

# Draft Strategic Plan

## 2015-2020

Please note artwork etc. still to be completed

## **Foreword from the Leader**

The Strategic Plan is Maidstone Borough Council's most important document because it illustrates how we will create the conditions in making Maidstone Borough an attractive place to live, work and visit. The council faces tough challenges over the next five years however we must create the conditions which allow for managed economic growth, but also respects our natural environment and the heritage which the county town of Kent possesses.

Maidstone is the county town of Kent and we have attracted investment and growth to help secure our future. We have a unique mix of rural Kentish villages, urban areas and a vibrant town centre, which makes Maidstone a highly desirable place in which to live, work and visit. However I believe we must not be complacent. Following public consultation about our priorities it was clear residents value a clean and safe borough and improvement to our transport infrastructure to ease the traffic congestion across the Borough of Maidstone.

The delivery of improved road infrastructure must occur through close working with key partners. For example work on the improved Bridges Gyratory scheme will start later in 2015. Other schemes across the borough will be funded through a variety of measures and will seek to improve key pinch points.

Although our borough is a clean and safe place we must work with all partners to continue to improve all areas of the public realm for the benefit of all. Working together with our parish councils and other local community groups we will facilitate improvements across the borough.

Over the next five years the Council will face a difficult financial future, along with most public sector organisations, as our funding for the provision of local services is reduced. We are taking steps to manage our assets more effectively through a series of measures including our Festivals and Events programme.

This document puts people at the heart of our plans. I want Maidstone to have a bright future and I believe the Strategic Plan sets out what we want to achieve over the next five years and what we will deliver for our residents, our businesses and also our visitors

Councillor Annabelle Blackmore

## **Introduction from the Chief Executive**

Maidstone sits at the heart of Kent and within the sphere of influence of London one of the world's most vibrant cities. This gives us both key locational advantages and challenges.

We need to create the conditions where Maidstone retains its intrinsic attractiveness, ensure that there are enough homes to accommodate our growing population and that we capitalise on the positive attributes of our location by creating the conditions for and harnessing the benefits of managed economic growth. We need to evolve the character of communities across the borough for the benefit of both our existing and future residents and in a way that respects the quality of people's lives, our heritage and the natural attributes of our environment.

We will do this by working closely with the public, businesses, our partners including Kent County Council and other organisations to encourage investment and growth for the benefit of everyone.

We will make sure the services we provide are of a high standard and value for money so everyone is satisfied and those that need support get it.

Maidstone is a diverse place – with distinctive rural and urban communities. We will invest in the quality of our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live, in our town centre to draw on the economic strength that Maidstone gives to the area and in infrastructure which is needed to support growth across the borough as a whole.

Although unemployment levels are low, since the recession economic output has fallen more in Maidstone than elsewhere in Kent and nationally and median earnings have declined. There are significant health inequalities reflecting the variation in prosperity across our communities. This diversity is at the centre of our ambition for Maidstone to be a place where everyone has a chance to succeed and where nobody gets left behind. We want to reduce inequality while by building resilience in individuals, communities, businesses and the Council itself.

Our plans will be built on our STRIVE values which we will use to guide our service design through the years ahead. In working to deliver our plan we will need to be innovative and creative. We will enable our staff, utilising their skills and experience, to find innovative and creative approaches and new ways of working.

Alison Broom

**OUR VISION**

That our residents live in decent homes, enjoy good health and a pleasant environment, with a successful economy that is supported by reliable transport networks.

**OUR MISSION**

Putting People First.

**PRIORITY 1**

Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all

**PRIORITY 2**

Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Providing a clean and safe environment

Encouraging good health and wellbeing.

Respecting the character of our Borough

Ensuring there are good leisure and cultural attractions

Enhancing the appeal of the town centre for everyone

Securing improvements to the transport infrastructure of our Borough

Promoting a range of employment opportunities and skills required across our Borough

Planning for sufficient homes to meet our Borough's needs

**OUR VALUES**

**Service**

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 positive and professional manner.

**Teamwork**

Working together to achieve our objectives and goals in a way that utilises the talents and creativity of everyone in our organisation.

**Responsibility**

We work in an environment that encourages us to take ownership for our actions. Making the right choices and decisions that lead to a satisfactory outcome for all.

**Integrity**

We have the courage to act on our convictions to build trust and honesty. We work with our partners and customers to create a feeling of openness and transparency in everything we do.

**Value**

Taking care and weighing up our options, aiming to get the maximum effect for every penny of public money we spend.

**Equality**

Valuing our differences and understanding how they can contribute to a better working environment and services that are fair and easy to access.

