

**MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**RECORD OF DECISION OF THE CABINET**

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Decision Made: 8 October 2014

**OVER-DEVELOPMENT OF INNER MAIDSTONE**

**Issue for Decision**

To consider the motion, as amended, relating to the over-development of "Inner Maidstone" and for Officers to report back to the next Council meeting on the concerns raised regarding the conversion of houses to multiple occupancy properties.

**Decision Made**

That due to the existence of policies and work in progress which address the issues raised in the motion relating to over-development of "Inner Maidstone", it was agreed that there was no requirement for a further report at this time.

**Reasons for Decision**

The Council already use draft Planning Policy DM8 in its determination of planning applications where a conversion is proposed from a large property to multiple occupation. The draft policy includes criteria for changes to the character of the street scene, boundary treatment, and impact on residents and parking. In addition, Policy DM4 sets out the principles of good design which proposals are expected to meet including, for example, respecting the amenities of occupiers on neighbouring properties and the creation of a safe environment for pedestrian and vehicular movements.

The Council is also looking to produce its own parking standards, and will be looking at those currently used by KCC Highways. On the back of this, Planning Officers will also look at parking strategies, especially for inner Maidstone and the possibility of traffic regulation orders on certain junctions.

### **Alternatives considered and why rejected**

It was noted that as Planning Officers have already been using policies DM4 and DM8 in determining applications relating to conversions of properties to multiple occupancy and the work in progress to address this issue, there is not a need for a further report at this time.

Should you be concerned about this decision and wish to call it in, please submit a call in form signed by any two Non-Executive Members to the Head of Policy and Communications by: <b>17 October 2014</b>
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**CYCLING SAFETY AND THE GYRATORY SYSTEM**

**Issue for Decision**

To consider the motion relating to cycling safety and the gyratory system and for Officers to report back to the next Council meeting.

**Decision Made**

That there is appropriate and sufficient dialogue with the Kent County Council's Highways Authority to address the issues raised in the motion relating to Cycling Safety and the Gyratory System and it not therefore considered that a further report is needed at this time.

**Reasons for Decision**

It was noted that Kent County Council have no proposals to change the current cycleway and footway.

They are, however, taking a report to the Joint Transportation Board in October on the bridges gyratory system.

**Alternatives considered and why rejected**

As there is an appropriate and sufficient level of dialogue between the Council and Kent County Council it is not considered necessary for a further report to be brought back to Council on this issue.

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**BEDROOM TAX (SPARE ROOM SUBSIDY)**

**Issue for Decision**

To agree the motion relating to the Bedroom Tax (Spare Room Subsidy).

**Decision Made**

1. As a review of the Housing Allocation Policy was undertaken less than six months ago, there is no need to carry out another review. The actions taken to assist residents in downsizing to smaller accommodation was noted;
2. The Council will continue to do all it can within the Council's legal powers to minimise the impact of spare room subsidy on families where there maybe short term absences and also people with disabilities where additional bedrooms may be required due to a person's disabilities;
3. The Leader of the Council will write to the Ministers of Housing and Work and Pensions setting out the facts and experiences in Maidstone arising from the spare room subsidy policy and send a copy to the LGA; and
4. The Leader will also provide feedback at the next full Council meeting in December under the 'Current Issues' agenda item.

**Reasons for Decision**

Council adopted the Housing Allocation Policy in April 2013. It moved away from a points based system to a banding system.

A review was carried out in May this year with tenants and stakeholders and the issue of people being prevented from downsizing was not raised during the review.

From the records 39 people have been able to downsize over the past year which does not support the evidence that people were being blocked from downsizing. There are a further 79 applicants on the register who are looking to downsize and are under retirement age so these are the people that would be effected by the spare room subsidy.

It should be borne in mind that there are 587 people who are effected by

the spare room subsidy. Information relating to the services that are available to tenants has been promoted through housing associations and Golding Homes recently hosted an event about mutual exchanges which was open to all tenants which is another option which people can use to downsize.

There is a general lack of suitable accommodation that people can downsize to.

### **Alternatives considered and why rejected**

As a review of the Housing Allocation Policy was undertaken only six months ago, it would not seem advisable to carry out another review at this time.

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## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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#### **FLOODING EVENTS IN MAIDSTONE**

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

To consider the issues that Borough residents, visitors, businesses and the Council faced during the flooding emergency phase between December 2013 and February 2014.

##### **Decision Made**

The actions and progress made to date were noted as detailed in Appendix A to the Report of Environment and Shared Services and of the work facilitated through a range of organisations including the parish councils, the National Flood Forum and Environment Agency.

##### **Reasons for Decision**

Between the 24 December 2013 and 17 February 2014, significant flooding occurred in several parts of the borough. The report focused on the lead up to the events, the key issues that arose during the emergency phases and the steps that have been taken subsequently as part of the recovery phase. This included identifying some of the key areas where arrangements worked well, as well as those where there are lessons to be learnt and recommendations for the future.

The Council is a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act with a duty to ensure both our services are maintained and to plan for emergencies so that humanitarian and environmental effects can be mitigated.

The Council's activities around emergency planning are continuous and extensive as a district and as part of the police chaired Kent Resilience Forum (KRF). This is a partnership of all the organisations that have a role to play in the response to a major emergency in the county such as the County Council, all districts, blue light services, the Environment Agency and the voluntary sector.

Like most districts Maidstone has adopted the "One Kent" approach to emergency planning, training and exercising. This along with the formal structure of the KRF and its various working groups ensures all partners work together towards a true multi agency response.

The One Kent approach clearly defines roles and responsibilities. For example the Environment Agency warn of floods, the Police warn and inform the public, the fire service executes rescues. Kent County Council arranges transport and the local authorities provide humanitarian assistance with the voluntary sector to displaced persons by running rest centres and providing temporary accommodation for homeless persons.

Although the report considered the response of the Council, it can be seen that very often that response requires an integrated approach and joint working by all agencies.

In order to be effective, the One Kent approach needs to extend down to community plans and KCC have a senior planning officer tasked with liaising with parish councils. To date plans are in place or in progress for Boughton Monchelsea, Boughton Malherbe, Collier Street, Staplehurst, Tovil, Lenham and Yalding.

Over 300 residential and 60 business properties flooded at Christmas and at the start of the year resulting in several hundred people being placed in temporary accommodation. The following report identifies some of the key issues across the borough and for the Council. Although many communities were affected, it is not the intention in this report to cover in detail all the areas that were flooded.

The report was being presented as it was felt to be a timely moment to reflect on the work that has taken place and report to Cabinet before we enter into the autumn period.

### **Alternatives considered and why rejected**

The recommendations in the report satisfy the Council's duty under The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to plan and act to mitigate the effects of a major emergency incident.

The recommendations also satisfy the duty of The Act and the Council's commitment to partners to plan at a county level as part of the 'One Kent' approach.

It is important that lessons learned from this response are put into place. Not actioning the recommendations could be deemed a failure to satisfy the Council duty under The Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

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