

AGENDA

COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING



Overview and Scrutiny

Date: Tuesday 10 February 2015
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors: Mrs Joy, D Mortimer (Vice-Chairman), Munford,
Mrs Parvin, Round, Sargeant, Mrs Stockell, B Watson
and J.A. Wilson (Chairman)

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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**
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 13 January 2015** 1 - 5
8. **Update on Tackling social isolation and loneliness faced by older people** 6 - 8

Follow up report from Sarah Robson, Community Partnership Manager and Sarah Shearsmith, Community Development Team Leader to update the Committee on progress since the meeting held on 13 January 2015.
9. **Affordable Housing Programme Update** 9 - 24

Continued Over/:

Issued on 29 January 2015

Alison Broom

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

A report presented by Andrew Connors, Housing and Communities Funding Manager, on the importance of affordable housing supply and how it is delivered, key challenges ahead and the opportunities for continued investment in the delivery of affordable housing.

10. Update on collective switching campaigns

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A report by Helen Miller, Household Expenditure Project Officer, considering ways to increase the take up of the Collective Switching Service called the Big Maidstone Switch.

11. Future Work Programme

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The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact Tessa Mallett on 01622 602524**. To find out more about the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk/osc

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Community, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 13 JANUARY 2015

Present: Councillor J.A. Wilson (Chairman), and
Councillors Butler, Mrs Joy, D Mortimer, Sargeant and
Vizzard

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

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be webcast.

63. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors:

- Mrs Parvin;
- Round;
- Stockell; and,
- Munford.

64. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillor Butler was present as a substitute for Councillor Parvin.

65. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

There were no visiting members present.

66. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor Vizzard declared an other significant interest by virtue of the fact he was Chairman of AgeUK Maidstone, should the work of AgeUK be discussed in any detail during the meeting.

There were no other disclosures by members or officers.

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

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

68. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2014

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

69. A PROPOSED MODEL TO IDENTIFY LONELY AND ISOLATED OVER 65 YEAR OLD RESIDENTS OF MAIDSTONE (INCLUDES BEREAVEMENT SERVICES)

The Chairman introduced Sarah Shearsmith, Community Development Team Leader, who presented the report in the absence of Sarah Robson, Community Partnership Manager.

Ms Shearsmith ran through the main points in the report and explained the:

- Definition of Isolation;
- Definition of Loneliness;
- Maidstone age profile;
- Impact of an aging population;
- Outcomes Maidstone Borough Council are seeking; and,
- Next steps.

During discussion the committee raised the following points:

- A suggestion for the working party should include AgeUK, as an agency who was already providing many services to the elderly of the borough.
- Ward councillors were very aware of the support and activities available to the elderly in their ward and would be a good source of information to help identify where there were potential gaps in the services provided.
- The draft forms included in the report as Appendix C and D needed further work in terms of the wording to ensure respondents were fully aware of why they were being asked for the information.
- The main difficulty in finding lonely and isolated people was they were lonely and isolated because they were not necessarily engaging in the services on offer. The issue would be finding these people.
- It was suggested the Quality of Life survey (appendix D) could be mailed out with the election information due to go out for the elections in May 2015. This would deliver the survey to all residents of the borough.
- The Wards identified in the report were those with the highest population of over 65 year olds and not necessarily the highest number of lonely and isolated people.
- It was agreed that loneliness and isolation can affect any age group and was not just confined to the elderly. It was pointed out that the working group had acknowledged this when scoping the review. The working group had suggested the committee focus on a manageable area of the community to begin with and had identified

the over 65 year olds of the borough. The report suggested the evidence gathering exercise be piloted in High Street Ward.

- It was agreed the services that would eventually be provided as a result of this work would not be restricted to the over 65 year olds. It was envisaged interventions would include how to keep active in older age and would be open to all.

RESOLVED: that the committee noted the report and recommend that:

- a. The Community Development Team Leader investigate the possibility of the proposed Quality of Life survey (appendix D) being sent out to all borough residents with the mail shots going out on the run up to the General Election in May 2015.
- b. The Community Development Team Leader establish what services are already being provided by other agencies, such as, AgeUK, Voluntary Action Maidstone, Older Peoples' Forum, and ask these agencies for their help in identifying the 'unknown' lonely and isolated over 65 year old people of the borough,

70. ANNUAL REFRESH OF THE HEALTH INEQUALITIES ACTION PLAN

Sarah Shearsmith, Community Development Team Leader, presented the report and outlined the main achievements to date under each of the six priorities.

During discussion the committee raised the following points:

- Concern was raised as to whether the moving of the library to an out of town site had impacted on residents and encouraging children to read.
- It was confirmed older people were involved in helping younger people to read through the Beanstalk group. The group trained people to go into schools and assisted with children's reading.
- Maidstone Borough Council were not currently doing any work to promote minimum unit pricing for alcohol.
- The initiatives described in the report were all successful. Some health and wellbeing initiatives in the past had not been particularly successful but information was not readily available at the meeting.
- The smoking statistics shown of page 163 of the agenda did not include people who used 'e-cigarettes'.
- Referrals to the initiatives outlined in the report were received from local GPs, pharmacies other agencies and self-referrals.

- Maidstone Borough Council had teamed up with Tunbridge Wells and Swale Borough Councils to deliver the Kent Healthy Business Awards across mid Kent. So far 10 businesses in Maidstone; 2 in Swale and 4 in Tunbridge Wells had taken up the initiative. The initiative would run for one year and was led by Paul Kirrage.
- The Health MOT Roadshow was currently on Jubilee Square in Maidstone. It was agreed residents would find a list of dates and venues useful for where and when the roadshow would be held.
- It was agreed it would be useful to have information on the number and location of foodbanks in Maidstone borough.
- Although the report stated 231 registered for the Big Switch and 85% of them would save money, it was agreed it would be interesting to establish how many of those actually changed suppliers.
- Although the Walking for Health initiative looked to be successful, it was suggested it could be better publicised to agencies who refer clients to it.
- It was further reported a series of cycling forums were being established in the borough to promote the use of bicycles as a sustainable form of transport.
- It was reported that sustainable weight loss was more successful if the initiative included support for clients on a longer term basis – for example 12 to 18 months.
- Dementia Awareness training was arranged for local businesses on 21 January 2015 at Maidstone Museum. Details of times offered would be circulated.
- A request had been made to include awareness of the issues and difficulties sufferers of dementia have to deal with on a daily basis and how to identify and assist sufferers when they present themselves in shops and businesses etc.
- It was confirmed Kent County Council (KCC) would grant Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) £90,000 to deliver a healthy weight initiative.
- It was confirmed that when granting funding KCC gave MBC direction on the initiatives the money should be spent on. MBC aimed to add value to initiatives already in place.
- The committee congratulated the team on their results and thanked them for their hard work in achieving them.

RESOLVED: that the committee noted the annual refresh of the Health Inequalities Action Plan and recommended:

- a. The Community Development Team Leader investigate the impact the move of the library to its new location has had on residents;
- b. The Community Development Team Leader provide information to residents on where and when the Health MOT Roadshow will be during 2015;
- c. The Community Development Team Leader establish how many food banks are in operation in the Maidstone borough;
- d. The Community Development Team Leader investigate how many residents who registered with the Big Switch campaign actually switched providers.

71. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: that the committee noted the:

- a) Updated Future Work Programme and asked that the request to change the of date of the committees February meeting from 10th to 17th be avoided if at all possible.
- b) List for Forthcoming Decisions and recommended the Parks and Leisure Manager provide the committee with an update on the latest position with the Maidstone Play Strategy 2014.
- c) The SCRAIP update attached as appendix C.

72. DURATION OF MEETING

18:30hrs to 20:00hrs

Agenda Item 8

Maidstone Borough Council

Community, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Update on Tackling social isolation and loneliness faced by older people

Tuesday 10 February 2015

While reading the following report you may want to think about:

- What you want to know from the report;
- What questions you would like answered.

