

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Tuesday 21 July 2020

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: Remote Meeting - The public proceedings of the meeting will be broadcast live and recorded for playback on the Maidstone Borough Council website.

Membership:

Councillors Mrs Blackmore, M Burton, Chappell-Tay, Clark, Cox (Chairman), English, Mrs Gooch, Harvey, McKay, Mortimer, Newton, Perry (Vice-Chairman), Purle, Round and Springett

The Chairman will assume that all Members will read the reports before attending the meeting. Officers are asked to assume the same when introducing reports.

<u>AGENDA</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
1. Apologies for Absence	
2. Notification of Substitute Members	
3. Urgent Items	
4. Notification of Visiting Members	
5. Disclosures by Members and Officers	
6. Disclosures of Lobbying	
7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information.	
8. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 24 June 2020	1 - 9
9. Presentation of Petitions (if any)	
10. Questions and answer session for members of the public (if any)	
11. Questions from Members to the Chairman (if any)	
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Issued on Monday 13 July 2020

Continued Over/:



Alison Broom, Chief Executive

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PART II

To move that the public be excluded for the items set out in Part II of the Agenda because of the likely disclosure of exempt information for the reasons specified having applied the Public Interest Test.

	Head of Schedule 12 A and Brief Description	
19. Part II Appendices, Council-Led Garden Community Update	Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).	224 - 234

INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

In order to ask a question at this remote meeting, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 17 July 2020). You will need to provide the full text in writing.

If your question is accepted, you will be provided with instructions as to how you can access the meeting.

In order to submit a written statement in relation to an item on the agenda, please call **01622 602899** or email committee@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 p.m. one clear working day before the meeting (i.e. by 5 p.m. on Friday 17 July 2020). You will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to comment on.

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MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 JUNE 2020

Present: Councillors Mrs Blackmore, M Burton, Chappell-Tay, Clark, Cox (Chairman), English, Mrs Gooch, Joy, McKay, Mortimer, Newton, Perry, Purle, Round and Springett

Also Present: Councillors Janetta and Tom Sams

174. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received for Councillor Harvey.

175. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillor Joy was present as a substitute for Councillor Harvey.

176. URGENT ITEMS

It was agreed that Item 18 – Council Led Garden Community Update would be taken before Item 13 – Maidstone Borough Council Response to Covid-10 Public Health Emergency.

177. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS

It was noted that Councillors Janetta and Tom Sams were present as Visiting Members for Item 18 – Council-Led Garden Community Update.

178. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

179. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

All Councillors were lobbied on Item 18 – Council-Led Garden Community Update.

180. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That all items be taken in public, as proposed.

181. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 APRIL 2020

RESOLVED: That the minutes be agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed at a later date.

182. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

183. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were five questions from members of the public.

Question from Mr Steve Heeley to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

'The Planning Inspector issued his final report on the Kent Minerals Site Plan on 23rd April 2020. His recommendation for adoption of this plan sees Chapel Farm identified as the only proposed soft sand quarry in Kent for the next 20 to 30 years. For those that don't know, Chapel Farm is an 88-acre site in the centre of the biggest landowner's holding in your Heathlands development. Why is this recent development or constraint not mentioned in the agenda item 18 officer's report?'

The Chairman responded to the Question.

Mr Steve Heeley asked the following supplementary question:

'What wasn't in the previous report was that the planning inspector said that the Chapel Farm site had to be sequential to the Burleigh Farm site in Charing, which pushes the timescales by between 10 and 15 years before extraction at Chapel Farm in Lenham can begin. This is another setback for a project that is already beset with enough problems, the site for the proposed quarry is the single biggest parcel of land in your scheme and the fact that this site is now potentially sterilised until 2050 before we can starting building houses, means that this is another question mark on how deliverable the scheme is. How much longer is this project going to continue for?'

The Chairman responded to the supplementary question.

