

Maidstone Borough Council**Strategic Plan 2015-2020 – Refresh without Artwork****NEW**

Foreword from the Leader (2015-16), Councillor Fran Wilson

Over the next five years Maidstone Borough Council faces an exceptionally challenging future as our funding from central government for the provision of local services is removed. Increasingly we have to rely on self-generated income and on our own tax base. Despite this we are confident we can produce a solid medium term financial strategy and continue to deliver the first class services which residents value.

Devolution is now high on Central Governments Agenda. It is vital that we put time and effort into determining what this will mean for the people of this Borough and, working with the County council and other district colleagues, into shaping the future for Kent.

At the heart of the borough is our county town. Emphasis will be placed on regeneration and transportation projects to underpin a vibrant economy and enhance its appeal to both residents and visitors.

The gap between income and house prices continues to grow. This, allied to an acute shortage of affordable housing, has made it increasingly difficult to get a foot on the housing ladder and has seen homelessness rise at an alarming rate. A key priority is to provide decent and affordable homes for our growing population.

Despite these challenges we are determined to remain ambitious in our aspirations for the Borough and its people and to emphasise its unique heritage, cultural and natural assets

Single Page with Vision Mission and Values Diagram

Providing a Clean and Safe Environment

Over the past 5 years, Maidstone Borough Council has demonstrated its commitment to deliver cost effective and sustainable waste and recycling services, as a result our recycling rate has improved significantly. Maidstone does not experience high levels of crime. We have with our Community Safety Partnership agreed that reducing anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, reoffending and improving road safety are our priorities up until 2018. During the first year of the Strategic Plan the Council has introduced a street cleansing service designed to meet the current and future needs of the Borough

We mean:

- People feel safe in the Borough and they live in a clean environment of high quality

We will:

- Work with our partners to improve all areas of the public realm
- Deliver the waste and recycling strategy
- Deliver an efficient and effective street cleansing service
- Deliver the Community Safety strategy
- Deliver the Air Quality Strategy working with partners

Measured by:

- Resident satisfaction
- British crime survey
- Environmental quality indicators
- Recycling
- Reduction in residual waste
- Estimated levels of CO2 Emissions (per head of population)

Encouraging Good Health and Wellbeing

Deprivation in the borough is lower than average, however 14.15% (4,100,295,300) of children (under 16 years old) in Maidstone live in poverty. There is a larger difference in life expectancy of men and women; women are expected to live 3 years longer than men and there is a 13 year gap between the ward with the highest life expectancy and the one with the lowest life expectancy. 7 years lower for men and 2.54 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Maidstone than in the least deprived.

We mean:

- Addressing the social determinants of health through our role in services like Housing, Environmental Health and Community Development and our provider role in terms of leisure activities
- Improved health outcomes for residents, reduced health inequality

We will:

- Deliver our housing strategy
- Deliver our health inequalities action plan
- Work with businesses to promote health and wellbeing

Measured by:

- Health Indicators
- Number of private sector homes improved
- Disabled Facilities Grants
- Homelessness Prevention

Respecting the Character and Heritage of our Borough

Maidstone is the county town of Kent. In terms of its geography it is largely rural and the countryside offers high quality landscape and biodiversity. Approximately 50% of the borough population lives in a parished area. We are focused on achieving economic prosperity, whilst at the same time balancing protecting the environment and landscape that makes the borough of Maidstone a great place to live, work in and visit.

We mean:

- Thriving and rResilient uUrban and rRural cCommunities
- Listening to our communities
- Respecting our hHeritage and nNatural eEnvironment
- Devolving services where we can and working with Kent County Council to do the same

We will:

- Deliver and honour our parish charter
- Deliver the communication and engagement action plan
- Work with our Parishes and Communities on the design of their communities

Measured by:

- Resident survey
- Parish survey

Ensuring there are good Leisure and Cultural Attractions

There is always something to see or do in Maidstone with the river, two museums and a theatre in the town centre, four green flag parks, a well-used leisure centre, a castle, various markets and a variety of festivals and events held across the Borough and throughout the year.

We mean:

- Maidstone has leisure and cultural offers which attract visitors and meet the needs of our residents

We will:

- Adopt and deliver a Destination Management Plan with a shared statement of intent to manage, develop and promote our borough
- Deliver the festival and events strategy
- Maximise the benefits of our leisure and cultural assets through our commercialisation approach to maintain key services

Measured by:

- Customer satisfaction with our leisure and cultural attractions
- Visitor economy indicators

Enhancing the Appeal of the Town Centre for Everyone

Maidstone has had an historically thriving town centre, however we need to ensure that we keep pace with the changing economic environment and continue to meet the demands of businesses and consumers. Investment in Maidstone town centre is needed if it is to continue to be a popular place for leisure, to live, shop and work.

We mean:

- Ensuring we have a thriving and attractive town centre that is fit for the future

We will:

- Be proactive in delivering a vision for the town centre through working with partners, businesses and regenerating areas ourselves.

Measured by:

- % of vacant retail units
- Conversion of office space to residential,
- How Maidstone is rated as a retail destination
- Resident satisfaction

Securing Improvements to the Transport Infrastructure for our Borough

Maidstone is strategically situated between London and the channel ports and is serviced by two motorway networks, the M20 and M2, with rail connections to central London. With regard to travelling in and around the Borough by car, congestion is an issue particularly at peak time in the town centre. The bus transport network serving Maidstone town is relatively strong whilst rural transport presents distinct challenges.

