

Maidstone 2020

'The strategy for the community'

The Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone Borough 2009-2020



Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone Borough 2009-2020

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Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone Borough 2009-2020

1. Introduction

1.1 *Duty of the council to produce a sustainable community strategy*

1.2.1 The Local Government Act 2000ⁱ placed a duty on every local authority to prepare a community strategy 'for promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom.' It is the overarching plan for the area.

1.2 *What is a sustainable community strategy?*

1.2.1 'The purpose of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) is to set the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of a local area – typically 10-20 years – in a way that contributes to sustainable development in the UK. It tells the 'story of the place' – the distinctive vision and ambition of the area, backed by clear evidence and analysis.' It is partially based on the priorities identified in the plans and strategies of all the partner organisations working within the area (see Appendix B), and itself provides the direction and framework for next generation of those plans and strategies moving forward. The strategy needs to take account of the needs of the whole community. This includes disabled people, young and older people, people on low incomes and those who live in rural areas.

1.3 *Definitions of sustainable development*

1.3.1 'The goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generationsⁱⁱ.'

1.3.2 For a local priority or policy to be sustainable, it should respect five principlesⁱⁱⁱ:

- ✓ living within environmental limits
- ✓ a strong, healthy and just society
- ✓ achieving a sustainable economy
- ✓ promoting good governance
- ✓ using sound science responsibly

1.4 *Produced in conjunction with the LSP*

1.4.1 'The starting point for delivering better outcomes is for local partners, in the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), to create a shared vision and shared sense of priorities for a place. The vision will be set out in a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), which will describe how people who live and work there want it to change over time.' Maidstone's LSP was established in 2001 to develop Maidstone's first community strategy and has since been instrumental in its

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implementation. It has for the last year been involved in developing its successor. For full details of the LSP see Appendix A.

1.5 Local Area Agreement (LAA)

1.5.1 The SCS is written in the context of the LAA which is an agreement between national government and the organisations in a local area (county or unitary/metropolitan council areas) to focus on 54 key priority outcomes/targets over a three year period. Kent agreed its second LAA – the Kent Agreement 2 (KA2) – in June 2008. KA2 is comprised of four key blocks:

- children and young people,
- safe and strong communities,
- healthier communities and older people,
- economic development and sustainable communities.

1.5.2 As part of the LAA in Kent, districts have been asked to develop Local Action Plans (LAP) with their local partners (For a summary see Appendix B Plans and strategies -.for full details of the Maidstone LAP see background documents). The Maidstone LAP is based on targets from KA2 that were considered of particular relevance to Maidstone:

| KENT'S PRIORITIES | ADOPTED BY MBC AS HIGH PRIORITY |
|--|---|
| Economic success | NI 163 Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 2 or higher NI 171 New business registration rate |
| Learning for everyone | NI 117 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) |
| Improved health, care & wellbeing | NI 39 Rate of Hospital Admissions per 100,000 for Alcohol Related Harm |
| Environmental excellence | NI 191 Residual household waste per household |
| Stronger & safer communities | NI 15 Serious Violent Crime Rate NI 21 Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police |
| Enjoying life | NI 110 Young people's participation in positive activities |
| Keeping kent moving | NI 47 People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents |
| High quality homes | NI 154 Net additional homes provided NI 141 Percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living |
| DCSF statutory indicators | NI 75 Achievement of 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including |

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| | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| | English and Maths (Threshold) |
|--|-------------------------------|

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2. Narrative of place/Maidstone Borough – where we are now

2.1 Maidstone Borough, which covers 40,000 hectares, sits at the heart of Kent, positioned between London and the Channel ports and is home to 143,000 people. Maidstone, as the County Town of Kent, is the administrative and retail capital. The Borough combines the services provided by a large urban area with excellent schools, shopping and a general hospital with a very attractive rural area, including the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB), with thriving villages some of which have brand new community centres, sporting facilities and farmers' markets supplied by a buoyant horticultural/fruit growing sector – truly the garden of England. Housing in Maidstone town has traditionally been considered relatively affordable compared to the south east average, but this is not the case in rural Maidstone and for those on average or low incomes.

2.2 Transport links are generally good although rail travel could still be improved. Rail journey times to London from some of the smaller market towns (Headcorn, Staplehurst and Marden) are as low as 40 minutes but have recently increased to over an hour from Maidstone itself. The Borough is well served by the motorway network with the M20 and M2 both providing links to the M25 and the Channel Ports. The international high speed railway stations at Ebbsfleet (15 mins) and Ashford (25 mins) are also extremely accessible. However, congestion is an issue (see 3.5 Challenges facing Maidstone). The bus transport network (including Park and Ride) serving Maidstone town is relatively strong whilst rural transport presents distinct challenges.

2.3 Maidstone Borough has high rates of employment, low levels of adults claiming incapacity benefits and a higher proportion of residents who have a degree than the South East average. Larger numbers of people commute into than out of the Borough. The Borough has a very mixed business sector with large numbers of small and medium size businesses with particular strengths in professional services (law and accountancy) and construction. There is a growing media industry led by Maidstone Studios and the Kent Messenger Group. Both the county and Borough councils have been judged 'Excellent' in recent assessments by the government's Audit Commission. Maidstone has an extensive further education campus (Mid Kent College) and a growing higher education offer with both the University for the Creative Arts and Mid Kent College seeking to increase their range of courses and facilities. Residents living in the Borough have relatively high wages (although many higher earners commute out of the Borough to achieve these).

2.4 Maidstone has the largest town centre shopping offer within Kent with approximately 700 shops, 75 cafes and restaurants, around 4,400 employees based within the town centre and is ranked as the 38th most desired shopping location within the United Kingdom. It is forecast to remain a top shopping locality. The Borough also boasts the largest night time economy within Kent, creating £75 million a year and 1,500 jobs. Additionally, rural Maidstone also has plenty to offer, with picturesque and thriving villages and small market towns, museums, gardens, antique shops and medieval churches. Leeds Castle, for example, is a thriving tourist attraction and international conference venue

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having hosted key Middle East peace talks in the past. Most recently it has become renowned for its open air concerts.

2.5 Maidstone is an exceptionally green Borough. As well as Mote Park, Maidstone's largest park, Grade II on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks, and home to thriving rugby and cricket clubs, and Whatman Park on the River Medway, the largest of three new Millennium parks and greens within the Borough, there are numerous smaller parks and squares within the town and villages which have benefited from a major play ground and sports facility investment programme in recent years. Maidstone Leisure Centre in Mote Park is the largest in Kent with five swimming pools and other sports facilities.

2.6 Overall crime has fallen within the Borough and is low compared to other areas in Kent,. During public consultation a number of individuals positively commented on the adequacy of policing within the Borough, and the benefits that neighbourhood policing systems have had within particular areas.

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3. Issues

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The previous section gives a positive picture of Maidstone Borough. However, action still needs to be taken by the agencies working together in Maidstone to address some major issues. As well as consulting with local people and organisations, the new sustainable community strategy is strongly evidence based using neighbourhood statistics and rigorous research.

3.1.2 The key building blocks for the new SCS this year have been:

- An examination of regional, sub-regional (county) plans and policies and the key plans and strategies of the Borough Council and other organisations in the Borough to identify what issues arise and where there may be 'gaps' in provision.
- An examination of the results of a range of community engagement/consultation exercises undertaken over the last year including Parish Plans.
- An examination of a range of statistical information on Maidstone, particularly deprivation indices, including the current LAA priority indicators, summarised in the Maidstone Profile.
- An examination of the results of a series of stakeholder workshops undertaken with the LSP over the last six months.

3.1.3 These four pieces of work were combined into an issues and choices report (see background documents). This report was formally reported to Maidstone Borough Council's Cabinet in October and informed an LSP Visioning workshop held in the same month.

3.2 Other plans and strategies - introduction

3.2.1 The statutory guidance states that the SCS is the **overarching** plan for promoting and improving the well being of an area. Additionally, the Local Government White paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' emphasised the SCS and other existing strategies and plans must take account of each other. A brief description of the additional key strategies and plans, and their particular relevance to Maidstone Borough, is therefore given to enable insight of how these will influence and be influenced by the SCS, and to enable an understanding of how these strategies and plans will support each other. Fuller descriptions of the plans are given in the Appendix B. The objectives and actions identified within each of the plans are not exhaustive.

3.2.2 Below is a diagram showing the relationship the SCS has with other existing plans and strategies.

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South east regional plans

3.2.3 Maidstone's role as a 'primary town centre' and a 'regional hub', and its successful bid for Growth Point Status (see Appendix B.10) is recognised in regional plans and strategies. In designating Maidstone a Growth Point the Government expected the Borough to provide 10,080 (this figure may be amended by the Government to 11,080 in the final adopted Plan) homes between 2006 and 2026, and a sustainable community. In return Government would provide grant aid for the provision of infrastructure. However, the Borough is not accorded the same status as the Thames Gateway and Ashford Growth Areas which are receiving the majority of government investment for

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regeneration, improved infrastructure and employment. While Growth Point Status is significant, Maidstone will have to lobby hard and rely on its own strengths as a natural business, transport, retail, leisure, administrative and service centre and its excellent 'quality of life' for residents, both in the town and its smaller towns and villages, to continue to thrive in a challenging economic climate. Maidstone is recognised in the South East Plan as a location for growth in high quality employment. Also that new development should be used to regenerate the town. Additionally the South East Plan still envisages the gap between Maidstone and the Medway Towns be protected as well as the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the countryside generally. Regional plans focus on regenerating areas and supporting communities in the South East that are struggling. These tend to be concentrated along the coast of Kent and Sussex, in the resort towns such as Margate and Hastings, the former naval/industrial complexes along the Thames and Medway, and the regions small cities such as Brighton and Hove. While mention is given to the need to tackle pockets of 'deprivation' in urban and rural areas throughout the south east, the very significant issues faced by a small minority of urban communities in Maidstone are not directly recognised. This has meant that the areas of Maidstone that struggle, have had to do so without government investment and as a lesser priority – this has resulted in issues becoming more, rather than less acute, despite the relevant affluence of the last few years. The needs of an aging population are also widely examined. For details of the Maidstone Policy in the South East Plan, see Appendix B Plans and Strategies.

Sub-regional/Kent-wide plans

3.2.4 Sub-regional plans generally associate Maidstone with the more affluent west of the county where household incomes, health and life expectancy are better rather than the east. However, issues such as congestion and its impact on air quality and the local economy, the need to match improvements in infrastructure and resources (ie water scarcity) with housing growth and health inequalities are recognised. Maidstone's thriving leisure and retail economy, its key rural services centres – 'the natural place to do business' – are recognised. Again the issues facing Maidstone of the influence of the growth areas of Ashford and Thames Gateway are recognised as well as the need to continue to attract high quality residential, employment and commercial development. The recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment of Health take focuses on the need to address health inequalities ie the differences in the health of people living in the most and least affluent parts of an area and so has had a strong link to the cross cutting objective in the SCS: '***To tackle health, education and employment inequalities in areas of disadvantage.***' Particular focus is also given to the impact on public health and services of an aging population. In terms of children and young people, there is a strong recognition of the links between poverty and educational attainment, emotional and psychological difficulties and their future well-being (particularly for young carers) and how these impact on their adult lives. Poor educational attainment skills and qualifications, for a small but significant minority, are recognised. The environment is generally considered good, albeit with concerns over transport and congestion. However, climate change – particularly the vulnerability of Kent to flood, drought and extreme

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heat events, is given a high priority. Waste is considered and Maidstone's relatively low recycling rates and high household waste arisings highlighted.

3.2.5 Hence at this level, the key priorities identified are:

- Tackling congestion and its impact on air quality and the local economy.
- The need to match improvements in infrastructure and resources with housing growth.
- Developing Maidstone's thriving leisure and retail economy and its role as 'the natural place to do business' in Kent.
- Supporting the development of rural service centres.
- Responding to the influence of the growth areas of Ashford and the Thames Gateway including continuing to attract high quality residential, employment and commercial development and to regenerate the Town.
- Tackle health inequalities.
- Tackling child poverty and its impact on educational attainment.
- Responding to the challenge of climate change and its impact.
- Improving waste collection and recycling.

Maidstone focussed plans

3.2.6 The economy, skills and the need to attract inward investment are given a high priority in Maidstone's recently published Economic Development Strategy. Again the need to tackle congestion as a potential threat to Maidstone's future economy is raised and the opportunity that development of further and higher education offers. Housing growth by 10,080 homes by 2026 and its potential to unlock investment in infrastructure is a significant feature of the Growth Point bid – while acknowledging that population growth by 24,800 to 167,000 by 2026 from its current levels at 143,000 will bring significant challenges, particularly for community based services and facilities. The thriving leisure industry in Maidstone is acknowledged but also the issues that this brings around anti-social behaviour and alcohol. The desire to develop a more family oriented leisure offer is a key aspiration. A particular challenge is that some parts of the town and estates, including those in larger villages, have levels of teenage pregnancy, young people without skills and jobs, educational attainment, and involvement of young people in crime amongst the worst in the county. The town centre has very high levels of alcohol related admissions to hospital and drug related crime. Plans and measures are in place to tackle these issues but this will be a particular focus of the SCS and as such '***To tackle health, education and employment inequalities in areas of disadvantage.***' has been identified as a cross cutting theme. Tackling inequalities is also a high priority in terms of health. Health plans tend to focus on the larger geographic area of West Kent but the developing 'Choosing Health' Plan for Maidstone has identified the following priorities; Reduction in smoking prevalence, contribute to downward trend for reduction in obesity prevalence, reduce the harm caused by alcohol and substance misuse, improving mental health and well being, older people in the Borough, improving sexual health and reducing teenage pregnancy. The

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delivery of additional housing both affordable and open market is identified in the emerging Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2006-2026. The potential for housing growth to unlock investment in strategic and community based infrastructure is a significant possibility. New development should aid in the regeneration of the urban area and the countryside should be protected.

3.2.7 The beauty and benefits of Maidstone's rural landscapes are identified in the Borough Council's (Saved) Local Plan and emerging LDF Core Strategy in particular – the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Special Landscape Areas of the Low Weald and Green Sand Ridge – the importance of horticultural and agricultural businesses, and the network of large and smaller village communities and how these need to be nurtured as they develop, is acknowledged both in the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan and the growing number of community led Parish Plans. The latter have been particularly effective in identifying local issues such as speeding and post office loss and implementing improvements in services and facilities – new local needs housing, community centres and youth activities – but the impact of the 2012 Olympics on lottery and other funding may limit their ability to continue to contribute to the future sustainability of rural communities. The SCS will need to be able to highlight issues both in the town and suburbs of Maidstone and the rural communities and develop objectives and actions to tackle these.

3.3 Community engagement and consultation

3.3.1 Particular weight is given in the strategy to the importance of community engagement and public consultation - local people's input into the decision making process and shaping future service changes. Improvements made to services should reflect the needs and aspirations of local residents. The focus group below identified: 'Residents feel strongly that consulting and involving them is important, and most welcomed the opportunity to give their views during the group discussions. Short focussed discussions and more involved workshops are seen as the most effective way of consulting residents, although some acknowledged that it would be hard for many to find the time to attend. There is also a strong emphasis on feedback – many make wanting to feel confident that their views have really been listened to as a condition of involvement.' According to the 2006 Best Value Performance Survey of councils only 30% of local residents were 'satisfied with opportunities for participation in decision making – slightly above the Kent average of 28% but below best in Kent of 34%.The results of these activities are summarised below in the order in which they took place.