Question from Ms Kate Hammond to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

'At your last meeting on 29th April, you told this committee that you had spoken and had met with Ashford Borough Council about more ambitious housing proposals in relation to the Heathlands project and the M20 corridor. Ashford Council appear to be unaware of any conversations on this matter. Can you confirm who it was that was spoken to, when that conversation took place and where the notes are recorded?'

The Chairman responded to the question.

Ms Kate Hammond asked the following supplementary question:

'Can I ask why no minutes were taken of the meeting?'

The Chairman responded to the supplementary question.

Question from Ms Sally King to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

'Can the Committee confirm what meetings officers and/or members have had with Highways England regarding a proposed new motorway junction at Lenham Heath since the 29th April?'

The Chairman responded to the question.

Question from Ms Gail Duff to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

'How will the chairman ensure that members of this committee will be given all the facts on the Heathlands project, in order for them to make future informed decisions?'

The Chairman responded to the question.

Councillor McKay, Leader of the Labour Group, responded to the question.

Question from Mr Richard Proctor to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

'The initial financial model for the Heathlands Garden Community barely came close to breaking even and certainly did not reflect all the necessary contingencies and detail to pass deliverability and viability tests. Is the revised masterplan being cut down with critical infrastructure removed at the expense of the Council's widely publicised vision and true Garden Community principles?'

The Chairman responded to the question.

Councillor McKay, Leader of the Labour Group, responded to the question.

The full responses were recorded on the webcast and were made available to view on the Maidstone Borough Council Website.

To access the webcast recording, please use the below link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUZ1mtwZZ7M>

184. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE CHAIRMAN

There were no questions from Members to the Chairman.

185. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme is noted.

186. COUNCIL-LED GARDEN COMMUNITY UPDATE

The Director of Regeneration and Place introduced the report as an update on the progress of the Council-Led Garden Community known as Heathlands, since April 2020.

It was noted that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) had advised that the Heathlands proposal was one of four garden communities that would be considered in further detail; with additional information submitted to the LPA for those purposes. This included a draft second stage landscape led master plan and a safeguarded area for a potential motorway junction. Three further land parcels had been brought forward by an independent developer as shown in the table within the report. The financial model noted by the Committee in September 2019 had been updated in draft and included within the submission and would be presented to the Committee in July 2020. A technical briefing for the Committee would take place on 20 July 2020.

The Director of Regeneration and Place confirmed that Homes England would continue to share the promotional cost of the project with the potential for an investment role to be undertaken. It was confirmed that this was the only area in the borough for which Homes England had made this offer.

A meeting had been arranged for the 26 June 2020 with the Parish council and Save Our Heathlands Group in order that future community engagement and public consultation could be discussed. Any ideas resulting from the meeting would be brought to the Committee for consideration. It was noted that the potential for the proposal to feature in the next stage of the local plan review depended on sustained progress over the summer.

Councillors Tom and Janetta Sams addressed the Committee as Visiting Members to ask that support for the project be withdrawn. Specific reference was made to the Council's ability to deliver services due to the financial impacts of Covid-19 alongside the financial cost of the proposal. Additional points raised included the effects on climate change through increased motor vehicle usage, lack of local employment opportunities and the need for greater transparency to allow greater community engagement.

It was noted that part of the debate held would be of greater relevance to the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee rather than this Committee. Several Members expressed the wish to be provided with

more detail in the future updates provided to the Committee in order that greater transparency would be achieved.

During the debate it was noted that Garden Communities elsewhere had not been as successful as originally hoped. It was felt that the offer made by Homes England as noted would provide assurance that the Heathlands proposal, should progress continue, would be successful.

In response to questions the Director of Regeneration and Place confirmed that a meeting would occur between the Council and Homes England to discuss the proposal of shared promotional costs. It was confirmed that the requirements of the memorandum as previously agreed would be met through a report to the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report be noted.

187. MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO COVID19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

The Chief Executive introduced the report and acknowledged the efforts of key workers across a multitude of services in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The importance of the organisations that had provided support to local residents and businesses was noted, which included the Parish Councils, Chamber of Commerce and numerous voluntary organisations. The Chief Executive thanked the Council's staff members for their efforts over recent months.

