

Strategic Plan 2011-15

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Foreword from the Leader

Introduction from the Chief Executive

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National Context

New Political Leadership

Britain has been going through a state of change having just come out of a recession and entering a new political environment. The election in May 2010 resulted in a hung parliament and a subsequent coalition government forming between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parties. The coalition government has stated their top priority is cutting Britain's budget deficit, "with the main burden of deficit reduction borne by reduced spending rather than increased taxes".

In May 2010, the Government published 'The Coalition: our programme for government' which outlined the key policy areas, with an emphasis on 'freedom, fairness and responsibility' creating the Big Society, giving citizens, communities and local government a central role in enabling a new approach to sustainable, low carbon economic growth. To enable some of these changes, the Government has introduced the Localism Bill to devolve greater powers to Councils and neighbourhoods and give local communities greater influence over budgets, housing and planning decisions

- 1) Lift the burden of bureaucracy
- 2) Empower communities to do things their way
- 3) Increase local control over public finance
- 4) Diversify the supply of public services
- 5) Open up government to public scrutiny
- 6) Strengthen accountability to local people

Comprehensive spending review

In October 2010, the Government presented its Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) which determined the spending budgets until 2014-15. For local government this means a reduction in the funding to local government by an average of 28% over the next four years, with larger savings having to be achieved in the first year. Within the next four years, Councils are going to have to undertake a review of policies, to consider how services are delivered and consider the potential impact of these changes in policy on other services.

Local Enterprise Partnerships

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's) are local partnerships between local authorities and businesses. The Government's aim is that LEP's will play a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and the creation of local jobs. Maidstone is committed to playing a full role in the Kent, Essex and East Sussex Partnership to ensure the Borough and its businesses benefit from regeneration opportunities.

Transport

The Department for Transport grant to local authorities has been reduced by 28%. However, the Government sees transport as a key driver of growth nationally and in the regions, stating that for every pound spent on Highways Agency schemes, on average £6 of benefits are achieved and in many cases, there are higher returns for local authority schemes. Since the spending review, 24 transport schemes have been approved. A further £600m will be open to 22 projects, which will be subjected to further analysis by the Department for Transport.

Transparency and Inspection

The Government sees Local Authorities as having a crucial role to play in ensuring that services are efficient and effective, offer good value for money and deliver what people want. The Government announced the abolition of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) with immediate effect from 25 June 2010, with the intention of clearing the burden of assessment from local authorities. Alongside the reduction in inspection, Councils will be moving to increased transparency in the data held by publicising more information such as spending, contracts and tenders above £500.

Planning and Housing

The Government is undertaking reforms to the planning system with the aim of giving neighbourhoods more ability to decide what the local area in which they live should look like, within a strategic framework provided by the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. Local people will determine where best to build the new homes and the local facilities they know are necessary to make their communities successful. The Community Right to Build will allow an application for planning permission to go ahead where there is overwhelming community support for the project. Regional Strategies will be abolished and decision-making on matters such as housing targets and planning are now made by local Councils in the Core Strategy and related documents. Changes to the national planning framework for planning policies are also to be introduced in the future.

A range of significant changes are proposed to social housing tenure and other reforms to existing housing legislation, including access to affordable housing. As a result changes will be made to the way social housing is delivered with public investment in affordable housing being more targeted. A review was also undertaken in 2010 of the Tenant Services Authority (which will cease to exist from April 2012) and the framework for social housing regulation.

Localism Bill

The Localism Bill has been introduced to enable many of the changes proposed above. The bill proposes to give council's a general power of competence, whereby as long as an activity is not unlawful, they are empowered to carry it out if they wish to. Community groups and social enterprise organisations will be

encouraged to have an active role, including taking over and delivering public services.

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Local Context

Maidstone the place

Maidstone is an exceptionally green Borough with a number of parks, the largest of which is Mote Park, which is Grade II on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and home to thriving rugby and cricket clubs. There are numerous smaller parks and squares within the town and villages which have benefited from a major playground and sports facility investment programme in recent years. We recognise the importance of maintaining a quality environment for residents including our heritage and conservation areas. The attractive country side offers high quality landscape and biodiversity and a wide range of informal recreation opportunities.

Maidstone Borough is considered a good place to live and work with high rates of employment, relatively low levels of adults claiming incapacity benefits and a higher proportion of residents who have a degree than the South East average. Larger numbers of people commute into than out of the Borough. The Borough has a very mixed business sector with large numbers of small and medium size businesses with particular strengths in professional services (law and accountancy) and construction. There is a growing media industry led by Maidstone Studios and the Kent Messenger Group. Maidstone has an extensive further education campus (Mid Kent College) and a growing higher education offer with both the University for the Creative Arts and Mid Kent College seeking to increase their range of courses and facilities. Residents living in the Borough have relatively high wages (although many higher earners commute out of the Borough to achieve these). Maidstone came out as the top destination for business in the 2010 study of locations for business in Kent.

Transport links are generally good although rail travel could still be improved. Rail journey times to London from some of the smaller rural towns (Staplehurst and Marden) are as low as 40 minutes but have recently increased to over an hour from Maidstone itself. The Borough is well served by the motorway network with the M20 and M2 both providing links to the M25 and the Channel Ports. The international high speed railway stations at Ebbsfleet (15 mins) and Ashford (25 mins) are also extremely accessible. The Council is pleased that an extension to the Thameslink network is being proposed to provide a direct link to London from Maidstone. With regard to travelling in and around the Borough by car, congestion is an issue particularly in the town centre. The bus transport network serving Maidstone town is relatively strong whilst rural transport presents distinct challenges. Road Safety is a concern for Maidstone with the poorest record for road safety in Kent. Following a scrutiny review of road safety, the Council will be supporting the LSP in taking initiatives forward to address road safety.

