

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

REPORT OF CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Report prepared by Christina Chemsiri

Date Issued: 17 March 2011

1. Customer Services - Maidstone Gateway Review

1.1 Key Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the recommendations within the 'Customer Services - Maidstone Gateway Review' report attached at **Appendix A**.

1.1.2 The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services is required to complete the Scrutiny Committee Recommendation Implementation Plan attached at **Appendix B** within 28 days of publication.

1.2 Recommendation of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1.2.1 That the Cabinet Member agrees the following recommendations:

- 1) Reduce opening hours from 8.30am-5.30pm to 9-5.30pm, whilst maintaining the opportunity for staff to start at 8.30am, to allow for training, setting up, etc.
- 2) The Mall to provide a car park pay machine by the Gateway entrance level to the car park.
- 3) Investigate whether it is possible to have a presence from Social Services on a Saturday.
- 4) Cabinet Member to pursue if registered social landlords will pay and provide a free-phone within the Gateway for customers.
- 5) KCC Registrar services to cease providing services within the Gateway, due to its own office location being so close.
- 6) In order for the CAB to maintain its independence, investigate the possibility of branding the CAB within the Gateway.
- 7) IT should prioritise improving the Parking Services information available online and this should also be accessible through mobile phone technology.

- 8) Parking Officer to be 'on-call' with the gateway staff equipped and trained to deal with initial enquiries.
- 9) To remove the weekly late night Thursday.
- 10) Planning Duty Officer to be 'on-call' for queries, with all minor enquiries primarily dealt with by Gateway staff.
- 11) Regular training be given to Gateway staff from all in-house qualified Planners.
- 12) A fee to partners be introduced to help cover cost of facilities provided in the Gateway.
- 13) Investigate new ways of working to avoid duplication of advice and money looking at what is being spent and where with CAB and neighbouring boroughs.
- 14) Carbon Footprint figures to be shared where applicable with Partners including KCC and the Chequers Mall Corporation.
- 15) Cabinet Member to investigate issues surrounding the wood burning central heating, ensuring that coppicing in local woodlands is incorporated.
- 16) Voluntary Action Maidstone to cease providing its services within the Gateway due to its own office location being so close.
- 17) The ground floor foyer be equipped for notices to the public, available to all departments and partners.
- 18) A pillar-box at the King Street entrance to the Gateway be installed allowing a secure and safe way to leave mail within office hours without the need to enter the Gateway itself.
- 19) Signage within the Gateway displaying the services and partners available should indicate the days and times that they are available.
- 20) Cabinet Member to pursue the opportunity to work with Job Centre Plus within the Gateway.
- 21) Cabinet Member to pursue the opportunity to have Kent Social Children's Services providing in the Gateway, due to their local offices being closed down.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 1.3.1 At its meeting on 1 June 2010, the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to carry out a review of the Council's approach with regard to Customer Services and the Maidstone Gateway, as it had been in operation since January 2009. This review focused on the operation of the Maidstone Gateway.

1.3.2 The Committee has carried out both select-committee style interviews and formal meetings with both internal officers and the Gateway partners, sent a questionnaire to Gateway staff and considered desktop research to identify alternative ways of providing a premium service to the public whilst maintaining value for money services.

1.3.3 Having considered the evidence, the Committee approved a wide range of recommendations for the Gateway service, and felt that it was a starting point in attempting to address perceived issues in the Maidstone Gateway.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The Cabinet Member could decide not to endorse any of the recommendations within the "Customer Services - Maidstone Gateway Review" report, however the recommendations are based on evidence from a range of sources and support the Council's objectives with regard to being a place with efficient and effective public services, as outlined at 1.5.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The Council's Strategic Plan 2009-12 lists "a place with efficient and effective public services" and the new Strategic Plan 2011-2015 lists "corporate and customer excellence" as key priorities. The recommendations within the report contribute to the fulfillment of these objectives.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 The Recommendations contained within the report will need to be risk assessed as part of reviewing whether they should be accepted or not.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	X
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	

7. Human Rights Act

8. Procurement

1.8 Relevant Documents

Appendices

Appendix A - Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
"Customer Services - Maidstone Gateway Review".

1.8.1 Background Documents

None

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

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This is a Key Decision because:

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Wards/Parishes affected:

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How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

Councillor Marion Ring

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

Telephone: 01622 686492

E-mail: marionring@maidstone.gov.uk

Christina Chemsì

Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Telephone: 01622 602463

E-mail: christinachemsi@maidstone.gov.uk