Make a note of your questions in the box below.

As you read the report you may think of other questions.

Questions I would like to ask regarding this report:

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Guidance note - Making Quality Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations

Scrutiny recommendations should seek to make a real difference to local people and the services provided. Recommendations that note a change or request further information fail to resolve problems or make changes. The scrutiny team have identified the following criteria for quality recommendations, they:

- affect and make a difference to local people;
- result in a change in policy that improves services;
- identify savings and maintain/improve service quality; or
- objectively identify a solution.

One way of checking the usefulness of recommendations is to evaluate them against the 'six Ws' set out below:

Good recommendations should answer these questions:

Why does it need to be done?	This will help ensure the outcome is relevant and in the right context – if a meeting is being requested it will ensure the correct people are invited to attend
Who is being asked to do it?	Without this nothing will get done (no one will take ownership)
What needs to be done?	Needs to be clear and specific
HoW will it be done?	Again, needs to be clear and specific, what is the expected output- for example a report to be written or a meeting to be arranged
Where does it need to be done/go?	If it's a meeting – where is it needed If it's a report – where is it to go, who needs to see it
When does it need to be done?	Crucial to have a timescale – without a deadline it will never get done

Thinking about these points will help ensure the outcomes of scrutiny are effective and will aid monitoring.

Maidstone Borough Council

**Community, Environment and Housing
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Tuesday 10 February 2015

**Update Report on Tackling Social Isolation and Loneliness Faced by
Older People**

Report of: Sarah Robson, Sarah Shearsmith, Housing and Community Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Follow up to Community, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CEH OSC) held on 13 January 2015.

2. AGREED NEXT STEPS

- 2.1 Outlined in SCRAIP (reference CEH.141111.46.4). Sarah Shearsmith to provide an update at the proposed CEH OSC meeting being held on 10 February 2014. However, key areas of focus will be;
- Understand older people's needs around social isolation and loneliness
Action: Undertake a Borough-wide survey of older people's needs in partnership with Kent Public Health, making use of local links e.g. KALC, KFRS, GPs, local services e.g. Hairdressers, Libraries, Pharmacies/Healthy Living Pharmacies with a focus on (with a focus on engaging those with a Long Term Condition or on a repeat prescription).
 - Explore a range of services and models to tackle social isolation, understanding the services and strengths already in place and gaps that should be addressed;
Action: Map and promote existing local support services.
Action: Promotion of the Silverline helpline, Age Action Alliance and Depression Alliance.

Action: Develop a bereavement pack for the Maidstone Crematorium and Private Funeral Directors to provide guidance and signpost to local services and activities.
 - Consider the role of council services in alleviating loneliness and isolation by making best use of resources available.
Action: Nominate a Maidstone Older People's Champion (with links to Older Person's Forum).

Maidstone Borough Council

Community, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Affordable Housing Programme Update

Tuesday 10 February 2015

While reading the following report you may want to think about:

- What you want to know from the report;
- What questions you would like answered.

Make a note of your questions in the box below.

As you read the report you may think of other questions.

Questions I would like to ask regarding this report:

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2015

REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Report prepared by Andrew Connors

1. AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME UPDATE

1.1 Issue for Consideration

- 1.1.1 To note the importance of affordable housing supply and how it is delivered, key challenges ahead and the opportunities for continued investment in the delivery of affordable housing.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Housing and Community Services

- 1.2.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

Background

- 1.3.1 The delivery of affordable Housing supports the council's corporate priorities for Maidstone to be a decent place to live and to have a growing economy. The affordable housing sector is experiencing a period of rapid change. A combination of policy change at the national level, led by the shift in approach to subsidy and vast welfare and planning reform changes, has created opportunities as well as a climate of uncertainty and heightened risk.
- 1.3.2 This report seeks to raise the understanding of affordable housing delivery and highlight the key challenges, issues and opportunities affecting the future delivery of affordable housing across Maidstone and how the council aims to respond to these challenges by increasing the supply of much needed affordable new homes.

Affordable Homes Programme

- 1.3.3 In order to achieve significant new supply within public spending constraints, the Government introduced the Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) in 2011. A total of £2.9bn capital grant funding was made available nationally to fund affordable housing over the four year programme period (2011-15). The 2011-15 Affordable Homes Programme moved, for the first time, to making allocations for the full 4-year programme period at the outset.
- 1.3.4 The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) are responsible for administering the AHP and also for regulating social housing providers to ensure that they are well managed and financially secure.
- 1.3.5 The centrepiece of this programme is the new *Affordable Rent* tenure, which consists of lower levels of capital subsidy, and higher levels of rent – set at up to 80% of market rent. Affordable Rent will form the principal element of the new supply offer. At the same time, new flexibilities were introduced to allow a proportion of existing social rent properties to be made available at re-let at an Affordable Rent, with the additional capacity generated from those re-lets applied to support delivery of new supply.
- 1.3.6 *Social housing* (pre-2011) was typically funded through a capital grant of £60,000 per unit – a figure substantially higher than under Affordable Rent. The HCA now give a capital grant of approximately £20,000 - £30,000 per home (although this figure can fluctuate depending on the agreement negotiated between the HCA and the Registered Provider).
- 1.3.7 As part of the Affordable Homes Programme, there is also the flexibility for some funding to be used for other forms of tenure including affordable home ownership and, in some circumstances, social rent. The expectation is that S106 (planning contributions) schemes will be delivered with zero grant input for both Affordable Rent and affordable home ownership.
- 1.3.8 In the 2013 Spending Review, the Chancellor announced that the AHP will be extended for three years up to 2017/18, signifying a continuation of the current model. A further £2.9bn of grant funding has been made available nationally to fund affordable housing over this extended programme period.

1.3.9 The programme seeks to:

- Increase the supply of new affordable housing – for Affordable Rent and affordable home ownership (shared ownership);
- Maximise the number of new affordable homes delivered with the available grant funding, supplemented by bidders' own contributions;
- Build homes that address the demographic challenges facing social housing, including the need for more one and two bedroom homes that match the needs of smaller households;
- Maximise delivery within the programme period and deliver new affordable homes by March 2018; and
- Encourage providers with capacity who are not currently developers, or who could do more, to bring that capacity into use, utilising the skills and expertise of existing delivery partners as appropriate. In addition to accessing capacity, the HCA's aim is to drive good value for money through the competitive process.

1.3.10 Registered Providers are asked to fully utilize the following cost contributions, where available, to contribute to the delivery of new supply, and to reduce the call on capital grant funding.

- Borrowing capacity generated by the net rental income stream of the new properties developed;
- The additional borrowing capacity that can be generated from the conversion of existing social rent properties to Affordable Rent (or other tenures) at re-let;
- Other sources of cross subsidy, including surpluses from existing stock and activities, Recycled Capital Grant Funding (most commonly derived from shared ownership sales) and Disposal Proceeds Funding and income from developing new properties for outright sale;
- Other sources of funding or means of reducing the costs such as free or discounted public land, including local authority land, and local authority contributions such as from the New Homes Bonus; and
- The benefit of Government backed guarantees.

1.3.11 The HCA assess scheme bids for capital grant funding which:

- Offer good value for money (taking account of both grant requested and anticipated costs, as well as the extent to which bidders have applied their own resources, including through utilising flexibilities available to generate capacity);
- Have a good and demonstrable prospect of delivery within the programme timeframe; and

- Meet local needs and priorities in their proposed locations, including building homes that address the demographic challenges facing social housing and any mismatch between existing stock and household needs (for example, by building more one or two bedroom homes in areas where there is a shortage of these).

1.3.12 Over half the available funding was allocated in the initial bid round, with the remainder, around £800 million, being made available on a continuous market engagement (CME) basis. Bidding for this is now open, and will remain so until all of the funding is allocated.

