AGENDA

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday 24 June 2015
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Brice, Chittenden, Cox, Garland, Mrs Joy, McKay, McLoughlin, Munford, Naghi, Ross, Round, Sargeant, Mrs Stockell and Mrs Wilson (Chairman)

Continued Over/:

Issued on 16 June 2015

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Alison Broom

Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone Kent ME15 6JQ

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 MAY 2015

Present: **Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Brice, Chittenden, Cox, Garland, Mrs Joy, McKay, McLoughlin, Munford, Naghi, Ross, Round, Sargeant, Mrs Stockell and Mrs Wilson (Chairman)**

Also Present: **Councillors Ash, Burton, Ells, English, Fissenden, Fort, Gooch, Harwood, Hemsley, Hinder, D Mortimer, Newton, Paine, Parvin, Paterson, Pickett, Ring, Robertson, Ross, Round, Springett, Webb and Webster**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

3. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

The following Members were in attendance as observers:

Councillors Ash, Burton, Ells, English, Fissenden, Fort, Gooch, Harwood, Hemsley, Hinder, D Mortimer, Newton, Paine, Parvin, Paterson, Pickett, Ring, Robertson, Ross, Round, Springett, Webb and Webster.

4. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: That Councillor Mrs Blackmore be elected as the Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2015/16.

5. DURATION OF MEETING.

6.30 p.m. to 6.35 p.m.

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

24 JUNE 2015

REFERENCE FROM COUNCIL

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

At the meeting of the Council held on 22 April 2015, the following motion was moved by Councillor Harper, seconded by Councillor English:

This Council recognises that cycling is an excellent carbon free form of transport. However, Maidstone currently has very low levels of cycling compared to similar communities elsewhere. The Council will work with the recently established Maidstone Cycle Campaign Forum to promote cycling.

In particular it will work with Kent County Council and the Campaign Forum to get in place as quickly as possible a cycle path along the Medway from Allington Lock to either Barming or Teston Bridge. This will provide a safe and pleasant route through the middle of the town and a safe artery for cycling into the town avoiding in particular Tonbridge Road, a notoriously difficult road for cycling along.

The Council reconfirms that it has currently allocated £1m towards this project and that Kent County Council has an allocation of £2m. If the scheme can be delivered under budget the Council will give consideration to use any balance (of its, MBC's, earmarked funds) towards further infrastructure for Cycling in the Borough.

During the discussion, with the agreement of the mover and the seconder, the first sentence of the third paragraph of the motion was amended as follows:

The Council reconfirms that it has currently allocated £1m towards this project and that Kent County Council has an allocation of £2m as part of the Local Enterprise Partnership funding.

The mover and the seconder of the motion indicated that they had no objection to the second paragraph of the motion being amended to reflect Members’ concerns that the proposed cycle path should be sympathetic to the environment.

The motion, as amended, was referred to the Policy and Resources Committee.

<u>RECOMMENDED</u>: That the Policy and Resources Committee consider the motion, as amended, relating to cycling infrastructure.

<u>NOTE</u>: A briefing note provided by the Head of Finance and Resources to assist the Council in its consideration of the motion is attached as Appendix A.

APPENDIX A

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

22 APRIL 2015

BRIEFING NOTE ON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT MOTION

THE ORIGINAL GRANT FUNDING

1. During the development of the capital programme for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20 the cabinet considered two schemes that had received grant aid during the year. These were bridges' gyratory improvements and sustainable transport improvements.

2. The schemes will be completed by Kent County Council but the grant conditions require contribution from the borough council. The bid for grant funding included maximum contributions from the council of £2.4m for the two schemes. The grant awarded is a total of £8.75m for the two schemes.

3. The sustainable transport scheme will develop cycle paths into the town centre along the River Medway. At the time of submitting the bid for funding the council committed a maximum of £1m of its own resources but expected to receive a maximum of £0.5m from other contributors making the minimum council contribution £0.5m.

4. The two schemes are reflected in the capital programme that was approved by council on 25th February 2015 as one of the budget decisions. The programme shows only the planned council contribution and assumes the funding for the sustainable transport scheme will be required in 2016/17.

CURRENT SCHEME ISSUES

5. The sustainable transport scheme involves a stretch of the river from East Farleigh to Aylesford. A large part of the costs involve the creation of a new tow path in the Tonbridge and Malling Borough area.

6. Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council has declared that it does not support the project, is not willing to contribute towards it and wish the government funding to be spent on flood protection measures instead. This has potentially called in to question whether the project can still proceed.

7. Kent County Council is seeking approval to amend the scope of the scheme so that all works take place in the Maidstone Borough area, which will reduce the costs of the scheme to £1.5m and the council's contribution to around £500,000. The cycle path proposed is between Allington Lock and Teston Bridge or Barming.

8. It is not clear yet whether such a significant change would require the project to be reappraised by government. A meeting of the Project Manager and stakeholders to explore these issues is planned for the 1st May 2015.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

9. The medium term financial strategy for capital, as agreed by council on 25 February 2015, incorporates principles of scheme prioritisation. Available resources from under spend of previous schemes are directed to the highest priority schemes and not earmarked for further work related to the scheme that under spent. This principle ensures that schemes are funded in priority order.

10. The proposal to earmark resources as set out in the motion would be contrary to the principles agreed in the medium term financial strategy unless the further work that the motion suggests was identified as the highest priority scheme requiring capital funding.

Agenda Item 12

Policy and Resources	24 June 2015
Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	Yes/~~No~~

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2014/15

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources Committee
Lead Director or Head of Service	Head of Policy and Communications
Lead Officer and Report Author	Clare Wood
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	None

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. Note the performance against the 2014/15 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and the end of year Strategic Plan action updates at Appendix A (Indicator Definitions are included for reference at Appendix B), considering :
    - Performance against target
    - Direction of performance
    - Reasons for missing data.
2. Agree the new Key Performance Indicator set and targets for the Strategic Plan 2015-20 at Appendix C.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Great People
- Great Place
- Great Opportunity

  The Key Performance Indicators are part of the Council's overarching Strategic Plan 2011-15 and play an important role in the achievement of corporate objectives, which in turn reflect what matters most to the Maidstone community. Other Performance Indicators cover a wide range of service and priority areas for example waste and recycling, customer contact, planning and costs.

Timetable	
Meeting	***Date***
Policy and Resources Committee	24/06/15
Council	N/A
Other Committee	N/A

Annual Performance Plan

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 To note the end of year Strategic Plan action updates and Key Performance Indicator results for 2014/15, and to agree the Key Performance Indicators and targets.

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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 Having a comprehensive and relevant set of performance indicators and targets is vital to ensure that the Council delivers its priorities and outcomes. It is important to look at these measures and set targets that reflect the Council's overall aim of continuous improvement. Definitions of performance indicators are included at Appendix B for reference.

2.2 Performance indicators are judged in two ways; firstly on whether performance has improved, been sustained or declined, compared to the same period in the previous year. This is known as Direction. Where there is no previous data, no assessment of Direction can be made.

2.3 The second way is to look at whether an indicator has achieved the target set and is known as PI status. If an indicator has achieved or exceeded the annual target they are rated green. If the target has been missed but is within 10% of the target it will be rated amber and if the target has been missed by more than 10% it will be rated red. Some indicators will show an asterix (*) after the figure, these are provisional values that are awaiting confirmation.

2.4 Contextual indicators are not targeted but are given a Direction. Indicators that are not due for reporting or where there is delay in data collection are not rated against targets or given a Direction.

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3. PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

3.1 There are 57 key performance indicators (KPIs) which were agreed in the Strategic Plan 2011-15 for 2014/15, relating to seven strategic outcomes. Overall, 56% (28) of KPIs achieved the annual target set and for 56% of indicators performance improved. At the year-end in 2013/14 51% (31) of the targets were met and 44% (24) of indicators had improved. Full details of KPI results are at Appendix A.

3.2 In terms of the Strategic Plan outcomes, performance has been strong for the outcome 'services are customer focused and residents are satisfied with them'. Despite the economic situation during this Strategic Plan period the Council has maintained performance and continued to ensure outcomes are achieved particularly in the area of reducing disadvantage and deprivation.

Performance against Target	On target	Missed target[1]	Target not achieved	N/A	Total
A Growing Economy	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	0	4	9
A Decent Place	12 (50%)	7 (30%)	5 (20%)	3	27
Corporate & Customer excellence	13 (62%)	4 (19%)	4 (19%)	0	21
Total	**28 (56%)**	**13 (26%)**	**9 (18%)**	**7**	**57**

Direction of Performance	Improved	Sustained	Declined	N/A	Total
A Growing Economy	5 (63%)		3 (37%)	1	9
A Decent Place	9 (38%)	1 (4%)	14 (58%)	3	27
Corporate & Customer excellence	15 (75%)		5 (25%)	1	21
Total	**28 (56%)**	**1 (2%)**	**21 (42%)**	**7**	**57**

Good Performance

3.3 The level of people claiming job seekers allowance has reduced over the course of the year and currently stands at 1.3% or 1,327 people, 475 fewer people are claiming this benefit compared to the same period last year. Maidstone's figure is 0.7% lower than the figure for Great Britain as a whole. This is the fifth lowest figure out of the Kent districts. In addition the proportion of people aged 16-18 that are not currently in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) has also reduced slightly compared to last year, there are currently 249, 16 to 18 year olds who fall into this category. The latest data available for England (February 2015) shows the current proportion of NEETs to be 4.8% higher than the figure for Maidstone (4.07%).

3.4 The proportion of vacant retail units in the town centre has reduced compared to last year. At this point last year there were 44 vacant units, this now stands at 39 vacant units, equating to 7.83% vacant units.

3.5 Also in reference to the town centre economy, the overall number of parking transactions in 2014/15 increased. This is due to King St car park reopening and flooding experienced in the previous year not being an issue in 2014/15. In 2014/15 there was a high turnover at the King St car park with £49.15 generated per bay per week whereas previously a MSCP average income per bay per week was £15.68. Income from pay and display spaces has increased by more than £200 per space since this period last year, exceeding the annual target. This is not surprising as the overall number of bays is much-reduced (223 to 60); however the income per bay is also much higher than the average income per bay, due to the close proximity to the shops, car park condition, and the short stay tariff.

[1] By less than 10%.

3.6 In relation to housing and the housing register, the team improved 217 private sector homes, exceeding the annual target of 180. In addition, the average length of stay in temporary accommodation (those leaving TA) has achieved the annual target. The average stay is currently 56 days.

3.7 Although performance fluctuated during the year, the processing of Major planning applications within statutory time frames achieved its annual target and improved on last year's performance. This is particularly positive considering that the service received 13 more major applications than in 2013/14 and there was a change in IT systems in June 2014.

3.8 The cost of collecting household waste per household has reduced by £8.77 following the roll out of the new waste contract in 2013. 2014/15 was the first full year under the new arrangements. Prior to the new contract, the cost of collecting waste had been around £55 per household, per year, for 2014/15 the cost of waste collection was £34.71.

3.9 In terms of delivering customer services the average wait time for calls into the contact centre has reduced by just over one minute compared 2013/14. The average wait time is currently just under two minutes. Performance on face-to-face contact in the Gateway has also improved, with 80% of visitors to the Gateway seen within 20 minutes. This is the first time the annual target has been achieved since 2011/12. Correspondingly, the channel shift indicators are all moving in the right direction with contacts by phone and in person reducing and those made online increasing; all have achieved the annual target and improved compared to 2013/14.

Poor Performance

3.10 While performance has improved, for the processing of Major and residential planning applications, it has declined for Minor and Other applications. The annual target for Minors was not achieved and the target for Other applications was missed (within 10% of target). The annual performance for both indicators is the lowest in over five years. When volumes of applications are compared to 2013/14 there has been an 8% reduction in the number of Minor applications and a 12% reduction in Other applications determined compared to this time last year. As outlined at 1.6.5 the service had a change in IT systems in June 2014, which created a backlog of applications affecting the performance for quarters 2 and 3. Performance is now returning to the levels seen prior to the implementation of the new system and the results for quarter 4 for both minor and other applications is greater than that for 2013/14 overall.

3.11 The annual target for number of affordable homes has not been achieved and performance has declined compared to the same period last year. Performance in the last quarter of 2014/15 was lower than anticipated due to delays in construction such as delivery of materials. One scheme of 36 units was delivered mid April 2015 and if it had been handed over in 2014/15, the annual target would have been marginally missed (rated amber) and performance compared to the previous year would be showing an improvement.

3.12 The average time taken to process and notify applicants on the housing register has not achieved the annual target. Currently it takes an average of 35.5 days an increase of 16.5 days from 2013/14. The team reviewed and amended their process and policies, which in turn have extended the average time taken. Following the completion of an online application applicants now have 28 days to supply supporting evidence before an assessment is made and they are given a decision. While this has made the processes longer, it is more supportive of applicants as they are applying for the register.

3.13 There was no consultation work undertaken this year in relation to neighbourhood action plans as this stage of the plan has now finished and the team is concentrating on delivering the improvements set out in the plans. Between 2011 and 2015 over 2,600 people from Shepway North and South and Park Wood wards participated in the programme. The Shepway Neighbourhood Action Plan launched in May 2013, this was then rolled-out as a 'community based neighbourhood action planning' model in the Shepway area. During 2014/15 the focus has been on delivering environmental improvements including a dedicated CCTV camera for Shepway North and South wards that can be deployed as needed and education around dog fouling. The Community Development team have also been working on other initiatives in the borough including the Maidstone Health Inequalities Action Plan that was agreed in May 2014

3.14 Satisfaction with complaint handling improved compared to this time last year however, the annual target has not been achieved. A low response rate for quarter 2 coupled with no satisfied responses for this period influenced this. In 2015/16 the Policy & Information team is reviewing how we handle complaints; this review will cover the policy and look at ways in which we can gain feedback from complainants. Overall, there has been a 28% increase in the number of complaints received for 2014/15 compared to 2013/14.

3.15 The number of working days lost to sickness has increased compared to the same period last year and has not achieved the annual target. This is due to an increase in long-term sickness, which currently stands at 6.88 days per employee. A majority of staff have returned to work and those that remain off work are being managed through occupational health.

Strategic Plan 2015-20 Key Performance Indicators and targets 2015-18

3.16 Details of proposed KPIs and targets are attached at Appendix C. Targets have been proposed by Service Managers and Heads of Service and where possible have been set for the next three years. Performance will be reported to the Corporate Leadership Team and Policy and Resources Committee through the Quarterly Monitoring Reports, so that early action can be taken to mitigate any issues where necessary.

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4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Having a comprehensive and relevant set of performance indicators and targets is vital to ensure that the Council delivers its priorities and outcomes. It is important to look at these measures and set targets that reflect the Council's overall aim of continuous improvement. Definitions of performance indicators are included at Appendix B for reference.

4.2 Previously the Local Authority had a duty to produce a Best Value Performance Plan setting out the annual results for all performance indicators and targets for the next three years. In 2009, this duty was removed however it is still considered best practice to produce an annual performance report as well as set and publish targets for the next three years.

4.3 The Council could choose not to produce an annual performance report and/or could choose alternative performance management arrangements.

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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 The performance indicator set at Appendix C evolved from discussions with Cabinet and Senior Manager about the Strategic plan 2015-20 and is the measurement mechanism for assessing progress on the Strategic Plan 2015-20.

5.2 The proposed targets for the Key Performance Indicator set for 2015-20 have been set following discussions with Service Managers and Heads of Service and where possible have been set for the next three years

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6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Key Performance Indicators are part of the Council's overarching Strategic Plan 2011-15 and play an important role in the achievement of corporate objectives which in turn reflect what matters most to the Maidstone community. Other Performance Indicators cover a wide range of service and priority areas for example waste and recycling, customer contact, planning and costs.	Anna Collier
Risk Management	The setting and monitoring of performance targets linked to our strategic outcomes forms a key part of our risk management framework by enabling the organisation to measure progress towards achieving its objectives, identify areas of strong performance and where there is under-performance in comparison with the targets set and consequently where remedial action needs to be focused.	Anna Collier

Financial	The financial implications of any proposed changes are also identified and taken into account in the Council's budget setting process with issues highlighted as part of the budget monitoring reporting process.	Zena Cooke & Paul Holland
Staffing	Having a clear set of measures enables staff outcomes/objectives to be set and effective action plans to be put in place.	Anna Collier
Legal	None identified.	
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	None identified.	Anna Collier
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The performance indicators cover and are used to monitor a number of priority areas. No implications identified.	
Community Safety		
Human Rights Act		
Procurement		Zena Cooke
Asset Management	None identified.	

7. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A – 2014/15 Performance out-turns
- Appendix B – 2014/15 Indicator Definitions
- Appendix C – 2015-18 KPI Targets

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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None

Understanding Performance Tables

Quarterly Data reported throughout the year.

Direction of Travel (D) shows change compared to the previous year please see keys to symbols below.

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			

The unique reference number.

Results for previous year so that comparisons can be made.

Values and Targets for the financial year 2014/15.

The status symbol shows if the target has been achieved please see keys to symbols below. Based on year to date performance and targets

Key to performance ratings

13

Performance indicators are judged in two ways; firstly on whether performance has improved, been sustained or declined, compared to the same period in the previous year for example, 2014/15 annual out-turns will be compared against 2013/14 annual out-turns. This is known as Direction. Where there is no previous data no assessment of Direction can be made. The second way in which performance is assessed looks at whether an indicator has achieved the target set and is known as PI status. Some indicators will show an asterix (*) after the figure, these are provisional out-turns that are awaiting confirmation. Contextual indicators are not targeted but are given a direction. Indicators that are not due for reporting or where there is delay in data collection are not rated against targets or given a direction.

PI Status	
	Target not achieved
	Target missed (within 10%)
	Target met
	No target to measure performance against
	Data Only

Direction	
	Performance has improved
	Performance has not changed / been sustained
	Performance has declined
	No previous performance to judge against

For Maidstone to have a growing economy

Outcome 1. A transport network that supports the local economy

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15 Value	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
PKG 002	Income from pay and display car parks per space	£1029.49	£291.15	£304.34	£333.00	£316.16	£277.96	£1244.65	£1029.49	Jeff Kitson		
PKG 007	Number of on-board Park & Ride bus transactions	377,907	89,849.5	90,217	105,595	88,778.5	90,720	374,440	378,000	Jeff Kitson		
	On board Park and ride transactions have declined by 1% since 2013/14, possibly indicating that the decline in service usage is slowing, as between 2012/13 and 2013/14 transactions were showing a 5% decline. The lower than budgeted for income has been offset by other Park & Ride income streams.											
PKG 008	Percentage change in bus usage on services from Maidstone depot	-1.64%	Not measured for Quarters					-3.31%		Jeff Kitson		

Code	Title	Latest Note
OUT 001.01	Deliver an integrated transport strategy	The Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) is a joint strategy being prepared by Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council. The draft strategy was published in 2012 and it supported the Core Strategy at that time. Since then the councils have been working together to identify solutions to Maidstone's transport infrastructure problems. At a strategic level, funding has been secured to improve traffic flows at the town centre bridge gyratory, for an integrated transport package for Maidstone, and for cycle improvements. Further transport modelling has recently been undertaken to reflect the evolution of housing numbers and the distribution of development in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan, and the results will be used to update the ITS. Additionally, to support the infrastructure needs of new development proposals in the local plan, a number of detailed design schemes for junction improvements have been commissioned.
OUT 001.02	Implement an infrastructure delivery plan	The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) supports the proposals of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (and former Core Strategy), and has been updated following consultation. There has been regular engagement with the infrastructure providers to ensure the IDP reflects the latest position. Given public concern over existing infrastructure problems, which cannot be remedied by contributions from new development, a number of task and finish groups comprising multi-agency membership on Health, Transport , Water Infrastructure and Education have been set up to consider

Code	Title	Latest Note
		existing issues. The groups will investigate the potential for joint solutions to problems and formulate actions for further work as necessary.

Outcome 2. A growing economy with rising employment, catering for a range of the skill sets to meet the demands of the local economy

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
DCV 002a	Percentage of 'major' business planning applications having pre-application discussions	92.45%	N/A	96%	N/A	TBC	92%	TBC	92%	Rob Jarman		
KCC 002	Percentage of 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs)	5.46%	Not measured for Quarters					5.07%		John Foster		
KCC 003	Percentage of the working age population educated to NVQ level 4 or higher	32.5%	Not measured for Quarters					31.2%		John Foster		
LVE 002	Percentage of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance	1.8%	1.5%	1.3%	1.2%	1.3%	2.5%	1.3%	2.5%	John Foster		
	Maidstone is currently 5th out of the twelve Kent districts for proportion of people claiming JSA. In total there are 1,327 people claiming JSA, 475 fewer than at this point last year.											
LVE 003	Percentage of vacant retail units in town centre	8.84%	Not measured for Quarters					7.83%	12%	John Foster		

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
R&B 002	Value of business rateable floor space	£141,699,516.00	Not measured for Quarters					£142,631,549.00	£143,116,511.10	Steve McGinnes		

Code	Title	Latest Note
OUT 002.01	Local Development Framework and Core Strategy	In March 2014, the Maidstone Borough Local Plan was published for public consultation. To respond to consultation comments further evidence has been prepared (agricultural land classification study and landscape capacity study), and policies and site allocations have been considered by Members throughout 2014. A further two committee meetings are planned for June and July 2015, after which a focused public consultation will be undertaken for key changes to policies and site allocations. The local plan will be finalised at the end of 2015. Submission is expected March 2016.
OUT 002.02	Review Economic Development Strategy	Consultation on the draft Economic Development Strategy took place between 15 December and 23 January. Social media, press releases and the Council's website were used to advertise the consultation. Two consultation events were held in January 2015; a business event in the morning and a Parishes and Communities event in the evening. Overall, we received representations from 85 businesses and over 1500 residents. The full consultation results and proposed changes to the strategy are expected to go to committee in June 2015.
OUT 002.03	Assistance for businesses	An Enterprise Hub is under construction in the area above the Gateway. This is due to open by September 2015 and will provide six offices, 15 hot desks, a seminar and meeting room facility. The facility aims to address the need for business space for micro-enterprises and start-up businesses. In 2014 it was agreed that Economic Development officers will be invited to all pre-planning meetings with commercial development clients. A monthly meeting between Planning, Economic Development and Housing officers has also been established to review new planning applications and potential developments prior to committee reports being compiled.

Code	Title	Latest Note
OUT 002.04	Review Parkwood Industrial Estate and implement a strategy for its regeneration	Discussions have been held with key tenants and a regular programme of meetings has been established. Meetings with key owners of development sites have commenced. Proposals are being finalised for improvements to the entrance and Bircholt Road. The Council is about to apply for planning permission to improve the signage at the entrance and was successful in purchasing part of the estate.
OUT 002.05	Work with partners through the LSP to deliver a step change in Maidstone's learning and skills performance to ensure a high-quality skills base sufficient to enable people in Maidstone to realise their full potential.	In alignment with actions identified in the draft Economic Development Strategy, the focus of skills initiatives has shifted throughout 2014/15 to concentrate on addressing the needs of businesses as well as the needs of individuals. In accordance with this the team has delivered: two redundancy support events, three recruitment events for specific businesses working with Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme providers, two jobs fairs and has supported businesses to explore apprenticeships through 1-1 meetings. Four work experience coffee mornings have been delivered alongside this, and support for career events in local schools has continued. The team has also continued to support the coordination of skills delivery partners such as Catch 22, has a role on the MidKent College Advisory Board and supports the transition of armed forces personnel into civilian employment through Maidstone's Armed Forces Covenant.
OUT 002.06	Deliver the High Street Regeneration Project	Phase 2 of the High Street regeneration was completed on time and on budget. Kent County Council is expected to issue an adoption certificate by the end of June 2015. An evaluation of the first two phases has been commissioned and is being carried out by Mott Macdonald. Their report is expected in June 2015 alongside an Economic Impact Assessment of the outline designs for the proposed Phase 3 works which will include Gabriel's Hill, Earl Street and the north end of Week Street. A report will be produced at this time setting out the options for taking forward this work. Going forward a Town Centre Visioning Group has been established to look at how Maidstone can deal with the challenges facing town centres such as out of town retails parks and offices and Maidstone specific issues like congestion and the river.
OUT 002.08	Local Implementation Plan (LIP) Homes and Community Agency milestones	The LIP was a mechanism used by the previous government and has not been carried forward by the coalition government in the same way. The only recognisable remnant is the affordable housing programme. The Housing Service developed a programme in partnership with its housing providers and the Homes & Communities Agency that successfully delivered over 1,100 new affordable homes over the past five years. The programme has delivered a wide range of property type and size of accommodation, ranging from 1 bedroom flats to four bedroom houses. The council delivered the first of its own housing stock during 2014/15 with Aylsebury House providing 12 units of emergency housing provision and later in the year the completion of Magnolia House that provides 8 self-contained apartments. Both schemes will provide better quality homes for homeless families. A new 5-yearAffordable Housing Programme to operate between 2015 and 2020 was announced and the council has fully engaged with the HCA and partners to provide the start of the new programme and ensure a continuous supply of new affordable housing.

For Maidstone to be a decent place to live

Objective 3. Decent, affordable housing in the right places across a range of tenures

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
DCV 003	Percentage of residential planning applications processed within statutory timescales	62.81%	65.60%	70.42%	60.99%	86.36%	70.00%	71.57%	70.00%	Rob Jarman		
DCV 004	Processing of planning applications: Major applications (NI 157a)	55.36%	68.75%	80.00%	77.78%	60.00%	70.00%	72.46%	70.00%	Rob Jarman		
DCV 005	Processing of planning applications: Minor applications (NI 157b)	71.22%	62.65%	51.81%	49.09%	74.16%	75.00%	60.65%	75.00%	Rob Jarman		
	Although performance improved substantively in the fourth quarter the annual target has not been achieved. The introduction of the Planning Support Shared Service in particular the IT issues created a backlog of planning applications. This appears to have had a greater impact on minor planning applications during quarters 2 and three. We can now see performance returning to previous levels with the quarter 4 value.											
DCV 006	Processing of planning applications: Other applications (NI 157c)	87.85%	80.00%	69.12%	68.10%	89.26%	85.00%	77.56%	85.00%	Rob Jarman		
HSG 001	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	189	38	39	44	42	105	163	200	Andrew Connors		
	Target for this quarter was much lower than anticipated due to several schemes with planned handovers in the programme slipping into the next financial year due to delays on-site which are beyond the Council's control. One scheme of 36 units has just slipped into April.											
HSG 002	Average grant per MBC funded affordable home unit	£7698.00	Not measured for Quarters					£00.00	£8500.00	John Littlemore		
	There were no affordable housing dwellings completed during the financial year that the council directly funded. Various opportunities are currently being assessed with a view to designing our own programme and making further capital commitments such as Brunswick Street accommodation project.											

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
HSG PS 003	Number of private sector homes improved	295	70	52	45	50	45	217	180	John Littlemore		
SPT 004	New homes built on previously developed land (BV 106)	76.83%	Not measured for Quarters					77.48%	65.00%	Rob Jarman		
SPT 006	Net additional homes provided (NI 154)	423	Not measured for Quarters					413	400	Rob Jarman		

Code	Title	Latest Note
OUT 003.01	New Housing: Enable the delivery of a range of high quality homes that are desirable and affordable to all sections of the community	A total of 163 affordable homes (comprising of affordable rent and shared ownership) are reported as completed for 2014/15. The affordable homes are a mixture of one, two, three and four bed units. Housing have a 100% response rate to responding to planning application consultations within the consultation period.
OUT 003.02	Existing Housing: Ensure our existing housing is suitable and able to meet future challenges; providing sought after homes now and into the future	The Business Improvement Team worked with the Housing Service to help develop the council's response to stock conditions within the private rented sector and home ownership. The new Housing Assistance Policy provides a more tailored grant regime that encourages landlords to improve their homes and management standards through the council's accreditation scheme. During 2014/15, the council provided 129 grants to improve homes and remove Category 1 Hazards (the most serious type of fault with a property). Landlords receiving grants are also required to provide nomination rights to the council, which helps to ease demand on the housing register by providing homes in addition to those provided by housing associations.
OUT 003.03	Homelessness & vulnerable groups: Commission and provide services with partners that meet identified needs, reduce inequalities, are responsive and timely, promote stable, strong communities, self-reliance and encourage positive aspirations	In 2014, a new Homelessness Strategy for 2014-19 was adopted. The new Strategy builds on recent success in changing service delivery that has seen the introduction of on line application forms, text messaging and emailing clients rather than using paper letters. This has improved efficiency by providing a quicker service to applicants whilst also reducing the overall cost of the service. The increase in homelessness has made for a challenging year with over 600 decisions made in 2014/15. During 2013/14, the number of households placed into temporary accommodation was 206 and they were accommodated for 11,942 nights. This figure increased in 2014/15 to 256 households who were accommodated for 12,688 nights. However, due to efficiencies achieved through improved working practices and the introduction of our own temporary accommodation an increase in costs of £164,000 was avoided over the year. Over 620 families were housed into affordable homes through nominations made from the council’s Housing Register to the various partner

Code	Title	Latest Note
		housing associations that work closely with the council to provide secure and good quality homes at an affordable rent. Of these families 32% were from Band ‘A’, which is for those applicants who provide a contribution to the community.

Objective 4. Continue to be a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit the borough

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
CDP 011	Recorded crime per 1,000 population	58.3	Not measured for Quarters					59.2		Sarah Robson		
CMP 001	CO2 reduction from local authority operations (NI 185)	The data for this annual indicator is delayed. The 2013/14 figure is expected to be ready by end of June and the 2014/15 figure is expected September.								John Littlemore		
COM 008	Satisfaction with local area as a place to live (Residents Survey)	84%	Not measured for Quarters					84%	87%	Roger Adley		
DEP 004	Satisfaction with street cleansing (Residents Survey)	These indicators relate to two outcomes. See outcome 6 for details.										
PKS 002	Satisfaction with Parks and Open Spaces (Residents Survey)											
DCE 001	Percentage of planning enforcement cases signed off within 21 days	91.58%	DQ issue missing data	5.1%*	44.1%	79.6%	90.00%	40.24%*	90.00%	Rob Jarman		
	Collecting enforcement data and establishing the 21-day indicator has been problematic since the change to Uniform in June 2014. Significant work has been put into resolving performance reporting and establishing indicators across the Mid Kent partnership for planning. We are now able to report on the 21-day indicator with confidence, but only as far back as Quarter 3 2014/15. This means that the value showing for quarter 2 and the end of year need to be treated with caution and are not representative of actual performance.											

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
DEP 001	The percentage of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having deposits of litter that fall below an acceptable level (NI 195a)	1.20%	1.66%	1.66%	6.67%	1.11%	1.70%	1.11%	1.70%	Jennifer Shepherd	↑	✓
DEP 002	The percentage of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having deposits of detritus that fall below an acceptable level (NI 195b)	4.81%	Not measured for Quarters					5.33%	5.50%	Jennifer Shepherd	↓	✓
DEP 003	Cost of street cleansing per head of population	£10.01	Not measured for Quarters					£10.76	£10.01	Jennifer Shepherd	↓	△
	During 2014 there was a review into the Street Cleaning function. The aims of the review were to identify the most effective cleansing regime for the borough and improve response times for reactive work, with an increased presence at peak times. As a result of the review, a Street Cleansing Directory has been produced which details the cleansing requirements for every road within the Borough and new cleansing schedules and staffing structures are in the process of being implemented. The team have also begun to use mobile technology to capture and transfer information from residents to frontline staff and then back to residents and have seen improvements in communications and customer engagement. Due to the improvements, use of this technology is now being extended. Overall, the actions agreed as part of the review should improve efficiency and allow improved monitoring of the service.											
PKS 001	Cost of maintaining the Borough's parks and green spaces per head of population	£12.76	Not measured for Quarters					£12.96	£12.76	Jason Taylor	↓	△
WCN 001	Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (NI 192)	45.83%	51.50%	51.23%	47.77%	45.30%	50.00%	49.10%	50.00%	Jennifer Shepherd	↑	△
WC N	Cost of household waste collection	£43.48	Not measured for Quarters					£34.71	£43.48	Jennifer Shepherd	↑	✓

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
002	2014/15 was the first full year under the new waste contract.											
WCN 004	Total waste arising per household	825.90	225.07	212.58	205.39	190.20	206.25	833.24	825.00	Jennifer Shepherd		

Code	Title	Latest Note
OUT 004.01	Deliver focussed enforcement activity to ensure high impact on the cleanliness of the Borough	Overall, the volume of fly-tipping incidents received has increased by 48% compared to 2013/14. It is thought that some of the increase relates to changes to vehicle restrictions at the Tovil tip. As outlined above a Street Cleansing review was carried out in 2014. The review recommendations that were adopted are expected to increase the efficiency of the street cleansing teams with changes to the staffing arrangements and cleansing rounds in conjunction with the use of mobile technology to provide improved services for residents.
OUT 004.02	Work with partners to ensure that all areas of the Borough are clean and well-maintained	Town centre have a new approach to street cleansing for Jubilee square to keep it maintained. In addition, monthly meetings of the Street Scene Sub Group are held with all key stakeholders to address any concerns and identify areas of improvement. The introduction of mobile technology has enabled reports relating to private land or land maintained by Kent County Council or other partners to be referred to them directly for action or to the enforcement team if necessary.
OUT 004.03	Ensure provision of timely specialist advice and services on heritage and landscape design to protect and enhance Maidstone's environment	The procedures and processes were revised following agreement with MKIP partners. Training has been provided to staff and the team is monitoring the impact of the changes and making minor amendments as required. There has been an improvement in performance with 85% of development consultations now being responded to within 21 days, a 5% increase on 2013/14 performance, this is positive considering that there has been a 75% increase in consultation requests. In addition, nine tree preservation orders were granted in 2014/15.
OUT 004.04	Deliver the Carbon Management Plan to ensure that the Council reduces it's carbon footprint by 3% per annum	A review is being undertaken of the Carbon Management Plan as many of its original objectives agreed in 2009 have become dated and no longer have funding attached to them. For example improved metering was carried out to a number of locations including Maidstone House, Museum East Wing, the Crematorium and the Parkwood Depot but this did not include the full Automated Monitoring & Reporting meters due to cost. Progress is being made to provide photovoltaic panels to a number of council owned properties including the Leisure Centre, Maidstone Depot and Magnolia House. An update will be provided to the new Communities, Housing and Environment Committee during 2015 to complete the Carbon Management Plan and to begin consulting on a Low Emission Strategy to replace the old Plan.
OUT 004.05	Maximise our leisure and cultural offer to enhance the quality of life for our residents whilst attracting visitors, new	The formation of Maidstone Culture & Leisure (MCL), which brings together to council's culture and leisure assets and the production of a business plan was completed during 2013/14. A Destination Management Plan has been developed during 2014/15, this will help promote Maidstone to the tourism and leisure market in collaboration with sector

Code	Title	Latest Note
	residents and businesses	stakeholders. Use of MCL assets to generate income to develop and protect these services is progressing with a new Adventure Zone for Mote Park approved in February 2015.
OUT 004.05a	Complete the Leisure and Culture Strategy with a focus on getting others to deliver and lead on leisure and culture	Work has commenced on commissioning out festivals with Proms in the Park now delivered by Parkwood Leisure (The Hazlitt) and with a transition year in 2015 for the Mela with the intention to commission it out from 2016. A Cultural Strategy is being drafted and is due to be completed during 2015, which will underpin the approach to partnership working and will set out what the Council's role is.
OUT 004.05b	Complete the redevelopment of the Museum's East Wing	The redevelopment of the Museum's East wing is complete and has been open since 2011. Satisfaction rates increased from 88% in 2012/13 to 97% for 2014/15.
OUT 004.05c	Complete a review of play areas and produce a strategy for future provision	The Play review has been completed and a capital programme has been agreed for 3 years commencing in 2015. The Play Strategy is being redrafted in 2015/16 to strengthen links to Health and Wellbeing agenda, with the aim of it being agreed by December 2015.
OUT 004.05d	Complete Mote Park regeneration project capital works	The Mote Park regeneration works were completed in 2012, and the project was delivered within budget and on time with additional parking which was not in the original plan. The project has been audited and received the highest level of assurance. Since the project was completed there has been a 13% increase in footfall in Mote park.
OUT 004.06	New Waste Contract	Cabinet agreed a partnership contract for waste service with Ashford and Swale district councils. The contract was awarded to Biffa who began providing services in Maidstone in August 2013, saving in excess of £1 million per year. The new service allows a greater range of waste to be recycled at the doorstep and recycling rates have gone from 44% (year prior to start of new contract) to 49%.

Objective 5. Residents in Maidstone are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
CDP 003	Percentage of residents participating in neighbourhood action planning as a percentage of the ward population (includes Planning for Real	7.79%	Not measured for Quarters					0.00%	4.00%	Sarah Robson		

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
	consultation)											
	Between 2012/13 and 2013/14 over 2,000 people from Shepway North and Shepway South wards participated in Neighbourhood Planning. This year the focus has been on delivering environmental improvements identified by residents as part of the neighbourhood action planning process including CCTV provision and a campaign to encourage people not to park on verges.											
HSG 004	Average time taken to process and notify applicants on the housing register (days)	14.5	Not available for Quarters					35.5	3.2	Andrew Connors		
	Following a review of the allocation, process and policy in housing new processes have been implemented. Theses changes have increased the average time taken to process and notify applicants on the housing register; applicants now have up to 28 days to supply evidence to support their application. The approach is more supportive of applicants.											
HSG 005	Number of households prevented from becoming homeless through the intervention of housing advice	261	118	50	64	108	88	340	350	Ellie Kershaw		
HSG 009	Average length of stay in temporary accommodation (those leaving TA)		73.7 days	48.4 days	46.0 days	58.6 days	57.6 days	56.0 days	57.6 days	Ellie Kershaw		
INT 001	Percentage of the borough covered by broadband (2mb and faster)	83.63%	Not measured for Quarters					TBC	88.00%	Dave Lindsay		
	The data for this indicator is expected to be available from the end of June as it comes from BT. However, there may now be a cost implication in obtaining this data. The Chief Information Officer is currently investigating this with KCC.											
LVE 007	Gap between median wage of employees (resident) and median wage of employees (Workplace)	£67.10	Not measured for Quarters					£59.60	£65.00	John Foster		

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
	The gap between the median weekly earning of residents who work in the borough and those that work outside the borough has decreased which is positive. However, last year both workplace and resident based earnings overall decreased by at least £40.00(£44.40 for workplace and £42.00 for residents based). This overall decrease in wages could be a result of Maidstone's population of public sector workers who account for almost 25% of the workforce and who have experienced below inflation pay increases for the last four years.											
KCC 002	Percentage of 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs)	Contextual partner data Repeated from Outcome two										
KCC 003	Percentage of the working age population educated to NVQ level 4 or higher											
R&B 004	Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events (NI 181)	8.25	9.98	9.65	9.78	5.40	10.00	8.32	10.00	Steve McGinnes		

Code	Title	Latest Note
OUT 005.01	Reduce inequalities within communities through preventative action	The Maidstone Health Inequalities Plan annual review has been drafted and forwarded to Kent Public Health. Our Commissioning intentions through our Health funding (approx. £168,000 per annum), focused on preventative actions in relation to weight management, mental health and emotional wellbeing. Additional strands of work, such as breastfeeding, smoking cessation and suicide awareness are being commissioned directly by Public Health locally. The Council has continued to work with health colleagues, to ensure any gaps in commissioning are picked up by the Borough Council at a local level. An Adult weight management service, which looks to sustain a long term movement towards and maintenance of a 5-10% body weight loss (for those with BMI 28 or above) has been commissioned and referrals are received from a range of professionals including GP's / Clinicians. In 2014/15 we received a total of 355 referrals directly to Maidstone Borough Council. All participants lost weight, with 25% losing 5-10% of their body weight. In addition, Two Suicide Prevention Training sessions (ASSIST) have been rolled out across Maidstone to community and frontline services who work with at-risk groups. Maidstone Mind has led the training and the sessions have been attended by 58 organisations to date.

Code	Title	Latest Note
OUT 005.02	Promote active citizenship – to facilitate and support increased involvement by local people in decision making and involvement in their neighbourhoods	Active Citizenship programme was completed for the 2014/15 financial year, with the final Neighbourhood Engagement workshop and Participatory appraisal workshop held in February 2015. During the Strategic Planning period (2011 to 2015) a BME forum was established in partnership with Voluntary Action Maidstone, a Community Payback scheme has also been set up with Kent Probation Service and the Parish Charter has been refreshed.
OUT 005.03	Review the Parkwood Planning for Real activity to inform further work and activities supporting communities in identifying and meeting their needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities	The Park Wood Neighbourhood Action Plan (NAP) work has been completed. The Shepway NAP was launched earlier in the year and has engaged with residents and agencies in the Shepway North and South wards. Maidstone Borough Council still works within the Park Wood ward, working in partnership with Fusion Healthy Living Centre to support its health and wellbeing programmes, supporting training and skills programmes being delivered through the charity Tomorrow's People, supporting a young parents group at Heather House and continues to manage the local community hall facility.
OUT 005.04	Implement meaningful community commissioning of services for local people	A pilot project was undertaken with the voluntary and community sector to review Social Return on Investment (SROI) and its impact on the Service Level Agreement funding received through the Community Partnerships team. In previous years, community commissioning was undertaken through the Neighbourhood Action Plan process in Shepway North and South, with local residents and partners working together to commission services and implement a programme of local environmental improvements (e.g. provision of CCTV, young people's diversionary activities and to reduce parking on grass verges). Community Budgeting was also used for the Community First project in the High Street Ward, with residents working together with ward councillors to develop commissioning briefs to tackle ASB, community engagement and youth diversionary activities. Looking ahead, with the Community Development team being restructured within the new Housing and Health team, there will be opportunities to develop meaningful commissioning of services that are targeted to addressing individual tenant's housing and health needs.

Corporate & Customer Excellence

Objective 6. Services are customer focused and and residents are satisfied with them

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
ACC 004	Percentage of residents agreeing that the Council provides value for money (Residents Survey)	46% (2011)	Biennial Residents Survey					43% (2013)	48%	Roger Adley Ellie Dunnet		

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
COM 001	Satisfaction with the way the Council runs things (Residents Survey)	63% (2011)	Biennial Residents Survey					66% (2013)	65%	Roger Adley		
COM 007	Percentage of residents that feel that the Council keeps them well informed about the services and benefits it provides (Residents Survey)	63% (2011)	Biennial Residents Survey					67%	65%	Roger Adley		
CTC 001	The average wait time for calls into the Contact Centre	171.25 seconds	149.00 seconds	112.00 seconds	80.00 seconds	80.00 seconds	120.00 seconds	105.25 seconds	120.00 seconds	Georgia Hawkes		
CTC 002	Percentage of Visitors to the Gateway responded to by a CSA within 20 minutes	73.87%	76.2%	84.55%	84.11%	74.23%	75%	79.75%	75%	Georgia Hawkes		
PIT 001	Percentage of complaints resolved within the specified timescale	95.44%	95.6%	93.49%	85.32%	95.39%	95%	93.32%	95%	Angela Woodhouse		
	There has been a 28% increase in the number of complaints received in 2014/15 compared with 2013/14. The Policy & Information team are about to embark on a review of the processes the Council has around complaints including the complaints policy.											
PIT 002	Satisfaction with complaint handling	37.29%	54.39%	.00%	26.09%	60.00%	45.00%	39.39%%	45.00%	Angela Woodhouse		
	Performance increased significantly in the fourth quarter, with 60% satisfaction being achieved. The survey has a low response rate however during quarter 3 an Information Officer was appointed to take the lead on managing complaints and it is expected that this will have a positive impact on the percentage of complaints resolved within specified timescales and the response rate for the satisfaction survey. In 2015/16 the Policy and Information team will be reviewing the complaints process including looking at ways to gain feedback from complainants.											
PKS 003	Satisfaction with the Leisure Centre (Residents Survey)	53% (2011)	Biennial Residents Survey					56% (2013)	55%	Jason Taylor		

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PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15 Status
						Value	Target	Value	Target			
R&B 009	Overall satisfaction with the benefits service	88.37%	91.15%	90.24%	93.64%	87.91%	85%	90.85%	85%	Steve McGinnes		
WC N 003	Satisfaction with refuse and recycling collection (Resident Survey)		Biennial Residents Survey					82% (2013)	80%	Jennifer Shepherd		
DEP 004	Satisfaction with street cleansing (Residents Survey)	56% (2011)	Biennial Residents Survey					53% (2013)	58%	Jennifer Shepherd		
PKS 002	Satisfaction with Council's parks and open spaces (Residents Survey)	76% (2011)	Biennial Residents Survey					80% (2013)	78%	Jason Taylor		

Code	Title	Latest Note
OUT 006.01	Ensure we use performance management data, customer satisfaction and customer feedback to improve services	The Policy & Information team is about to embark on a review of complaints and FOIs, looking at the policies, processes and systems used. A new set of PIs monitoring communication channels for all service are being introduced which will provide service managers with more information about how people access our services.
OUT 006.02	Review the way we interact with our customers	The customer focussed services review was completed in October 2012. It included focus groups, interviews and surveys with residents and businesses, visits to other councils, analysis of customer transaction data and use of Mosaic Public Sector to look at the types of people who contact us, how they contact us, how frequently and for which services. The aim of the project was to make recommendations on how the Council should be delivering customer services for the future. The new model is essentially digital first - a full range of services provided via the website or through apps where this is appropriate, a reduced desire for person to person calls and an increased automated telephone service, face to face available through appointments at our offices and partners supporting transactions. The new model of customer service delivery for the future and the actions we are taking to deliver this is detailed in the Customer Service Improvement Strategy adopted by Cabinet on 10 April 2013. In these 2 years, the completion of online self-serve forms has increased by over 300% to 19,536 in 2014/15, visits to the Gateway have reduced by 21% and telephone calls (excluding partners' Planning calls which the Contact Centre started taking in 2014/15) have reduced by 3%. As part of this ongoing work to move to a digital first model, in 2014 the council employed RedQuadrant to look at the way customer services were being delivered and how this could be done more efficiently and effectively in a digital first way. In line with their recommendations, Customer Services and Transformation have been brought together under the new position of Service Improvement Manager, the previously separate Gateway

Code	Title	Latest Note
		and Contact Centre teams have been brought together as one Customer Services team in one location and plans to reduce the number of unstructured emails customers send to Customer Services are in place. In addition, the reduction in management costs and removal of some vacant Customer Services hours has been used to fund permanent resources for maintaining and improving the website and online transactions.

