

Build Back Better – A Borough that Works for Everyone
Recovery and Renewal Action Plan

Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 has had a significant effect on the Borough's economy, communities, the way we work and our resources. This plan sets out our action plan for recovery and renewal and the principles on which the actions have been based aligned to the national levelling up agenda.

The impact of the pandemic is still unfolding as economic disruption continues. The impact on individual sectors has varied significantly reflecting the extent to which lockdown measures and restrictions have forced some industries to temporarily shut down. Hospitality, recreation and retail and those that supply these sectors have been amongst those hardest hit, however they have also driven much of the job growth recorded in the Borough over recent years and remain locally significant.

The contribution of our communities in response to the COVID19 pandemic has been remarkable and we are truly grateful for everyone who has come together in response to the pandemic.

There can be no doubt that the pandemic has had a negative impact on our most vulnerable residents and we believe as support is withdrawn, we will see a further increase in need and households in crisis. Universal Credit claimants have increased in Maidstone borough by 142% since the start of the pandemic.

As we move out of response into recovery and then renewal we want to work with our communities, the community and voluntary sector including parish councils and anchor institutions to focus on building resilience, avoiding duplication, improving communication and identification of common goals, improving and making best use of our community infrastructure and empowering our communities to help themselves.

In terms of the way we work the pandemic has been a major game changer for the pace of digitalisation and will remain a key component of the new normal. There are major implications for the way we work and how our residents live and work in the borough and how we interact with both residents and businesses. Whilst of benefit to many the changes have also heightened challenges such as digital exclusion for some people. Environmental awareness has also been significantly raised, and therefore government policy is now focused on green recovery. These factors give the opportunity to accelerate Maidstone's ambitions in terms of clean growth, sustainable travel and natural capital.

Build Back Better Principles

Levelling up – Work should be focussed on communities and individuals who are most vulnerable. Projects that relate to levelling up should be based on geographical locations of communities and not limited by ward boundaries. Levelling Up provides a renewed focus on improving people’s life chances and a healthy recovery including addressing inequalities already present that have been accentuated by the pandemic e.g., for health and wealth/financial precariousness.

Community Resilience – Continuing to build relationships with Parishes, the Community and Voluntary Sector and carry out projects to enable people to help themselves and support the community and voluntary sector.

Build back Greener – Ensuring our actions support the Council’s ambitions for biodiversity and climate change as set out in our Biodiversity and Climate Change Plan.

Building back Faster – Whilst the Council supports the notion of ensuring we run an efficient and effective planning service as seen by the planned investment in the planning service in our action plan, development should be well planned and appropriate for the Borough.

Maidstone’s Open for Business – As the business capital of Kent to be a borough that is supportive of existing business and welcomes inward investment. This is congruent with our new Economic Development Strategy which has a priority to be Open for Business, maximising our economic role at the heart of Kent and a strong public sector base to create a positive and entrepreneurial environment in which businesses can grow and thrive. We want to maximise the unique opportunities presented by being part of the North Kent Enterprise Zone and having the Kent Medical Campus in our borough.

Think Local - using our role as a facilitator and connector in the Borough to ensure our local economy is well supported. For example, work with the Anchor Institutions in our borough on training, skills and recruitment for local people and spending locally when procuring services wherever possible

The Way We Work – e.g. capturing and sustaining the experience and benefits of the pandemic for agile working

Recovery and Renewal Action Plan

A Vibrant Economy

Action	Target start and end	What Does Success Look Like	Committee and Senior Responsible Officer	Principles
<p>MidKent College Skills Hub</p>	<p>September 2021 - (project planning with MKC to identify end)</p>	<p>Provision of a town centre venue to provide accessible training, careers advice, and employability support for all residents.</p> <p>Courses delivered to a range of participants including book-keeping and computerised accounting, skills development online courses, essential digital skills, certified work skills programmes, food hygiene and employability workshops and support. Courses delivered to a range of participants including book-keeping and computerised accounting, skills development online courses, essential digital skills, certified work skills programmes, food hygiene and employability workshops and support. With space for</p>	<p>ERL/ John Foster</p>	<p>Maidstone's Open for Business</p>