1.3.13 CME allows housing providers further opportunities to bid for firm schemes during the 2015 to 2018 period. This will include specialist, supported or rural housing, which can often require a longer lead time, and these, along with schemes making use of construction innovation including advance housing manufacture, are especially encouraged under CME.

1.3.14 The council achieved Registered Provider status with the HCA on the 26th March 2014. This basically enables the council to be a landlord of social housing stock once again. It complements our existing Investment Partner status with the HCA (awarded 19th November 2012), in which we can apply and receive grant directly from the HCA for providing affordable housing.

1.3.15 The council is actively looking for opportunities to acquire land/property as well as develop land within our ownership to help meet our commercialism and strategic housing objectives. Such opportunities could also form part of a bid for capital grant funding to the HCA under the CME process.

Maidstone Response to the Affordable Homes Programme Offer

1.3.16 There has been a strong response to the Affordable Housing Programme offer. Registered Providers and the HCA continue to see Maidstone as an important area for affordable housing delivery and investment. **Table 1** below shows the amount of funding the HCA has allocated towards the delivery of affordable homes, within each of the local authorities in Kent. This covers the period April 2011-September 2014.

Table 1 - Affordable Homes Programme (2011-15) - Schemes confirmed by the HCA			
Local Authority	Funding (£)	Affordable Homes	Grant Per Affordable Home
Ashford	5,167,174	386	13,386

Canterbury	1,447,635	126	11,489
Dartford	204,000	118	1,729
Dover	3,799,013	191	19,890
Gravesham	9,406,892	250	37,628
Maidstone	6,884,709	548	12,563
Medway Towns	9,115,126	399	22,845
Sevenoaks	1,023,222	83	12,328
Shepway	3,764,962	143	26,328
Swale	4,635,756	333	13,921
Thanet	3,217,900	106	30,358
Tonbridge & Malling	3,038,172	272	11,170
Tunbridge Wells	5,247,151	396	13,250

Source: Homes and Communities Agency

1.3.17 Maidstone has received the 3rd highest funding allocation of the 13 districts, and is delivering the highest number of affordable homes. The average amount of grant per home is also demonstrating excellent value for money at just £12,563.

1.3.18 There has been a far more cautious approach adopted by Registered Providers with respect to submitting additional scheme bids for grant funding since the opening of the extended Affordable Homes Programme (2015-18). This is mainly due to the HCA retaining a significant proportion of funding for future continuous market engagement (as referred to above), rather than allocating the entire funding available at the outset of the new programme period. **Table 2** below shows the confirmed initial funding allocations within each local authority in Kent so far as at December 2014.

Table 2 - Affordable Homes Programme (2015-18) - Schemes confirmed by the HCA			
Local Authority	Funding (£)	Affordable Homes	Grant Per Affordable Home
Ashford	2,990,500	172	17,387
Canterbury	778,000	42	18,524
Dartford	0	150	0
Dover	910,000	26	35,000
Gravesham	1,134,000	101	11,228
Maidstone	1,457,173	176	8,279
Medway Towns	1,863,000	235	7,928
Sevenoaks	0	47	0
Shepway	1,090,000	49	22,245
Swale	4,074,000	136	29,956
Thanet	2,024,379	92	22,004
Tonbridge &	7,126,969	283	25,184

Malling			
Tunbridge Wells	3,342,000	108	30,944

Source: Homes and Communities Agency

- 1.3.19 The council was successful in obtaining a grant allocation of £210k from the HCA in the 2011-15 AHP, to bring 12 empty properties back into use as affordable housing. To be considered for the programme properties must have been empty for a period of 6 months and be brought back into use (completed) by March 2015. The council has so far brought back into use 4 empty properties on a lease and repair basis.
- 1.3.20 In addition, the council purchased Magnolia House back in March 2014, of which was in the former ownership of Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust. The property has been empty for over 2 years and was declared surplus to requirements by the Trust. Magnolia House consists of 8 self contained flats (4 x 1-bed and 4 x 2-beds). Refurbishment work has already started on site, and the properties are due for completion and handover early February 2015.
- 1.3.21 MBC have 100% nomination rights to the properties (being the freehold owner) which will be used to provide homes for homeless families in the Borough by offering settled accommodation to those who the council has a homeless duty to secure accommodation for. The properties will be let on an affordable rent basis (80% of the open market rent, inclusive of service charges) within LHA rates, which for one-beds is £122.36 and two-beds is £151.50. Management of the properties will be undertaken on behalf of the council by Hyde Housing Association.

Past and projected affordable housing completions

- 1.3.22 Maidstone has an excellent track record for delivery of affordable housing and has outperformed all other authorities in Kent with respect to the delivery of affordable housing, with the exception of Medway, which is a unitary authority. This is supported by **Table 3** below which shows the number of affordable homes delivered by each Kent local authority from 2010 to 2014.

Table 3: Numbers of affordable housing delivered by each Kent local authority between 2010 and 2011 and 2013 to 2014.	
Medway	1060
Maidstone	1050
Ashford	790
Tonbridge & Malling	630

Gravesham	560
Dartford	540
Canterbury	460
Swale	430
Thanet	370
Tunbridge Wells	340
Dover	200
Sevenoaks	170
Shepway	150
Totals	6750

1.3.23 The council is on track to exceed our target of completing 200 affordable homes during the 2014-15 financial year, with 225 affordable homes forecast for completion by year end, with a similar number anticipated for 2015-16.

Key challenges ahead for affordable housing

1.3.24 The Affordable Rent model marks a shift in the approach to subsidy away from high levels of **capital** subsidy to one of high levels of **revenue** subsidy provided through Housing Benefit. Under this model, the level of future inflation-linked increases to the rent are crucial to the amount of borrowing that can be supported, and therefore, to the level of capital subsidy required in order to build each home.

1.3.25 Housing association rent policy is regulated by government. Rents for new homes are set at up to 80% of market levels and inflated each year by RPI+0.5%, although this will change to CPI+1% from 2015. This inflation-based approach is critical to the viability of the model, as it forms the basis on which housing associations can borrow at attractive rates from the financial sector.

1.3.26 The effect of the model is to create a sub-market rental sector, with rents which are more affordable to people who could not generally afford to rent privately. This approach can only function if tenants who cannot afford to pay these rents from their own income receive assistance from the state. Typically, this means that Housing Benefit accounts for 50% of the rental stream on new Affordable Rent properties, and more than 50% of the increased rent on existing properties converted from social rent. Nationally, the Housing Benefit

bill is expected to rise by £1.4 billion over 30 years to pay for the shift in approach to subsidy.

- 1.3.27A further pressure point created by the reduction to capital subsidy is that it forces more funding to be sourced privately. This means that many providers will find their borrowing increasingly constrained by gearing the longer the current model remains in place. Some housing associations are closer to reaching their borrowing limits than others, but eventually all will become constrained and will have to slow or halt their development programmes. Therefore access to alternative funding sources is increasingly crucial to maintaining supply.

Welfare Reform

- 1.3.28Another significant challenge is welfare reform. Since April 2013, the Housing Benefit payable to social housing tenants has been restricted (social sector size criteria) according to the number of bedrooms in each property. This means that many housing associations will need to consider being involved with downsizing incentive schemes and the development of attractive schemes for older people, to address the issue of under-occupation.
- 1.3.29One of the main stumbling blocks preventing people from downsizing is that enough smaller properties are simply not available. The National Housing Federation estimates that 180,000 households are under-occupying two bedroom homes, but would be competing for only 85,000 one bedroom properties across the entire sector if they all opted to move. This issue becomes even more pronounced in the context that local authority lists have a further million people waiting for one bedroom properties. Currently over 55% of applicants (1,337) on the council's housing register have a 1-bed need.
- 1.3.30Most Registered Providers are concerned that the aforementioned *social sector size criteria* and *direct payments* under Universal Credit will each increase arrears and affect the sector's ability to collect rents. At present most rent payments for people on housing benefit are sent direct to landlords. But when Universal Credit is introduced nationally between now and 2017, tenants will receive one lump sum covering all their benefits and be expected to meet their housing costs themselves, a month in advance.
- 1.3.31This has led to many Registered Providers introducing 'Rent in Advance' policies. This reflects concern among Registered Providers that people will default on payments when they have to pay rent themselves, a month in advance, under the new system.