Objective 7. Effective, cost efficient services are delivered across the borough

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15
						Value	Target	Value	Target			Status
BIM 002	Percentage of financial transactions not carried out on-line or by direct debit/standing order	10.27%	8.7%	8.65%	7.42%	10.91%*	10%	8.26%*	10%	Paul Riley		
BIM 003a	Percentage of customer contacts made in person in the Gateway	7.96%	6.90%	7.20%	6.06%	5.56%*	7.30%	6.72%*	7.30%	Georgia Hawkes		
BIM 003b	Percentage of customer contacts made online by visiting the councils website	73.21%	75.47%	73.59%	78.01%	79.51%*	75.00%	75.68%*	75.00%	Georgia Hawkes		
BIM 003c	Percentage of customer contacts made by phone through the contact centre	18.83%	17.63%	19.22%	15.93%	14.93%*	17.70%	17.60%*	17.70%	Georgia Hawkes		
DCV 007	Cost of planning per application	£115	Not measured for Quarters					£192	£115	James Bailey; Ryan O'Connell		
HRO 001/ BV 12	Working Days Lost Due to Sickness Absence (rolling year) (BV 12) Maidstone	8.17 days	7.46 days	8.36 days	9.59 days	9.90 days	8.00 days	9.90 days	8.00 days	Dena Smart		
	The total sickness figure is being influenced by the significant long-term sickness cases - we would expect this to drop now as several people have either returned to work or taken ill health retirement.											

PI Ref	Indicator Description	2013/14 Value	Q1 2014/15	Q2 2014/15	Q3 2014/15	Q4 2014/15		2014/15		Responsible Officer	D	2014/15
						Value	Target	Value	Target			Status
R&B 005	Percentage of Non-domestic Rates Collected (BV 010)	97.33%	33.64%	59.23%	85.57%	97.68%	97.80%	97.68%	97.80%	Steve McGinnes		
	Whilst the service has failed to achieve target, it has improved performance from 97.33% to 97.68% through a change in the way that the service is structured and increased level of staff time dedicated to business rate collection. It is anticipated that performance will continue to improve and that the target of 97.8% will be met in 2015/16.											
R&B 006	Percentage of Council Tax collected (BV 009)	98.30%	29.30%	58.10%	86.50%	98.40%	98.40%	98.40%	98.30%	Steve McGinnes		
WCN 006	Missed bins	92.5	37.6	41.0	25.2	25.4	30.0	32.3	30.0	Jennifer Shepherd		
	Performance of this indicator improved in the last two quarters, returning to below the targeted level. Higher levels of missed bins than expected in quarters one and two influenced the annual figure. This was partly due to a vehicle fault, identified in September, which affected 18 vehicles across the Partnership and resulted in a high level of vehicle downtime. As the work was covered by other operatives the level of missed collections increased. The vehicle issue was isolated as a defective part, which has now been replaced on all affected vehicles.											

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Code	Title	Latest Note
OUT 007.01	Seek out and implement new ways of delivering services that are not our core business, such as the Theatre and the Museum	The formation of Maidstone Culture & Leisure (MCL) brought together to council's culture and leisure assets. Park Wood Leisure is currently managing the Hazlitt theatre and following a recent Museums front of house review, by the Business Improvement Team, the opening hours on Sundays and Mondays have been altered to make it more convenient for families to visit. In addition, a partnership with Tunbridge Wells has been established to promote both boroughs as tourist destinations. It was agreed in December 2014 that the Council will manage the new visitor centre at Cobtree park and a Cobtree manager will be appointed to undertake the day to day management of the estate. These changes should create a financially sustainable management model for the park. In June 2014, the Planning Support shared service was implemented in partnership with Swale and Tunbridge Wells. A commercialisation strategy was agreed in 2014, which sets the Council's approach to this body of work.
OUT 007.02	Progress the shared services programme for those services that it is practical to do so and savings can be achieved.	The Mid Kent Services Director trial has now concluded, with a recommendation from the project team to make the post permanent. The MKIP Board have assessed the evidence and are now looking at options for possible implementation of this recommendation. As the MKIP Board is not a decision-making meeting, a formal decision will need to be made at each of the authorities in line with their individual governance arrangements in order to progress this option further.

Code	Title	Latest Note
		MKIP submitted a joint bid to secure over £500,000 in funding for delivering digital services across the partnership. The bid was successful, and initial work has been undertaken to set up a joint project team and work on a detailed project plan for the three authorities.
OUT 007.03	Undertake a programme of business improvement service reviews to ensure services are customer focused and delivered efficiently and effectively.	As part of the wider Customer Service Improvement Programme the Business Improvement team continue to review and work with services to deliver staff time efficiencies and cashable savings. The Housing review is complete and a new housing triage process is being implemented. The council is estimated to have spent about £40K less on temporary accommodation in 2014/15 than it would have done if improvements had not been made. The business case for a pet crematorium has been agreed by Cabinet and this is expected to bring substantial income into the council and plans are being developed for other income generating opportunities at the Crematorium. The Parking review has delivered staff time efficiencies in Parking Services and Corporate Support and online forms are currently being developed to allow people to apply for and renew parking permits online. The Environmental Services mobile working solution has delivered £15K in savings and is expected to deliver a further £23K, as well as substantial staff time efficiencies that will be quantified and reported in 2015/16. The Revenues and Benefits review is nearly complete, with changes in standard letters and the introduction of new online forms- expected to make staff time efficiencies of around 3.4 FTE over the next year. The Events review has identified £6K potential savings and the review of the Museum front office has identified around £35K of potential savings. The out of hours telephone contract has also been reviewed, and a saving of £8K per year will be made from 2015/16.
OUT 007.04	Ensure that the authority has a productive, proactive and flexible workforce	The Cabinet have now agreed the workforce strategy which will continued to be delivered through the action plan. Systems and processes are in place for effective recruitment, training and performance management of staff. The employee engagement plan is in place and the development of the ambition to reach Investors in People Gold by 2015 should ensure this focus continues.

For Maidstone to have a growing economy

Outcomes by 2015:

1. ***A growing economy with rising employment, catering for a range of skill sets to meet the demands of the local economy.***

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
Customer (attraction)	**LVE 003** Percentage of vacant retail units within the town centre	Annual	Aim to minimise	John Foster	Maidstone is a shopping centre of regional significance. Its continued attractiveness for businesses, visitors and shoppers is important to the prosperity of the Borough.
Process	**LVE 002** Percentage of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	John Foster	JSA claimant count records the number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) and National Insurance credits at Jobcentre Plus local offices. People claiming JSA must declare that they are out of work, capable of, available for and actively seeking work during the week in which the claim is made. Measures the health of the jobs economy.
	DCV 002 a) Percentage of major business planning applications take-up of pre-applications advice **b)** Percentage of those taking pre-application advice where the applications were approved	Bi-annual	Aim to maximise	Rob Jarman	These indicators measure the take-up and quality of pre-application advice. Pre-application advice is being promoted by the team to ensure that developments are high quality and well designed.
Finance	**R&B 002** Value of business rateable floor space	Annual	Aim to maximise	Steve McGinnes/ John Foster	The rateable value represents the open market annual rental value of a business/non-domestic property. This means the rent the property would let for on the valuation date, if it was being offered on the open market.
Learning & Development	**KCC 003** Number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS) **(NEW)**	Annual	Aim to minimise	Sarah Robson	Non-participation in education, employment or training between the ages of 16 and 18 is a major predictor of later unemployment, low income, depression, involvement in crime and poor mental health.
Learning & Development	**KCC 004** Working age people educated to NVQ level 4 of higher **(NEW)**	Annual	Aim to maximise	Sarah Robson	This indicator is needed because of the important role local authorities have with regard to economic development and the key part that skills and qualifications play in supporting economic development.

2. *A transport network that supports the local economy.*

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
Customer	**PKG 008** Percentage change in bus usage on services from Maidstone depot	Annual	Aim to maximise	Jeff Kitson	To assess the change is bus usage as part of the monitoring of the outcome ‘a transport network to support the local economy’. This indicator shows if more or less journeys are being made by buses. The source data is provided by Arriva and are global figures for their Maidstone depot –and cover sections of route beyond the boundary however they give a good indication of what is happening in the area.
Process	**PKG 007** Number of Park and Ride transactions	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	Jeff Kitson	The Indicator compares the on bus transaction figure (these are the cash sales to passengers boarding buses) on Park and Ride with the one for the same period of the previous year therefore, assessing fluctuations in the service usage.
Finance	**PKG 002** Income from pay and display car parks per parking space	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	Jeff Kitson	Pay and Display income is monitored closely - data collated daily will be used to calculate the income per parking space at each quarter of the financial year. Demonstrating income efficiency and usage in monetary terms.

For Maidstone to be a decent place to live

3. *Decent, affordable housing in the right places across a range of tenures.*

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
Customer	**DCV 003** Percentage of residential planning applications processed within statutory timescales	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	Rob Jarman	To ensure local planning authorities determine planning applications in a timely manner. These indicators measure the percentage of planning applications dealt with in a timely manner for their respective categories.
Customer	**DCV** Processing of planning applications within statutory timescales - 004 (Majors), 005 (Minors) , 006 (Others)	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	Rob Jarman	

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
Process	**HSG 010** Net addition homes delivered	Annual	Aim to maximise	Rob Jarman	This indicator measures the net increase in dwelling stock over the year. This was originally a national indicator that was introduced to encourage a greater supply of new homes to address the long term housing affordability issue.
	HSG 001 Number of affordable homes delivered	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	John Littlemore	To promote an increase in the supply of affordable housing. This indicator shows how many affordable homes have been delivered.
	HSG PS 003 Number of private sector homes improved	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	John Littlemore	This is the number of private sector homes that have been improved by various means throughout the year in which the outcome has had a positive impact of the resident's health, safety or welfare.
Finance	**DCV 007** Average cost of planning service per application	Annual	Aim to minimise	Rob Jarman	This indicator is to assess value for money in the planning processing expressed per application. Costs will exclude enforcement work.
Finance	**HSG 003** Average grant per MCB funded affordable home unit	Annual	N/A	John Littlemore	Total supply of all affordable dwelling completions built or acquired by RSLs (or other bodies) with financial support (grant) directly from the Council, i.e. all affordable homes delivered via schemes which MBC has contributed to, divided by the total grant paid. This will include any renovations or conversions (resulting in the provision of additional affordable dwellings).
Learning & Development	**SPT 004** Percentage of new homes built on previously developed land	Annual	Aim to maximise	Rob Jarman	To encourage the provision of additional housing on previously developed land and through conversions of existing buildings in order to minimise development on green fields.

4. *Continues to be a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit the Borough.*

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
Customer	**COM 008** Satisfaction with local area as a place to live (Resident Survey)	Biennial	Aim to maximise	Sarah Robson	MBC recognises that the quality of place remains a priority to residents and drives how satisfied people are with their local area as a place to live. These indicators will provide MBC with a baseline of local satisfaction which will help us identify and address the sorts of issues affecting how residents feel about their local area.
Customer	**DEP 004** Satisfaction with street cleaning (residents survey)	Biennial	Aim to maximise	Jennifer Shepherd	
Customer	**PKS 002** Satisfaction with Parks & Open Spaces (residents survey)	Biennial	Aim to maximise	Jennifer Shepherd	
Customer	**DEP 007** Percentage of fly-tipping reports responded to within 1 working day	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	Jennifer Shepherd	Fly-tipping is the common term used to describe waste illegally deposited on land as described under Section 33 of the Environment Protection Act 1990. This indicator is to monitor the timely removal of illegal dumping of waste on relevant land and highways.
Process	**DCE 001** Percentage of planning enforcement cases signed off within 21 days	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	Rob Jarman	To ensure a timely response to planning enforcement.
Process	**DEP 002** Local Street & Environmental Cleanliness a) Litter, b) Detritus (NI 195ab)	Annual	Aim to minimise	Jennifer Shepherd	The percentage of relevant land and highways that is assessed as having deposits of litter or detritus that fall below an acceptable level.
Process	**WCN 001** Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (NI 192)	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	Jennifer Shepherd	The indicator measures percentage of household waste arising's which have been sent by the Authority for reuse, recycling, composting or anaerobic digestion. This is a key measure of local authorities' progress in moving management of household waste up the hierarchy, consistent with the Government's national strategy for waste management.
Finance	**PKS 001** Cost of maintaining the borough's parks and open spaces per head of population	Annual	Aim to minimise	Jason Taylor	To monitor the cost of maintaining the borough's parks and open spaces
Finance	**WCN 002** Cost of waste collection per household	Annual	Aim to minimise	Jennifer Shepherd	To monitor cost of municipal waste disposal, to ensure that good value for money is achieved while delivering a high quality service.

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
Finance	**DEP 003** Cost of street cleansing per head of population	Annual	Aim to minimise	Jennifer Shepherd	The cost of street cleansing per head of the residents of Maidstone is an indicator to show any changes in the cost of street cleansing.
Learning & Development	**WCN 004** Total waste arisings per household (NEW)	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	Jennifer Shepherd	In line with the position of waste reduction at the top of the waste hierarchy, the Council wishes to see a year on year reduction in the total amount of waste arising's per household. Local authorities have an important role to play in assisting their residents to reduce waste (as well as encouraging sorting of waste for recycling, re-use, home composting and other forms of home treatment of waste).
Learning & Development	**CMP 001** Percentage CO2 reduction from local authority operations	Annual	Aim to maximise	TBC	The public sector is in a key position to lead on CO2 emissions reduction by setting a behavioural and strategic example to the private sector and the communities they serve. The aim of this indicator is to measure the progress made by MBC to reduce CO2 emissions from the relevant buildings and transport used to deliver its functions and to encourage them to demonstrate leadership on tackling climate change.
Learning & Development	**CDP 011** Recorded crime per 1,000 population	Annual	Aim to minimise	Sarah Robson	This indicator provides a snapshot of the level of crime in the borough and its direction of travel. The data for this indicator comes from Kent Police.

5. *Residents are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced.*

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
Customer	**HSG 009** Average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation (those leaving TA)	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	John Littlemore	Average length of stay in temporary accommodation (TA) for those leaving TA in period. To measure the authority's success in reducing temporary accommodation use.

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
Customer	**INT 001** Percentage of the Borough covered by Broadband	Annual	Aim to maximise	Dave Lindsay	A broadband internet connection is increasingly viewed as a vital utility at work and home – the electricity of the 21st century. A largely deregulated market means that broadband services are competitively priced. However, it also makes the provision of these services a commercial decision by Internet Service Providers (ISPs), often favouring the denser urban areas.
Process	**R&B 004** Average time taken to process new benefit claims and changes of circumstances	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	Steve McGinnes	HB/CTB of £19bn is paid to over 5 million low income households. Delays in the administration of these benefits can impact on some of the most vulnerable people in our society by: • Leading to rent arrears and evictions • Preventing access to housing because landlords are reluctant to rent to HB customers • Acting as a deterrent to people moving off benefits into work because of the disruption to their claim
Process	**HSG 005** Number of households presented from becoming homeless through intervention	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	John Littlemore	To measure the effectiveness of housing advice in preventing homelessness or the threat of homelessness. Under section 179(1) of the Housing Act 1996 part VII, as amended by the Housing Act 2002, housing authorities have a duty to ensure that advice and information about homelessness and prevention of homelessness are available free of charge to anyone in their district.
Process	**MFM 001a** Number of families accepted on the Maidstone Families Matter programme **MFM 001b** Percentage of those accepted to the Maidstone Families Matter programme that have been engaged with	Quarterly Quarterly	Aim to maximise	Ellie Kershaw	These indicators measure the progress of the Maidstone Families Matter programme. This is Maidstone's local version of the government's Troubled Families Programme. Currently this programme runs until March 2015.
Finance	**LVE 007** Gap between median wage of employee (residents) and the median wage of employees (workplace) (salary differences)	Annual	Aim to minimise	John Foster	Proxy indicator measure for increases in standard of living but also a measure of economic competitiveness with knowledge driven industries requiring higher skilled labour force and able to pay higher wages. Resident based wage

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
					levels in Maidstone are higher than the workplace based levels suggesting lower skilled and lower wage level local economy.
Learning & Development	**CDP 003** Percentage of residents participating in neighbourhood planning as a percentage of the ward population	Annual	Aim to maximise	Sarah Robson	Resident participation is important for successful neighbourhood planning. This indicator assesses what percentage of the ward population have been involved and participated in the process.
Learning & Development	**KCC 003** Number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS) **(REPEATED)**	Annual	Aim to minimise	Sarah Robson	Non-participation in education, employment or training between the ages of 16 and 18 is a major predictor of later unemployment, low income, depression, involvement in crime and poor mental health.
Learning & Development	**KCC 004** Working age people educated to NVQ level 4 of higher **(REPEATED)**	Annual	Aim to maximise	Sarah Robson	This indicator is needed because of the important role local authorities have with regard to economic development and the key part that skills and qualifications play in supporting economic development.

Corporate and Customer Excellence

Outcomes by 2015:

6. *Services are customer focused and residents are satisfied with them. (Customer & Resident Scorecard)*

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
Customer	**COM 001** Percentage of residents satisfied with the way the Council runs it's services	Biennial	Aim to maximise	Roger Adley	MBC recognises that the quality of place remains a priority to residents and can influence how satisfied people are with their local area as a place to live. These indicators will provide MBC with an indication of local satisfaction which will help them identify and make improvements to the borough and to how services are delivered.
Customer	Percentage of residents satisfied with key services: **WCN 003** Refuse & Recycling collections **PKS 003** Maidstone Leisure Centre **PKS 002** Parks and open spaces **DEP 004** Street cleanliness	Biennial	Aim to maximise	Jennifer Shepherd & Jason Taylor	

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
Customer	**R&B 009** Percentage of customers satisfied with benefits service	Annual	Aim to maximise	Steve McGinnes	The indicator is intended to gage the level of customer satisfaction with how the benefit service operates.
Process	**COM 007** Percentage of residents that feel that the Council keeps them well informed about the services and benefits it provides.	Biennial	Aim to maximise	Roger Adley	One of the Council's key roles is to provide advice, therefore it is important to ensure that residents and customers can easily access and understand the information that we provide. These indicators demonstrate the levels of satisfaction with of our communications.
Process	**CTC 001** Average wait time for calls (Seconds)	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	Sandra Marchant	This indicator is the average wait time a customer telephoning the Contact Centre has to wait before being answered by a Customer Service Advisor.
Process	**CTC 002** Percentage of customers to the Gateway seen within 20 minutes	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	Sandra Marchant	This indicator is the percentage of visitors to the Gateway responded to within 20 minutes by a Customer Service Advisor. The aim is to keep customers wait times to a minimum and to improve access to Council services.
Finance	Percentage of residents agreeing that the Council provides value for money (Residents Survey)	Biennial	Aim to maximise	Paul Riley & Roger Adley	This indicator measures the extent to which resident is feel that the Council is providing value for money. The Council has a duty provide services that are cost efficient.
Learning & Development	**PIT 002** Percentage of those making complaints satisfied with how their complaint was handled	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	Angela Woodhouse	These indicators are to measure complaint resolved on time and to gage the level of customer satisfaction with the complaints process. These are also reported as part of the quarterly complaints report.
	PIT 001 Percentage of complaints resolved within specified timescale	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	Angela Woodhouse	

7. *Effective, cost efficient services are delivered across the borough.*

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
Customer	**WCN 006** Number of missed bins per 100,000 collections	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	Jennifer Shepherd	This indicator monitors the performance of the contractor and ensures that the service delivers quality and that changes are communicated properly to residents.
Customer	**BIM 003a** Percentage of customer contacts made in person in the Gateway	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	Georgia Hawkes	This suite of indicators measures contact to council across the Gateway, Contact Centre and Website in order to assess the progress of the channel shift project.
	BIM 003b Percentage of customer contacts made online by visiting the		Aim to maximise		

Element	Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	Responsible Officer	Rationale
	councils website				
	BIM 003c Percentage of customer contacts made by phone through the contact centre		Aim to minimise		
Process	**BIM 004** Change in the number of out-going post items	Quarterly	Aim to maximise (Negative change)	Georgia Hawkes	It is more costly to send an item in the post than it is to do so by email. This indicator monitors the change in number of post items being sent out to inform progress on the channel shift project.
Process	**R&B 006** Percentage of Council tax collected	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	Steve McGinnes	These two indicators monitor the collection of Council Tax and NDNR against the target, the collection of which is a key local authority function.
Process	**R&B 005** Percentage of business rates collected	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	Steve McGinnes	
Finance	**BIM 002** Percentage of financial transactions not carried out on-line or by direct debit/standing order	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	Georgia Hawkes	This is a test of value for money. Payments made on-line or by direct debit, standing order or direct credit cost the Council much less to process than payments made over the phone or cash or cheques sent in the post or deposited at the payment kiosks.
Finance	**DVC 007** Average cost of planning service per application	Annual	Aim to minimise	Rob Jarman	The measure the cost of the development management team per application they have processed.
Learning & Development	**HRO 001** Working Days Lost Due to Sickness Absence (rolling year) (BV 12)	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	Dena Smart	To monitor the level of sickness absence in the council.

Appendix C

KPI Targets 2015-18

Guide to understanding performance tables

Shows if a higher or lower

Officer responsible for supplying data and performance commentary.

Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	2014/15 Out-turn	2015/16 Target	2016/17 Target	2017/18 Target	Responsible Officer

Performance Indicator name

How often the indicator is reported

This is the most recent available out-turn. Figures that have an asterisk (*) are provisional and are to be confirmed.

Proposed targets for 2014-17. These are reviewed annually.

Priority: **Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all**

Outcome 1: **Providing a clean and safe environment**

Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	2014/15 Out-turn	2015/16 Target	2016/17 Target	2017/18 Target	Responsible Officer
WCN 001 Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (NI 192)	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	49.10%	53%	56%	59%	Jennifer Shepherd
DEP 004 Satisfaction with Street cleansing (residents Survey)	Bi-Annual	Aim to maximise	53% (2013)	55%	N/A	57%	Jennifer Shepherd
Total CO2 Emissions for all sectors (Kt)	Annual	Aim to minimise	TBC	-3%	-3%	-3%	John Littlemore
CDP Percentage change all crime	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	2.8%	Information only			Sarah Robson
Keep Britain Tidy Environmental Quality Survey **(NEW)**	Annual	Better than all England average	New PI	To be discussed.			Jennifer Shepherd

Appendix C

KPI Targets 2015-18

Outcome 2: **Respecting the character of our borough**							
Indicator	**Frequency**	**Good Performance**	**2014/15 Out-turn**	**2015/16 Target**	**2016/17 Target**	**2017/18 Target**	**Responsible Officer**
COM 008 Satisfaction with local area as a place to live (Residents Survey)	Bi-annual	Aim to maximise	84% (2013)	85%	N/A	87%	Anna Collier
CDP 009 Percentage of residents that agree they can influence decisions affecting their local area (Residents Survey)	Bi-annual	Aim to maximise	28% (2013)	30%	N/A	32%	Roger Adley
DEM XXX Percentage of parishes that are satisfied with the level of communication and engagement they have with MBC (Parish Survey) **(NEW)**	TBC	Aim to maximise	New PI	Establish Baseline	2% increase	2% increase	TBC

Outcome 3: **Encouraging Good Health and Wellbeing**							
Indicator	**Frequency**	**Good Performance**	**2014/15 Out-turn**	**2015/16 Target**	**2016/17 Target**	**2017/18 Target**	**Responsible Officer**
HSG PS 005 Average time taken to process disabled facilities grants (days)	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	77.61 days	35.00 days	35.00 days	35.00 days	John Littlemore
HSG 005 Number of households prevented from becoming homeless through the intervention of housing advice	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	340	350	350	350	John Littlemore
CDP XXX Percentage of resident that consider themselves to be in good or very good health **(Residents Survey) (NEW)**	Bi-annual	Aim to maximise	N/A	Establish baseline	2% increase	2% increase	Sarah Robson
CDP XXX Percentage of children (year 6) that are obese **(Health Inequalities) (NEW)**	Annual	Aim to minimise	15.8%	14.8%	13.8%	12.8%	Sarah Robson
CDP XXX Percentage of adults that are obese **(Health Inequalities) (NEW)**	Annual	Aim to minimise	18.9%	17.9%	16.9%	15.9%	Sarah Robson

KPI Targets 2015-18

Priority: **Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all and Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough**

Outcome 4: **Ensuring there are good Leisure and Cultural Attractions**

Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	2014/15 Out-turn	2015/16 Target	2016/17 Target	2017/18 Target	Responsible Officer
PKS 011 User Satisfaction with the Leisure centre	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	81.78%	82%	84%	85%	Jason Taylor
PKS 002 Satisfaction with parks and open spaces **(Residents Survey)**	Bi-annual	Aim to maximise	80% (2013)	82%	N/A	84%	Jason Taylor
MCL Number of people attending the Mela **(NEW)**	Annual	Aim to maximise	NEW PI	2% increase	2% increase	2% increase	TBC
MCL Income generated from commercial leisure and culture activities **(NEW)**	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	NEW PI	TBC	Future targets will be determined as part of the budget setting process each year.		Marcus Lawler

Outcome 5: **Enhancing the Appeal of the Town Centre**

Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	2014/15 Out-turn	2015/16 Target	2016/17 Target	2017/18 Target	Responsible Officer
LVE 003 Percentage of vacant retail units in Town Centre	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	7.83%	13%	12%	11%	John Foster
NEW Satisfaction with Maidstone's town centre as a place to visit, shop and socialise (Residents Survey)	Bi-Annual	Aim to maximise	NEW PI	Establish baseline	2% increase	2% increase	John Foster
Town Centre Vitality Index (**NEW**)	Annual?	Higher position	131/500 (2014 HDC)	To be discussed			John Foster

Appendix C

KPI Targets 2015-18

Priority: **Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough**

Outcome 6: **Securing improvements to the transport infrastructure of our borough**

Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	2014/15 Out-turn	2015/16 Target	2016/17 Target	2017/18 Target	Responsible Officer
Total number of people registered on KentJourneyshare.com **(ITS) (NEW)**	Annual	Aim to maximise	TBC	25% increase p/a LTP3 period			Sue Whiteside
PKG 008 Percentage change in bus usage on services from Maidstone depot	Annual	Positive Change	-3.31%	Information only- Partner data			Jeff Kitson
PKG 007 Number of Park and Ride transactions	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	374,440	378,000	378,000	378,000	Jeff Kitson
PKG 001 percentage of parking spaces used	Annual	Aim to maximise	59.43%	60%	62%	64%	Jeff Kitson

Outcome 7: **Promoting a range of employment opportunities and skills required across the borough**

Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	2014/15 Out-turn	2015/16 Target	2016/17 Target	2017/18 Target	Responsible Officer
LVE 002 Percentage of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance	Quarterly	Aim to minimise	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	John Foster
KCC 002 Number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEETS)	Annual	Aim to minimise	31.2%	Information only - Partner data			John Foster
Percentage change in employee jobs (NOMIS) **(NEW)**	Annual	Positive change	-1.8% (2013)	2 years arrears			John Foster

Outcome 8: Planning sufficient homes to meet our Borough's need

Indicator	Frequency	Good Performance	2014/15 Out-turn	2015/16 Target	2016/17 Target	2017/18 Target	Responsible Officer
SPT 006 Net additional homes provided (NI 154)	Annual	Aim to maximise	TBC	500	550	600	John Littlemore/ Rob Jarman
HSG 001 Number of affordable homes delivered	Quarterly	Aim to maximise	163	150	The current programme ends in 2015. Targets for future years will be agreed as part of the budget process.		John Littlemore

Policy & Resources	24 June 2015
Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	Yes

Economic Development Strategy

Final Decision-Maker	Policy & Resources Committee
Lead Director or Head of Service	Director of Regeneration and Communities
Lead Officer and Report Author	Economic Development Manager
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the changes to the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan set out in Appendix 3 are agreed and that the draft Economic Development Strategy is adopted as the Council's Strategy to support economic growth and prosperity for the Borough.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Great People
- Great Place
- Great Opportunity

Timetable	
Meeting	***Date***
Policy and Resources Committee	24/06/15
Council	N/A
Other Committee	N/A

Economic Development Strategy

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 To consider the responses to the consultation on the draft Economic Development Strategy, consider the Council's response and whether to adopt the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan, as amended in Appendix 3.

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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The Economic Development Strategy is a key document for the Council and will impact on the economic, social and environmental wellbeing for the whole of the borough, businesses and residents and on the agendas of other public sector services such as Job centre Plus and Kent County Council.

2.2 Maidstone has the largest economy in Kent, i.e. Maidstone businesses generate £3.3bn worth of goods and services each year. Gross Value Added (GVA) measures how productive per worker an area is and at £21,200 per year, Maidstone has the 2nd highest GVA per head in the county, but this is below the national average (£21,900).

2.3 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.

2.4 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.

2.5 Maidstone has a strong labour market with high employment and economic activity rates and relatively low levels of unemployment. In the year ending December 2013 76.8% of residents were estimated to be in employment, above both the national (71.7%) and Kent (72.6%) averages.

2.6 However Maidstone's direction of travel in terms of jobs and economic growth is declining and requires action to reverse the decline.

2.7 Since the recession, economic output i.e. the level of productivity has fallen more in Maidstone than in Kent as a whole and nationally.

2.8 Employment performance has been poor in recent years, with the number of jobs decreasing since 2009. This was largely due to high job losses in the public sector and this sector continues to be at risk from cuts in public sector spending.

2.9 Business growth has been below the Kent and national averages in recent years. Between 2008 and 2011, business deaths outnumbered business births. 2012 has seen a reversal of this trend. Maidstone has a low share of employment in knowledge economy jobs, such as high tech manufacturing, ICT and creative industries such as media and architecture, which are traditionally higher skilled and higher paid.

2.10 The qualifications profile of the adult population is poorer than the county and national average, with less than a third (32.6%) of residents qualified at NVQ Level 4 or above, compared to (Kent (33.6%) and the national average for England (35%). While there has been some improvement over recent years, this has been less than for Kent and the nation as a whole.

2.11 Median earnings for Maidstone residents have been in decline since 2010 and now stand for the first time in over 10 years below both the GB and South East Averages. Maidstone resident earnings (2013) are the third lowest in Kent, and workplace earnings are the second lowest in Kent, just above Thanet.

2.12 Commuting patterns show that Maidstone has changed over the last decade from being a net importer to a net exporter of workers and is less important as a place of work for its residents. Commuters are now predominantly those in higher occupational groups whereas commuters into Maidstone are in lower status semi skilled and elementary occupations that are generally less well paid.

2.13 The council's previous Economic Development Strategy was produced prior to the recession in 2008. In order to take account of the changes in the economy both nationally and locally the council commissioned Shared Intelligence (Si) to help prepare the new economic development strategy. Their work included:

- reviewing the existing vision to ensure that this still meets current aspirations;
- an assessment of the current state of the Maidstone economy to identify the opportunities and challenges we face - the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats;
- identifying priorities for how we will achieve our ambitions and the interventions to capitalise on Maidstone's economic assets; and
- formulating a programme of actions to take forward the journey to deliver our vision by 2031.

2.14 To inform the development of the strategy, an analysis of the broader national and local economic trends was undertaken to provide the evidence base. The findings of this work are set out in a separate State of the Maidstone Economy report, which sits alongside this strategy.

2.15 In parallel to the work on the Strategy, work was carried out by GVA regarding the Qualitative Employment Land Supply which states that "for the borough to realise it's economic potential, there is a need to provide new employment land to both accommodate the scale of growth forecast but, equally importantly, to diversify the portfolio to ensure different forms of demand and floorspace can be accommodated."

2.16 Forecasts indicate that total jobs growth in Maidstone could be between 7,800 and 14,400 jobs to 2031. The sectors forecast to see the greatest jobs growth are professional services, administrative & support services, education, health, and residential care & social work. It should be noted that Maidstone is one of a few authority areas in Kent which has seen employment growth in the manufacturing sector.

2.17 The strategy identifies a series of priority actions to capitalise on our assets and the opportunities to strengthen the economy and create the right conditions for economic growth. These five priorities are:

2.18 **Retaining and attracting investment** - We will support existing businesses to grow and also work to attract new employers to the borough, creating job opportunities for all residents across a range of sectors.

2.19 **Stimulating entrepreneurship** - We will create a more entrepreneurial and innovative economy, supporting new business start-ups and those with high growth potential to move up the value chain.

2.20 **Enhancing the town centre** - We will promote the regeneration of Maidstone town centre as a high quality retail and leisure destination, and as a place to live and work.

2.21 **Meeting the skills needs** - By working closely with our partners we will ensure that residents are equipped with skills for work and that the skills needs of businesses are being met. We will encourage better careers advice in schools and promote apprenticeships and work experience placements in the Council and with businesses. We will support the expansion of the Higher Education sector to increase the number of graduates in the workforce, supporting initiatives such as the Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery (KIMS) and Kent Medical Campus (KMC) , as well as the University of the Creative Arts (UCA) expansion at Maidstone Studios.

2.22 **Improving the infrastructure** - We will invest in infrastructure to drive economic growth – including the transport network and digital infrastructure.

2.23 There are many partners involved in taking forward the opportunities identified and there is a clear leadership and enabling role for Maidstone Borough Council to play in coordinating, promoting and actively working with the business community to achieve the economic vision.

2.24 Critically achieving the higher rate of jobs growth largely depends on:

- Delivering the vision for the Town Centre,

- Maximising the opportunities presented by Maidstone Medical Campus.
- Filling the gap in our portfolio of employment sites to meet modern business needs.
- Delivering a new masterplan for Eclipse Business Plan.

2.25 A more detailed Action Plan covering short, medium and longer term actions is included at the end of the Strategy. The Action Plan will be reviewed and refreshed annually to ensure it remains relevant.

2.26 At the joint Planning and Transport and Commercial and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 21st October both committees recommended the draft strategy go out to public consultation. On the 12th November Cabinet approved the draft Strategy for consultation purposes. The Economic Development Strategy is an important document with Borough wide implications for both businesses and residents. The Council therefore undertook to use a number of methods to reach and engage with them.

2.27 Consultation on the draft Economic Development Strategy (EDS) took place between the 15th December and the 23rd January.

2.28 An online form, together with the relevant documents, was put on the consultation page of Maidstone Borough Council's website. Comment boxes after each question allowed more expansive responses and an open question asking for other comments allowed non directed responses to be captured.

2.29 A press release was issued to the media and the KM newspaper ran a half page story on it. Social media was used to raise awareness of the consultation. The KM also had a significant feature in their newspaper on the 19th December 2014.

2.30 The same on-line form was sent to around 1900 businesses across Maidstone borough and three prompts were sent to encourage their participation.

2.31 Two consultation events were also held, on 13 January 2015. A Parish and Communities event was attended by 33 people, and a business event was attended by 60 people. These events enabled attendees to ask direct questions of officers and members and to engage in a workshop style discussion to offer views and opinions on the Strategy and their own views on what needs to be done to make Maidstone more prosperous. All these views were captured and have been used to inform the final Economic Development Strategy.

2.32 A telephone survey was used to engage residents. This structured approach enabled the views of a large number of Maidstone residents to be gathered within a short timeframe – 1,518 interviews were conducted between January 5th and January 20th 2015 – and also allowed interviews to be targeted so the opinions of those participating would be as representative as possible across all residents in the Borough. Quotas were set to ensure fair representation by age, gender and employment status. To allow results to be analysed at a ward level, at least 50 interviews were undertaken in each ward, with larger wards receiving more interviews. The survey lasted 10 minutes on average and consisted of 19 questions, including both multiple choice/ scale questions and those allowing an open /free response.

2.33 It should also be noted that the views of the business community, key employers and stakeholders were considered in the development of the draft Strategy, prior to the consultation period, this included:

- Two workshops with the Maidstone Economic Business Partnership (MEBP) facilitated by Shared Intelligence held on 23rd May and 5th June 2014;
- Two workshops with Maidstone Borough Councillors - the Cabinet on 23rd July and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29th July 2014;
- A programme of interviews conducted by Shared intelligence in May/June 2014 with 15 key businesses;
- Face to face and telephone interviews with 14 key stakeholders; and
- The results of a business survey undertaken by Maidstone Borough Council in June 2014 with responses from 59 employers.

2.34 The report of the Joint Planning, Transport and Development and Economic and Commercial Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2014 stated that "concern was raised regarding the wording and strength of the delivery mechanisms for the action plan for the draft Economic Development Strategy. It was agreed there was a need for a higher priority and profile for tourism, leisure and the visitor economy and renewable and green energy in the strategy and it was felt the action plan needed to be written in more positive language." The report stated that these comments would be responded to as part of the public consultation.

2.35 The consultation process resulted in the following:

- 25 submissions were received from the online survey
- 25 submissions were received from the business survey
- 60 people attended the business event
- 33 people attended the Parish and Communities event
- 14 detailed submissions were received from residents, agents, developers and local businesses.

Summary of responses.

2.36 The online survey and the business survey resulted in a significant number of responses agreeing or strongly agreeing with the main thrust of the draft EDS. The questions in the survey are as follows:

Q1: Do you agree that the challenges in our draft strategy are the right ones?
Q2: Do you agree with the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in our draft strategy?

Q3: Do you agree with our vision
Q4: Do you agree with the three objectives in our draft strategy
Q5: Do you agree with the five priorities in our draft strategy

2.37 Table 1 below sets out the range of responses to the survey:

Table 1

Questions	Number of respondents	Q1 Agreed or Strongly Agreed	Q2 Agreed or Strongly Agreed	Q3 Agreed or Strongly Agreed	Q4 Agreed or Strongly Agreed	Q5 Agreed or Strongly Agreed
Online Survey	25	88%	80%	92%	80%	88%
Business Survey	25	84%	84%	80%	88%	88%

2.38 The findings of both the on line and business surveys have been summarised by Facts International in their report in Appendix 1.

The Business and Parish and Communities events

2.39 The views and opinions expressed at these events are set out as a background document. The majority of the views and suggestions for action were already reflected in the draft Economic Development Strategy and will be developed further through the Town Centre master planning work, Destination Management Plan and Cultural Strategy. There was a view that more should be done to strengthen links between schools and businesses and the Action Plan has been changed to reflect this in Action D4. There was a great deal of support for the Leeds Langley Bypass or South East Maidstone Strategic Link Road. Whilst this point is noted, this issue has wider implications for the spatial distribution of development across the Borough and needs to be considered after traffic modelling work has been completed and the Integrated Transport Strategy agreed.

Key findings from the Residents Telephone Survey

2.40 An independent market research company was commissioned to undertake a survey of residents to seek their views on the Economic Development Strategy. The consultation survey suggests that the feelings and preferences of Maidstone residents are closely aligned with the priorities outlined in the Economic Development Strategy.

2.41 Whilst there are variations in the importance attached to different priorities by different types of residents, none of the priorities tested appears overly polarising and the lowest average importance rating given by any sub-group (a score of 5.2 given by residents of Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton ward to ‘Lobbying for better rail services to London from Maidstone East’) sits above 5 out of 10.

2.42 When given the opportunity to suggest anything further that could be done to improve the local economy, residents tended to mention activities linked to the key principles of the EDS, notably improving the town centre, enhancing the borough's infrastructure and creating high level jobs.

2.43 Local jobs and skills are of prime importance to residents. The "twin" priorities of 'Creating enough local jobs to meet the needs of the growing population' and 'Working with schools, the college and training organisations to ensure residents have the skills needed to get jobs locally' share joint first place as the most important to Maidstone citizens. These two areas are inextricably linked and this is highlighted in the comments made by residents and respondents to the open consultation and business survey as well as in the EDS itself.

2.44 A call to create more diverse, high quality local jobs, including mentions of apprenticeships, represents the third most common theme among spontaneous suggestions for additional activity to be undertaken by the Council.

2.45 The high importance attached to local job creation and skill development extends beyond those who would directly benefit from these initiatives to older, retired people. Older members of the community see these goals as worthwhile either because of the potential benefits for their own younger family members or out of concern for or pride in the borough as a whole.

2.46 The survey included a question regarding consideration of development proposals at Junction 8 M20 given the sensitive nature of the issue. While reactions to the idea of a new employment site at Junction 8 were mixed, over half of residents said they would support this, with a further 1 in 6 having no opinion. Those who would object represent less than a third of those interviewed and are most likely to live within neighbouring wards.

2.47 The importance of local employment creation to Maidstone residents is further demonstrated by the position of this consideration as the top reason to support a new employment site at Junction 8 of the M20, mentioned by more than half of those who would strongly support this development. This is also an important rationale for those who would "support somewhat". Comments made by this group suggest that some see the development as a "necessary evil", with the need for job creation outweighing other concerns around environmental impact or a preference for other priorities, such as town centre regeneration, that would more immediately affect their own quality of life.

2.48 The potential for infrastructure and "quality of life" improvements is particularly valued. At the same time, residents are keen that the Council takes action on infrastructure improvements, especially 'redeveloping derelict or unsightly property' and 'tackling congestion and improving roads', both of which receive almost universal agreement. The importance of infrastructure activity also comes through strongly in the comments made by residents when asked what else the Council could be doing to improve the local economy.

2.49 In reviewing the survey responses, a certain tension can be seen between economic goals, such as creating jobs, and quality of life factors like the borough's unique rural environment, with many residents noting that a balance needs to be struck. This echoes the EDS commitment to achieving growth sustainably without sacrificing the environmental qualities that make Maidstone a special place.

2.50 Transport issues are a key concern. Maidstone's transport links emerge from the survey as a key area of concern for residents. This relates particularly to congestion, especially on the M20 and town centre roads, and to parking issues. However, there does also appear to be a strong interest in improved public transport and in encouraging other car-free options. Improvements to local public transport, for example bus links into the town centre, are prioritised well above lobbying for better rail links to London.

2.51 The survey supports the idea of an entrepreneurial borough. The survey findings support the idea that Maidstone is an entrepreneurial borough, identified as a key strength in the EDS. There appears to be particular support for the idea of trying to encourage growth from within, with helping to grow existing local businesses prioritised above attracting new businesses to the borough. A high level of importance is also attached to helping local residents who would like to start their own business and help and support for small businesses features as a key theme among spontaneous suggestions for action.

2.52 A summary report on the residents' survey has been produced by Facts International and this is set out in Appendix 2.

Other responses received by the Council

2.53 Detailed written submissions were received from 14 individuals and organisations. The relevant points made in each submission are set out in the background document to this report, together with the Council's response and any proposed changes recommended to the Strategy or Action Plan.

Summary

2.54 The vision, key aims and priorities of the EDS are largely supported as is the evidence supporting them. Following feedback from the consultation, some minor amendments have been made throughout the document to make its meaning clearer. The structure of the document has been amended to improve legibility and the action plan has been included with the main body of the Strategy. Monitoring indicators have been added as has a glossy of terms. A section on Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry and the rural economy has been strengthened and the Visitor Economy sections have been updated and information regarding the Destination Management Plan and Cultural Strategy added.