## **Providing a Clean and Safe Environment**

Over the past 5 years, Maidstone Borough Council has demonstrated its commitment to deliver cost effective and sustainable waste and recycling services as a result our recycling rate has improved significantly. Maidstone does not experience high levels of crime. We have with our Community Safety Partnership agreed that reducing anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, reoffending and improving road safety are our priorities up until 2018.

### **We mean:**

- People feel safe in the Borough and they live in a clean environment of high quality

### **We will:**

- Work with our partners to improve all areas of the public realm
- Deliver the waste and recycling strategy
- Deliver an efficient and effective street cleansing service
- Deliver the Community Safety strategy
- Deliver the Air Quality Strategy working with partners

### **Measured by:**

- Resident satisfaction
- British crime survey
- Environmental quality indicators
- Recycling
- Reduction in residual waste
- Estimated levels of CO2 Emissions (per head of population)

## **Encouraging Good Health and Wellbeing**

Deprivation in the borough is lower than average, however 15% (4,300) of children (under 16 years old) in Maidstone live in poverty. There is a larger difference in life expectancy of men and women; 7 years lower for men and 4 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Maidstone than in the least deprived.

### **We mean:**

- Addressing the social determinants of health through our role in services like Housing, Environmental Health and Community Development and our provider role in terms of leisure activities
- Improved health outcomes for residents, reduced health inequality

### **We will:**

- Deliver our housing strategy
- Deliver our health inequalities action plan
- Work with businesses to promote health and wellbeing

### **Measured by:**

- Health Indicators
- Number of private sector homes improved
- Disabled Facilities Grants
- Homelessness Prevention

## **Respecting the Character of our Borough**

Maidstone is the county town of Kent, in terms of its geography it is largely rural and the countryside offers high quality landscape and biodiversity. Approximately 50% of the borough population lives in a parished area. We are focused on achieving economic prosperity, whilst at the same time balancing protecting the environment and landscape that makes the borough of Maidstone a great place to live, work in and visit.

### **We mean:**

- Thriving and Resilient Urban and Rural Communities
- Listening to our communities
- Respecting our Heritage and Natural Environment
- Devolving services where we can and working with Kent County Council to do the same

### **We will:**

- Deliver and honour our parish charter
- Deliver the communication and engagement action plan
- Work with our Parishes and Communities on the design of their communities

### **Measured by:**

- Resident survey
- Parish survey

## **Ensuring there are good Leisure and Cultural Attractions**

There is always something to see or do in Maidstone with the river, two museums and a theatre in the town centre, four green flag parks, a well-used leisure centre, a castle, various markets and a variety of festivals and events held across the Borough and throughout the year.

### **We mean:**

- Maidstone has leisure and cultural offers which attract visitors and meet the needs of our residents

### **We will:**

- Adopt and deliver a Destination Management Plan with a shared statement of intent to manage, develop and promote our borough
- Deliver the festival and events strategy
- Maximise the benefits of our leisure and cultural assets through our commercialisation approach to maintain key services

### **Measured by:**

- Customer satisfaction with our leisure and cultural attractions
- Visitor economy indicators

## **Enhancing the Appeal of the Town Centre for Everyone**

Maidstone has had an historically thriving town centre however we need to ensure that we keep pace with the changing economic environment and continue to meet the demands of businesses and consumers. Investment in Maidstone town centre is needed if it is to continue to be a popular place for leisure, to live, shop and work.

### **We mean:**

- Ensuring we have a thriving and attractive town centre that is fit for the future

### **We will:**

- Be proactive in delivering a vision for the town centre through working with partners, businesses and regenerating areas ourselves.

### **Measured by:**

- % of vacant retail units
- Conversion of office space to residential,
- How Maidstone is rated as a retail destination
- Resident satisfaction

## **Securing Improvements to the Transport Infrastructure for our Borough**

Maidstone is strategically situated between London and the channel ports and is serviced by two motorway networks, the M20 and M2, with rail connections to central London. With regard to travelling in and around the Borough by car, congestion is an issue particularly at peak time in the town centre. The bus transport network serving Maidstone town is relatively strong whilst rural transport presents distinct challenges.

### **We mean:**

- A transport network that meets the needs of residents and businesses

### **We will:**

- Deliver an integrated transport strategy and work with our partners to seek improvements to the transport infrastructure

### **Measured by:**

- Measures from Integrated Transport Strategy
- Resident Survey

## **Promoting a range of employment skills and opportunities across the borough**

There were 68,300 people employed in the Maidstone economy in 2012 with a high proportion in the public sector, reflecting the town's status as Kent's County Town and administrative capital. There were 6,760 registered businesses in Maidstone in 2012, equivalent to 43 businesses per 1,000 population, compared to 39 for England and an above average rate of self-employment.