Maidstone's Local Strategic Partnership has carried out work in 2010 looking at how public money is spent locally. They have identified that £602 million has been spent in Maidstone in 2010 by various bodies including Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Kent Police and the local Primary Care Trust. Just over 35% of the money is spent on health and social well-being, nearly 17% is spent on education and 15% on housing.

What matters to Maidstone residents

The Council carried out extensive consultation when developing the Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone 2009-2020. Residents were asked to identify what was good and bad about living in the Borough as well as their dream for Maidstone. The top three positive comments related to Maidstone included shopping, parks and the river. Other positive comments related to cleanliness, the countryside and nightlife. The top three negative comments related to traffic congestion, public transport and the quality of roads. The top three dreams for Maidstone residents related to resolving transport issues, improving the river and an improved theatre/concert facility.

In the 2008 Place Survey, the top five factors identified by residents as making an area a great place to live were level of crime, health services, clean streets, affordable decent housing and education provision. The Place Survey also asked what factors required most improvement: road and pavement repairs and the levels of congestion came out top closely followed by activities for teenagers and public transport. As a Council, we have little control over many of these factors we will however seek to influence outcomes in these areas through working with our partners and residents.

During the development of this Strategic Plan, residents were consulted on the budget to identify what matters to them in respect of council services. This exercise was factored into the Cabinet's prioritisation of spending and services. More detail is reported on this in the prioritisation section of the plan. The importance of the rural transport network, cleanliness of our town centre and supporting and encouraging a range of business development was identified during a resident focus group reviewing our priorities.

About the Council

The Council has a strong record of improvement based on previous inspection results as an excellent rated Council. We are now looking at how we improve residents' satisfaction with the Council, as we turn our attention outwards to residents rather than up to central government.

When the Council conducted the Place survey in 2008, 44% of respondents said they were very or fairly satisfied with the way the Council runs things. This was just below the national average of 45%. 32% strongly or tended to agree that

the Council provides value for money. The Council is looking to improve resident satisfaction and increase value for money as a priority going forward.

The services we deliver

- Housing including Housing and Council Tax benefits
- Planning and Development Control
- Council Tax collection and non-domestic rates
- Waste collection
- Electoral registration
- Local Land charges
- Food and Safety
- Environmental enforcement
- Building control
- Museum
- Theatre
- Crematorium and cemetery
- Leisure centre
- Parks and open spaces
- Street cleaning
- Abandoned vehicles
- Community safety
- Arts and sports
- Public conveniences
- Licensing
- Economic development

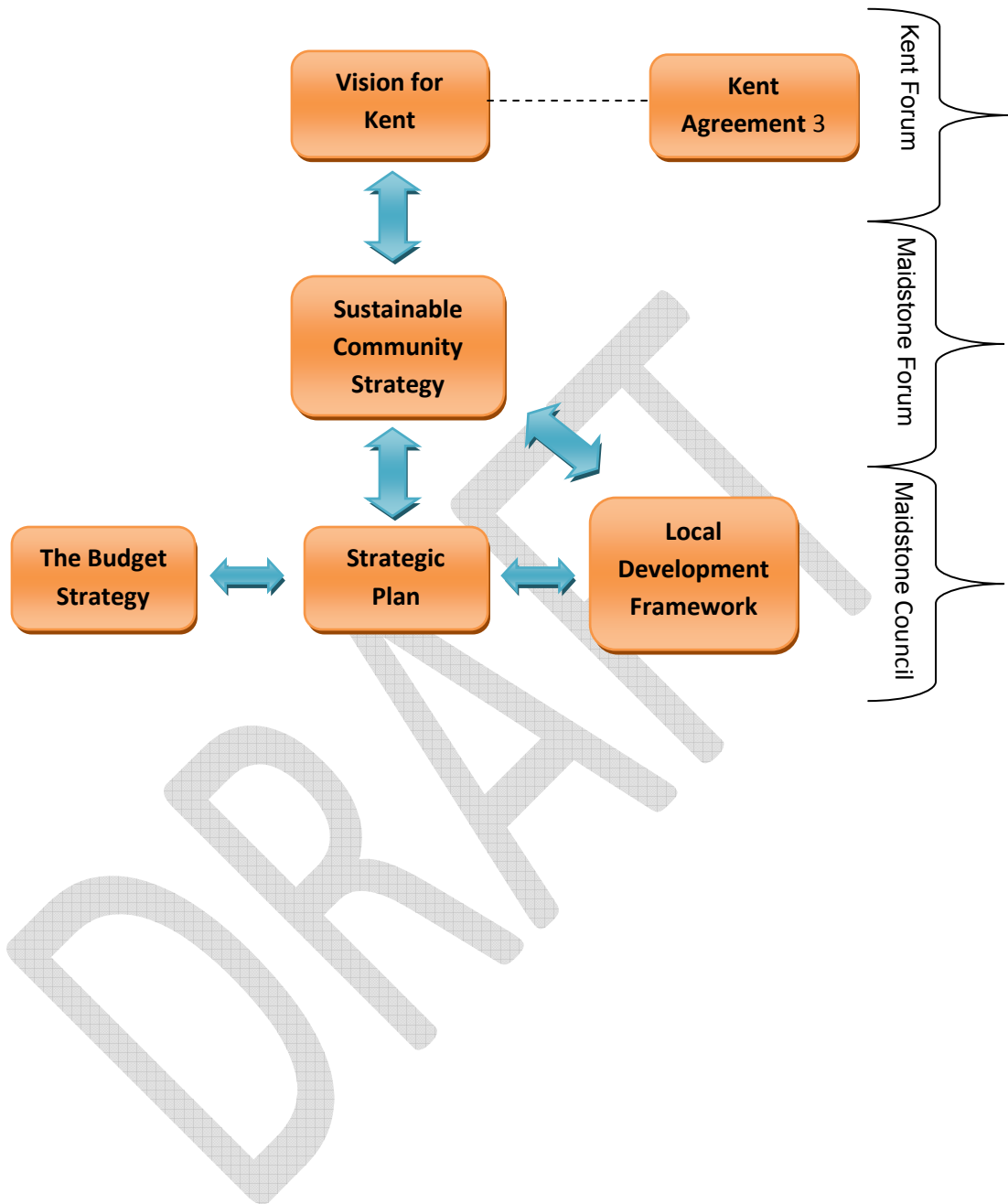
How the Council works

The Council has 55 Councillors who are elected by thirds. Since May 2008, the Conservative party has held the majority of seats on the Council. The Council appoints a Leader who appoints the Cabinet; the Cabinet makes key decisions on Council services, which must be in line with the overall policy and budget framework set by the Council. Each Cabinet Member has their own portfolio area which they make decisions on. Matters that concern two or more portfolios are generally dealt with by the whole Cabinet, which meets monthly.