2.55 The Locations for Growth section has been updated following a joint meeting of the Economic and Commercial Development and the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2014 which resolved to support development for employment use at

Junction 8 of the M20 subject to the development of a planning policy by the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development to mitigate damage and to ensure appropriate constraints.

3 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The consultation on the draft Economic Development Strategy has led to some helpful comments from a range of organisations and residents that improve the document.

3.2 The Committee could choose not to adopt the Economic Development Strategy but not to do so would limit the effectiveness of the council to help deliver economic growth and prosperity for the benefit of the borough's residents and businesses.

4 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

4.1 The outcome of the consultations with residents, businesses, key stakeholders and councillors and the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees are set out in the main body of the report. A list of all the changes made to the consultation version of the Economic Development Strategy is available as a background document to this report.

5 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Economic Development Strategy is at the heart of achieving the Council's Strategic Plan 2015-2020 and supports both priorities of "Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all" and "Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough. Specifically it includes actions for "Enhancing the appeal of the town centre for everyone" and Promoting a range of employment opportunities and skills required across our Borough."
Risk Management	Many actions require the support of partner organisations outside the Council's direct control, clear and frequent communication and engagement will help ensure trust and good decision making. Investment decisions at the Kent and SELEP level may prioritise other locations than Maidstone. Regular meetings between senior officers and Councillors with Kent County

	Council and Kent and Medway Economic Partnership is vital to ensure Maidstone's needs are fully understood and delivery of projects takes place in a timely fashion. Global and national changes to the economy over the life of the Strategy could impact on the local economy making the delivery of the Strategy more difficult. Indicators to monitor the health of the local economy will be established and reported to businesses and Councillors on a regular basis. The Strategy will be continuously under review and if necessary, changes will be proposed and consulted on. The Action Plan will be updated annually.
Financial	The proposed methods of funding are set out for each action in the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan at Appendix 3. The methods include the use of the additional resources retained by the Council as a result of membership of the Kent Business Rates Pool. The action plan does not yet provide estimated costs but during 2014/15 Cabinet considered options for sources of funding to support the EDS and recognised that the premise on which the Business Rates Pool has been developed is to support additional business growth within the area covered by the pool. This objective links well with the objectives of the EDS and it was agreed that the Council's share of the additional business rates was to be used to support the action plan. At the time this was agreed by the Cabinet the share of the expected growth for 2014/15 that would be retained by the Council was approximately £92,000. In addition to that share an identical sum would be available through a growth fund that required agreement between this Council and Kent County Council as to its use. This fund had similar business growth objectives and it is likely that Kent County Council would not resist its use to deliver the actions within the EDS. This meant a maximum fund of £184,000 which would be available in 2015/16 after the business rates account has been finalized following the 31st March year end. Now that the final account is known for the business rates collected the Kent Business Rates Poll has enabled the Council to benefit directly by an additional £144,000 which is

	£52,000 more than estimated. This sum is also available through the growth fund making the total resource £288,000. This is a significant sum and could be used to deliver on actions from the action plan but could ultimately be used as revenue funding for prudential borrowing of up to £5m to support the larger projects within the EDS.
Staffing	The council has approved the use of the growth in business rates arising from the business rates pool to support the delivery of the Economic Development Strategy. Many of the actions will be achievable within existing staff resources, whilst some will need additional funding for staffing. The council has already approved fixed term funding to appoint a Town Centre Programme Manager to deliver the actions relating the Town Centre vision work.
Legal	There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	No issues arise from the Equality Impact Needs Assessment. EINA will be undertaken for specific actions as required.
Environmental/Sustainable Development	Environmental and sustainable development will form part of the considerations when delivering the action plan
Community Safety	N/A
Human Rights Act	N/A
Procurement	Any procurement arising from the delivery of Economic Development Strategy will be undertaken in accordance with the council's policies and procedures.
Asset Management	Any asset management considerations will be identified as part of the related business case.

6 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with and form part of the report:

- Appendix 1: Residents' Consultation Report
- Appendix 2: Summary of the Residents' Consultation Report
- Appendix 3: Economic Development Strategy

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- State of the Maidstone Economy report, August 2014, Shared Intelligence

- Business and Community Event Meeting Notes
- MBC Response to Written Representations
- List of changes made to the consultation version of the Economic Development Strategy

Maidstone Draft Economic Development Strategy 2014-2031:

Residents' Consultation

Prepared by:

FACTS international

On behalf of:

Maidstone Borough Council

January 2015

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This report sets out the results of a survey of 1,518 Maidstone residents undertaken by Facts International, an independent market research agency. This forms part of a range of public consultation activity undertaken around Maidstone's draft Economic Development Strategy (EDS) for 2014-2031[1].

The EDS is a key strategy for the Council and will impact on the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the whole borough. It has been produced alongside work being undertaken on the Local Plan, which will provide a framework for development until 2031, including planning for homes, jobs, shopping, leisure and the environment as well as the infrastructure to support these[2].

Maidstone's population is forecast to grow significantly over the next 16 years and the EDS highlights the importance of maximising the economic potential of the Borough, emphasising the importance of delivering appropriate employment land and business development support in achieving this goal.

The Strategy aims to set out the key economic challenges and opportunities faced by the borough over the next 16 years and the actions needed to deliver jobs and prosperity for all[3]. However, the EDS is composed of a complex, detailed plan of action and supporting evidence, with themes and terminology designed for a "policy savvy" audience. Therefore, the intention of the consultation survey was to seek feedback on areas *related* to the key points of the Strategy, but to do this in a way that would be accessible, understandable and interesting to the average resident.

The survey questionnaire focused on gathering residents' views on the importance of different types of activity linked to the five priorities outlined in the EDS:

- **Retaining and attracting investment -** Supporting existing businesses to grow and working to attract new employers to the Borough, creating job opportunities for all residents across a range of sectors.
- **Stimulating entrepreneurship** - Creating a more entrepreneurial and innovative economy, supporting new business start-ups and those with high growth potential to move up the value chain.
- **Enhancing the town centre** - Promoting the regeneration of Maidstone town centre as a high quality retail and leisure destination, and as a place to live and work.
- **Meeting the skills needs** - Ensuring that residents are equipped with skills for work and that the skills needs of businesses are being met.
- **Improving the infrastructure** - Investing in infrastructure to drive economic growth – including the transport network and digital infrastructure.

Residents were also asked for their opinions on the idea of allocating a new employment site at Junction 8 of the M20, a key transformational action outlined in the EDS. Enabling the creation of 14,400 jobs in a range of sectors and occupations by 2031 is one of the strategy's main objectives, reflecting a desire to diversify the range of employment and businesses to be found within

[1] The public consultation period is 15th December 2014 to 6th February 2015
[2] http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/planning/local-plan/what-is-the-local-plan
[3] The full draft strategy can be found at http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/council/have-your-say/current-consultations/draft-economic-development-strategy-for-2014-31

Maidstone. However, research into the supply of employment land in the borough by consultants GVA[4] suggests that this jobs target is unlikely to be delivered without intervention. Based on their assessment of potential options, the GVA report strongly advocates the allocation of a new employment site along the motorway corridor.

To allow any areas of importance to residents not covered by the EDS to be identified, survey participants were also given the opportunity to mention any other action they thought the Council should be undertaking to improve the local economy.

As well as feeding back their views via the survey, Maidstone residents have also had the opportunity to participate in an "open consultation" on the EDS via the Maidstone Borough Council website. Those interested in reviewing the strategy in more detail have been able to read the full document and/or an executive summary before leaving comments on their agreement or otherwise with key elements such as the identified challenges, SWOT analysis, vision, objectives, priorities and transformational actions. The open consultation documents were also sent as an email survey to businesses in the Borough. Responses to the web-based consultation and business survey are set out in Section 4 of this report. The Open Consultation documents are included in Annex 6.

1.2 Methodology

Approach

The survey was conducted via Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). This approach enabled the views of a large number of Maidstone residents to be gathered within a short timeframe – 1,518 interviews were conducted between January 5th and January 20th 2015 – and also allowed interviews to be *targeted* so the opinions of those participating would be as representative as possible of those held across all residents in the Borough.

Quotas were imposed to ensure fair representation by age, gender and employment status. To allow results to be analysed at a ward level, at least 50 interviews were undertaken in each ward, with larger wards receiving more interviews. At the end of fieldwork, the results were weighted to produce the closest possible match to the demographic breakdown of the Maidstone population as set out in Kent County Council's (KCC's) Area Profile[5] . Details of the interviews conducted by resident group and the weighting applied are given in Annex 2.

Residents were invited to take part in the survey predominantly based on a RDD (Random Digit Dialling) approach targeted by ward. Using this approach, rather than telephone directories or other sources of "listed" numbers, gives a wider range of residents the opportunity to take part and so helps to ensure that the survey is as inclusive and representative as possible.

However, the targeted RDD approach only covers landlines. In order to increase inclusivity further and to ensure representation of younger people, mobile phone numbers were also purchased from a commercial provider[6]. A number of other strategies were also used to try to maximise the number of younger people surveyed, including interviewing in the evenings and at weekends, publicising the survey and the benefits of participating on social media, and prioritising speaking to younger people within those households called. It is typically much easier to engage older people to take part in

[4] GVA "A Qualitative Assessment of the Employment Land Supply" http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s38755/Appendix%20A%20Qualitative%20Employment%20Site%20Assessment.pdf
[5] http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/Facts-and-figures-about-Kent/area-profiles
[6] These would have been purchased by the provider from various sources where people "opt in" to share their phone number and address e.g. websites, questionnaires etc.

research of this kind. However, as the EDS covers the next 16 years and focuses on issues such as employment and jobs, gathering feedback from younger age groups was considered particularly important in the context of this study.

Details of the total number of calls made and the outcome of these calls, including the number of refusals, are set out in Annex 1.

Questionnaire

The survey lasted 10 minutes on average and consisted of 19 questions, including both multiple choice/ scale questions and those allowing an open response. As well as being asked for their opinion on a number of areas, respondents were asked to provide information about themselves to allow comparison of results across different resident groups. The survey questionnaire is included at Annex 5.

Facts International designed the questionnaire in collaboration with Maidstone Borough Council. In light of the importance of ensuring a fair consultation and the particularly sensitive nature of the question around Junction 8 development, considerable thought was given to ensuring that questions were easy to interpret and understand and framed in such a way as to allow respondents to give an informed opinion. The CATI approach helped to ensure that accurate results were gathered, for example by allowing banks of statements to be rotated so that these were not presented to every respondent in the same order – thus ensuring that ratings have not been influenced by the location of statements within the list.

As a Market Research Society (MRS) company partner, Facts International is committed to providing accurate, unbiased research as set out in the MRS Code of Conduct. Interviewers and executives are committed to remaining wholly impartial and to conducting all research projects on a fully independent basis. More information on Facts International is given in Annex 7.

Analysis of results

On completion of fieldwork, the open ended responses given were coded into thematic areas by an experienced team of coders. Weighting was applied as outlined in Annex 2 and data was tabulated to allow calculation of statistics such as nets and means and to outline differences by resident groups with these differences tested for statistical significance[7]. These comparisons by group are drawn out throughout the report.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

Section 2 explores which areas of Council activity residents would prioritise, linking these with the priorities outlined in the EDS. The section includes importance ratings given to a list of activity areas, plus analysis of spontaneous suggestions for actions the Council could undertake to improve the local economy.

Section 3 focuses on feelings towards the possibility of allocating a new employment site at Junction 8 of the M20.

Section 4 covers feedback given through the open consultation and e-mail survey of businesses

Section 5 summarises the key themes and messages emerging from the study

[7] All findings reported are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level

2.0 Residents' Priorities

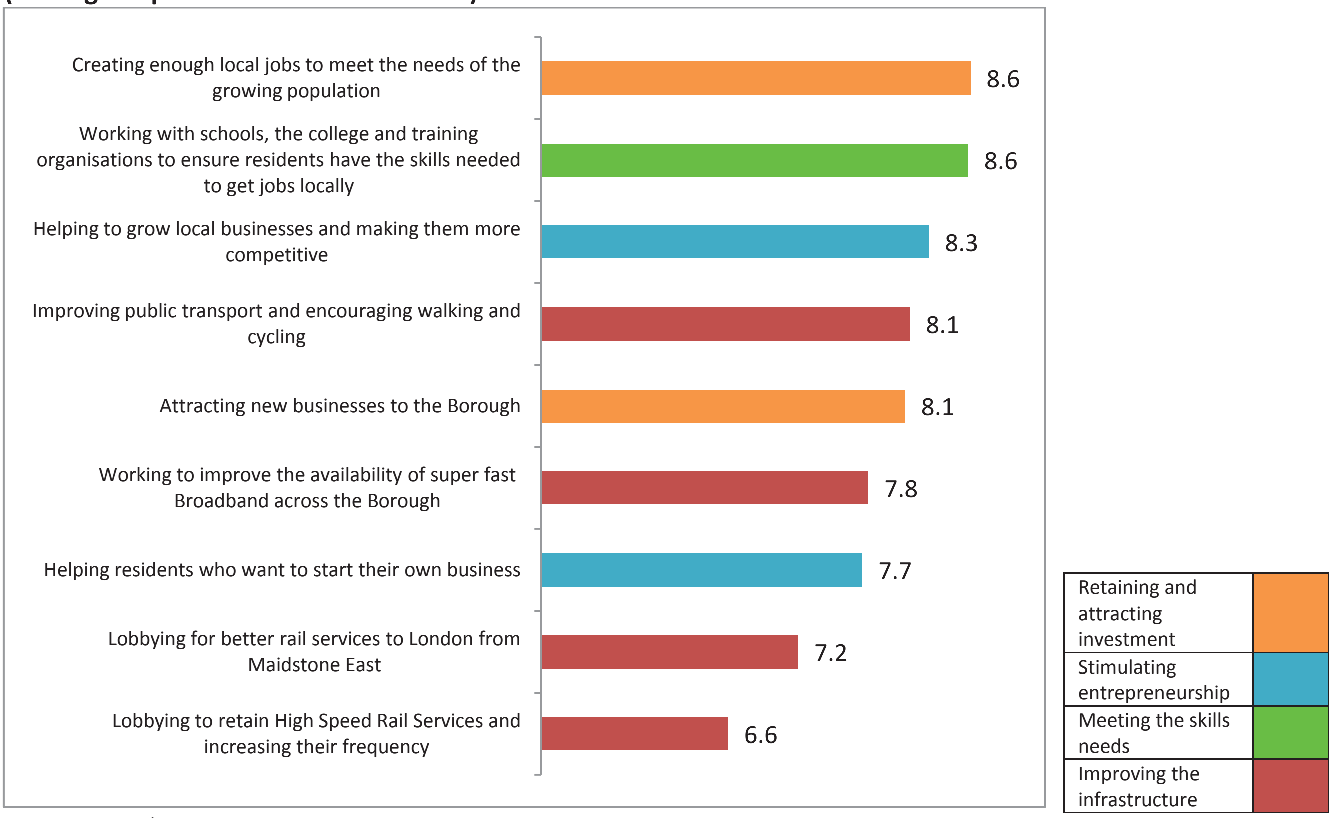
This section examines Maidstone residents' priorities in terms of Council activity to support and grow the economy, starting by looking at priorities at an overall level, then drilling down to explore the areas of most importance to different sub-groups within the Borough.

2.1 Relative Importance of EDS Priorities to Residents

Perceived importance of economic improvement activity areas

Survey participants were presented with a series of nine activity areas intended to improve Maidstone and its economy on which the Council plans to focus over the next 16 years. They were then asked to rate how important they considered each of these to be on a scale of one to ten[8].

Figure 2.1: Importance of key activity areas to Maidstone residents
(Average importance score – out of 10)



Base: 1,518 Residents.

The most important areas to the Maidstone population as a whole are job creation to meet the needs of the growing population, and working to ensure that residents have the skills to get jobs

[8] As explained in Section 1.2, the statements were presented in a randomised order to avoid any bias resulting from their positioning within the list.

locally. Both receive an average score of 8.6 out of 10 and each is given an importance rating of 10 out of 10 by almost half of all residents (46% for job creation, 45% for skills)[9].

These priorities fit well together as two sides of the same equation around the supply of and demand for suitably qualified workers. They also tie in with all three of the objectives for 2031 set out in the EDS:

1. Enable the creation of 14,400 jobs in a range of sectors and occupations
2. Raise GVA per head[10] to the level of the South East
3. Raise the skills profile of Maidstone to the South East average

"They should help the youngsters regarding their prospects for work."
Female, 75+, Retired, Shepway South Ward

"They need to provide more educational opportunities for people on benefits".
Male, 35-44, Self-employed (Within Maidstone), South Ward

Residents consider helping to grow existing local businesses and making them more competitive as more important than attracting businesses to locate in the area or encouraging new business start-ups, giving this an average importance score of 8.3 out of 10 compared with 8.1 and 7.7 respectively.

"They should be helping out smaller business. They seem to emphasise bigger global companies and forget the smaller ones in the town."
Male, 25-34, Employed (outside Maidstone), High Street Ward

In terms of infrastructure, rail links to areas outside of the borough appear less important than improving local public transport and encouraging non-car options for short local journeys. Only 1 in 5 residents (20%) would give 'lobbying to retain high speed rail services and increase their frequency' an importance score of 10, compared with more than a third (35%) for 'improving public transport and encouraging walking and cycling'.

"Make public transport in the town cheaper so that less cars are used."
Male, 55-64, Self-employed (Outside Maidstone), Loose Ward

Agreement with infrastructure, housing and town centre priorities

Residents were also asked to comment on a second batch of activity areas, all relating to infrastructure, housing or the town centre, by stating the degree to which they would agree or disagree with these as a priority for the Council in order to improve Maidstone.

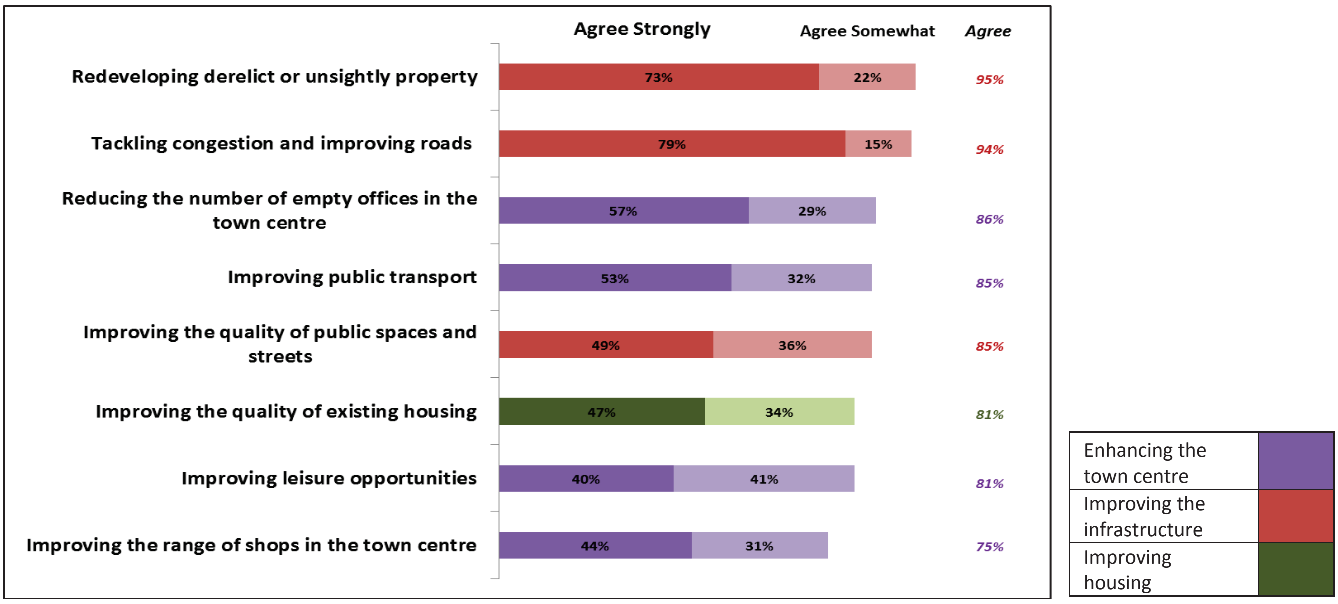
[9] The distribution of residents giving each possible mark out of 10 is almost identical for the two metrics
[10] GVA per head is a measure of the relative economic prosperity of an area, calculated by estimating the value of the economic output and dividing it by the population. If GVA per head in Maidstone were on a par with the South East it would mean that we have created more higher value, better paid jobs and our economic performance would be more in line with the rest of the South East. [Extract from the Maidstone Draft Economic Strategy 2014-2031, Shared Intelligence]

As shown in Figure 2.2, all of the areas tested received support as priorities from at least three quarters of residents, with 'redeveloping derelict or unsightly property' and 'tackling congestion and improving roads' generating almost universal agreement.

"Derelict properties should be done up to look better. Empty shops make the town look very unattractive"
Male, 35-44, Employed (outside of Maidstone), Marden and Yalding Ward

"People are being put off of Maidstone. It's a miserable driving experience, we try not to do it if we can."
Male, 55-64, Retired, Staplehurst Ward

Figure 2.2: Agreement with infrastructure, housing and town centre priorities



Base:1,518 Residents

Residents are least likely to prioritise 'improving the range of shops in the town centre' but this is nevertheless something that more than four in ten strongly agree should be a priority with only 8% disagreeing.

""Improve the quality and range of shops and make shopping in Maidstone pleasurable..."
Female, 45-54, Employed (outside of Maidstone), Coxheath and Hunton Ward

Spontaneous suggestions for action

Survey respondents were given the opportunity to feed back anything else they thought the Council should be doing to improve the local economy and more than half of residents (52%) had a suggestion to make. Some residents took this opportunity to further expand on the importance to them of the priorities and action points covered earlier in the survey, while others brought out slightly different issues.

While the question did specifically mention the local *economy*, some answers given relate to more general improvements that the Council could make. However, many of these relate to the *quality of life* locally, something that the EDS highlights as having an economic impact by encouraging skilled residents to locate and stay in the borough, which will in turn prove attractive for businesses.

Therefore, only very specific suggestions with little relevance to economic policy, for example comments around rubbish collection and bins, have been excluded from the analysis of these answers[11]. Quality of life-related infrastructure suggestions, such as increasing the number of GPs or school places, have been considered as relevant and are included.

A diverse range of suggestions were put forward but certain words feature heavily across all the responses gathered. These include "people" (336 mentions), "roads" (318 mentions), "shops" (297 mentions) and "businesses" (277 mentions). The type of words used by residents to describe their suggestions for the Council are illustrated by the Word Cloud set out in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3 What else should the Council be doing to improve the local economy? – Word Cloud

Base: 795 residents making a suggestion. Larger words = more mentions e.g. businesses = 277 mentions, station = 11 mentions. Some linking words have been excluded for clarity. Word cloud created via Tagxedo (http://www.tagxedo.com/app.html).

The diversity of ideas put forward can also be grouped together into themes. The most common thematic areas mentioned (those identified by more than 3% of those making a suggestion) are set out in Figure 2.4 overleaf.

[11] 40 responses (equal to 5% of suggestions) were excluded for this reason.

Figure 2.4: Thematic grouping of spontaneous suggestions for other action the Council should take to improve the local economy (Most common themes)

Theme area	% mentioning
Focus on the town centre and its appearance and bring in better shops, cafes and businesses	16%
Improve roads	14%
Create more diverse local jobs and apprenticeships, including well paid, quality jobs, not just service jobs	10%
Improve infrastructure e.g. the number of schools, doctors, supermarkets etc	10%
Reduce parking fees, more parking spaces, better use of traffic wardens and Park & Ride	9%
Improvements to public transport including cheaper fares and improvements to bus and train services	7%
Decrease congestion and avoid grid lock	7%
Build on existing sites and brown fields to maintain open, green spaces	7%
Encourage small business including offering opportunities and smaller spaces for businesses, emphasising production and industry rather than large supermarkets	7%
Reduce shop and business rates/ rents	4%
Maximise the river, improve the riverside, make the most of the new bridge	4%
Make areas look nicer, tidier and smarter	3%
Create new houses, including by converting empty offices into accommodation	3%
Offer amenities for younger people - after school clubs, playgroups	3%
Better planning/ planning permission	3%
Stop wasting money/ prioritise budgets	3%

Retaining and attracting investment	
Stimulating entrepreneurship	
Enhancing the town centre	
Improving the infrastructure	
Improving housing	
Creative/ cultural offer	
Other	

Base: 795 residents making a suggestion. Table shows theme areas mentioned by at least 3% of respondents. Multiple responses possible.

The suggestions made generally link closely with the priorities set out in the EDS, particularly "Improving the Infrastructure", with residents commonly mentioning roads, parking and transport. "Tidying up" parts of the Borough and work to make the most of the riverside area were also often identified as initiatives where more could be done. Some suggestions were made around planning and development, particularly the idea of building on brownfield, rather than greenfield sites. It should be noted that the question about additional suggestions for Council activity came after the question about development at Junction 8, and the call to build on existing sites was more common among those who would object to the development (mentioned by 13%, compared with 5% of those who would support the development and 7% of all residents).

Figure 2.5: Infrastructure suggestions – Word Cloud and quotes

Word Cloud based on 350 respondents. Larger words = more mentions. Word Cloud created via Tagxedo.

One in six residents making a suggestion for Council activity mentioned improvements relating to the town centre, including the need to improve its appearance and to bring in better quality shops, cafes and businesses. A further 4% called for a reduction in the rates and rents charged to shops and other businesses.

Figure 2.5: Town centre suggestions – Word Cloud and quotes

Word Cloud based on 129 respondents. Larger words = more mentions. Word Cloud created via Tagxedo.

Creating quality jobs (10%) and encouraging small businesses (7%) also feature among the top 10 types of activity suggested.

> *"Create more jobs for future generations."*
> Male, 65-74, Retired, Harrietsham Ward

> *"Jobs are the most important thing."*
> Male, 75+ Retired, Leeds Ward

> *"Quality not quantity of jobs – jobs that last"*
> Male, 55-64, Retired, North Downs Ward

> *"Encourage the right business – smaller businesses with more variety."*
> Male, 65-74, Retired, Loose Ward

> *"Support small businesses that are struggling. If there is business, there is work."*
> Female, 25-44, Employed (outside of Maidstone), South Ward

2.2 Differences in Priorities by Resident Group

Not all sub-groups of Maidstone residents prioritise different areas of Council activity in the same way. The Figures on pages 16-17 highlight the groups of residents for whom each of the priorities and activities explored in the survey appear to have the most and least resonance.

It is also possible to take an *overall* view of ratings and feedback given by key resident groups and this is set out below:

Young People (aged 16-24)

46 residents aged 16-24 took part in the survey and this is the age group with potentially the most to gain if the EDS vision for 2031 can be achieved. Their views on Council priorities are generally in line with the average across the Maidstone population, although they tend to see priorities around improving infrastructure as slightly less important than average and give higher than average ratings to improving leisure opportunities, public transport and the availability of super-fast Broadband. It is interesting to note that this group does not appear to differ significantly from the Maidstone population as a whole in terms of their ratings of the importance of local job creation or skills development. However, they do attach much greater importance to helping residents who want to start their own business (average importance score of 8.0 compared with 7.7 on average) and several of those leaving comments mentioned that they thought the Council should provide help for new start-ups, suggesting an interest in entrepreneurship among this group.

> *"Improve start up information for small businesses, which will improve the local economy."*
> Female, 16-24, Employed (Within Maidstone), Barming Ward

> *"Go to schools and colleges and educate people on starting their own business."*
> Male, 16-24, Student, Park Wood Ward

Carers/ homemakers

There are a number of areas that women consider more important or more of a priority than men including creating local jobs, upskilling local residents and improving public transport. However, it is among the carers/ homemakers group (91% of whom are women) that particularly high importance scores and agreement levels can be seen across almost all priority areas. This group give especially strong support to activity targeted towards local skills and jobs, giving importance scores of 9.7 for local skills development and 9.3 for local job creation (compared with averages across all Maidstone residents of 8.6 for both)[12]. More than half (54%) of the carers/ homemakers interviewed fall into the 35-44 year old age group and this interest is likely to reflect concern for children who will be growing up and joining the workforce over the 16 year period covered by the EDS. However, this may also potentially be a reflection of an interest in returning to the workforce themselves, if appropriate jobs were to be available and accessible. It is notable that the two areas where carers/ homemakers give lower than average importance scores are the two activity areas related to rail services. This supports the idea that *local* jobs are of particular interest to them, with commuting less of an option given childcare commitments. Comments made around what else the Council could do cover improvements in schools as well as other issues, but also support for those who have been out of work for some time.

"When I was a cashier, chip and pin was just coming in and people like me don't have any experience with this and smart phones and tablets. If you haven't had any experience with things like that you need courses and a support network as the job centre does not offer anything like that. If you want to do courses it costs money, and if you don't have it you can't do the courses.

Female, 35-44, Carer/homemaker, Marden & Yalding Ward

Older people

Older people are generally more likely to consider issues such as public spaces and streets and public transport as important priorities. Those over 75 in particular are especially likely to consider improving the range of shops in the town centre as important (82% agree this should be a priority, compared with 74% of all residents), perhaps reflecting difficulties travelling further afield to visit alternative shopping destinations.

Older, retired people are not significantly less likely than younger people to consider activities such as creating local jobs or upskilling local residents as important future priorities, giving comments to suggest that these actions are of interest to them, either for the good of the Borough as a whole or out of concern for their own children or grandchildren.

"It took my grandson ages to get a job when he left school. How are they meant to get experience when nobody will employ them in the first place?".

Female, 65-74, Retired, Harrietsham & Lenham Ward

"We need further development in to Maidstone – to make sure Maidstone is better and stronger".

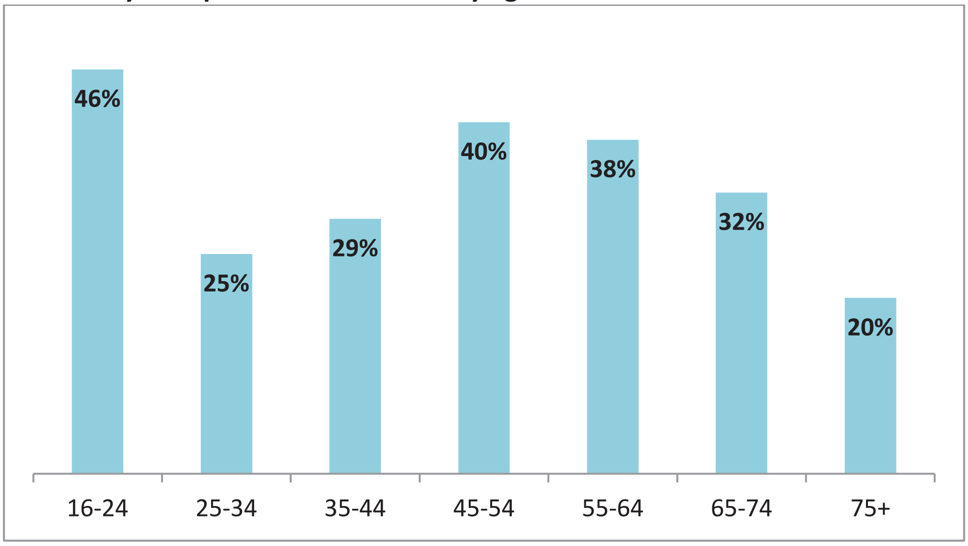
Female, 65-74, Retired, Park Wood Ward

It is interesting to note that while the importance of improving the availability of super-fast broadband is highest among young people and the middle aged (average importance rating of 8.2 among those aged 16-24 and 8.0 among 45-64 year olds), there continues to be some interest in this

[12] Although the number of carers/ homemakers interviewed is relatively small (45 respondents) these differences are statistically significant

area as a priority even among the very oldest residents. Almost a third of those aged 65+ and one in five of those aged over 75 rate this area 10 out of 10 for importance.

Figure 2.6: Proportion giving an importance rating of 10 out of 10 to 'working to improve the availability of super-fast broadband' by age



Bases: 16-24 = 46, 25-34 = 69, 35-44 = 176, 45-54 = 299, 55-64 = 339, 65-74 = 352, 75+ = 237.

Out-commuters

Around half of working residents surveyed travel outside of Maidstone to work and these individuals place less importance on almost all areas of activity than those who work locally. This makes sense as they are unlikely to be as interested in local jobs if they know they have already been able to secure employment elsewhere. They may also see improvements to infrastructure such as derelict buildings or empty offices as less relevant to them if they spend less time in the borough. As they are used to travelling, they may not consider improving Maidstone town centre as a priority if they more regularly shop in neighbouring towns or developments such as Bluewater instead.

The EDS identifies Maidstone's out commuters as a potential resource available to any new firms who are encouraged to re-locate to the borough. However, if these individuals do not have an immediate *desire* to work locally, rather than commuting out, effort may be required to attract them to alternative local employment.

Given that they tend to be better off, higher skilled workers who may potentially have the resources and inclination to start their own business, out-commuters as a group can be considered as a potential source of entrepreneurship. However, those interviewed as part of the survey placed significantly less importance on 'helping residents who want to start their own business' than individuals working within the borough (average importance score of 7.5 compared with 8.0).

Interestingly, out-commuters are not significantly more likely to see 'lobbying for better rail services to London from Maidstone East' or 'lobbying to retain High Speed Rail Services and increasing their frequency' as priorities than the average for all residents, suggesting that many may be commuting to neighbouring areas rather than to London or travelling by road rather than rail.

The self employed

154 self-employed residents participated in the survey. While these respondents were less likely than employees to commute out of the borough to work, 3 in 10 reported working outside of Maidstone.

Results for this group do not differ significantly from those for all residents across most activity areas. As could be expected, the self-employed are more likely to attach importance to 'help for residents wanting to start their own business', giving an importance score of 7.9, compared with 7.7 across the population as a whole. They also have a greater interest in Broadband improvements (average importance score of 8.2 compared with 7.8 for all residents).

When asked what else the Council could be doing, a number of self-employed residents mentioned that they would appreciate more support for their business, including a reduction in business rates and red tape as well as better business space. It was suggested that more could be done to engage with small businesses, and it will be important to ensure that the smallest businesses, including micro-businesses and "one man bands" are not overlooked in taking forward the actions outlined in the EDS.

> ***"Open up local authority contracts to small business and reduce red tape as far as possible".***
> **Male, 35-44, Self-employed, Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton Ward**

> ***"Provide business space for small businesses".***
> **Male, 35-44, Self-employed, North Downs Ward**

> ***"Reduce business rates for small businesses employing 2 or less people".***
> **Male, 55-64, Self-employed, Headcorn Ward**

Rural vs urban residents

Several areas of activity appear more important to residents in urban areas than to those living in rural parts of the borough. These include attracting new businesses (importance score of 8.2 among urban residents compared with 7.9 for rural residents) and activity around rail links (reflecting proximity to the station, urban residents give importance scores of 7.3 for 'lobbying for better rail services to London from Maidstone East' and 6.7 for 'lobbying to retain High Speed rail services and increase their frequency' compared with 7.0 and 6.4 respectively for rural residents).

Conversely high speed Broadband appears more of a priority for those in rural areas, which may reflect relatively poor connectivity in some rural parts of the borough (rural residents give this an importance score of 8.1, while urban residents rate this as only 7.5 out of 10 in terms of importance). Certain rural wards stand out in particular with this priority receiving an importance rating of 8.5 in Marden & Yalding and Headcorn and 8.6 in Leeds. In North Downs ward, the average rating is 9.4.

Some rural residents making a suggestion for 'anything else the Council should be doing to improve the local economy' mention a desire for a greater focus on rural and farming issues.

> ***"Look after the farmer, the rural community gets forgotten."***
> **Female, 55-64, Retired, Marden & Yalding Ward**

> ***"I think they should be focusing more on local resources, economic and food/farming, moving towards a more sustainable borough, especially in the area of food production."***
> **Male, 45-54, Employed, (outside of Maidstone) Heath Ward**

Other differences at ward level are highlighted in Figures 2.7 and 2.8 overleaf

Figure 2.7: Type of residents considering economic improvement activity areas most and least important by demographic group and ward

	More important to:	Average importance score	Less important to:	Average importance score
Creating enough local jobs to meet the needs of the growing population (Av. Importance score 8.6)	Carers/ homemakers Women Maidstone work location	9.3 8.8 8.8	Men Retired Non-Maidstone work location	8.4 8.4 8.5
	Park Wood *High Street*	*9.1* *9.0*	*North Downs*	*8.1*
Working with schools, the college and training organisations to ensure residents have the skills needed to get jobs locally (Av. Importance score 8.6)	Carers/ homemakers Women Maidstone work location	9.7 8.8 8.7	Men Self-employed Non-Maidstone work location	8.4 8.4 8.4
	Allington *Downswood & Otham* *Harrietsham & Lenham*	*9.0* *9.0* *9.0*	*Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton* *South* *North Downs*	*7.9* *8.3* *8.3*
Helping to grow local businesses and making them more competitive (Av. Importance score 8.3)	45-54 year olds Working within Maidstone	8.4 8.5	Age 75+ Non-Maidstone work location	8.1 8.1
	Shepway North *Downswood & Otham* *High Street*	*8.8* *8.7* *8.7*	*Boxley* *Detling & Thurnam*	*7.8* *7.8*
Improving public transport and encouraging walking and cycling (Av. Importance score 8.1)	Carers/ homemakers Women 55-64 year olds Retired Not in work	8.9 8.3 8.3 8.3 8.3	16-24 year olds Men In work	7.5 7.9 8.0
	Downswood & Otham *High Street* *Harrietsham & Lenham* *Park Wood*	*8.9* *8.6* *8.5* *8.5*	*Boxley* *Headcorn* *South*	*7.7* *7.7* *7.7*
Attracting new businesses to the Borough (Av. Importance score 8.1)	"Other white background groups 65-74 year olds	8.7 8.3	16-24 year olds	7.6
	High Street *Park Wood* *Loose*	*8.7* *8.6* *8.5*	*Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton* *Leeds* *Marden & Yalding*	*7.5* *7.6* *7.6*
Working to improve the availability of super fast Broadband across the Borough (Av. Importance score 7.8)	Non-white ethnicities Minority ethnic groups Self-employed Carers/ homemakers Maidstone work location Rural residents	8.7 8.4 8.2 8.2 8.1 8.1	Aged 75+ Urban residents 65-74 year olds Non-Maidstone work location	6.6 7.5 7.6 7.7
	North Downs *Leeds* *Marden & Yalding* *Headcorn*	*9.4* *8.6* *8.5* *8.5*	*North* *Shepway North* *Fant* *South*	*6.9* *7.0* *7.0* *7.1*
Helping residents who want to start their own business (Av. Importance score 7.7)	Carers/ homemakers Maidstone work location	8.4 8.0	Retired Non-Maidstone work location	7.5 7.5
	Harrietsham & Lenham *Barming* *Downswood & Otham*	*8.3* *8.2* *8.2*	*Bearsted* *Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton* *Bridge*	*7.0* *7.2* *7.2*
Lobbying for better rail services to London from Maidstone East (Av. Importance score 7.2)	Women 65-74 year olds Non-Maidstone work location Urban residents	7.4 7.4 7.3 7.3	Self-employed Men Aged 75+	6.6 6.9 6.9
	Bearsted *Heath* *Barming*	*8.3* *8.0* *7.9*	*Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton* *Staplehurst*	*5.2* *6.1*
Lobbying to retain High Speed Rail Services and increasing their frequency (Av. Importance score 6.6)	25-34 year olds Urban residents	6.9 6.7	Aged 75+ Rural residents	6.3 6.4
	Bearsted *Bridge* *East*	*7.2* *7.2* *7.1*	*Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton* *Headcorn*	*5.3* *5.4*

See Annexes 2 and 3 for sub-group bases.

Figure 2.8: Summary of differences in infrastructure, housing and town centre priorities by resident type

Redeveloping derelict or unsightly property *(Improving Infrastructure)* [Av. Agreement level, 95%]		• Stronger agreement among the 65+ age group (97%) than among 16-24 year olds (89%) or 45-54 year olds (92%). • Weaker agreement in Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton and Leeds wards (both 88%). 99% agreement in Detling & Thurnam, North, Shepway South and Sutton Valance & Langley wards.
Tackling congestion and improving roads *(Improving Infrastructure)* [Av. Agreement level, 94%]		• Weaker agreement among men (92%) than women (96%). • Greater agreement among the retired (96%) than among those in work (93%) but a difference between those working within Maidstone (96%) and those working outside of the Borough (90%). • Agreement among 100% of residents surveyed in Downswood & Otham, Loose and Park Wood. Weaker agreement in East ward (86%).
Reducing the number of empty offices in the town centre *(Enhancing the town centre)* [Av. Agreement level, 86%]		• Greater agreement among carers/ homemakers (96%), less among the self-employed (82%). • Greater agreement among residents of Coxheath & Hunton (93%), less among those in Marden & Yalding (74%) and East ward (75%).
Improving public transport *(Improving Infrastructure)* [Av. Agreement level, 85%]		• Weaker agreement among men (82%) than women (88%). • More of a priority for 55-64 year olds (88% agree) than for 25-34 year olds (78%) and for those working within the borough (86% compared with 81%). • No difference between rural and urban residents but stronger agreement in Loose (96%) and Barming (95%) than in Coxheath & Hunton (71%) and Headcorn (72%).
Improving the quality of public spaces and streets *(Improving Infrastructure)* [Av. Agreement level, 85%]		• More of a priority for those over 45 than for 16-34 year olds (87% agree compared with 80%) • More of a priority for minority ethnic groups (92% agree) • Stronger agreement in Bearsted and Barming wards (94%) and much weaker agreement in Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton (70%).
Improving the quality of existing housing *(Improving Housing)* [Av. Agreement level, 81%]		• Less of a priority for working residents than for those not in work (79% agree compared with 83%) • A difference between rural and urban residents – 79% of those in rural areas agree, compared with 81% in urban Maidstone. Highest levels of agreement in Harrietsham & Lenham (90%) and Barming (88%). Lowest agreement in Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton (70%) and Bearsted (73%).
Improving leisure opportunities *(Enhancing the town centre)* [Av. Agreement level, 81%]		• More of a priority for 16-34 year olds than those over 45 (88% agree vs. 79%). • Sees most support as a priority in North ward and Shepway South Ward (90% of residents agree).
Improving the range of shops in the town centre *(Enhancing the town centre)* [Av. Agreement level, 75%]		• Most important to the retired (79% agree), particularly those over 75 (82% agree). • Of less interest to working residents (73% agree), with important differences by work location (77% agreement for those who work within Maidstone, 68% for those who work outside). • Strongest agreement in North Ward (88%) Downswood & Otham (87%). Weakest agreement in Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton (57%).

See Annexes 2 and 3 for sub-group bases.

3.0 Feelings Towards a New Employment Site at Junction 8

A key foundation of the EDS is "*Making the most of our many economic assets, while at the same time protecting those that make Maidstone a special place*" and achieving this balance represents a particular challenge when considering the issue of employment land.

The EDS sits alongside the Local Plan, which focuses more specifically on future local development, but the EDS highlights the need for additional employment land to be found to allow Maidstone to create the additional jobs forecast to be required in line with a projected increase in the borough's population of 17,300 working age people by 2031. Consultants GVA predict that Maidstone's economy is only capable of producing between 7,800 and 14,400 jobs during this period[13], meaning a shortfall in local jobs for local people, which could lead to a greater need for out-commuting or greater unemployment. GVA conclude their Employment Site Assessment report[14] by stating *'Not all the requirement for 18 hectares of employment land can be met within the existing employment site portfolio and there is likely to be a qualitative requirement for new land to be allocated which is specifically aimed at accommodating the likely requirements of future growth sectors'* and give guidance that *'future land allocations should prioritise space along the motorway corridor to support growth of businesses that largely serve national and regional markets'.*

Therefore, **'Allocating a new employment site at Junction 8 to meet modern business needs'** represents one of four transformational actions outlined by the EDS[15].

Testing residents' reactions to this important and sensitive aspect of the EDS was considered a key element of the survey. However, it was felt to be vital that respondents gave an *informed* answer when commenting on this idea. They were therefore given some contextual information before being asked about this as follows:

"Over the next 16 years, Maidstone's population will grow by around 20%, meaning an extra 17,300 jobs will be needed for our residents. To deliver as many of these jobs as possible in the Borough, the Council will need to consider allocating land for a new business park at Junction 8 of the M20."

Residents were asked about a "business park" as it was felt that this would help respondents to understand the type of development being referred to - a mixed use site including a range of businesses of different sizes from different economic sectors - and to differentiate this from a previous plan to build a large scale warehouse and logistics business park and rail freight interchange called KIG in a similar area.

Interviewers were provided with additional information to share with respondents where necessary, allowing them to explain that the development would be a business park of about 20 hectares, considerably smaller than the KIG development previously proposed) and that it would be at the junction, not directly next to villages and close to only a few houses.