The report highlighted the actions taken by the Council in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, to respond to new and increased demands. It was noted that the Council's relationships with residents, business, Parish Councils and various other organisations had been strengthened due to the cooperation shown in recent months.

The Small Business Grant Fund and the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Fund scheme was initiated in April 2020 with 89% of the businesses eligible for £10k grants having submitted applications with over £17million distributed in response. Of the businesses eligible for the £25k grant scheme, 85% submitted applications with over £10million distributed in response. A total of £28.5million in funding was provided by Central Government, with £27.3 million distributed which totalled 96%. The Council was the best performing district within Kent and twenty-second nationally in the distribution of £10k and £25k grants.

The Discretionary Grant Scheme was launched in May 2020, with the Council provided with £1.4million in funding from Central Government. Over 300 applications were received, with over £1million distributed to 228 businesses. To allow for further applications being received, the Council applied for additional funding and were provided with an additional £890k.

The Committee wished to express their thanks to the Key Workers, Voluntary Organisations and persons, Parish Councils and the Council's staff members.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report be noted.

188. MAIDSTONE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO RECOVERY FROM THE COVID19 PANDEMIC

The Chief Executive introduced the report on the Council's approach to recovery and drew attention to the importance of an evidence-based approach in tailoring those plans. The objectives and approach to recovery were outlined within paragraphs 2.9 and 2.10 of the report.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the possible resurgence of Covid-19 in either local or national form would be a significant risk to the Council's recovery approach. The Strategic Plan would be harder to achieve in the short term and potentially long term, with housing, economic growth and healthy life expectancies likely to be affected. It was noted that there would be an opportunity for elements which included green topics, climate change and business transformation to be examined. The Council's financial stability would be re-examined, and a comprehensive report would be provided to the Committee in July 2020 on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

With regard to recovery, the High-Street had been reopened and the hospitality industry was to follow. A politically balanced Member Consultative Forum had been created, to encourage shared communication between officers and politicians, which met on a weekly basis.

RESOLVED: That

1. The context for Covid-19 recovery be noted; and
2. The objectives for Covid-19 recovery for Maidstone be agreed.

Note: Councillor English exited the meeting during the debate on this item.

189. FOURTH QUARTER BUDGET & PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement introduced the report which summarised the position of the 2019/20 financial year. It was noted that there had been a surplus in the budgets of the Committee and the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee; both of which were offset by the deficits shown for the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure and Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committees.

The Director of Finance confirmed that Appendix 4 included an update to the Council's current financial position, in accordance with the information submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

(MHCLG) for May 2020. A significant overspend would likely arise in the next financial year and future years.

Appendix 1 detailed the position of the schemes arising from the Business Rates Retention Pilot. It was requested that any decision regarding the unspent funds allocated for the schemes be deferred until the 21 July 2020 meeting of the Committee, in order that a report on the current 2020/21 financial position and strategic response could be provided to the Committee before any decision is taken. The Committee was asked to approve the three cases of Business Rate write-offs shown within the Appendix that the Council had not been able to recover.

The Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer noted that of the three strategic indicators reported to the Committee, one had achieved its target, one was within 10% of the target and that a fourth quarter figure for the percentage of land and highways with acceptable litter was not presented as this was measured three times a year as per Defra guidance.

It was noted that there were five indicators reported by exception to the Committee, of which four were categorised under the strategic priority of 'Thriving Place'. The impact of Covid-19 was felt early with a reduction in visitors to Maidstone, which affected the High Street, Museum and Leisure Centre in particular. Of the seven strategic indicators in the annual outturn, two had achieved the target set, one had achieved within 10% of the target, one was awaiting data and two were reported by exception.