The Cabinet is held to account by Overview and Scrutiny committees. These committees ensure the decisions of the Cabinet are properly monitored and examine the Council's policies, services and expenditure. They also carry out investigations and research into relevant topics and make recommendations to Cabinet on their findings to inform and shape the policy of the Council.

The Council also operates several Committees who take regulatory decisions including Licensing and Planning. These are an integral part of the Council's operation. The Council also has an Audit Committee in place which acts as a check and balance on the Council and its services to ensure we adhere to our high standards of corporate governance.

Strategy map- how we work with others



Our Vision, Priorities and Outcomes for Maidstone

The Council is committed to and shares the vision for Maidstone, identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2020:

"We want Maidstone Borough to be a vibrant, prosperous 21st century urban and rural community at the heart of Kent, where its distinctive character is enhanced to create a safe, healthy, excellent environment with high quality education and employment where all people can realise their aspirations."

The Council has identified the following three priorities and six outcomes for Maidstone over the next four years.

Priorities

1. For Maidstone to have a growing economy

Maidstone will have a growing economy, with a range of employment and business opportunities. In essence, Maidstone is a good place to work and do business.

Outcomes by 2015

- a transport network that supports the local economy.
- a growing economy with rising employment, catering for a range of skill sets to meet the demands of the local economy.

2. For Maidstone to be a decent place to live

Maidstone's urban and rural parts continue to be a clean, attractive and well designed and built environment, with proper respect paid to its diverse and valuable assets; a place where people want to live.

Outcomes by 2015

- decent, affordable housing in the right places across a range of tenures.
- continues to be a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit the Borough.

3. Corporate and Customer Excellence

The Council will have a productive workforce with people in the right place at the right time, delivering cost effective services. Services will be affordable, delivered on time and to agreed standards in an accessible way. We will continue to support our most vulnerable residents and seek to reduce the different forms of deprivation across the Borough in both urban and rural areas.

Outcomes by 2015

- residents are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced.
- the Council will continue to have value for money services that residents are satisfied with.

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Delivering Priorities and Outcomes

Outcome: **By 2015 Maidstone has a transport network that supports the local economy**

Why it matters for Maidstone

Transport plays an important role in supporting economic development and creating opportunities for growth. Businesses need an effective and well connected transport system to access the town and to connect with London, other centres in Kent, the southeast and internationally in order to thrive. Residents need to be able to get to places directly and quickly. We recognise that to do this we need to work closely with transport authorities and operators including business leaders and Kent County Council. We also seek to have an improved rail network for residents and business and will continue to lobby and work with partners to achieve this ambition. We recognise that the transport network had to be effective across the Borough and will be a key component in supporting our rural areas and ensuring our rural economies prosper.

Public consultation consistently reveals transport as a major concern for example that carried out for carried out for the Sustainable Community Strategy showed that a large proportion of Maidstone's local people view the transport system and particularly the accessibility of public transport, as inadequate. Links are generally good although rail travel could still be improved with journeys to London mostly taking over an hour and none of the main stations having full disabled access. There are proposals to put in place a new train line direct to the City and to other London destinations, which we will support. The Borough is well served by the motorway network with multiple accesses to the M20 and M2 both providing links to the M25 and the Channel Ports. In terms of town centre congestion, during the morning peak time it takes 3 minutes and 28 seconds to drive one mile. Peak congestion is a major problem and projected to get worse, the town is also vulnerable to 'operation stack'. There is a park and ride scheme which serves the town centre.

What we plan to do	Milestones	Ownership
Deliver an integrated transport strategy (alongside the Core Strategy) in partnership with the transport authorities and operators which will result in joint working to improve and develop an effective and integrated transport network to meet future needs	<p>2011 - Develop Integrated Transport Strategy alongside the Core Strategy</p> <p>2011-15 - Milestones as set out in the Integrated Transport Strategy</p>	The Council & Partners
Implement an infrastructure delivery plan with partners utilising available funding including the planning tariff, developer contributions, new homes bonus, Local Transport Plan 3, other grant funding and potentially tax incremental financing.	<p>2011- Develop Infrastructure Delivery Plan</p> <p>2011-15 - Milestones as set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan</p>	The Council , KCC and stakeholders

Support an efficient, integrated, sustainable and multi-modal transport network capable of supporting a growing population and increased economic prosperity	<p>2011-15 - Milestones as set out in LDF</p> <p>2014 - Engage with bus operators, Network rail KCC and railway operators to progress improvements to the railway infrastructure and services for the start of new rail franchise 2014</p>	The Council, KCC and LSP partners
Maintain traffic flow through effective parking enforcement	Ongoing	The Council

Performance Scorecard		
Element	Indicator	Frequency
Customer	Percentage of parking spaces used	Quarterly
	Percentage change in bus usage on services from Maidstone depot	Annual
Internal process	Average journey time per mile for key routes (Congestion)	Annual
	Number of Park and Ride transactions	Quarterly
Finance	Income from pay and display car parks per parking space	Annual
Learning & Growth	Integrated Transport Strategy	Bi-annual
	Infrastructure Delivery Plan	Bi-annual

Outcome: By 2015 Maidstone has a growing economy with rising employment, catering for a range of skill sets to meet the demands of the local economy.