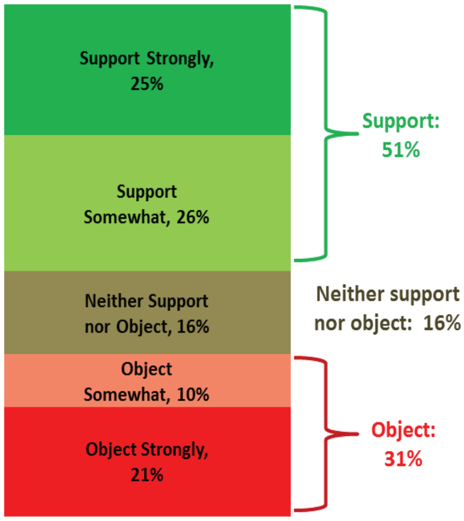
This section outlines the extent to which different groups within the Maidstone population would support or object to a new business park at Junction 8 and explores the reasons given for support or objection.

[13] 'Maidstone Draft Economic Development Strategy 2014-2031', Shared Intelligence, September 2014
[14] GVA "A Qualitative Assessment of the Employment Land Supply"
http://services.maidstone.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s38755/Appendix%20A%20Qualitative%20Employment%20Site%20Assessment.pdf
[15] The others are 'Producing and implementing a new vision for Maidstone Town Centre', 'Maximising the opportunities presented by Maidstone Medical Campus' and 'Producing and implementing a new masterplan for Eclipse Business Park'.

3.1 Levels of Support or Objection by Resident Group

As shown in Figure 3.1, just over half of all residents interviewed would support a new business park at Junction 8, just under a third would object and 1 in 6 have no opinion either way.

Figure 3.1: Levels of support and objection to the idea of a new business park at Junction 8 – All residents



Base:1,518 Residents

Unsurprisingly, the strongest factor influencing residents' level of support or objection to the potential business park described is their location within the borough, with those living in the rural areas closest to Junction 8 most likely to object. As shown in Figure 3.2, residents of Bearsted are 8 times more likely to object than those living in Barming and almost 10 times more likely to object strongly. More than half of residents would support the development in 15 out of Maidstone's 26 wards and there are only 5 wards where the proportion of residents who would support this falls below a third.

The importance of location can be further illustrated by looking at views towards a potential business park at Junction 8 on a map. Figure 3.3 on page 21 maps residents' feelings on this subject using a "sentiment score", calculated by allocating a number to each point on the support-object scale[16] and finding an average. Across all residents, the average sentiment score is 3.2 and in Park Wood it is 3.8. However, in Bearsted this score is just 1.6[17]. On the map, the darkest red signifies the greatest objection, evidenced by the lowest sentiment score. The darkest green highlights the strongest support and shades of yellow show those areas where residents' opinions are more neutral. The map emphasises the location of the strongest objections closest to Junction 8 in the rural wards to the north of the borough. In contrast, there are much higher sentiment scores, signalling greater positivity towards a new business park in the southern and town centre wards. The 5 wards where objection is strongest - Bearsted, North Downs, Leeds, Detling & Thurnam and Sutton Valence & Langley - cover a large area. However, it should be noted that these 5 wards account for just 12% of all households across Maidstone.

[16] Support strongly = 5, Support somewhat = 4, neither support nor object = 3, Object somewhat = 2, Object strongly = 1.
[17] A full list of sentiment scores by ward is set out in Annex 4.

Figure 3.2: Support and objection to the idea of a new business park at Junction 8 by Ward

Fig 3.2a: Support

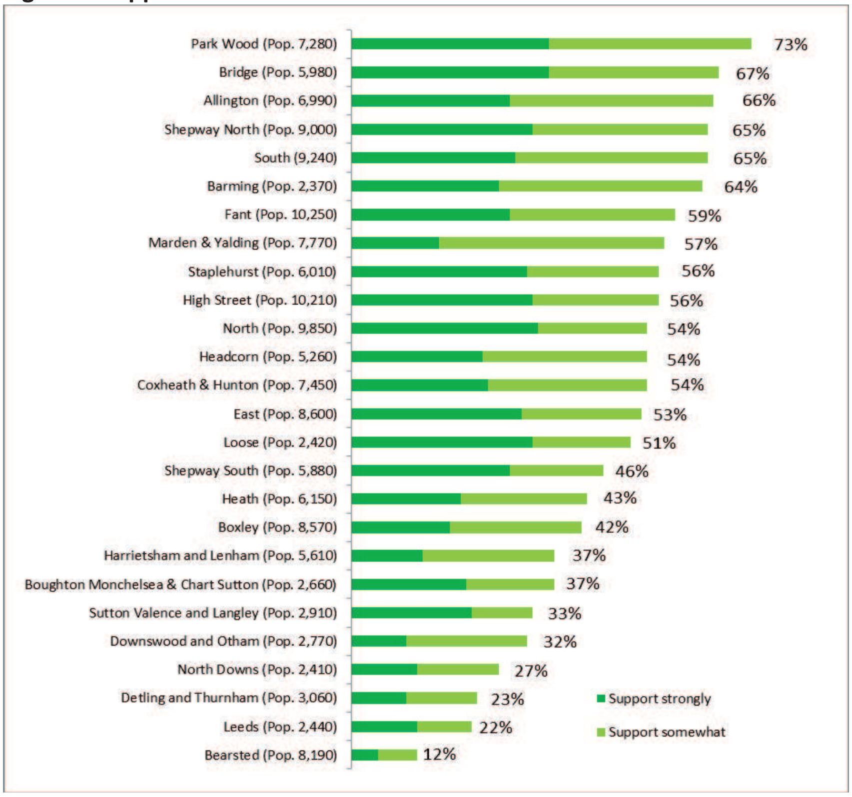
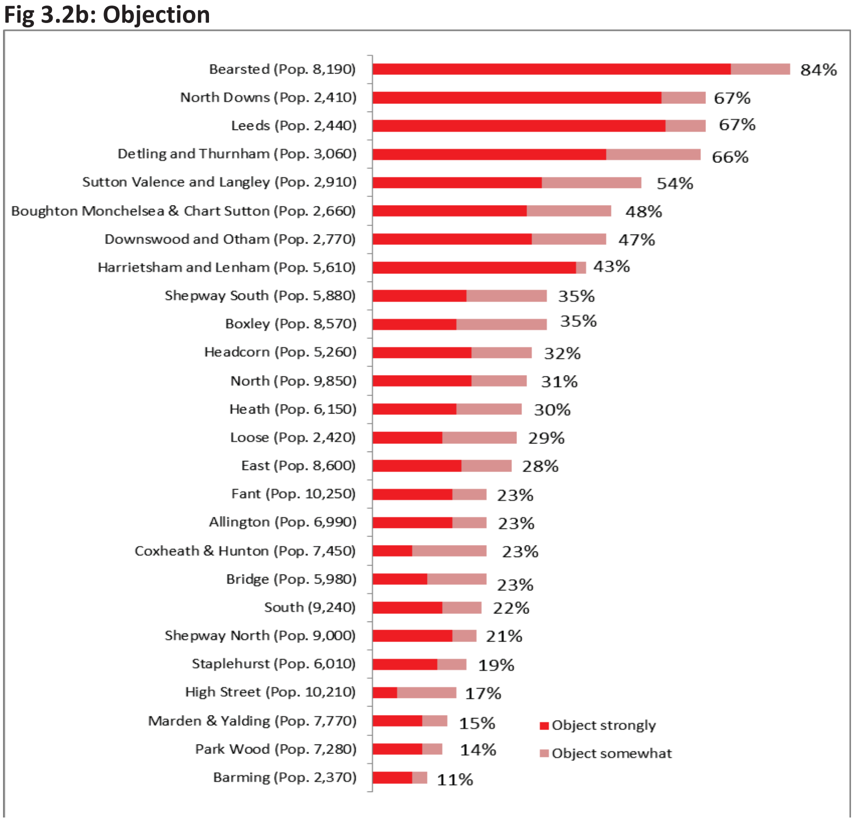


Fig 3.2b: Objection



See Annex 2 for bases by Ward. At least 50 interviews were conducted in each ward. Source for population figures = 2013 Mid Year Estimates, ONS. From KCC Area Profiles (http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/Facts-and-figures-about-Kent/area-profiles)

Figure 3.3: Feeling towards a new business park at Junction 8 by ward based on 'sentiment scores' – Darker colour = greater level of objection

See Annex 2 for bases by Ward. At least 50 interviews were conducted in each ward. See Annex 4 for sentiment scores by ward.

As well as significant differences at ward level, attitudes towards a business park at Junction 8 differ between rural and urban residents (59% of urban residents would support compared with 41% of rural residents). This is likely to reflect the rural nature of the wards closest to where the development would be placed. Residents of rural wards to the South of Maidstone such as Staplehurst and Marden & Yalding are some of the most supportive of the potential development, with around 60% saying they would support this.

Other differences by resident group include:

- More support from **men** than **women** (57% would support compared with 46%)
- More support from **young people** compared with **older people** (59% of 16-34 year olds would support compared with 49% of those aged 45+)
- More support from **employees** than from the **retired** (53% compared with 47%)
- More support from **minority ethnic groups** than from **White British** residents (71% compared with 50%).

3.2 Reasons to Support a New Employment Site at Junction 8

As shown in Figure 3.4 on page 24, more than half of those who would strongly support the idea of a new business park at Junction 8 (and 4 in 10 of those who support somewhat) cite the need for job creation for local people as the reason behind their support for this idea.

"I think it's very important to increase working opportunities especially for the younger generation. Anything that increases revenue in the borough is a good thing. I think with opportunities such as that it has the potential to reduce crime rates, increase aspiration and reduce unemployment which are all good things."
Female, 35-44, Employed (outside of Maidstone), Fant Ward, Somewhat support

"I find that Maidstone for a county town has got very little opportunities as far as work is concerned. There are very few businesses and few work opportunities. There is more in Canterbury than in Maidstone."
Male, 74+, Retired, Bridge Ward, Support Strongly

"There are so many people out of work – any ideas to get people new jobs".
Female, 55-64, Employed (outside of Maidstone), Allington Ward, Support somewhat

Those with the strongest interest in job creation for local people are most likely to have strong support for the idea of a new business park at Junction 8. Of those who give an importance score of 9 or 10 for 'Creating enough local jobs to meet the needs of the local population', 30% would strongly support a new business park, compared with 20% of those giving an importance score of 6 or less.

One in five residents mention the need for this site in order to achieve more general goals around economic growth and the prosperity of the borough.

"If something is needed to support Maidstone and the economy, I'm afraid I support it. Maidstone has always been regarded as a 2nd grade town as it has such a bad image. Anything that improves it's image and the economy must be supported".
Female, 55-64, Employed (within Maidstone), Staplehurst Ward, Support Somewhat

As well as outlining why they think building a new business park *somewhere* is important, a number of respondents mentioned specific geographical advantages they consider relevant to the Junction 8 site, notably its good transport links and specifically the proximity of the M20 motorway. Some respondents suggested that creating a new business park may have "knock on" effects in terms of improvements to the road network that would have benefits more generally.

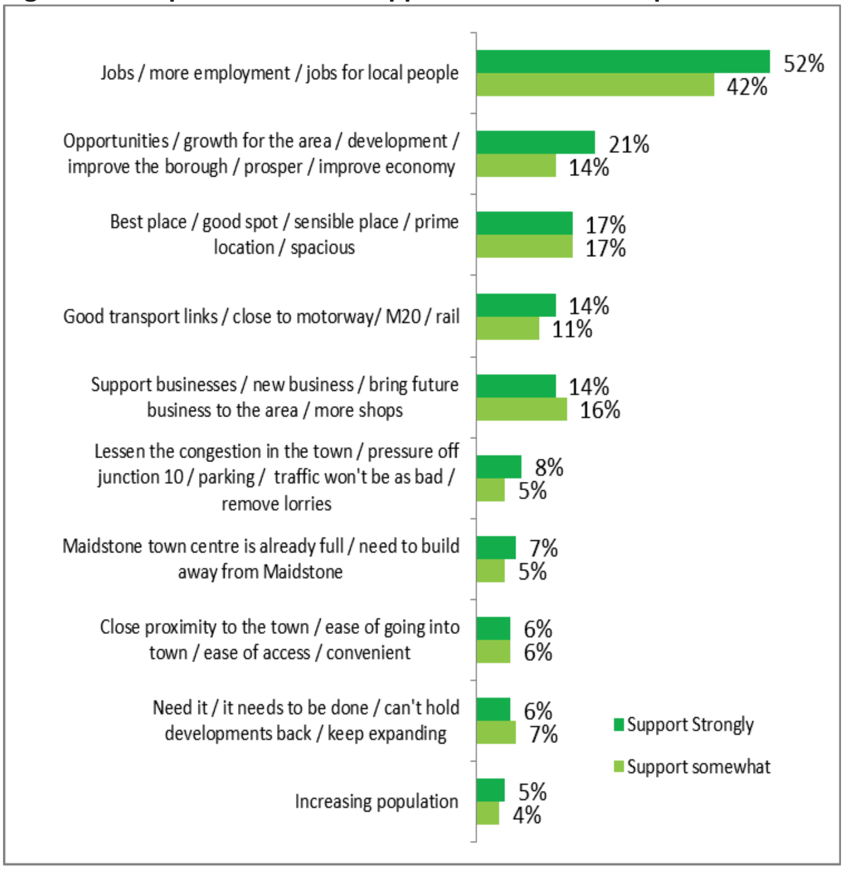
"It's a sensible place to put it… it's ordinary land that is not being used for anything special. It has transport links and is handy for residents and for people working there".
Female, 65-74, Retired, Barming Ward, Support Somewhat

"It's an area that can be developed and it's strategically placed."
Male, 65-74, Retired, Coxheath & Hunton Ward, Support Strongly

"I think its a prime location for businesses to develop there and could attract some significant operations because it has the motorway network and easy links to channel tunnel."
Male, 55-64, Employed (within Maidstone), Marden & Yalding Ward, Support Strongly

Residents supporting the idea of a new business park at Junction 8 also highlighted that this area is not a pure "green field" and that they did not believe there to be any features in the immediate vicinity that would be negatively impacted by the development of a new employment site. This location appears to have support both for being far enough away from the town centre to help reduce some of the "pressure" in terms of congestion or development space for example, but also close enough to the town to allow relatively easy access if needed.

Figure 3.4: Top 10 reasons to support a new business park at Junction 8



Bases: Support Strongly = 355 respondents, Support Somewhat = 360 respondents. Multiple responses possible. Top 10 answers shown.

Some of those saying that they would support the development "somewhat" qualified their answers by noting that while they felt a new business park was necessary they believed that this should be handled with sensitivity to the environment. Others mentioned that they would somewhat support a new site in principle, but would ideally need more information, for example on the type of businesses that would locate there. There were also some residents who said they would "somewhat" support a new business park at Junction 8, but that they saw other activity, such as improving the town centre, as a higher priority.

> ***"It's a good idea but the planners track record so far in approving applications for the local community is poor. The council do not look at how planning applications will impact on the local community and area. Due consideration is not given to the surrounding infrastructure like roads and schools."***
>
> **Male, 45-54, Employed (Outside Maidstone),Boxley Ward, Support Somewhat**

Figure 3.5: Why support a new business park at Junction 8 – Word Cloud

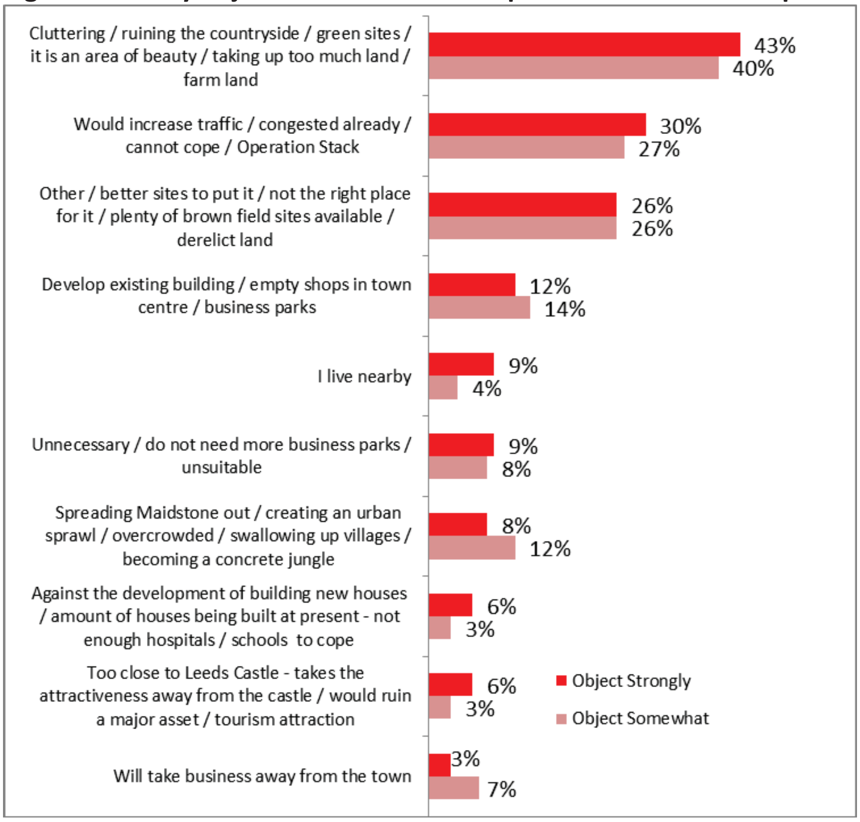
Word Cloud based on 777 respondents. Larger words = more mentions. Word Cloud created via Tagxedo.

3.3 Reasons to Object to a New Employment Site at Junction 8

Environmental concerns, particularly a feeling that this would clutter up or ruin the countryside, represent the top reason to object to a new employment site at Junction 8, mentioned by 4 in 10 of those who would object as set out in Figure 3.6. A view that Junction 8 is not the most appropriate location and concern around "urban sprawl" also feature among the top ten reasons to object to the site.

> ***"It is entirely unnecessary to have here and the country side needs preserving. It is cluttering the countryside unnecessarily."***
>
> **Male, 75+, Retired, Harrietsham & Lenham Ward, Object Strongly**

Figure 3.6: Why object to a new business park at Junction 8 – Top 10 reasons



Bases: Object Strongly = 398 respondents, Object Somewhat = 166 respondents. Multiple responses possible. Top 10 answers shown.

Interestingly, given that some who would support a new business park suggest that this might help to ease traffic issues, 3 in 10 of those who would object to a development at Junction 8 cite fears around traffic and congestion[18]

"We live between Junction 7 and 8. We still get a lot of lorries which are frequently parking along this stretch and push all the traffic onto the local roads. It just makes the congestion worse. I do object strongly as far as Junction 8 is concerned. I know that the people need jobs, but there are possibly other areas that could be used."
Female, 65-74, Retired, Bearsted Ward, Object Strongly

"It is not an industrial zone. Unless road inks are improved, it will cause problems with traffic in Leeds village."
Male, 65-74, Retired, Headcorn Ward, Object Somewhat

"More congestion, more confusion. It would make it more difficult to get around. This would make congestion worse. The type of jobs produced would be minimum wage and then people can't afford housing. There would be pollution."
Male, 65-74, Retired, Sutton Valence & Langley Ward, Object Strongly

"I disagree fundamentally with building new housing or business parks in the area, although I agree that we need more jobs."
Female, 45-54, Self-employed (Outside Maidstone), Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton Ward, Object Strongly

"I live nearby" is given as a reason for objection by 4% of those who would object "somewhat" to a new business park at Junction 8 and by almost 1 in 10 of those who would object strongly. This is a much more common reason among rural residents (12%), particularly those living in Leeds (27%), Detling & Thurnam (23%) or Bearsted (20%). In contrast, some residents mention that they would

[18] 'Operation Stack' is mentioned specifically and it should be noted that during the last few days of the survey period, Operation Stack was in effect, causing severe disruption throughout Kent

support a business park at Junction 8 as this is close to their home so they would find it easy to access any new jobs created.

A number of the reasons given to object to a new business park at Junction 8 suggest that residents may need help to understand exactly what this would involve. For example, 6% of those who would object strongly mention that they are against the building of new houses. Further, 4% of those who would object feel that this plan has already being turned down, failing to differentiate the new idea for a mixed used business park from the previous KIG lorry park proposal.

"Its already been turned down in the past and its an area of natural beauty as its adjacent to the north downs."
Male, 65-74, Retired, Headcorn Ward, Object Strongly

"The KIG plan was turned down for a variety of reasons and those reasons are still valid."
Male, 55-64, Retired, Harrietsham & Lenham Ward, Object Strongly

Some of those objecting to a business park assumed that this would include some element of retail facilities and it is interesting to note that 5% of objectors feel that a new business park at Junction 8 would take business away from the town centre.

Figure 3.7: Why object to a new business park at Junction 8 – Word Cloud

Word Cloud based on 564 respondents. Larger words = more mentions. Word Cloud created via Tagxedo.

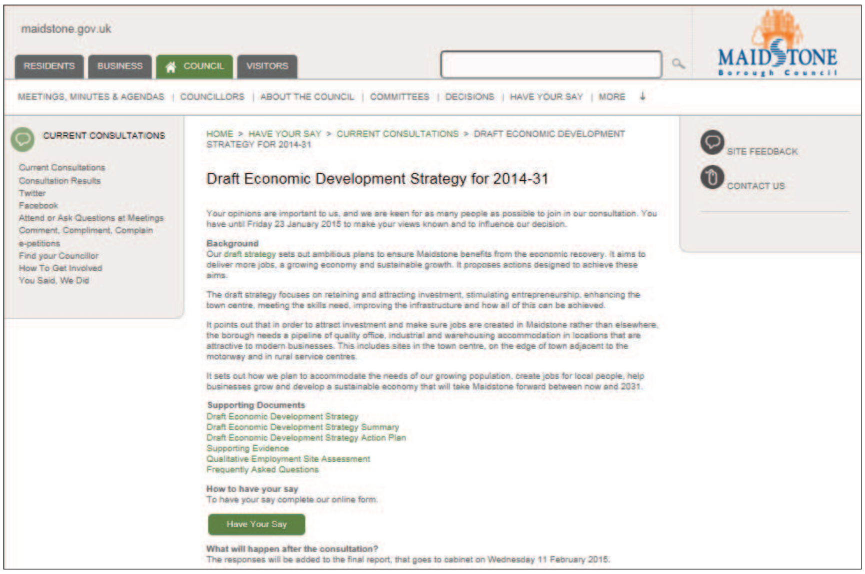
4.0 "Open Consultation" and Business Survey Results

This section sets out the results of an 'open consultation' hosted on the Council's website to allow more technical feedback on the draft EDS and the results of an email survey of businesses in the borough asking for feedback on the open consultation questions.

4.1 Background

In addition to commissioning a telephone survey, Maidstone Council provided residents with the opportunity to review and comment upon the full EDS online via the council's website. This exercise is referred to as the "open consultation" in this report. The consultation area of the website (http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/council/have-your-say/current-consultations/draft-economic-development-strategy-for-2014-31) included the full version of the EDS plus supporting documents. The consultation was publicised via a press release and social media and was promoted at a business event and Parish/Community event on January 13th 2015. The website consultation was open from Tuesday 16th December to Friday January 23rd 2015.

Figure 4.1: EDS Consultation homepage



The Council also sent out an e-mail survey to around 1,900 businesses from their business database. These businesses were encouraged to forward the survey on to others in their network, so it is estimated that around 2,000 businesses in total received this.

The open consultation and the business survey followed the same format, inviting respondents to review a summary of the draft Economic Development Strategy (as well as the full document and supporting materials if they wished) then asking a series of five scale-based questions around opinions on key points of the strategy. Following each scale-based question, residents and businesses had the opportunity to leave comments to explain and support the answer given.

It should be noted that the open consultation and business survey have captured the views of a particular sub-set of respondents, rather than being representative of the borough as a whole.

Respondents to the open consultation in particular are "self-selecting" and this also applies to a lesser extent to the email survey of businesses. Although a proactive invitation to participate was widely circulated, those with a particular interest in the issues raised would have been the most likely to read the materials and compose a response.

The open consultation received a total of 25 responses, including nine respondents giving business details and one Parish Council. Business respondents to the open consultation include two from firms with addresses outside of Maidstone and six from the construction and related industries. There are also some "overlaps" among the respondents, including one married couple, two colleagues from the same firm and two individuals based in the same building.

There were also 25 responses to the business survey, including a number of respondents from the public and voluntary sectors and six based outside of Maidstone.

One respondent participated in both the open consultation and the business survey and gave the same answers in each.

The open consultation and the business survey each attracted one respondent disagreeing to all of the scale-based questions asked and entering the same comments for multiple follow up questions. In both cases, these respondents noted that they were against over-development of the rural areas of Maidstone and that they disagreed with the EDS because they felt it was geared towards this.

Due to the relatively small number of responses submitted to both the open consultation and the business survey, these responses will be summarised in a *qualitative* manner in the remainder of this section of the report.

4.2 Challenges

Figure 4.2: 'Our Challenges' – Extract from the Economic Development Strategy summary

Maidstone today stands at a crossroads. The national economy is starting to grow after a long period of recession that affected Maidstone more adversely than its neighbours in some ways. 1,900 jobs have been lost since 2009 many of which have been in the public sector, output has grown more slowly than in Kent overall, and the town centre has slipped down the retail rankings. More residents are having to travel outside of the Borough to work compared to 2001. Earnings for Maidstone residents have been in decline since 2010 and now stand for the first time in over 10 years below the GB average. Maidstone resident earnings (2013) are the third lowest in Kent, and workplace earnings are the second lowest in Kent. It has not been all bad news though - the population has grown and is forecast to continue to grow, there has been recent private sector job growth, and more new businesses are being created and surviving than before. Investors are coming forward with new proposals that could bring significant benefits for Maidstone.

Over the lifetime of the Local Plan (2031) the working age population is forecast to grow by over 17,300 people. However it is considered by the Council's consultants, GVA, that the economy is only capable of producing between 7,800 and 14,400 jobs during the same period. This will mean more residents will need to commute out of the Borough to find work. Only if the actions proposed in this Strategy are delivered, will the upper jobs target be reached.

The majority (22 out of 25) of those who responded to the open consultation agree that the correct challenges have been highlighted in the draft EDS. The strength of this agreement varies, with an equal split between half of respondents saying they strongly agree and half saying they simply agree. Agreement is primarily driven by the belief that a stronger infrastructure will in turn result in economic growth and higher employment levels.

The situation is similar among respondents to the business survey, with 21 out of 25 respondents agreeing.

"The proposals to improve the town centre and job opportunities go hand in hand with the need to develop edge of town business hubs to increase job opportunities, encourage growth of the town's successful industries and attract new businesses. Completing development at Eclipse Park and providing new development for business at Junction 8 are key to the aims and strategies."

Open Consultation Respondent, Female, 55-64, London

"Maidstone needs stronger infrastructure to support the economic growth in the area, this in turn will increase employment in Maidstone. At present businesses and jobs appear to be going to Ashford as they already have these things in place. Maidstone is the County town of Kent and it has slipped behind other towns in the county for jobs, businesses and transport links by both road and rail."

Open Consultation Respondent, Female, 35-44, South Ward

Agreement is often diluted by a view that although the challenges outlined are correct there needs to be a more realistic and tangible approach to economic development.

"Agree but very woolly. Focus on tangible deliverables. Try benchmarking Maidstone with similar sized towns surrounding London. Try Bedford. Population, wages, no: of road bridge crossings, no. of restaurants, no. of shops, train time to London, cost of train to London, road distance, road commuting time to London etc. You would see Maidstone ranks poorly. Some of these only need money and vision to fix.
If you build it they will come....don't ignore the elephant in the room - London. Make MAIDSTONE a commuter suburb of London and workers will spend their evenings, weekends and money in Maidstone, which in turn will drive local commerce, which is a spiral attracting new companies as they will see the relative wealth and opportunities here".

Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 35-44, Fant Ward

Taking this sentiment one step further, those who disagree with the challenges outlined in the EDS highlight that they do so because they feel they are unrealistic and that the Council should focus on areas they can directly influence.

"The strategy should focus on meeting challenges it can directly influence, so while the challenges identified are laudable, they are to a large degree unrealistic (failing the SMART test). They also omit more tangible challenges within the gift of stakeholders and Maidstone Borough Council in particular."

Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 35-44, High Street Ward

4.3 SWOT Analysis

Figure 4.3: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis) as outlined in the draft EDS

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Good strategic transport links • Attractive business location opportunities around motorway junctions • High quality environment • Opportunities in the health and medical growth sectors • Significant proportions of economically active residents • High proportions of residents employed in technical and associate professional occupations • Growth in knowledge based economy sectors • Diverse and broad sectoral mix • High levels of entrepreneurship • Good school performance in GCSEs and A levels	• Poor rail connectivity to London compared to neighbouring towns • Relatively low levels of productivity • Gap between resident and workplace earnings • Low qualification profile and the gap widening with other places • High dependency on public sector employment • Low proportion of managerial level occupations • Lack of employment in key knowledge sectors • Loss of HE provision • Maidstone town centre is falling in the retail hierarchy. • Lack of suitable retail units that meet retailer requirements • An abundance of low quality secondary office space in the town centre and stagnant office market demand for secondary space • Low level of delivery of new high quality floorspace across all property types
Opportunities	**Threats**
• The working age population is forecast to grow • Strong base of entrepreneurs to further develop • Out commuting of higher skilled workers provides future business growth opportunities • To build sector strengths based around the proposed expansion of Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery and Maidstone Medical Campus • To build Higher Education capacity with a focus on health-related opportunities relating to the Maidstone Medical Campus and the University for the Creative Arts provision at Maidstone Studios • Ability to utilise the M20 and junctions of it, to attract regional and nationally focused activities. • Availability of employment sites for development at Junction 7 • To increase the attractiveness of the town centre and enhance retail and leisure offer through proposed developments	• Decreasing proportion of the population in the 30-59 age band • Major growth proposals in neighbouring local authority areas • Competition from established locations for 'value added' sectors • Global competition • Dominance of Kings Hill in the regional office market • Competition from neighbouring centres for local business seeking to expand and inward investment opportunities • Proposals for out-of-town retail developments which could threaten the town centre if poorly planned. • Limited scale market

In line with the perception that Maidstone Borough Council has correctly identified the key challenges facing the borough, the majority of respondents to both the open consultation (20 out of 25) and the business survey (21 out of 25) agree with the SWOT analysis outlined in the draft EDS. The key points drawn out in particular are:

- **Strength** - Maidstone is well placed to benefit from potential growth opportunities in new sectors such as health and out of town retail;
- **Weakness** – Maidstone is constrained by the current transport infrastructure (both road and rail network);
- **Weakness** – lack of local higher degree colleges or links with nearby universities;
- **Threat** – competition in the youth job market may mean that Maidstone is unable to attract and retain talent

Ashford is raised as an additional threat due to its own ambitious plans and comparatively simple political landscape which affords easier progression.

"The lack of local higher-degree colleges and/or established links with nearby universities is a key weakness in Maidstone and should be given greater prominence. It will not be possible to grow a knowledge-based economy without sources of trained people and teaching. The current further-education colleges are insufficient, and the draft plan shows inadequate ambition to address this weakness."

Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 45-54, Boxley Ward

"You have no vision to improve rail connections to London. Maidstone has HS1 only 2 miles away and you did not encourage a station to be constructed on this fantastic infrastructure and now you never can. Maidstone should be a 30 min MAXIMUM rail commute - instead it is 49 minutes 6 times a day costing nearly £45. This will not change Maidstone in to commuter town."

Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 35-44, Fant Ward

The handful of respondents who disagree with the SWOT analysis cite the following points:

- **Strength** – The development at Junction 8 is only a strength if the Council supports sites such as Waterside Park;
- **Strength** – Good school performance is not true as in reality there are high performing schools (Grammar Schools) and very poorly performing schools. This is balanced out in the figures, but not a true reflection of education in Kent as demonstrated by the lack of people going on to achieve degree level qualifications & the low qualification profile;
- **Weakness** – Lack of council support for current businesses to expand within the borough;
- **Weakness** – Poor wage growth compared with inflation;
- **Weakness** – A large increase in precarious work such as zero hour contracts;
- **Weakness** – Motorway congestion
- **Opportunity** – Proactively identify a variety of employment sites across the borough;
- **Opportunity** – Availability of employment sites for development at both junctions 7 and 8 of the M20.

"The M20 is currently at a standstill every morning and evening around Maidstone. How can any further growth possibly be accommodated unless this is addressed?".

Business Survey Respondent, Male, Creative Sector, Gillingham

4.4 Vision

Figure 4.4: Vision for Maidstone by 2031 - as outlined in the draft EDS

"A model '21st century county town, a distinctive place, known for its blend of sustainable rural and urban living, dynamic service sector-based economy, excellence in public services, and above all, quality of life."

The majority respondents to the open consultation (23 out of 25) agree with the vision as outlined in the draft EDS. Agreement is also strong, although not as overwhelming, among business survey respondents (20 out of 25 agree). The strength of this agreement among open consultation respondents is driven by a number of factors, namely:

- A feeling that it is important to improve infrastructure to maintain a better balance between rural and urban needs; better park and ride facilities, improved access to sites at motorway junctions, and better business park facilities;
- A perception that the Council would do better to focus on specific actions such as making sure the right land is available for development and meeting with local businesses to make sure their needs are met;
- Cynicism over the will and determination to make the radical changes required.

"Motorway junctions need improvements to take the pressure off of rural roads and the town centre. Maidstone needs more shops to attract people to the retail outlets in the area rather than travelling to Bluewater or Canterbury. Maidstone needs better park and ride facilities and more accessible modern business parks to attract new business to the area."
Open Consultation Respondent, Female, 35-44, South Ward

"I agree with the vision, but you will not achieve it. You are not ambitious enough to make significant structural changes. An analogy - you plan to re-sequence the traffic lights to improve congestion rather than build a new bridge and relief road over the Medway."
Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 35-44, Fant Ward

The handful of open consultation respondents who disagree with the vision feel it does not go far enough and is to a degree backward looking. This is also echoed in the business survey, with some respondents finding the vision too generic and therefore uninspiring.

"For me, this doesn't go far enough. It feels like it's backwards looking with nostalgia to some hypothetically more prosperous times. What does a model 21st century county town look like? Efficient infrastructure, technologically adventurous, joined-up services (at all levels, not just public services), information rich, economically vibrant, so that people want to come to Maidstone because it's the best place to share and collaborate on ideas, thoughts, successes. "
Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 35-44, South Ward

"Your vision sounds similar to every other town in Britain, and many in Kent. As such, it's not very exciting and therefore unlikely to make people excited. "
Business Survey Respondent, Male, Professional Services Sector, Ashford

Another important point of concern around the vision for business survey respondents is the reference to a "dynamic service sector-based economy", with a feeling that the contribution of other sectors can be equally valid.

"The limitation to service industry ignores the growing pressure for a diverse economy that also caters for manufacturing, storage and distribution, and the importance of tourism".
Business Survey Respondent, Business Services Sector, High Street Ward

4.5 Objectives

Figure 4.5: EDS objectives

1. **Enable the creation of 14,400 jobs in a range of sectors and occupations**
2. **Raise GVA per head to the level of the South East**
3. **Raise the skills profile of Maidstone to the South East average**

Again, the majority of both open consultation respondents (20 out of 25) and business survey respondents (22 out of 25) agree with the draft objectives as outlined. There were a number of comments made around the draft objectives, namely:

- Without a specific strategy plan this feels like a 'wish list';
- The objectives do not go far enough; why aim to be average?;
- To achieve these objectives, appropriate companies need to be encouraged to establish themselves in Maidstone through better infrastructure and facilities.

*"Again, this doesn't go far enough. You're not being adventurous enough. Why *aim* to be average? (which is what the raising x to the same as the rest of the South East means)."*
Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 35-44, South Ward

"To achieve these criteria it is essential that the appropriate companies are encouraged to base their operations in Maidstone and as mentioned previously need the appropriate facilities and accommodation in the right strategic location to enable them to establish and grow a successful business."
Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 55-64, Canterbury

Business respondents also underlined the need for skills and jobs objectives to be tackled together, given that some local firms were already experiencing skill shortages and struggling to fill roles.

Those who disagree with the objectives do so for the following reasons:

- A view there needs to be more inward investment in scientific, knowledge based and professional services sectors – in turn raising the skill levels in the Borough;
- There should be indicators of progress rather than specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

"Maidstone needs to encourage more inward investment in scientific, knowledge based sectors and in professional services. The range of sectors currently in place contain many which continue the current situation of low skill, construction, manufacturing, retail etc. You will not raise skills levels if you do not show more ambition and the value added will not increase if efforts continue along the same route as followed in the past.
Open Consultation Respondent, Male, 65-74, Detling & Thurnam Ward

4.6 Priorities

Figure 4.6: EDS Priorities

1. **Retaining and attracting investment**
2. **Stimulating entrepreneurship**
3. **Enhancing the town centre**
4. **Meeting the skills needs**
5. **Improving the infrastructure**

Again, the majority of respondents to both the open consultation (22 out of 25) and business survey (22 out of 25) agree with the five priorities selected. There were a number of specific suggestions around the priorities, namely:

- Improve infrastructure and utilise access to the M20;
- Truly attract entrepreneurs by understanding their mind-set and appoint a Czar for Entrepreneurs.

There were also some more general comments on the priorities:

- Do not spread the focus too thinly, prioritise and focus on a few specific areas;
- Agreement with the principle, but there is a need to show a more sophisticated and determined approach.

4.7 Other Comments

Echoing the residents' survey, a number of business survey respondents highlight potential opportunities around the riverside area.

There was also some call for greater collaboration with the voluntary sector or with other districts on common issues; with a suggestion that as the County town, Maidstone should be leading the way.

An interesting point of view put forward in the business survey is the idea that "quality of life" issues and priorities that are important to residents do have an impact on business, and therefore on *economic* well-being. This includes the rural environment being something that attracts businesses and skilled employees to the area, the town centre being the "face" of Maidstone and the idea that issues such as parking and congestion may put employees off work in the area.

"The "quality of life" aspect should not just be stated by MBC, it should be a fundamental part of, and run right through, the economic strategy. This means retaining the open green spaces and vistas around Maidstone, which is one of the reasons I chose to locate my business here. If you turn Maidstone into a clone of Ashford and continue concreting over green spaces, we will take our company and jobs elsewhere!?"

Business Survey Respondent, Male, Business Services Sector, Shepway North Ward

"I particularly agree with the need to improve the town centre, which is an embarrassing place for Maidstone. I would never take any of our clients (many who are from overseas) into the two centres - it is a grubby, downbeat place in most parts".

Business Survey Respondent, Male, Business Services Sector, Shepway North Ward

Further over-arching messages and synergies coming out across the different themes covered in this report are explored in Section 5 overleaf.

5.0 Key Messages

The following key messages can be taken from this study:

- Maidstone residents generally appear to be **in agreement** with the priorities outlined in the EDS
- **Local jobs and skills** are of prime importance to residents, who are able to take a **long term view** of priorities for the borough
- The potential for **infrastructure and "quality of life" improvements** is particularly valued
- There is some tension between **rural and urban** priorities
- **Transport issues** are a key concern
- The survey supports the idea of an **entrepreneurial borough**

Each of these findings is explored in more detail below.

General agreement with the EDS Priorities

The consultation survey suggests that the feelings and preferences of Maidstone residents are closely aligned with the priorities outlined in the EDS. Residents give an average importance score of at least 7 out of 10 for eight of the nine EDS-related priorities put to them, and this average score is closer to at least 8 out of 10 for seven areas. Similarly, at least three quarters of residents would agree that each of the infrastructure, housing and town centre activity areas they were asked about should be prioritised and this figure rises to 95% for redeveloping derelict or unsightly property, the action gaining the highest level of support. While there are variations in the importance attached to different priorities by different types of residents, none of the priorities tested appears overly polarising and the lowest average importance rating given by any sub-group (a score of 5.2 given by residents of Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton ward to 'Lobbying for better rail services to London from Maidstone East') sits above 5 out of 10.

When given the opportunity to suggest anything further that could be done to improve the local economy, residents tended to mention activities linked to the key principles of the EDS, notably improving the town centre, enhancing the borough's infrastructure and creating a high level jobs.

While reactions to the idea of a new employment site at Junction 8 were mixed, just over half of residents said they would support this, with a further 1 in 6 having no opinion. Those who would object represent less than a third of those interviewed and are most likely to live within neighbouring wards.

Agreement with the content of the EDS also extends to responses to the open consultation and business survey, with very few respondents noting any divergence between their views and the key elements of the strategy.

Importance of local jobs and skills and long term thinking

It is fitting that the "twin" priorities of 'Creating enough local jobs to meet the needs of the growing population' and 'Working with schools, the college and training organisations to ensure residents have the skills needed to get jobs locally' share joint first place as the most important to Maidstone citizens. These two areas are inextricably linked and this is highlighted in the comments made by residents and respondents to the open consultation and business survey as well as in the EDS itself.

Both these areas receive an average importance rating of 8.6 out of 10 and are rated 10 out of 10 for importance by almost half of respondents. Further, a call to create more diverse, high quality local jobs, including mentions of apprenticeships, represents the third most common theme among spontaneous suggestions for additional activity to be undertaken by the Council.

The high importance attached to local job creation and skill development extends beyond those who would directly benefit from these initiatives to older, retired people. Older members of the community see these goals as worthwhile either because of the potential benefits for their own younger family members or out of concern for or pride in the borough as a whole.

Those who currently commute out of the borough to work appear less engaged with local priorities generally, and this includes interest in the creation of local jobs. If out-commuters are happy with their current situation and reluctant to move to newly created local positions, this will make upskilling of new entrants to the labour force; including young people, the unemployed and those returning to work from carer/ homemaker roles; even more important.

The importance of local employment creation to Maidstone residents is further demonstrated by the position of this consideration as the top reason to support a new employment site at Junction 8 of the M20, mentioned by more than half of those who would strongly support this development. This is also an important rationale for those who would "support somewhat". Comments made by this group suggest that some see the development as a "necessary evil", with the need for job creation outweighing other concerns around environmental impact or a preference for other priorities, such as town centre regeneration, that would more immediately affect their own quality of life.

The importance of priorities such as local job creation and upskilling residents, as well as the comments made around these topics, suggest that Maidstone citizens are able to take a *long term* view when assessing the priorities they consider most important, supporting initiatives that may require planning and investment over many years, rather than just "quick fix" solutions.

Indeed, a key area where the views of those responding to the open consultation and business survey diverge from the principles of the EDS is a feeling that the strategy as a whole, and the vision in particular, is not forward-looking *enough*, lacking ambition and distinctiveness.

Value of infrastructure and "quality of life" improvements

At the same time, residents are keen that the Council takes action on infrastructure improvements, especially 'redeveloping derelict or unsightly property' and 'tackling congestion and improving roads', both of which receive almost universal agreement. The importance of infrastructure activity also comes through strongly in the comments made by residents when asked what else the Council could be doing to improve the local economy.

Improvements to infrastructure represent the type of activity that can have an immediate, tangible and visible impact for residents, meaning that it is unsurprising that they are valued. This activity is less obviously linked to economic development than work to create local jobs or upskill residents, but it will help to increase the *quality of life* that residents enjoy. This is highlighted in the EDS as a factor contributing to a successful local economy by indirectly driving economic competitiveness and as something that is important for attracting new investment. It is therefore identified as an overarching element of the EDS vision for 2031.

Infrastructure improvements can be seen as a "win win" activity, with these not only improving the lives of existing local residents but also playing a role in attracting and retaining skilled employees and high quality businesses.

Tension between rural and urban priorities

In reviewing the survey responses, a certain tension can be seen between economic goals, such as creating jobs, and quality of life factors like the borough's unique rural environment, with many residents noting that a balance needs to be struck. This echoes the EDS commitment to achieving growth sustainably without sacrificing the environmental qualities that make Maidstone a special place.

This tension is particularly evident in the views of residents in neighbouring rural wards towards the potential creation of a new employment site at Junction 8 of the M20. These residents are rightly concerned about the nature of any development in this location and the impact it may have on the countryside and rural way of life that they see as a key strength of their local area.

Conversely, there is also some resistance to the idea of a new employment site at Junction 8 from urban residents who feel that more focus should be placed on improving in-town locations before looking at out of town developments. This appears to partly stem from residents drawing their own conclusions about what a new site might look like, for example imagining that this might include significant elements of retail units or housing. This group may be more receptive to the idea of a new Junction 8 employment site if given fuller information on what exactly this would entail.