IPSOS MORI focus groups

3.3.2 IPSOS MORI was commissioned to undertake a series of focus groups with local residents looking at issues highlighted in the previous community strategy in December 2007. Key findings of this research included:

- 'On the whole, most residents are positive about living in Maidstone and this sentiment is particularly prevalent among younger age groups.'
- 'While there is a perception that the town of Maidstone is "livelier" than some other towns, places and areas in Kent – and that it has much to

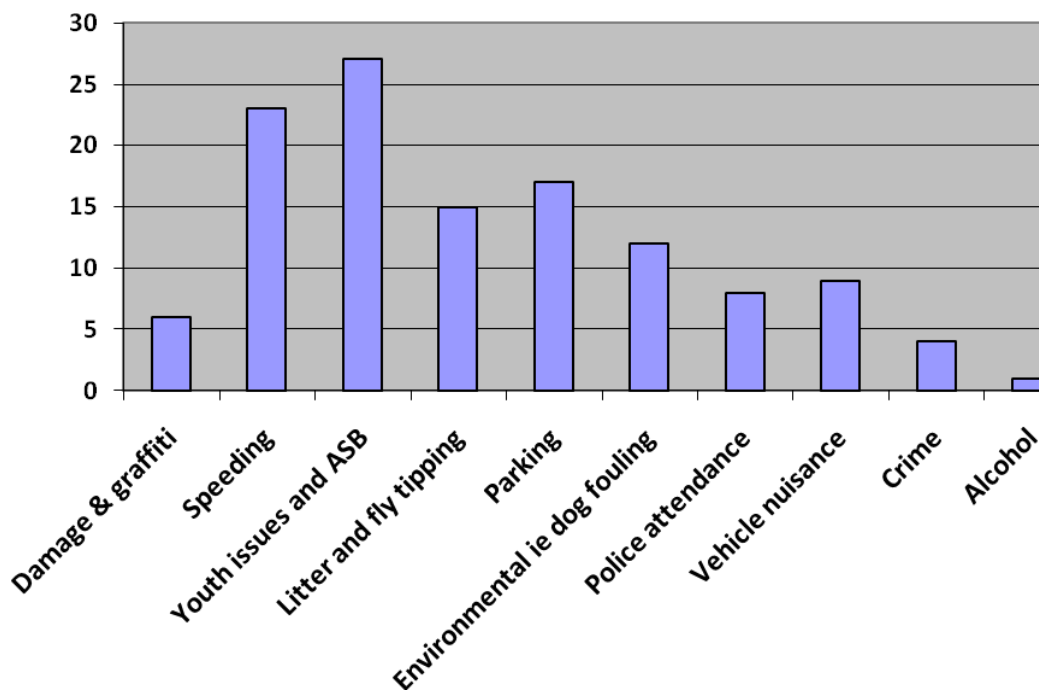
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offer in terms of restaurants, bars and shopping – older residents tend to be more critical, citing crime and litter as key concerns.'

- 'Transport is a major issue for both older and younger residents and across different socio-economic groups.'
- 'Housing and land use are also regarded as big issues for the Borough now and in the future with many fearful that the rate of development is "turning Maidstone into a city" – something most are keen to avoid.'

Partnerships and Communities Together

3.3.3 In a parallel project to parish plans in 2007, the police led a multi-agency community engagement programme called Partners and Communities Together (PACT). Surveys were undertaken in local neighbourhoods and the results presented to public meetings held afterwards attended by the public, local representatives and partners including the police, Borough and County Council. The aim of PACT is to identify and address issues raised at a local level. *A study of PACT results showed the following top issues emerging from PACT meetings across Maidstone Borough 2007/8:*



Stick Up for Maidstone

3.3.4 Stick up for Maidstone was developed and carried out between June – September 2008. This consultation was created with the aim of being participative, asking members of the public to write something 'good', something 'bad', 'a dream', and something 'green' about Maidstone Borough on post-it notes and 'sticking them up' onto a notice boards. The exercise was carried out at ten different public events / locations, and over 600 people participated generating 2,400 separate comments. Venues and events included a partnership conference in March, the Chequers Mall shopping centre as part of Green week in June, the Shepway Fete and the River Festival in July and the County Show,

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Mela (multi-cultural music, dance and food festival) and Peace One Day (youth music event) in September. An online version of the consultation has been produced and is available for further public comments at <http://www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/SUFM/>.

3.3.5 The top three positive comments related to Maidstone included shopping, parks and the river. Other positive comments related to 'cleanliness', the countryside and nightlife. The top three negative comments related to traffic congestion and public transport and the quality of roads. Other negative comments related to litter, parking and planning. The top three dreams related to resolving transport issues, improving the river and an improved theatre/concert facility.

Place survey

3.3.6 This survey, commissioned by Maidstone Borough Council on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership was sent to 5000 households and resulted in nearly 2000 responses. The survey took place in November 2008 and was replicated in all Kent districts. The survey is almost wholly based on a template provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government although it did allow for a few locally generated questions. The survey aims to ascertain satisfaction with a local area and services but also the levels of civic participation. Although the results of the survey have yet to be published initial findings suggest:

- Most important in making somewhere a good place to live are: The level of crime (49%), health services (43%), clean streets (38%), public transport (29%), affordable decent housing (28%), access to nature (26%), shopping facilities (26%), education provision (26%), parks and open spaces (25%) and level of congestion (24%).
- However, most in need of improving (in Maidstone Borough) are: road and pavement repairs (48%), levels of congestion (47%), activities for teenagers (41%), public transport (25%), the level of crime (22%) and clean streets (21%).
- 86% of people are satisfied with Maidstone as a place to live.
- 25% of people give unpaid help to local clubs, societies, community activities and charities.
- 82% of people think Maidstone is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.
- 60% would like to be more involved in the decisions that affect their local area.

Conclusions community engagement/public consultation

3.3.7 There seems to be a strong consensus across all the community engagement and public consultation on the key issues for Maidstone although there is a slight difference in the priority. Overwhelmingly transport issues are a high priority, activities and services for young people and crime are a high

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priority. However, it should be noted, from the Place Survey, that while crime is ranked first when people were asked which is 'Most important in making somewhere a good place to live', when asked which is 'most in need of improving' (in Maidstone Borough) crime is ranked fifth with less than a quarter of respondents putting it in their top five. Road and pavement repairs was ranked first for most in need of improving. Parking and litter is raised as a concern in many parish plans, PACT and Stick Up for Maidstone. When comparing these results with the statistical evidence, while there is strong correlation particularly over improving transport and facilities for young people, the results for crime suggest that the statistical reduction in crime is still not resulting in improved public confidence. Enhancing the riverside and making more of Maidstone's position on the River Medway is also a recurring theme in local surveys.

3.4 Statistical evidence

3.4.1 Over the summer of 2008, a statistical profile or evidence base was developed in support of the work on developing the SCS (Maidstone Profile). This aimed to look at the most recent data available on the Borough, both at a Borough level and at (where available) ward/neighbourhood level. Where possible three years worth of data was sought so that trends could be identified and comparisons in performance/data were made with other Kent districts, against county, regional and national averages. While these identified a great many strengths, they also highlighted a number of issues for Maidstone. It is envisaged that these will be revisited annually in the form of a report card in order to demonstrate where positive progress has been made and where further work and potentially resources need to be focussed. To follow is a summary of the main points. These are dealt with in more detail in the individual topics within the SCS and also in the profile itself which is available online. The data is listed under the topic headings of the SCS. The data makes extensive use of the new National Indicator (NI) set developed by the Audit Commission, National Office of Statistics and Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG).

Economy and prosperity

3.4.2 NI data and supplementary data from Official Labour Market Statistics indicate that Maidstone is generally performing well economically. New business rate registrations in particular remain higher than Kent and England averages, suggesting that Maidstone is viewed as an attractive location to establish a new business. Evidently this is an area in which the Borough is performing particularly well. By comparison, when assessing data showing the numbers of those who made claims for Job Seekers Allowance during May 2008, it is evident that there are a number of wards that experienced notably higher levels of claimants than others. In particular Park Wood and High Street produced the largest number of claimants, with Shepway South, North Downs, Shepway North and Fant also having a high number of people making claims.

3.4.3 Residents of Maidstone receive higher weekly earnings than the average weekly earnings for the South East and Great Britain. However, those who are employed within Maidstone receive lower weekly earnings than the average of the South East and Great Britain. This suggests that a significant number of those that reside within Maidstone commute to different locations where

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earnings are higher. It may therefore be worth assessing how to make Maidstone a more attractive working environment for the resident population and business, to improve locally based employment opportunities of Maidstone. Data also demonstrates that there are larger numbers of people commuting into the Borough than there are commuting out, suggesting that Maidstone remains an attractive local employment area. Maidstone has a higher proportion of residents with lower level qualifications than the South East average, suggesting a need to increase skills and training..

Sustainable and integrated transport

3.4.3 Although Maidstone benefits from relatively good connectivity in terms of motorways and rail – the latter is threatened with a reduction in services. The Borough suffers from high levels of traffic which causes congestion problems, particularly in the town centre. This impacts on the economy and also has a negative impact upon air quality which can be damaging to the health of local people.

Crime, confidence and safety

3.4.4 Overall crime is low in Maidstone and falling. However, data demonstrates that Maidstone saw an increase in the number of violent offences that occurred between 2003 and 2006. Despite this, Maidstone is not performing particularly badly within this area compared to other Boroughs within Kent. However, fear of crime appears to be high compared to the actual crime rate.

3.4.5 In relation to road safety however, Maidstone had the highest number of people in Kent that were killed or seriously injured on the roads between 2005 and 2007. It also saw the largest increase in numbers. In 2007 11 more people were killed or seriously injured in Maidstone than in Sevenoaks, which had the second highest numbers.

Health and older people

3.4.6 Maidstone appears to perform relatively typically in comparison to other Kent Boroughs, within all of the key areas assessed for health. Nevertheless, this is an area in which there are again differences within the Borough at ward level, with typically the socially and economically disadvantaged wards having lower standards of health than those that are more affluent. Attention should focus on raising standards generally, narrowing or removing this inequalities gap. It has also been reported that mental health plays a significant role in relation to physical well being, and the importance of encouraging good mental health.

Children, young people and families

3.4.7 Data demonstrates that Maidstone has a relatively high number of 16 – 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). In 2008 Maidstone had the fourth highest NEET rate when compared to the other districts in the county, and therefore also had a higher average rate than Kent. It has also become apparent that there are particular wards within the Borough that have much higher NEET levels than others. The highest of which is Park Wood, followed by High Street, Shepway South and Shepway North. This suggests that there are specific wards within the Borough which may require greater focus than others.

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3.4.8 During 2008 Maidstone had the third highest numbers of entrants into the youth justice system of any district in Kent, and experienced a significant increase in numbers between 2007 and 2008. It is evident that there are some wards which have significantly higher numbers of young offenders. High Street has the highest rates, followed by Shepway South and Park Wood wards.

3.4.9 Though the Borough has a higher proportion of school leavers achieving five or more A* - C grade GCSEs, there are considerable differences between the performance of particular schools within the Borough. Four secondary schools performed below the 30% threshold set by national government.

Homes and communities

3.4.10 Maidstone provided the second highest number of new homes of any district in Kent during 2006/07. However, the Borough is struggling to provide the level of housing need indicated as being necessary by the Housing Needs Survey 2005. The importance of preventing homelessness should also be acknowledged, particularly in light of recent economic down turn, and the consequences that may result from this. This is particularly important when juxtaposed with the currently increasing elderly population who may be considered more vulnerable in terms of the risk of homelessness. The strategic approach is particularly important considering the close relationship of housing needs as with planning and economic circumstances.

Sport, creativity and culture

3.4.11 In 2006 Maidstone had the 2nd highest adult participation in sport and recreation rate in Kent after Sevenoaks. The rate is also above the average for England. However, this still only amounts to 22% of the adult population. There is strong clinical evidence that individuals who participate in regular physical exercise experience better physical and mental health. Physical activity improves self esteem and self worth, and in some situations is used as an effective treatment for those with mental health problems. However, according to the 2008 Maidstone Health Profile, the percentage of children taking school based exercise is low and is worse than for England as a whole. This data suggests that there should be a focus on encouraging children to take more exercise.

Environmental excellence and climate change

3.4.12 Attention has been given here to the possible impacts that climate change may have upon Maidstone. The recent Strategic Flood Risk Assessment highlights the importance of the installation and maintenance of adequate drainage or sustainable urban drainage (SUDs), particularly when considering the planning of new development. A second aspect considered is that of carbon emissions. The largest proportion of Maidstone Borough's carbon emissions come from industrial and commercial activity with lesser but still significant emissions from transport and domestic energy use. However, air quality particularly that related to road transport and congestion is a significant issue. Per capita carbon emissions dropped slightly between 2005 and 2006. Maidstone Borough Council reduced its own carbon emission rates between 2006/07 and 2007/08.

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Conclusions - Statistical evidence

3.4.15 Maidstone tends to perform well compared to national, regional and county averages for most indicator sets from health to education and the economy. However, there are some neighbourhoods that are struggling. This is highlighted by education results. There is also a link between poverty and educational attainment. Teenage pregnancy is another area where although the rate is below the Kent average, it is rising and the rates are very high in a small number of wards. This issue of inequalities is therefore to be tackled in a cross cutting way in the SCS and objectives and actions to tackle inequalities will appear in most topic areas (see Part 5 Topics).

3.4.16 However, there are a small number of issues where Maidstone performs significantly below the Kent average across the board, and these issues are of particular priority in the SCS. These include:

- the numbers killed and seriously injured on the roads,
- the numbers of young people known to the criminal justice system,
- and the numbers of young people not in education training and employment.

3.5 Challenges facing Maidstone

3.5.1 The Borough's economy has much potential for improvement. Maidstone's residents tend to have weekly earnings that are higher than the South East average; nevertheless, the Borough's workers on average receive a lower average weekly wage than the average of the South East. The Borough's economy also experiences relatively low levels of productivity as a result of lower levels of innovation and higher earning specialisms. It is considered that the lack of innovation within the economy is hindered by the limited higher education provision although this is set to grow. Having said that, the University for the Creative Arts which has a campus at Oakwood Park, is recognised at a local, regional, national, and international level as offering specialist courses, and having strong links with the creative and cultural industries.

3.5.2 Congestion problems are prevalent within the town centre with resultant air quality implications and the problem is exacerbated by Operation Stack which disrupts businesses and residents within the Borough. The problem is shared with other districts within Kent. Public consultation revealed that a large proportion of Maidstone's local people view the transport system and particularly the accessibility of public transport, as inadequate. Additionally during the last three years there has been a steady increase in the number of people who are killed or seriously injured on the Borough's roads. Maidstone now has the highest number of casualties (people killed or seriously injured) of any district in Kent.

3.5.3 Although the Borough had the second highest number of new houses built in 2008 compared to other Kent districts, there is currently a significant short fall between the number of houses built, and total housing need – the 2005 Housing Needs Survey indicated that there was a need for 920 additional

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affordable homes a year, which is currently not met. Due to financial constraints, the housing authority Maidstone Borough Council cannot achieve these targets alone. Maidstone, as the county town, houses relatively high numbers of vulnerable people compared to other Kent districts. Home repossession is likely to become more frequent as a result of the recent economic climate.

3.5.4 11% of Maidstone's population live within areas which fall into the most disadvantaged 20% in the country across a broad range of issues, as identified by the government's Index of Multiple Deprivation. Men from the most disadvantaged areas of the Borough live on average five years less than those from the most affluent areas. These areas experience higher levels of teenage pregnancy, lower levels of skills/qualifications, higher levels of crime and child poverty. While education in schools is generally good and improving, a few schools have experienced much poorer results. There is a strong suggestion that this is connected to child poverty. Maidstone has experienced an increase in numbers of young people entering the criminal justice system and is now in the bottom quartile in Kent for this indicator.

3.5.5 Despite overall crime falling – except in a small number of areas - local people tend to have the perception that crime rates within the Borough are higher than they actually are. This perception was supported throughout the public consultation in which a significant proportion of people commented that they were fearful of being in town at night, and felt threatened by young people's anti social behaviour.

3.5.6 Although the recent growth point status given to the Borough brings with it opportunities, the development of 10,080 new homes and increasing the population by 24,800 by 2026 will be a challenge to public service providers, on a creaking infrastructure and may exacerbate existing problems such as peak hour congestion and air quality. It may also require the development of new schools and health provision. It will certainly require the creation of new jobs and businesses and there will be the need to ensure a balance between employment provision and housing. The duration of the current recession is uncertain, this will offer further challenge as larger numbers of people may become unemployed and less able to support their families, lifestyles and the area's economy.

3.5.7 Climate change is a particular challenge, particularly the threat from extreme weather events. Maidstone Borough suffered extensive flooding in 2000, a heat wave in 2003, quickly followed by a two year drought. Increased housing provision will put a strain on water resources and further urbanisation if carried out without due care could lead to increased run off and hence flooding. Existing properties will need to be adapted to ensure potential damage is limited and new developments will have to be more robust. Furthermore, much valued green and parkland areas are at risk of being lost to allow for enough land for these developments, and it is therefore essential to ensure that, where possible, previously developed land is used for the planned expansion.