Why it matters for Maidstone

As a Borough we want Maidstone to be a place where the conditions are in place for businesses to flourish. We have a growing creative industry that we remain committed to supporting. We recognise the significant economic impact of the green economy and wish to encourage green businesses to develop in Maidstone. The Council is committed to growth that is environmentally sustainable and will create the conditions which attract "green" businesses and encourage existing businesses to improve their efficiency and more sustainable use of resources. We will also support business growth and development across the Borough through our planning policies and land allocation including the management of the green and blue infrastructure network. Our Development Management service will ensure the relevant Council services provide an effective pre-application service and will process planning applications in a cost effective and timely manner. Maidstone also has significant rural business economies our Local Development Framework will include the rural areas.

Maidstone has the largest economy of all Kent Districts and Boroughs. More people commute into the Borough each day than commute out. The Borough is an economic hub providing employment for a large part of Kent. However, despite its natural location advantages, Maidstone's growth rate was the 4th lowest in Kent between 1998 and 2008 and behind the South East and Great Britain averages. It is a diverse economy with reliance on town services, 30% of businesses are located in the rural area. Moreover much of this employment growth has been public sector employment. Whilst around 10,000 jobs were created in the service sector during this period, the Borough lost over 3,000 jobs in manufacturing. Neighbouring areas have been able to provide a greater choice and range of employment sites in both quality and quantum and in some cases at more competitive prices. If the planned cuts in public sector expenditure of 30% result in jobs losses in the sector in the same proportion, nearly 6,000 people could lose their jobs who work in Maidstone. We also have a low wage local economy and the national changes to education and skills development will impact on our residents and employment. We will be seeking to address these local issues through our land allocations, planning policy and work with the education and skill sector.

What we plan to do	Milestones	Ownership
Create and deliver a Local Development Framework documents including a Core Strategy with the policies and land allocations that will create the right conditions for economic development*	July 2012 - Core Strategy adopted	The Council
Review the Council's Economic Strategy to support the preferred	2011 - Economic Development Strategy reviewed	The Council

options set out in the Local Development Framework and Core Strategy and identify the Council's approach to supporting green business initiatives	March 2012 - New strategy in place April 2012 - March 2015 - Action plan delivered	
Assist businesses who want to develop or locate to the Borough through our pre-application planning advice service and ensuring that the planning committee continues to be effective in supporting the Council's priorities	April 2011- August 2011 - Review the operation of the planning committee 2011-12 Introduce a training schedule for Members and officers	The Council
Review Parkwood Industrial Estate and implement a strategy for its regeneration	November 2010 - Strategy review 2011-2015 Implement strategy actions	The Council and relevant
Work with partners through the LSP to deliver a step change in Maidstone's learning and skills performance to ensure a high-quality skills base sufficient to enable people in Maidstone to realise their full potential.	Milestones to be set and agreed by LSP	The LSP
Deliver the High Street Regeneration Project	Milestones in accordance with project plan	The Council

* The local development framework and core strategy set out the Council's planning policies for the Borough, as well as where it wishes to see housing and commercial development

Performance Scorecard		
Element	Indicator	Frequency
Customer	Number of enquires to locate in Kent	Quarterly
	Time taken to process commercial planning applications	Quarterly
	Number people claiming JSA (employment)	Quarterly
	Percentage of vacant units within the town centre (availability & suitability)	Quarterly
Internal	Unemployment Rate (employment)	Quarterly

process	Percentage of economically active people in Maidstone (employment)	Annual
	Supply of ready to occupy completions (business)	Annual
Finance	Cost of Revenues & Benefits Service	Annual
	Supply & value of business rateable floor space (availability & suitability)	Annual
	a)Percentage of major business planning applications take-up of pre-applications advice b) Percentage of those taking pre-application advice where the applications were approved (with a comparison against those who did not take-up pre-application advice (commercial viability)	Bi-annual
	£'s retained from employment growth bonus (TBC)	Annual
Learning & Growth	Economic Development Strategy	Bi-annual
	Regeneration Statement Milestone	Bi-annual
	Local Implementation Plan Homes and Community Agency milestones	Bi-annual
	LDF Milestones achieved	Bi-annual

Outcome: By 2015 Maidstone has decent, affordable housing in the right places across a range of tenures

Why it matters for Maidstone

We want Maidstone to be a place where people enjoy where they live and a key part of this will be having access to affordable and decent housing. We understand that good housing promotes educational attainment, better health outcomes and employment opportunities. The provision of choice and affordability in housing for the citizens of Maidstone, including rural communities, which meets their needs and aspirations are addressed within this outcome. Decent means housing that meets residents' needs in terms of availability and size as well as meeting the national decent homes standard.

In terms of affordable housing, we are referring to a range of tenure that includes socially rented, intermediate or affordable rent and a variety of shared ownership products. Maidstone Borough Council works to ensure that all new developments of 15 homes or over contain at least 40% affordable housing, which in 2009/10 led to 399 affordable homes becoming available. Due to Council intervention, 83 empty private sector homes were either brought back into use, the majority being let to households from our housing list. We also have a role to play in improving the quality of private housing through grants for improvements to insulation and heating. The Council has completed a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to help us build the right kind of homes in the right places.

Housing in Maidstone town has traditionally been considered relatively affordable compared to the south east average, but this is not the case in rural Maidstone and for those on average or low incomes, home repossession is likely to become more frequent as a result of the recent economic climate. Maidstone has a fairly low level of households living in temporary accommodation provided under the homelessness legislation compared to the other Boroughs in Kent and a significantly lower level than the average for England according to the 2010 Health Profile. The numbers have dropped each year. Maidstone is consistently above target for homelessness prevention.

