

**Housing Strategy 2016-2020**

**Priorities, Outcomes and Actions – April 2017 Update**

**Priority 1: Enable and support the delivery of quality homes across the housing market to develop sustainable communities**

**Outcomes – What we plan to achieve**

- a)** Enable the delivery of homes as identified in the emerging Local Plan; and has an appropriate policy framework in place that delivers an appropriate mix, tenure and range of housing to meet identified need.
- b)** Deliver a mix of homes of different types, tenure and size, via direct provision and in partnership with private developers, housing associations and other key partners, which meet the needs of the local population.
- c)** Deliver new affordable homes that are designed to a high standard, energy efficient, accessible and respond to people’s changing needs.
- d)** Maximise housing investment opportunities by seeking innovative funding and delivery options to support housing delivery within Maidstone.

**Actions – What we will do in order to achieve the stated outcomes**

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>What we plan to do</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1b	Create a Local Housing Company to build/acquire new affordable and private homes to meet the commercial and	MBC Housing & Enabling Team, MBC Property and Procurement, MBC Legal & Finance Consultants, Housing Developers, MBC Planning,	April 2018	Maidstone Property Holdings has now been created.

	housing objectives of the Council.	Landowners, Homes & Communities Agency		
1a/b/c/d	Ensure the emerging Local Plan provides an appropriate policy framework for affordable housing, including the production of an Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	MBC Housing & Enabling Team, MBC Spatial Planning Policy, Housing Developers, Registered Providers, Homes & Communities Agency	April 2017	<p>The Local Plan has almost completed its examination stage. The Council is now consulting on proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan and, following his consideration of the representations received, the Local Plan Inspector will issue his final report. There are main modifications proposed to the policies relating to affordable housing, namely:</p> <p>DM (11) – Housing Mix; DM (13) Affordable Housing; DM (14) – Local Needs Housing. Policy DM11 includes an additional cross reference to Neighbourhood Plans. Policy DM13 includes the addition of new text referencing vacant building credit; and a policy amendment to increase the threshold at which affordable housing will be sought: 11 units or more or which have a</p>

				<p>combined floor space of greater than 1,000m<sup>2</sup> (gross internal area). Policy DM14 includes amendments to the text and policy, to clarify that 'local needs housing' is affordable local needs housing on rural exception sites located outside of the Borough's settlement boundaries.</p> <p>The Spatial Policy Team in conjunction with the Housing Service will be working on the production of the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) during the course of the next year.</p>
1a/b/c	Promote home ownership products e.g. Help to Buy, Starter Homes, and Shared Ownership in Maidstone.	MBC Housing & Enabling Team, Landowners, Housing Developers, MBC Planning	Review annually	<p>Home ownership products are promoted via the planning process in accordance with the Council's Affordable Housing tenure policy requirements.</p> <p>Advice, assistance and support is given to existing homeowners and first-time buyers who wish to apply for Help to Buy products in the Maidstone Borough.</p>

				<p>124 new shared ownership units were completed and made available for applicants during 2016 / 2017.</p> <p>Marketing and promotion events for home ownership schemes in Maidstone continue to be supported working in partnership with bpha, the local Help to Buy Agent.</p>
1a/b/c	<p>Establish a register to gather evidence of demand for self and custom build within Maidstone and work with planning to identify serviced plots of land to meet this demand.</p>	<p>MBC Housing &amp; Enabling Team, Landowners, Housing Developers, MBC Planning</p>	<p>May 2016</p>	<p>A Local Self Build Register was established in May 2016 at the following web-link (<a href="http://localselfbuildregister.co.uk/localauthorities/maidstone-borough-council/">http://localselfbuildregister.co.uk/localauthorities/maidstone-borough-council/</a>).</p> <p>Demand for self-custom build plots in Maidstone is being monitored via the register in order to identify serviced plots of land to meet this demand.</p> <p>There are currently 142 applicants who have registered an interest in self and custom build plots within Maidstone. There have been no self-build</p>