Planning & Housing Reforms

- 1.3.32The **Growth & Infrastructure Act 2013** came into force in April 2013, aiming to speed up development and encourage economic growth. One of the key measures, introduced temporarily until 30 April 2016, is for interest holders in land to be able to apply to the local planning authority (LPA) either to modify or to remove an affordable housing planning obligation, enforced under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, if it results in the development not being economically viable. The LPA is obliged to deal with the application so that the development becomes economically viable.
- 1.3.33If modification of the affordable housing requirement is justified on that basis, then the guideline states that a viable affordable housing provision should be proposed, delivering the maximum level of affordable housing consistent with viability and the optimum mix of provision. This gives the Council an element of discretion about how to modify the affordable housing requirements and any application made by a developer must be backed up by robust viability evidence.
- 1.3.34On 30th May 2013 **Permitted Development Rights** were introduced in England to authorise a change of use from an office use (Class B1(a)) to a residential use (Class C3), without having to lodge a planning application. This right will expire on 30th May 2016, when the Government will consider whether to extend the period.
- 1.3.35The council's planning policies for residential development require a certain proportion (current adopted policy is 40%) of units to be allocated as affordable housing, but only if planning permission is required, which will not apply in the case of new rights. However many residential developers and Registered Providers are now seeking out suitable office buildings for conversion from office to residential which may include provision for affordable housing.
- 1.3.36A further round of planning and housing reforms was announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement. The Autumn Statement included measures to extend affordable housing capital investment to 2018-19 and 2019-20, to ensure that on average 55,000 new affordable homes per year continue to be delivered.
- 1.3.37The government remains committed to establishing shared ownership as a route to home ownership, and making it more attractive to both households and investors. To stimulate further investment in shared ownership, the government will extend the scope of Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) multiple dwellings relief so that "lease and leaseback" arrangements with housing associations on shared ownership properties also attract the relief.

- 1.3.38The government will also consult on options for streamlining the process for selling on shared ownership properties, and will work with housing associations, lenders and the regulator to identify and lift barriers to extending shared ownership.
- 1.3.39The government has also proposed taking further action to speed up the planning process by keeping the speed of decisions on major applications under review and taking steps to speed up s106 negotiations.
- 1.3.40On 1st December 2014 Minister of State for Housing and Planning Brandon Lewis announced an additional initiative aimed at getting empty or redundant land and property back into use. Where a vacant building is brought back into any lawful use, or is demolished to be replaced by a new building, the developer should be offered a financial credit equivalent to the existing gross floorspace of relevant vacant buildings when the local planning authority calculates any affordable housing contribution which will be sought. Affordable housing contributions will be required for any increase in floorspace.
- 1.3.41Housing will be working with Planning to agree how to address this issue and the method of assessing/calculating the credit.

Opportunities for alternative funding and delivery models

- 1.3.42The delivery of affordable homes within Maidstone and across the country continues to be of extreme importance as buying a home is increasingly out of reach for many people. House prices are rising faster than average earnings and there are 1.7 million households on waiting lists for affordable homes across England. The number of people renting has doubled and the average first-time buyer is now 35 years old. In some rural communities, where wages are low, homes have become unaffordable for people.
- 1.3.43Research has shown that the stability of an affordable home can have profound effects on childhood development and school performance and can improve health outcomes for families and individuals.
- 1.3.44But the benefits of affordable housing extend beyond its occupants to the community at large. The development of affordable housing can increase spending and employment in the surrounding economy by creating jobs and stimulating local economic development. It also acts as an important source of revenue for local authorities such as through the New-Homes Bonus. The New Homes Bonus is a grant paid by central government and is based on the amount of extra Council Tax revenue raised for new-build homes, conversions and long-term empty homes brought back into use. There is also an extra payment for

providing affordable homes.

- 1.3.45 The Council continue to support the corporate priority of delivering affordable housing by maintaining a capital programme and investing directly in the provision of affordable housing within the borough. Since stock transfer (2004) the council has invested £18m towards supporting the delivery of over 1,150 affordable homes. Capital will continue to be required to help contribute towards the importance of delivering affordable housing.
- 1.3.46 Many Registered Providers and local authorities are now considering alternative funding sources for delivering affordable housing in addition to the aforementioned routes of HCA/Council capital grant, borrowing (long/short term bank lending) and recycling subsidy from conversions/sales. The most popular alternative funding source being Special Purpose Vehicles.
- 1.3.47 This refers to finance where investors set up special purpose vehicles (SPVs) with local authorities (or others) and Registered Providers to fulfill a specific set of objectives. Investors are typically insurance and pension funds looking for stable, inflation-linked returns. These might be Local Asset Backed Vehicles where the local authority contributes land or another tangible asset into the vehicle.
- 1.3.48 The LGA's 'Investing in our nation's future' calls on an incoming government to make changes that would free councils to play their role in ensuring everyone finds an affordable home. New housing facilitates economic growth, and helps increase council tax, business rates, and New Homes Bonus receipts locally. New homes for rent can also offer on-going income generation for councils. Councils have already proven they are well placed to increase housing supply and many more are setting up their own housing companies or exploring the potential to do so, offering flexibility on tenure and rent. Properties that are not subject to financial losses through 'Right to Buy' and schemes that can be financed free from the borrowing cap are all being looked at. Some councils are embarking on new approaches to apply private investment to meet local housing need with schemes that are self-financing, using the rent generated over the term to repay institutional investors.
- 1.3.49 Alongside pressing for the financial freedoms and a reintroduction of the conditions that allow councils to build, the LGA is also exploring a practical investment offer that could help councils build at scale without public subsidy. The offer aims to provide a further option to support councils:
- Pursue and secure new kinds of additional funding, outside the Housing Revenue Account (HRA);

- Build homes to meet housing need, generate income and stimulate growth;
- Access favourable rates from institutional or other corporate funders, which are often only achieved 'at scale'.

1.3.50 The model of support the LGA would like to test with interested authorities involves the LGA assisting a group of councils to collectively access institutional or other corporate finance to build new homes. For any single council the cost of entry to this type of arrangement could be prohibitive. Accordingly, the LGA would look to reduce entry costs and forward fund the spend on due diligence; the legal, property and financial expertise to secure funds at the most competitive rates with financing sourced and structured in a way that meets council needs. The LGA would recover its costs, potentially together with an industry standard percentage, from the finance raised. These costs would be spread over the whole consortia.

1.3.51 A key element of the offer is to provide support to the participating councils through what can be a complex and expensive process, to enable them to secure additional funding for housing development. Getting the process right can provide much needed homes as well as play a significant part in a council's income generation and growth strategies.

1.3.52 The LGA invited expressions of interest to be submitted by the 10th of September 2014 from local authorities who are interested in accessing significant funds to develop their own new housing outside of housing revenue accounts (where councils have an HRA). Maidstone submitted an expression of interest and have had a follow up conversation to discuss the shape of the offer in more detail and enable the LGA to better understand the council's ambition for future housing development.

1.3.53 As part of the LGA's next steps for the Institutional Investment in Housing offer, they are arranging 1:1 meetings with the Councils most likely to begin schemes in 2015/16. A provisional date for a visit to Maidstone Borough Council has been set for Thursday 5th February 2015.