What we plan to do	Milestones	Ownership
New Housing: Enable the delivery of a range of high quality homes that are desirable and affordable to all sections of the community		The Council
Existing Housing: Ensure our existing housing is suitable and able to meet future challenges; providing sought after homes now and into the future	2011 Housing Strategy reviewed 2011-2015 Implement Housing Strategy	The Council

Homelessness & vulnerable groups: Commission and provide services with partners that meet identified needs, reduce inequalities, are responsive and timely, promote stable, strong communities, self-reliance and encourage positive aspirations	2012 Housing Strategy reviewed 2011-2015 Implement Housing Strategy	The Council
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Performance Scorecard		
Element	Indicator	Frequency
Customer	Percentage of residential planning applications granted a) Urban area b) Rural	Quarterly
	Average time taken to process residential planning applications	Quarterly
	Percentage of planning applications determined within statutory timescales (a Majors, b) Minors, c) Others	Quarterly
Internal process	Number of affordable homes delivered	Quarterly
	Number of homes made decent	Quarterly
	Percentage of new homes built on previously developed land (Location and Environment)	Annual
Finance	Average grant per MBC funded affordable home unit	Quarterly
	Cost of planning per head of population	Annual
Learning & Growth	Housing Strategy	Bi-annual
	Tenancies Policy (TBC)	Bi-annual

Outcome: By 2015 Maidstone continues to be a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit the Borough

Why it matters for Maidstone

Maidstone is an exceptionally green Borough with a number of well maintained parks and open spaces. As Maidstone will continue to be a place for development the challenge will be to continue to maintain and enhance our 41 conservation areas. Work is being undertaken to make the Borough more attractive such as the Mote Park improvement project and the Museum East wing project. An attractive environment means a well built and designed environment, under the outcome related to the economy we have committed to an effective planning process to ensure we have a well designed environment. Cleanliness has improved across the Borough and Co2 emissions have been decreasing. We are committed to increasing social responsibility to ensure the new development is of high quality and the Borough's varied and valued landscape and heritage assets are respected so the environment remains clean and attractive. We want Maidstone to continue to be a place where people enjoy living and would choose to live. As stated in the earlier section on the economy, we will also be encouraging green business in Maidstone. As a Council we will lead with our carbon management programme: over the next four years we will be seeking to reduce carbon emissions from Council buildings and vehicles.

What we plan to do	Milestones	Ownership
Deliver focussed enforcement activity to ensure high impact on the cleanliness of the Borough	April 2011 - Assess feasibility and trial Area Based Enforcement May 2011 - Implement revised scheme	The Council
Work with partners to ensure that all areas of the Borough are clean and well-maintained	May 2011 - Assess feasibility and trial Area Deep Cleaning July 2011 - Rolled out revised scheme	The Council and Partners
Ensure provision of timely specialist advice and services on heritage and landscape design to protect and enhance Maidstone's environment	Ongoing - Provide quality pre-application advice services for heritage and landscape design	The Council
Deliver the Carbon Management Plan to ensure that the Council reduces it's carbon footprint by 3% per annum	Ongoing - Reduce carbon emissions across the Borough and improve air quality Ongoing - Reduce the Council's carbon footprint and improve the use of other natural resources whilst ensuring the Council is planning to adapt to Climate Change	The Council with others

Maximise our leisure and cultural offer to enhance the quality of life for our residents whilst attracting visitors, new residents and businesses	<p>April 2011 - Complete the Leisure and Culture Strategy with a focus on getting others to deliver and lead on leisure and culture</p> <p>October 2011 - Complete the redevelopment of the Museum's East Wing</p> <p>January 2012 - Complete a review of play areas and produce a strategy for future provision</p> <p>March 2012 - Complete Mote Park regeneration project capital works</p>	The Council
New Waste Contract	April 2013 –New Waste Contract in place	The Council

Performance Scorecard		
Element	Indicator	Frequency
Customer	Number of listed building consents granted	Annual
	Percentage of waste recycled	Quarterly
	Visits/Uses of the Museum per 1,000 population (project)	Quarterly
Internal process	Number of Tree Preservation Orders granted	Quarterly
	Local Street & Environmental Cleanliness a) Litter, b) Detritus, c) Graffiti, d) Fly posting	Annual
	Time taken to respond to reports of fly-tipping (clean environment)	Quarterly
Finance	Cost of maintaining the Borough's parks & green spaces per head of population	Annual
	Cost of waste collection	Annual
	Cost of street cleaning per head of population	Annual
Learning & Growth	Air quality Action Plan	Annual
	Percentage CO2 reduction from local authority operations	Annual
	Carbon Management Plan	Bi-annual

Outcome: By 2015 residents in Maidstone are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced

Why it Matters for Maidstone

This outcome refers not only to our deprived areas but those individuals who are most vulnerable wherever they are in the Borough including our rural communities. National policies on welfare reform and public sector budget cuts will have an impact for our deprived areas and our most vulnerable residents. Our economic and housing strategies that feature under other outcomes will be crucial to achieving this outcome. This will not be an easy area to address as 11% of Maidstone's population live in areas considered to be in the 20% most deprived in the country. Our rural areas also contain households suffering deprivation. These areas have lower standards of health and lower life expectancy than average. The disadvantaged wards have the highest numbers of young people not in education, employment or training and significantly higher numbers of youth offenders.

We will continue the work on Planning for Real in our deprived areas to engage communities in identifying and resolving local issues and problems and helping others to help themselves. As community leaders, we will convene resources to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training and reduce the number of adults out of work. We will seek to do this through working with local businesses and supporting social enterprise start ups. We will be working to prevent disadvantage and will seek to participate in a pilot with KCC to address the needs of complex families in our Borough.