3.5.8 Also of significance is that although the introduction of the high speed rail network (High Speed 1) has the potential to benefit the Borough, it will also result in Maidstone meeting tough competition from the government's 'Growth

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Areas', Ashford and the Thames Gateway, which are currently receiving substantial public and private investment in housing, the economy and the environment. There is the potential that this will be particularly damaging to Maidstone's economy, and supports the proposals for improvements to encourage investment within the area. The proximity of Kings Hill will continue to be a challenge to Maidstone as a local growth area for high added value jobs and higher education.

3.5.9 There have been recent concerns over health care provision in the borough voiced in the media and by local politicians. Some of these relate to the transfer of health services from Maidstone Hospital to the new hospital at Pembury. Most recently concerns have related to the very high levels of transmission of secondary infectious diseases at Maidstone Hospital that resulted in a number of deaths, a Health Care Commission investigation and ultimately in the resignation of the Chief Executive. According to the Health Care Commission in 2007 Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust provided a weak quality of service to patients and failed to maintain the adequate standard of performance it achieved the previous year. It continued to be weak at managing its finances. However, it was commended for bringing about a turn around in the control of infectious diseases. The Primary Care Trust (now West Kent NHS) was recently assessed as providing only an adequate quality of service to patients. It was weak at managing its finances. The PCT has just come through two major restructures.

3.5.10 While concerted action is being taken at a local level by a partnership of public, private, voluntary, community and faith organisations to address many of these issues, there is the risk that the problems currently experienced within the Borough may worsen, particularly through lack of investment. Government funding has focussed in the last ten years on areas where issues of disadvantage are widespread and this has led to much less investment in Boroughs such as Maidstone which are generally affluent, but still have significant pockets of disadvantage. Maidstone missed out on regeneration funding (Single Regeneration Budget), and on Sure Start aimed at improving early years' education and improving the life chances of the most vulnerable children and their families. The recession may act further to disadvantage these areas should unemployment see an increase. Finally, an aging population may lead to an increase in the proportion of the population dependant on public services for their care, health and housing unless their independence can be maintained and enhanced.

3.6 *The opportunities for Maidstone*

3.6.1 Maidstone is home to 143,000 people, 8.8 percent of the people in Kent and Medway, and this is set to increase to 167,600 people by 2026 with 10,080 additional homes. Maidstone has been identified as a Growth Point by national government (Department of Communities and Local Government) and in the Regional Spatial Strategy and is set to receive £5 million in Growth Point funding to be focussed on delivering physical, social and cultural infrastructure projects to support the early delivery of housing as the main priority but also the creation of sustainable communities. This presents opportunities to improve the Borough's infrastructure while increasing the numbers of affordable homes and up-skilling the workforce within the Borough. The building of these new

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developments also offers the opportunity to help tackle social exclusion and promote economic, social and environmental wellbeing. The planned urban extension (Core Strategy - Preferred Spatial Option to the south east of the town) that results from the Growth Point status offers the possibility to create more sustainable patterns of development with well planned infrastructure and good access to local facilities.

3.6.2 The SCS should also provide the opportunity for delivering improvements to Maidstone's transport system, in particular decreasing the number of vehicles on the road. As well as local initiatives such as increasing the uptake of Park and Ride, the power of wellbeing and the new Sustainable Communities Act (see Appendix C) provide the opportunity for the LSP to tackle long standing issues such as plans to build a South East Maidstone Strategic Link Road (formerly Leeds and Langley bypass) in new and innovative ways.

3.6.3 The introduction of the new high speed rail service in Kent (High Speed 1), timetabled to begin running in December 2009, will significantly reduce the travel time into London via Ashford and Ebbsfleet. If adequate connections can be provided between Maidstone, Ebbsfleet and Ashford this new service could increase the attractiveness of the area, particularly for economic purposes.

3.6.4 Enhancement of the local economy may also be achieved through the expansion of higher education services. Possible expansion of the University for the Creative Arts is currently being discussed, and encouragement is given to the expansion of Mid Kent College.

3.6.5 It has been predicted that over the next twenty years the United Kingdom will experience significant changes in demographic patterns. Most notable is the expected sharp increase in the proportion of older people, and a decrease in the number of children. An increase in the proportion of able bodied older people suggests there will be additional people who will be willing to participate in voluntary activity and other community based activities.

3.6.7 Finally, in 2012 London will be hosting the Olympic Games which have provided much business opportunity within the United Kingdom. The focus given to the games will provide the possibility for encouraging healthier life styles for children and adults within the Borough, and increasing awareness of the importance of exercise and healthy eating.

3.7 *The current economic climate*

3.7.1 The national economic picture is challenging. The UK's economy has been in recession, consumer confidence is low, house prices have fallen and increasing numbers of people have found themselves without jobs as businesses have had to cut costs or have failed. The Government have taken a number of steps to stimulate the economy, including cutting interest rates. Regeneration, the promotion of prosperity and neighbourhood planning are priorities to help tackle inequality and poor living standards, as well as improving the prospects in disadvantaged areas by attracting investment from businesses. Construction and finance industries have been hit hard by the economic downturn. Ensuring everyone has access to education and skills training remains a top priority for the government and Maidstone Borough Council in terms of narrowing the

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equality gap and ensuring the UK has a workforce that has the skills required to meet the needs of the economy.

3.7.2 The objectives and targets within Maidstone's SCS may require future amendment as a result of the recession. The current economic down turn may result in deficits in the funds public sector organisations and the local partners, which consequently may limit the areas in which investment is possible, and restrict attention to areas with a high prioritisation. Additionally, the needs of the public may also change during this period, and the SCS might need to be refreshed to ensure that it reflects these needs. The vision contained within the SCS is aspirational, and it may be that economic down turn may mean that some aspects of this aspiration are unachievable. Therefore the Council and its partners need to consider carefully the required level of infrastructure required to support future growth and prosperity, in doing so the LSP and its partners will work closely to support a robust approach to infrastructure planning.

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4. Vision and objectives

4.1 Vision for Maidstone

We want Maidstone Borough to be a vibrant, prosperous 21st century urban and rural community at the heart of Kent, where its distinctive character is enhanced to create a safe, healthy, excellent environment with high quality education and employment where all people can realise their aspirations.

4.2 Vision related objectives

- Develop a vibrant economy, create prosperity and opportunities for all.*
- To develop an efficient, sustainable, integrated transport system.*
- Build stronger and safer communities.*
- Create healthier communities and support older people to lead more active and independent lives.*
- Make Maidstone Borough a place where people of all ages - children, young people and families - can achieve their aspirations.*
- Develop Maidstone Borough's urban and rural communities as models for 21st Century quality and sustainable living.*
- Build a thriving sporting, creative and cultural life for all.*
- Retain and enhance Maidstone Borough's distinctive history, landscape and character.*

4.3 Cross cutting objectives:

- Tackle health, education and employment inequalities in areas of disadvantage.*

4.3.1 Approximately 11% of Maidstone's population live within areas which are amongst the most disadvantaged 20% in the country. The issues faced by the people living in these areas are manifested in a number of different ways and the economic downturn is likely to exacerbate these. For this reason it is necessary to bring together an Inequalities Task Group to examine and tackle the problems and opportunities that exist in these areas. The council is therefore looking at an approach of neighbourhood planning in conjunction with the residents for these areas of high need including parts of: Park Wood, Shepway North and South and High Street Wards (Also see all topics).

- Establish Maidstone Borough's reputation as a place for environmental excellence and action on climate.*

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4.3.2 The quality of the environment impacts on people's quality of life, health and the attractiveness of an area to inward investment. While Maidstone has a high quality environment there are issues particularly relating to traffic, air quality and the impact of climate change. These are dealt with across all the topics and in detail in Topic 8: Environmental excellence and climate change.

4.3.3 An area not dealt with in detail in the draft SCS was the need for public agencies to be more engaged with residents on improving and developing services. More than 60% of respondents to the Place Survey felt they couldn't influence decisions affecting their local area. It is therefore recommended to include a new cross cutting objective:

- ***Public agencies and their partners to undertake a programme of continuous community engagement and work with communities to resolve their issues at the community level.'***

4.4 From objectives to action

4.4.1 Having developed the Vision and Objectives, it is necessary to identify detailed objectives, related to the issues and the necessary actions and targets, to enable these to be achieved. These have been arranged in topics each linked to the vision. The topics are as follows:

1. Economy and prosperity
2. Sustainable and integrated transport
3. Crime, confidence and safety
4. Health and older people
5. Children, young people and families
6. Homes and communities
7. Sport, creativity and culture
8. Environmental excellence and climate change

4.4.2 The actions related to the objectives can only come forward in a partnership between the council and all the necessary Agencies, the full commitment of the Local Strategic Partnership, to fulfil the actions . The action plans for individual topics identify:

- the issues,
- the resulting objectives,
- the significant actions required
- and where possible, the targets that the partnership would like to see achieved.

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4.4.3 The actions are based upon what is being carried out currently or in the near future (the duration of the LAA), what action will be taken in three years time, and what will be done in five or more year's time. Parts of the action plan will be developed as part of the consultation process. A significant number of these actions will be covered in greater detail within the detailed action plans of partners or partnerships such as the Crime and Disorder Reduction Plan. The intention is not to duplicate these plans, there should be synergy between the SCS and other plans in the Borough. However, the SCS should also provide challenge to partners to 'do better' for the benefit of the people of Maidstone.

4.4.4 For the consultation summary of the strategy, a set of key actions were highlighted. These are ranked according to the responses so far received. Respondents were asked to prioritise their top three:

| Our key actions are: | |
|--|-----|
| Increase youth facilities and services (Topic 5: Children, Young People and Families) as a means of tackling anti-social behaviour (Topic 3: Crime, Confidence and Safety) | 44% |
| Regenerate the town centre and make more of the river (Topic 1: Economy and Prosperity) | 32% |
| Pursue the construction of more affordable homes to meet local need and bring empty homes back into use (Topic 6: Homes and Communities) | 31% |
| Develop stronger licensing powers to tackle alcohol abuse and related crime (Topic 3: Crime, Confidence and Safety) | 27% |
| Develop transport and parking strategies to reduce congestion (Topic 2: Sustainable and Integrated Transport) | 26% |
| Support with schools and the county council measures to improve GCSE results in schools and preparing people for work (Topic 5: Children, Young People and Families) | 26% |
| Attract and retain higher paying employers in the Borough (Topic 1: Economy and Prosperity) | 24% |
| Work with schools to maximise the use of their facilities for sporting activities for all ages (Topic 5: Children, Young People and Families) | 24% |
| Create a task force to tackle health, education and employment inequalities in areas of disadvantage (Cross-cutting) | 22% |
| Further develop with the health service a community health programme to tackle obesity, smoking, alcohol abuse and improve sexual and mental health (Topic 4: Health and older people) | 21% |
| Campaign with the county council to reduce the high levels of deaths and injuries on the roads (Topic 2: Sustainable and Integrated Transport) | 16% |
| Develop and implement carbon reduction and climate change adaptation plans ie against flooding (Topic 8: Environmental Excellence and Climate Change) | 15% |

4.4.5 It is proposed to separate the key action 'Increase youth facilities and services' from 'as a means of tackling anti-social behaviour into two separate but related actions.

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5. Topics

5.1 Topic 1: Economy and prosperity

This topic tackles the vision related objective: ***Develop a vibrant economy, create prosperity and opportunities for all.*** We want Maidstone to have a vibrant and distinctive local economy – building on its strengths in construction, media, and businesses services. We will aim to ensure a high quality town centre with excellent leisure and retail facilities as well as continuing to recognise the strength and challenges of the night time economy. We will encourage and support the expansion of further and higher education facilities within the Borough to increase local people’s skills and decrease the number of those who are not in employment, education and training, ensuring that people of all ages and abilities are able to achieve their aspirations. The partnership will work with the significant minority of individuals and families affected by or threatened by workless-ness to identify pathways back into employment. Finally, we need to be able to respond to the economic downturn and its impact on local businesses and people.

| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|--|---|--|------|
| <p>1.1 Analysis by Gavurin Ltd identifies that Maidstone Borough has no sector specialisms, which are necessary in increasing the competitive advantage of the local economy, and stimulating inward investment. In addition, the Borough’s economy lacks innovation, with only 9 patent applications being made in the Maidstone economy in 2006. Low rates of innovation tend to be</p> | <p>Develop a more entrepreneurial and innovative local economy</p> | <p>Attract more knowledge-intensive service sector-based companies, ensuring a steady pipeline of high quality sites for commercial development.</p> <p>Engage with local agents/land owners to undertake site-by-site appraisals of secondary office accommodation and test the feasibility for conversion, demolition or refurbishment, as part of a comprehensive approach to office</p> | <p>Maintain or increase the stock of VAT registered businesses (per 1000 population)</p> | |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| closely associated with low rates of productivity and slow growth rates of the economy. | | development. | | |
| | | Prepare a prioritised, phased programme of office development, identifying sites for prime high quality office space in the town centre and for complementary edge of town development. | Strategic allocations in Core Strategy. Develop Regeneration Strategy | MBC with business partners (new business partnership to be formed including Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses). |
| 1.2 During 2007 the average weekly earnings of residents was 13.27% higher than the average weekly earnings of workers in the Borough. This indicates that there are a large number of commuters travelling out of the Borough to higher value jobs. | Increase availability of higher value jobs to residents within the Borough. | Develop a more distinctive local economy with sector specialisms – professional and business services, creative and media sector, public sector, construction, and tourism. | To increase total gross weekly workplace wages in Maidstone Borough from 2007 level of £376.80 closer to parity with the south east regional average (£392.70 in 2007) NI 166. | MBC with business partners (new business partnership to be formed including Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses). |
| 1.3 For a Borough of its' size, productivity within Maidstone is weak. Although Gross Value Added (GVA) per worker | Increase productivity/Gross Value Added per worker in the Borough. | Attract more knowledge-intensive service sector-based companies, ensuring a steady pipeline of high quality | Narrow the gap between regional GVA and Maidstone's. | MBC with business partners (new business partnership to be formed including Kent |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| has increased steadily between 1998 and 2005, seven of the 12 districts within Kent have a higher GVA per worker than Maidstone. | | sites for commercial development. | | Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses) and Locate in Kent. |
| 1.4 Maidstone currently has limited higher education provision within the Borough compared to similarly sized towns, which provides an obstacle to enhancing productivity, economic expansion and encourages those who undertake higher education courses to move out of the Borough. Although Maidstone is above the national and Kent average | Expand higher and further education within Maidstone, retain graduates, raise skills and foster innovation. | Enable the expansion and consolidation of University for the Creative Arts (UCA) in Maidstone, and the university's efforts to develop its knowledge transfer capacity. The University for the Creative Arts is recognised at a local, regional national, and international level as offering specialist courses, and having strong links with the creative and cultural industries. | Narrow gap of proportion of adults qualified to Level 2 (equivalent to 5 A*- C grades at GCSE level) from 2006 baseline 65.5% (2006) to south east average 68% by 31 st March 2011. | MBC with the University for Creative Arts (UCA) KCC, Mid Kent College, education providers with voluntary and community sector partners. |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| <p>for the rate of adults qualified to Level 2 (equivalent to 5 A*- C grades at GCSE level), there are wards, both within the urban and rural areas, which demonstrate much lower rates.</p> | | <p>Support the work of KCC, Mid Kent College and education providers in preparing for the new Diploma.</p> <p>Maximise the take up and impact of national skills programmes including Train to Gain, the Skills Pledge and other mainstream initiatives.</p> | | |
| <p>1.5 Parts of the town centre of Maidstone and some of the outlying neighbourhoods are run down</p> | <p>Regenerate the Town Centre and outlying neighbourhoods, improve the public realm and strengthen the town's interrelationship with the River.</p> | <p>Strengthen the Town Centre as an employment and retail centre through providing employment rates and improving the public realm to create a higher quality retail and leisure offer to attract and retain more expenditure in the Borough.</p> | <p>Increasing recorded footfall in town centre.</p> <p>Will be addressed in Core Strategy and Urban Area Action Plan.</p> | <p>MBC with business partners (new business partnership to be formed including Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses).</p> <p>MBC with</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| | | Identify the scale and type of retail, leisure and office space required as part of a comprehensive Area Action Plan. | | Neighbourhood Planning Task Group. |
| 1.6 Four wards within Maidstone suffer from economic, social and environmental disadvantage and are ranked within the 20% most disadvantaged in Kent for a range of indicators from numbers of lone parents on income support to numbers claiming incapacity benefit and life expectancy. | Reduce worklessness within the Borough. | Multi-agency Neighbourhood Planning Task Group to develop area based initiatives to tackle inequalities in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in south Maidstone. | Reduce worklessness and from from 7.7% (Feb 2008) NI 152 Working age people on out of work benefits | MBC , Neighbourhood Planning Task Group including Job Centre Plus. |
| 1.7 The economic downturn will have a significant impact on the economic vitality of the Borough. | To cushion the effect of the downturn on the Borough's economy. | Maidstone Borough Council will as part of a Regeneration Strategy examine: • Using its Wellbeing Powers to enter into partnerships, make | Develop Regeneration Strategy by 2010. | MBC |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|-------|-----------|---|--------|------|
| | | <p>grants, set up companies, deliver services or consider any other innovative actions or initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using its Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers to facilitate land assembly or bring back into use redundant sites and premises to achieve regeneration. • Use powers to sell its own land at less than market value where this will act as a catalyst to achieve sustainable economic development and regeneration. • Use MBC assets - land and property - to enable the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy's vision for the | | |

Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone Borough 2009-2020

| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|-------|-----------|--|--------|------|
| | | <p>Borough.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter into Joint Ventures or other agreements with the private sector, public and voluntary sectors to increase capacity, lever funds and resources. • Work with neighbouring authorities around functional economic geographies to deliver a more competitive economy. | | |

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5.2 Topic 2: Sustainable and integrated transport

This topic tackles the vision related objective: **'To develop an efficient, sustainable, integrated transport system'**.