1.3.54 The council is also considering the creation of a 'Local Housing Company' to build new affordable and private homes. In considering a project of this kind, the council will have to consider its powers and duties and what is the best way to set the company up in order to demonstrate that the proposal is reasonable and beneficial to council tax payers and the community. Also that the council is achieving best value and able to deliver its strategic commercialism and housing objectives.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.4.1 The Committee could choose not to receive update reports. However, given the importance of the affordable housing programme in helping to contribute to Strategic Plan priorities, this course of action is not recommended.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 1.5.1 Affordable Housing supply contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Plan priorities; For Maidstone to be a decent place and to have a growing economy.

1.6 Risk Management

- 1.6.1 Housing will consider how bids meet local needs and priorities and will verify fit with the HCA during the bid assessment process. Housing will also continue to monitor the impact of welfare, housing and planning reforms and work closely with stakeholders/partners to address issues as they arise.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1 None

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

1.8 Relevant Documents - None

1.8.1 Appendices - None

1.8.2 Background Documents - None

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

Maidstone Borough Council

Community, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Update on collective switching campaigns

Tuesday 10 February 2015

While reading the following report you may want to think about:

- What you want to know from the report;
- What questions you would like answered.

Make a note of your questions in the box below.

As you read the report you may think of other questions.

Questions I would like to ask regarding this report:

-
-
-
-
-

Guidance note - Making Quality Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations

Scrutiny recommendations should seek to make a real difference to local people and the services provided. Recommendations that note a change or request further information fail to resolve problems or make changes. The scrutiny team have identified the following criteria for quality recommendations, they:

- affect and make a difference to local people;
- result in a change in policy that improves services;
- identify savings and maintain/improve service quality; or
- objectively identify a solution.

One way of checking the usefulness of recommendations is to evaluate them against the 'six Ws' set out below:

Good recommendations should answer these questions:

Why does it need to be done?	This will help ensure the outcome is relevant and in the right context – if a meeting is being requested it will ensure the correct people are invited to attend
Who is being asked to do it?	Without this nothing will get done (no one will take ownership)
What needs to be done?	Needs to be clear and specific
HoW will it be done?	Again, needs to be clear and specific, what is the expected output- for example a report to be written or a meeting to be arranged
Where does it need to be done/go?	If it's a meeting – where is it needed If it's a report – where is it to go, who needs to see it
When does it need to be done?	Crucial to have a timescale – without a deadline it will never get done

Thinking about these points will help ensure the outcomes of scrutiny are effective and will aid monitoring.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITY, ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2015

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND
COMMUNITIES

Report prepared by Helen Miller

1. UPDATE ON COLLECTIVE SWITCHING CAMPAIGNS

1.1 Issue for Consideration

- 1.1.1 To consider ways to increase take up of the Collective Switching Service called the Big Maidstone Switch.

1.2 Recommendation of Head of Housing and Community Service

- 1.2.1 That the Committee considers the contents of this report and continues to support the council's promotion of the Collective Switching Service called the Big Maidstone Switch
- 1.2.2 That the Committee endorses the recommendations set out in 1.3.10

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 1.3.1 Collective switching provides a no cost, no hassle and no obligation way to find out whether you could get cheaper gas and electricity and if you then choose to switch it supports your switch to the new provider. The majority of households, approximately 85%, do not compare the market or switch their electricity or gas providers. Barriers include lack of time, a perception that it will be difficult, lack of interest and no access to the internet.
- 1.3.2 The service is provided by iChoosr, who provide the online registration portal, carry out the reverse auction where the energy providers compete to provide the lowest prices, send a personal offer to each registrant and support the switch. The Council promotes registration, encourages registrants to open and consider their personalised offer and supports residents who do not use the internet to register by phone or by visiting the Gateway. iChoosr receive a referral fee each time a registrant switches to a new energy company and they pass a

small portion of that to the Council which is used for marketing subsequent schemes.

- 1.3.3 Households that have not switched provider for more than three years are more likely to gain a lower price by switching. Lower gas and electricity prices help reduce fuel poverty. Levels of fuel poverty in Maidstone are average for the South East with approximately 9% of households estimated to be in fuel poverty. The winter 2013-2014 scheme provided an average saving of £161 with 85% of registrants able to save money and the autumn 2014 an average saving of £187.82 with 96% of registrants able to save money on the annual bill.
- 1.3.4 Whilst the rate of registrants who chose to switch when they received their offer was high in both campaigns and was better than the national average, overall take up of the Big Maidstone Switch schemes has been low. iChoosr advise that take up tends to be higher when the service is advertised on the homepage of the website, that a whole organisation approach is more effective than a more fragmented approach, that councils take offline referrals by phone as well as the online service, and councils work with partners organisations to promote the service. Uptake is normally higher in cold months when householders are more focused on the cost of heating their home.
- 1.3.5 231 residents registered for the winter 2013-2014 scheme. The Council was focused on the flooding during the winter 2013-2014 scheme and the scheme was not advertised on social media and rarely featured on the home page of the website. Data from the Winter 2013 – 2014 scheme showed that registrants heard about the scheme via newspapers and magazines, a flyer, Facebook and twitter, or a personal referral, with a roadshow or event as the least common way to hear of the scheme.
- 1.3.6 Just 73 residents registered for the autumn 2014 scheme. The scheme was featured on the home page of the website but not advertised on social media until the last week of the campaign. Though it was covered by our Borough Update and internal Wakey Wakey it was not covered by the local papers. The scheme was promoted to partner organisations at the Money Advice for Practitioners seminars in July but this was a few weeks before the service re-opened. The member of staff managing the scheme was focused on administering the repair and renew flooding grant and unable to actively promote the scheme.
- 1.3.7 Appendix 1 shows the location of households that registered. Concentration is higher in the town and some villages and lower in rural areas. There appears to be no take up in Yalding, Collier Street and Hunton. There is some take up outside Maidstone borough, but that is normal as this figure could include our own staff or people that

work in the Borough but do not reside here and when a service is available online. Appendix 2 shows the location of households that chose to switch with the service. Uptake was low outside the borough and a little lower than expected in the town but strong in rural areas.

- 1.3.8 Data from the Winter 2013-2014 scheme indicates that 71% of the households that registered had not switched in the last 3 years and a disproportionately large number identified themselves as including a person having a long term illness or disability or a person over 60 years old in the household. This shows that the scheme is clearly helping vulnerable residents.
- 1.3.9 The Council was awarded a small contract in autumn 2014 to provide two Energy Best Deal training sessions from the South East Financial Capability Forum. The Energy Best Deal training aims to help participants understand how to compare the market and find a low price for their electricity and gas bills. Other organisations also provide this training in Kent. This service and the Big Maidstone Switch could be considered to be providing a similar service; however the Energy Best Deal service helps people to develop the skills to compare the market and the Big Maidstone Switch seeks the lower prices on behalf of the householder. Through utilising both schemes the council will be able to promote savings to those who are able to switch without help, whilst offering support to those residents who need it.
- 1.3.10 To increase take up in subsequent schemes the council should consider;
- A whole council approach where all frontline staff, Members and Parish Councillors are aware of the scheme and can give out promotional materials during customer contacts
 - A commitment to promoting the service on the homepage when registration is open
 - An active social media campaign during the registration and uptake phases
 - Sending press releases to the local papers
 - Sending information to organisations that give financial advice and those that have contact with vulnerable customers such as the Childrens' Centres and CAB
- When used together these actions should result in better uptake of the service and so more residents saving money on their utility bills.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.4.1 The Council could decide not to promote the Big Maidstone Switch. No collective switching service would be promoted by the Council and residents could seek to switch energy provider without support. It is likely that this would result in fewer residents switching meaning more residents would remain in fuel poverty and that many would be paying

too much for their energy supply. For this reason doing nothing is not recommended.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

This scheme will support the corporate priority that residents are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 Take up of the service could be low and so not assist many residents. Active promotion of the service is needed to ensure its success.