What we plan to do	Milestones	Ownership
Reduce inequalities within communities through preventative action	April 2012 - Pilot completed with KCC on complex families April 2011-16 - Deliver Community Development Strategy milestones.	In Partnership
Promote active citizenship – to facilitate and support increased involvement by local people in decision making and involvement in their neighbourhoods	Ongoing - Neighbourhood Action Plans in place Ongoing - Neighbourhood Forums in Place April 2012 - Localism Boards in place	The Council, KCC and Partners
Review the Parkwood Planning for Real activity to inform further work and activities supporting communities in identifying and meeting their needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities	2011-2016 Neighbourhood Action Plans in place for Parkwood, Shepway North, Shepway South, High Street and other priority areas.	The Council and Partners
Implement meaningful community commissioning of services for local people	2011-2015 - Establish a social return on investment model for the delivery of the Community Development Strategy to identify how and ensure that our community development services add value	The Council

<p>Support and encourage people to participate in their communities through staff volunteering and supporting local businesses in developing social enterprise initiatives</p>	<p>Ongoing - Promote volunteering and funding streams to voluntary groups April 2011 - Set up meeting on social enterprise with local businesses to ascertain the appetite and develop support for social enterprise April 2011-14 - Encourage services to look at social enterprise models as part of future service planning April 2013 - Work with Voluntary Action Maidstone and the LSP to create a database of volunteers to match to volunteering activities</p>	<p>The Council leading work with business and voluntary sector</p>
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Performance Scorecard		
Element	Indicator	Frequency
Customer	Percentage of the Borough covered by Broadband	Annual
	Average time taken to process and notify applicants on housing register	Quarterly
	Number of individual volunteers registered on the Voluntary Action Maidstone Database of volunteers (community spirit) and Number of volunteer organisations registered with VAM	Annual
Internal process	Number of residents participating in Neighbourhood planning as a percentage of the ward population	Annual
	Average time taken to process new benefit claims and changes of circumstances	Quarterly
	Number of households presented from becoming homeless through intervention	Quarterly
Finance	Gap between median wage of employee (residents) and the median wage of employees (workplace) (salary differences)	Annual
Learning & Growth	Community Development Strategy	Bi-annual
	Neighbourhood Action Plans	Bi-annual

Outcome: By 2015 the Council will continue to have and demonstrate value for money services that residents are satisfied with.

Why it matters for Maidstone

This outcome is related to ensuring that residents are satisfied with what the Council does and our services in relation to their cost and value. We will be changing the role of the Council to ensure that our services have a positive impact on the lives of people who live and work in the Borough. As a Council, we will seek to enable residents, encourage responsibility and grow our communities. We will deliver less services directly ourselves and commission and enable more, through social enterprise, public and employee run services.

The Council provides many different services which are used by different types of people. It is essential to ensure that people can access the services they need in a way that suits them and provides value for money. We recognise that the internet provides the only way people can access our services and get information at any time of day and on any day of the year. Therefore, we are improving the Maidstone Borough Council website to make sure information is clear and have as many services as possible online. Using the Council website also provides good value for money: it costs least for people to get information, apply for things and make payments (about £0.32 per visit to the website), a little more if people telephone the Council to do these things (about £1.86 per phone call) and it costs most for people to visit the Gateway (about £9.66 per visit). As we know that not everyone can or wants to get information or services online, we will continue to provide high quality telephone and face to face services. The Council is currently researching the ways people prefer to find out information and access services like parking, housing and planning. We will use this information to look at our services and decide how they should be delivered. We will look to provide services in ways that meet the needs of the people who use them, preferably through the least expensive options where this is possible. This will help us cut the cost of delivering services to the public.

What we plan to do	Milestones	Ownership
Seek out and implement new ways of delivering services that are not our core business, such as the Theatre and the Museum	March 2012 – Plans in place for cost neutral Museums and Theatre service	The Council
Progress the shared services programme for those services that it is practical to do so and savings can be achieved	April 2011 – March 2015 - progress shared services	The Council and Partners

Ensure we use performance management data, customer satisfaction and customer feedback to improve services	<p>April 2011 - Introduce a new correspondence system and use complaints and compliments to inform service delivery and improvements</p> <p>April 2011 - Review & reduce performance indicators</p> <p>Ongoing - Cabinet & Scrutiny to monitor performance quarterly</p> <p>Ongoing - Ensure there are robust audit and overview and scrutiny arrangements in place</p>	The Council
Undertake a programme of business improvement service reviews to ensure services are customer focused and delivered efficiently and effectively.	<p>April 2011- April 2013 - Undertake programme of reviews</p>	The Council
Ensure that the authority has a productive, proactive and flexible workforce	<p>July 2011 - Produce and implement a Workforce Plan incorporating a skills audit for current resources and a plan to develop the workforce for future needs</p> <p>March 2011 - Gain Investor in People re-accreditation (Assessment)</p> <p>March 2014 - Gain Investors in People re-accreditation (Assessment)</p> <p>2011-2015 - Manage the change initiatives through a strategic approach to organisation development in line with Strategic Plan milestones</p>	The Council

Performance Scorecard		
Element	Indicator	Frequency
Customer	Satisfaction with the way the Council runs things (perception)	Perception
	Satisfaction with Priority Services (to be defined by the public) (perception)	Annual
Internal process	Percentage of business rates collected (Efficiency)	Quarterly
	Percentage of Council tax collected (Efficiency)	Quarterly

Finance	Savings identified through reviews (Value for Money)	Quarterly
	Value of fraud identified (Housing benefits) (Efficiency)	Quarterly
Learning & Growth	Review customer access to services to improve access and efficiency	Bi-annual
	Improvements	Bi-annual

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Service Principles – How we will design our services

1. Residents and businesses are the starting point for services; every service must be considered from the perspective of the citizen and delivered at the lowest possible level – a bottom-up approach.
2. We will enable service delivery and seek to commission services rather than deliver them ourselves wherever appropriate.
3. We will work with partners where there are economies of scale and to identify common solutions and shared services.
4. Services must achieve our priorities.
5. We will manage our services so no-one is disadvantaged because of where they live.
6. We will concentrate on delivering our core services, whilst recognising that there are areas we need to influence and work with others on to bring about change.
7. We will work together as one Council and with our partners to deliver change and manage expectation.