				plots implemented so far.
1b	Monitor and respond to the changing social housing market, including: Impact of the 1% annual reduction in social rents over the next 4 years; Impact of the affordable rent regime on affordability; Impact of the Allocation Scheme to ensure social housing is being allocated effectively and fairly.	MBC Housing & Enabling Team, Housing Developers, Registered Providers, Homes & Communities Agency, MBC Benefits	Review annually	<p>The impact of the 1% annual reduction in social rents over the next four years continues to be monitored. Particularly in the delivery of new-build affordable housing and the ability to deliver affordable rented dwellings in accordance with policy.</p> <p>The allocation scheme is continually reviewed to ensure that social housing is allocated fairly. The scheme was last reviewed in August 2016 and is due for a further update when the Temporary Accommodation Strategy is reviewed in December 2017 and to conform with the Homelessness Reduction Act.</p>
1a/b	Enable the delivery of new affordable housing, particularly 1 and 2 bedroom homes to meet the identified need.	MBC Housing & Enabling Team, MBC Planning, Housing Developers, Registered Providers	Review annually	A total of 303 affordable homes have been completed for the financial year 2016/17, exceeding the annual target (150) by 153 affordable homes. 65% of these new completions

				<p>were for affordable rent.</p> <p>Delivery against affordable completions has been strong due to good progress made on several key strategic sites in the Borough. Of these 303 affordable completions, a total of 208 are 1 &amp; 2-bed accommodation.</p>
1d	<p>Explore opportunities for funding investment with a range of partners including the Local Enterprise Partnership, Homes &amp; Communities Agency, institutional investors that will contribute towards the delivery of housing across the market.</p>	<p>MBC Housing &amp; Enabling Team, Landowners, Housing Developers, Registered Providers, Homes &amp; Communities Agency, DCLG, LGA, LEP</p>	<p>Review annually</p>	<p>Discussions have taken place with the Homes and Communities Agency regarding the various funding streams available to support the delivery of housing. This includes Starter Homes and Housing Infrastructure as well as loan funding for local authorities.</p> <p>Further details regarding the various options and funding mechanisms are to be provided.</p> <p>The Council will pursue appropriate investment opportunities help fund council led schemes within Maidstone.</p>
1b/c	<p>Consider on a site by site basis joint venture and</p>	<p>MBC Housing &amp; Enabling Team, MBC Property and</p>	<p>Review</p>	<p>The Council are exploring various</p>

	partnership models to share expertise, income, resources and risk.	Procurement, MBC Legal, Registered Providers, Housing Developers, Landowners, External Contractors / Consultants, Kent Housing Group, DCLG, LEP, KCC	annually	<p>joint venture and partnership models at present to help with housing delivery, by sharing expertise, income, resources and risk.</p> <p>This includes exploring package deals with developers; signing up to various frameworks to access contractors, consultants to help deliver projects and bringing RP partners on board to deliver affordable housing on council led developments.</p>
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1a/b	Work with planning, the local and Gypsy Traveller and travelling communities to identify potential housing sites to meet identified need.	MBC Housing & Enabling Team, MBC Planning, Gypsy and Traveller Community, Parish Councils, Kent County Council	Review annually	<p>A meeting was arranged with colleagues in Spatial Policy and Development Control to discuss the continued merits of bringing forward a Public Gypsy site.</p> <p>It was concluded that the Council has only very limited, specific evidence of a need for an additional public Gypsy and Traveller site upon which a case for funding/delivery could be based. It is therefore no longer</p>
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				being pursued as a project
1b/c	Bring forward Brunswick Street car park to deliver a quality housing scheme to meet housing and commercial objectives	MBC Housing & Enabling Team, MBC Property and Procurement, MBC Legal, MBC Planning, Housing Developers, External contractors/consultants, Registered Providers, Landowners.	September 2018	<p>The Council have appointed Employers Agents (Martin Arnold) and Architects (Calford Seaden) to assist in the delivery of this site. Pre-application advice and consultation has been undertaken on latest scheme design proposals with a view to submitting a planning application. The Legal team are currently working on the purchase of the Jubilee Church and Pipers sites at the Upper Stone Street end of the car park. Current programme aims for start on site date by January 2018.</p> <p>Progress is also being made on potential further development sites in Union Street and King Street.</p>
1a/b/c	Continue to support Parish Councils in delivering local needs housing where this has been proven necessary.	MBC Housing & Enabling Team, Parish Councils, MBC Spatial Planning Policy, Action for Communities in Rural Kent	Review annually	MBC continue to work in partnership with Parish Councils and Action with Communities in Rural Kent in assessing the local needs for affordable housing by providing funding for local



