

Kent Farmers, Growers and the Wider Maidstone Food and Drink Industry

Will this be a Key Decision?	No
Urgency	Not applicable
Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet
Lead Head of Service	Karen Britton, Head of Spatial Planning and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Democratic Services, for Council
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

To consider the motion that was passed at Full Council on Wednesday 25 September 2024 relating to Kent Farmers, Growers and the Wider Maidstone Food and Drink Industry.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to the Committee:

1. To consider the motion relating to Kent Farmers, Growers and the Wider Maidstone Food and Drink Industry and decide whether to approve, amend or not adopt the motion; and
2. That minded to approve or amend the motion, that a further report be recommended to Cabinet on the matter so the full implications can be considered.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Planning and Healthier Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee	6 November 2024
Cabinet	20 November 2024

Kent Farmers, Growers and the Wider Maidstone Food and Drink Industry

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<i>It is recommended that a further report be requested so that the implications can be fully assessed</i>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	<i>It is recommended that a further report be requested so that the implications can be fully assessed</i>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Risk Management	<i>It is recommended that a further report be requested so that the implications can be fully assessed</i>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Financial	<i>It is recommended that a further report be requested so that the implications can be fully assessed</i>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Staffing	<i>It is recommended that a further report be requested so that the implications can be fully assessed</i>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Legal	The motion is a political matter forwarded by Council and the Policy Advisory Committee, to be considered by Cabinet. However, any decisions taken as a result of the motion need to be fully assessed and comply with the budget and policy framework. It is therefore recommended that a further report be requested so that the implications can be fully assessed.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Privacy and Data Protection	<i>It is recommended that a further report be requested so that the implications can be fully assessed</i>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Equalities	<i>It is recommended that a further report be requested so that the implications can be fully assessed</i>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Public Health	<i>It is recommended that a further report be requested so that the implications can be fully assessed</i>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Crime and Disorder	<i>It is recommended that a further report be requested so that the implications can be fully assessed</i>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Procurement	<i>It is recommended that a further report be requested so that the implications can be fully assessed</i>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At Full Council on Wednesday 25 September 2024 the motion attached at Appendix 1 was passed relating to Kent Farmers, Growers and the Wider Maidstone Food and Drink Industry.
- 2.2 In accordance with Council Procedure Rule C1, 12.9.3, the motion, having been moved and seconded, was referred to the relevant Policy Advisory Committee.
- 2.3 At the Planning, Healthier and Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee on Wednesday 6 November 2024 it was agreed to recommend the motion to Cabinet, with the following amendment:
- "4. Maidstone Borough Council investigates the possibility of a small scale farmers markets within the town centre."*
- 2.4 The information that had been set out in the briefing note to Council is provided below.
- 2.5 In determining a whether to recommend the approval or amendment of a motion from Council, in order to reach a procedurally sound decision, the Cabinet need to be aware of the full impacts of the motion and its context within the budget and policy framework. It is therefore recommended that a report on the impacts of the motion is produced for the January 2024 meeting cycle ahead of any final decisions on the motion.

Economy

- 2.6 As identified in the adopted Economic Development Strategy 'Priority Three, A Thriving Rural Economy', Maidstone accommodates a successful rural economy that provides a vital source of employment for many of the Borough's residents.
- 2.7 It is home to a vibrant mix of industries including manufacturing, agriculture and tourism and an unrivalled portfolio of heritage and visitor

assets including Leeds Castle, Stoneacre, Kent Life and Headcorn Aerodrome.

- 2.8 The Strategy recognises the following Economic Drivers and Opportunities for the food and drink sector.
- 2.9 The 'Garden of England' brand: opportunities for Maidstone's rural businesses to capitalise on a thriving food and drink manufacturing sector in Kent and benefit from the agglomeration effects of a growing cluster.
- 2.10 This topic can be explored further in the planned revision of the current Economic Development Strategy.