Values - How we will deliver our services

The Council has developed and agreed six core values which will define how we deliver our services:

- **Superb Customer Service** – It is important to understand that everything we do impacts on our customers, both internal and external. We will listen to and understand their needs, then take action to provide the right service in a professional manner.
- **Teamwork** - working together to achieve our objectives and goals in away that utilises the talents and creativity of everyone within our organisation.
- **Responsibility for delivering on our promises** – being focused on the Council’s vision and priorities. Leadership and management that respond and take the organisation through change.
- **Integrity and High Standards of Corporate Governance** – being transparent and accountable. Having the courage to act on our convictions to build trust and honesty within the organisation. Working with our partners and customers to create a feeling of openness and transparency in all that we do.

- **Value for Money** – taking care and weighing up our options, aiming to get maximum effect for every penny of public money we spend. Promoting ownership to ensure that all of us feel responsible for providing value for money in all that we do and making suggestions for improvements.
- **Equality within a diverse organisation** - valuing our differences for the enrichment and betterment of our working environment. Having the courage to question our own reactions and mindset in order to be open to new ideas and concepts.

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How we have prioritised and funded services

The Council has to make 5 million pounds of savings over the next four years. In order to identify savings, the Council has focussed on the delivery of core services which meet our priorities and asked the public to determine what matters to them in relation to the Council's discretionary services.

The Cabinet, as a first stage in determining budgets, prioritised the Council's front line services into low, medium and high, by identifying which services would best achieve their priorities through a paired analysis. A paired analysis is where each service is compared in a pair with every other service and one is chosen above the other as being more important in achieving the Council's priorities. Services were ranked from 1 to 12 and then as high, medium or low.

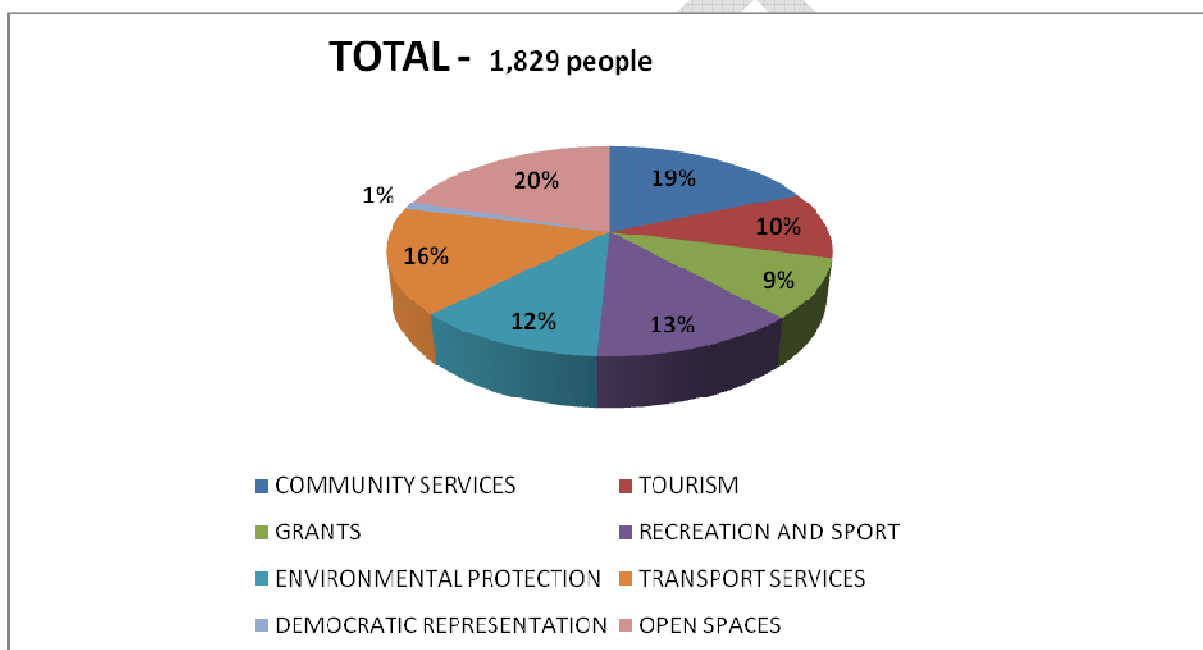
Service Prioritisation Table

Revenue	High	Medium	Low
Invest	Economic Development		
Maintain	Parking and Transport Housing		Environmental Health
Reduce	Planning and Building Control	Community Safety Waste Collection and Recycling Community Development Recreation, Sport and Open Spaces	Culture and Heritage Tourism Street Cleansing

Once Cabinet had carried out this exercise, they reviewed the services to determine which should be invested in, which should be maintained and where investment should be reduced. It should be noted that services identified to be maintained will not necessarily mean maintaining the cost of the service. Also

where the service has been identified to be reduced, this refers to the cost of the service. For example, it was identified that for the planning service the service level should be maintained but the service should be more efficient and costs reduced. The prioritising of services was followed up with meetings between senior managers and the Cabinet and where appropriate the shadow Cabinet to identify how saving could be made in accordance with the prioritisation. As a consequence, the Council is now reviewing how we deliver our cultural services and considering alternative options to reduce costs and deliver the services that residents want and need.

The public were consulted with regard to which discretionary services were top priority. Discretionary services are those services which the Council is not compelled by law to deliver but chooses to.