There are also some other differences in the prioritisation of activities by rural and urban residents. For those living in rural areas, especially in certain wards where connectivity is a particular issue, working to improve the availability of super-fast broadband across the borough is a key priority. In contrast, urban dwellers are more likely to prioritise improvements to rail services, as well as having a greater desire to attract new businesses to the borough.

Importance of transport issues

Maidstone's transport links emerge from the survey as a key area of concern for residents. This relates particularly to congestion, especially on the M20 and town centre roads, and to parking issues. However, there does also appear to be a strong interest in improved public transport and in encouraging other car-free options.

Improvements to *local* public transport, for example bus links into the town centre, are prioritised well above lobbying for better rail links to London. It may be that to some extent this prioritisation reflects the Council having less scope to act, able only to *lobby* for improvements, rather than make these directly. However, it is likely that rail links are considered a lower priority as travelling to London represents something that is not necessarily part of the day to day life of the average Maidstone resident. This extends to those who commute out of the borough to work, for whom road links to neighbouring Kent towns appear to be a more immediate priority.

Improving rail links to the capital is highlighted by respondents to the business survey as something they would prioritise, given that they consider the current situation a constraint on growth. This may also be something that will be important in attracting new businesses to locate in the borough, suggesting that it could be considered a *strategic* concern, even if it does not feature on the everyday radar of most residents.

Transport issues play a key role in attitudes towards a potential new employment site at Junction 8 but the same concerns feature as a reason for both support and objection, depending on how the likely future impact of the site on the road network is interpreted. This suggests a need to try to ensure that secondary benefits of this kind, for example reduced pressure on roads in the town centre or improvements to the junction itself, can be achieved and that these feature in any communication about the scheme.

Evidence of Maidstone as an entrepreneurial borough

The survey findings support the idea that Maidstone is an *entrepreneurial* borough, identified as a key strength in the EDS. There appears to be particular support for the idea of trying to encourage growth from within, with helping to grow existing local businesses prioritised above attracting new businesses to the borough. A high level of importance is also attached to helping local residents who would like to start their own business and help and support for small businesses features as a key theme among spontaneous suggestions for action.

Self-employed residents surveyed suggest that they would appreciate assistance from the Council, including calling for practical measures that would help them, including access to appropriate business space and leniency on issues such as business rates and "red tape".

The findings suggest that young people may be particularly interested in entrepreneurship, with younger residents expressing an interest in start-up information, including disseminating this via schools and colleges.

APPENDICES

Annex 1: Calls made and breakdown of call outcomes

TOTAL NUMBERS DIALLED	21,419
COMPLETED INTERVIEWS	1518
DEFINITE APPOINTMENT	164
GENERAL APPOINTMENT	804
NO REPLY	6805
ENGAGED	300
ANSWER PHONE	2642
MODEM/FAX	69
REFUSAL	6042
COMPANY REFUSAL	34
TERMINATED	150
UNOBTAINABLE	2011
DUPLICATE	46
LANGUAGE BARRIER	34
WRONG NUMBER	183
NOT AVAILABLE IN SURVEY PERIOD	78
SCREENED - WORKING STATUS	108
SCREENED - AGE	431

Note: The automated dialler system allows "no response" outcomes, such as no reply or unobtainable numbers, to be quickly noted and moved on from, allowing interviewers to focus on numbers where a "live" respondent picks up.

Annex 2: Profile of survey respondents compared with residents' profile and weighting scheme applied

Item	Description	Achieved		True Proportion			Weighted Proportion		
		N	%	N	%		N	%	
Age	16-34	115	8%	364	24%	41%	244	16%	41%
	35-44	176	12%	258	17%		379	25%	
	45-64	638	42%	531	35%	59%	522	34%	59%
	65+	589	39%	364	24%		374	25%	
Working Status	Employed	628	41%	834	55%	66%	827	54%	66%
	Self employed	154	10%	167	11%		176	12%	
	Unemployed	27	2%	46	3%	34%	30	2%	34%
	Student	22	1%	106	7%		40	3%	
	Retired	618	41%	213	14%		379	25%	
	Homemaker/ Carer	45	3%	76	5%		47	3%	
	Other	24	2%	76	5%		21	1%	
Gender	Male	715	47%	744	49%		744	49%	
	Female	803	53%	774	51%		775	51%	
Ward	Allington Ward	59	4%	67	4%		67	4%	
	Barming Ward	53	3%	23	1%		23	1%	
	Bearsted Ward	61	4%	79	5%		79	5%	
	Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton Ward	53	3%	24	2%		24	2%	
	Boxley Ward	60	4%	76	5%		76	5%	
	Bridge Ward	58	4%	62	4%		62	4%	
	Coxheath and Hunton Ward	61	4%	70	5%		70	5%	
	Detling and Thurnham Ward	53	3%	27	2%		27	2%	
	Downswood and Otham Ward	53	3%	27	2%		27	2%	
	East Ward	63	4%	87	6%		86	6%	
	Fant Ward	67	4%	101	7%		102	7%	
	Harrietsham and Lenham Ward	59	4%	59	4%		59	4%	
	Headcorn Ward	58	4%	52	3%		52	3%	
	Heath Ward	58	4%	59	4%		59	4%	
	High Street Ward	64	4%	101	7%		102	7%	
	Leeds Ward	56	4%	23	1%		23	1%	
	Loose Ward	53	3%	24	2%		24	2%	
	Marden and Yalding Ward	61	4%	76	5%		76	5%	
	North Downs Ward	53	3%	23	1%		23	1%	
	North Ward	62	4%	88	6%		88	6%	
	Park Wood Ward	59	4%	62	4%		62	4%	
	Shepway North Ward	60	4%	79	5%		79	5%	
	Shepway South Ward	58	4%	58	4%		59	4%	
	South Ward	62	4%	91	6%		91	6%	
	Staplehurst Ward	59	4%	55	4%		55	4%	
	Sutton Valence and Langley Ward	53	3%	26	2%		26	2%	

Annex 3: Respondent Profile – Further Information

The below information on the profile of survey respondents was captured but not used for weighting:

Item	Description	Achieved	
		N	%
Working vs. not working	In work	782	52
	Not in work	736	48
Working location	Within Maidstone	447	57
	Outside of Maidstone	335	43
Urban vs. rural	Urban	670	44
	Rural	848	56
Ethnicity	White British	1396	92
	White Irish	5	<1
	Other white background	55	4
	White and Black Caribbean	2	<1
	White and Black African	2	<1
	Other mixed background	2	<1
	Indian	7	<1
	Pakistani	0	0
	Bangladeshi	0	0
	Other Asian background	8	1
	Black or Black British - Caribbean	2	<1
	Black or Black British - African	5	<1
	Other Black or Black British	2	<1
	Chinese	2	<1
	Other ethnic group	18	1
	Refused	12	1
Long standing illness / Disability / Infirmity	Yes	1259	83
	No	254	17
	Prefer not to say	5	<1

Annex 4: Sentiment Scores for a new business park at Junction 8 of the M20 by ward

Score = average calculated by applying values to support-object scale as follows:

Support strongly = 5, Support somewhat = 4, Neither support nor object = 3, Object somewhat = 2, Object strongly = 1.

Bearsted Ward	1.59
Leeds Ward	2.08
North Downs Ward	2.13
Detling and Thurnham Ward	2.19
Downswood and Otham Ward	2.64
Harrietsham and Lenham Ward	2.64
Sutton Valence and Langley Ward	2.66
Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton Ward	2.78
Boxley Ward	3.08
Heath Ward	3.18
Shepway South Ward	3.22
Headcorn Ward	3.26
North Ward	3.36
East Ward	3.39
Loose Ward	3.41
Fant Ward	3.48
Coxheath and Hunton Ward	3.49
Marden and Yalding Ward	3.50
Allington Ward	3.56
South Ward	3.58
Staplehurst Ward	3.58
Shepway North Ward	3.60
Bridge Ward	3.68
High Street Ward	3.70
Barming Ward	3.71
Park Wood Ward	3.84

Annex 5: Residents' Survey Questionnaire

Maidstone Borough Council EDS Consultation – Final Questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

Good <morning / afternoon / evening>. My name is <INSERT INTERVIEWER NAME>. I am calling on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council from an independent research company called Facts International.

We would appreciate your help with a short survey about your views on Maidstone Borough Council's plans to grow the local economy, both urban and rural, and make the Borough more prosperous.

Depending on your answers, this should take around 10 minutes.

The call may be monitored or recorded for the purpose of training or quality control.

Is now a convenient time to talk?

IF "YES" START SURVEY
IF "NO" PLEASE SET AN APPOINTMENT OR, IF THE RESPONDENT DOES NOT WISH TO CONDUCT THE SURVEY, ENTER APPROPRIATE REFUSAL CODE AND THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME
IF THE CUSTOMER SAYS THEY ARE NOT FLUENT IN ENGLISH AND THEY ASK IF SOMEONE ELSE COULD TRANSLATE THE QUESTIONS ON THEIR BEHALF, THEN ALLOW THIS PERSON TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY.

QUOTAS

Ward Quotas (Strict)

Ward	Quota
Allington Ward	58
Barming Ward	53
Bearsted Ward	60
Boughton Monchelsea and Chart Sutton Ward	53
Boxley Ward	60
Bridge Ward	58
Coxheath and Hunton Ward	60
Detling and Thurnham Ward	53
Downswood and Otham Ward	53
East Ward	62
Fant Ward	64
Harrietsham and Lenham Ward	58

Headcorn Ward	56
Heath Ward	58
High Street Ward	64
Leeds Ward	53
Loose Ward	53
Marden and Yalding Ward	60
North Downs Ward	53
North Ward	62
Park Wood Ward	58
Shepway North Ward	60
Shepway South Ward	58
South Ward	62
Staplehurst Ward	58
Sutton Valence and Langley Ward	53
TOTAL	**1,500**

Demographic Monitoring Quotas

These will be set at the beginning of the survey but may be relaxed closer to completion – weighting will then be used to correct for any differences between the interviewee profile and the profile of Borough residents

Gender	Quota
Male	735
Female	765
Total	**1,500**

Age	Quota
18-34	354
35-49	416
50-64	367
65+	363
Total	**1,500**

Working Status	Quota
In work	1,005
Not working	495
Total	**1,500**

SCREENER

SAY TO ALL

To ensure that our research accurately represents the views of Maidstone residents, I firstly need to ask you a few questions about yourself

ASK ALL

S1

Could you please tell me your postcode?

Write In

S2. INTERVIEWER: PLEASE CODE THE GENDER OF THE RESPONDENT

1. Male
2. Female

ASK ALL

S3.

Which of the following age groups do you fall into?

READ OUT AS NECCESSARY. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. **18 – 24**
2. **25 – 34**
3. **35 – 44**
4. **45 - 54**
5. **55 - 64**
6. **65 - 74**
7. **75+**

ASK ALL

S4. **Which of the following best describes you? Are you…?**

READ OUT IF NECCESSARY. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. **Employed**
2. **Self-employed**
3. **Unemployed**
4. **Retired**
5. **Student**
6. **Carer/ homemaker**
7. **Other (specify)**

ASK ALL EMPLOYED AND SELF-EMPLOYED RESIDENTS (Code 1-2 at S4)

Q7. And do you work…:

READ OUT. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. Within Maidstone Borough
2. Outside of Maidstone Borough

QUESTIONS

ASK ALL
Q1
In order to improve Maidstone and its economy, the Borough Council has identified areas of activity to focus on over the next 16 years. For each activity, could you please tell me how important this is to you. Please use a scale of 1-10, where 10 is very important and 1 not at all important.

READ OUT STATEMENTS. ROTATE LIST.

- **A. Creating enough local jobs to meet the needs of the growing population**
- **B. Helping to grow local businesses and making them more competitive**
- **C. Attracting new businesses to the Borough**
- **D. Working with schools, the college and training organisations to ensure residents have the skills needed to get jobs locally**
- **E. Helping residents who want to start their own business**
- **F. Improving public transport and encouraging walking and cycling**
- **G. Lobbying for better rail services to London from Maidstone East**
- **H. Lobbying to retain High Speed Rail Services and increasing their frequency**
- **I. Working to improve the availability of super fast Broadband across the Borough**

10 – Very Important	10
9	9
8	8
7	7
6	6
5	5
4	4
3	3
2	2
1 – Not at all important	1
Don't know (DO NOT READ OUT)	*11*

ASK ALL
Q2
To what extent do you agree that the Council should prioritise the following in order to improve Maidstone?

READ OUT STATEMENTS. ROTATE LIST.

- A. **Tackling congestion and improving roads**
- B. **Improving public transport**
- C. **Improving the quality of public spaces and streets**
- D. **Improving the range of shops in the town centre**
- E. **Reducing the number of empty offices in the town centre**
- F. **Redeveloping derelict or unsightly property**
- G. **Improving the quality of existing housing**
- H. **Improving leisure opportunities**

READ OUT. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. **Agree strongly**

2. **Agree somewhat**
3. **Neither agree nor disagree**
4. **Disagree somewhat**
5. **Disagree strongly**
6. Don't know (Do not read out)

ASK ALL
Q3
Over the next 16 years, Maidstone's population will grow by around 20%, meaning an extra 17,300 jobs will be needed for our residents. To deliver as many of these jobs as possible in the Borough the Council believes there is a need to build a new business park at Junction 8 of the M20. To what extent would you support this idea? Would you….

READ OUT. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. **Support strongly**
2. **Support somewhat**
3. **Neither support nor object**
4. **Object somewhat**
5. **Object strongly**
6. Don't know (Do not read out)

ASK ALL WHO WOULD SUPPORT A NEW SITE AT JUNCTION 8 (CODES 1-2 AT Q2)
Q4a. **Why would you support a new business park at Junction 8?**

Write in

ASK ALL WHO WOULD OBJECT TO A NEW SITE AT JUNCTION 8 (CODES 4-5 AT Q2)
Q4b. **Why would you object to a new business park at Junction 8?**

Write in

ASK ALL
Q5. **Is there anything else you think the Council should be doing to improve the local economy?**

1. No
2. Don't Know

3. Yes - Write in

SAY TO ALL
That is all the questions I have on the Councils' future activities and priorities. However, I would now like to ask some questions about yourself to allow us to compare the views of different types of residents, and to help us to ensure a range of views are represented.

Maidstone Borough Council is committed to Equal Opportunities. I can reassure you that the information you provide in this section will not be linked to any comments you make, and will not be linked to your name, address or other personal identifier. The information will be used for monitoring purposes only and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

ASK ALL

Q10. **Which ethnic group would you say you belong to?**

READ OUT AS NECCESSARY. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. **White British**
2. **White Irish**
3. **Other white background (please write in)**
4. **White and Black Caribbean**
5. **White and Black African**
6. **Other mixed background (please write in)**
7. **Indian**
8. **Pakistani**
9. **Bangladeshi**
10. **Other Asian background (please write in)**
11. **Black or Black British – Caribbean**
12. **Black or Black British – African**
13. **Other Black or Black British (please write in)**
14. **Chinese**
15. **Other ethnic group (please write in)**

ASK ALL

Q11. **Would you consider yourself to have a long standing illness, disability or infirmity?**

READ OUT IF NECCESSARY. CODE ONE ONLY.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Prefer not to say

ASK ALL WITH ILLNESS/ DISABILITY (CODE 1 AT Q11)

Q12. **And does this illness or disability limit your activities in any way?**

READ OUT IF NECCESSARY. CODE ONE ONLY

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know/ Prefer not to say

THANK AND CLOSE

Annex 6: Open Consultation and Business Survey Materials

Economic Development Strategy Public Consultation

A public consultation on Maidstone Borough's Economic Development Strategy is taking place between Monday 15th December 2014 and Friday 6th February.

This is a key strategy for the Council and will impact on the economic, social and environmental wellbeing for the whole of the borough. It has been produced alongside the work being undertaken on the Local Plan.

Maidstone's population is forecast to grow significantly over the next 16 years. Key to this growth will be ensuring sufficient jobs are created to meet the needs of the growing population. Delivery of appropriate employment land and support to business development will be critical in achieving this aim.

The Strategy aims to set out the key economic challenges and opportunities faced by the Borough over the next 16 years and the actions needed to deliver jobs and prosperity for all.

We would welcome your comments on the strategy and have produced some key questions, which we would like you to consider within your response. We are also happy to receive any other general comments that you have on the strategy. The full Economic Development Strategy can be viewed by clicking on http://maidstoneeconomicdevelopmentstrategydraftconsultatation. A State of the Economy report has also been produced which provides a statistical analysis of how the economy has changed particularly since the recession, http://maidstonestateoftheeconomy.

How to comment:

You can comment on the documents using these methods:

by completing the online questionnaire – http://onlinequestionnaire

by completing the attached questionnaire and sending it back to us in the pre-paid envelope by the 6th February 2015.

by emailing economicdevelopment@maidstone.gov.uk. Please make sure Maidstone Economic

Development Strategy is in the subject title.

or by writing to us at Economic Development Unit, Maidstone Borough Council…

Economic Development Strategy Summary

Our Challenges

Maidstone today stands at a crossroads. The national economy is starting to grow after a long period of recession that affected Maidstone more adversely than its neighbours in some ways. 1,900 jobs have been lost since 2009 many of which have been in the public sector, output has grown more slowly than in Kent overall, and the town centre has slipped down the retail rankings. More residents are having to travel outside of the Borough to work compared to 2001. Earnings for Maidstone residents have been in decline since 2010 and now stand for the first time in over 10 years below the GB average. Maidstone resident earnings (2013) are the third lowest in Kent, and workplace earnings are the second lowest in Kent. It has not been all bad news though - the population has grown and is forecast to continue to grow, there has been recent private sector job growth, and more new businesses are being created and surviving than before. Investors are coming forward with new proposals that could bring significant benefits for Maidstone.

Over the lifetime of the Local Plan (2031) the working age population is forecast to grow by over 17,300 people. However it is considered by the Council's consultants, GVA, that the economy is only capable of producing between 7,800 and 14,400 jobs during the same period. This will mean more residents will need to commute out of the Borough to find work. Only if the actions proposed in this Strategy are delivered, will the upper jobs target be reached.

The main strengthens, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the Maidstone economy are as follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Good strategic transport links • Attractive business location opportunities around motorway junctions • High quality environment • Opportunities in the health and medical growth sectors • Significant proportions of economically active residents • High proportions of residents employed in technical and associate professional occupations • Growth in knowledge based economy sectors • Diverse and broad sectoral mix • High levels of entrepreneurship • Good school performance in GCSEs and A levels	• Poor rail connectivity to London compared to neighbouring towns • Relatively low levels of productivity • Gap between resident and workplace earnings • Low qualification profile and the gap widening with other places • High dependency on public sector employment • Low proportion of managerial level occupations • Lack of employment in key knowledge sectors • Loss of HE provision • Maidstone town centre is falling in the retail hierarchy. • Lack of suitable retail units that meet retailer requirements • An abundance of low quality secondary office space in the town centre and stagnant office market demand for secondary space • Low level of delivery of new high quality floorspace across all property types

Opportunities	Threats
• The working age population is forecast to grow • Strong base of entrepreneurs to further develop • Out commuting of higher skilled workers provides future business growth opportunities • To build sector strengths based around the proposed expansion of Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery and Maidstone Medical Campus • To build Higher Education capacity with a focus on health-related opportunities relating to the Maidstone Medical Campus and the University for the Creative Arts provision at Maidstone Studios • Ability to utilise the M20 and junctions of it, to attract regional and nationally focused activities. • Availability of employment sites for development at Junction 7 • To increase the attractiveness of the town centre and enhance retail and leisure offer the through proposed developments	• Decreasing proportion of the population in the 30-59 age band • Major growth proposals in neighbouring local authority areas • Competition from established locations for 'value added' sectors • Global competition • Dominance of Kings Hill in the regional office market • Competition from neighbouring centres for local business seeking to expand and inward investment opportunities • Proposals for out-of-town retail developments which could threaten the town centre if poorly planned. • Limited scale market

The overall approach adopted in this strategy is about making the most of our many economic assets, while at the same time protecting those that make Maidstone a special place. We want to support our businesses to grow, creating jobs for all of our residents and ensuring they are equipped with the skills to maximise their potential.

Our Vision

By 2031 our vision for Maidstone is:

> *"A model '21st century county town, a distinctive place, known for its blend of sustainable rural and urban living, dynamic service sector-based economy, excellence in public services, and above all, quality of life."*

Our Objectives:

By 2031 we aim to:

4. Enable the creation of 14,400 jobs in a range of sectors and occupations
5. Raise GVA per head to the level of the South East
6. Raise the skills profile of Maidstone to the South East average

The strategy sets out how we will achieve our vision and identifies a series of priority actions to capitalise on our assets and the opportunities we have to strengthen the economy and create the right conditions for economic growth.

Our Priorities:

1. Retaining and attracting investment - We will support existing businesses to grow and also work to attract new employers to the borough, creating job opportunities for all residents across a range of sectors. A recent report produced by consultants GVA to consider whether the Borough's existing employment sites are fit for purpose and meet modern business needs concluded "for the borough to realise it's economic potential, there is a need to provide new employment land to both accommodate the scale of growth forecast but, equally importantly, to diversify the portfolio of sites to ensure different forms of demand and floorspace can be accommodated." The GVA report strongly advocates the allocation of a new employment site along the motorway corridor.

2. Stimulating entrepreneurship - We will create a more entrepreneurial and innovative economy, supporting new business start-ups and those with high growth potential to move up the value chain.

3 .Enhancing the town centre - We will promote the regeneration of Maidstone town centre as a high quality retail and leisure destination, and as a place to live and work.

4. Meeting the skills needs - We will ensure that residents are equipped with skills for work and that the skills needs of businesses are being met. We will support the expansion of the Higher Education sector to increase the number of graduates in the workforce, supporting initiatives such as the Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery (KIMS) and Maidstone Medical Campus, as well as the University of the Creative Arts (UCA) expansion at Maidstone Studios.

5. Improving the infrastructure - We will invest in infrastructure to drive economic growth – including the transport network and digital infrastructure.

There are a number of actions proposed to deliver the Strategy which are set out in the main document.

Our Actions:

Our key transformational actions:

1. Producing and implementing a new vision for Maidstone Town Centre.
2. Maximising the opportunities presented by Maidstone Medical Campus.
3. Allocating a new employment site at Junction 8 to meet modern business needs.
4. Producing and implementing a new masterplan for Eclipse Business Park.

We recognise that there are many partners involved in taking forward the opportunities identified and there is a clear leadership role for Maidstone Borough Council to play in coordinating, promoting and actively working with the business community to achieve the economic vision.

Questions:

1. Do you agree with that these are the correct challenges faced by the Borough?

Yes

No

Partly

If no or partly please explain

2. Do you agree with the SWOT analysis

Yes

No

Partly

If no or partly please explain

3. Do you agree with the vision?

Yes

No

Partly

If no or partly please explain

4. Do you agree with the 3 Objectives

Yes

No

Partly

If no or partly please explain

5. Do you agree with the 5 Priorities

Yes

No

Partly

If no or partly please explain

6. Do you agree with the Key transformational actions proposed including the need for a new business park at Junction 8

Yes

No

Partly

If no or partly please explain

8. What do you feel are the key factors needed to support good growth?

8. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the Economic Development Strategy?

9. What is you name, business name (if a business) address, post code, email, telephone number.

10. Are you happy for us to keep your details and email you with news and information regarding Maidstone's growth.

Yes

No

SUBMIT

Annex 7: About Facts International

Facts International is an independent Market Research company based in Ashford, Kent. Established in 1985, the agency covers all research methodologies and provide services to high profile clients across the Private, Public and Third Sectors, abiding by the highest quality standards. Facts International is a company partner of the Market Research Society (MRS) and holds numerous quality standards. In 2011 Facts became the first research company in the UK to be awarded the prestigious Gold Investor in People award. For more information see www.facts.uk.com.

Maidstone Draft Economic Development Strategy 2015-2031:

Residents' Consultation

Executive Summary

Prepared by:

FACTS international

On behalf of:

MAIDSTONE Borough Council

January 2015

Maidstone Draft Economic Development Strategy 2015-2031: Residents' Consultation

Executive Summary

Between January 5th and January 20th 2015, 1,518 Maidstone residents took part in a 10 minute telephone interview seeking their views on Council priorities for the next 16 years. They were asked questions related to the priorities outlined in the borough's Economic Development Strategy (EDS), in order to test the resonance of these priorities with the local population.

The survey was structured to ensure representation of key sub-groups of Maidstone residents and the final data was weighted to reflect the profile of the borough as a whole.

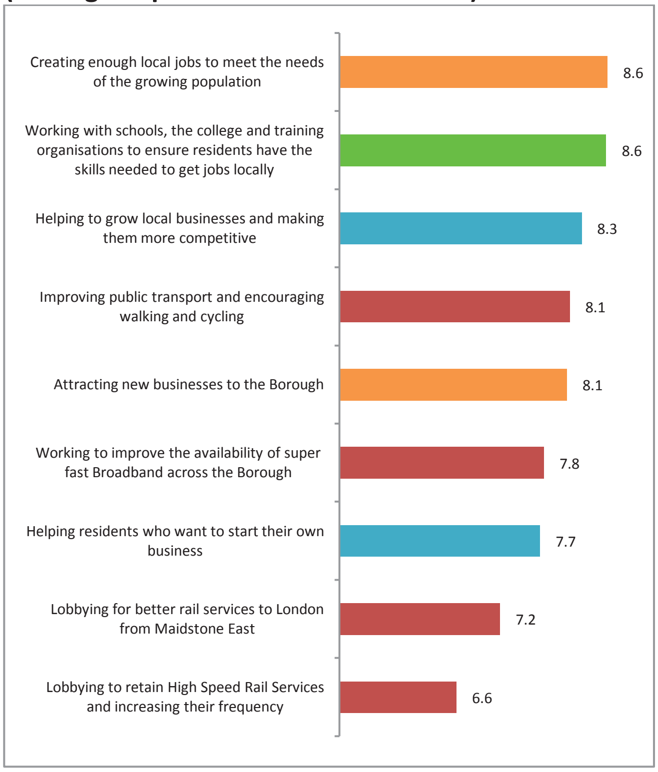
Consultation activities around the EDS also included an 'open consultation' allowing residents to view and comment on relevant documents via the Council's website and an email survey of businesses.

The key findings from the consultation are set out below.

Maidstone residents generally appear to be in agreement with the priorities outlined in the EDS

The consultation survey suggests that the feelings and preferences of Maidstone residents are closely aligned with the priorities outlined in the EDS. Residents give an average importance score of at least 7 out of 10 for eight of the nine the EDS-related priorities put to them, and this average score is closer to at least 8 out of 10 for seven areas.

Figure 1: Importance of key activity areas to Maidstone residents (Average importance score – out of 10)



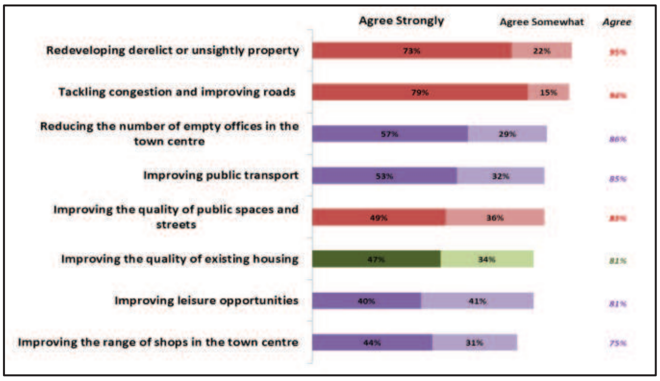
Base: 1,518 Residents.

Key (Relevant EDS priorities)

Retaining and attracting investment	
Stimulating entrepreneurship	
Meeting the skills needs	
Improving the infrastructure	

At least three quarters of residents would agree that each of the infrastructure, housing and town centre activity areas they were asked about should be prioritised and this figure rises to 95% for redeveloping derelict or unsightly property, the action gaining the highest level of support.

Figure 2: Agreement with infrastructure, housing and town centre priorities



Base:1,518 Residents

Key (Relevant EDS priorities)

Enhancing the town centre	
Improving the infrastructure	
Improving housing	

While there are variations in the importance attached to different priorities by different types of residents, none of the priorities tested appears overly polarising and the lowest average importance rating given by any sub-group (a score of 5.2 given by residents of Boughton Monchelsea & Chart Sutton ward to 'Lobbying for better rail services to London from Maidstone East') sits above 5 out of 10.

When given the opportunity to suggest anything further that could be done to improve the local economy, residents tended to mention activities linked to the key principles of the EDS, notably improving the town centre, enhancing the borough's infrastructure and creating high level jobs.

Figure 3: Thematic grouping of spontaneous suggestions for other action the Council should take to improve the local economy (Most common themes)

Theme area	% mentioning
Focus on the town centre and its appearance and bring in better shops, cafes and businesses	16%
Improve roads	14%
Create more diverse local jobs and apprenticeships, including well paid, quality jobs, not just service jobs	10%
Improve infrastructure e.g. the number of schools, doctors, supermarkets etc	10%
Reduce parking fees, more parking spaces, better use of traffic wardens and Park & Ride	9%
Improvements to public transport including cheaper fares and improvements to bus and train services	7%
Decrease congestion and avoid grid lock	7%
Build on existing sites and brown fields to maintain open, green spaces	7%
Encourage small business including offering opportunities and smaller spaces for businesses, emphasising production and industry rather than large supermarkets	7%
Reduce shop and business rates/ rents	4%
Maximise the river, improve the riverside, make the most of the new bridge	4%
Make areas look nicer, tidier and smarter	3%
Create new houses, including by converting empty offices into accommodation	3%
Offer amenities for younger people - after school clubs, playgroups	3%
Better planning/ planning permission	3%
Stop wasting money/ prioritise budgets	3%

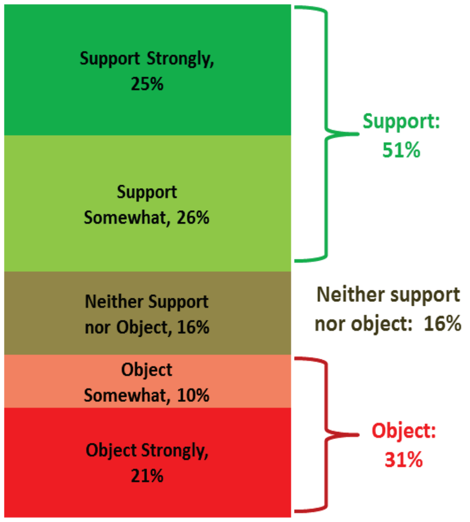
Base: 795 residents making a suggestion. Table shows theme areas mentioned by at least 3% of respondents. Multiple responses possible.

Key (Relevant EDS priorities)

Retaining and attracting investment	
Stimulating entrepreneurship	
Enhancing the town centre	
Improving the infrastructure	
Improving housing	
Creative/ cultural offer	
Other	

While reactions to the idea of a new employment site at Junction 8 were mixed, over half of residents said they would support this, with a further 1 in 6 having no opinion. Those who would object represent less than a third of those interviewed and are most likely to live within neighbouring wards.

Figure 4: Levels of support and objection to the idea of a new business park at Junction 8 – All residents



Base:1,518 Residents

Agreement with the content of the EDS also extends to responses to the open consultation and business survey, with very few respondents noting any divergence between their views and the key elements of the strategy.

Local jobs and skills are of prime importance to residents, who are able to take a long term view of priorities for the borough

It is fitting that the "twin" priorities of 'Creating enough local jobs to meet the needs of the growing population' and 'Working with schools, the college and training organisations to ensure residents have the skills needed to get jobs locally' share joint first place as the most important to Maidstone citizens. These two areas are inextricably linked and this is highlighted in the comments made by residents and respondents to the open consultation and business survey as well as in the EDS itself.

> *"They should help the youngsters regarding their prospects for work."*
> **Female, 75+, Retired, Shepway South Ward**

> *"They need to provide more educational opportunities for people on benefits."*
> **Male, 35-44, Self-employed (Within Maidstone), South Ward**

Both these areas receive an average importance rating of 8.6 out of 10 and are rated 10 out of 10 for importance by almost half of respondents. Further, a call to create more diverse, high quality local jobs, including mentions of apprenticeships, represents the third most common theme among spontaneous suggestions for additional activity to be undertaken by the Council.

The high importance attached to local job creation and skill development extends beyond those who would directly benefit from these initiatives to older, retired people. Older members of the community see these goals as worthwhile either because of the potential benefits for their own younger family members or out of concern for or pride in the borough as a whole.

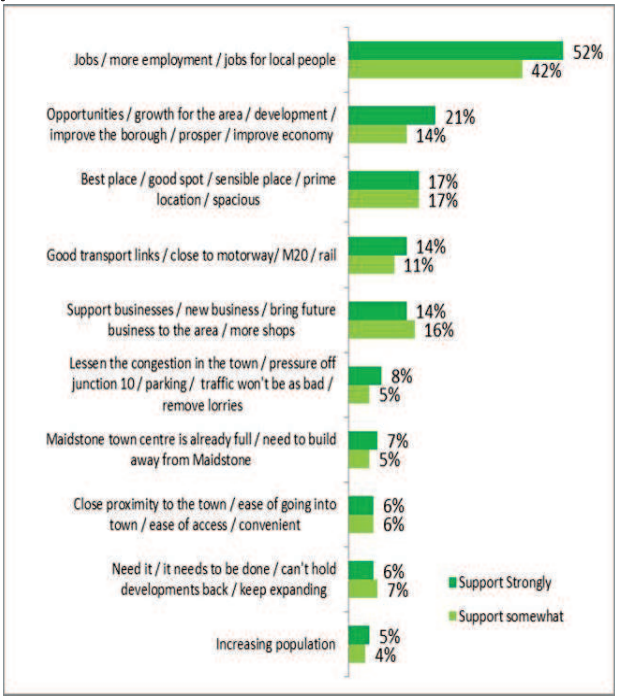
> *"It took my grandson ages to get a job when he left school. How are they meant to get experience when nobody will employ them in the first place?"*
> **Female, 65-74, Retired, Harrietsham & Lenham Ward**

> *"Quality not quantity of jobs – jobs that last."*
> **Male, 55-64, Retired, North Downs Ward**

Those who currently commute out of the borough to work appear less engaged with local priorities generally, and this includes interest in the creation of local jobs. If out-commuters are happy with their current situation and reluctant to move to newly created local positions, this will make upskilling of new entrants to the labour force; including young people, the unemployed and those returning to work from carer/ homemaker roles; even more important.

The importance of local employment creation to Maidstone residents is further demonstrated by the position of this consideration as the top reason to support a new employment site at Junction 8 of the M20, mentioned by more than half of those who would strongly support this development. This is also an important rationale for those who would "support somewhat". Comments made by this group suggest that some see the development as a "necessary evil", with the need for job creation outweighing other concerns around environmental impact or a preference for other priorities, such as town centre regeneration, that would more immediately affect their own quality of life.

Figure 5: Top 10 reasons to support a new business park at Junction 8



Bases: Support Strongly = 355 respondents, Support Somewhat = 360 respondents. Multiple responses possible. Top 10 answers shown.

The importance of priorities such as local job creation and upskilling to residents, as well as the comments made around these topics, suggest that Maidstone citizens are able to take a *long term* view when assessing the priorities they consider most important, supporting initiatives that may require planning and investment over many years, rather than just "quick fix" solutions.

Indeed, a key area where the views of those responding to the open consultation and business survey diverge from the principals of the EDS is a feeling that the strategy as a whole and the vision in particular, is not forward-looking *enough*, lacking ambition and distinctiveness.

The potential for infrastructure and "quality of life" improvements is particularly valued

At the same time, residents are keen that the Council takes action on infrastructure improvements, especially 'redeveloping derelict or unsightly property' and 'tackling congestion and improving roads', both of which receive almost universal agreement. The importance of infrastructure activity also comes through strongly in the comments made by residents when asked what else the Council could be doing to improve the local economy.

> ***"Derelict properties should be done up to look better. Empty shops make the town look very unattractive."***
> **Male, 35-44, Employed (outside of Maidstone), Marden and Yalding Ward**

> ***"People are being put off of Maidstone. It's a miserable driving experience, we try not to do it if we can."***
> **Male, 55-64, Retired, Staplehurst Ward**

Improvements to infrastructure represent the type of activity that can have an immediate, tangible and visible impact for residents, meaning that it is unsurprising that they are valued. This activity is less obviously linked to economic development than work to create local jobs or upskill residents, but it will help to increase the *quality of life* that residents enjoy. This is highlighted in the EDS as a factor contributing to a successful local economy by indirectly driving economic competitiveness and as something that is important for attracting new investment. It is therefore identified as an overarching element of the EDS vision for 2031.

Infrastructure improvements can be seen as a "win win" activity, with these not only improving the lives of existing local residents but also playing a role in attracting and retaining skilled employees and high quality businesses.

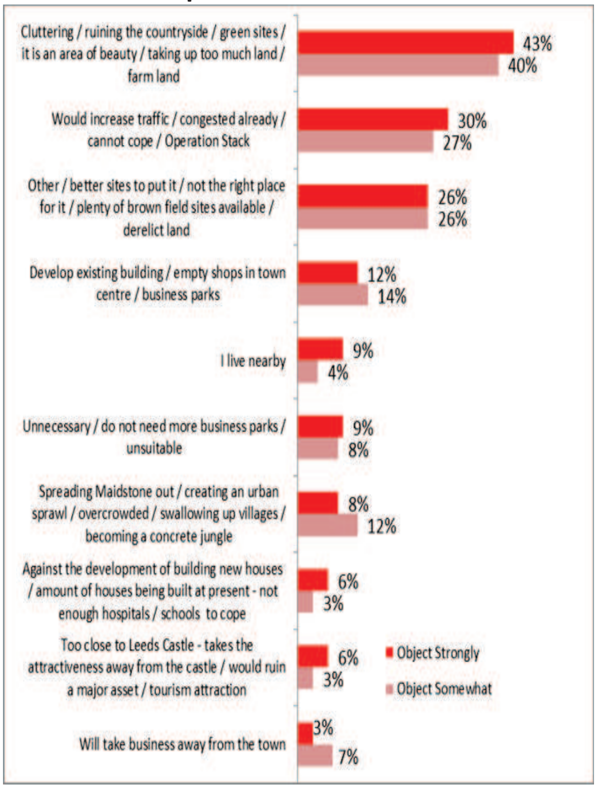
There is some tension between rural and urban priorities

In reviewing the survey responses, a certain tension can be seen between economic goals, such as creating jobs, and quality of life factors like the borough's unique rural environment, with many residents noting that a balance needs to be struck. This echoes the EDS commitment to achieving growth sustainably without sacrificing the environmental qualities that make Maidstone a special place.

This tension is particularly evident in the views of residents in neighbouring rural wards towards the potential creation of a new employment site at Junction 8 of the M20. These residents are rightly concerned about the nature of any development in this location and the impact it may have on the countryside and rural way of life that they see as a key strength of their local area.

Conversely, there is also some resistance to the idea of a new employment site at Junction 8 from urban residents who feel that more focus should be placed on improving in-town locations before looking at out of town developments. This appears to partly stem from residents drawing their own conclusions about what a new site might look like, for example imagining that this might include significant elements of retail units or housing. This group may be more receptive to the idea of a new Junction 8 employment site if given fuller information on what exactly this would entail.

Figure 3.6: Why object to a new business park at Junction 8 – Top 10 reasons



Bases: Object Strongly = 398 respondents, Object Somewhat = 166 respondents. Multiple responses possible. Top 10 answers shown.

There are also some other differences in the prioritisation of activities by rural and urban residents. For those living in rural areas, especially in certain wards where connectivity is a particular issue, working to improve the availability of super-fast broadband across the borough is a key priority. In contrast, urban dwellers are more likely to prioritise improvements to rail services, as well as having a greater desire to attract new businesses to the borough.

Transport issues are a key concern

Maidstone's transport links emerge from the survey as a key area of concern for residents. This relates particularly to congestion, especially on the M20 and town centre roads, and to parking issues.

> ***"The M20 is currently at a standstill every morning and evening around Maidstone. How can any further growth possibly be accommodated unless this is addressed?"***
> **Business Survey Respondent, Male, Creative Sector, Gillingham**

However, there does also appear to be a strong interest in improved public transport and in encouraging other car-free options.

Improvements to *local* public transport, for example bus links into the town centre, are prioritised well above lobbying for better rail links to London. It may be that to some extent this prioritisation reflects the Council having less scope to act, able only to *lobby* for improvements, rather than make these directly. However, it is likely that rail links are considered a lower priority as travelling to London represents something that is not necessarily part of the day to day life of the average Maidstone resident. This extends to those who commute out of the borough to work, for whom road links to neighbouring Kent towns appear to be a more immediate priority.

Improving rail links to the capital is highlighted by respondents to the business survey as something they would prioritise, given that they consider the current situation a constraint on growth. This may also be something that will be important in attracting new businesses to locate in the borough, suggesting that it could be considered a *strategic* concern, even if it does not feature on the everyday radar of most residents.

Transport issues play a key role in attitudes towards a potential new employment site at Junction 8 but the same concerns feature as a reason for both support and objection, depending on how the likely future impact of the site on the road network is interpreted. This suggests a need to try to ensure that secondary benefits of this kind, for example reduced pressure on roads in the town centre or improvements to the junction itself, can be achieved and that these feature in any communication about the scheme.

The survey supports the idea of an entrepreneurial borough

The survey findings support the idea that Maidstone is an *entrepreneurial* borough, identified as a key strength in the EDS. There appears to be particular support for the idea of trying to encourage growth from within, with helping to grow existing local businesses prioritised above attracting new businesses to the borough. A high level of importance is also attached to helping local residents who would like to start their own business and help and support for small businesses features as a key theme among spontaneous suggestions for action.

Self-employed residents surveyed suggest that they would appreciate assistance from the Council, including calling for practical measures that would help them, including access to appropriate business space and leniency on issues such as business rates and “red tape”.

The findings suggest that young people may be particularly interested in entrepreneurship, with younger residents expressing an interest in start-up information, including disseminating this via schools and colleges.

“Improve start up information for small businesses which will improve the local economy.”
Female, 16-24, Employed (Within Maidstone), Barming Ward

“Go to schools and colleges and educate people on starting their own business.”
Male, 16-24, Student, Park Wood Ward

Shared Intelligence

Maidstone Economic Development Strategy

2015 - 2031

June 2015

Contents

Executive Summary

Maidstone[1] today stands at a crossroads. The national economy is starting to grow after a long period of recession that affected Maidstone more adversely than its neighbours in some ways. Employment has declined with significant jobs losses in the public sector[2], output has grown more slowly than in Kent overall[3], and Maidstone town centre has slipped down the retail rankings[4]. –On the other hand the population has grown and is forecast to continue to grow[5], there has been recent private sector job growth[6], and more new businesses are being created and surviving than before[7]. Investors are coming forward with new proposals that could bring significant benefits for Maidstone.

As the economic recovery gathers momentum, Maidstone needs to be in a position to benefit from the emerging growth opportunities. Without concerted action by the council and partners, there is a risk that Maidstone's economy will continue to under perform.

The overall approach adopted in this strategy is about making the most of our many economic assets, while at the same time protecting those that make Maidstone a special place. We want to support our businesses to grow, creating jobs for all of our residents and ensuring they are equipped with the skills to maximise their potential. By 2031 our vision for Maidstone is:

> *"A model '21st century county town, a distinctive place, known for its blend of sustainable rural and urban living, dynamic service sector-based economy, excellence in public services, and above all, quality of life."*

This strategy sets out how we will achieve our vision and identifies a series of priority actions to capitalise on our assets and the opportunities we have to strengthen the economy and create the right conditions for economic growth. These five priorities are:

Retaining and attracting investment - We will support existing businesses to grow and also work to attract new employers to the borough, creating job opportunities for all residents across a range of sectors.

Stimulating entrepreneurship - We will create a more entrepreneurial and innovative economy, supporting new business start-ups and those with high growth potential to move up the value chain.

Enhancing Maidstone town centre - We will promote the regeneration of Maidstone town centre as a high quality retail and leisure destination, and as a place to live and work.

Meeting the skills needs – By working closely with our partners we will ensure that residents are equipped with skills for work and that the skills needs of businesses are being met. We will encourage better careers advice in schools and promote apprenticeships and work experience placements in the Council and with businesses. We will support the expansion of the Higher Education sector to increase the number of graduates in the workforce, supporting initiatives such

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[1] All references to Maidstone" refer to the Borough unless suffixed with Town Centre.
[2] P13 Paragraph 3.10 of this Strategy
[3] P12 Paragraph 3.4 of this Strategy
[4] P29 Paragraph 5.33 of this Strategy
[5] P14 Paragraph 3.24 of this Strategy
[6] P13 Paragraph 3.9 of this Strategy
[7] P14 Paragraph 3.21 of this Strategy

as the Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery (KIMS) and Kent Medical Campus (KMC)[8], as well as the University of the Creative Arts (UCA) expansion at Maidstone Studios.