				<p>housing need surveys.</p> <p>Recent local housing needs surveys have been carried out in Staplehurst, Lenham and Sutton Valance.</p>
1a/b/c/d	<p>Contribute to the Local Government Associations Housing Commission on exploring new routes to housebuilding and seek good practice for delivery in Maidstone.</p>	<p>MBC Housing &amp; Enabling Team, Housing Developers, MBC Planning, Landowners, Registered Providers, KCC, LGA</p>	<p>September 2016</p>	<p>The preliminary findings from the commission were published at the LGA Annual Conference in July 2016.</p> <p>The final report published in December 2016 set out further detail and key asks in advance of the Housing White Paper.</p> <p>The Housing White Paper has subsequently been published in February 2017, of which the Council provided comments on.</p> <p>The Council will continue to monitor ideas with the sector, exploring new routes into housebuilding and capturing good practice to meet housing need within Maidstone.</p>
1a/b/c	<p>Promote the development of good quality homes that are energy efficient, meet the minimum</p>	<p>MBC Housing &amp; Enabling Team, Housing Developers, MBC Planning, Registered Providers</p>	<p>Review annually.</p>	<p>Developers are being encouraged to produce homes that are energy efficient and meet the minimum guideline space</p>

	guideline space standards and embrace the concept of Lifetime Homes			standards via the planning process. The Council's new standard precedent s106 agreement, contains clauses which state that affordable dwellings will be built in accordance with Part M4(2) Category 2: Accessible and adaptable dwellings and Part M4(3) Category 2: Wheelchair user dwellings of the Building Regulations.
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**Priority 2: Ensure that existing housing in the Maidstone Borough is safe, desirable and promotes good health and wellbeing**

**Outcomes – What we plan to achieve**

- a) To raise housing quality and standards across all tenures and improve the condition of existing homes to maximise health and wellbeing outcomes for all.
- b) To improve health outcomes for residents by reducing health inequality to ensure a healthy standard of living for all.
- c) Promote ways for residents to improve their health and wellbeing by tackling fuel poverty, energy efficiency advice and managing domestic bills.
- d) Bring empty homes back into use in order to increase the housing options available for local residents.

Actions – What we will do in order to achieve the stated outcomes

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>What we plan to do</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Comments</b>
2a	Improve the condition and supply of accommodation within the private rental sector by engaging with landlords to support good management and take appropriate enforcement action where necessary.	National Landlords Association, Maidstone Landlords Forum, Landlords, Homeowners, MBC Housing & Health Team	Review annually	<p>The Housing and Health Team continue to deliver their statutory role in the enforcement of housing standards in the borough.</p> <p>The team continue to support the biannual Landlord forum run by the NLA in the promotion of standards and legislation.</p> <p>In 2016/17 the team delivered 133 improvements to properties across the private rental market throughout the borough.</p>

2a/b/c	Assist with delivery of the Health Inequalities Action Plan	Maidstone Health and Well-Being Group, MBC, KCC Children's Centres, West Kent NHS Trust – Midwives and Health visitors, West Kent CCG – Commissioners and GPs KCHT Registered Providers, Schools, Age UK, Youth Providers.	Review annually	The Health Inequalities Action Plan from 2014 was reviewed and refreshed and approved at the end of 2016 by the CHE Committee.  Discussions are ongoing with members of the Maidstone Health and Wellbeing Group to determine how best to deliver the Action Plan.
2a	Review key strategic documents to ensure they remain relevant to today's market, including: The Council's Tenancy Strategy; Council's Housing Assistance Policy; The Council's Housing Standards Enforcement Policy.	MBC Planning, MBC Housing, Registered Providers, Housing Developers, Private Landlords	September 2016 April 2016 March 2017	The Housing standards enforcement policy and Housing Assistance Policy was revised and approved by the Council in October 2016
2a/b/c	Address the needs of the ageing population, in particular the 85+ age group, including support needs such as adapting properties, provision of care in the home, providing specialist	MBC Housing & Inclusion team, MBC Housing & Health team, MBC Housing & Enabling Team, Private Landlords, Registered Providers, KCC	Review annually	The Housing & Health team continue to administer disabled facility grants across all tenures and all age groups.  Through the settlement of the Better Care Fund the Council

	accommodation and care/nursing home provision.			assist in the funding of other essential equipment installations identified by County Social Services required by vulnerable residents.
2a	Promote the review of the Disabled Facilities Grant to provide an efficient service that assists disabled residents to remain in their home.	KCC, MBC Housing and Health Team, Registered Providers, Private Sector Landlords, Homeowners	Review annually	In 2016 Kent Housing Group initiated a County wide review of best practice and delivery of Disabled Facilities Grant.  The project is due to report its findings to Kent Joint Chief Executives' Meeting later in 2017
2b/c	Initiate projects such as the Roseholme Healthy Homes Pilot, which will improve the health and well-being of residents within the Borough.	MBC Housing & Inclusion Team, MBC Housing & Health Team, Maidstone Health and well-being group, KCC, External businesses, Voluntary groups	March 2017	Resources for the Housing & Health team are diverted in part to assist in the support of work to reduce the number of people in homeless temporary accommodation.  The Housing and Health Team are progressing a project to work in partnership with Maidstone Hospital to provide assistance to Maidstone residents who are medically fit to be discharged from hospital but require additional support through minor