The three services rated by the public as lowest priority were democratic representation, grants to voluntary organisations and tourism. Democratic representation includes the Mayor’s events, twinning, parades and civic events. As a consequence of the public consultation, the Council will be reviewing our budgets for these areas and this has been reflected in the budget strategy.

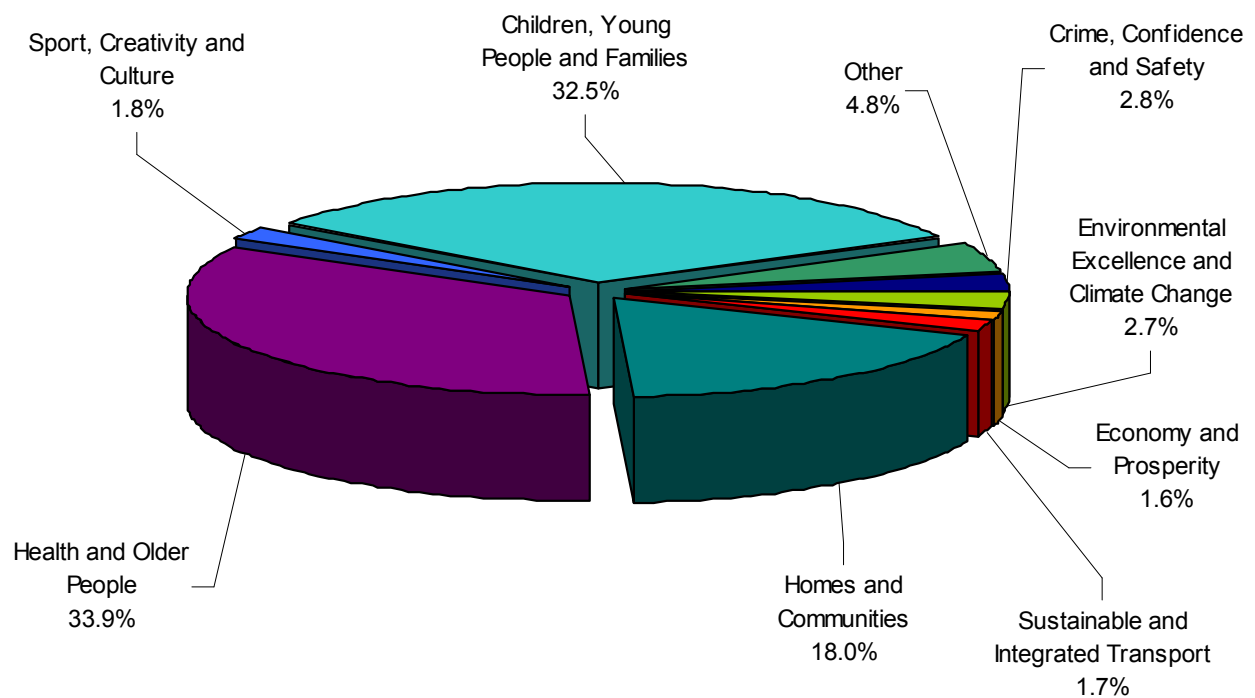
During the budget consultation the public were asked for additional suggestions for savings; staffing costs were identified as an important area for the public. The Council has already taken action that will reduce management costs and will take further action to reduce staffing costs. This will include reviewing the back office functions to make savings which will include a shared HR and Finance service. When asked to identify services that were important, waste and recycling was identified as an important service to residents during the

consultation. The Council will be introducing a Borough-wide food waste collection scheme with collections of residual waste and dry recyclables every other week.

Working in Partnership: How Resources are Spent in Maidstone

The Council has taken part in the LSP's study of how resources are allocated locally. The study used data from different public bodies and agents in Maidstone to find out where money is spent locally by those bodies and what it's spent on. Information was submitted by a variety of agencies including the Council, KCC, Kent Police, the PCT and the Homes and Community Agency. Golding Homes, the local NHS trust and Kent Fire and Rescue's spending is not included in the data. It is estimated that £4,062 was spent per person in the Borough in 2009-10.

The biggest area of spend locally is on health and older people, followed closely by children, young people and families.



Performance Management – Doing what we say we will

We are committed to being open and transparent and we will publish performance data on our website so we are accountable to the public. Furthermore, the Council's performance will be managed by the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet as well as held to account through overview and scrutiny. We have sought to review and reduce the number of performance indicators we use to measure and monitor success and target performance. The last performance plan contained 162 indicators covering 6 priorities and 22 key objectives. For the period 2011-15, we propose to use xx indicators to measure performance.

Indicators have been outlined for each outcome so we can measure and monitor our success.

Risk Management

The Council has reviewed the outcomes we hope to achieve by 2015 to identify any risks to those outcomes. Six strategic risks have been identified. Action plans to mitigate these risks will be put in place and reported to Management Team and Cabinet. Strategic risks and actions will be linked to the Council's service delivery plans. The actions set out to achieve each outcome in this plan will also be a key part of the risk mitigation. The performance on these will be reported regularly through our performance management processes to Management Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny.

Glossary

Local Development Framework (LDF) including the Core Strategy – The Local Development Framework documents including the Core Strategy set out the Council’s planning policies for the Borough, as well as where it wishes to see housing and commercial development.

Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – the LSP is a group of private and public organisations in Maidstone who work together to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy

Neighbourhood Planning – In the Plan we refer to the Parkwood Planning for Real activity and Neighbourhood Plans. Neighbourhood Action Plans have been developed across the UK to address local issues and improve the quality of life for residents. They are plans developed with and by our communities to identify and address local issues.

Performance Indicators – These are set out in the strategic plan as a means of measuring the Council’s progress and performance against our outcomes.

Social Return on Investment – This is a means by which we can measure and account for a much broader concept of value. It incorporates social, environmental and economic costs and benefits into decision making, providing a fuller picture of how value is created or lost.

Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) - The Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on every local authority to prepare a community strategy “for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom.” The SCS is the overarching community plan for the area.