We mean:

- A transport network that meets the needs of residents and businesses

We will:

- Deliver an **I**ntegrated **T**ransport **S**trategy and work with our partners to seek improvements to the transport infrastructure

Measured by:

- Measures from Integrated Transport Strategy
- Resident Survey

Promoting a range of employment skills and opportunities across the Borough

There were ~~83,100~~~~76,300~~~~68,300~~ people employed in the Maidstone economy in 2014/15 with a high proportion in the public sector, reflecting the town's status as Kent's County Town and administrative capital. There were 6, ~~760~~~~735~~ registered businesses in Maidstone in ~~2012~~~~2015~~, equivalent to 4~~23~~ businesses per 1,000 population, compared to 39 for England and an above average rate of self-employment.

We mean:

- Meeting the skills and employment needs of our residents, not becoming a dormitory borough and supporting and attracting businesses

We will:

- ~~Deliver our~~~~Adopt a~~ Economic Development Strategy ~~and Deliver~~ with Partners.
- Work with businesses and support them to grow and develop
- ~~Build on the success of~~~~Support the principle~~ of ~~the~~an enterprise hub
- Work with our partners to support those not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Measured by:

- % of our residents that are NEET
- Net change in jobs
- % of Job Seekers Allowance claimants
- Business Start-ups versus failures

Planning for Sufficient Homes to meet our Borough's Needs

Over the last five years, the supply of new affordable housing within the borough has been greater than in neighbouring authorities, although still less than historic levels. ~~163~~~~189~~ new affordable homes were built in the borough in ~~2014/15~~~~2013/14~~. ~~In total 630 new homes were delivered in 2012/13, of these new homes over 80% were built on land that had previously been developed.~~

We mean:

- Having enough homes to meet our residents needs with sufficient homes across a range of tenures

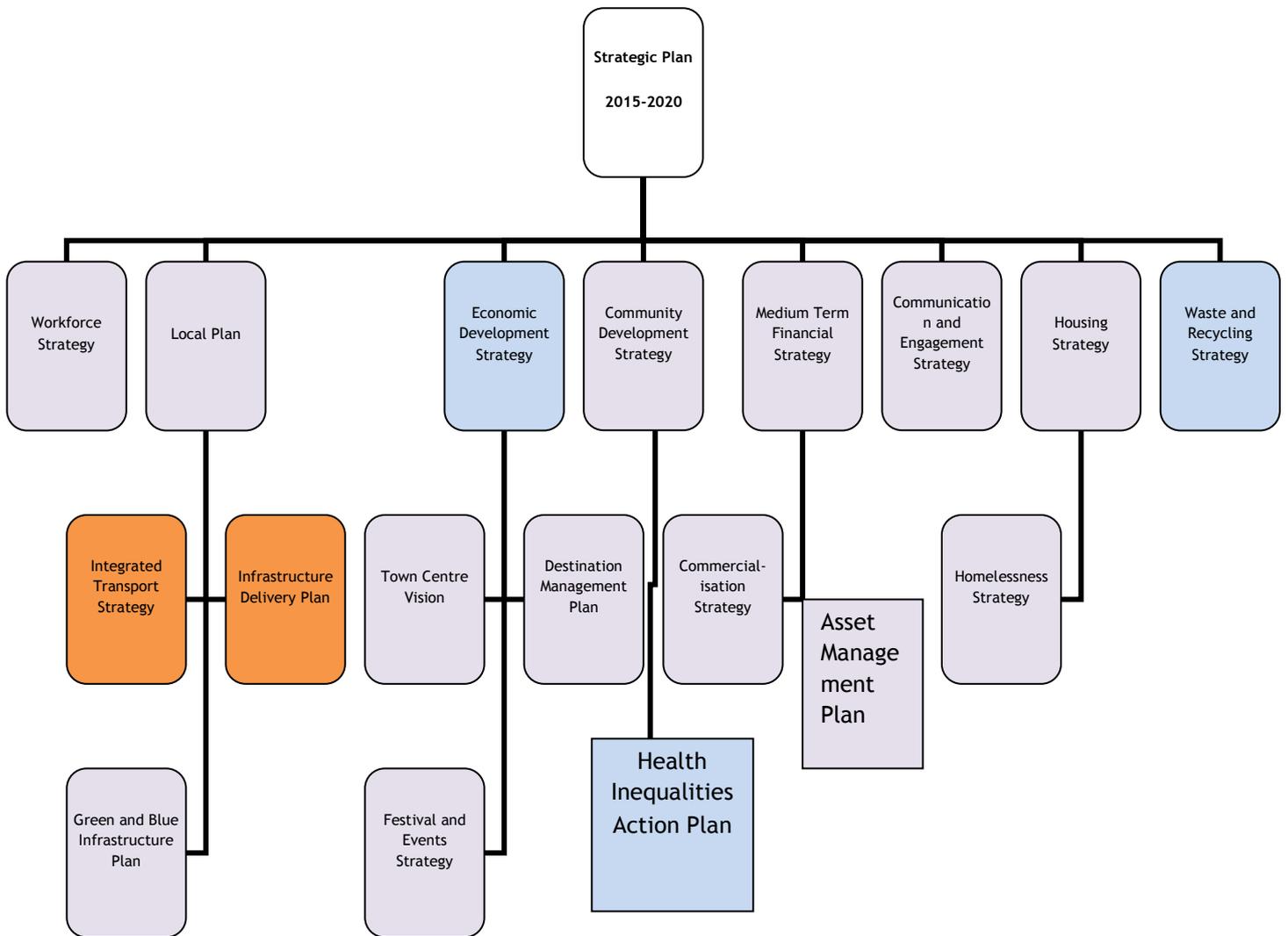
We will:

- Adopt a local plan
- Deliver the Housing Strategy

Measured by:

- Net Additional Homes
- % of additional homes that are affordable

How it all fits together - Our Strategies and Plans



Priority 1 Keeping Maidstone an attractive place for all

Priority 2 Securing a successful economy

Supports both priorities