				<p>adaptations or equipment loan.</p> <p>The project aims to: Enable Maidstone residents to remain in their homes living safe and independent lives ; Improve patient mental health and wellbeing; Reduction in hospital re-admissions; Reduce demand for residential care placements; Reduce 'bed blocking'</p>
2b	<p>Work with NHS Health trainers to support residents to achieve healthier lifestyle choices with issues such as Healthy eating, quitting smoking, exercise and emotional well-being.</p>	<p>Kent Community Health (NHS Health Trainers), MBC Housing &amp; Health Team , GP's, Registered Providers, CAB</p>	<p>Review annually</p>	<p>Referrals are made from MBC Healthy Living Programmes to the Health Trainer service.</p> <p>Front line staff have attended the Making Every Contact Count Training.</p> <p>There has also been a new Health Improvement Referral form produced along with other district and borough councils in the West Kent CCG area which includes Housing Services. This means GPs can refer directly into Housing Services should their patient have a condition related to their Housing.</p>

2a/d	Work with owners of long term empty properties to bring them back in to use	National Landlords Association, Maidstone Landlords Forum, Landlords, Homeowners, MBC Housing & Health Team	14 every quarter. Review annually.	<p>The Housing and Health team continue to apply pressure on the owners of empty properties and in the past twelve months assisted in reducing the number of empty properties by 61.</p> <p>The combined Committee Chair and Vice-Chair workshop determined that empty homes are not a priority area, as Maidstone is below the national and regional average.</p>
2c	Promoting and delivering the affordable warmth strategy	MBC Housing & Health Team, Registered Providers, Home Owners, Landlords, Landlords Forum	Review annually	<p>The team continue to promote the Kent &amp; Medway Warm Homes call centre and service The Warm Homes scheme is a partnership project between Kent County Council and district councils to support residents in Kent and Medway to save energy in their home.</p> <p>The Council administer the winter warmth grant scheme on behalf of KCC Public Health for residents suffering poor health.</p> <p>The Housing &amp; Health team will work to promote changes brought about by The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented</p>

				Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 and the introduction of tougher energy efficiency standards of the least energy efficient properties from 1st April 2018
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**Priority 3: Prevent Homelessness, Secure Provision of Appropriate Accommodation for Homeless Households and Supporting Vulnerable People**

**Outcomes – What we plan to achieve**

- a) Prevent and relieve homelessness amongst local residents who are at risk of homelessness by offering timely, expert advice that helps to prevent their homelessness.
  
- b) Increase the availability of suitable accommodation for homeless households via direct provision and the use of the private rented sector, to reduce temporary accommodation costs, length of stay and reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation.
  
- c) Support independent living and reduce risk of repeat homelessness for vulnerable residents by offering a range of housing options, advice and support to maintain or improve their health and well-being.

Actions – What we will do in order to achieve the stated outcomes

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>What we plan to do</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Comments</b>
3a/b/c	Deliver our existing Homelessness Strategy Action Plan	MBC Housing & Inclusion team, MBC Housing & Enabling Team, Private Landlords, Registered Providers, Voluntary Groups, CAB, KCC Social Services, Schools, Supported Housing Providers	By March 2020	All action points on the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan are currently being delivered or are planned to do so during the next 12 months.
3b	To expand on the success of Aylesbury House by investing in the acquisition/purchase of additional temporary accommodation within	MBC Housing & Inclusion team, MBC Housing & Enabling Team, Homes & Communities Agency, DCLG, Land owners, Property owners, Private institutional	December 2016	The Council have acquired a further 23 units for temporary accommodation (Square Hill, 1A Queen Anne Road, Marsham Street, Star House).