Sector Intelligence

- 2.11 Maidstone has 295 Food and Drink Production Service enterprises making 3.7% of all Maidstone enterprises. Slightly higher than the Kent and Medway average of 3.1% of all Enterprises and the South East average of 2.9%.
- 2.12 This can be split down by subsectors, to Crop, & animal production, hunting and related services 260, Fishing and aquaculture, 5, Manufacture of food products 20 and Manufacture of beverages 5.
- 2.13 Food and Drink production enterprise size bands, the 295 businesses are split down to 265 micro, 20 small and 5 medium sized businesses. (Source UK Business Counts 2023)

Employment

- 2.14 Employee jobs in Food and Drink Production, The Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) provides estimates of the number of employee jobs by industrial sector. Using the 2007 Standard Industrial Classification (2007SIC). All numbers are rounded. The sector supports 2,800 employees making 3.6% of all Maidstone employees, higher than the Kent and Medway percentage of 2.5%. Maidstone is the second highest of the Kent Districts, after Swale at 8.5%.

Support

- 2.15 In addition to the business support programme offered to all Maidstone businesses via Economic Development, the council could seek to strengthen its links to the following organisation.
- 2.16 Produced in Kent: set up to promote and support Kent and Medway food and beverage businesses. The council could provide support and promote existing Maidstone Business Members and encouraging others to join. This was traditionally undertaken by the Councils Tourism Team and links to Visit Kent.
- 2.17 <https://www.producedinkent.co.uk/>

2.18 Produced in Kent in partnership with Social Enterprise Kent also manage the Kent Food Partnership. The partnerships goals are to:

1. Promote healthy, sustainably produced and affordable food to the public
2. Tackle food poverty and diet-related ill-health
3. Build community food knowledge, skills and resources
4. Promote a diverse and vibrant food economy
5. Transform catering and food procurement
6. Reduce waste and the ecological footprint of the food system

2.19 <https://www.producedinkent.co.uk/kent-food-partnership>

2.20 Economic Development connected the Kent Food Partnership to the Councils Community Larders team and understands the team have a relationship with this group and been offered a place on their working group.

2.21 Food poverty has far-reaching impacts on communities, widening health inequalities and broadening inequalities further, educational challenges may arise with children and vulnerable communities can become less resilient.

2.22 Data from local food bank provision shows a increasingly growing need for Maidstone residents requiring support. We recognise that addressing these issues necessitates strengthening community resources. In our preventing financial inclusion strategy we have committed to working with partners and to ensure residents can access healthy food to support physical and mental health.

2.23 The Council also recognises the important role that farmers play as part of tackling the environmental priorities for the Borough of Maidstone and this is addressed in the current Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy and will be further built upon when that strategy is refreshed in 2025.

2.24 In November Maidstone Borough Council and Mid Kent College will be hosting an event to explore how businesses can contribute to improving the environment for Maidstone, this includes the farming community and a specific session for local farmers has been planned. Invitations will be sent out shortly.

Procurement:

2.25 Opportunities may arise with the new Procurement Act 2023 for the council to provide additional support to this sector and put in place policies/thresholds for the councils own spending powers and social values.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 The Cabinet could be recommended to adopt the motion, amend the motion or not adopt the motion. If recommended to adopt or amend the motion the Cabinet will need to fully evaluate the impacts of the motion. In that

event it is therefore recommended that the Cabinet receive a report on the motion's impacts at its January meeting before approval.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 There is no preferred option as this is a motion forwarded from Council. However, if the Cabinet are recommended to adopt or amend the motion relating to Kent Farmers, Growers and the Wider Maidstone Food and Drink Industry they will need to consider a further report on the implications in order to reach a sound decision on it.
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5. RISK

- 5.1 Any risks arising from the motion would be considered in a future report.
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The motion was considered by Full Council on Wednesday 25 September and the Planning and Healthier Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee on Wednesday 6 November.
- 6.2 At the Planning, Healthier and Stronger Communities Policy Advisory Committee it was agreed to recommend the motion to Cabinet, with the following amendment:

"4. Maidstone Borough Council investigates the possibility of a small scale farmers markets within the town centre."

7. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Motion from Full Council on Wednesday 25 September
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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None