Improving the infrastructure - We will invest in infrastructure by working closely with our partners, in particular Kent County Council; a priority being the need for digital accessibility and an adequate transport network across the Borough.

We recognise that there are many partners involved in taking forward the opportunities identified and there is a clear leadership role for Maidstone Borough Council to play in coordinating, promoting and actively working with the business community to achieve the economic vision.

[8] Maidstone Medical Campus was renamed Kent Medical Campus in April 2015

1 Introduction

1.1 At the time of writing Maidstone's last Economic Development Strategy in 2008 the economy was in a very different place, poised on the brink of an economic recession which has been one of the longest in our history. Now some six years on the economic recovery is starting to gain momentum and there are real signs of growth.

1.2 Like many other places across the UK, Maidstone has fared relatively well in some ways during the recession and badly in others. We have seen overall employment decline but at the same time there has been population growth. Maidstone now stands at a crossroads where the opportunities for economic growth can be seen all around us. However, some tough and bold decisions will be needed to capitalise on these opportunities for the benefit of residents and businesses.

1.3 This strategy sets out our ambitions for what we want to achieve by 2031, the opportunities and challenges facing the Maidstone economy and how we will achieve the strategy.

Developing the Strategy

1.4 The council commissioned Shared Intelligence (Si), who are experienced economic development professionals, to help prepare this economic development strategy. Their work included:

- reviewing the existing vision to ensure that this still meets current aspirations;
- an assessment of the current state of the Maidstone economy to identify the opportunities and challenges we face - the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats;
- identifying priorities for how we will achieve our ambitions and the interventions to capitalise on Maidstone's economic assets; and
- formulating a programme of actions to take forward the journey to deliver our vision by 2031.

1.5 To inform the development of the strategy, an analysis of the broader national and local economic trends was undertaken to provide the evidence base. The findings of this work are set out in a separate State of the Maidstone Economy report, which sits alongside this strategy.

1.6 The views of the business community, key employers and stakeholders have also been considered in developing this strategy. Engagement has come via a number of different channels, including:

1. two workshops with the Maidstone Economic Business Partnership (MEBP) facilitated by Shared Intelligence held on 23rd May and 5th June 2014;
2. two workshops with Maidstone Borough Councillors - the Cabinet on 23rd July and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29th July;
3. a programme of interviews conducted by Shared intelligence in May/June 2014 with 15 key businesses;
4. face-to-face and telephone interviews with 14 key stakeholders; and
5. the results of a business survey undertaken by Maidstone Borough Council in June 2014 with responses from 59 employers.

1.7 A consultation draft Strategy was published between the 15th December and the 23rd January. The consultation involved the following:

1. An online form, together with the relevant documents, was put on the consultation page of Maidstone Borough Council's website.
2. A press release was issued to the media and the KM newspaper ran a half page story on it. Social media was used to raise awareness of the consultation. The KM Paper also had a significant feature in their newspaper on the 19th December 2014.
3. The same on-line form was sent to around 1900 businesses across Maidstone borough and three prompts were sent to encourage their participation.
4. Two consultation events were also held, on 13 January 2015. A Parish and Communities event was attended by 33 people, and a business event was attended by 60 people. These events enabled attendees to ask direct questions of officers and members and to engage in a workshop style discussion to offer views and opinions on the Strategy and their own views on what needs to be done to make Maidstone more prosperous. All these views were captured and have been used to inform the final Economic Development Strategy.
5. A telephone survey was used to engage residents. This structured approach enabled the views of a large number of Maidstone residents to be gathered within a short timeframe – 1,518 interviews were conducted between January 5th and January 20th 2015 – and also allowed interviews to be targeted so the opinions of those participating would be as representative as possible across all residents in the Borough. Quotas were set to ensure fair representation by age, gender and employment status. To allow results to be analysed at a ward level, at least 50 interviews were undertaken in each ward, with larger wards receiving more interviews. The survey lasted 10 minutes on average and consisted of 19 questions, including both multiple choice/ scale questions and those allowing an open /free response.

1.8 The consultation process resulted in the following:

1. 25 submissions received from the online survey
2. 25 submissions received from the business survey
3. 60 people attended the business event
4. 33 people attended the Parish and Communities event
5. 14 detailed submissions received from residents, agents, developers and local businesses.

1.9 The findings of the consultation process were considered by the Council and informed the final version of this Strategy presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 24th June 2015.

1.10 This strategy is for the whole of the borough of Maidstone, although it is recognised that the economic needs and opportunities vary geographically. On the one hand the borough has a vibrant rural economy that needs to be supported and on the other, Maidstone is the largest urban area in Kent and the County Town. The strategy sits alongside and informs the emerging Local Plan. It sets out our ambitions and principles for supporting growth of the economy, but does not consider specific employment land allocations which are addressed in the Local Plan.

Maidstone in 2031

1.11 The council is committed to maximising the economic potential of Maidstone and enabling the creation of jobs for all residents of different backgrounds and skill levels. While growth is imperative, it needs to be achieved sustainably without sacrificing the environmental qualities that make Maidstone a special place.

1.12 **By 2031, we aim to:**

- **enable the creation of 14,400 jobs in a range of sectors and occupations[9]**
- **raise economic output (GVA) per head[10] to the level of the South East**
- **raise the skills profile of Maidstone to the South East average**

1.13 In 2008, together with stakeholders from education, the business community and the public sector, we developed a long term economic vision for Maidstone to become a 21st Century county town. The long term ambitions described in the vision remain largely the same today as six years ago. However, achieving them has been made all the more difficult by the recession, which has slowed the rate of growth, increased unemployment and stymied investment.

1.14 The recession has resulted in some fundamental structural shifts in the national economy. Whereas the public sector was a key driver of employment growth in the early part of the decade (which was to the benefit of Maidstone as a county town), efforts to reduce the national deficit and the knock-on effects on the budgets of public sector agencies, mean that these jobs can no longer be relied upon. Growth in private sector employment is now critical to Maidstone's future prosperity.

1.15 Moreover, the policy context is now significantly different from before. National economic policy is shaped by BIS's Industrial Strategy with its focus on sector partnerships and "eight great technologies". At the regional level, Regional Development Agencies have been replaced by Local Enterprise Partnerships and there are new Strategic Economic Plans which influence the funding opportunities available.

1.16 The vision and strategy builds from a body of evidence and academic thinking about what makes local economies successful. Successful towns and cities tend to be those that are competitive, productive and innovative. They have the ability to continually upgrade their business environment, skills base, physical, social and cultural infrastructures and to attract the most profitable firms and the most talented people.

1.17 The visioning work in 2008 has been updated to reflect the economic circumstances and policy environment today and is captured in our Vision Statement below.

Our 2013 Vision Statement

"In 2031, Maidstone is home to a model '21st century county town', a distinctive place, known for its blend of sustainable rural and urban living, vibrant service sector-based economy, excellence in public services, and high quality of life. Highly skilled and talented people continue to be attracted to the borough to live; while many commute out to work in London or elsewhere in Kent, more work inside the borough - in the town, in the surrounding rural centres, or from home. In the evenings and at weekends, residents choose to spend their money in Maidstone because of its unique, high quality retail and leisure offer.

[9] The source of this figure is explained in paragraph 4.5 of this Strategy.

[10] GVA per head is a measure of the relative economic prosperity of an area, calculated by estimating the value of the economic output and dividing it by the population. If GVA per head in Maidstone were on a par with the South East it would mean that we have created more higher value, better paid jobs and our economic performance would be more in line with the rest of the South East.

Maidstone town centre is truly 'a great place to visit, a great place to shop'; people come to Maidstone for its attractive high street and high quality, broad range of independent shops and retail multiples. Maidstone could never be called a clone town with its boutiques, high fashion outlets, and choice of niche retailers. Maidstone has moved up the retail rankings and is seen as an attractive alternative to the many homogenous out-of-town malls. In the evenings the town centre comes alive; it is a safe place for families out for an evening at the theatre, at entertainment venues and cultural facilities or at the many restaurants. Young people from all over Kent come to Maidstone because of the famous nightlife.

A culture of lifelong learning has been embedded in Maidstone in recognition of the importance of education and skills. Young people leave school with the qualifications they need to succeed in life. The further and higher education sectors have expanded and there is a significant university presence in the town. Vocational and community-based learning opportunities are closely aligned with the needs of local employers.

Environmental sustainability and valuing our environment is very important to the people of Maidstone. More people choose to leave their cars at home taking public transport, or walking and cycling. Fast and frequent rail services to London provide an important economic stimulus and access to job opportunities for our residents who choose to commute.

As a 21st century county town, Maidstone remains a by-word for excellence in public services, home to the highly respected borough and county councils, leading schools, further and higher education providers, and first class health services.

Maidstone is an important driver of growth in the south east, recognised by the Local Enterprise Partnership and central government. There are more knowledge intensive businesses here than ever before. The expansion of the Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery (KIMS) and Kent Medical Campus (KMC) have attracted skilled professionals to the area. Alongside this, our buoyant business and professional services sector goes from strength to strength, serving markets well beyond the immediate boundaries of Maidstone. The creative and media sector has grown rapidly in the last 20 years with the University College of the Creative Arts (UCA) and Maidstone Studios producing even more nationally acclaimed programmes. Graduates are leaving university and setting up their own businesses, taking advantage of the new incubation space, virtual offices, and other high tech facilities at the Enterprise Hub.

Our rural communities are important community and commercial centres in their own right. They are a major part of our tourism offer, which also includes Leeds Castle and the riverside in Maidstone town centre.

Maidstone has a clear and distinctive offer to investors; they know that for the cachet of being in a county town, good connectivity, a ready supply of high quality affordable workspace, a pool of skilled labour, and good work-life balance, then Maidstone is the place to be."

2 Strategic Context

2.1 This economic development strategy for Maidstone sits within a wider European, national, regional and local policy context. It is important that this strategy is aligned to these broader strategic plans so that funding opportunities can be maximised to deliver our economic growth aspirations for Maidstone. The Strategic context of this document will be kept under review and the monitoring indicators set out at the end of this Strategy will be used to inform when a review of the Strategy is required to meet the changing national economic picture.

The Plan for Growth and the UK Industrial Strategy

2.2 Upon election in 2010, the Government set out its strategy for promoting balanced and sustainable growth of the national economy in The Plan for Growth and the Growth Review[11]. A number of key themes were identified:

- **Providing stability for business**: Including a credible plan to reduce the deficit and for a stable financial system.
- **Making markets more dynamic**: Creating an open and competitive business environment to boost productivity.
- **Increasing trade and access to international markets:** With an emphasis on the importance of export growth for the recovery.
- **Access to finance:** Maintaining a flow of finance so businesses have the resources to invest and grow in the wake of the 'credit crunch'.
- **A planning regime which supports growth and sustainable development:** Including the introduction of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) with its 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.
- **Infrastructure:** Including the *National Infrastructure Plan* designed to set out a more coordinated investment plan nationally.
- **Labour market reform:** Including improved incentives to work through the Work Programme and removing barriers to job creation.

2.3 As the UK emerges from recession, these key themes continue to shape national economic policy and are therefore relevant context for developing Maidstone's economy.

2.4 Alongside the Growth Review, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has continued to develop the national Industrial Strategy. This strategy focuses on developing sector partnerships and makes commitments to providing support for all sectors to improve global competitiveness, innovation and export potential.

2.5 Eleven sector strategies have been published so far alongside the national Industrial Strategy – those highlighted in bold are of most relevance in terms of Maidstone's economic profile: Aerospace, **Agricultural Technologies**, Automotive, **Construction**, **Information Economy**, International Education, Life Sciences, Nuclear, Offshore Wind, Oil and Gas, and **Professional and Business Services**. A strategy looking at the future of retail was published in October 2013 with the British Retail Consortium and a strategy for the **Creative Industries** has been launched in 2014.

2.6 In addition, the Industrial Strategy identifies four cross-cutting themes:

1. **Eight Great Technologies**: Big data; satellites and space technology; robotics and autonomous systems; life sciences, genomics and synthetic biology; regenerative medicine; agri-science; advanced materials and nano technology; and energy.
2. **Skills**: Working to deliver the skills that employers need, giving businesses more say over how government funding for skills is spent.
3. **Access to finance**: Helping businesses get the finance they need to invest in people and equipment and to grow.

[11] HMT/BIS (November 2010) 'The path to strong, sustainable and balanced growth'

4. **Procurement**: Developing UK supply chains and creating a simpler and more transparent public sector procurement system.

2.7 The sector strategies and cross cutting themes in the Industrial Strategy have helped to inform our thinking in the Economic Development Strategy.

South East LEP Strategic Plan and the Growth Deal

2.8 The South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP) is a partnership of key leaders from business, local government and further and higher education across the South East. It covers the counties of Essex, Kent and East Sussex and the unitary authorities of Southend, Thurrock and Medway. Of the 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships set up by Government, SE LEP is the largest outside London, with a total population of 3.9 million, more than 130,000 businesses and 1.3 million jobs.

2.9 Government asked all LEPs to submit a Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) in March 2014, identifying the housing, transport, economic development and skills priorities of the area. Kent's priorities in the SEP were articulated in Unlocking the Potential: Going for Growth (see below).

2.10 SEPs were the mechanism by which LEPs bid for a share of the Local Growth Fund – a new £12 billion fund devolved from government departments. The first wave of the Growth Deals were announced on 7th July 2014 and SE LEP was awarded £442.1 million, with £64.6 million of new funding confirmed for 2015/16 and £143.6 million for 2016/17 to 2021. The deal included a provisional allocation of £8.9 million for an integrated transport package for Maidstone for 2016/17 onwards.

2.11 A key component of the Deal was the creation of SEFUND - a revolving investment fund for local authorities and partners to bid for in order to support projects in their area. Although this proposal did not receive a financial allocation in the Growth Deal, the SE LEP has been able to establish a SEFUND initially using recycled Growing Places Funding. It is important that the Maidstone Economic Development Strategy provides the foundation for Maidstone to secure its share of SEFUND and future rounds of LGF.

European Structural Investment Funds Strategy (ESIF)

2.12 In addition to resources secured through the Growth Deal, the SE LEP has access to European Structural Investment Funds for the period 2014-2020. These fund are available through both the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) European Programmes. The SE LEP European Structural Investment Fund Strategy (ESIF) is aligned to the priorities of the SE LEP Strategic Economic Plan.

Unlocking the Potential: Going for Growth

2.13 The Growth Deal for Kent and Medway was based on the Kent and Medway Growth Plan - Unlocking the Potential: Going for Growth. It focuses on the key transport projects, housing and employment sites, skills capital projects, and other funding opportunities in the area.

2.14 The key locations for growth include Maidstone and the M20 corridor; Thames Gateway Kent – A2/M2 corridor; East Kent – the high speed one growth corridor; and West Kent – the A21 corridor and Medway Valley. Maidstone is identified as Kent's county town, with economic opportunities associated with its central location, established business services sector and developing media and health sectors. The M20 Junction 7 with Eclipse Business Park and the Kent Medical Campus, and

Maidstone town centre are identified as opportunities for growth. The relative weakness of rail connectivity and high levels of congestion around Maidstone town centre are identified as specific economic challenges.

2.15 Investment opportunities are identified at Kent Medical Campus, where funding opportunities could help to bring forward the development by supporting initial infrastructure costs. At the nearby Maidstone Studios the University of the Creative Arts are looking to develop their student facilities. In Maidstone town centre, redevelopment of the area surrounding Maidstone East Station is identified as an important regeneration site, replacing outdated office blocks and car parking with a new mixed-use extension of the town centre.

2.16 A number of transport projects identified for Maidstone in the SEP have received funding including:

- **Maidstone Gyratory Bypass.** This £5.7 million total cost scheme has been allocated £4.56 million Local Growth Funds and is due to start in 2015/16 with completion in 2016/17. It will deal with a congestion and air quality hotspot within Maidstone Town Centre, lying at the point where the A20, A26, A229 and A249 primary routes converge and cross the River Medway in Maidstone town centre. Two additional northbound lanes will be constructed to enable northbound traffic on the A229 to bypass the existing Gyratory system. This will reduce journey distances, travel time and congestion and enable the regeneration of the western riverside.
- **Sustainable Access to Maidstone Employment Areas**. At a total cost of £3 million, £2 million of Local Growth Funds have been allocated to this scheme which will start in 2015/16 and be completed in 2016/17. This scheme is a high quality dedicated cycle and pedestrian route from residential development sites on the outskirts of Maidstone's urban areas into Maidstone Town Centre. It will encourage a modal shift to walking and cycling, reducing vehicle trips along main access routes into Maidstone; delivering decongestion benefits and improving journey time reliability.
- **West Kent LSTF (Local Sustainable Transport Fund).** This scheme includes local growth funding of £1 million for Maidstone East Rail Station improvements which is matched by £1 million from the national station improvement programme and is part of a larger schemes around the station which includes a retail element.

Tackling Disadvantage: Low Income Working Families

2.17 Kent County Council is leading the preparation of a strategy to support working families on low incomes. This is a particularly important issue in Maidstone where the weekly wages of workers are particularly low. 'In-work poverty' has become more of a concern nationally as inflation – including the cost of gas, electricity, food and other basics - has risen faster than wage growth, leading to a decline in real incomes. The work is looking into how local authorities in Kent can support people on low pay to: maintain good health; progress in their career to better paid jobs; navigate the complexities of the in-work benefits system; and how to incentivise employers to give workers a fair deal.

3 Maidstone Today: Challenges and Opportunities

3.1 This section sets out how Maidstone's economy has been performing over recent years and the challenges and opportunities it faces. The key points in this section are based on the findings set out in the State of the Maidstone Economy report and from the programme of engagement and workshops with the business community, stakeholders and councillors.

Maidstone has the biggest economy in Kent

3.2 Maidstone is the largest economy in Kent in terms of economic output, worth an estimated £3.3 billion per annum[12]. Total employment - including both employees and the self-employed - was 70,700 in 2012[13], 12.6% of total employment in Kent.

Recent economic performance has been poor

3.3 Over recent years Maidstone's economy has not fared well and for many economic indicators the downward trends have been worse than for neighbouring areas and comparator towns.

3.4 Maidstone’s economic output, measured in terms of GVA, fell between 2007 and 2012 and as a result its contribution to the Kent economy decreased from 13.3% to 12.5%. Amongst the Kent districts, only Dover experienced a worse fall in output over this period. Over the longer term from 2002 to 2012, Maidstone's economic output performance has been below par - increasing by only 3.8% which was below the Kent (+4.2%) and national (+4.4%) rates. Nearby districts of Dover, Tunbridge Wells, Gravesham and Swale have all performed better.

3.5 Total employment in Maidstone fell from 72,600 in 2009 to 70,700 in 2012[14]. This 2.6% decrease was greater than the fall across Kent as a whole (-0.7%) and contrasts with a slight +0.7% increase nationally. Only Ashford (-2.9%) and Tonbridge & Malling (-3.1%) saw a decline greater than Maidstone amongst the Kent districts, with the others all doing better, particularly Dartford (+11.3%) and Sevenoaks (+5.1%).

3.6 Employment in Maidstone also fared worse than in comparator areas like Colchester, Chelmsford and Horsham, which saw either no change or an increase in employment over the same time period.

3.7 Over a longer time horizon from 2002 to 2012, employment in Maidstone increased by 3.8%, which was above the Kent average (+0.9%) but below the national growth rate (+5.8%). Four other districts in Kent saw greater growth and these were Dartford, Shepway, Canterbury and Ashford.

A service sector based economy

3.8 The focus of the Maidstone economy is towards the service sector with Health and Public Administration (largely public sector), Business Administration & Support, Financial and Insurance Services and Information & Communication all relatively significant.

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[12] All GVA estimates are from Kent County Council (2014) Business Intelligence Statistical Bulletin
[13] ONS (2013) Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)
[14] ONS (2013) Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) - includes employees and self-employed.

3.9 While public sector orientated service industries have performed badly in employment terms since 2009, private sector services have seen some growth. Employment in Business Administration & Support, Financial and Insurance services and Information & Communication increased between 2009 and 2012 and growth has been well above the national and Kent trends, with the exception of Business Administration & Support which grew more at the Kent level.

Public sector job losses

3.10 One of the main reasons why the Maidstone economy has performed poorly over recent years is the level of its reliance on the public sector for employment at a time when austerity has meant cuts to the public sector nationally. Some 1500 of the 1900 jobs lost in Maidstone between 2009 and 2012 were in the public sector[15].

3.11 Maidstone has the second highest dependency on public sector jobs in the South East (27.9% of the workforce)[16] and it is forecast to lose a further 2000 jobs by 2015 through a combination of direct (1490) and indirect (510) public sector job losses.

3.12 Private sector jobs have also been lost since 2009 in Maidstone, but to a lesser extent than in the public sector and there are more positive signs of growth over the last year.

3.13 The dominance of the public sector in the Maidstone economy continues to be a key issue for future prosperity. As the county town, we would expect the proportion of employment in the public sector to be high but some diversification is needed. In 2012, 11.3% of the employment in Maidstone was in Public Administration and Defence compared to only 4.4% in Kent as a whole. Signs are that the public sector is set to continue to shed further jobs over the next few years, so increasing private sector employment growth in Maidstone needs to be a priority.

Manufacturing is important

3.14 Although the manufacturing sector is relatively small in the borough, accounting for a relatively low proportion of jobs (5.6% of jobs compared to 6.9% in Kent and as whole and 8.9% nationally), it has performed relatively well. Manufacturing employment increased by almost 5.7% between 2009 and 2012, which contrasts with decline in Kent (-6.6%) and nationally (-3.5%)

3.15 The manufacturing industries which performed best in Maidstone were Pharmaceutical Products, Food Products, Rubber and Plastic Products and Computer, Electronic and Optical Products.

3.16 This growth has largely been around Marden, Headcorn, Staplehurst and in northern areas around the M20. However, some of these growing businesses wish to relocate to more accessible parts of the borough closer to the motorway network. It will be important that these growing manufacturing companies are nurtured to capitalise on the opportunities for economic growth they bring.

A small but growing knowledge economy

3.17 Overall Maidstone has a relatively low share of higher value 'knowledge intensive' employment (14.5% compared to 16.1% for Kent and 19.4% nationally); these are sectors such as ICT, financial and business services, and advanced manufacturing, which are driving national economic growth. While their share in Maidstone is relatively low, they are growing with strong jobs growth recorded since 2009 above that for Kent and England as a whole (+5.1% compared to +4.4% in Kent and +2.6%

[15] ONS (2013) Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES)

[16] KCC Research & Intelligence (January 2011) 'Public Sector Dependency and an assessment of public sector jobs in Kent'

for England)[17] The knowledge economy industries that saw particularly significant growth in Maidstone are Architectural and Engineering Activities, Computer Programming, Consultancy and Related Activities and Publishing.

3.18 It is important that these high value jobs are encouraged as they are the growth industries of the future that will bring higher value, higher paid job opportunities to the borough.

An entrepreneurial economy

3.19 Maidstone is an entrepreneurial economy with the self employment rate (12.1%) above the Kent (11%) and national (9.9%) averages; the borough ranks fourth highest in Kent below Tunbridge Wells, Shepway and Dover[18].

3.20 Although the rate of business start-ups has fallen over recent years, from constituting 13.9% of businesses in 2004 to 11.2%, this is on a par with the average for Kent (11.1%) but above the national average (10.8%)[19].

3.21 Business survival rates generally deteriorated during the recession, but Maidstone performed relatively better, with business survival rates generally above the national average since 2011.

3.22 However, some of the reported specific and generic barriers facing new business start-ups and their survival in Maidstone include:

- inflexible lease terms for premises and comparatively high costs, particularly for those without start-up capital and recent graduates and residents starting in business from low income backgrounds;
- many micro businesses working in isolation with few opportunities to develop local supply chains;
- a lack of business skills and little awareness of what is available and a perception that engaging help will be costly; and
- business frustration that the business support landscape is too fragmented and/or irrelevant to their needs.

3.23 It is important that new business creation is encouraged and supported through the early stages of development. New firms and SMEs, particularly in the high value knowledge sector, are important drivers of innovation and higher productivity in the economy and this will help to diversify Maidstone's economy away from the predominance of the public sector.

A growing population

3.24 Maidstone had an estimated population of 157,300 in 2012 and is the largest district in Kent, with 10.6% of the county's population.[20] The population has grown faster than the national average in the last decade, with 17,000 more residents since 2002.

[17] ONS (2013) Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) based on KCC definition of the knowledge economy.
[18] ONS Annual Population Survey
[19] ONS Business Demography

[20] ONS Mid Year Population Estimates

3.25 This growth is set to continue, with future population growth for Maidstone forecast to be above the national and regional level to 2021. Both the working age (16-64) and retirement age (65+) population are expected to grow more than in Kent overall.

3.26 This growth offers opportunities to capitalise on the increased productive capacity of the local labour force to support business growth. If jobs growth does not materialise to meet these needs then commuting to neighbouring places will rise causing additional pressure on existing infrastructure and any additional business rates income that could be generated from new economic activity will be lost.

High rates of economic participation

3.27 Maidstone has a strong labour market with relatively high employment and economic participation rates and relatively low levels of unemployment. In 2013, 7.2% of economically active residents aged 16-64 were unemployed, compared to 7.6% for both Kent and England.[21] Unemployment increased as a result of the recession, from around 4.3% in 2008 to 8.2% in 2012, but fell in the last year. Thus, while the labour market has performed relatively well in difficult times, there is still some way to go for unemployment to return to pre-recession levels.

3.28 Maidstone's claimant count (the share of working age people claiming Jobseekers Allowance) shows a similar pattern to overall unemployment. The claimant count rate rose sharply in 2008, from 1.0% of 16-64 year olds in January 2008 to 2.7% in January 2012, but has come down in the last year. In April 2014, 1.7% of working age residents were claiming JSA, compared with 2.3% for Kent and 2.7% for England as a whole. Maidstone's claimant count rate was the fifth lowest in Kent in April 2014[22].

3.29 This relative tightness of the labour market is further supported from evidence of mismatch between the supply and demand for labour. There is greater demand for entry level and intermediate level jobs amongst JSA claimants, particularly in sales and customer service roles, than vacancies available, whereas for higher paid occupations, such as associate professionals, the opposite is true - there are more vacancies than claimants.

3.30 Anecdotal evidence from employers suggests that businesses are facing recruitment problems which are affecting the ability of some Maidstone businesses to grow. For example, a logistics company reported that it was struggling to recruit 40 drivers, a manufacturing company reported difficulties in recruiting engineers and a care provider is also having problems in recruiting for relatively low wage positions.

3.31 These indicators suggest that labour market conditions are tight and some businesses are facing recruitment problems across a spectrum of job types in Maidstone.

Low qualification levels

3.32 The qualifications profile is relatively low in Maidstone with less than one third (32.6%) of residents qualified at NVQ Level 4 or above. This is below the Kent (33.6%) and national (35%) averages. More

[21] ONS Annual Population Survey
[22] ONS claimant count

people in Maidstone are also qualified at below level 2[23] (18.5%) compared to Kent as a whole (16.5%)[24].

3.33 However, GSCE performance is good. In 2013 70.8% of Key Stage 4 pupils in Maidstone achieved 5+ A*-C GSCE grades (including English and mathematics) compared to only 63.1% across Kent and 59.2% nationally and at A level 87.8% of pupils achieved 3 or more A*-E Grades compared to 86.1% across Kent[25].

3.34 While there has been improvement over recent years both at the upper and lower ends of the qualifications profile - fewer people have no qualifications and more now have degrees - this improvement has been less than in Kent as a whole, so the gap has widened.

3.35 For Maidstone to attract high value jobs and for companies to innovate and become more productive in the future, there is a need to up skill the workforce and attract graduates to work in the Maidstone economy.

Residents earn more than workers

3.36 Average earnings of residents in Maidstone (£26,800) are above those of workers (£23,290)[26]. This gap between the wages of residents and workers reflects commuting patterns with out-commuters generally going to better paid occupations, and in-commuters coming to generally lower paid service sector jobs.

3.37 Historically, resident earnings in Maidstone have been above the Kent and national averages, However, latest figures suggest resident earnings in Maidstone fell between 2012 to 2013 from £28,700 to £26,800 and therefore are now below the Kent (£28,700) and national (£27,400) averages. These figures need to be treated with caution and monitored to test whether 2013 was a one off fall, an error in the data, or whether they are part of a more profound decline.

Maidstone is becoming less important as a place for jobs

3.38 Maidstone as a place for work for its residents has become less important over the last decade, moving from being a slight net importer of labour to a net exporter. The 2011 Census shows that some 1240 more people were leaving the borough for work than coming in.

3.39 Evidence suggests that in terms of jobs profiles, more out-commuters are working in managerial, professional, and technical occupations, while those commuting into Maidstone tend to be in skilled / semi-skilled occupations.[27]

3.40 The potential pool of more highly skilled labour that is currently commuting out of the borough offers potential opportunities to attract higher value businesses which can utilise these skills.

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[23] Level 2 is equivalent to 5 GCSEs Grade A* to C
[24] ONS Annual Population Survey
[25] Kent County Council.
[26] ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2013
[27] Administrative and secretarial; skilled trades; caring, leisure and other services; and, sales and customer service occupations

SWOT Analysis

3.41 Based on the analysis of recent economic trends and other analyses which are discussed later in the strategy, summarised below are the main strengthens, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the Maidstone economy.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Good strategic transport links • Attractive business location opportunities around motorway junctions • High quality environment • Critical mass of employment draws workers to the area • Opportunities in the health and medical growth sectors • Part of a growing and dynamic market area • Significant proportions of economically active residents • High proportions of residents employed in technical and associate professional occupations • Growth in knowledge based economy sectors • Diverse and broad sectoral mix • High levels of entrepreneurship • Good school performance in GCSEs and A levels	• Poor rail connectivity to London compared to neighbouring towns • Relatively low levels of productivity • Gap between resident and workplace earnings • Low qualification profile and the gap widening with other places • High dependency on public sector employment • Low proportion of managerial level occupations • Lack of employment in key knowledge sectors • Loss of HE provision • Maidstone town centre is falling in the retail hierarchy. • Lack of suitable retail units that meet retailer requirements • An abundance of low quality secondary office space in Maidstone town centre and stagnant office market demand for secondary space • Low level of delivery of new high quality floorspace across all property types • Lack of available land close to the motorway corridor to meet the market demand for larger businesses premises in this location.

Opportunities	Threats
• The working age population is forecast to grow • Strong base of entrepreneurs to further develop • Out commuting of higher skilled workers provides future business growth opportunities • To build sector strengths based around the proposed expansion of KIMS and Kent Medical Campus • To build HE capacity with a focus on health-related opportunities relating to the Kent Medical Campus and the UCA provision at Maidstone Studios • Ability to utilise the M20 to attract regional and nationally focused activities • Availability of employment sites for development at Junction 7 • To increase the attractiveness of Maidstone town centre and enhance retail and leisure offer the through proposed developments • Use of new PDR (Permitted Development Rights) to convert low quality vacant offices to Maidstone town centre housing and thereby improve the vitality of the office market • Potential delivery of existing permissions if property market can be strengthened • Potential to exploit 'niche' opportunities in the sub-regional economy • Growth in neighbouring areas within the functional market area can grow 'market opportunities' for Maidstone businesses	• Decreasing proportion of the population in the 30-59 age band • Major growth proposals in neighbouring local authority areas • Competition from established locations for 'value added' sectors • Global competition • Dominance of Kings Hill in the regional office market • Competition from neighbouring centres for local business seeking to expand and inward investment opportunities • Proposals for out-of-town retail developments which could threaten Maidstone town centre if poorly planned. • Limited scale market • Use of new Permitted Development Rights to convert commercial premises to residential uses leading to uncertainty and displacement for businesses and loss of employment sites to residential through the planning process.

4 Maidstone's Growth Potential

4.1 Understanding the trajectory of the Maidstone economy, both in terms of the scale and type of economic growth that could occur is an important foundation for the economic development strategy. An informed judgement about the sectors that could grow (and decline) is needed to shape policy and investment decisions by the council and partners.

4.2 At the same time, we must acknowledge the inherent uncertainties when making these judgements. Anticipating external shocks such as the global credit crunch is almost impossible. Moreover, in the context of global and national structural macroeconomic changes, the council is limited in its ability to influence the performance of different sectors. Policy needs to be sufficiently flexible to adapt to the changing demands of the economy and to create the conditions for growth in a range of sectors. These sectors need to provide jobs in a range of different occupations at different skill levels and pay grades for all residents.

Employment Forecasts

4.3 In their report *Economic Sensitivity Testing and Employment Land Forecast*[28]*,* consultants Bilfinger GVA present a number of different forecasts of future employment growth in the Maidstone economy. A 'base' scenario is modelled from econometric forecasts by Experian. This effectively represents a 'business as usual' scenario, projecting forward largely based on historic trends. The base scenario is for employment growth of 7,800 jobs between 2011 and 2031 in Maidstone.

4.4 Building from the base scenario, Bilfinger GVA consider the locally relevant factors that could drive economic growth, considering where the base scenario under- or over-plays the potential for growth in some of Maidstone's existing key sectors. In addition, the consultants assess the potential for growth in new 'opportunity' sectors, reviewing some of the emerging technologies that could drive growth and how applicable they are to Maidstone's economy.

4.5 Based on this analysis, Bilfinger GVA conclude that it is reasonable to anticipate that employment growth will, in certain sectors, grow beyond what 'business as usual' or historic trends would suggest. To quantify the potential uplift, three sensitivity tests are applied. First, comparator areas are identified and their forecasts for sector growth compared with Maidstone. Second, the impact of proposed developments in Maidstone are considered, including KIMS/KMC and the Newnham Court Shopping Village. Third, the key elements of sensitivities 1 and 2 are integrated to arrive at an enhanced growth scenario of 14,400 jobs over the period 2011 to 2031.

4.6 Bilfinger GVA conclude that while there are risks, on balance it is appropriate to plan for growth in line with the enhanced growth scenario to maximise economic potential. The high growth scenario, which has been accepted by the council, will require a proactive approach to promoting economic growth, making land available in attractive locations for business, taking forward the regeneration of Maidstone town centre and implementing other actions outlined in this strategy. Maximising the potential of Kent Institute of Medicine and Surgery (KIMS) and the Kent Medical Campus proposal will be particularly important for achieving the employment forecast.

[28] Bilfinger GVA (2014) 'Economic Sensitivity Testing & Employment Land Forecast for Maidstone Borough Council'

Sectors

4.7 A breakdown by sector of the 14,400 jobs forecast in Maidstone over the next 20 years is provided by Bilfinger GVA in their report. As the forecasts are derived from standard industrial classifications, it is helpful to group some of these activities together for the purposes of strategy and policy making. The commentary below is focused on those sectors, and sub-sectors, with the largest growth potential in Maidstone. It is drawn from analysis by Shared Intelligence in the State of the Economy report and from the Bilfinger GVA report.[29]

Professional and Business Services

4.8 Employment in Maidstone, like the UK, is expected to continue its shift towards service sector-based activities with professional and business services the main engine of growth. While a renaissance in manufacturing has been touted since the financial crisis, it has so far failed to emerge to the extent that pre-recession trends have substantially changed. The professional services sector covers a wide variety of activity, from legal services through to scientific Research and Development (R&D). Growth of over 5200 jobs are forecast in this sector by 2031 making it the largest contributor to future growth in Maidstone. Business services such as architecture, marketing and management consultancies are driven to an extent by growth of the industries they serve. Demand in Maidstone is likely to be largely locally driven from SMEs serving local markets.

4.9 The R&D activities within this sector are of particular interest to Maidstone as they help to raise productivity, broaden the economic base, and offer well paid jobs. Some of the Kent Medical Campus jobs would fall into this category.

4.10 Other sectors expected to grow which fit under the broad category of Professional and Business Services include:

- ***Finance***: While the financial crisis, together with longer-term consolidation of activities within the sector, has meant a decline in employment nationally, Maidstone has seen recent job gains. Longer-term growth in the South East is anticipated and building on the existing strong base, it is reasonable to assume that Maidstone could capture a share of this growth. The sector is forecast to create almost 500 jobs in Maidstone by 2031.

- ***Computing and information services***: Information technologies permeate nearly all sectors of the economy and are a key driver of innovation and productivity gains. The IT services sector continues to evolve with cloud computing and the mobile App industry both recent drivers of growth alongside on-going demand for networking, hosting, and maintenance. As more and more business rely on information technologies to do business, employment will continue to grow. The relatively low start-up costs associated with setting up an online business, or launching a new App mean there are opportunities for micro enterprises and SMEs. The sector is forecast to create 600 jobs in Maidstone by 2031.

- ***Administrative and support services***: These services will continue to grow with the wider economy, as both the private and public sectors continue to outsource more of their administrative and support tasks in order to focus on core business. The sector is of particular interest in terms of the potential for remote working and start-up opportunities. Over 1600 jobs are forecast in Maidstone by 2031.

[29] Bilfinger GVA (2014) 'Economic Sensitivity Testing & Employment Land Forecast for Maidstone Borough Council'

Construction and Real Estate

4.11 Maidstone has a comparatively large construction sector, with some 30% more jobs than the national average. Reflecting the highly cyclical nature of employment, over 1500 jobs in construction were lost during the recession. As the property market recovers, there is good reason to believe employment in construction in Maidstone will recover and expand. The scale of housing growth in Maidstone, nearby parts of Kent and the South East should support long-term growth, as should the development of new employment sites, notably the proposal for the Paramount Theme Park in North Kent.

4.12 Three sectors in the forecast fall under the broad category of construction – civil engineering, construction of buildings, and specialised construction activities. Together, they are forecast to create nearly 800 jobs in Maidstone by 2031. Closely tied to Construction is the Real Estate sector where more than 600 jobs in Maidstone are forecast in activities such as including Real Estate Sales, Managing and Letting.

Health and Social Care

4.13 An ageing population and the rising proportion of national income being spent on health and social care will drive growth of this sector. More people are turning to private healthcare to supplement care provided by the state. An uplift to the base forecast for the health sector in Maidstone has been applied to account for investment taking place in KIMS and the Kent Medical Campus proposal. These developments will create highly skilled, well-paid jobs that will boost productivity and income in Maidstone. It is therefore important to support the development of KIMS and Kent Medical Campus to ensure that the opportunities it will bring to attract further inward investment are capitalised upon.

4.14 Over 1500 additional jobs are forecast in Maidstone in the health sector by 2031. Another 1500 jobs are forecast in Maidstone in Residential and Social Care. These sectors offer the potential to create jobs in a range of occupations and a variety of skill levels.

Manufacturing

4.15 The manufacturing sector has performed relatively strongly in Maidstone since 2009 - particularly in the rural areas, such as Marden and north of Maidstone. Maidstone has some locally significant and growing businesses in transport equipment manufacturing. Nurturing this sector and supporting manufacturing industries to continue to grow in the future will be important. Securing the future of our existing businesses is the best way of achieving economic growth rather than relying on new inward investment opportunities.

Creative and Media

4.16 The creative industries are increasingly recognised as one of the UK's competitive strengths in the global economy. There were over 2700 jobs in the broad creative industries sector in Maidstone in 2012, representing 3.8% of employment, which is above the Kent average (3.1%) but below the national average (4.3%).

4.17 Within this broad sector, Maidstone has a specialism in Media and Broadcasting in the form of Maidstone Studios, and also has close ties with the University of the Creative Arts. While London dominates the media industry, Maidstone Studios is a key asset locally that should be supported. New technologies including new online platforms are creating opportunities for entrepreneurs to enter the sector. While the quantum of forecast employment growth in media is modest (+80 jobs) by 2031, they are potentially high value jobs, and the figure should be seen as a minimum within the context of more significant growth of the wider creative sector.

Retail and Leisure

4.18 The retail sector continues to change significantly with the growth of online retail, the popularity of larger shopping malls and the recent decline in disposable income. High streets are being forced to reinvent themselves to survive in this highly competitive environment. Investment in Maidstone town centre is needed if it is to continue to be a popular retail and leisure destination. Population growth and growing consumer confidence should provide a much needed injection of demand and footfall in the short-medium term. The retail sector is forecast to create 600 jobs by 2031.

4.19 In terms of leisure, long-term growth in income has driven demand for recreation activities, tempered recently by the fall in real incomes following the recession. With the right offer, Maidstone has the potential to attract growth in the sector, drawing spend from relatively wealthy surrounding areas. The recreation sector is forecast to create 260 jobs in Maidstone.

Education

4.20 Nationally, the education sector is expanding, driven largely by population growth which is resulting in the need for more schools places, and in turn more teachers, teaching assistants, secretarial and consultancy support. Demand for further and higher education is also growing, with the latter one of the UK's most important exports in the form of international students. Population growth in Maidstone will mean at least two new primary schools within the town. There are also opportunities for expansion of higher education, linked to the media sector and health sectors. The education sector is forecast to create 1500 jobs in Maidstone by 2031.

Logistics and Distribution

4.21 The logistics and distribution sector has seen significant growth over the past decade proving to be resilient in the recession. Future growth in this sector is forecast to be strong. More and more goods are being transported across the country from business to business and business to consumer. In this sense, the logistics sector is an important enabling sector for the rest of the economy. The sector offers a range of employment opportunities at different occupational and skill levels. The industry is growing in terms of size and sophistication; Skills for Logistics – the sector skills agency forecasts the need for more than 900,000 workers over the next decade nationally, increasingly at managerial levels and also at machine operative and administrative levels.

4.22 Locations with good accessibility to ports, airports and freight hubs have been the main focus for operators and developers. Maidstone's location on the M20 means it fits many of these criteria and demand is expected to be strong along motorway junction locations. Nearly 700 more jobs are forecast in land transport and storage and a further 300 jobs in the wholesale sector in Maidstone by 2031.

The Visitor Economy

4.23 Tourism is an important sector in Maidstone; visitors come to the area for a variety of different reasons, both for leisure and business visits and from a variety of places, bringing an injection of expenditure which helps to raise income and employment both directly and through multiplier effects. Nationally, the tourism sector continues to expand; according to ONS figures 2013 was a record year for overseas visitor numbers to Maidstone with a large increase in the number of Chinese visitors.

4.24 Leeds Castle is the most high profile of Maidstone's tourist attractions with over 500,000 visitors per annum. Other key attractions include Kent Showground, Maidstone Museum & Bentlif Art Gallery, one of the most important regional museums in the South East, Kent Life – an open air visitor attraction about Kent's rural heritage, and the Hazlitt Theatre.

4.25 Many people visit Maidstone to enjoy its attractive rural villages and Kentish countryside. Parts of the borough are within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). People visit to go walking, cycling, horse riding or to sample the local Kentish produce. The town centre attracts people during the day for the retail and leisure offer, as well as for the parks and riverside walks. In the evening, Maidstone's bars and club are popular with young people and contribute to an important evening economy. Maidstone town centre has also seen a growing restaurant, café and coffee shop offer from national chains and independents, many of which are clustered around Earl Street.

4.26 The parks and open spaces in Maidstone, especially Mote Park and Whatman Park, mean it is well placed to host major events and festivals, and has a track record of doing so. Large scale events at the Kent Showground, Leeds Castle, Brands Hatch, the Hop Farm and in the venues of the Medway towns, bring large numbers of staying visitors to Maidstone. Maidstone is also a popular location for conferences, with a number of different venues across the borough which are promoted by Kent Conference Bureau (KCB), a public/private sector run marketing consortium promoting Kent as a conference and event destination, that was originally established in Maidstone.

4.27 Analysis of the visitor economy in Maidstone has been undertaken using the industry-standard Cambridge model. The most recent assessment based on 2013 data found:

- *Spend* - around £186.8 million was spent on trips to Maidstone in 2013 by overnight and day visitors, down by 0.2% compared to 2011. It is estimated that a further £59 million was added through multiplier effects. Drawing together direct business turnover, supplier and income induced expenditure, and related expenditure, the total value of tourism activity is estimated to have been around £251.6million – an increase of 4% compared to 2011.
- *Trips* – an estimated 3.7 million tourism day trips were made to Maidstone in 2013, up 1% compared to 2011. In addition, around 367,000 overnight tourism trips were made.
- *Origin of spend and trips* – domestic visitors made up 80% of overnight trips (291,000) and overseas visitors made 20% of trips (66,000). By comparison, 21% of expenditure was made by domestic staying visitors; 14% by overseas staying visitors and 65% by day visitors.
- *Jobs* – an estimated 3,762 full-time equivalent jobs were created by the sector, or 5,190 including seasonal and part-time workers - around 8% of total employment.