We recognise that Maidstone's transport system is vital to ensure the wellbeing of all those within the Borough. We also recognise that it is struggling to deal with peak time congestion in the urban area with a resultant adverse impact on the economy, air quality, people's health and the environment. We will focus attention on ensuring accessibility to services for all those within rural and urban areas via fairly priced and reliable transport choices including public transport. We also aim to improve the links that Maidstone has with surrounding areas, particularly Ebbsfleet, Ashford and London to enable Maidstone's economy to be competitive with the new growth areas, and to ensure the Borough remains an attractive place for investment and visitors. The partnership will work together with transport providers to ensure the problems of Maidstone's transport system are addressed.

Additionally, we recognise the need for sustainable transport methods to ensure that environmental damage is reduced. Use of public transport will be encouraged in order to reduce the number of cars, particularly within the town centre, therefore easing congestion and ensuring good air quality. We will provide adequate infrastructure to encourage more people walk and cycle, balancing this with the needs of disabled people.

| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| 2.1 Congestion within the Borough, some of which is school related, particularly within the town centre is becoming an increasing problem. Congestion is linked to air quality. An assessment has identified five air quality hot spots in and around Maidstone and on the M20. The whole of Maidstone's urban area and the adjacent section of the M20 has been | Decrease congestion in the Borough and improve air quality. | MBC and KCC to jointly develop an Integrated Maidstone Transport Strategy to support LDF Core Strategy based on the principles of: a) Reducing the need to travel b) Giving genuine transport choice including sustainable transport modes ie public transport, cycling etc c) Targeted investment in traffic management | Baseline congestion figures being developed by KCC using UTM system. Prevent congestion levels from increasing. Seek a 1% annual reduction in rate of children taken to school | MBC and KCC with transport providers (new Transport Task Group). |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|---|---|--|------------------------|
| included in an air quality action zone. | | <p>systems and infrastructure to reduce congestion and improve connectivity.</p> <p>Develop a Parking Strategy</p> <p>Support the KCC School Travel Plan Officers in working with schools to reduce the number of children being brought to school by car.</p> <p>Bid for capacity improvements and public transport priority measures through the Kent Local Transport Plan (KLTP)</p> <p>Enhance the MBC Park and Ride service through the Core Strategy of the LDF.</p> <p>All LSP members to develop and implement robust green travel plans with targets to reduce inessential travel.</p> | <p>by car from 34.1%.</p> <p>Increase number of journeys taken out of car by Travel Plans.</p> | |
| 2.2 Congestion within the Borough worsens at times when phase two of Operation Stack (which involves closing lanes on the M20 between junctions 9 and 8) is in force, during which traffic is forced to travel through the Borough | Minimise the impact of operation stack. | MBC to work jointly with other districts, KCC, the Highways Agency and the Police alleviate the effect of Operation Stack. | Extend the use of the Quick Moveable Barrier to Phase 2 of Operation Stack by 2013 and promote a wider solution to | Highways Agency/Police |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| on the A20 causing adverse impacts for the economy and air quality. | | | Operation Stack. | |
| 2.3 Public consultation reveals that a sizeable proportion of Maidstone's local people are dissatisfied with the public transport services available within Maidstone, with particular comment given to the inadequacy of access via public transport to / from rural areas of the Borough, and rail services into and out of London. | Seek the improvement of public transport. | <p>Bus and rail operators to improve information, services and infrastructure.</p> <p>Bid for public transport priority measures through the KLTP.</p> <p>Ensure new housing developments fund sustainable transport improvements</p> <p>Support the development of community transport initiatives to complement public transport/the car ie in rural areas or for people with special needs.</p> | Ensure 100% of new dwellings within 400 metres of a bus service | MBC, KCC and parishes with transport providers. |
| 2.4 The introduction of the high speed rail link to Kent in December 2009 will significantly reduce travel time into and out of London, and to the continent, from both Ashford and Ebbsfleet. Maidstone will need to respond to this as well as remaining competitive with the government's 'Growth | Improve the transport network to underpin economic growth, enhancing access in and around the town centre and to local, regional and national markets. | <p>Create joint MBC/KCC Transport Task Group.</p> <p>Building on Maidstone's designation as a Transport Hub, work with Department for Transport (DfT), Network Rail, Highways Agency and work with KCC to take forward the programme of interventions described in the Economic Development</p> | Target to be a measure of improved services. | MBC/KCC Transport Task Group |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| <p>Areas' – Ashford and the Thames Gateway – which are currently receiving substantial public and private investment in housing, the economy and the environment.</p> | | <p>Strategy, particularly M20 improvements, All Saints and South East Maidstone Strategic Link and improvements to rail service.</p> <p>Work with Network Rail and the rail service providers to develop faster rail services between Maidstone and central London, and encourage the expansion of the Thameslink network and CTRL Domestic Services to serve Maidstone East and Maidstone West stations.</p> | | |
| <p>2.5 In the Place Survey the largest group of respondents highlighted road and pavement repairs (48%) as most in need or improving in Maidstone Borough.</p> | <p>Improve the state of roads and pavements.</p> | <p>Actions to be developed.</p> | <p>Targets to be developed.</p> | <p>KCC Highways</p> |

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5.3 Topic 3: Crime, confidence and Safety

This topic tackles the vision related objective: **'Build stronger and safer communities'**. This topic relates to Topic 5 Children, Young People and Families and Topic 6: Homes and Communities.

We want Maidstone to be a safe place, where people feel they are welcome to visit, work or live. Our aim is that everyone within the Borough is respected, and if individuals fail to give respect to others, that this is addressed. We recognise that issues relating to the night time economy in Maidstone need to be tackled. However, there needs to be an acknowledgement that the Safer Maidstone Partnership is very good at tackling crime, and the value of the intelligence led approach to community safety. The SCS reflects both the current Crime and Disorder Reduction Plan and identifies how to make the next step change.

| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| 3.1 There has been a consistent reduction in crime in most categories during 2007/2008 and this has further improved since the period April 2007 to September 2008 on which the most recent Safer Maidstone Partnership Strategic Assessment is based. There was an overall reduction of 10% in crime in the full year figures for 2007/2008 compared to the 2005/2006 baseline. When compared to the same period 2006/2007, the reduction was even more dramatic | Continue the decrease in overall rates of crime. | To create integrated Public Community Safety Unit by council & police. | Rolling year Aug 2007-Jul 2008 saw a 16.1/% reduction from 12834 to 10767. The 2008-2011 MBC Strategic Plan seeks a 2% annual reduction in all recorded crime. | Safer Maidstone Partnership |
| | | To improve the design of housing schemes to minimise the level of crime. | Develop a new Supplementary Planning Document related to designing out crime. | Maidstone Borough Council with Kent Police and the Safer Maidstone Partnership. |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| with a reduction of 13.3%. | | | | |
| <p>3.2 During 2008 Maidstone has had the fourth highest number/rate of entrants into the youth justice system of any district in Kent, and experienced a significant increase in numbers between 2007 and 2008. There are some areas which have significantly higher numbers of young offenders. High Street has the highest rates, followed by South and Park Wood wards. Park Wood and High Street had respectively the 3rd and 4th highest rate of any wards in Kent of young people known to Youth Offending Service (May 2007). Shepway North and</p> | <p>Take a preventative approach to tackle and reduce anti-social behaviour (also see Topic 5 Children, Young People and Families 5.2.)</p> | <p>Robustly tackle ASB through the multi-agency tasking process - utilizing PCSOs, KCC Wardens & ASB Team.</p> <p>To support the work of the Delivery Group dealing with ASB & 'Prevent & Deter' to ensure early intervention for young people including restorative justice.</p> <p>To promote the work of the Power Project to identify & work with vulnerable children who may become involved in ASB.</p> | <p>Current target is to reduce % of public with a high level of perceived ASB in their local area from 14% (2007/8) to 13% 2008/9 based on Kent Crime and Victimization Survey.</p> <p>New targets for NI 21 Dealing with local concerns about ASB and crime by the local council and police to be established following results of the Place Survey.</p> | <p>Safer Maidstone Partnership with Neighbourhood Planning Task Group.</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|
| Shepway South Wards also appear in the worst 10% of wards in Kent. | | | | |
| 3.3 Fear of crime is disproportionately high in comparison to actual levels of crime. | Reduce fear of crime. | To establish a Community Reassurance Delivery Group to oversee press and publicity coverage of crime and disorder initiatives in the Borough and to ensure that Maidstone is accurately represented. | To be in top quartile of Kent districts. | Community Reassurance Group of SMP |
| 3.4 When comparing data from 2003 until 2006, while overall crime rates have fallen, it is apparent that there has been a rise in violent crime within the Borough. | Reduce violent crime. | <p>Actions relating to serious violent crime to follow.</p> <p>To work with the Domestic Violence (DV) Forum in raising awareness and increase reporting.</p> <p>To support the Specialist Domestic Violence Court and the work of the</p> | The current Kent target is an 8% reduction from 0.31 crimes per 1000 population in 07/08 to 0.28 crimes per 1000 population in 2008/09 Targets for Years 2 & 3 of the CDRP will be established during 08/09 once definitive baselines have been set ¹ . | Violent Crime Group of SMP |

¹ Target agreed in conjunction with Kent police & SMP. The measure will be: Number of serious violent crimes per 1000 population. Supporting violent crime data could be provided through Assessments of Policing & Community Safety (APACS) measures, namely: Number of gun crimes per 1000 population, Number of knife crimes per 1000 population. The data will be collected & measured monthly. The data source will be the Kent Police Genesis system; drawing on

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|---|---|--|-------------------------|
| | | Independent Domestic Violence Advisors. | | |
| <p>3.5 Between April 2007 and April 2008 High Street and Park Wood wards were ranked 4th and 16th worst in Kent in terms of total recorded crimes. However, as High Street is a town centre ward, this will have a major impact on the types of crimes recorded.</p> <p>For High Street, the most common crimes recorded were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence against the person: 26% of all recorded crimes • Theft offences: 19% • Shoplifting: 19% • Criminal Damage: 15% <p>These crimes are commonly found in town centres, and are linked to the night-time</p> | Reduce serious crime in the wards where the trend is higher than the Borough average. | Target wards that are specific hot spots. | Ward level targets to be developed as part of the Neighbourhood Action Planning process. High St had a rate of 36.7 crimes per 1000 residents making it the 4 th highest ranked ward in Kent in 2007. Park Wood had a rate of 16 per 000 making it the 16 th highest ranked in Kent. | Inequalities Task Group |

information from the recorded crime module. Comparison between CDRPs in Kent will be made using the reported crime measure. Comparison against Most Similar Groups will be made using the standard reporting formats on the Home Office, IQuanta system. In addition, supporting data will be made available through Kent Crimeview. The data will be summarised on a monthly basis in the CDRP Summary Pack produced by Kent Police, Business Information Unit (BIU). The Kent Partnership, Central Support Team (CST) will distil the information from the pack into a standardised reporting format (including exception reporting) & distribute to CDRPs & county groups. Individual CDRPs will also summarise information from the pack for local purposes.

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|--|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| economy and retail outlets. Most of the other highest-ranking wards in Kent are found in town centre locations. | | | | |
| 3.6 It is predicted that alcohol related admissions to hospital will rise – indeed the Kent Agreement target is for a reduction in the predicted rise, rather than an overall reduction. Maidstone’s binge drinking is already the second highest in Kent. While there are clearly links with the night-time economy, observation suggests that a contribution to these figures might stem from the concentration of hostel accommodation in the town centre. | Reduce alcohol related crime in the town centre. | <p>Directed operations and supervision to be undertaken by police and MBC Licensing Officers to ensure that premises are well run.</p> <p>To work with licence holders through the Night Time Economy Forum.</p> <p>To develop preventative initiatives through the Violent Crime Delivery Group.</p> | To be in top quartile of MSG & Kent CDRPS by ... | Alcohol and Drugs Action Group of SMP |
| 3.7 In 2005/6 High Street had the highest percentage of recorded drug related offences for any ward in | Reduce drug offences. | The action will be spatially targeted. SMP will work closely with the Kent Drug and Alcohol Action Team | Ward level targets to be developed as part of the Neighbourhood Action | Alcohol and Drugs Action Group of SMP |
| | | Review Licensing Policy. | | MBC |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|--|---|--|----------------------|
| <p>Kent, with Shepway South and North and Park Wood wards also having relatively high rates. From April 2007 to March 2008 there were 105 drug offences in the High Street Ward – a reduction from 130 offences in 2005/6.</p> | | <p>(KDAT) to ensure appropriate service provision, in addition to work with the Primary Care Trust on innovative approaches to reducing alcohol and drug misuse.</p> <p>To disrupt the drugs market by enforcement activity to be led by Kent Police supported by the Alcohol Drugs Action Group (ADAG).</p> <p>Initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the dangers of drugs and alcohol by ADAG.</p> | <p>Planning process.</p> | |
| <p>3.8 Maidstone had the largest number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads during 2006 and 2007, compared to other Kent districts. There has been a continual increase in the number of people killed or seriously injured within Maidstone between 2005 and</p> | <p>Reduce deaths & serious injuries from accidents on the roads.</p> | <p>Implement an evidence based plan to reduce deaths and injuries, with a particular focus on children and young people, including recommendations from Maidstone Borough Overview and Scrutiny Investigation,</p> | <p>National 40% Reduction Target by 2010</p> | <p>KCC with MBC.</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|-----------|--------|--------|------|
| 2007. 18 additional people were killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents in 2007 compared to 2005. | | | | |

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5.4 Topic 4: Health and older people

This topic tackles the vision related objective: **Create healthier communities and support older people to lead healthier, more independent and active lives.**

The partnership aims to improve the health of all local people. This will be done through a combination of ensuring excellent health provision and encouraging people to minimise the risk of health problems by living a healthier life style, particularly through diet, exercise and not participating in activities which may be damaging to their health. The multi-agency Joint Strategic Needs Assessment of the Borough will be utilised to identify the current health issues that should be tackled within the SCS. This particularly identifies demographic changes which will result in higher proportions of older people living within the Borough, as well as the inequality in average life expectancy between different wards. Men from the most disadvantaged areas have over five years shorter life expectancy than those from the least disadvantaged areas. The aim for healthy life styles and minimising health problems cannot be considered alone, but relates to other social, environmental and economic factors. We recognise that all areas within the strategy may impact upon the health of a person. For example, housing has an important impact on people's health, and data demonstrates that there tend to be higher numbers of health problems and a lower life expectancy in pockets of the town where incomes are lowest. This in turn appears to be linked to lack of skills, qualifications and unemployment. Community safety also has a significant impact upon health. In particular, areas of the Borough which have high alcohol consumption, most notably High Street, have much higher numbers of people who have suffered, or continue to suffer health problems. Work to improve health must be carried out in conjunction with the objectives of the other topics. This topic of the SCS identifies health issues which relate to adults and older people. The health issues which relate specifically to children and young people are considered within Topic 5. We also recognise the importance of accessibility to health and associated services and this is dealt with in Topic 2: Sustainable and integrated transport.

| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| 4.1 According to the recent Maidstone Health Profile (2008), 'the health of people in Maidstone is better than the England average. Disadvantage levels are low and life expectancy better than average for men and | Reduce health inequalities which exist within the Borough. | Implement the 'Choosing Health Plan' for Maidstone focusing on health inequalities. | Reduce all age all cause mortality rate (NI 120) from 559 per 100, 000 in 2006/07: to 539 per 100, 000 2010/11: | Health Action Team with Neighbourhood Planning Task Group. |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <p>women.’ However, it continues: ‘There are health inequalities within Maidstone. For example, men from the most disadvantaged areas have over 5 years shorter life expectancy than those from the least disadvantaged areas. Over 11,800 people living in the Borough are dependent on means tested benefits and over 3,800 children are living in low income households.</p> | | | | |
| <p>4.2 Maidstone had the third highest number of alcohol related admissions to hospital in 2006/7 compared to the other Kent districts. This is in part due to its larger population and is slightly below the Kent average. However, during 2006 Maidstone had the second highest binge drinking rate within Kent. At present all Boroughs within Kent have rates of</p> | <p>Promote healthier lifestyles in order to reduce preventable diseases and deaths.</p> | <p>Develop effective interventions through the Choosing Health Programme, focused on: maintaining healthy weight, smoking cessation, preventing harm from alcohol, mental health, sexual health.</p> | <p>The number of alcohol hospital admissions in Maidstone is predicted to rise from 1056 in 2006/7 to 1387 in 2008/9 (NI 39). The overall rate is expected to grow further by 2011.</p> <p>Targets for number of drug users recorded as being in effective treatment (NI 40) Mortality rate from all</p> | <p>Health Action Team with Neighbourhood Planning Task Group.</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <p>binge drinking lower than the England² average but the rate is rising. High Street had the highest percentage of recorded drug related offences for any ward in Kent in 2005/6, and three other wards have relatively high rates. Although the death rate from smoking is low, smoking accounts for at least 200 deaths every year. People with poor mental health are also more likely to participate in heavy smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, low levels of exercise and have poor diets.</p> | | | <p>circulatory diseases at ages under 75 (NI 121), mortality from all cancers at ages under 75 (NI 122) are under development.</p> <p>The target for the number of Maidstone residents who stopped smoking in 2008/9 is 756.</p> | |
| <p>4.3 It is predicted that Maidstone will experience considerable demographic changes within the next ten years, which will result in a major increase in the elderly and vulnerable population. From 2005 to</p> | <p>Support older people to lead healthier, more independent and active lives.</p> | <p>Commission a study of older people's needs in Maidstone and integrate into 'Choosing Health Programme'.</p> <p>Ensure that the development of services addresses the needs of carers, as well as the cared</p> | <p>To be developed following study.</p> | <p>Health Action Team with Neighbourhood Planning Task Group.</p> |

² Binge drinking is defined as men who had consumed eight or more units of alcohol, and women who had consumed six or more units on their heaviest drinking day within the last week.

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| <p>2020 it is predicted there will be a 30% increase of over 65 year olds in West Kent. Half of the adult population will be over 50 by the early 2020s and many will live in disadvantaged areas. However, the increase in active older people is also a potential resource in terms of volunteering.</p> | | <p>for, to lead more fulfilled lives at home as in Maidstone District Plan (Adult Services)</p> | | |
| <p>4.4 West Kent NHS (formerly West Kent Primary Care Trust (PCT)) was assessed in 2007/8 as providing a 'weak' quality of service to patients. However, it was 'fair' at managing its finances. West Kent NHS has just come through two major restructures. Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust provided</p> | <p>Achieve accessible health services that all the residents of Maidstone can have confidence in.</p> | <p>To be agreed.</p> | <p>West Kent NHS to progress from Health Care Commission: Assessment 2007/08: 'weak' for quality of service and 'satisfactory' for the use of resources to at least 'Good' for both by 2011.</p> | <p>West Kent NHS (formerly West Kent PCT).</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| <p>a 'weak' quality of service to patients and failed to maintain the 'adequate' standard of performance it achieved the previous year. However, it had progressed from 'weak' to 'fair' at managing its finances.</p> | | | <p>Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS (hospital) Trust to progress from Health Care Commission assessment 'weak' quality of service to patients and 'fair' managing its finances to 'Good' by 2011.</p> | <p>Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS (hospital) Trust</p> |
| <p>4.5 How to reduce infectious diseases at Maidstone Hospital.</p> | <p>Reduce the rate of infectious diseases in Maidstone Hospital.</p> | <p>Implement Health Care Commission action plan.</p> | <p>Target to be in the top 10% performing hospitals in the UK</p> | <p>Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS (hospital) Trust</p> |

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5.5 Topic 5: Children, young people and families

*This topic tackles the vision related objective: **Make Maidstone Borough a place where people of all ages - children, young people and families - can achieve their aspirations***

We want Maidstone Borough to be a place where all children and young people are able to fulfil their aspirations and contribute to the well-being of the community. All children should be able to achieve their potential in an excellent school or college. We will provide support for vulnerable children and their family members, particularly looked after children, those with learning difficulties or disabilities, and children who are or have been carers. We recognise the need to support the Borough's children right from their early years, and will support them and their families to ensure that they have safe, healthy and fulfilled lives.

| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| 5.1 Though the Borough has a higher proportion of school leavers achieving five or more A* - C grade GCSEs than the Kent and national average, there are considerable differences between the performance of particular schools within the Borough. Four secondary schools performed below the 30% threshold set by national government. There is also a link between poverty and | Continue to raise performance across all schools and improve the educational attainment of children in the schools that performed the 30% threshold. | Establish two effective multi agency children and young people's plans for the two local children's partnership areas in the Borough, incorporating a range of school improvement measures, including Academy status' for some schools. | Move from current situation where four secondary schools are below the 30% threshold, to none by 2011. | Local Children's Services Partnerships with New Line Learning, other Academies and Neighbourhood Planning Task Group. |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| educational attainment. | | | | |
| <p>5.2 During 2008 Maidstone has had the fourth highest number/rate of entrants into the youth justice system of any district in Kent, and experienced a significant increase in numbers between 2007 and 2008. There are some areas which have significantly higher numbers of young offenders. High Street has the highest rates, followed by South and Park Wood wards. High Street has the 4th highest rate of any ward in Kent of young people known to Youth Offending Service (May 2007).</p> | <p>Reduce the number of young people entering the youth justice system.</p> | <p>Increase the provision of and access to youth activities, services and education facilities and reduce risk taking behaviours.</p> <p>Encourage young people to volunteer within the community, and the opportunities that volunteering enables.</p> | <p>For Maidstone to be in top quartile in Kent by 2011.</p> | <p>Local Children's Services Partnerships with Multi Agency Youth Action Group (MAYDAG).</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
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| <p>5.3 Maidstone had the fifth highest rate of under 18s who are not in education, employment or training compared to the other Kent Boroughs in 2007/8 although the position improved from the previous year. Additionally, Park Wood, Shepway North, Shepway South, Fant and High Street wards had more than ten percent of their 16 – 18 year olds not in education, employment or training, during April 2008.</p> | <p>Embed a culture of lifelong learning and ensure providers respond to the needs of employers.</p> | <p>Develop actions to address NEETS as part of area based action plans.</p> <p>Promote the take up of national skills programmes to maximise impact including: Train to Gain, the Skills Pledge and other mainstream initiatives.</p> | <p>To be agreed.</p> | <p>Local Children's Service Partnership Boards (Maidstone 1 and Maidstone 2) with Neighbourhood Action Task Group with Job Centre Plus.</p> |
| <p>5.4 Although Maidstone as a whole has seen an increase in teenage pregnancy rates, between 2005 and 2006, the Borough as a whole does not have unusually high rates. However, there</p> | <p>Reduce teenage conceptions with a particular focus on areas with the highest rates.</p> | <p>Deliver the actions laid out in the County Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and the Maidstone Teenage Pregnancy Action Plan (2008/9).</p> | <p>The Kent target is to reduce under 18 conceptions to 16 per 1000 by 2010 from the rate of 40 per 1000 in 2006. However, this is unlikely to be achieved and</p> | <p>Maidstone Teenage Pregnancy Local Implementation Group (including MBC) with Neighbourhood Planning Task Group.</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
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| <p>are a number of wards that experienced exceptionally high teenage pregnancy rates. Park Wood falls into the highest category of 200+ conceptions in every 1000 girls under the age of 18, and is one of only two wards within Kent that fall within this category. This is in part due to the higher levels of social housing and flatted accommodation in the area, but other factors are also at play. 5 other wards in Maidstone also have rates higher than the county average; these are Shepway South, Shepway North, North, Marden & Yalding & Fant wards.</p> | | | <p>targets are likely to be revised (by the Kent Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board).</p> | |
| <p>5.5 While levels of childhood obesity in</p> | <p>Increase children's participation in regular</p> | <p>To be developed by Local Children's Services</p> | <p>Increase the percentage of</p> | <p>Local Children's Services Partnership</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Maidstone are slightly below the average for Kent, the percentage of children taking school based exercise is low and is worse than for England as a whole (Maidstone Health Profile, 2008). However, childhood obesity is a growing problem nationally.</p> | <p>sporting activities, address obesity and increase understanding of healthier diets.</p> | <p>Partnership with schools, MBC and sports clubs.</p> | <p>children taking school based exercise to above the average for England and Kent.</p> <p>Increase the percentage of children taking out of school exercise.</p> | <p>with schools and MBC and sports clubs.</p> |
| <p>5.6 The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Children in Kent, indicates that mental health of young people plays a significant role in ensuring that young people do not participate in what would be considered to be negative behaviour. <i>"Poor mental health is associated with low educational achievement, performance and</i></p> | <p>Improve the mental health of young people in Maidstone.</p> | <p>Develop preventative measures through the local children's services action plans based on the principle: 'Act earlier to encourage children to be healthier as a means of addressing Children's and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS).</p> | <p>To be developed.</p> | <p>Local Children's Services Partnerships.</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
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| <i>absenteeism”.</i> | | | | |
| <p>5.7 Between September 2006 and August 2007, Maidstone had a slightly lower rate of persistent school absence than the average of England. However it has a higher rate than the South East, and is ranked eighth (1st being the lowest and 12th the highest) out of the twelve districts in Kent. During this time period just below four percent of pupils living within Maidstone were persistently absent.</p> | <p>Reduce school absence and exclusions.</p> | <p>Identification of Persistently Absent (PA) pupils by Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs) for fast track to court;</p> <p>Reinforced enforcement system; employment of Parent Support Officer to work with parents/carers of disruptive pupils, poor attenders and excluded pupils;</p> <p>Development of the IYFA(In Year Fair Access) programme ; school support for the “In reach programme</p> | <p>Attendance increased to a minimum of 90% in all secondary schools by March 2011.</p> | <p>Local Children’s Services Partnerships</p> |

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5.6 Topic 6: Homes and communities

This topic tackles the vision related objective: **'Develop Maidstone Borough's urban and rural communities as models for 21st Century quality and sustainable living.'**

The provision of homes and access to good quality housing that people can afford is extremely important to all of us. We will continue to tackle homelessness by taking a preventative approach and will work with those who be threatened by homelessness to prevent that from happening. We will work as a partnership to meet the Government's target to make homes occupied by vulnerable people decent. We will maximise support to vulnerable, elderly and disabled people, to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live comfortably and independently for as long as possible. We recognise the need for affordable housing and will ensure sufficient affordable developments within the Borough. Finally, we recognise the right of everyone to live in a decent home and will work with residents to improve their homes.

| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| 6.1 There are some 2,300 people on borough council's housing waiting list (Jan 2009) and this number is rising rapidly. Despite building 6,638 houses since 2004 - on average over 900 houses a year - only 576 of these were 'affordable' homes. Despite recent house price reductions, 50% of households earn under the threshold necessary to purchase | Increase the availability of affordable housing across all tenures including student accommodation. | <p>Agree a new Housing Strategy which will link housing with planning, regeneration and health and act as the basis for bidding for funding from the new Homes & Communities Agency.</p> <p>Carry out a joint Strategic Housing Market (Needs) Assessment with Ashford Borough Council.</p> <p>Pursue the construction of more affordable homes by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).</p> <p>Increase the provision of</p> | <p>To bring forward 229-257 affordable homes per annum until 2011.</p> <p>Work to ensure that all affordable housing is built to Lifetime Homes standard by 2011, and all housing by 2013.</p> | MBC in partnership with Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), Government Office for South East (GOSE), Parish Councils Action for Communities in Rural Kent and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and private developers. |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| the cheapest 'market' properties. | | Life Time Homes. Work with Parish Councils and our partners to provide affordable rural housing to meet local need. | | |
| 6.2 By 2021 the 45-64 age group will increase by 9%, but the most significant rises are in the 65-79 and 80+ age groups which are forecast to rise 44% and 66% respectively These demographic changes will lead to an increase in the demand for suitable accommodation and other services for these age groups. | Make provision for elderly, disabled and other vulnerable people that support independent living. | Utilise Private Sector Housing Renewal and Regional Housing Board Grant to increase distribution of grants to vulnerable people. | Annually complete 35 Disabled Facility Grants to enable people to stay in their homes and reduce the time it takes to process these from 5 to 4 weeks. Increase the numbers of people helped by the Staying Put Partnership from current levels below 500 to over 750 per annum by 2011. | MBC in partnership with Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Government Office for South East (GOSE) |
| 6.3 The current economic decline is already resulting in reduced private sector housing supply, increasing repossessions, difficulty obtaining | Reduce homelessness by providing housing options advice and increasing support for people at risk of losing their homes. | New Homelessness Strategy linking planning, regeneration, sustainability and community cohesion. Introduce Choice Based Lettings scheme. | To increase the number of households prevented from becoming homeless through housing advice from 250 annually to 275- | Maidstone Borough Council with Citizens Advice Bureau & Maidstone Mediation |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| <p>mortgages and increasing numbers of households requesting housing advice. However, the numbers of households living in temporary accommodation is currently below government targets.</p> | | <p>Introduce new Mortgage Rescue Scheme</p> <p>Develop further multi-agency advice through Maidstone Gateway</p> | 300. | |
| <p>6.4 Maidstone currently has over 5% of households living in fuel poverty. This will be exacerbated by increased fuel costs. While housing stock is generally good there remain a number of homes that are in poor repair and vulnerable people living in very poor conditions.</p> | <p>Support people to improve the quality of the existing housing stock.</p> | <p>Develop energy efficiency promotion to encourage people to: Increase the thermal efficiency of people's homes through wall and roof insulation and improve the economic efficiency of heating systems by maximizing use of grant aid.</p> <p>Maximise incomes ie from pensions and benefits.</p> <p>Maximise uptake of grants such as Disability Facilities Grants</p> <p>All new developments to be built to over and above national requirements</p> | <p>To be developed as part of the new housing strategy.</p> | <p>MBC in partnership with RSLs.</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| | | utilising Code for Sustainable Homes | | |
| 6.5 Some 4% (1,900) homes in Maidstone have hazards, with privately rented homes comprising approximately a quarter of unfit homes | Reduce the number of unfit homes with a particular focus on vulnerable households. | Commission a private sector house condition survey in early 2009. Maximise grant aid to bring these properties up to standard. | 70% of vulnerable households in the private sector to occupy decent homes by 2010 | MBC in partnership with private sector owners and landlords. |
| 6.6 Empty homes – As at April 2007 there were a total of 1,168 empty properties in Maidstone, and 135 had been empty for more than 2 year. | Reduce the number of long-term empty homes | Implement the Empty Homes Strategy by bringing back into use 60 long-term empty properties | Bring back into use 60 long-term empty properties by ... | MBC in partnership with private sector owners and landlords. |
| 6.7 The borough has some 100 Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), of which 80 are licensable. | Ensure that all HMOs are safe for their occupants | Enforce licence conditions through inspection and other means | License all known HMOs by ... | MBC in partnership with landlords |
| 6.8 The figures provided by Voluntary Action Maidstone identify that there has been an increase in the number of volunteers registering with the centre between 2006 | Make Maidstone Borough a centre of excellence for the VCS by encouraging active citizenship, civic participation and active volunteering. | Increase the number of people registered with VAM on a year on year basis. | Actual figures to be agreed. | Voluntary Action Maidstone (VAM) formerly Maidstone Volunteer Bureau with MBC and KCC. |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|-----------|--------|--------|------|
| <p>and 2008, and it is expected that this figure will continue to rise. However, it is estimated that these figures represent approximately two percent of the total number of individuals who volunteer within the Maidstone Borough. There are strong practical benefits to increasing voluntary activity especially during an economic down turn.</p> <p>With the increasing numbers of people living longer in the Borough, there is potentially a larger pool of active older people, but also a larger number of very elderly who may require more support.</p> | | | | |

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5.7 Topic 7: Sport, creativity and culture

This topic tackles the vision related objective: **'Build a thriving sporting, creative and cultural life for all'**.