### **We mean:**

- Meeting the skills and employment needs of our residents, not becoming a dormitory borough and supporting and attracting businesses

### **We will:**

- Adopt a Economic Development Strategy and Deliver with Partners.
- Work with businesses and support them to grow and develop
- Support the principle of an enterprise hub
- Work with our partners to support those not in education, employment or training (NEET)

### **Measured by:**

- % of our residents that are NEET
- Net change in jobs
- % of Job Seekers Allowance claimants
- Business Start-ups versus failures

## **Planning for Sufficient Homes to meet our Borough's Needs**

Over the last five years, the supply of new affordable housing within the borough has been greater than in neighbouring authorities, although still less than historic levels. 189 new affordable homes were built in the borough in 2013/14. In total 630 new homes were delivered in 2012/13, of these new homes over 80% were built on land that had previously been developed.

### **We mean:**

- Having enough homes to meet our residents needs with sufficient homes across a range of tenures

### **We will:**

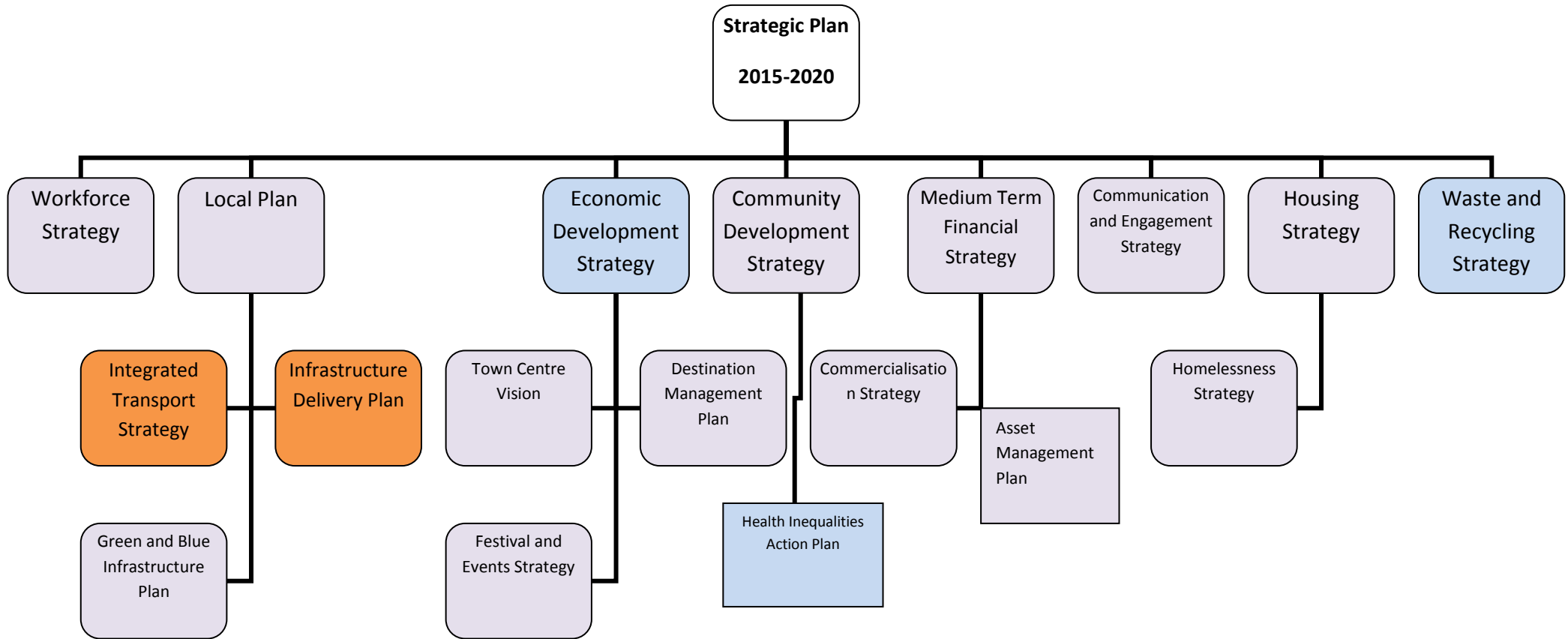
- Adopt a local plan
- Deliver the Housing Strategy

### **Measured by:**

- Net Additional Homes
- % of additional homes that are affordable



**How it all fits together – Our Strategies and Plans**



<b>Priority 1 Keeping Maidstone an attractive place for all</b>
<b>Priority 2 Securing a successful economy</b>
<b>Supports both priorities</b>