1.6.2 The Council could suffer loss of reputation if the scheme is run poorly by iChoosr. The procurement process assessed the customer service provided and the previous two schemes have not given rise to any complaints.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

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

X
X

1.7.2 Financial. Some minor costs are incurred with marketing the scheme. The Council does receive referral fees from iChoosr which can offset these costs.

1.7.3 Staffing. Staff time will come from within existing resources and relate to officer time in communications team to update resources and

arranging printing and social media campaigns, the IT team to activate and deactivate the CRM for the Contact centre, the Contact Centre in taking a small volume of calls, the webteam to activate and deactivate the registration portal and a few days project management time to ensure the process runs smoothly. Staff who meet customers face to face should promote the scheme in existing contacts with customers

1.8 Conclusions

- 1.8.1 The Big Maidstone Switch enables households who would not compare the market to discover whether they can save money by switching their energy provider or tariff. Take up has been low so far, but we have advice on how to improve it and reactivation is simple. The scheme does not require much money or time to run.

1.9 Relevant Documents

1.9.1 Appendices

- 1.9.2 Appendix 1 shows the location of registrants in the winter 2013-2014 scheme

- 1.9.3 Appendix2 shows the location of registrants who switched their supplier with the winter 2013-2014 scheme.

1.9.4 Background Documents

- 1.9.5 Appendix 3 The original Collective Switching of Energy Suppliers Service for Households sent to Cabinet Member on 29/08/13

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

THIS BOX MUST BE COMPLETED

Yes

☒

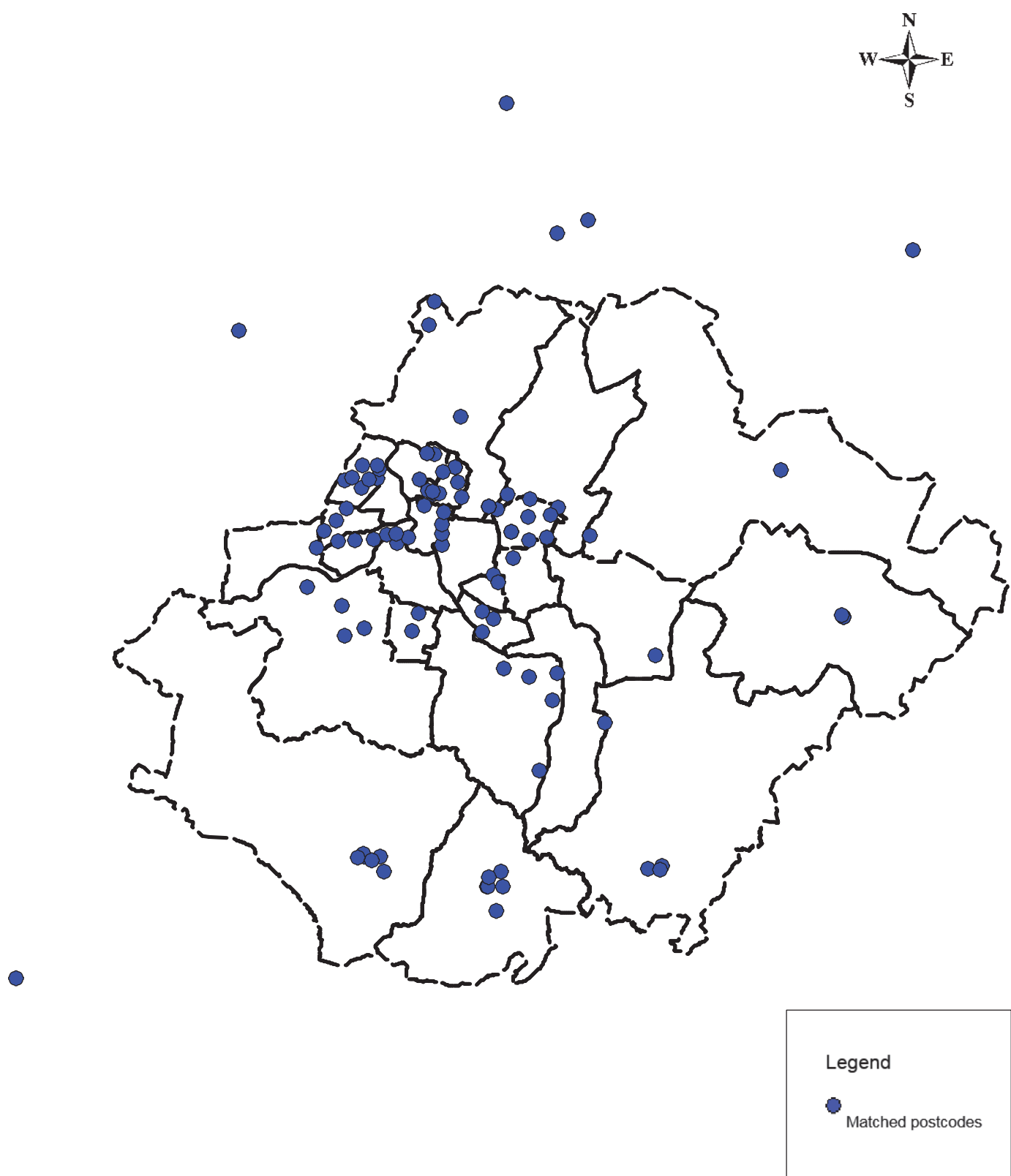
No

☐

If yes, this is a Key Decision because: it impacts on more than one ward

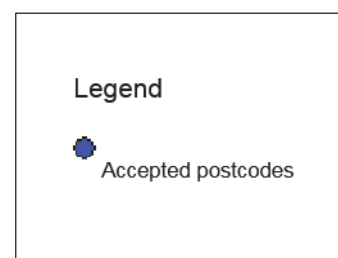
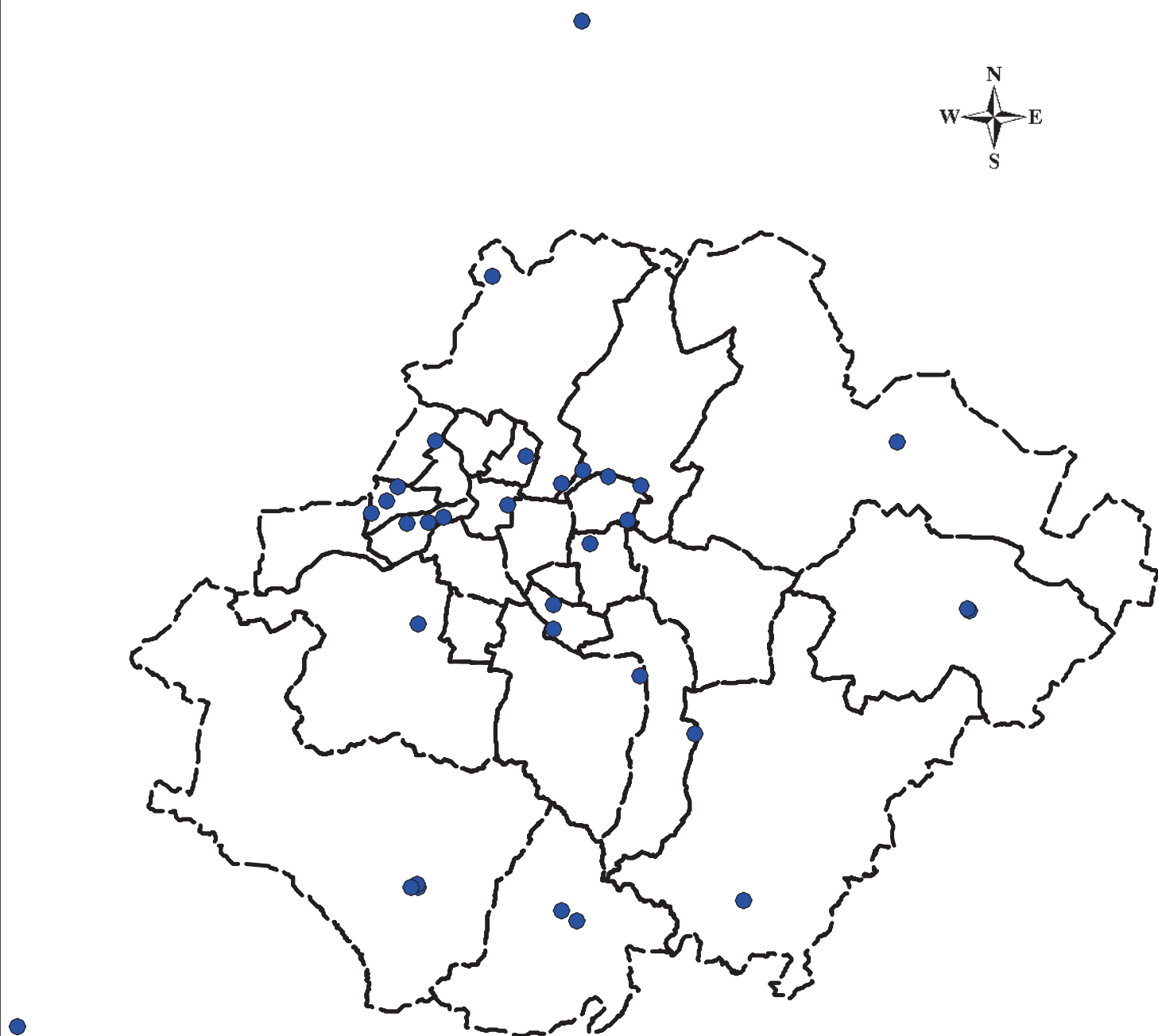
Wards/Parishes affected: All