We take pride in the heritage and culture that Maidstone has to offer and we want to help this flourish. We will promote the benefits of physical activity, and aim to encourage the uptake of sport, by ensuring inspiring sporting facilities are available to all. We will develop the existing parks and the river to their full potential. Finally, we want to create an animated Borough, by promoting and enhancing creative arts within economic and cultural life.

| Issue | Objective | Action | Lead |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>7.1 Less than a quarter of the adult population within the Maidstone Borough took part in regular sport or recreation during 2005 / 2006. Public consultation revealed that many people felt that sport and leisure facilities were inaccessible to them due to their high cost. Many feel that it is important to ensure that any leisure facilities are affordable, and easy to get to. The 2012 Olympic Games will provide the opportunity for encouraging healthier life styles for children and adults within the Borough, and increasing awareness of the importance of exercise and healthy eating.</p> | <p>Utilize the opportunity provided by the 2012 Olympic games to increase active participation in sport for all ages, by increasing the provision of high quality, affordable and improved sporting facilities.</p> | <p>Establish consistent discounted fees across departments and agencies.</p> <p>Investigate the feasibility of obtaining funding to carry out a comprehensive community sports facilities audit</p> <p>Promote awareness of the health benefits and the need to encourage adequate exercise (Activities outlined in the Maidstone Choosing Health funded programme).</p> | <p>Maidstone Borough Council</p> |
| | | <p>Maximise the usage of school sites for sporting activities for all ages).</p> | <p>Local Children's Services Partnerships</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Lead |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>7.2 The IPSOS MORI Focus Group report Dec 07 stated: 'While leisure, culture, sport and entertainment is not in itself prioritised by many respondents, one of the main issues at the heart of many discussions is the need to improve access to leisure facilities for young people. Many feel that there need to be more youth centres in Maidstone to provide young people with activities, and a place to interact.'</p> | <p>Develop cultural services and facilities for young people.</p> | <p>These are being developed in the Local Area Action Plan (LAA) for this indicator, to be aligned with the County action plan</p> <p>Measures would include for example the further development of the Hazlitt's Youth Theatre and Education Department.</p> | <p>Local Children's Services Partnerships</p> |
| <p>7.3 The Stick Up for Maidstone report rated a new theatre or concert hall as amongst the top two 'dreams'. Some of the older residents also note that they would like to see a theatre or music venue located in the town centre. This is seen as important not just to allow people in the area to access music and entertainment facilities, but also to bring local people together.</p> | <p>Ensure the highest quality cultural facilities, services & visitor experiences are balanced with good access & affordability.</p> | <p>Arts Development Plan 2009- Develop display space for visual artists in the town</p> <p>Develop existing and new gallery spaces in the town by joint working with the Museum & Theatre</p> <p>Undertake feasibility of building into the regeneration of the town centre, plans for a new concert / theatre venue.</p> | <p>MBC with private sector and developers.</p> |
| <p>7.4 The Stick Up for Maidstone report rated improvements to the river amongst the top two 'dreams'. The majority wanted to ensure better use of the river in terms of entertainment. Suggestions</p> | <p>Enhance the quality, use and appearance of the river in terms of leisure, cultural and sporting facilities and activities.</p> | <p>Arts Development Plan 2009- Develop a quality programme of public art along the river.</p> | <p>MBC with private sector and developers.</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Lead |
|---|-----------|--------|------|
| included building cafes along the river front, or a theatre, making better use of it for walking and cycling and increasing the seating areas along it. | | | |

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5.8 Topic 8: Environmental excellence and climate change

This topic tackles the vision related objective:

- **Retain and enhance Maidstone Borough's distinctive history, landscape and character**

... and the cross cutting objective:

- **Establish Maidstone Borough's reputation as a place for environmental excellence and action on climate change**

We want Maidstone to be a clean and green Borough in which local people and businesses respect the environment and actively consider its importance now and in the future. By 2020 the Council and its partners will have prepared Maidstone's businesses and communities to adapt to the effects of climate change particularly extreme weather incidents such as drought, flooding and heat waves, and will be making a significant contribution to mitigate climate change by reducing carbon emissions. We will have built new sustainable communities to the highest environmental standards and will have made existing homes and businesses more environmentally efficient. All homes will be close to well managed green spaces and be linked by public transport, cycle and pedestrian routes.

| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|---------------|---|--|---------------------------------|
| 8.1 Combined recycling/composting rates in Maidstone rose from 19.21% in 2006/7 to 23.78% in 2007/8 and the target is to reach 35% by 2010/11. With the roll out of the Borough council's new recycling strategy, recycling rates have already significantly increased. However, Maidstone shows as having the third highest amount of waste per head of population of Kent districts. Public opinion (parish plans and Stick Up for | Reduce waste. | Waste disposal infrastructure (processing, composting & transfer facilities) is delivered in line with improvements in District services at best value to the Kent taxpayer | Recycling compost rate of 35% by 2011 (interim). | MBC with Kent Waste Partnership |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Maidstone) have consistently supported greater emphasis on recycling and reducing waste.</p> | | | | |
| <p>8.2 In a recent national survey³ 88% of people believed, irrespective of the cause, that the climate is changing and 70% believe that if there is no action taken, the world will soon experience a major environmental crisis.</p> <p>Maidstone is at the heart of the most vulnerable region in Britain to climate change. The floods of autumn 2000 were followed by the heat wave of 2003, and a two year drought just passed. The floods 2000 were the largest in recent history. For England as a whole, autumn 2000 was the wettest since meteorological records began in 1766. Much of Kent was affected and flooding was particularly severe over the mid Kent catchments of the rivers Medway, Beult and Teise.</p> | <p>Prepare the Borough's communities and businesses to adapt to climate change – particularly extreme weather incidents such as drought, heat-waves, flooding, and the requirement for adequate drainage to minimise surface run off.</p> | <p>Audit risk registers of key public sector partners in Maidstone.</p> <p>Undertake local risk based assessment of significant vulnerabilities and opportunities</p> <p>Develop a partnership adaptation plan for Maidstone.</p> | <p>Demonstrate achievement of Level 3 (NI 188) by 30th March 2011.</p> | <p>MBC with Maidstone Going for Green Partnership and Community Recovery Committee</p> |

³ IPSOS MORI report 'Tipping Point or Turning Point' 2008

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| <p>During this period, Yalding in particular suffered extensive flooding, with some 50 properties affected and road access closed. Flooding in Maidstone town, however, was limited.⁴ The Medway has been subject to many flood events; in December 1927, September 1968 and November 1960. It is predicted that as a result of climate change flooding will become more frequent.</p> | | | | |
| <p>8.3 In 2005 Maidstone residents produced on average 6.9 tonnes of CO₂ per head. This figure had reduced slightly to 6.8 tonnes by 2006⁵ the last year for which data is available. The CO₂ total for Maidstone Borough in 2006</p> | <p>Reduce carbon emissions from fossil fuels across transport commerce / business and domestic use.</p> | <p>Develop and implement carbon reduction action plan for Borough council properties and fleet (including refuse vehicles).</p> | <p>20% reduction by 31st March 2016 (NI 185)</p> | <p>MBC with Energy Saving Trust.</p> |

⁴ Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of Maidstone Borough, 2007

⁵ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 18.09.08

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| <p>was just short of a million tonnes of CO₂ - 978 kilo tonnes (kts). Of this figure 376 kts came from commerce and industry, 354 kts from homes and 248 kts from road transport. Maidstone has the fourth lowest emission rate within the county, with only 1.3 tonnes of CO₂ per capita more than Thanet, which has the lowest emission rate. Maidstone Borough, Kent County Council have agreed with national government to reduce this figure by 11% by 2011.</p> | | <p>Utilise One to One support program from Energy Saving Trust to develop and implement multi-agency carbon reduction/climate change plan.</p> <p>Develop Borough Air Quality Action Plan (also see Topic 6 Sustainable Integrated Transport)</p> | <p>Per capita carbon reduction target 11% by end of March 2011 (NI 185).</p> | <p>Maidstone Going for Green Partnership</p> |
| <p>8.4 Maidstone has been identified in the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan for a number of important wildlife habitats. Important natural features in Maidstone Borough include; almost a third of native yew and beech woodlands found in the county, river habitats, including the River Beult Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the River Medway and the River Len, Low Weald meadows, including Marden Meadow SSSI with its</p> | <p>Enhance biodiversity and links between semi natural habitats.</p> | <p>The draft Maidstone Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is currently being consulted upon with targets to increase active conservation management of nature conservation sites.</p> | <p>Implement targets in adopted Maidstone BAP.</p> | <p>MBC, KCC and Kent Wildlife Trust</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|--|--|--|------------------------------------|
| <p>abundant orchids, the distinctive Low Weald landscape, with its small fields, hedgerows and ponds, woodland and grassland habitats on the chalk, Gault clay and Greensand and important geological sites, including Aylesford Quarry and Aylesford Pit. Maidstone town is home to the outstanding Mote Park, subject to a new lottery bid, as well as a number of other parks including the newly created Whatman Millennium Park, two Millennium Greens and local nature reserves. However, the current Green Space Strategy has identified that some areas have under provision of green space.</p> | | | | |
| <p>8.5 Just under 6% of homes in Maidstone are in fuel poverty although the efficiency of homes has been improving by more than 1.5% annually for a number of years because of initiatives by the council and its partners particularly the Kent Energy Centre. However, this is</p> | <p>Reduce fuel poverty in the Borough.</p> | <p>Increase thermal efficiency of buildings, improve economic efficiency of heating systems, maximise incomes (ie benefits for those entitled to them). New development to be</p> | <p>New target to be agreed with DEFRA based on NI 187 Tackling fuel poverty - % of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency</p> | <p>MBC with Kent Energy Centre</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|-----------------------------|---|--|-----------------|
| <p>likely to be undermined because of increasing energy/fuel costs and the economic down turn. Fuel poverty, occurs when a household needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to maintain an adequate heating regime (usually 21 degrees Centigrade for the main living area and 18 degrees for other occupied rooms. Fuel poverty may be caused by a number of factors including a lack of insulation, inefficient heating systems, the high cost of fuel, under occupancy and low incomes.</p> | | <p>built to over and above national requirements utilising Code for Sustainable Homes</p> | <p>rating</p> | |
| <p>8.6 Maidstone's town centre, key road junctions and the M20 are all subject to poor air quality. Three new hotspots for the road vehicle pollutant Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) have been identified in Maidstone's urban area, in addition to the existing Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the town centre and</p> | <p>Improve air quality.</p> | <p>Reduce traffic and congestion and develop a low emission strategy that integrates with climate change, energy reduction and air quality plans for the Borough.</p> | <p>Air quality – % reduction in NO_x and primary PM₁₀ emissions in Air Quality Action Zone – Short term (3 years) to minimise growth of exceedence levels. Medium term (5years) to minimise</p> | <p>MBC, KCC</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|---|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| <p>on the M20. NO₂ causes respiratory illnesses and possibly increases the risk of lung infections. Young children and people with asthma are the most sensitive to this pollutant. As a result the whole of Maidstone's urban area is to become an AQMA.</p> | | | <p>exceedence levels.</p> | |
| <p>8.7 In the Place Survey 'clean streets' was placed third (38%) in respondents list of 'Most important in making somewhere a good place to live' but only 6th in terms of most needs improving in Maidstone Borough (21 %). This suggests that Maidstone Borough is performing above the expectations of residents. However, given its importance and the suggestion that satisfaction is lower in some wards this is still considered a priority.</p> | <p>Litter free borough.</p> | <p>Clean sweeps and a crack down on fast food litter.</p> | <p>Meet the targets set for national performance indicators relating to street cleansing, flytipping, fly posting and graffiti</p> | <p>Maidstone Borough Council</p> |
| <p>8.8 In the Place Survey 25% of respondents prioritised parks and open spaces 'as important in making somewhere a good place</p> | <p>Continue to improve parks and open spaces – particularly Mote Park as the largest park in the</p> | <p>Continue to implement capital investment in new facilities and maintain</p> | | <p>Maidstone Borough Council.</p> |

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| Issue | Objective | Action | Target | Lead |
|--|--|--|--------|------|
| to live'. However, only 8.65% listed this as 'most in need of improving' in Maidstone Borough. | borough. | parks and open spaces. | | |
| Protection of the North Downs AONB, the setting of Maidstone and the Countryside. | To protect the Borough's high quality landscape and the countryside. | To formulate new Policies and implement existing Policies. | | |

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7. Implementation and monitoring - making change happen

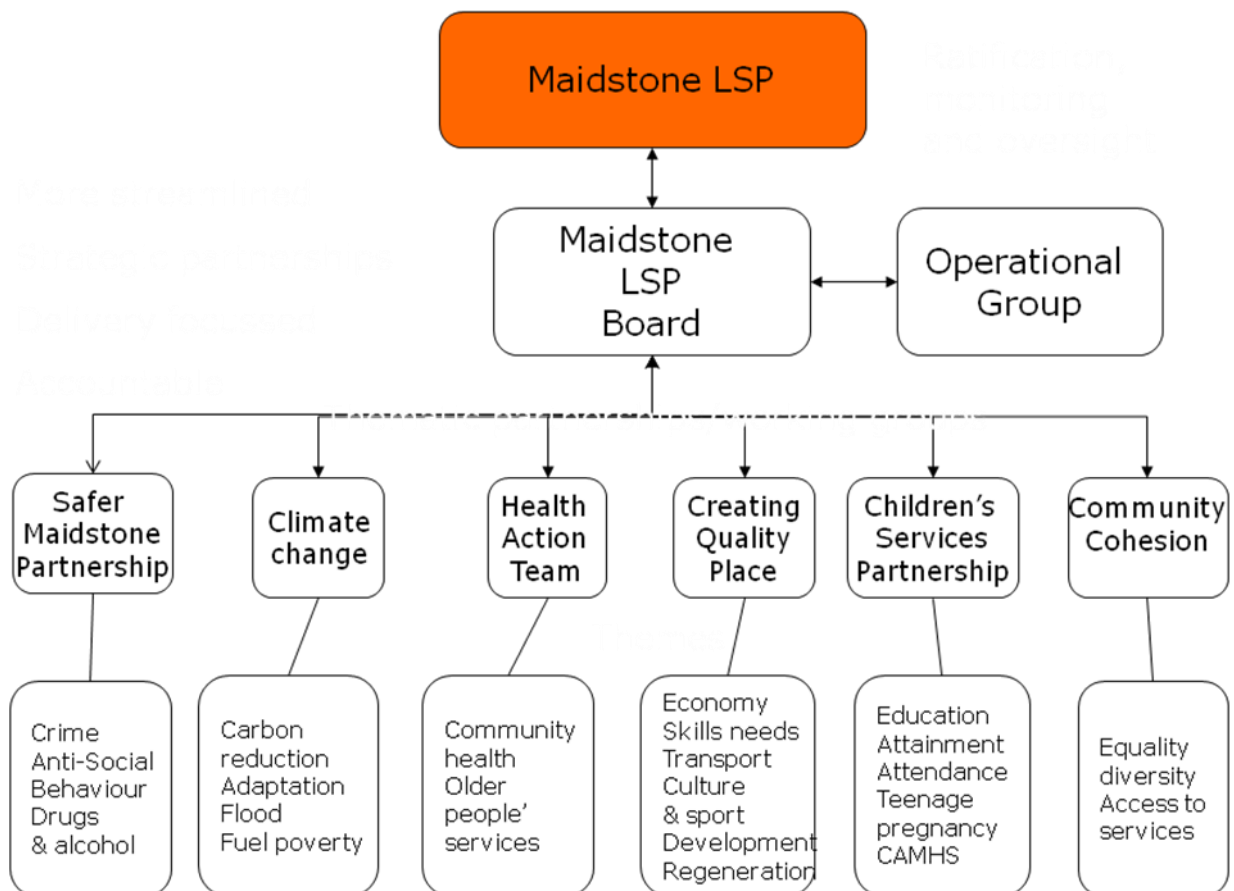
7.1 Government guidance states: 'To achieve the right outcomes for people and places, there needs to be timely monitoring, review and measurement of progress against targets. LSPs collectively will need to review progress against the priorities agreed – to assess whether the activities undertaken by their members have resulted in the desired outcomes and where this is not the case, steer the appropriate changes to plans and interventions. The views of local communities themselves will of course be central to assessing if desired outcomes have been delivered and/or whether or not there needs to be a change in focus.' MBC will take the lead, with key partners and partnerships, on performance managing the new SCS and reporting back to the LSP and the community on progress on key actions and targets within the new strategy on a half yearly basis. Part of this process will be a programme of continuous community engagement to gain the views of Maidstone residents on whether they perceive the improvements in facilities and services set out in the plan. This programme of engagement will have a second but equally important role in working with communities to resolve their own issues at the community level. Where significant issues arise they will be raised with the Borough council and LSP and may in some cases lead to revising the relevant parts of the SCS to meet these emerging issues. The actions have been developed jointly with partners and will be reported to and monitored by the LSP on a half-year basis.