4.28 The fundamental challenge for Maidstone is to capture a greater share of South East tourism and build on the borough's heritage, urban and rural strengths. Destinations that are well managed are more likely to excel in attracting new investment, talented workers and ultimately more visitors. The council has commissioned a Destination Management Plan - a shared statement of intent between public and private partners to manage, develop and promote Maidstone as a tourist destination with a publication date of July 2015.

4.29 Aligned to this work will be the production of a Cultural Strategy which will provide a shared direction and actions around the following themes:

- Cultural Heritage – understanding and interpreting Maidstone's past in order to shape its future
- Cultural Assets - maintenance, usage and development
- Festivals and Events – overview and opportunities for enhancement
- Supporting and Developing Maidstone's Creative Economy – artists, cultural organisations
- Creative Industries – fulfilling the growth potential
- Building Social Capital, Health and Wellbeing through Culture – encouraging and developing cultural participation
- Cultural Place Making: Maidstone town / rural areas; connectivity; twilight economy; future opportunities; identity.

The Rural Economy

4.30 A large part of the borough has a vibrant rural economy that also offers opportunities for growth, with its diverse range of industries including the land-based sector, such as farming and horticulture, rural tourism-based businesses and others in sectors including construction, manufacturing and distribution.

4.31 Many of the priorities identified in this strategy - retaining and attracting investment, stimulating enterprise, meeting the skills needs of employers and investing in infrastructure - apply as much to rural areas as they do to the urban economy. However, growth in rural areas needs to be planned sensitively and sustainably in order to retain the appeal of the countryside as a place to live, visit and do business. We recognise that there are some specific opportunities and challenges facing the rural economy and we will work with local communities, businesses and parishes to develop initiatives around the priorities in this Strategy .

Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry

Agriculture and food manufacturing is an important part of the national economy recognised in the national Agri-Tech Strategy, not least for its role in feeding the rapidly expanding global population. The strategy puts considerable emphasis on research and development, innovation and skills that will be needed to raise productivity and support sustainable intensification of agriculture. More locally Kent has a proud history of producing some of the finest produce in England, which is promoted under the brand 'Produced in Kent'.

The Agri-tech sector has some potential for the Borough as identified by GVA in the Economic Sensitivity Testing report. There is still a significant land based sector in the Borough. Opportunities for businesses could present themselves in the form of adoption and development of new techniques and as a test centre. Hadlow College and East Malling Research Centres in neighbouring Boroughs could enable private sector/research collaborations and technology transfer. East Malling has recently benefited from Government funding through the Agri-tech Catalyst to established centres of agricultural innovation.

4.32 The land based sector shares many of the issues other industry sectors have including skills shortages, planning, access to markets, business support and broadband connectivity. Other issues are more specific around the way agriculture is funded and the countryside stewardship role they perform. The industry is represented on The Maidstone Economic Business Partnership and work is under way to identify how the Borough Council can add value and support the sector. Discussions are ongoing with farmers and the National Farmers Union (NFU). We need to continue to promote the development and diversification of agriculture and other land-based rural businesses in Maidstone and the growth opportunities that are emerging in this sector. The expansion of the Leader Rural Development Programme to all of rural Maidstone will provide grant finance to support diversification.

Home-working and home-based businesses

4.33 More businesses than ever are being started from home in home offices, studios or workshops, as technology has enabled entrepreneurs to reach a wide marketplace via the internet from anywhere in the world. Research by KCC suggests that Maidstone has one of the highest concentrations of home-based businesses in Kent.

4.34 The quality of life on offer in Maidstone is one of its key competitive advantages and attracts a talented pool of people to the area to live and work. In the modern economy, greater flexibility of working conditions means that an increasing number of people are able to work from home. This offers an opportunity for Maidstone to attract more people looking for a better work-life balance by setting up a home-based business or working from home. To support this growth, planning policies need to be sufficiently flexible to allow home working, and to permit workspace such as live-work units, to be built. Fast, reliable, telecommunications infrastructure is also a prerequisite for many home workers and home-based businesses.

ICT infrastructure

4.35 High-speed broadband is increasingly recognised as the 'fourth utility', being as important as gas, electricity and water to homes and businesses alike. Broadband and mobile telecommunications coverage in rural areas can be patchy and act as a barrier to businesses needing high bandwidth. "Making Kent Quicker" is a county-wide Kent County Council programme with BT and the government's broadband agency, Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), to bring better broadband to Kent. By the end of 2015, at least 95% of all properties in Kent will have access to higher-speed fibre-based broadband infrastructure and every property in the project area will be able to access a broadband service of at least 2Mbps. A minimum of 91% of premises will get superfast broadband of at least 24Mbps. We need to continue to support efforts to extend the reach of high speed broadband in Maidstone's rural areas enabling more people to receive 24Mbps or higher.

Tourism-related businesses

4.36 The beautiful natural landscape of Maidstone's rural areas and its array of visitor attractions, such as Leeds Castle, offer potential for rural tourism-related business growth. The Destination Management Plan will be the vehicle through which the specific opportunities presented by Maidstone's rural offer will be developed.

5 Strategy for Growth

What Makes a Successful Local Economy?

5.1 There is a long history of academic thinking in economic geography, regional economics and urban studies that has attempted to explain why some local economies perform better than others, and to identify the key success factors. The concept of 'agglomeration economies' has been popular in recent discourse and has informed latest government policy with respect to local economic growth.[30] Agglomeration theory suggests that concentrations of economic activity generate economic benefits for businesses located within them, including easier access to skilled labour, specialist inputs and suppliers, and the creation of knowledge spillovers. Agglomeration benefits are believed to raise productivity, income and living standards.

5.2 The concept of 'resilience' has also gained traction within the field following the recession. The Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), and the Institute of Public Policy[31] (IPPR) have both emphasised the importance of local economies being able to adapt both to shocks and to long-term changes. The concept of resilience is tied to a broader debate about what constitutes 'good growth', placing greater emphasis on the importance of environmental sustainability, responsible business practices, engagement and accountability and a responsive public sector.

5.3 Some common threads emerge from these different theories. Successful towns and cities tend to be those that are competitive, productive and innovative. They have the ability to continually upgrade their business environment, skills base, and physical, social and cultural infrastructures, to attract the most profitable firms and the most talented people. Success factors include:

- **Innovation, creativity and enterprise** - entrepreneurial activity and the exploitation of new ideas through innovation are important drivers of economic growth. How easily new ideas are diffused between firms and sectors in a locality will influence their take-up and ultimately how productive the local economy will be.

- **Risk investment and capital** - investment and capital is required for businesses to develop new innovations and for investment in the place. Therefore, the ability of a place to attract this will influence its performance.

- **High quality labour** - the availability of human capital to turn ideas into new innovations worth funding with venture capital is important for achieving successful knowledge driven economies.

- **Exports** – successful local economies tend to be those that export goods and services beyond their immediate boundaries serving wider markets.

- **Connectivity** - having efficient transport, electronic telecommunications and business networks are critically important to how the economy of a place functions and good systems are needed to support successful economies.

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[30] BIS Economics Paper No.7 (2012) "Understanding Local Growth"
[31] IPPR (2014) "Building Economic Resilience".

- **Quality of life** - this is hard to define objectively and can relate to the social, environmental and place factors. Evidence suggests that a good quality of life is an indirect rather than a direct driver of urban economic competitiveness, but it is nevertheless important for attracting new investment**.**

- **Decision making** – strategic decision making by urban authorities is a key driver of competitiveness when effective governance arrangements are in place.

5.4 Maidstone has many features of a successful economy. Our aim is to build on these strengths through this economic development strategy to ensure that a sufficient diverse range of jobs are available to our residents now and for future generations with the benefits of growth and prosperity shared by all.

5.5 Towards a more successful economy

5.6 Turning our economic vision into a reality for Maidstone and achieving our growth ambitions, requires a clear strategy and set of actions to deliver the strategic objectives and create the right conditions for economic growth. We will achieve this through focusing on the following five priorities and the actions required to deliver them.

A. Retaining and Attracting Investment

B. Stimulating Entrepreneurship

C. Enhancing Maidstone Town Centre

D. Meeting the Skills Needs

E. Improving the Infrastructure

5.7 This strategy needs to be taken forward by all partners involved in delivering the economic agenda in Maidstone. This includes the borough and county councils, agencies such as Job Centre Plus, the schools, colleges and universities and, most importantly, the business community. It is our businesses that will ultimately deliver economic growth and it is our role to support them by creating the right conditions for them to flourish.

5.8 The business community in Maidstone is developing a strong voice through the Maidstone Economic Business Partnership (MEBP). This is an industry led business partnership facilitated by Maidstone Borough Council. There is a clear desire from MEBP members to make things happen and demonstrate that Maidstone is "open for business". The potential for Maidstone to benefit from the recent upturn in the economy is clearly recognised by businesses who are advocating that Maidstone Borough Council takes an active role in promoting economic growth.

A.Retaining and Attracting Investment

5.9 **We will support existing businesses to develop and grow and also work to attract new employers to the borough, creating job opportunities for all residents in a range of sectors,** with special regard to those that are high growth, growing the economy through exports, and in the knowledge economy. The work set out in Section 4 Maidstone's Growth Potential regarding the Visitor Economy, Destination Management Plan and Cultural Strategy will be important factors in achieving this priority.

5.10 Global competition and competition from neighbouring towns will increase in the years to come. Ashford Borough Council and the local authorities in Thames Gateway Kent have put forward ambitious growth plans, with many new homes and jobs planned. We need to continue to invest in infrastructure, skills and business support in Maidstone to provide an attractive offer to new and existing businesses.

5.11 An important part of this is ensuring that the planning framework enables a pipeline of quality office, industrial and warehousing accommodation to come forward in locations that are attractive to modern business. This includes sites in Maidstone town centre, on the edge of town adjacent to the motorway and in rural service centres. (See Section 6 Locations for Growth).

Business Retention

5.12 The growth Maidstone has seen over recent years has been largely due to the expansion of existing businesses, rather than new inward investment from outside of Kent. Supporting existing local businesses to grow is therefore critical for delivering the job growth we want for the future.

5.13 There is a need to support existing businesses through working with partners and other agencies with funding to support their growth. Through the European Structural Investment Funds Programme, the South East Local Enterprise Partnership has allocated resource to the government's Growth Accelerator programme (now part of the national Business Growth Service) to enable greater provision of this service across the area. It is important that partners work together across the borough to ensure that the potential of both of these programmes achieves maximum impact.

5.14 As the recovery of the national economy continues to gather momentum, business sentiment in Maidstone is also improving. Around half of the 59 businesses responding to a recent the Maidstone Borough Council survey[32] said they were planning to take on more staff in the next 12 months and nearly three quarters were either ‘very confident’ or ‘somewhat confident’ about the prospects for growth in turnover over the next five years. This view was echoed at the first MEBP workshop (23rd May 2014) and is reflected in the Federation of Small Business' own survey of business sentiment undertaken on a six- monthly basis. We need to work with businesses to encourage them to invest and grow in Maidstone.

5.15 A key reason for overall employment decline in Maidstone over recent years has been the predominance of the public sector which has seen significant job losses during this period of austerity and public spending cuts. Our strategy therefore needs to focus on encouraging growth in private sector businesses to help diversify the local economy away from too much reliance on the public sector.

5.16 Recent commuting patterns suggest that Maidstone has become less important over the last decade as a place of work for its residents, moving from being a marginal importer of labour in 2001 to being a net exporter in 2011. In 2011, approximately 1,240 more people were commuting out of the borough to work than commuting in and the percentage of Maidstone residents working and living in the borough fell from 60% in 2001 to 50% in 2011.

[32] Maidstone Borough Council (April 2014) 'Business Survey'

5.17 Maximising the productive contribution of our residents for the benefit of the Maidstone economy may mean that additional employment land needs to be identified so that more jobs can be created for the growing working age population, if net out-commuting is to be reversed and potential business rate income in the borough is to be maximised.

5.18 Businesses which are identified with potential to grow will be targeted to receive support through the Government's Business Growth Service to help ensure that they deliver the level of job growth forecast.

5.19 There is still under-representation of knowledge-based industries in the Maidstone economy despite improvements over recent years. This is reflected in the relatively low proportion of residents with high level qualifications and a reason why more working residents in higher paid occupations commute out of the borough to work elsewhere. Attracting more knowledge-based businesses and supporting our existing ones to grow is therefore important for the future.

5.20 Our pool of residents in managerial and professional occupations, high levels of educational achievement, good strategic transport links and high quality environment are all key assets of the local economy. They provide the foundation to attract more knowledge-based businesses to Maidstone in the future.

5.21 As well as having some specific sector specialisms with potential for job growth in Maidstone in the future, we also have a broad economic base. This diversity together with its economic assets make Maidstone attractive to many other sectors as well. To ensure that opportunities unforeseen at the moment can be capitalised upon, we need to ensure that employment land allocations are sufficiently flexible so that these potential opportunities are not lost to competing places in the future.

Inward Investment

5.22 Maidstone is an attractive business location; a recent business survey[33] found that the most appealing features are its strategic location, the high quality of life, the transport infrastructure (good access to the motorway network) and a committed workforce.

5.23 This view of Maidstone as a good business location is also supported by a recent Locate in Kent survey of 314 key business figures in the South East. This indicates that knowledge of Maidstone as a business location is relatively high - Maidstone and Ashford together were the places that most respondents had a great deal or a fair amount of information about. More now cite Maidstone and Ashford as the most favourable business location in Kent compared to a similar survey in 2010. The only other place viewed more favourably as a business location in Kent was Thames Gateway Kent. In terms of a specific preferred location, Maidstone was the second most favoured place in Kent to Ashford, although this was a reversal of the position in 2010 when Maidstone was the most favoured business location.

5.24 This is another indicator that Maidstone stands at a crossroads, with signs that neighbouring places, such as Ashford and Medway, are starting to gain greater economic growth momentum than Maidstone. Both of these towns have considerably better High Speed rail links to the capital and

[33] Maidstone Borough Council, Business Survey, April 2014

ambitious growth plans. If Maidstone doesn't act quickly to regain ground that it has lost, it risks being left behind. Positive action is needed now to alter this trajectory.

5.25 Anecdotal evidence suggests that most inward investment to Maidstone over recent years has generally been from businesses moving within the Kent area, rather than from further afield. We therefore need to do more to promote the benefits of locating in Maidstone to a wider business audience, particularly businesses that would benefit from close proximity to the national motorway network.

Retaining and Attracting Investment - Actions

A1. Implement the Council's new Business Customer Relationship Management system. The information held on each business enables relevant targeted information to be sent to them on subjects such as available finance, export support, innovation initiatives etc. The objective is to hold a single business database of all registered businesses in the Borough, available corporately within MBC but also with our external partners. Local businesses will be targeted to receive support that enables them to grow. This will be done in partnership with others such as Manufacturing Advisory Services (now part of the national Business Growth Service), UKTI, Kent International Business etc..

A2. Work with Kent Medical Campus to ensure that the investment goes ahead, including investigating using direct council intervention (powers/Investment) if necessary.

A3. Ensure that employment land allocated through the planning system is suitable for the needs of new and expanding employers and that planning policies are flexible enough to achieve the right balance between realising potential growth opportunities and not sacrificing the environment which is in itself an asset.

A4. Deliver and support business events focused on supporting existing business competitiveness and driving business growth.

A5. Effectively engage with employers to raise awareness of available programmes and support to increase take up and participation to improve business competitiveness. Consider the use of the Business Rates Pool to target certain businesses with rates relief as an incentive to invest and grow.

A6. Investigate a new master plan for employment at Eclipse Business Park (Junction 7 M20).

A7. Commission and deliver a Destination Management Plan.

A8. Commission and deliver a Cultural Strategy.

A9 Through discussions with the land based sector, identify and deliver actions to support investment, diversification, skills development, and the take up of technological advancements.

B. Stimulating Entrepreneurship

We will create a more entrepreneurial and innovative economy, supporting new business start-ups and those with high growth potential to move up the value chain.

5.26 Maidstone is an entrepreneurial place; the economy is dominated by small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and there are a large number of businesses per head of population and a high self employment rate.

5.27 A key priority for the future is to continue to diversify the Maidstone economy away from over reliance on the public sector by encouraging new private sector businesses to start up and to support the existing ones to grow. New businesses are also important vehicles for driving forward innovation within an economy and there is a close association between companies that are innovative and those that are high growth. This innovation can happen across all sectors and the key to nurturing this is being able to identify companies looking to innovate and engage with them to determine what support is needed to help them realise their growth potential.

5.28 Maidstone Borough Council has been providing business start-up support through Kent Invicta Chamber. There has been a good level of take-up for these services with Kent Invicta Chamber reporting higher than expected demand across a broad range of sectors. In 2012-13 there was a 20% increase in take up and interest in the “Starting in business” workshops and 1-1 advice sessions. There was also an increasing number of referrals from Job Centre Plus, with 351 clients referred in the 12 months to March 2014 through the Enterprise Club. This was in addition to clients referred to private sector providers of the Work Programme.

5.29 As a response to this demand, Maidstone has strengthened its business support Service Level Agreement with the Chamber to increase delivery capacity and it has also sponsored an enhanced delivery programme for 2013-14 with grant funding from Kent County Council (KCC). This includes more start-up workshops, one-to-one advice, sector specific business planning workshops and private sector engagement by creating local business networks. Through this enhanced programme, support will be provided for around 800 individuals.

5.30 According to research undertaken by KCC in 2010, Maidstone has one of the highest concentrations of home-based businesses in Kent[34] and these are located in both the urban and rural parts of the borough. Many of these businesses reportedly suffer from isolation, a lack of networking opportunities, professional services and meeting rooms. All of these factors conspire to stifle growth and survival.

5.31 Supporting these businesses to grow, as well as encouraging more residents who are perhaps currently commuting out of the borough to work in London to consider setting up their own businesses locally, offers potential for the future. Not only would it maximise the economic contributions of these residents, it would also build on one of Maidstone’s strengths - the work-life balance on offer, to attract high skilled and high earning entrepreneurs, or home workers to the area.

5.32 Encouraging new business start-ups will require the necessary infrastructure to be put in place to support their growth. The council has embarked on a major new initiative to deliver and operate an

[34] Live/Work Network (December 2010) 'Understanding Kent’s Home-Based Business Sector'

affordable business workspace which will be called "The Business Terrace" to provide a highly supportive environment for new start-ups and existing micro businesses to grow. A range of supportive initiatives are proposed, including flexible time-based and virtual memberships, peer-to-peer business support, and high quality, bespoke mentoring, events, seminars and workshops. This is an important priority for the council to encourage new business creation and investment in Maidstone.

5.33 Ensuring that high speed broadband infrastructure is in place across the borough is also critical for encouraging growth of home-working and new business start-ups. This will be particularly important in rural areas where these types of businesses will not threaten the high quality of the environment, whilst offering real potential for economic growth in some of the most isolated parts of the borough.

5.34 In recognising the potential that new business start-ups can bring to our local economy, there is also a need to ensure a consistency with other policies adopted by the Council, such as flexible planning policies which permit the use of residential properties for home-working.

B. Stimulating Entrepreneurship - Actions

B1. Deliver a new, business start-up programme for the Borough,

B2. Deliver a pilot Enterprise Hub called "The Business Terrace" for Maidstone.

B3. Work with Kent County Council to ensure the roll out of high speed broadband across rural communities.

B4. Investigate and deliver specific actions that the Council could undertake to support the creation of small businesses in rural areas.

C. Enhancing Maidstone Town Centre

We will promote the regeneration of Maidstone town centre as a high quality retail and leisure destination, and as a place to live and work.

5.35 The town centre is very important to the borough as both a means of attracting expenditure and as a source of employment. Some two thirds of all jobs in the borough are in the town centre itself and even more (71%) of the service sector jobs are there. The town centre is also an important asset as a retail and leisure destination serving a wide catchment area.

Importance of Office Jobs

5.36 The predominance of the service sector in Maidstone town centre is reflected in its importance as the main location for office accommodation in the borough. Over recent years there has been significant growth of an edge of town office market with the development of schemes such as Eclipse Park at Junction 7 of the M20, and out of town schemes such as Kings Hill in the neighbouring district of Tonbridge and Malling.

5.37 One of the key challenges facing Maidstone is addressing the diminishing stock of quality office space in the town centre and the increase in secondary poor quality offices that do not meet the needs of modern employers. Vacancy rates in this secondary stock have risen substantially, and much of the office space currently available in the borough is in the town centre[35].

5.38 The relatively large amount of vacant ageing low quality office stock is depressing the buoyancy of the overall town centre office market and the large number of 'For Let' signs has a negative effect on perceptions of the town centre. However, where office accommodation is of high quality, demand is relatively strong, particularly for smaller office units.

5.39 A number of conversions from offices to residential are already underway in the town centre following the government's introduction of Permitted Development Rights (PDR). Some conversions under PDR or otherwise, will be advantageous in helping to manage down the excess supply of secondary stock, potentially raising values and rejuvenating the market for high quality office development in the future. However it is also desirable to retain the better quality office space to maintain the town centre's status as a key employment location for office occupiers. It will be important to ensure that this conversion is monitored and that where possible planning policies are put in place to try to achieve the right balance.

Retail and Leisure Destination

5.40 As a retail location Maidstone has recently slipped down the national hierarchy of retail centres.[36] Nevertheless, the town performs relatively well and successfully competes with nearby Ashford, Chatham and Dartford.[37] National trends in retailing include:

•The reduction in multiple retailer representation across the UK, with a focus by brands on a smaller number of larger locations. Tied into this is the growth of internet shopping.
•The increased importance of restaurants/ eateries and leisure uses in terms of anchoring town centres and major new shopping centres.
•Changing store formats such as the growth in "pop up" stores.
•The importance of providing a high quality of experience (through the quality of the retail and leisure offer through to the quality of environment and accessibility) to shoppers in order to attract and retain their custom.
•The importance of achieving an appropriate balance between independent and multiple retailers.

5.41 The impact of these trends on Maidstone Town Centre needs to be properly understood and action taken to ensure its vitality and viability.

5.42 Maidstone has good multiple retail representation, particularly in the prime retail areas of Fremlin Walk, where the House of Fraser department store provides a high quality anchor. This is complemented by a strong independent offer and an outdoor market.

5.43 However, The Mall lacks a high quality anchor[38] and there is a sense that the town centre could offer a lot more from a retail perspective. There is a notable lack of large, modern and well-located shop units to attract those major 'anchor' retailers not currently represented in Maidstone town centre, such as Debenhams and John Lewis. Considerable expenditure is lost to Bluewater, particularly from the more affluent residents who tend to shop there.

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[35] Bilfinger GVA (August 2014) 'Qualitative Employment Site Assessment, Maidstone Borough Council', Draft Final Report
[36] 2013 Venuescore Ranking Index
[37] DTZ (August 2013) 'Maidstone Town Centre Assessment'
[38] DTZ (August 2013) 'Maidstone Town Centre Assessment', p.47

5.44 Maidstone town centre also has many positives as a leisure and cultural destination, with restaurants, the museum, the Hazlitt theatre, a cinema and nightlife for young people. However, feedback from consultations with Councillors and businesses suggests there is a need to encourage more cultural and leisure activities to attract greater numbers of people into town. Suggestions made to improve the town centre at a recent workshop included:

- attracting higher quality retailers and another department store;
- making more of the historic buildings and the river;
- creating a stronger sense of identity and a 'brand' to distinguish Maidstone from other places;
- managing down the stock of redundant office space in the town centre; and
- investing in transport infrastructure and improving access by public transport.

5.45 Ensuring the vitality and viability of Maidstone town centre has been and continues to be a key priority for the Council's economic development activities. The council is responsible for many of the major improvements to the town centre over the last 15 years. This includes using its compulsory purchase order powers to bring about the £100 million redevelopment of the former brewery site to create Fremlin Walk - the 350,000 sq ft retail centre in the heart of the town centre. The council's focus on good design and the integration of old and new, resulted in a Gold Award in the British Council of Shopping Centres Awards in 2005.

5.46 A programme of improvement schemes to upgrade the town centre environment has commenced. Starting with High Street, Bank Street, Middle Row and parts of King Street, some £4 million has been spent transforming the area with high quality granite stone, seating, lighting and planting. New open spaces have been created to hold events to attract and retain shoppers and visitors, and encourage people to stay longer in the town centre. Mott Macdonald has been commissioned to evaluate the economic impact of the public realm works including impact on shop vacancies, job creation, visitor perception, consumer expenditure and property prices. In November 2014 the scheme was Highly Commended in the Kent Design and Development Awards.

5.47 The council is currently considering a further phase of public realm improvements which includes proposals for Gabriel's Hill, Earl Street and the north end of Week Street. Public consultation has taken place on draft designs for all three areas.

5.48 The council established a Town Team in partnership with Town Centre Management to capture the enthusiasm and commitment from businesses, residents, voluntary and community organisations, and faith based groups to reinvigorate the town centre. This followed the Mary Portas Review of High Streets. Sub groups focus on projects under the headings of regeneration, marketing and events. Partners work together to ensure the town centre is safe, clean and attractive to shoppers and visitors, which reflects the Town's Purple Flag award. The structure and activities of the Town Team were recently commended by a Peer Review of the council.

5.49 The council has also been working with the owners of The Mall shopping centre, Capital and Regional, over the past 18 months to encourage both short and long term investment. These discussions have culminated in an initial £4 million refurbishment starting in 2015. Phased redevelopment and expansion of The Mall will include more retail and leisure uses with investment estimated at £100 million.

5.50 The council has also been working with Solum Regeneration (a joint venture between Network Rail and Kier Group) to bring about the comprehensive redevelopment of Maidstone East Station and the adjacent Royal Mail Sorting Office. This important gateway into Maidstone town centre suffers from partial dereliction and poor quality buildings. Discussions have been taking place over 18 months, covering issues of land assembly, land uses, design, public realm and town centre connectivity.

5.51 These two sites present a major opportunity to strengthen the town centre retail offer at the north end of Week Street, improve the railway station and connectivity with the town centre and create a better setting around Kent County Council's Sessions House and County Hall. Both The Mall and Maidstone East Station are identified in the Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation Draft for future retail uses.

5.52 A planning application by Land Securities for an out of town retail scheme at Newnham Court was recently rejected on the grounds that it would prejudice the council's preferred strategy (as set out in the draft Local Plan) for the delivery of new comparison and convenience goods floor space on the sequentially preferable sites of Maidstone East/former Royal Mail site and the Mall within the town centre. The council's retail advisors DTZ also considered that the Land Securities proposal "would have a serious adverse impact on existing and planned investment in the town centre; which would be severe enough to preclude any significant new town centre retail development for many years."

5.53 The council supports the redevelopment and expansion of Newnham Court Shopping Village but with a focus on complementary rather than competing High Street uses as set out in paragraph 7.8 of the draft Local Plan regulation 18 consultation. Retail employment is sought after by many residents in Maidstone and a range of jobs and skills are needed to ensure prosperity for all. Retail employment offers progression in to higher paid occupations in the sector and enables employees to develop transferable customer service skills.

5.54 We want to attract new retail investment to Maidstone in the future and there is a need to capitalise on the opportunities that are now presenting themselves to improve the town centre. The council needs to work closely with developers and investors to ensure that the impact of new schemes is maximised in terms of the retail, leisure, employment and housing opportunities they can bring to Maidstone town centre.

C. Enhancing Maidstone Town Centre - Actions

C1. To develop a vision for the town centre and translate this into a spatial land use plan "masterplan" for the future development of the town, with a programme of activity to deliver short, medium and long term actions.

C2. Consider current office accommodation uses in the town centre and determine how best to ensure the development of fit for purpose prime office space for business.

C3. Consider how the public sector can work together to help stimulate the development of new office accommodation and further investment in Maidstone town centre

D. Meeting the Skills Needs

By working closely with our partners we will ensure that residents are equipped with the skills for work and that skills needs of business are being met. We will encourage better

careers advice in schools and promote apprenticeships and work experience placements in the Council and with businesses.

We will support the expansion of the Higher Education sector to increase the number of graduates in the workforce, supporting initiatives such as KIMS and Kent Medical Campus initiative, as well as the UCA expansion at Maidstone Studios.

5.55 Ensuring that businesses have the skilled workforce they need to grow and that residents have the skills to take advantage of new job opportunities will be a key to future economic success. Maidstone fares well in terms of overall educational attainment at level 2 and level 3 and has many high quality schools in the borough. There is a wide range of academic pathways at level 3 and a high proportion of young people go on to higher education.

5.56 Work is ongoing to improve pupils understanding of the career opportunities available to them, the skills required by employers and the different pathways they could take to meet their aspirations. Ofsted's report 'Going in the right direction?', published in September 2013, found that the majority of schools across the country needed to do more to ensure that all of their pupils had information on the full range of training and education options and career pathways to help them make informed choices about their future so that they could reach their potential. Encouraging employer engagement with schools, such as initiatives like "Inspiring the Future," which links business people and schools together to give career insight talks to young people, and arranging work experience which highlight employability skills is a key action in this Strategy.

Further Education

5.57 Maidstone is well served by the Further Education sector with Mid Kent College having a strong offer and close links with businesses and private sector training provision. However, the provision of apprenticeships and skills training for school leavers that do not want to go to college is limited, with no private sector training providers providing work-related and apprenticeship training in sectors such as construction; one of the sectors forecast for employment growth.

5.58 Mid Kent College is the main further education provider in Maidstone, and has just completed a multi-million refurbishment of its Oakwood Campus. The college is currently expanding its provision on the former UCA campus and received funding for 2015/16 from round 4 of the Skills Funding Agency's College Capital Investment Fund. It is proposing to transform and equip these buildings into state of the art facilities for a higher skills centre where it will offer HE courses, including foundation degrees and Higher National Diplomas in subjects ranging from Business and Engineering to Health and Social Care. Business incubation units will also be part of the scheme, serving to encourage students to establish new businesses and also to attract smaller employers that could benefit from closer collaboration with the college.

5.59 Mid Kent College is working closely with both the business community and with Maidstone Borough Council through the College's Advisory Committee, and other channels, to ensure that its skills and training provision is meeting the needs of local employers. Maidstone Borough Council activity encourages expanding and new businesses to consider working with the College to offer Traineeships, Apprenticeships and work experience placements. The Council participates and encourages other businesses to undertake Work Ready Interviews with students to help develop their employability skills. Businesses are also encouraged to validate course curriculum. During the course of the refurbishment at the Oakwood Campus, the council agreed to temporarily house the college's skills unit so that an even closer working relationship can be forged, with both parties learning from each other.

Meeting Employer Skills Needs

5.60 A number of sectors are reportedly facing skills challenges in Maidstone at present and some companies are adapting their recruitment policies to address this situation. Examples of these include:

- An accountancy firm that has recently shifted its recruitment focus towards workers in London seeking a lifestyle change and to school leavers who are offered training to become qualified accountants on the job.
- An aerospace engineering company has a higher proportion of staff approaching retirement age and are anticipating problems filling the positions. Although apprentices are being trained, this takes time to get them to the required skills level.
- A manufacturing company claims only to have a small pool of engineers to recruit from locally and that they would like to see more done to promote the sector in Maidstone.
- Two solicitor firms need to recruit to respond to the upturn in the market but are having difficulties.
- A logistics company is looking to recruit 40 drivers but is struggling to recruit even six.
- A care provider is facing difficulties recruiting owing to only being able to offer low wages due to government cuts and lack of funding.

5.61 While there is considerable work going on to achieve closer links between Mid Kent College and local employers, links between the public sector, training providers and local businesses could be better. The introduction of the Maidstone Economic Business Partnership is a step in the right direction. However, if employment recruitment shortages and the future skills needs of businesses are to be addressed, more needs to be done to better understand the skills and training needs of employers across the borough and to encourage greater numbers of businesses to take on apprenticeships.

Higher Education

5.62 To be successful in attracting higher value jobs in growth sectors in the future, the workforce needs to be suitably qualified. The evidence shows that while the qualification profile of Maidstone's population has improved over recent years, with more people now qualified at level 4 and above, this is still below the national average and there has been greater improvement elsewhere in Kent.

5.63 Attainment at level 2 and level 3 is high in Maidstone and many young people leave the borough for a university education. This presents an opportunity to keep these young people in Maidstone in the first place, perhaps by catering for their higher education needs locally, or to attract them back after graduation.

5.64 Maidstone lacks a significant university campus. The University of the Creative Arts withdrew from the Oakwood campus a few years ago, although it has still retained a presence at Maidstone Studios where it offers courses in Media Production, Media Business and Media Interactive Production. Teaching these courses at the studios enables students to develop strong links with the creative/production companies that are based there or others that use the facilities. This provides students with more hands on experience of working in the industry and is a major attraction for the courses offered there. However, with the closure of the Oakwood Park campus there is a lack of ancillary facilities, such as a library and social space, to enhance the student experience and they currently need to travel to the campus at Rochester for these facilities. UCA is trying to address this through further development proposed on the Maidstone Studios site.

5.65 In April this year KIMS opened on a site near to Maidstone Studios close to junction 7. This £95 million state-of-the-art hospital is set within a seven-acre development and will be a centre of clinical excellence with both academic and teaching facilities. KIMS is a hospital run by clinicians where consultants manage their patients' treatment pathway from referral through diagnosis to treatment and discharge. KIMS is the catalyst for a larger development on adjacent land, Kent Medical Campus. This 18 hectare site will incorporate a Neuro Village, Medical School and Research and Development occupiers focused on life sciences situated in high quality landscaped grounds.

5.66 Discussions are underway to explore opportunities to further develop the medical-related training offer at the Kent Medical Campus with other universities that are already providing medical and health-related HE training. A close relationship is developing with Canterbury Christ Church University which has an Institute of Medical Science that provides an umbrella for all the medical and health-related courses offered by the university. Post graduate medical courses are offered at Canterbury Christ Church University at the Universities of Medway campus in Chatham in the areas of urology, orthopaedics, general surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology and ear nose and throat. Undergraduate degrees in ancillary medical or health-related subjects, such as physiotherapy, midwifery, speech therapy and social care, are also provided in the Faculty of Health and Well Being.

5.67 It is clear that there is scope for building upon the offer currently proposed for Kent Medical Campus through links to other universities, both in Kent and the wider area. This is an important area to be taken forward in the future to ensure that opportunities are maximised around this cluster for Maidstone.

5.68 The close proximity of KIMS and the KMC to Maidstone Studios, where UCA is currently running courses and has ambitions to provide more facilities for students, offers opportunities for synergies to be developed and could potentially be the start of a 'Universities at Maidstone'.

5.69 University investment should be encouraged to attract higher value research-based employment into the borough, and to give more residents the opportunity to gain degree level qualifications. This has been successful in Medway where the 'Universities at Medway' campus has been developed at Chatham Maritime. The proposed Kent Medical Campus, together with UCA at Maidstone Studios and Mid Kent College's Higher Skills centre at Oakwood Park, could well be the starting point of something transformational. Achieving this is a priority for Maidstone and it is important that partners work together to make it happen.

D. Meeting the Skills Needs - Actions

D1. Work closely with Mid Kent College and other relevant education and training providers to forge closer links with business to help ensure that the skills needs of employers are met.

D2. Increase the number of businesses in Maidstone that take on traineeships and apprenticeships at Levels 2 and 3 and reduce the levels of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs).

D3. Increase awareness of the sector growth opportunities in Maidstone to training providers so that they can gear their provision to meet the future needs of employers.

D4 Work with schools and businesses to improve careers advice and work experience opportunities.

D5. Support KIMS in their discussions with universities to expand the Higher Education (HE) offer on the KMC site

D6. Support discussions between UCA and KIMS on looking to enhance the overall student experience for HE students at Maidstone Studios and at Kent Medical Campus.

D7. Work with UCA to further develop the business case for their proposed new facilities at Maidstone Studio

E. Improving the Infrastructure

We will invest in infrastructure by working closely with our partners, in particular Kent County Council. A priority being the need for digital accessibility and an adequate transport network across the Borough.

5.70 In the recent local business survey[39] businesses rank 'investment in infrastructure' as the number one priority for action for the council, with 'tackling congestion' ranked second. The importance of tackling infrastructure issues was also a common theme raised at the Maidstone Economic Business Partnership workshops and also from business interviews.

Road Transport Links

5.71 Maidstone has good strategic road transport links provided by the M20 which runs to the north of Maidstone town centre. The three motorway junctions within the borough are key assets for the local economy, although the proximity of junction 8 to the North Downs AONB means that this is a sensitive area for development.

5.72 The main transport issues relate to the infrastructure in the south of the borough, where all road links to the motorway in the north of the borough need to go through Maidstone town centre. The congestion on these routes causes delays which in turn increases both travel time and affects reliability.

5.73 Recently, road weight restrictions have been imposed on some of the secondary roads around Marden to the south of Maidstone town centre, where manufacturing companies are located in industrial parks on the edge of the town. This is impacting on the businesses that need to use vehicles to transport goods and supplies along these roads to access the national motorway network. This calls into question the suitability of these places as employment locations for businesses in sectors that need good road access to the motorway network.

Maidstone Town Centre

5.74 Access is also a recognised barrier to growth in the town centre with both parking and public transport improvements identified by businesses as needing attention.

[39] Maidstone Borough Council (April 2014) 'Business Survey'

5.75 Maidstone Borough Council has been working with Kent County Council and the SE LEP to seek LGF funding to address some of the transport issues in Maidstone. The council was successful in securing £16.5 million from 2015/16 for four schemes at a total cost of £28.5 million. These schemes are:

- Maidstone Gyratory Bypass - two additional northbound lanes to enable northbound traffic on the A229 to bypass the existing town centre Gyratory system.
- Sustainable Access to Maidstone Employment Areas - a high quality dedicated cycle and pedestrian route from residential development sites on the outskirts of Maidstone's urban areas into the Town Centre.
- Maidstone Integrated transport package - key junction and road capacity improvements and enhanced public transport.
- West Kent LSTF - funding contribution towards Maidstone East Rail Station improvements as part of the larger scheme around the station.

5.76 While this investment will help to address some of the transport issues facing Maidstone, other solutions also need to be considered, including a coordinated programme to deal with issues around Maidstone town centre that includes park and ride, public transport and car parking, as well as roads.

Broadband

5.77 Digital infrastructure is also identified by businesses as a barrier to growth in Maidstone. Interviews reveal that businesses are concerned about the availability and speed of broadband, especially in rural areas. In partnership with Broadband Delivery UKl (BDUK), Kent County Council is aiming to bring broadband to every property in Kent and Medway, and super fast broadband to more than 90% of households and businesses by 2015. Kent County Council has also been successful in their bid to the Government to extend the reach of super fast broadband services across Kent, under their 'Super fast Extension Programme'. It is hoped that the new funding will ensure that 95% of homes across the Country will get super fast broadband by the end of 2017. However this will mean that 5% of homes will only receive 2 mgbts and this will need to be monitored and action taken if some communities and businesses are disadvantaged at the end of this process.

Housing

5.78 A shortage of housing and high house prices are an issue of concern to the business community who see this as potential barrier to growth. Some employers, particularly those with workers in lower paid occupations, see this as an impediment to being able to recruit workers locally. There is concern that if more houses are not built in the next 12-18 months, then both house prices and market rents will increase even further, compounding the existing problem.

5.79 This is clearly not just a planning issue as there is planning permission in place for over 3000 residential units in the Borough and the Local Plan is making provision to 2031. The availability of affordable mortgages, developer finance, wage levels, commuting patterns, and the capacity of the market to build and sell homes each year are also significant factors.

E Improving the Infrastructure - Actions
E1. Take forward the schemes for which Local Growth Fund grants have been allocated.

E2. Develop and implement a campaign calling for faster train services to London

E3. Work closely with KCC and other stakeholders to agree and deliver the Integrated Transport Strategy

E4. Work closely with KCC to consider and implement ways to increase the speed, reliability and coverage of broadband across Maidstone, especially in rural areas.

6 Locations for Growth

6.1 This strategy recognises that both the economic needs and opportunities for growth vary across the borough.

The Existing Portfolio of Sites

6.2 The Maidstone urban area provides the majority of employment in a range of occupations including retail, leisure and recreation, professional services and most office based businesses, and industrial and warehouse units. It will remain the main employment location within the Borough with the future success of the Town Centre identified as a critical priority for this Strategy.

6.3 There are 27 existing office, warehouse and industrial sites across the Borough providing a range of unit types, sizes and quality (and hence price) in a choice of locations for business. Many of these sites are within Maidstone’s urban area including Parkwood and Turkey Mill. 20/20 Business Park is located just off Junction 5 M20 and at Junction 6 Brooklyn Park is now occupied by Scania. Eclipse Business Park, Newnham Court Shopping Centre, KIMS and Kent Medical Centre are all served from Junction 7.

6.4 Significant business and industrial parks are located in the Rural Service Centres of Harrietsham, Headcorn, Lenham, Marden and Staplehurst. There are many smaller office and industrial/warehouse locations too, adding to the choice of sites available for businesses.

6.5 The majority of all of these sites are well occupied and broadly fit for purpose. An important role for the emerging Local Plan is to protect the existing stock of industrial and employment sites to secure them from alternative, higher value uses so they can continue to be an important part of the Borough’s employment land supply.

New Locations for Growth

6.6 The amount of additional employment land needed for the full Local Plan period (the ‘demand’) was determined in the ‘Economic Sensitivity Testing and Employment Forecast’ of January 2014.

6.7 To assess the qualitative demand for employment floorspace, and thereby to complete the evidence base for this aspect of the Local Plan, a ‘Qualitative Employment Site Assessment’ (‘the Assessment’) was carried out, also by Bilfinger GVA. This assessed whether there are gaps in the property portfolio which, if not addressed, could constrain the growth of the economy . This assesses whether current land allocations will meet the qualitative needs, as well as the quantitative land requirements, to accommodate the type of employment growth forecast to 2031.

6.8 The Assessment considered the nature of the office and industrial property markets in the borough. Their findings indicate that Maidstone's position, in terms of both the office and industrial market in Kent, has been changing and that it’s pre-eminence has slipped. This is consistent with the findings of Shared Intelligence's analysis of recent economic trends which also demonstrates that Maidstone has performed relatively poorly in economic terms over recent years, especially compared to some of our neighbouring boroughs.

6.9 The key findings of the Assessment, which are of particular relevance to the economic development strategy are summarised below:

6.10 **Offices**: the market has shifted from large scale premises to smaller units and/or multi-tenant purpose built stock due to a concentration of smaller businesses in the borough, often professional services type firms and lack of interest in the borough as a 'back office' location for major banks/insurance companies etc. The qualitative need is therefore likely to be met though new units up to 500sqm and not through the larger, older buildings which are particularly concentrated in the town centre. Indeed it is estimated that some 25,000sqm of the poorer quality town centre office stock could be lost and not replaced without compromising the economy. Some such rationalisation is likely to be a precursor to a reinvigoration of the town centre office market. The Assessment notes that in- and out-of centre locations appeal to different types of firms and that offering a choice of locations would better provide for occupier needs.

6.11 **Industrial**: The Assessment concludes that demand for industrial/manufacturing floorspace is most likely to result from relocation of firms from the local/sub-regional area rather than from a major inward investment opportunity. Development is more likely to be built for a specific end user rather than as a speculative enterprise. The demand will generally be for smaller (<200sqm) and medium sized (1,000-1,500sqm) units.

6.12 **Warehousing**: It is concluded that the borough is neither far enough from the ports or central enough to serve a UK distribution market or even SE regional market. The demand for warehousing space is most likely to be to serve sub-regional markets for example on-line retail demand, discount retailers with tight supply chains and local distribution hubs for logistics firms. The demand is most likely to be for units up to 5,000sqm.

6.13 Overall, and significantly, there is also an identified lack of employment land supply in the locations most likely to be attractive to the type of occupiers economic growth will attract. The key characteristics of these locations include being highly accessible with good support amenities and optimum physical and digital infrastructure. It is recognised that the prime locations for business sectors that need good access to the national road network for transporting goods and services are around the M20 motorway junctions. Some of these potential employment sites are also close to some of the highest quality environments, so there needs to be a balanced approach to ensure that achieving economic growth does not come at the expense of the environmental assets which make the borough special.

6.14 There has been high demand for new development at the M20 motorway junctions. Feedback from the business community suggests that a more concentrated pattern of future employment land allocations might be more appropriate to meet business demand, rather than the dispersed pattern outlined in the Regulation 18 Local Draft Consultation Plan issued for consultation in July 2014.

6.15 The existing capacity for industrial and warehousing use is all in the south of the borough where the road links are the weakest and where weight restrictions have been placed on some secondary rural roads making these sites less attractive for some larger scale manufacturing and logistics operations. The Assessment states "whilst this does not make these sites redundant, it does potentially limit their future attractiveness to businesses and could restrict the role they play in accommodating employment growth."