		ten participants to be physically present in the hub it is envisaged that 208 people would be able to take advantage of the hub for courses and support over 26 weeks. KPIS unemployment, youth unemployment		
Invest in industrial and warehouse premises to help de risk new employment sites coming forward	September 2021 and going	Projects are identified to invest in and Maidstone is seen and delivers its promise of being open for business, businesses can expand and locate to the Borough.	P&R/John Foster	Maidstone's Open for business
Transform the Town Centre through the development and delivery of a town centre strategy.	September 2021 and going	Town Centre Strategy in place by 1 March 2023, projects may begin prior to this. Maidstone town centre becomes a centre of excellence for urban sustainability with a strong focus around arts, culture, leisure and visitor economy creating a place where people want to live, feel safe and which prides itself upon being a town centre which is relevant to all of the Borough's residents and to which all of the borough's residents can relate. KPIs: Town Centre Footfall, Town Centre vacancy rates NEW:	P&R/Phil Coyne	Cross Cutting

		resident satisfaction survey results		
Vibrant Visitor Economy	July 2021 to July 2023	Maidstone has an enhanced arts and culture offer with increased visitors to key attractions and an increase in footfall in the town centre. See KPIs	ERL/John Foster	Maidstone's Open for Business/ Levelling Up/ Community resilience
Capacity to develop projects and bids to take advantage of new funding opportunities	September 2021 to September 2025	Successful bids and projects completed that meet our priorities.	P&R/John Foster	Cross Cutting

Resilient Communities

Action	Target start and end	What does Success look like	Committee and Senior Responsible Officer	Principles
Establish Community Compact	May 2021 – ongoing	Partnership in place between the community and voluntary sector and the council. Joint projects completed and greater resilience	CHE/Angela Woodhouse	Community Resilience
Support and Encourage Volunteering in the Borough.	June 2021-October 2022	Increase in the number of volunteers, volunteering in the Borough and as a consequence more community initiatives delivered. Work with involve to develop an indicator	CHE/Angela Woodhouse	Community Resilience
Online Community Participation	September 2021	Online tool in place and used to successfully engage with the public on projects and initiatives.	P&R/Anna Collier	Community Resilience
Equip Trinity Foyer to be a Community Hub	June 2021 – October 2021	New community hub delivered for all housing and related support services in Trinity Foyer	CHE/John Littlemore	Community Resilience
Love Where You Live and Get Involved.	September 2021-2023	8 community environmental projects delivered. Civic Pride increased as measured by the Resident’s Survey. Baseline the number of participants in the project.	CHE/Jen Stevens	Community Resilience Building Back Greener
Financial Inclusion Strategy and Actions		The number and value of unclaimed benefits that residents are supported to claim	P&R/Steve McGuinness	Levelling Up

		<p>A reduction in the number of households in financial crisis or at risk of moving into crisis</p> <p>Increased take up of debt advice services by households with problem debt</p> <p>A reduction in the number of households identified as being in a repeated pattern of Council Tax debt</p> <p>The number of low-income households supported with energy efficiency measures</p> <p>The number of low-income households supported to access a more appropriate tariff</p>		
Community Resilience Fund	October 2021 – October 2024	30 projects delivered by a variety of community and voluntary sector groups and organisations.	CHE/Angela Woodhouse	Community Resilience

The Way We Work				
Action	Target start and end	What does Success Look like	Committee and Senior Responsible Officer	Principles

Ensure staff have the right equipment (office and home) to enable new ways of working	October 2021	Staff able to effectively work anywhere	P&R/Steve McGuiness	New Ways of Working
Embedding new ways of working and ensuring the office is fit for purpose	October 2023	Flexible office space that supports the new ways of working with the right technology and facilities.	P&R/Georgia Hawkes	New Ways of Working
Increase HR capacity to facilitate agile working and new ways of working	October 2021-October 2022	Better understanding from staff on impact of changes to organisation culture Actions taken to meet future workforce requirements.	P&R/Bal Sandher	New Ways of Working

Responding to Increased Demands Arising from COVID-19

Action	Target Start and end date	What does success look like	Committee and Senior Responsible Officer	Principles
Business Grant Distribution	ongoing	Maidstone continues to be the business capital of Kent	ERL/Steve McGuiness	Maidstone's Open for Business
Revenues and Benefits – Citizens Advice Maidstone Post	August 2021	Residents with debt problems are assisted to maximise income, reduce debt by claiming the benefits they are entitled to	ERL/Steve McGuiness	Levelling Up
Planning Development Control fixed term post	ASAP	Backlog resolved and staff able to meet demands on the service	SPI/William Cornall	Building back better

Planning Enforcement fixed term post	ASAP – March 2022	Backlog resolved and staff able to meet demands on the service	SPI/William Cornall	Building back better
Increased capacity in Heritage and Landscape	ASAP	Backlog resolved and staff able to meet demands on the service	SPI/William Cornall	Building back better
Increased capacity within Data Analytics to provide support for recovery and renewal projects	July 2022-July 2023	18 dashboards in place by 2023.	P&R/Angela Woodhouse	Cross cutting

