

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

15 MAY 2013

REPORT OF HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Report prepared by Sarah Robson

- 1. REFRESHING THE MAIDSTONE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2009-20: MAIDSTONE COMMUNITY STRATEGY**
- 1.1 Key Issue for Decision

This report sets out proposals for updating the Maidstone Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-20 for Maidstone. In Maidstone, our strategy is called Maidstone Community Strategy – your community, our priority.
- 1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Housing and Community Services
 - 1.2.1 That Cabinet Members endorse the refreshed Strategy; Maidstone Community Strategy – your community, our priority for 2009-20.
 - 1.2.1 That the Head of Housing and Community Services be given delegated powers to make minor amendments as a result of consultation, including with Overview and Scrutiny and key partners from voluntary and community groups in the priority areas of the borough.
- 1.3 Reasons for Recommendation
 - 1.3.1 Local authorities have a statutory requirement (see Appendix 1) to prepare and publish a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for their area. In Maidstone, our strategy is called Maidstone Community Strategy – your community, our priority.
 - 1.3.2 Communities and Local Government (CLG) guidance on preparing a SCS states "the purpose of the SCS is to set the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of a local area - typically 10 to 20 years - in a way that contributes to sustainable development in the UK."
 - 1.3.3 The guidance recommends that a SCS should contain the following elements:
 - the long-term vision based firmly on local needs - this will be underpinned by a shared evidence base informed by community aspirations; and

- key priorities for the local area, based upon this vision which may realistically be achieved in the medium term.
- 1.3.4 From time to time a local authority may modify their sustainable community strategy, and in preparing or modifying their sustainable community strategy, a local authority must consult and seek the participation of each partner authority and such other persons considered appropriate, and must have regard to any guidance for the time being issued by the Secretary of State.
- 1.3.5 The preparation and publication of a SCS has generally been undertaken through Local Strategic Partnerships, and therefore this responsibility now falls to the Maidstone Locality Board.
- 1.3.6 An SCS has value as a vehicle for consulting with local people and with key partners on the long-term priorities for an area.
- 1.3.7 Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) approved the current sustainable community strategy in 2009. The Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership previously agreed that the Borough Council's Community Partnerships Unit be tasked to take the operational lead on the refresh and revision of key strategies including the Sustainable Communities Strategy and any Maidstone contribution to the Vision for Kent.
- 1.3.8 Continuing to produce a strategic document that highlights the priorities for Maidstone very much fits with the Locality Board's remit to oversee and shape local delivery of the Kent Recommitment and to draw together local public services for greater effectiveness and efficiency.
- 1.3.9 The refresh has taken account of;
- economic changes and the financial context of our partners;
 - identified improvements and declines (e.g. health inequalities, youth unemployment etc.) associated with the priority areas of the current Sustainable Community Strategy;
 - reviewed priorities agreed by the Maidstone Locality Board in 2011, which reduced the overarching priorities from 7 down to 3;
 - needs analysis work, including consultation, undertaken in the preparation of other recent partnership strategies;
 - priorities in the Borough Council's updated Strategic Plan;
 - the emerging emphasis on community engagement and responsibility and;
 - the need to introduce and monitor locally agreed measures and targets.

1.4 Consultation Undertaken

1.4.1 The individual organisations/agencies on the Maidstone Locality Board were consulted on the refresh of the Strategy’s priorities in December 2012. Feedback was originally sought from Maidstone’s residents in the 2009 public consultation and has been taken into account as well as feedback from the Council’s Residents Survey 2012. Further consultation will be undertaken with key partners including voluntary and community groups in the priority areas of the borough.

1.5 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.5.1 The Council could choose not to refresh the Sustainable Community Strategy. However, if the strategy is not refreshed there is a risk that the overall strategic direction and long term vision for the borough will not be sufficiently articulated and coordinated, and the needs of the borough’s communities not met in a coordinated way.

1.6 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.6.1 Maidstone Borough Council’s Strategic Plan makes specific reference to supporting Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership to deliver its contribution to the Sustainable Community Strategy and Vision for Kent. With the replacement of the Partnership, this reference will now relate to the Locality Board.

1.7 Risk Management

1.7.1 Risk assessments will need to be carried out by the Maidstone Locality Board. Any risks to the Council will be managed through our existing risk management policies and reported on a regular basis.

1.8 Other Implications

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	X
3.	Legal	X
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	X
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	X
8.	Procurement	

9. Asset Management



1.8.1 Financial

The Sustainable Community Strategy will inform both short term and long term priority and budget setting for the Maidstone Locality Board and key partners.

1.8.2 Equality Impact Needs Assessment

A Stage 1 Equality Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the original Strategy. This identifies that the strategy by its nature is aimed at addressing inequalities and improving the outcomes for groups with protected characteristics. On an ongoing basis, organisations representing different communities of interest will need to be consulted and invited to engage in the development of the Strategy. Impact assessments will be undertaken for specific activity within the strategy before this is implemented.

1.8.3 Legal

Currently the Council is required to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy. However, the government recently consulted on new Best Value statutory guidance, which stated that the requirement for councils to produce a Community Strategy could be repealed in the future. Despite this it is believed that it is beneficial to retain a single overarching strategy to guide the work of the Council and the Maidstone Locality Board.

1.8.4 Community Safety

The Community Strategy includes a key priority relating to safe and cohesive communities, within which there are a number of objectives relating to community safety. The action plan contains a number of specific activities that will contribute to improving community safety in the borough.

1.8.5 Human Rights Act

Many aspects of the Strategy support Human Rights in setting out to tackle issues such as poverty, homelessness, environmental issues and inequalities in health. There are no other immediate legal or human rights implications.

1.8.6 Conclusion

The Sustainable Community Strategy was first produced in 2009. While a number of the objectives in the strategy remain relevant, given the many changes in the national and local context it is timely to refresh the Strategy and the priorities for the Maidstone Locality Board, which

will provide an essential mechanism to allow actions to be determined at a community level.

1.14 Relevant Documents

Appendix

Refreshed Maidstone Community Strategy 2009-2020 (April 2013)

Background Documents

None

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes No

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

.....

This is a Key Decision because:

.....

Wards/Parishes affected:

.....