6.16 The lack of available sites along the motorway corridor has been highlighted by the market with the submission of two planning applications at Junction 8 one called Waterside Park and the other "Woodcut Farm".

6.17 The Assessment finds that there is both quantitative and qualitative need for additional employment land. New site/s should focus on a 'new', diversified offer in preference to replicating the characteristics of the existing portfolio. This points towards:

a. A range of flexible, small scale, good quality office space

b. Capacity for 'design and build' bespoke industrial space

c. Small-medium warehouse/distribution units

d. Location/s with good strategic road access to markets

e. Location/s with minimal development constraints

f. Location/s with ICT connectivity

g. Creation of a distinct new employment location

6.18 The Assessment concludes that "there is likely to be demand for a new high quality, well serviced mixed use employment development area that accommodates small business orientated space, standalone industrial and manufacturing provision (albeit likely to be a design and build demand) and smaller scale distribution and ancillary workspace and office space".

6.19 Additionally the Assessment recommends that plan policies are sufficiently flexible to enable a mix of office, industrial and warehousing uses on sites.

6.20 This economic development strategy does not identify specific sites for future employment growth across the borough (for office, warehousing and industry) - that is the role of the Local Plan. However a report by the Head of Planning to the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee 21 October 2014 highlighted the findings of the Qualitative Employment Site Assessment and its implications for employment policies in the draft Local Plan. The report stated that the selection of sites in the Regulation 18 version of the Local Plan 2014 would not meet the identified qualitative needs in a location well connected to the strategic road network. Based on the outcomes of the Strategic Economic Development Land Availability Assessment (SEDLAA) the only available, additional land at a motorway junction is at J8 of M20. Development in this location would better meet the gap identified through the evidential analysis in the Qualitative Employment Sites Assessment. It could also enable the quantitative demand for offices to be met which is not the case for the current selection of Regulation 18 sites.

6.21 The report went on to state that balanced against this economic case is the acknowledged sensitivity of the landscape in the J8 location and that that development at J8 would cause substantial landscape harm. The limitations of the location in terms of public transport connections and relative separation from the centres of population were also acknowledged. However with the NPPF direction to meet the needs of the economy in full it is officers' view that, with the completion of this qualitative assessment, the balance of planning and economic development considerations now weigh in favour of identifying land in the location of J8 in the emerging Local Plan. The Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to support development for employment use at Junction 8 of the M20 subject to the development of a planning policy by the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development to mitigate damage and to ensure appropriate constraints.

6.22 The strategic case for a new employment site at Junction 8 has been established and its development is critical to ensuring that the principle aim of the Strategy is achieved i.e. the creation of 14,400 jobs by 2031 in a range of sectors and occupations. With a growing population, the realisation of key employment opportunities including the Town Centre Masterplan, Eclipse Business Park, Kent Medical Campus and Junction 8 are essential if the Council and its partners are to minimise unsustainable out commuting and reduce the likelihood of Maidstone becoming a "dormitory town".

6.23 The detail of a new planning policy, setting out the criteria in which development at Junction 8 will be acceptable, will be considered by Maidstone Borough Council's Spatial Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee in August 2015.

7 Making it Happen: The Action Plan

7.1 This strategy can only be delivered through working in partnership. There are many organisations and agencies that are working to achieve different elements of this strategy and there is a leadership role that Maidstone Borough Council needs to play to coordinate and ensure these culminate in achieving our ambitions for economic growth. The Action Plan sets out who the main leads and partners are for each action, and the implementation period: short (1-2 years) medium (3-5 years) or long term (5 year plus).

7.2 A key message from the business community is a desire for Maidstone Borough Council to show more leadership and take a more proactive approach towards economic growth and ensure that the right signals are given that Maidstone is 'open for business'. However, it is important that the right balance is struck between enabling economic growth and protecting the very assets that make Maidstone a special location to do business - its attractive environment particularly the North Downs AONB and Maidstone town centre.

7.3 It is important that the council works closely with developers; early pre application discussions with officers are strongly encouraged to reduce the chance of proposals coming forward which are unacceptable and incur unnecessary costs and delays for developments. Maintaining effective and transparent communication during the application process will help to reduce developer uncertainty and help ensure growth opportunities are realised.

7.4 There are a number of ways in which the Borough Council can help to achieve the economic vision through a leadership role. This might include leading partnership working, taking a financial stake in some developments, considering favourably proposals that will bring large numbers of jobs to the borough, and promoting Maidstone as a business location, to name but a few. It is important that the council considers these roles in the future to ensure that economic opportunities are maximised.

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Economic Development Strategy – Action Plan

A) Retaining and Attracting Investment

		Action / Milestones	S / M / L	Resource	Lead	Partners
A1	A1. Implement the Council's new Business Customer Relationship Management system. The information held on each business enables relevant targeted information to be sent to them on subjects such as available finance, export support, innovation initiatives etc.. The objective is to hold a single business database of all registered businesses in the Borough, available corporately within MBC but also with our external partners. Local businesses will be targeted to receive support that enables them to grow. This will be done in partnership with others such as Manufacturing Advisory Services (now part of the national Business Growth Service), UKTI, Kent International Business etc..	Number of businesses categorised to assess growth potential / identify business lifecycle / export potential	Short	Existing MBC resource + partners SELEP Funding ERDF / ESF Funding	Coordinating Lead by MBC	Growth Accelerator Programme High Growth Kent (KCC) UKTI MAS University of Greenwich (Enterprise Europe Network) University of Kent Business School Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
		a. Number of 'deeper' appraisals	Short			
		b. Number of full diagnostic reviews of companies	Short - Medium			
		c. Number of growth action plans to be put in place to work over medium to long term	Short - Medium			

A2	Work with Kent Medical Campus to ensure that the investment goes ahead, including investigating using direct council intervention (powers/Investment) if necessary.	Enter into direct discussions with site owner/agent to take forward each element of KMC including medical school, Neurovillage and medical technologies. Explore opportunity to attract the Regenerative Medicine Catapult.	Medium	Existing MBC resources	MBC	KMC Ltd KCC SELEP
		Investigate joint promotional activities with the owner and agent.	Short	Current resources, networking and website		
		Consider barriers to delivering KMC and bid to SLGF.	Short	Existing MBC resources		
A3	Ensure that employment land allocated through the planning system is suitable for the needs of new and expanding employers and that planning policies are flexible enough to achieve the balance between realising potential growth opportunities and not sacrificing the environment which is in itself an asset.	Site allocation policies published	Short	Existing MBC resources	MBC	MBC KCC Business Community
		New site allocations made in the next draft of the Local Plan	Short	Existing MBC resources		
A4	Deliver and support business events focused on supporting existing business competitiveness and driving business growth	Development of a programme of 'finance ready' events with MD's and Senior Manager's attending Number of companies participating in finance ready programme Management Skills Workshops: Number of individuals attending	Medium	Existing MBC resources	MBC	TSB Enterprise Europe Network

		workshops ICT – Number of companies improving use of and access to ICT e.g. using new websites as a driver for growth Development of supply chain networks (sector approach)				
A5	Effectively engage with employers to raise awareness of available programmes and support, increase take up and participation to improve business competitiveness. Consider the use of the Business Rates Pool to target certain businesses with rates relief as an incentive to invest and grow.	Undertake a baseline survey of the business support available to them including relevance and quality to highlight duplication and gaps.	Short	Existing MBC resources	MBC	Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, Kent Institute of Directors, Lenham Valley Business Association, South Maidstone Business Association, Marden Business Forum, the Network of Rural Business Forums, Visit Kent and Produced in Kent.
		Work with business support organisations to use this intelligence to inform the KMEP Innovation and Growth Statement.	Short			
		Strengthen Maidstone Economic Business Partnership to become a strong voice for businesses in Maidstone.	Short			
		Programme of business engagement to raise awareness of available programmes and support and to encourage a greater take up of apprenticeships. - Number of Business Visits	Medium			
		Regular e-newsletters	Short			
		Sector specific briefing notes	Short			

		New business information website	Short			
A6	Investigate a new master plan for employment at Eclipse Business Park (Junction 7 M20).	Support the landowner to identify a new vision for Eclipse Business Park Ensure new policies for Eclipse Business Park are flexible enough to achieve this.	Medium	Existing MBC resources	Gallagher	MBC
A7	Commission and deliver the Destination Management Plan	Strategy published by July 2015	Short	Existing MBC resources Business rates pool	MBC	Visit Kent and all other stakeholders connected with the Visitor Economy
A8	Commission and deliver a Cultural Strategy	Strategy published by March 2016	Short	Existing MBC resources Business rates pool	MBC	All Stakeholders interested in the themes of the Cultural Strategy
A9	Through discussions with the land based sector, identify and deliver actions to support investment, diversification, skills development , and the take up of technological advancements.	Meet with Farmers and Horticulturalists and the National Farmers Union to identify issues and actions	Short	Existing MBC resources	MBC	Land based sector, Produced in Kent, NFU and KCC, Kent Wildlife Trust.

B) Stimulating More Entrepreneurship

		Action / Milestones	S / M / L	Resource	Lead	Partners
B1	Continue to provide funding for a business start-up programme.	Continue to deliver an enhanced programme of business support and explore innovative ways for local delivery with partners	Short	Existing MBC resources and bid for new funding	MBC	KICC
		Work with others to coordinate the plethora of business support initiatives to remove duplication and fill gaps in provision	Medium	SELEP	SELEP and KMEP	MBC KCC
B2	Deliver a pilot Enterprise Hub called "The Business Terrace" for Maidstone.	Deliver the pilot Hub with aim of being open by September 2015. The pilot Hub will test proof of concept as the Council retains its ambition to create a full Hub in the medium term.	Short	Existing MBC resources Business Rates pool	MBC	KICC Centre for Micro Businesses Kent Foundation for Young Entrepreneurs Princes Trust University of Kent University of Greenwich
B3	Work with Kent County Council to ensure the roll out of high speed broadband across rural communities.	Work with KCC on ensuring Maidstone Businesses benefit from the extended roll out programme.	Short	Existing MBC resources	KCC	MBC BT BDUK Parish Councils
		Encourage all new developments to provide the required infrastructure to enable fibre to all premises.	Medium			
B4	Investigate specific actions that the Council could undertake to support the creation of small businesses in	Capitalise on the enthusiasm shown by some parish councils and rural business networks to identify small businesses in rural areas.	Short	Existing MBC resources and bids to the SELEP / ERDF / ESF	MBC	Parish Councils Centre for Micro Businesses Produced in

	rural areas.	Investigate the parish level interventions required to support the small businesses identified	Medium			Kent Made in Kent Rural Networks NFU TSB
		Identify specific interventions to support the land based sector	Short			
		Investigate the use of rural libraries and other community facilities to deliver business support activities in rural areas.	Medium			

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C) Enhancing the Town Centre

		Action / Milestones	S / M / L	Resource	Lead	Partners
C1	To develop a vision for the town centre and translate this into a spatial land use plan "masterplan" for the future development of the town, with a programme of activity to deliver short, medium and long term actions.	Agree with stakeholders a long term vision for the Town Centre	Short	Existing MBC resources Business Rates pool	MBC	Capital and Regional Solum KCC Private sector partners
		Develop and deliver a set of initiatives to make this vision a reality.	Medium			
		Ensure planning policies support the vision and delivery of actions	Medium			
C2	Consider current office accommodation uses in the town centre and determine how best to ensure the development of fit for purpose prime office space for business.	Consider use of direct intervention including purchase of sites to ensure quality office offer.	Medium	Existing MBC resources Business Rates pool Borrowing to resource purchases (considered alongside development appraisals) and private sector partners	MBC	KCC Private sector partners
		Monitor the situation with regards to Permitted Development Rights (PDR) and the loss of both primary and secondary office stock	Short			
		Ensure planning policies support the protection of the quality town centre office stock.	Medium			
C3	Consider how the public sector can work together to help stimulate investment in Maidstone town centre.	Explore options for the delivery of Phase 3 public realm works in Gabriels Hill, Earl Street and North End of Week Street including ensuring Planning Policy requires S106 contributions where appropriate.	Medium	Infrastructure Delivery Plan including S106 contributions	MBC	KCC Leisure Industry Private sector partners

		Work with MCL to develop events and activities within Maidstone Town Centre to enhance the Town Centre offer.	Short	MCL Business Plan		
		Consider direct intervention through the Council acting as an investment partner in key sites such as the Mall and Maidstone East	Medium	Existing MBC resources Business Rates pool Borrowing to resource purchases (considered alongside development appraisals) and private sector partners	MBC	Capital and Regional Solum KCC Private sector partners

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D) Meeting Skills Needs

		Action / Milestones	S / M / L	Resource	Lead	Partners
D1	Work closely with Mid Kent College and other relevant education and training providers to forge closer links with business to help ensure that the skills needs of employers are met.	Engage with local businesses to gauge their awareness of the existing training provision available to them and the relevance and quality.	Short	Existing MBC resources	MBC	All training providers All businesses KCC Job Centre Plus
		Undertake a baseline survey to determine the skills needs of our local businesses.	Short	Existing MBC resources		
		Develop a comprehensive web based application incorporating the principles behind the big exchange, access to skills for young people, a business to business skills exchange portal and ability to aggregate business training needs.	Medium	Transforming Local Government Fund (secured £100k) and ESF bid		
D2	Increase the number of businesses in Maidstone that take on traineeships and apprenticeships at Levels 2 and 3 and reduce the levels of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs).	Link with programme of business engagement see A5 and D1	Medium	Existing MBC resources Business Rates pool	MBC	KCC, Education Business Partnership, Schools, Mid Kent College All training providers All businesses Job Centre Plus
		Use social media, website, e-newsletters, editorial, case-studies and other to promote apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities to businesses.	Short	Existing MBC resources Business Rates pool		
		Identify support for pre-NEET and NEET young people, including work experience placements and apprenticeships	Short	New MBC staff resource required Business Rates		

				pool		
D3	Increase awareness of the sector growth opportunities in Maidstone to training providers so that they can gear their provision to meet the future needs of employers.	Provide regular briefing notes, information and newsletters to training providers to give them a wider understanding of the borough's business composition and likely trends to enable them to gear provision accordingly.	Short	Existing MBC resource Business Rates pool	MBC	KCC, Mid Kent College All training providers Job Centre Plus
D4	Work with schools and businesses to improve careers advice and work experience opportunities.	Identify willing businesses Develop placement processes with the Education Business Partnership	Medium	New MBC staff resource required	MBC	KCC, Education Business Partnership, Schools, Mid Kent College All training providers All businesses Job Centre Plus
D5	Support KIMS in their discussions with universities to expand the Higher Education (HE) offer on the KMC site.	Establish working group Identify drivers for HE investment Any barriers Consider funding options	Medium	To be determined	KIMS	MBC, Canterbury Christchurch University
D6	Support discussions between UCA and KIMS on looking to enhance the overall student experience for HE students at Maidstone Studios and at Kent Medical Campus.	Evolve the joint working group with KIMS to include UCA	Long	To be determined	MBC	UCA , KIMS, Maidstone Studios

D7	Work with UCA to further develop the business case for their proposed new facilities at Maidstone Studio.	Support the Studios bid to create a Media Village to SLGF	Long	Existing MBC resources	Maidstone Studios	UCA

E) Improving the Infrastructure

		Action / Milestones	S / M / L	Resource	Lead	Partners
E1	Take forward the schemes for which Local Growth Fund grants have been allocated.	Work with KCC and contribute to the Project Groups for Sustainable Access to Employment and Bridge Gyratory Bypass Project.	Short	SLGF Infrastructure Delivery Plan	KCC	MBC TMBC EA
		Work with partners within the project areas to increase ownership and funding opportunities.		Existing MBC resources	MBC	
E2	Develop and implement a campaign calling for faster train services to London.	Work with South Eastern to ensure the 2018 Thameslink from Maidstone East remains on-track, to deliver an extended peak period service to the City of London.	Medium	Existing MBC resources	South Eastern Rail	MBC KCC Medway Valley Line Network Rail
		Work with the Medway Valley Line and South Eastern to ensure High Speed Service from Maidstone West continues.	Medium	Existing MBC resources	KCC	MBC Govia
E3	Work closely with KCC and other stakeholders to agree the Integrated Transport Strategy	Deliver the transport proposals in the ITS.	Long	SLGF Infrastructure Delivery Plan Existing MBC resources	KCC MBC	Developers
E4	Work closely with KCC to consider ways to increase the rate of broadband roll out across Maidstone borough, especially in rural areas.	Help identify areas where poor broadband provision is hindering the development of business to help inform the areas of focus for the extension programme to the BDUK funding.	Medium	Existing MBC resources	KCC	BT Developers Parish Councils

		Help promote the uptake of upgraded services within areas of business / resident concentration to increase the potential coverage of the BDUK work.	Medium	Existing MBC resources	KCC	BT Developers

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Maidstone Borough Council – Partnership Engagement and Demonstrating Leadership

	Action / Milestones	S / M / L	Resource	Lead	Partners
To publicise the positive things that the council is doing that demonstrate it is pro economic growth.	Produce a Business Charter setting out the role of every Council service in supporting businesses. Promote the work of the Council through the media. e.g. Down's Mail supplement. Attend and present to business networking and business support organisations.	Short	Existing MBC resources	Economic Development MBC	All Services in MBC All Businesses
To consider ways of effectively conveying to the Maidstone electorate the advantages that economic growth will bring.	Promote the benefits of growth through the media, case studies, press releases and direct to parishes.	Medium	Existing MBC resources	MBC	Design South East Media partners Parish Councils
To consider what the Council can do to convey the message to investors that Maidstone is 'open for business and for investing in growth'.	Redesign the Locate in Maidstone website Hold awareness raising events in London with private sector partners Create new marketing material	Medium	Existing MBC resources	MBC	Business networks
To examine ways in which more support can be given to planning applicants to increase the likelihood of a positive outcome.	Encourage pre-application advice with businesses Ensure Economic Development Officers attend pre-application meetings	Short	Existing MBC resources	MBC	Businesses

Monitoring Indicators

To measure progress towards the actions in the Economic Development Strategy action plan, each of the actions will be monitored against the agreed milestones and reported annually to the council and the Maidstone Economic Business Partnership.

In addition, the overall performance of the Maidstone economy will need to be monitored against a range of relevant datasets. This will provide an overall measure of the 'health' of the Maidstone economy and highlight where further action, or reprioritisation is required.

The indicators relating to the performance of the local economy are provided in the table below:

Indicator	Source	Current Figure - Maidstone (2015)	Current Figure - South East (2015)	Desired Direction of travel
GVA per head at current basic prices	KCC Research & Evaluation: ONS / District estimates, Research & Evaluation, Kent County Council	£ 22,439 (2013) - District estimates, Research & Evaluation, Kent County Council	£25,843 (2013) - KCC Research & Evaluation: ONS / District estimates	↑
Percentage of Job Seeker Allowance Claimants	NOMIS	1.2% (April 2015)	1.2% (April 2015)	↓
Unemployment rate (aged 16 and over – proportion of economically active, i.e employed and unemployed)	Nomis: ONS annual population survey	4.9%(Jan 2014-Dec 2014)	4.2 %(Jan 2015 –Mar 2015)	↓
Proportion of population qualified to at least level 2 or higher	Nomis: ONS annual population survey	74.4% (Jan 2014 – Dec 2014)	77.1% (Jan 2014 –Dec 2014)	↑
Proportion of population qualified to at least level 3 or higher	Nomis: ONS annual population survey	53.0% (Jan 2014 – Dec 2014)	60.5% (Jan 2014 –Dec 2014)	↑
Proportion of the population qualified to at least level 4 or higher	Nomis: ONS annual population survey	31.2% (Jan 2014 – Dec 2014)	39.1% (Jan 2014 –Dec 2014)	↑
Employment rate (aged 16-64)	Nomis: ONS annual population survey	76.8% (Jan 2014 – Dec 2014)	77.2% (Jan 2014 –Dec 2014)	↑

Percentage of people of Working age on Key out of work benefits[40]	Nomis: DWP benefit claimants - working age client group	6.8% (November 2014)	6.8% (November 2014)	↓
16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)	KCC/Gov.uk	4.7% (February 2015)	4.2% (2014)	↓
Total gross weekly workplace wages (Full-time workers)	Nomis: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings - workplace analysis	£455.80 (2014)	£541.40 (2014)	↑
Total gross weekly residential wages (Full-time workers)	Nomis: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis	£515.40 (2014)	£567.00 (2014)	↑

[40] Key out-of-work benefits includes the groups: job seekers, Employment Support Allowance and incapacity benefits, lone parents and others on income related benefits. Note: % is a proportion of resident population aged 16-64

Employers and stakeholders approached to help inform the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan
Handelsbanken
Brachers
DSH Accountants
Maidstone Studios
Logic PM
Leeds Castle
Amethyst Group
Scarabs
MEP
John Taylor
MCCH Society
Cllr David Burton
Gullands
DHA Planning
Lenham Storage
Pillory Barn
KIMS
Dempson Crooke
Locate in Kent
Kent County Council, Economic Development Team
NFU
UCA
Kent County Council
Federation of Small Businesses

Mid Kent College
Kent Invicta Chamber
Capital and Regional
Fremlin Walk
Chartway Group
MBC Cabinet
MBC Economic and Commercial Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Maidstone Economic Business Partnership

Appendix Glossary

Term	Definition
AONB	An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is an area of countryside in England, Wales or Northern Ireland which has been designated for conservation due to its significant landscape value.
BDUK	Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), part of the Government's programme to deliver super fast broadband and better mobile connectivity to the UK.
BIS	The Government department for Business, Innovation and Skills.
BRES	Business Register Employment Survey, BRES is the definitive source of official employee statistics and can be used to derive employment estimates at varying industrial and geographical levels
BT	British Telecom, BT Group plc, trading as BT, is a British multinational telecommunications services company.
CLES	Centre for Local Economic Strategies, is the UK's leading independent charitable research and member organisation, with a focus on economic development, regeneration and place-making.
KICC	The Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce is a membership organisation which provides a full range of business support services, ranging from networking, international trade, and business support to representation and is a member of the British Chamber of Commerce accredited network of Chambers of Commerce across the United Kingdom.
EA	Environment Agency, a Government agency responsible for regulating major industry and waste, treatment of contaminated land, water quality and resources, fisheries, inland river, estuary and harbour navigations, conservation and ecology, managing the risk of flooding from main rivers, reservoirs, estuaries and the sea.
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund, is a fund allocated by the European Union (EU) the main objective of which is to financially aid projects and activities which reduce the economic disparity within the member states of the EU.
ESF	The European Social Fund (ESF) is the European Union's main financial instrument for supporting employment in the member states of the European Union as well as promoting economic and social cohesion.
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds is the new terminology for the EU programmes which are delivered directly by the EU Member States, including the: European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural, Development, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. During the 2014-2020 programming period these funds will be delivered in a more integrated manner.
GVA	Gross Value Added is a measure in economics of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.
HMT	HM Treasury is the government's economic and finance ministry
IPPR	Institute of Public Policy is an independent registered charity whose purpose is to conduct and publish research into, and promote public education in, the economic, social and political sciences, and in science and technology; including the effect of moral, social, political and scientific factors on public policy and on the living standards of all sections of the community.

JSA	Job Seekers Allowance is a form of unemployment benefit paid by the Government to people who are unemployed and actively seeking work. It is part of the social security benefits system and is intended to cover living expenses while the claimant is out of work.
KCB	Kent Conference Bureau is a free venue finding service to help organisations locate a suitable venue for an event in Kent. It is currently part of Maidstone Borough Council but managed by an industry led Board.
KCC	Kent County Council is the county council that governs the non-metropolitan county of Kent in England. It provides the upper tier of elected local government, below which are 12 district councils, and around 300 town and parish councils.
KMEP	Kent and Medway Economic Partnership is chaired by the private sector and is made up of twenty one members, eleven business representatives, eight local authority leaders and one representative from higher and further education. The role of the KMEP is to approve, drive forward and monitor a strategic economic plan for Kent and Medway; Consider strategic economic investment priorities through funds such as the Single Local Growth Fund, European structural and investment funds and other public funding sources that may become available; Determine and monitor the use of all funding devolved from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership to Kent and Medway; Act as the commissioning body for projects and programmes in Kent and Medway funded through the Single Local Growth Fund and the European Structural and Investment Funds; Consider and develop responses to new economic opportunities and challenges in Kent and Medway; Ensure a strong voice for Kent and Medway business and government at national and regional level, including through the South East LEP.
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnerships are partnerships between local authorities and businesses, established by central Government. They decide what the priorities should be for investment in roads, buildings and facilities in the area. Maidstone falls within the South East Local Enterprise Partnership covering East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock.
LSTF	Local Sustainable Transport Fund is funding from the Department for Transport to support transport improvements that could cut carbon emissions and create local growth. £100 million capital funding from the fund has been made available through the Local Growth Fund for 2015 to 2016.
MAS	Manufacturing Advisory Service (now part of the Government's Business Growth Service) a government-backed service offering support to businesses with the potential to improve and grow. Funded by BIS, Business Growth Managers, with specific manufacturing expertise, work on the ground with management teams to plan long-term strategies, improve processes, bring new products to market and develop supply chains
MBC	Maidstone Borough Council
MCL	Maidstone Culture and Leisure, part of Maidstone Borough Council, MCL commissions and delivers cultural, parks and leisure and visitor economy services.
MEBP	Maidstone Economic Business Partnership, an industry led partnership, administered by MBC to ensure that the plans and strategies of Government reflect the needs of local businesses.
KMC	Maidstone Medical Campus is a development proposal, with outline planning permission, for a medical campus comprising up to 98,000sqm on land adjacent to the Newnham Court Shopping Village, Maidstone. The site covers an area of approximately 18.7ha. In April 2015 it was renamed Kent Medical Campus.

NFU	National Farmers Union, champions British farming and provides professional representation and services to its farmer and grower members.
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are work based awards in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that are achieved through assessment and training. To achieve an NVQ, candidates must prove that they have the ability (competence) to carry out their job to the required standard. There are five levels of NVQ ranging from Level 1, which focuses on basic work activities, to Level 5 for senior management. Level 2 is equivalent to one GCSE at A*-C.
ONS	Office for National Statistics, is the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics
SEFUND	South East Fund, a real estate investment fund for the South East LEP area of East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock
SEP	Strategic Economic Plan, each Local Enterprise Partnership is required to have a SEP. The Government will assess the distribution of Local Growth Funds based on the SEP for local growth and its use of all resources and levers.
SLGF	Single Local Growth Fund, funds from Central Government departments, brought together to allow the 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships to bid for funding from a "single pot".
SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprise, is a category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding 50 million euro, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding 43 million euro."
TMBC	Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
TSB	Technology Strategy Board is now called Innovate UK, and is part of BIS , it funds, supports and connects innovative businesses to accelerate sustainable economic growth.
UCA	University for the Creative Arts is a specialist art and design university in the south of England
UKTI	UK Trade and Investment works with UK based businesses to ensure their success in international markets through exports.

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Agenda Item 14

Policy & Resource Committee	24 June 2015
Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	**Yes**

Risk Management Process Refresh

Final Decision-Maker	Policy & Resources Committee
Lead Director or Head of Service	Director of Environment and Shared Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Head of Audit Partnership
Classification	Non-Exempt
Wards affected	n/a

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. Approve moving ahead with the process to build and maintain a comprehensive risk register as set out in section 4 and Appendix 1.
2. Delegate to the Chief Executive (as the accountable officer) authority to take operational decisions necessary for the ongoing maintenance and review of the risk register.
3. Agree to receive and consider biannual summary risk register reports for review, scheduled for January and July.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Great People
- Great Place
- Great Opportunity

Timetable	
Meeting	***Date***
Policy and Resources Committee	24 June 2015
Council	n/a
Other Committee	n/a

Risk Management Process Refresh

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report leads on from a review undertaken by Mid Kent Audit of risk management processes at another authority, but noting that several of the matters raised were also relevant to Maidstone BC. While it is important to recognise that the Council's current approach to risk management is adequate – in the sense that the external audit value for money conclusion and Head of Internal Audit opinion are both unqualified – there exists capacity to refresh the process in order to achieve efficiencies and better quality outcomes. Specifically, the revisions to the process seek to achieve:

- Increased clarity in roles and responsibilities for risk management, placing the process clearly within the scope of a named responsible director (the Director of Environment and Shared Services) and a service (internal audit).
- A more uniform approach across the Council allowing for comprehensive overview of risk as it exists and evolves and consideration within the context of the Council's operations as a whole, and
- Clearly scheduled opportunities for review of risk by senior officers and members.

1.2 Based on the review of risk management approaches adopted elsewhere across the public and private sectors, and consultation and workshops with Council officers and Members, the Council has developed a refreshed approach to risk management summarised in appendix I. This approach aims to realise the additional benefits of a revised process as described above within current resources (principally delivered administratively in year one by internal audit in line with the Audit Plan agreed by the Council's Audit Committee on 30 March 2015).

1.3 This report outlines the approach, inviting comment from Members, and asks their approval that it be implemented to the timescale and with the intended outcomes described.

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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The formal definition of risk management, drawn from the HM Treasury Orange Book is: "*all the processes involved in identifying, assessing and judging risks, assigning ownership, taking action to mitigate or anticipate them as well as monitoring and reporting on what has been done*". More succinctly, risk management is how the Council identifies, prioritises and deals with the risks it faces.

2.2 The Council's current process was developed almost ten years ago in direct response to the challenge of the Audit Commission via the Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime. The content has been refreshed over this period with the Cabinet and with the external support of Zurich Municipal. Over time the formal 'written' approach has been largely superseded in practice by an informal approach to risk that, while practically functional as a management tool, is difficult to assess and review and does not clearly provide to Members or officers a comprehensive overview of the Council's developing risks and their management.

2.3 Leading on principally from an in-depth review undertaken at another authority with similar (though not identical) informal practices, internal audit has been working with officers during 2014/15 in developing an approach that seeks to minimise those weaknesses and efficiently realise further benefits.

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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Maintaining the existing, largely informal process potentially leaves the Council vulnerable to having an incomplete or inconsistent understanding of risk, with consequent limitations in the quality of its decision making.

3.2 The alternative approach being proposed is summarised at appendix 1 and deliverable within existing resources as agreed within the Internal Audit Plan.

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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The approach is summarised in appendix 1 and will be supported by a more detailed manual for use by officers. It is anticipated the approach will realise the benefits noted in the introduction:

Increased clarity of roles

4.2 The process will be owned and managed by internal audit in the first instance. It is important to note that it is the *process* owned and managed by internal audit, the substantive responses to risks will remain the domains of risk owners. Ownership of the risks remain with the lead officers in the council. This distinction maintains internal audit's independent position and is consistent with guidance circulated by the Institute of Internal Auditors on the reasonable extent of audit's role in risk management. Having a clear process owner, and Corporate Leadership Team level sponsor, will ensure the process is kept updated and live, not least by being informed by the ongoing results of other audit work.

4.3 The proposal also makes clear the distinct roles of Members. Specifically the role of this Committee in periodic review of the substance of the risk register and progress on actions underway to mitigate specific risks. This compares with the role of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee in taking an overview of the mechanics of the process and its effectiveness in providing assurance.

A more uniform and comprehensive approach

4.4 The proposed process includes greater detail on the definitions of both the impact and likelihood of risks (for example, by indicating what level of financial risk the Council could reasonably bear) to allow for a common scale across risks. This will be so whether those risks arise from services, from projects, from audit review or from high level strategic discussions.

4.5 The process results in the construction of a comprehensive risk register, drawing together risks from all those sources to a common scale and keeping that register updated both through information provided by projects boards/services/senior management and the results of audit work.

Clearly scheduled reviews

4.6 The comprehensive risk register will be kept updated and so, potentially, will be available for ad hoc review. However, periodic reviews are proposed to ensure oversight is appropriate and maintained. Review of a summary risk register is proposed, comprising all of the absolute highest scoring risks plus a selection of other major issues. Informally this has been called a 'top 10 risks' listing but the actual number is likely to vary with circumstance and will be consulted on as part of agenda setting meetings ahead of the relevant Corporate Leadership Team or Committee meetings.

4.7 The process proposes quarterly review by the Corporate Leadership Team of the summary risk register (December, March, June, September) and biannual at this Committee. It is proposed that those reviews are in January (in part to inform the budget setting process in January/February each year) and July (in part to inform approval of the Council's Annual Report and Accounts).

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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 The process has been developed in consultation with the Corporate Leadership Team and other workshops involving officers and Members.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 If agreed, an outline timetable leading up to the first review of the summary risk register:

- **July-October 2015**: Audit attendance at service management meetings and project boards across the Council to develop service/project risk registers. Also continuing discussion with the Policy team on incorporation of the approach within simultaneously developing service planning and project management processes.
- **Autumn 2015**: Based on the strategic plan, risk workshop with senior officers and Members looking to refresh and update the 'strategic' risks.
- **November 2015**: First comprehensive risk register compiled by audit.

- **December 2015**: First summary risk register review by Corporate Leadership Team.
- **January 2016**: First summary risk register review by this Committee.
- **Spring 2016**: Risks refreshed as part of revised service planning process.
- **Spring/Summer 2016**: Audit, Governance and Standards Committee review of effectiveness of the risk management process.

6.2 As the comprehensive risk register is compiled the Council will continue to operate its existing risk management processes. As noted in paragraph 1.1, the existing process is adequate to meet the Council's regulatory and audit requirements and so there is no detriment to continuing this process in the short term (though the Council will only benefit from the refreshed approach once implemented).

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7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	No significant impact. It is expected that once the register has been produced there will be a close alignment with the corporate priorities.	David Edwards
Risk Management	Risk management is the principal focus of the proposal.	Rich Clarke
Financial	The proposed process is to be delivered within existing resources as approved by the Audit Committee.	Suzan Jones
Staffing	The proposed process is to be delivered within existing resources as approved by the Audit Committee.	Rich Clarke
Legal	No significant impact in terms of the proposal, however there may be legal implications arising from any risks identified and these can be addressed at that stage.	Donna Price
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	No significant impact.	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	No significant impact.	
Community Safety	No significant impact.	
Human Rights Act	No significant impact.	
Procurement	No significant impact.	
Asset Management	No significant impact.	

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Risk Management Process Summary Information

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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None applicable.

Risk Management – One Page Summary

Step 1 – Identify Risks

Best done in groups, by those responsible for delivering objectives, at all levels

RISK is the chance of something happening that will **impact** on **objectives**

Consider both **THREATS** and **OPPORTUNITIES**

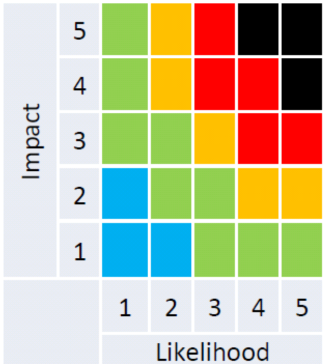
When to consider:

- Setting business aims and objectives
- Service planning
- Target setting
- Partnerships & projects
- Options appraisals

Think both **what could go wrong** and **what more could we achieve?**

Step 2 – Evaluate Risks

Combination of the **impact** and **likelihood** of an event and its consequences (the **inherent risk**)



Black – Top risk, immediate action and reporting to directors
Red – High risk, immediate action
Amber – Medium risk, review current controls
Green – Low risk, limited action, include in plans
Blue – Minimal risk, no action but review

Step 3 – Treat Risks

Concentrate on **top risks**, 10 to 12 in number

- Can we reduce likelihood?
- Can we reduce impact?

Risk Response – 4 **T**s

- **T**reat (i.e. apply controls)
- **T**olerate (i.e. accept risk)
- **T**ransfer (i.e. insurance)
- **T**erminate (i.e. stop activity)

After your risk response; where does it score now? (the **mitigated risk**)

Devise **contingencies and action plans** for '**Red**' and '**Black**' risks – seek to reduce mitigated risk back to '**Amber**' or below

Step 4 – Review Risks

Risk Registers

- Contain all identified risks, **Management Action Plans** for top risks
- Prepare and monitor as **regular agenda item**
- Indicate **risk response** and **risk owner**

Council risk monitoring

- Risk registers passed to internal audit
- Ongoing review by internal audit

Council's Top Risks

- **Top ten* mitigated risks** and all inherent 'Black' risks (summary risk register) monitored as regular item at **CLT** (quarterly)
- Summary risk register biannually at **PRC**
- Annual monitoring at **Audit Committee**

Policy and Resources Committee	24th June 2015
Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	**Yes**

Installing renewable energy technology

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources Committee
Lead Director or Head of Service	David Edwards, Director of Environment and Shared Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Marcus Lawler, Commercial Projects Manager
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to Committee:

1. That the Committee approves the purchase, installation and operation of photovoltaic technology on the following buildings within the Council's estate:

Building	Array
Lock Meadow Market Hall	50kw
Vinters Park Crematorium	10kw and 4kw
Magnolia House	24kw

2. That the Committee approves the purchase of renewably generated electricity from a third party at Maidstone House.
3. That the committee approves a budget of £125,000 to implement the recommendations.
4. That the Committee delegates authority to the Commercial Projects Manager to spend that budget and enter into the appropriate contracts to implement the recommendations.
5. That the Committee delegates authority to the Commercial Projects Manager to obtain the necessary permissions and licences to implement the recommendations including: registration for Feed in Tariff; sale, export or purchase of electricity; and appropriate agreements with the District Network Operator; and to assign those permissions and licences as appropriate.
6. That after conducting the trial of Power Purchase Agreements a further report is brought to the Committee suggesting further sites for the installation of renewable energy technology; and detailing any recommended policies to promote the environmental and financial benefits of this technology in the wider Borough.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:
• Great People • **Great Place** • Great Opportunity

Timetable	
Meeting	***Date***
Policy and Resources Committee	24.06.2015
Council	Not required
Other Committee	Not required

Installing renewable energy technology

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Council will be producing a Low-Emissions Strategy during 2015/16. A central theme of the Strategy is the reduction of carbon emissions across the Borough. The previous Carbon Management Plan will be superseded by the Low Emissions Strategy. Approving the recommendations within this report will support delivery of the carbon reduction theme in the Low-Emissions Strategy and implementing the recommendations within this report will generate a carbon reduction of a minimum of 62.83 tonnes of carbon, per annum.

1.2 Implementing the recommendations in this report will also make a predicted income contribution to the Council of £19,402 per annum; equivalent to a 16.18% return on capital employed.

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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 On 27th February 2015 the Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing approved a project to install a 50kw array at the Council's depot on Bircholt Road (see Para.9 Background Papers). The project was delivered in time, and under budget. Since its commissioning on 16th March 2015, the depot array has generated 16,069 kWh (as of 8th June 2015). This means the equipment is performing better than expected and this project can therefore be viewed a success.

2.2 The project at the depot was intended to be a trial, and to prove the concepts of carbon offset and savings generation. As the project is a success, a feasibility study of further sites has been conducted, looking at electricity usage and suitability for photovoltaic installation. Five sites were identified (two of which will be covered in a separate report to the Cobtree Manor Estate Trust) leaving three 'top sites' recommended under this report. Microgeneration Certification Scheme (see background documents) performance criteria were applied to the Council's estate and the results for the three sites recommended by this report are as follows:

Site	Array	Orientation (variation from south)	Pitch	Shading Factor	IR Factor	Annual Performance
Market	50kW	55	20	1 (x1)	1081	54,050kwh
Crematorium	10kW 4kW	10 55	50 40	1 (x1) 4 (x.96)	1111 1023	11,110kwh 3,928kwh
Magnolia	24kW	10	35	1 (x1)	1126	27,024kwh

The predicted performance of the equipment has been measured using the published FiT rates (see Para.9 Background Documents) to show the following annual contributions:

Site	**Annual Performance**	**FiT**	**Export or saving**	**Total annual contribution**	**Annual carbon reduction (tonnes)**
Market	54,050kWh	£6,329	£3,243 (S)	£9,572	23.24
Crematorium	11,110kWh 3,928kWh	£1,300 £507	£667 (S) £236 (S)	£1,967 £743	4.78 1.69
Magnolia House	27,024kWh	£2,810	£1,310 (E)	£4,120	11.62
Total	**96.112kWh**			**£16,402**	**41.33**

Note: 1. Where saving is assumed, this is calculated by multiplying the performance of the array by 10.859p per kWh, which is the current purchase price of electricity through LASER(a public sector collective to buy electricity) to give maximum saving available. 2. FiT and Export rates are fixed for 20 years and adjusted annually by Retail Price Index. 3. Payback for the investment is 7.6 years.

2.3 The crematorium has capacity to install arrays with a far greater quantum of potential output. The sensitive nature of the service offered to the borough from this site means that the recommended installation has been calculated using only sites which are considered appropriate. This review has been conducted in conjunction with the Bereavement Services Manager.

2.4 The site with the Council's largest electricity spend is Maidstone House and The Gateway (in excess of £130,000 per annum). This site has been discounted for a direct investment in PV as the council does not own it, and the current lease expires in 2023; this introduces a financial risk which does not exist at the other sites mentioned within this report. The Council does have the opportunity to enter into an assignable power purchase agreement with a generator of renewable energy. This will allow the council to purchase electricity at a lower rate (from 4.85p per kWh) than through LASER and reduce carbon emissions. This type of opportunity exists at other sites on the Council's estate and this portion of the report can be viewed as a trial; the results of which will contribute to future policy and projects. The direct benefits from entering into a PPA at Maidstone House can be summarised, for an assumed 50kw array as follows:

- Savings of £3,000 per annum.
- Carbon reduction of 21.5 tonnes per annum.

2.5 This feasibility study, assumptions and this report have been reviewed by Aylesbury Vale District Council. Aylesbury Vale is an exemplar local authority for renewable energy technology and their report can be found at Appendix A.

2.6 LASER has been consulted with regard to the recommendations contained within this report and they have confirmed that should the Committee approve them they will not affect the Council’s agreement with LASER to buy electricity through them.

2.7 The funding needed to implement the requirements can be broken down as follows:

Item	Amount
Estimated cost of arrays and installation	£100,000
QA of project estimates and reports	£1,500
QA of technical aspects by structural engineer	£6,000
Building control	£2,200
Legal review of power purchase agreement	£2,500
Post-project QA inspections	£1,200
Project manager’s contingency	£10,000
Total	**£123,400**

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 The Committee could decide not to approve any of the recommendations. This will mean that none of the benefits at para. 4 will be realised and this will have particular impact for the Medium Term Financial Strategy as alternative savings will have to be identified.

3.2 The Committee could elect to approve just the Council owned installations and operation of photovoltaic technology. This would mean the Council do not have the opportunity to learn the lessons derived from a trial project and then apply them to future projects and policy.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To approve the recommendations contained within the report.

4.2 This will support the carbon reduction theme contained within the draft Low-Emissions Strategy.

4.3 This will contribute to the savings identified within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 Not applicable.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 Assuming the Committee approves the recommendations contained in this report, the main actions will be as follows:

Action	Date
Committee decision to proceed	24.06.2015
Passed to Comms Team for review and action	28.06.2015
Procurement	28.06.2015
QA	28.06.2015
Installation	28.08.2015
Commissioning	29.09.2015

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	This report sits in support of: ***Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all.*** *Providing a clean and safe environment*	Director of Environment and Shared Services
Risk Management	Risk management provision is contained within the Commercialisation Strategy and this project is covered by those provisions. The risks associated with this project will be identified on a risk register.	Head of Audit Partnership
Financial	A provision for commercial projects is contained within the capital programme and the recommendations within this report will be covered by that provision. This is not a named project but can be covered by this allocation in the capital programme. The payback period for this project is 7.6 years.	Director of Communities and Regeneration Senior Accountant (Client)
Staffing	Not required.	
Legal	The Sale of Electricity by Local Authorities	Deputy Head of

	(England and Wales) Regulations 2010 provide a power allowing local authorities in England to sell electricity generated from renewable sources including solar. Confirmation of Permitted Development Rights at each proposed site should be sought from Planning as part of project assurance. Confirmation that no restrictive covenant or other title issue exists at each proposed site should be sought from Mid-Kent Legal as part of project assurance.	the Legal Partnership
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	Not required.	
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The installation of this equipment is covered by permitted development rights and no planning application needs to be made.	Development Manager
Community Safety	Not required.	
Human Rights Act	Not required.	
Procurement	The council will comply with all relevant legislation and procedures. The procurement process will be conducted with the support of the Procurement Manager. The quantum of spend when combined with the previous depot project is below the threshold for mandatory application of EU procurement rules. Due to financial implications of protracted procurement (multiple reviews of the FiT), a CSO will be sought to promptly procure the installation of these arrays.	Property and Procurement Manager
Asset Management	Energy reduction and the opportunity to introduce renewable energy generation is an important element of good asset management.	Property and Procurement Manager

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A – Aylesbury Vale District Council report.

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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet member decision 27th February 2015.