Appendix 1 Map showing location of registrants.



0 5
miles
Scale: 1:180,200

Appendix 2 Map showing location of those who switched.



Scale: 1:170,200

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Ordnance Survey 100019636

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND LEISURE SERVICES

REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Report prepared by Helen Miller

Date Issued: 29/08/13

1. COLLECTIVE SWITCHING OF ENERGY SUPPLIER SERVICE FOR HOUSEHOLDERS

1.1 Key Issue for Decision

- 1.1.1 To consider whether the Council will promote a collective switching scheme, provided by a third party, for householders to seek a competitive price for their electricity and/or gas supply.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Housing and Community Services

- 1.2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services agrees the Council enters into an agreement with a collective switching provider and promotes collective switching to households in all tenures across the borough.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 1.3.1 The majority of householders do not switch their electricity and /or gas provider or tariff. According to Ofgem, only 15% of households switched gas supplier and 17% switched electricity supplier in 2011. Ofgem also assert that the number of households switching is declining over time.
- 1.3.2 The government recognises that fuel bills have continued to increase in the last decade and have increased 30% on average over the last 5 years. As fuel bills have increased the number of households struggling to pay fuel bills has increased.
- 1.3.3 The government's new definition of fuel poverty covers those living on a lower income in a home that cannot be kept warm at a reasonable cost. Although the level of fuel poverty in Maidstone is lower than the national average it remains a significant problem.
- 1.3.4 Households that have never switched energy providers are most likely to gain a lower price from switching. These households are unlikely to compare the market without support. Collective switching provides a

- no cost, no hassle, and no obligation way to compare the market and potentially get cheaper fuel bills.
- 1.3.5 The scheme would be open to all tenure types and all payment types including prepayment meters and a Green Electricity tariff option will be available. Other Councils in Kent found take up of the service was high among those households that included a person over 60 as part of the household.
- 1.3.6 In summary, the collective switching process is where the Council would market the service, householders would register online or phone or visit the Council for help with paper registration. The switching provider then holds a reverse auction to seek the lowest price and contacts each registered household in writing to explain the offer including showing whether it would save them money and how much money it would save. The householder would decide whether to switch and no pressure is exerted to influence their decision. The switching provider would support the switching process and provide a troubleshooting service. Savings range from nothing up to £200 per year with the latest schemes averaging around £90 per year.
- 1.3.7 It remains the householder's decision whether to switch provider and/or tariff, and there is no requirement to take part following the receipt of an offer to switch.
- 1.3.8 It is anticipated that the first registration period will be in January and February 2014 and then repeated every six months.
- 1.3.9 The communications plan indicates that the communications costs associated with the scheme will be approximately £250.00. The Council will receive a small referral fee for each household that switches their gas or electricity tariff. It is anticipated that project will be cost neutral for the Council. The planning and liaison work will be carried out by the Home Energy Efficiency Project Officer as their role was created to support this and other energy efficiency related work.
- 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended
- 1.4.1 The Council does not promote a collective switching service. Without support to switch many households will not compare the energy market and some will continue to pay higher bills than necessary and may become fuel poor as a result.
- 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives
- 1.5.1 Accessing lower fuel bills will increase affordability and contribute to Maidstone being a decent place to live. In addition the scheme will contribute towards supporting disadvantaged residents because of

where they live and reducing the level of deprivation across the borough.

1.6 Risk Management

- 1.6.1 Maidstone Borough Council may suffer loss of reputation if a collective switching scheme associated with them is run poorly. A robust procurement process will ensure that an appropriate service provider is chosen which will mitigate this risk.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

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

- 1.7.2 Financial. Service providers receive a referral fee for each fuel a household chooses to switch and a small portion of this fee is given to the Council for marketing the service. The level of contribution will be determined through the procurement process and will offset costs identified in the communications plan.

- 1.7.3 Staffing. Staff time will come from within existing resources and relate to officer time in procurement, communications, partnership working and the contact centre.

- 1.7.4 Legal. Following procurement advice a legal contract will be entered into to protect the interests of the Council and the members of the public.

- 1.7.5 Equality Impact Needs Assessment – attached at Appendix A

1.7.6 Procurement. The service provider will be chosen through a robust procurement process set against an outcome-based service specification.

1.7.7 Appendices

Appendix A - Equality Impact Needs Assessment

1.7.8 Background Documents None

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

X

No

If yes, this is a Key Decision because: Collective Switching would be a borough wide service impacting on the residents of 1 or more wards

Wards/Parishes affected: All

How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

Cllr John A Wilson

Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services

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Housing Services Manager

Telephone: 01622 602103

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Maidstone Borough Council

Community, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 10 February 2015

Future Work Programme and SCRAIP Update

Report of: Tessa Mallett, Overview and Scrutiny Officer

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Committee are asked to consider the future work programme, attached at **Appendix A**, to ensure it is appropriate and covers all issues Members currently wish to consider within the Committee's remit.
- 1.2 The Committee are also asked to consider the List of Forthcoming Decisions relevant to this Committee attached as **Appendix B**.
- 1.3 The Committee are further asked to note the updates on the SCRAIP report attached as **Appendix C**.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee considers and notes the future work programme, attached at **Appendix A**, and the update provided in section 7.1 (below).
- 2.2 That the Committee considers the List of Forthcoming Decisions, relevant to the Committee at **Appendix B**, and discuss whether any of these items require further investigation or monitoring.
- 2.3 That the Committee notes the updates on the SCRAIP report attached as **Appendix C**.
- 2.4 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 At the future work programme workshop on 17 June 2014 members agreed the topics they wanted programmed in for the 2014-15 Municipal Year. The topic suggestions were made by members of the public, Parish Councils, officers and local press.
- 3.2 Throughout the course of the municipal year the Committee is asked to put forward, and review, work programme suggestions.

