

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND
DEVELOPMENT**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHANGE, PLANNING AND THE
ENVIRONMENT**

Report prepared by Emma Boshell

Date Issued: _____

1. ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2011/12

1.1 Key Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the findings of the Annual Monitoring Report 2011/12, and to approve the document attached at Appendix A to this report for publication on the Council's website.

1.2 Recommendation of the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment

1.2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development approves the Annual Monitoring Report 2011/12 (attached at Appendix A) and it be published on the Council's website.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 In recent years regulations governing how local authorities should produce their Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) have changed significantly. Firstly, in March 2011 central government withdrew all guidance on local plan monitoring, leaving local authorities with the freedom to choose which targets and indicators to include in their AMR. Further, the introduction of the Localism Act in November 2011 removed the requirement to submit the AMR to the Secretary of State. This year, the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 replaced and consolidated all previous regulations, placing emphasis on producing the report for local people on locally determined key issues.

1.3.2 However, providing an overview on progress and the key issues that face the Council in planning in particular are still viewed as being valuable. With these changes in mind, Maidstone's AMR focuses on monitoring those indicators that help to illustrate the key features of the borough and those that are essential for the monitoring of policies in local planning policy documents. Thus, the AMR comprises:

- An introduction to the Annual Monitoring Report;
- A Maidstone Profile, which demonstrates the wider demographic, social, economic and environmental characteristics of the borough;
- Key Monitoring Indicators that are set out in local planning policy documents and which address local issues relating to housing, economic development and the built and natural heritage. An indicator to monitor neighbourhood planning has been introduced into the section this year. In future, the AMR will also include indicators set out in the Integrated Transport Strategy once it has been adopted;
- Local Plan Progress, a new section for this year which includes a review of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) to assess the progress of the timetable for the production of local planning policy documents and identifies any changes required, and a list showing action taken by the Council under the duty to cooperate;
- A Glossary of Terms that assist the reader with the acronyms used throughout the document.

1.3.3 The AMR indicators assist in monitoring the policy targets set out in the Council's draft Core Strategy, which has recently been subject to public consultation. The representations received by the Council are currently being assessed and any resultant changes to the targets will be updated through next year's AMR.

1.3.4 Recently a number of core strategy examinations have been suspended because of unsatisfactory evidence supporting the local authorities' housing and employment targets. The Council's evidence base needs to be robust enough to support Maidstone's Local Plan at examination, and in particular, the Plan must be in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In addition, there appears to have been a shift at examination from locally determined targets to a greater emphasis on meeting national projections. This includes greater emphasis on demonstrating cross boundary working and also bearing in mind that the South East Plan targets have still not been revoked. Therefore, the housing target is currently under review. For the purposes of the AMR the 5 year housing land supply is measured against both 10,080 and 11,080 dwelling targets for the period 2006 to 2026.

1.3.5 Maidstone has a population of 155,800 (recorded in 2011), made up of 51% females and 49% males. The largest population group is aged 40-49. There are 63,447 households within the borough with an average household size of 2.4. Overall reported crime has fallen, with

the exception of dwelling burglaries which rose by 36%. The Council is addressing local crime and disorder through the Safer Maidstone Partnership. Unemployment levels fell by 1.7% between 2011 and 2012 (the total number of people unemployed is 2,406), and the percentage of resident unemployment in Maidstone remains lower than in Kent, the South East and England.

- 1.3.6 Average Maidstone resident annual earnings fell by £213 between 2010 and 2011. GCSE results improved, and show a greater achievement in gaining 5 or more subjects at grades A* to C. Areas of multiple deprivation remain unchanged throughout the borough but the Council has engaged with the community in Park Wood, which is within the 2% of most deprived areas in England, and prepared a Neighbourhood Action Plan to deliver agreed actions. The percentage of pupils in Maidstone qualifying for free school meals in primary and secondary education is lower than in Kent and England.
- 1.3.7 There has been a net loss of employment floorspace in the borough overall. 72% of employment floorspace and 92% of dwellings were completed on previously developed land, and these high levels are expected to continue in the short term in advance of allocating greenfield sites in Maidstone's Local Plan. The Council has recently commissioned experts to update the employment target for the borough, the results of which will be available soon. At 1 April 2012, the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply based on either 10,080 (4.3 years) or 11,080 dwellings (3.7 years). The Council is currently undertaking a new Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) in order to identify sites with potential for housing. Windfall development continues to provide a significant number of dwellings each year.
- 1.3.8 Maidstone continues to make best use of its available land – 84% of dwellings were constructed at densities in excess of 30 units per hectare. Of all planning permissions granted in 2011/12, 40% of dwellings were affordable units. The Council has recently commissioned experts to test the viability of the affordable housing target, the results of which will be available soon. Nine areas started work on their neighbourhood plans during 2011/12, and the Council has a dedicated web page to keep the public informed of the progress of all neighbourhood plans.
- 1.3.9 Under the Council's duty to cooperate (set out in the Localism Act 2011), discussions have been held with partner organisations to consider joint approaches to plan making and to communicate on cross-boundary and county-wide issues, including but not limited to adjoining authorities, infrastructure providers, the development industry and Kent County Council.

1.3.10 To summarise, the AMR shows a generally positive picture of the borough over the past twelve months during a challenging economic climate. Successes over the monitoring year include a reduction in unemployment and a continuing upward trend in GCSE results. The Council delivered 873 net dwellings with a high percentage built on brownfield land, and the affordable housing target of 40% was reached. However, the AMR reveals that there are still challenges. The number of burglaries has increased and average Maidstone resident annual earnings have fallen. There has also been an increase in homeless households and the number of households on the housing register waiting list. The Council's Homelessness Strategy addresses housing needs.

1.3.11 The AMR has proved to be an invaluable tool, used to monitor local planning policies but also to record historic indicators that assist the public in understanding the profile and achievements of the borough.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 Although guidance on preparing Annual Monitoring Reports has been withdrawn by the government, and the duty to submit the document to the Secretary of State has been removed, under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 the Council is still required to produce a monitoring report for local people on locally determined key issues.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The AMR monitors the success of a range of policies that impact on corporate objectives set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Strategic Plan.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There are no risks arising from this report.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

- 1. Financial
- 2. Staffing
- 3. Legal
- 4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
- 5. Environmental/Sustainable Development

X
X

- 6. Community Safety
- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management

1.7.2 Financial and staffing – there are general costs involved in the production of the AMR, such as printing, but these can be accommodated within the LDF budget. The AMR has been produced within the existing staff structure.

1.8 Relevant Documents

None

1.8.1 Appendices

Appendix A: Annual Monitoring Report 2011/12

1.8.2 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.

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