Key Performance Indicators

Indicator	Reported to Committee	Reason for Monitoring	Level/comparison	What would recovery look like?
ECONOMY				
Unemployment	Quarterly	Economic impact for MBC residents	Kent/SE and GB comparisons	When rates hit March 20 percentage: 2.2%
Youth unemployment	Quarterly	Economic impact for particularly vulnerable MBC residents	Kent/SE and GB comparisons	When rates hit March 20 percentage: 3.7%
Town Centre Footfall	Quarterly	Key measure of town centre and overall MBC economy	Compare with previous month and previous years month.	When footfall figures close on pre covid19 levels
Town Centre vacancy rates	Quarterly	Key measure of town centre and overall MBC economy	Maidstone and National average (collected by One Maidstone)	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels
House prices and sales volumes	Quarterly	Key measure of MBC economy and the construction sector	Maidstone and SE	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels
Number of Business Grants awarded to closed businesses	Quarterly	Indication of businesses that will be at risk		When businesses that qualify have been awarded the grant and no more applications are coming in.
COMMUNITY				
Homelessness prevention – prevention duty ended as applicant	Quarterly	Key measure of the availability of	Same month in 2019	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels

has suitable accommodation		accommodation/success at prevention		
Number of households in temporary accommodation (excluding rough sleepers)	Quarterly	Key measure of cumulative need	Same month in 2019	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels
Number of households newly in temporary accommodation broken down by main reason (excluding rough sleepers)	Quarterly	Key measure of pressure within the housing system including loss of tenancy and home ownership	Same month in 2019	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels
Number of rough sleepers in temporary accommodation	Quarterly	Key measure of pressure within the housing system	Same month in 2019	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels
Number of rough sleepers newly engaged	Quarterly	Key measure of the cumulative impacts of economic and other change for our most vulnerable residents	Same month in 2019	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels
Reports of Anti-social behaviour	Quarterly	Indicator of community experience of the impacts of lockdown and other restrictions	Same month in 2019	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels
Reports of noise nuisance	Quarterly	Indicator of community experience of the impacts of lockdown and other restrictions	Same month in 2019	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels
Number of Community Protection warnings and notices	Quarterly	Measure of the council's response to ASB	Same month in 2019	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels

Reports of Domestic Abuse	Quarterly	Relevant measure of risk to vulnerable residents	Same month in 2019	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels
Number of new Council Tax Support (CTS) applications received	Quarterly	Indicative of trends in households in financial difficulty	Same month in 2019	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels
Number of live CTS cases	Quarterly	Indicative of cumulative level of households in financial difficulty	Same month in 2019	When figures close on pre-covid19 levels
CHE decisions on 3rd November for Community Resilience implemented	Quarterly	Indicative of further improvement in partnership working with the voluntary and community sector and parish councils		Implementation of Committee decisions completed
COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION				
Council Tax collection – percentage in year collection Reduction in cash received compared to this time last year	Quarterly	Measure of financial resources available to MBC	2020/21 budget	When collection returns to projection for 2020/21
Business Rates collection – percentage in year collection	Quarterly	Measure of financial resources available to MBC	2020/21 budget	When collection returns to projection for 2020/21
Council's collection of other income – percentage in year collection	Quarterly	Measure of financial resources available to MBC	2020/21 budget	When collection returns to projection for 2020/21
THE WAY WE WORK – Building on the opportunities and risks created/accentuated by covid19				
Office footprint	Bi annual	Aim to reduce permanently by end of 2023/4	Current floorspace at Maidstone House	New smaller accommodation footprint achieved
Cost of office accommodation	Quarterly	Aim to reduce permanently by end of 2023/4	Current floorspace at Maidstone House	New smaller accommodation footprint achieved

Office running costs (post, print, utilities)	Biannual	Aim to reduce systematically through different ways of working and carbon reduction initiatives	2019/20 running costs	Running costs reduced
Travel costs	Quarterly	Aim to reduce systematically through different ways of working and carbon reduction initiatives	2019/20 travel costs	Mileage costs reduced
Review of contract provisions and Business Continuity for very significant change in circumstances including change in law, force majeure	Annually	Protection for MBC and our customers where outsourced services fail, are no longer fit for purpose or affordable	Existing Business Continuity Plans	Business Continuity Plans updated and exercised