- 3.3 The Committee's work programme is currently very full. Members are asked to consider the work programme to ensure it remains appropriate, realistic and covers issues Members currently wish to consider within the Committee's remit.
- 3.4 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?RPId=443&RD=0>

6. Scrutiny Committee Recommendation Action and Implementation Plan (SCRAIP) Responses

- 6.1 The issue of making, and monitoring, recommendations is an important part of the scrutiny process. SCRAIPs set out recommendations following scrutiny meetings/reviews and information is sought on the plan as to whether recommendations are accepted, the action to be taken and by who.
- 6.2 A SCRAIP update report for this Committee is attached as **Appendix C**. SCRAIPs highlighted in grey have been responded to in full. SCRAIPs in white are still waiting a response, a verbal update, where possible, for these will be provided at the meeting.

7 Future Work Programme Update

- 7.1 Following discussions with the Chairman and officers the following changes have been made to the committees Future Work Programme:
- 10 February 2015 – Maidstone Older Peoples' Forum – to tackle Loneliness and Isolation in the Over 65s of Maidstone

8. Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 The Committee will consider reports that deliver against the following priorities:
 - 'For Maidstone to have a growing economy' and 'For Maidstone to be a decent place to live'.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 To assist O&S committees in their inquiries, a small budget is available for the purchase of necessary equipment and to cover the costs of training, site visits, meetings in locations other than the Town Hall, witness expenses, specialist advice, books and any other cost that might be legitimately incurred by the committees in the course of their activities.

10. Relevant Documents

- 10.1 Appendix A – Future Work Programme
Appendix B – List of Forthcoming Decisions
Appendix C – SCRAIP update report

11. Background Documents

- 11.1 None

Community, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2014-15

Meeting date	Report deadline	Agenda topics	Details and desired outcomes	Report Author and witnesses
17 June 2014		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Election of Chair and Vice Chair Future Work Programme for 2014/15 and SCRAIP updates 		
15 July 2014		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet Member Priorities Review of Allocations Scheme Initial reports on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Inclusion update Troubled Families Project 		Cllrs Ring and Perry Neil Coles Ellie Kershaw
12 August 2014	30 July 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and Wellbeing Board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is it working for Maidstone? Adults and Older People Review – the way forward looking at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolation and Loneliness in Older People 		Interviews with Bob Bowes and Alison Broom
9 September 2014	27 August 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of the Empty Homes Plan (2013-15) Update on recommendations from Accessing Mental Health Before the Point of Crisis – including CAHMS 	Update Update on recommendations made by CLS&E OSC 2013-14	Neil Coles Sarah Shearsmith/Sarah Robson
14 October 2014	1 October 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting as the Crime & Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safer Maidstone Partnership update Street population Road safety update Night time economy – violent crime 	Update on work of SMP Future plans of SMP Witnesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Littlemore Alison Broom, Chair SMP Cl Simon Wilson, V Chair SMP Steve Horton, Kent Rd Safety Team Nick Sylvester, KFRS Insp Jody Gagan-Cook Sgt Tristan Stevens Will Myers, Street Outreach Kim Flain, CRI 	John Littlemore Sarah Robson Invite to go out to Ann Barnes PCC

11 November 2014	29 October 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Loneliness and Isolation in the Over 65s of Maidstone borough 	Interview witnesses to establish where gaps are, what can be provided and make recommendations.	Jo Tonkin, Kent Public Health Louise Hudson, Public Health Sarah Shearsmith/Sarah Robson Janet Greenroyd Community Wardens Paul Coles AgeUK
9 December 2014	26 Nov 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maternity Services in the Borough – are they working? Review of Street Cleansing Update report – Families Matter and Financial Inclusion – report only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview witnesses to review Maternity services in the borough since the move of the service to Pembury Hospital 	Ask Bob Bowes to attend Jennifer Shepherd Ellie Kershaw
13 January 2015		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual refresh of the Health Inequalities Action Plan Report on a proposed model to identify where the greatest number of lonely and isolated over 65 years olds resided in the borough of Maidstone. Bereavement Services in Maidstone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committee to see refresh of action plan and then decide if they want to look at a specific part in more detail Requested by committee to help gather data for the review on loneliness and isolation in the over 65s 	Sarah Robson Sarah Robson
10 February 2015		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MBC Affordable Housing Development programme Update on the second Collective Switching Campaign Maidstone Older Peoples Forum to address L&I 		Andrew Connors Ellie Kershaw
10 March 2015		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting as the Crime & Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Strategic Assessment and rolling plan Community Safety Plan (statutory document) Strategic Assessment for Community Safety 	Sarah Robson John Littlemore
14 April 2015		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private Rented Sector Update report Review of MKIP Shared Environmental Health Service Housing Strategy Review Draft report on Loneliness and Isolation in the Over 65 Age Group of the Maidstone Borough Impact of the Welfare Reforms – initial report Update report – Families Matter and Financial Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rescheduled from September and December How is it performing one year on? 	John Littlemore John Littlemore/Cllr Ring Steve McGinnis Ellie Kershaw

Future Items – with dates to be confirmed

- Young Carers



44 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" –

Forthcoming Decisions
February 2015 - May 2015

- 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
-
- 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.

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 committeeservices@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) 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) 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.

Forthcoming Decisions
February 2015 - May 2015

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)
Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing Due Date: Friday 16 Jan 2015	Assessment of waste and recycling services The outcome of an assessment of the service against the requirements of the Waste Regulations 2011		Gary Stevenson gary.stevenson@midkent.gov.uk	Public	Assessment of waste and recycling services
Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services Due Date: Friday 30 Jan 2015	Maidstone Play Strategy - A Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Areas 2014-2024 To consider the adoption of the Maidstone Play Strategy – A Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Areas 2014-2024 and the actions within the document	KEY Reason: Expenditure > £250,000	Jason Taylor, Parks and Leisure Manager jason.taylor@maidstone.gov.uk	Public	Maidstone Play Strategy - A Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Areas 2014-2024

Forthcoming Decisions
February 2015 - May 2015

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)
Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing Due Date: Friday 30 Jan 2015 49	ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014 - NEW ANTI-SOCIAL To provide Members with an overview of the important new measures for tackling anti-social behaviour contained within the Anti-Social Behaviour and Police Act 2014 (the Act). The local plans for its implementation and for Members to consider the implications for the Council, as a 'relevant body', for the purposes of the Act.	KEY Reason: Affects more than 1 ward	Martyn Jeynes martynjeynes@maidstone.gov.uk	Public	ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014 - NEW ANTI-SOCIAL

Forthcoming Decisions
February 2015 - May 2015

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)
Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing Due Date: Friday 30 Jan 2015	Cabinet Report Provision of fencing at Stilebridge and Water Lane sites Provision of fencing at the Borough Council owned Stilebridge and Water Lane Gypsy and Traveller sites, Maidstone		Sarah Robson sarahrobson@maids-tone.gov.uk	Public	Cabinet Report Provision of fencing at Stilebridge and Water Lane sites

SCRAIP Report from 9 December 2014 - Community, Environment and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Meeting, Date & Minute	Recommendation	Executive Decision Maker	Action Expected Outcome	Response	Lead Officer
CEH.141209.57.1	The Waste and Street Scene Manager bring an update report on the new street cleansing service to the appropriate committee in September 2015 once the service has been running for a few months.	Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing		A report will be provided to the appropriate committee in September 2015 to provide an update regarding the implementation of changes to the street cleansing service.	Jennifer Shepherd
CEH.141209.57.2	The Waste and Street Scene Manager make available to all members the street cleansing schedule for their area once they have been finalised in consultation with the workforce.	Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing		The revised schedules will be made available to all Members once the review has been implemented. This is expected to be in May / June 2015 once all changes have been fully implemented and reviewed.	Jennifer Shepherd
CEH.141209.60.1	The Head of Housing and Community Services prioritises the cost/benefit analysis of the night time economy so that it is available for the next Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 10 March 2015.	Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services		I would suggest this item is reallocated to Economic Development, unless it is to look at the negative impact and costs associated with the NTE.	John Littlemore; Sarah Robson