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Appendix A: Maidstone's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

The government guidance sets out a clear role for LSPs: 'LSPs provide the forum for collectively reviewing and steering public resources, through identifying priorities in SCSs and Local Area Agreements (LAAs).' Maidstone's LSP comprises a range of key organisations from the public, private and voluntary sector (see below) delivering services and providing facilities within Maidstone Borough. In spring 2008, Maidstone's LSP undertook a self- assessment and started work on a new sustainable community strategy. Below is outlined the structure of Maidstone Borough's LSP agreed at its meeting in April 2008.



The Maidstone LSP (full group) comprises:

1. Area Committee of the Kent Association of Local Councils
2. Church in Society
3. Citizen's Advice Bureau
4. Disability Focus Group
5. Federation of Small Businesses

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6. Kent Association of Local Councils
7. Kent County Council
8. Kent Fire and Rescue Service
9. Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
10. Kent Police
11. Kent Wildlife Trust
12. Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS (hospital) Trust
13. Maidstone Borough Council
14. Maidstone Community Support Centre
15. Maidstone Housing Trust
16. Maidstone Mediation
17. Mid Kent College
18. Professional Hub (business group)
19. Town Centre Management Initiative
20. University for the Creative Arts
21. Voluntary Action Maidstone (Formerly Maidstone Volunteer Bureau)
22. West Kent Primary Care Trust
23. YMCA

The Maidstone LSP Board comprises:

1. Kent Police
2. Maidstone Borough Council
3. Kent County Council
4. West Kent Primary Care Trust
5. Voluntary Action Maidstone (Formerly Maidstone Volunteer Bureau)
6. University for the Creative Arts
7. Business representative (to be agreed)

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Appendix B: Plans and Strategies

1 Regional Spatial Strategy – The South East Plan

1.1 The RSS incorporates the Regional Transport Strategy and provides a broad development strategy for the South East region over a period of 15 – 20 years. The strategy also forms the base for Local Development Documents, Local Transport Plans and other regional and sub regional strategies and plans that will have some influence over how land in the area is used. It is therefore appropriate that Maidstone's SCS gives due regard to the RSS. The plan provides for a substantial programme of housing development and economic growth, which will be closely related to the availability of infrastructure and associated services. It identifies a network of 21 regional hubs (including Maidstone) consisting of highly accessible urban areas, which should continue to provide extended economical, social and cultural activities. Particular efforts will be made to improve the attractiveness of these towns and cities, to improve quality of life and achieve effective urban renaissance.

1.2 There are then a number of key objectives and policies of particular relevance to Maidstone's SCS:

- to improve transport and communication infrastructure within the South East (see Chapter 2 Sustainable and integrated transport,
- to tackle housing problems (see Chapter 6 Homes and Communities),
- and to target deprivation and social inclusion (see SCS cross cutting objective: Reduce inequalities within the borough).

1.3 The plan also recognises the increasing elderly population 'This will increase the demand for health and social facilities.' And the need to 'plan specifically to provide facilities to take into account these special needs.' (See Chapter 4 Health and older people). Maidstone is also adjacent to two 'sub-regions where the majority of development will be concentrated' – East Kent and Ashford and will need to respond to this. The policy on town centres raise a number of aspects that have a particular resonance with Maidstone: 'thriving places will be created for merging independent businesses as well as established players and for universities, colleges and schools (see Chapter 5: Children, young people and families),' In terms of transport policies T1 vi 'Include measure that reduce the overall number of road casualties (see Chapter 3 Crime, confidence and Safety)' and T2 Rural Transport i 'take a co-ordinated approach to encouraging community based transport in areas of need' both fit well with objectives or actions developed later in this strategy.

1.4 Maidstone itself is recognised as a 'Primary Town Centre' and 'Regional Hub' within the plan. Maidstone's successful bid for Growth Point Status is highlighted in the RSS. There is a Maidstone Policy within the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the RSS which aims to strengthen Maidstone's 'growth role for housing development, and to seek a non-competitive role with Kent Thames Gateway, and to avoid coalescence with the Medway Gap urban area.' Policy AOSR2: Maidstone Hub states: 'The Local Development Framework at Maidstone will:

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- i. Make new provision for housing consistent with its growth role, including associated transport infrastructure
- ii. Make new provision for employment of sub-regional significance, with an emphasis on higher quality jobs to enhance its role as the county town and a centre for business. The concentration of retail, leisure and service uses at the centre will allow close integration between employment, housing and public transport
- iii. Confirm the broad scale of new business and related development already identified and give priority to completion to the major employment sites in the town
- iv. Make Maidstone the focus for expansion and investment in new further or higher education facilities
- v. Support high quality proposals for intensifying or expanding the technology or knowledge sectors at established and suitable new locations
- vi. Ensure that development at Maidstone complements rather than competes with the Thames Gateway and does not add to travel pressures between them
- vii. Avoid coalescence between Maidstone and the Medway Gap Urban area.

It concludes:

1.5 Maidstone is the county town of Kent, and serves as the focus for administrative, commercial and retail activities. It is designated as a hub under Policy SP2 of this (RSS) Plan as it is well related to strategic rail and road networks and serves as an interchange point between intra and local rail services. It also offers opportunities for significantly higher levels of new housing development. An indicative 90% of new housing at Maidstone should be in or adjacent to the town. Associated infrastructure to support growth should include the South East Maidstone Relief Route and Maidstone Hub Package. Local Authorities should investigate the need to avoid coalescence with the Medway Gap urban area. It is proposed to add 1880 dwellings to the housing provision to Maidstone to reflect its new Growth Point Status (to 11,080 homes from 920 by 2026).

2 The Regional Economic Strategy for South East England 2006 – 2016

2.1 This Strategy complements the RSS but with a special focus on economic development (see Chapter 1 Economy and prosperity). Its purpose is to set a course for the region's economy that addresses the economic challenges and secures benefits for all those who live and work in the South East. The Strategy identifies three key challenges these are; the **global challenges** which aim to take advantage of opportunities that enable the South East to compete amongst global markets. **Smart growth** aims to increase levels of prosperity per head, across the South East, without increasing the region's ecological footprint. This will be delivered through higher productivity and increasing the number of resident population participating in economic activity. The third key challenge is that of **sustainable prosperity**, in which it is recognised that growth must be pursued within environmental limits. Additionally specific attention will be given

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to the Thames Gateway, Milton Keynes, South Midlands and the Ashford Growth Areas which were launched by the Sustainable Communities Plan 2003. The plan recognises Maidstone's bid for Growth Point Status and its role as a regional hub. According to the RES: 'The Regional Economic Strategy will support these Hubs (and Diamonds) in developing and implementing their plans to unlock the potential for sustainable growth,' and so Maidstone needs to ensure it receives continued support from SEEDA for its Growth Point Status and other related plans. However, Maidstone is outside the Thames Gateway and Ashford Growth Area Diamonds which will see the majority of government investment and will need to be able to respond to this.

3. Vision for Kent

3.1 The Vision for Kent (V4K) is the community strategy for the county. It has a great deal of synergy with Maidstone's SCS, albeit at a different geographical scale. It sets the direction of travel for all the key players who are working to improve the quality of life for everybody in Kent 2006-2026. It was based on the original V4K published in 2002. The vision has been divided into eight key themes (which are closely linked to the chapters in Maidstone's SCS). According to the Vision for Kent, 'Kent will be a county...

- where a vibrant and successful economy and targeted regeneration are delivered and sustained
- where learning is stimulated and supported for everyone - for life, for employment and for enjoyment
- where people lead healthier lives and enjoy high quality services that meet their needs for health, care and wellbeing
- where a high quality environment and countryside are protected and enhanced for current and future generations
- where communities are stronger, safer and confident in the face of change
- where residents and visitors enjoy life through an enhanced and accessible range of recreational, sporting, artistic, and cultural opportunities
- where jobs and services are easily accessible for all sections of the community and congestion and pollution are reduced
- where housing needs are met and decent, high quality homes help create attractive, safe and friendly communities.

3.2 While the strategy seeks to meet the challenge of sustainable development or growth it also recognises that 'the adequate provision of infrastructure and services to ensure that development is sustainable is fundamental to its achievement.' As well as developing a common understanding of sustainable development, providing a Kent wide context to district Local Development Frameworks and SCS, the Vision also sought to steer the development of the second Local Area Agreement for Kent or Kent Agreement 2 (KA2).

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3.3 In an iterative way, the V4K also sought to acknowledge the key priorities identified in district community strategies/LSPs. Hence in 2006 Maidstone was highlighted as:

- Having a thriving leisure and retail economy
- The natural place to do business in Kent
- Having key rural service centres

3.4 Key issues for the district were:

- Influence of the growth areas of Ashford and the Thames Gateway
- Attracting more residential and high quality development
- Reducing congestion, improving infrastructure and public transport

4 Local Area Agreement (LAA)

4.1 The SCS is written in the context of the LAA which is an agreement between national government and the organisations in a local area (county or unitary/metropolitan council areas) to focus on 54 key priority outcomes/targets over a three year period. Kent agreed its second LAA – the Kent Agreement 2 (KA2) – in June 2008. KA2 is comprised of four key blocks:

- children and young people,
- safe and strong communities,
- healthier communities and older people,
- economic development and sustainable communities.

4.2 The government guidance explains about LAAs: 'The Local Area Agreement (LAA) sets out the 'deal' between central government and local authorities and their partners to improve services and the quality of life for local people. As such, the LAA is also a shorter-term delivery mechanism for the Sustainable Community Strategy.' 'In two tier areas, there needs to be close co-operation between counties and districts in agreeing local priorities. Like other partner authorities, districts have important functions of their own, but they also act as wider community leaders; they have broad powers to promote well-being and they have important relationships with partners through district level LSPs. Counties and districts will need to agree locally how to best make use of their respective partnerships to achieve the necessary consensus.' As part of the LAA in Kent, districts have been asked to develop Local Action Plans (LAP) with their local partners. The Maidstone LAP is based on targets from KA2 that are of particular relevance to Maidstone. Out of the 54 national indicators, Maidstone has identified 14 as a high priority and 11 as a medium priority. They have been prioritised as high (red), medium (amber) and low (green) as to the degree that they meet/don't meet the following criteria:

- Performance issues
- A growing problem
- Cross cutting impact
- Linked to the aspirations of the council

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- Linked to the overall objectives of the council
- Tackle the council's identified strategic risks such as deprivation or climate change.

| ECONOMIC SUCCESS |
|---|
| NI 163 Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 2 or higher |
| NI 171 New business registration rate |
| NI 152 Working age people on out of work benefits |
| NI 188 Planning to Adapt to Climate Change |
| LEARNING FOR EVERYONE |
| NI 161 Learners achieving a Level 1 qualification in literacy |
| NI 162 Learners achieving an Entry Level 3 qualification in numeracy |
| NI 117 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) |
| IMPROVED HEALTH, CARE & WELLBEING |
| NI 120 All-age all cause mortality rate (All persons) |
| NI 55 Obesity in primary school age children in Reception |
| NI 39 Rate of Hospital Admissions per 100,000 for Alcohol Related Harm |
| NI 40 Number of drug users recorded as being in effective treatment |
| NI 125 Achieving independence for older people through rehabilitation/intermediate care |
| NI 51 Effectiveness of child and adolescent mental health (CAMHs) services |
| ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE |
| NI 189 Flood and coastal erosion risk management |

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| NI 186 Per capita CO2 emissions in the LA area |
| NI 191 Residual household waste per household |
| NI 197 Improved Local Biodiversity – proportion of Local Sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented |
| STRONGER & SAFER COMMUNITIES |
| NI 195 Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting) |
| NI 15 Serious Violent Crime Rate |
| NI 21 Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police |
| NI 111 First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17 |
| NI 32 Repeat incidents of domestic abuse |
| NI 3 Civic participation in the local area |
| NI 6 Participation in regular volunteering |
| ENJOYING LIFE |
| NI 11 Engagement in the Arts |
| NI 8 Adult participation in sport and active recreation |
| NI 110 Young people's participation in positive activities |
| KEEPING KENT MOVING |
| NI 198 Children travelling to school – mode of travel usually used |
| NI 175 Access to services and facilities by public transport, walking and cycling |
| NI 47 People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents |
| HIGH QUALITY HOMES |

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| NI 159 Supply of ready to develop housing sites |
| NI 187 Tackling fuel poverty - % of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency rating |
| NI 154 Net additional homes provided |
| NI 155 Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) |
| NI 141 Percentage of vulnerable people achieving independent living |
| DCSF STATUTORY INDICATORS |
| NI 75 Achievement of 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths (Threshold) |
| NI 87 Secondary school persistent absence rate |

5 Kent Local Transport Plan (KLTP) 2006 – 2011

5.1 This plan is Kent's second transport plan. The long term vision (by 2025) is: "To provide good, safe accessibility to jobs and services for all sections of the community in Kent, and to improve the environment and health of the community by reducing congestion and pollution, widening the choice of transport available, and by developing public transport, walking and cycling." The plan links very strongly to Chapter 2: Sustainable and integrated transport. When added to other investment by Government, developers, transport operators, District Councils and other activity by the County Council, the KLTP's headline targets are to achieve :-

- A 10% increase (from 58%) by 2011 in the number of households within 30 minutes travelling time of a hospital by public transport
- A 5% increase (from 88.9%) by 2011 in the number of households within 15 minutes of a GP's surgery by public transport
- By 2007/8 a 40% reduction on 2000 levels in the number of people killed & seriously injured on Kent's roads with a corresponding 50% reduction for children. A corresponding 10% reduction in the number of people slightly injured by 2010/11.
- A reduction in average vehicle speeds on Kent's roads in residential areas by 10% by 2011
- A 2% increase per year in bus patronage on 2003/4 levels
- A 6% improvement in bus punctuality by 2011
- A 38% increase in cycling on 2003/4 levels by 2011
- Restraining Kent wide traffic growth to less than 2% per annum

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- A 10% increase in the use of sustainable transport modes for journeys to school by 2011

5.2 The strategy recognises Maidstone's particular transport needs: 'Maidstone is the county town of Kent, being a centre for business, retail and administration. It is located close to the County's motorway and trunk road network and therefore has good links to the rest of the UK and to the coast via the M20. Localised traffic congestion and poor journey time reliability is increasingly common on many local roads.' A congestion plan has been prepared/in preparation for Maidstone to address its traffic issues/transport needs.

6 The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Health, 2008

6.1 Strategic Needs Assessments offer a means by which NHS Primary Care Trusts and Local Authorities describe the future health, social care and well being needs of the local people (see Chapter 4: Health and older people). The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 encompasses a duty to produce the assessment, and it also forms part of the implementation of the White Paper 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say', and the local government white paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities'. Kent has two assessments, one considering the needs of adults, the other considering the needs of children. The two take into account demands based on health inequalities and so have had a strong link to the cross cutting objective in the SCS: Reduce inequalities within the borough. Within the adult assessment particular consideration is also given to the impact of an aging population (see Chapter 4: Health and older people). The recommendations given within the assessment will shape future investment and direction of services. Key recommendations for the 'Current and future demand for treatment and care in Kent' include:

- Kent needs to prepare for significant increases in its older population.
- The main conditions affecting all patients are: Arthritis, Diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)and Heart Failure
- The key long-term conditions affecting older people are dementia, arthritis, stroke and coronary heart disease. These are also the main causes of disability and needs for social care
- As the population ages, there will be up to 25% more people with these conditions in Kent over the next ten years
- Mental illness, learning disability and physical disability are all increasing in both incidence and complexity
- The people most affected by long term health problems and disability are more likely to live in the deprived areas of Kent.
- Improving intermediate care and preventative treatment will have a beneficial impact.
- Shaping services towards a greater emphasis on home and community care is likely to need increased joint investment which must be recouped through reduced acute and residential care.