	Maidstone to house homeless and vulnerable households.	investors, Agents		<p>A report regarding the Council's Temporary Accommodation Strategy was presented to the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee on the 13 December 2016, which set out the requirement for a range of temporary accommodation, including a small portfolio of 13 additional units to be bought and retained by the Council.</p> <p>The Council have since procured the services of an Employers Agent in February 2017 (Faithorn Farrell Timms) to assist in the delivery of a purchase and repair programme of 13 units for use as temporary accommodation.</p> <p>Property viewings have taken place, and as of April 2017 offers have been accepted on 13 properties, of which are now in the legal conveyancing purchase process. The programme is on track for completion by the end of June 2017.</p>
3c	Strengthen partnership working at local, county and national level and	MBC Housing & Inclusion team, KCC, DCLG, KHOG, CAB, Voluntary groups,	Review annually	The Housing & Inclusion team held two Housing Seminars in November 2016, aimed as a

	understanding of assistance and options available to homeless and vulnerable households.	Registered Providers		<p>networking event and educating non-housing professionals on the housing services provided by MBC.</p> <p>Multi-agency Monthly Street Population Working Group meetings to look at the needs and support for the highest profile rough sleepers.</p> <p>Housing Panel meetings established from April 2017 for the allocations of all vacancies within KCC commissioned young person's accommodation services in Maidstone.</p> <p>Successfully bid with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Canterbury City Council for DCLG Rough Sleeper Funding.</p>
3a	Continue to support private sector landlords and tenants to maintain their tenancies by offering pre-tenancy training.	Private Sector Landlords, Registered Providers, Tenants, MBC Housing & Inclusion team	Ongoing monthly	Pre-tenancy training provided for households in temporary accommodation to assist applicants develop skills required to successfully sustain a tenancy.
3a/c	Provide specialist targeted information and	MBC Housing & Inclusion team, MBC Housing & Health	Ongoing.	Homelessness & Health booklet

	advice that will enable people to improve their own housing and health circumstances, prevent homelessness and make best use of resources.	team, MBC Housing & Enabling Team, CAB, KCC, NHS Health trainers	Review annually.	<p>developed for agencies to signpost vulnerable adults into support services and shared amongst Homelessness &amp; Health Working Group.</p> <p>Recruiting a Preventions Team to provide earlier intervention and homelessness prevention support to households.</p>
3a /c	Promote closer co-operation with the Revenues and Benefits and DHP Team to assist customers in difficulty that require further support to help solve their financial issues.	MBC Housing and Inclusion Team, Registered Providers MBC Benefits, CAB	December 2016	<p>Monthly Revs &amp; Bens meetings to discuss issues relating to housing benefits and DHP's. DHP's actively being applied for to assist households in rent arrears or with former tenancy arrears, to enable them to retain their home, clear TA arrears or enable quicker move-on from TA.</p> <p>Agreement from DHP Team that will consider wider use of DHP to assist larger households secure private rented accommodation depending on circumstances and requirements.</p>
3a/c	Support affected households to manage welfare reform changes	MBC Housing & Inclusion team, MBC Benefits, Registered Providers, CAB,	Ongoing. Review	Preventions Officer provided support to CAB with project to

	to the benefit system.	Private Landlords	annually	target those households affected by Benefit Cap, where money advice/budgeting would not resolve financial difficulties and housing assistance need.
3c	Ensure homeless households have access to volunteering, training and employment opportunities	Job Centre Plus, Voluntary groups, MBC Housing & Inclusion team, CAB	Ongoing. Review annually	The requirements of the new homelessness reduction bill, along with Job Centre Plus having moved in to the Maidstone Link, will ensure that this is an area where further work will be carried out over the forthcoming year.
3b	Secure shared housing for under-35s single homeless people.	MBC Housing & Inclusion team, MBC Housing & Enabling team, Private Sector Landlords, Agents	December 2016	Plan to do work this year on setting up shared accommodation events to encourage people to look at this as an option.
3b	Expand the Homefinder incentive scheme to more landlords within Maidstone and neighbouring boroughs	MBC Housing & Inclusion team, Private Landlords, National Landlords Association, Maidstone Landlords Forum, Agents	December 2016	Homefinder Scheme being reviewed to wider incentive to landlords with larger properties, on a sliding payment scale depending on size of property.  Use of Bond to further support Homefinder offer for the private

				rented sector.
3c	Work with supported housing providers to understand the potential impact of the Housing Benefit cap to supported accommodation tenants and how best to address it.	MBC Housing & Enabling Team, MBC Housing & Inclusion Team, Supported Housing Providers, KCC Accommodation Solutions Team.	March 2017	Action not required - Supported accommodation is now exempt from the Benefit Cap