

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE CABINET HELD ON 15 MAY 2013

REFRESHING THE MAIDSTONE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2009-20: MAIDSTONE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Issue for Decision

To consider the Refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2020.

Recommendation Made

That the refreshed Strategy: Maidstone Community Strategy – your community, our priority for 2009-20 (as attached at Appendix A) be adopted.

Reasons for Recommendation

At the meeting on 15 May 2013, Cabinet made the following decision:-

1. That Council be recommended to adopt the refreshed Strategy: Maidstone Community Strategy – your community, our priority for 2009-20.
2. That the Head of Housing and Community Services be given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Maidstone Community Strategy as a result of consultation including Overview and Scrutiny and key partners from voluntary and community groups in the priority areas of the borough, before being recommended to Council.

Local authorities have a statutory requirement 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.

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."

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.

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.

The preparation and publication of a SCS has generally been undertaken through Local Strategic Partnerships, and therefore was the responsibility of the Maidstone Locality Board.

An SCS has value as a vehicle for consulting with local people and with key partners on the long-term priorities for an area.

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.

Continuing to produce a strategic document that highlights the priorities for Maidstone fitted 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. The purpose and priorities of the document remain relevant whilst the position of the Locality Board is clarified.

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.

Consultation Undertaken

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

has been undertaken with key partners including voluntary and community groups in the priority areas of the borough.

Changes made following further consultation

No additional changes have been required following the further consultation period.

However, with the recent disbandment of the Maidstone Locality Board, the Strategy has been updated to reflect this change. The Borough Council and its partners will continue to oversee and steer the delivery of this Strategy.

Alternatives considered and why not recommended

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.

Background Papers

None