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6.2 Within the children's JSNA there has been 64 recommendations that have been made. This includes that investment should be targeted in accordance with the principle of equity to areas of greatest need. All funding agencies should agree differential funding targeted at those issues and the parts of Kent identified to have the greatest need. Additionally, all agencies should target their approach on the family as a whole rather than the Children's behaviour (see Chapter 5: Children, young people and families). The recommendations relevant to Maidstone are also supported by the Local Children's Services Plans.

7 Kent Children and Young Persons Plan 2008 – 2011

7.1 The KCYPP is the statutory overarching multi agency plan for Children and Young People in Kent, and is the action plan of the Kent Children's Trust. The Plan establishes key priorities which aim to improve the lives of children in Kent and to mitigate the effects of child poverty and deprivation within the county and has an extensive action plan flowing from this. It is driven by the Government's Every Child Matters principles which establish 5 key aims for those agencies working with children. These are that children need to be safe, to be healthy, to enjoy and achieve, to make a positive contribution and to achieve economic wellbeing. The Kent Children's Trust has just established 23 local subgroups, called Local Children's Service Partnerships, with responsibilities for developing their own local Children and Young People's Action plans as a subset of the Kent-wide Plan. Maidstone, in common with virtually all of the Districts in Kent has two LCSPs who are in the process of developing their local multi agency plans. The statutory lead authority for Children's Trusts in Kent is KCC. The LCSP for Cluster 2 (East & South East Maidstone) has a number of recently agreed priorities which are reflected in Chapter 5 Children, young people and families:

- Partnership Working – To reduce the impact of poverty (generational and situational) on children's lives by tackling the underlying causes and mitigating the effects.
- Being Healthy – To identify Children and Young People (aged 0-15) with emotional and/or psychological difficulties at the earliest possible stage and respond with the most effective support.
- Staying Safe – Ensure Children and Young People are safe and feel safe in the communities where they live, go to school, play, work and travel
- Enjoy and Achieve – To promote the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of young children so they flourish at home and at school.
- Making a Positive Contribution – Improve participation and engagement by all children and young people and their families in youth, cultured and community activities in Maidstone.
- Achieving Economic Wellbeing – Increase the number of young people who have the skills and vocational qualification for work through implementation of the 14-19 Strategy.
- Teenage Pregnancy – To improve quality of and access to information, advice and guidance relating to sex education, sexual health and parenting, to reduce numbers of teenage pregnancies and increase number of young parents in education, training or employment.

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7.2 The LCSP for Cluster 1 (west of the River Medway) is being developed currently but is likely to largely reflect Chapter 5 Children, young people and families.

8 The Kent Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2007 - 2027

8.1 This strategy (see Chapter 8: Environmental excellence and climate change) has been produced by the Kent Waste Partnership (KWP), which comprises the district councils within Kent in addition to Kent County Council (KCC). It identifies how the partners will work together to manage efficiently the collection and disposal over the next 20 years. The Strategy seeks to provide a balance between social, environmental and economic needs, with the aim of providing financial and environmental benefits to the county. The partners aim to ensure downward pressure on how much waste is produced in Kent, increase recycling and dramatically cut the amount of waste that goes to landfill. The partnership will produce and implement an action plan to deliver the Strategy, which will be revised annually. In order to deliver the Strategy, the Kent Waste Partnership will engage householders so that they understand the need for, and participate fully in, waste reduction and recycling and composting initiatives. Additionally, the partnership will aim to be responsive to the needs of the community, and proactively influence Kent's Local Development Framework for Waste (LDF) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The key elements of the Strategy are:

- Waste minimisation and re-use will be a priority in order to break the link between waste production and economic growth.
- The KWP will achieve a minimum level of 40% recycling and composting of household waste in Kent by 2012/13. Individual authorities will reach recycling levels above or below this figure according to their local circumstances; Kent County Council will increase recycling at Household Waste Recycling Centres to 60% by 2012/13.
- Information and education campaigns will seek to change behaviours and to increase the performance of existing recycling schemes.
- Timely procurement of treatment capacity for residual waste will ensure that Kent meets government targets for diverting biodegradable wastes from landfill.

8.2 The economic down turn has had already had an impact on demand for recyclables ie glass, paper, plastic dramatically affecting the revenues available from these to local authorities which may lead to a reappraisal of recycling targets.

9 Maidstone Economic Development Strategy 2008

9.1 The Economic Development Strategy (see Chapter 1 Economy and prosperity) aims to create an economy which enables the Maidstone Borough to be more competitive and respond to the neighbouring Growth Areas of the Thames Gateway and Ashford, where significant government and private investment in homes, jobs and environment has been planned. The Strategy is a response to the challenges facing the Maidstone economy, and the new

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responsibilities facing the Council and partners for driving economic development. The strategy's vision is to create:

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

9.2 The work with partners and stakeholders in developing this vision has contributed significantly to the development of the SCS's vision and objectives, particularly Chapter 1 Economy and prosperity but also Chapter 2 Sustainable and integrated transport and Chapter 8 Climate change and environmental excellence. The Strategy identifies a series of priority actions which must be carried out in order to achieve this vision. In particular it aims to develop sector specialisms, create a more innovative and entrepreneurial economy which will attract and retain investment in addition to ensuring an adequate transport system and increasing facilities for life long learning. The Strategy is structured around enhancing the drivers of competitiveness. Central to the strategy is the recent achievement of Growth Point Status.

10 Growth Point Status

Although not a plan or strategy, Growth Point Status will have a significant impact on MBC to 2026. Maidstone achieved Growth Point status in 2006 requiring the Borough to deliver 10,080 homes between 2006 and 2026. Maidstone's population is therefore due to grow to 155,000 (12,000) by 2016/17 and 165,000 by 2026 (23,000). This compares with a population increase between 1996 and 2006 of just 4,500 people. The challenges to deliver sustainable growth on this scale are considerable, but achievable if sufficient resources are made available (see Chapter 6 Homes and communities). CLG advise that Growth Point funding should be focused on delivering physical, social and cultural infrastructure projects to support the early delivery of housing as the main priority but also the creation of sustainable communities (see Chapters 7 Sport, creativity and culture and Chapter 8 Environmental excellence and climate change).

The approach being taken will focus the majority of new development in the Maidstone urban area first, making the best use of previously developed land and existing infrastructure, followed by a planned new urban extension to the south east of Maidstone, including the creation of new strategic infrastructure. Fundamental to Maidstone's approach are the principles of creating locally distinctive sustainable communities, which are well designed and encourage a healthier, safer and more prosperous community for local people and new residents to the Borough supported by timely improvements to the economic, social and environmental infrastructure. The new SCS will provide the framework within which the Growth Point Status can be developed. Key capital projects in the programme will include:

- Town Centre Public Realm project
- All Saints Link Road and linked initiatives
- South East Maidstone Strategic Link (design and consultation element only)

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Key revenue projects include:

- Maidstone Integrated Water Strategy
- Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Staff to support growth and other delivery vehicle activity

11 *Maidstone Borough Council Statement of Licensing Policy August 2007*

11.1 Section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003 requires each licensing authority (Maidstone Borough Council) to publish a statement of its licensing policy every three years. The objectives of the Policy are to pursue the four licensing objectives as identified by the Licensing Act 2003 (see Topic 3 Crime, confidence and Safety.):

- the prevention of crime and disorder;
- public safety;
- the prevention of public nuisance;
- and the protection of children from harm.

11.2 The policy strives to do this through an emphasis on partnership working. Partners and stakeholders such as Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Authority, other responsible authorities and local businesses and residents are all consulted and worked with where appropriate to ensure that the licensing objectives are addressed. The policy also lists actions taken specifically by the council to deliver the policy's objectives, for example considering the cumulative impact of a concentration of licensed premises, in Maidstone town centre for example, and ensuring that only necessary, proportionate and reasonable conditions are imposed on licences. The policy also highlights that the council will take proportionate but firm action against those who breach the conditions of a licence or persistently break the law, such as selling alcohol to under 18s, but that early warning of any concerns identified at a premises will be given to licence holders.

11.3 The Policy lists a wide range of objectives that contribute to the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy, from "maintaining a safe and family friendly environment" to "encouraging the self sufficiency of local communities". The licensing objectives outlined by the Licensing Act 2003 directly reflect the key Sustainable Community Strategy themes of "Crime, confidence and Safety" and "children, young people and families", while the recognised role of licensing in the cultural offer of the Borough reflects the "sport, creativity and culture" theme.

12 *The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan*

12.1 The current plan covers the duration of 2004 – 2009, and will be superseded in April 2009 by a revised management plan for 2009 – 2014. The Kent Downs Management Plan aims to ensure that the natural beauty and special character of the landscape and validity of the Downs and its communities

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are recognised, maintained and strengthened. It is aimed that the revised Plan will be the first point of reference and the primary means to develop, co-ordinate and promote policies and new opportunities for the management, conservation and enhancement of the AONB. Additionally, it is aimed that local authorities will give high priority to the Management Plan within their Local Area Agreements, LDF policies, development control decisions and planning enforcement cases. The plan is of particular relevance to Chapter 7: Sport, creativity and culture and Chapter 8: Environmental excellence and climate change.

12.2 The Plan also places significant weight on the development of strong working partnerships, with organisations that have a statutory duty of regard to the AONB, but also with partnerships of neighbouring protected landscapes through the South East AONB forum, National Association of AONBs and the Europark Federation. It is aimed that relevant interest groups, especially local communities, will have a say in decisions on the future of the Kent Downs.

12.3 In order to carry out these objectives the Plan has identified a wide range of actions. This includes publishing and encouraging local authority adoption of a Landscape Design Handbook, developing guidance to support mechanisms for landscape, biodiversity conservation and enhancement work, developing targeted action plans for areas in need of restoration & enhancement and extending the 'Kent Downs around Towns' initiative to address urban fringe pressures. Supporting vibrant communities will be achieved by developing methods to foster greater involvement, understanding & awareness of the local community, by supporting community led initiatives. Finally, encouraging sustainable development and travel will be achieved by engaging in development and consultation stages of LDFs and developing a gateway signing programme, by becoming involved in relevant development control proposals likely to affect the integrity of the AONB.

13 Parish Plans

13.1 Parish plans are community led action plans aimed at improving facilities and services in rural communities– generally over five years. According to the government guidance *Creating, Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities* (July 2008): 'Many towns and parish councils and other groups in rural areas have developed parish plans with their communities and local partners, which are similar in scope to sustainable community strategies. In other areas Neighbourhood Action Plans fulfil a similar function. They are likely to be valuable for informing the development of Sustainable Community Strategies of acting as local delivery plans for the LAA'.

13.2 Maidstone Borough has the largest number of parish plans published of any district in Kent: Bredhurst, Chart Sutton, Collier Street, Detling, Harrietsham, Headcorn, Leeds, Lenham, Staplehurst, Sutton Valence, Thurnham, Ulcombe and Tovil have all published plans in the last few years. These have been reviewed in two commissioned reports published in 2004 and 2006. These reports and more recently published plans were used to inform the issues and choices paper within the SCS. According to Action for Communities in Rural Kent the top five issues emerging from parish plans in Maidstone Borough are:

- Traffic speed (see Topic 3: Crime, confidence and Safety)

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- Traffic levels (see Chapter 2: Sustainable and integrated transport)
- High house prices (see Chapter 6: Homes and communities)
- Facilities for teenagers (see Chapter 5: Children, young people and families)
- Post office provision (see Chapter 1: Economy and prosperity)

13.3 Ten of the parish plans within the borough mention the preservation of landscape within the parish. Also mentioned within the majority of the plans (in addition to what has been indicated above), is the aim to keep the borough clean and tidy (see Chapter 8: Environmental excellence and climate change), ensuring good access to information and ensuring adequate democracy, policing, and the preservation of public and community transport

13.4 The following projects have then been developed to assist achievement of the top five priorities. A number of individual traffic calming projects have been developed, the South Maidstone Quiet Lanes project is underway, and housing needs surveys and local needs housing projects have been and continue to be carried out. In addition individual projects such as youth clubs, skate parks, detached youth work and youth forums/parish councils have been developed.

13.5 Finally, a number of parishes have undertaken lobbying of Royal Mail and community post office projects supported by ACRK.

14. The first community strategy for Maidstone "Maidstone Matters"

14.1 The first community strategy for Maidstone 'Maidstone Matters', was adopted in April 2003 and revised in 2005. At that time residents told us that **community safety, clean streets and transport** were their top priorities. As a direct result of that strategy:

- community wardens and police community support officers have become a daily sight on our streets and overall crime has been reduced,
- carers for sick and disabled family members have received better support,
- there has been greater support for and involvement of voluntary and community organisations in providing improved services,
- the streets, parks and open spaces have become cleaner and free of graffiti and fly tipping,
- new affordable homes have been built in villages for local people,
- measures to address speeding in rural areas have become widespread,
- and a one stop shop for public services (called the Gateway) has opened in Maidstone town centre in early 2009.

14.2 Most recently a special project team has been set up by the LSP to address teenage conceptions and an outreach nurse has been employed to work with at risk young people – the first worker to be deployed in West Kent. Other recent initiatives have included providing free leisure passes to the eighty or so

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foster children/children in care in Maidstone so that they can access sport and active leisure activities.

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Appendix C: Sustainable Communities Act 2007

1. The act encourages local communities to come forward with ideas and proposals to promote the sustainability of their local area. 'Sustainability' is defined in the Act in very broad terms, and can cover anything which could improve the economic, social, or environmental well-being of the area, or promote participation in civic or political activity.

2. The expectation is that most proposals will come from community organisations, local branches of national organisations, parish and town councils, neighbourhood forums, residents and tenants associations, **local strategic partnerships** and other partnership bodies. Proposals can be developed by councils themselves, who will need to discuss these ideas with local panels (explained later) and try to reach agreement. Ideas could be generated through the development of **sustainable community strategies** and LAAs.

3. All proposals under the Act will need to be submitted via local councils, who have discussed them with **local panels**. Councils will then decide which to send on to a national 'Selector' body (the Local Government Association), whose role is to consider proposals made under the Act and in co-operation with the Secretary of State, to draw up a short-list. Parish and town councils will need to submit proposals via one of the principal councils in their area. They can also be represented on community panels.

4. The first invitation for proposals was issued by the Secretary of State in October 2008. The deadline for submission of proposals to the Selector, in the first round, is **July 31st 2009**. A basic criterion is that proposals must be ones that need some form of action from central government (such as a change in legislation, a transfer of responsibilities from one public body to another, a new national policy or a change or strengthening of policy).

5. In considering proposals, local councils will need to distinguish between those which could happen anyway, if agreed at local level, and those which need central government action or intervention of some sort. Before submitting any proposals to the LGA as the national Selector, each council will need to go through several steps:

- establish or identify a panel (or panels) of local people and work with them to develop proposals which would promote sustainability. This might be a newly established panel, or an existing local consultative panel or forum which meets the requirements of the Act
- try and reach agreement with the panel, about the merits of a proposal and priorities between different proposals
- consult with those parties affected if the proposal involves the transfer of a responsibility from one public body to another
- 'have regard' to a list of matters set out in a Schedule to the Act, and which reflect issues of concern to organisations which supported the Act during its passage through Parliament (such as preserving local jobs, services and facilities, energy conservation, sustainable transport and food production)

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- make a formal decision (via the full council or council cabinet) on whether to forward the proposal onwards to the Selector.

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageId=1293641#contents-2>

ⁱ Local Government Act 2000,

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2000/ukpga_20000022_en_1

ⁱⁱ Securing the Future – UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy, 2005

http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/publications/pdf/strategy/SecFut_complete.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities: Statutory Guidance, 9th July 2008,

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/strongsafeprosperous>