RESOLVED: That

1. The Revenue position as at the end of Quarter 4 be noted;
2. The Capital position and slippage at the end of Quarter 4 be noted (Appendix 1);
3. The Summary of Performance for Quarter 4 for Key Performance Indicators be noted (Appendix 2);
4. The write-off of uncollectable business rates totalling £37, 153.22 be approved (Appendix 3);
5. The Covid-19 Financial Update be noted (Appendix 4); and
6. In light of the projected impact of Covid-19, a decision on the uncommitted Business Rates Retention Scheme allocations as set out in Appendix 1, page 22, is deferred pending a further report to this Committee next month on the 2020/21 position.

190. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2020-21

The Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer introduced the report and confirmed that the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2020-21 for all Service Committees were shown in Appendix 1. The KPIs had been agreed

by all service committees except the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee as the Committee had not yet considered their draft KPIs.

The Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer confirmed that the Committee had last year identified seven strategic indicators, three of which were reported on a quarterly basis and four on an annual basis. The report set out the changes to indicators and set out the seven indicators for 2020-21.

It was noted that the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee had requested a quarterly update on unemployment figures within Maidstone and that the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee wished to be regularly updated on the planning enforcement workload figures.

RESOLVED: That the draft Key Performance Indicators for 2020-21, attached as Appendix 1 be agreed.

191. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement introduced the report which would have been presented to the Committee in March, however this meeting was cancelled due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. It was confirmed that risks related to Major Emergency with national/internal impact and Resurgence of Covid-19 had been added to the framework as new risks. The existing risk management framework would continue to be used, with the current situation reflected in the update report and attached appendices.

Particular attention was drawn to the fact that the probability and impact of the risks shown had been updated if necessary, with a focus on financial restrictions and the threat to retail and leisure sectors; both of which had increased substantially due to the pandemic.

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement informed the Committee that the Institute of Fiscal Studies had published a report on the risks that had arisen to local authorities as a result of Covid-19. It was noted that District Councils were at increased financial risk due to the dependence on local income in supporting services, with the Institute having ranked the Council in the middle section of District Councils at risk.

In response to questions the Director of Finance and Business Improvement confirmed that the Council may be expected to use part of the reserves held to mitigate the effects of Covid-19, however clear guidance had not yet been given.

It was felt that there should be an increase from the annual reporting of Risk Management to the Committee, due to additional risks outlined during the discussion.

RESOLVED: That

1. The risk information as set out in Appendix 1 be noted; and
2. A Risk Management Update report be provided to the committee on a quarterly basis until otherwise requested.

192. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.32 p.m.

2020/21 WORK PROGRAMME

	Committee	Month	Origin	CLT to clear	Lead	Report Author
Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021-22	P&R	21-Jul-20	Governance	?	Sheila Coburn	Sheila Coburn
Equalities Update	P&R	21-Jul-20	Standing Item	?	Angela Woodhouse	Orla Sweeney
Future Development of MTFs in Response to COVID-19	P&R	21-Jul-20	Governance	Yes	Mark Green	Mark Green
Communication and Engagement Strategy - 2020 - 21 Action Plan	P&R	21-Jul-20	Communication	Yes	Angela Woodhouse	Julie Maddocks
Council Led Garden Community Update	P&R	21-Jul-20	Officer Update	?	William Cornall	William Cornall
Corporate Planning Update	P&R	21-Jul-20			Angela Woodhouse	Angela Woodhouse
Q1 Budget, Performance and Risk Management 2020/21	P&R	12-Sep-20	Governance	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Archbishop's Palace Options Appraisal	P&R	16-Sep-20	Asset Management	Yes	Mark Green	Lucy Stroud
Climate Change Action Plan	P&R	16-Sep-20	Governance	?	Angela Woodhouse	Helen Miller
Council Led Garden Community Update	P&R	16-Sep-20	Officer Update	?	William Cornall	William Cornall
Debt Recovery Update	P&R	16-Sep-20	Officer Update	?	Steve McGinnes	Steve McGinnes
Covid Recovery Update	P&R	16-Sep-20	Officer Update	?	Alison Broom	Alison Broom
Council Led Garden Community Update	P&R	21-Oct-20	Officer Update	?	William Cornall	William Cornall
Q2 Budget, Performance and Risk Management 2020/21	P&R	25-Nov-20	Governance	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22-2025/26	P&R	25-Nov-20	Governance	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Council Led Garden Community Update	P&R	25-Nov-20	Officer Update	?	William Cornall	William Cornall
Council Led Garden Community Update	P&R	16-Dec-20	Officer Update	?	William Cornall	William Cornall
Collection Fund adjustment 2020/21 and Council Tax Base 2021/22	P&R	20-Jan-21	Governance	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Medium Term Financial Strategy & Budget Proposals 2021/22	P&R	20-Jan-21	Governance	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet

2020/21 WORK PROGRAMME

	Committee	Month	Origin	CLT to clear	Lead	Report Author
Medium Term Financial Strategy - Capital Programme 2021/22 - 2025/26	P&R	20-Jan-21	Governance	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Council Led Garden Community Update	P&R	20-Jan-21	Officer Update	?	William Cornall	William Cornall
Q3 Budet, Performance and Risk Management 2020/21	P&R	10-Feb-21	Governance	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Medium Term Financial Strategy & Budget Proposals 2021/22 - Final	P&R	10-Feb-21	Governance	No	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Council Led Garden Community Update	P&R	10-Feb-21	Officer Update	?	William Cornall	William Cornall
Asset Management Strategy	P&R	TBC	Strategy Update	?	Mark Green	Georgia Hawkes
Commissioning and Procurement Strategy	P&R	TBC	Strategy Update	?	Mark Green	Georgia Hawkes

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Agenda Item 13

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

21 JULY 2020

COUNCIL-LED GARDEN COMMUNITY UPDATE

Final Decision-Maker	Policy & Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration & Place
Lead Officer and Report Author	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration & Place
Classification	Public Appendix L and M are exempt as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, paragraph 3, Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
Wards affected	All, but in particular Harrietsham & Lenham and Headcorn Wards. Lenham Parish Council and Boughton Malherbe Parish Council are affected.

Executive Summary

The proposal was last considered by this Committee on 24th June 2020. The purpose of this report is to provide an update in respect of the progress made since then in pursuing a Council-led garden community, near Lenham Heath (Heathlands), and to agree the overall business case for the proposal and the level of financial exposure that this would mean for the council itself over the medium term. Furthermore, it is important that this Committee should signal its ongoing commitment to the proposal, if it were so minded, in advance of any decisions that will be made by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) on the preferred spatial strategy. As in the case of previous reports to this Committee, the contents of this report relate to the Council's position as a potential property owner/ developer and not as LPA.

Purpose of Report

For decision.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

To endorse the second stage submission made to the LPA and in doing so signal the Council's intention to continue to work with Homes England (HE) to act as master developers to bring forward the Heathlands proposal, and specifically approve:

- A. The second stage vision document and revised masterplan provided as appendix G, as well as the other supporting appendices too.

- B. The financial model for the Heathlands proposal provided as private appendix L.
- C. The shared (with HE) impending financial commitment to continue the promotion of the proposal through the Local Plan Review (LPR) process, to secure the land options and to secure Planning consent over the coming years.
- D. The use of the second stage vision document as a means and basis for further community engagement in collaboration with the Parish Council.

Timetable	
<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Policy and Resources Committee	21 July 2020

COUNCIL-LED GARDEN COMMUNITY UPDATE

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<p>Impact on Corporate Priorities</p>	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling • Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve all the corporate priorities.</p>	<p>Director of Regeneration & Place</p>
<p>Cross Cutting Objectives</p>	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report recommendations support the achievement of all the cross cutting objectives.</p> <p>Through delivering much needed homes to include 40% affordable housing of which 70% would be for social rent. The emerging masterplan is landscape led with circa 50% of the total area proposed as green space. Led by the ambitions set out in the Strategic Plan the Council can ensure that the design principles of development where it is the master planner reflect the commitment to reduce health inequalities amongst other things.</p>	<p>Director of Regeneration & Place</p>
<p>Risk Management</p>	<p>See section 5.</p>	<p>Director of Regeneration & Place</p>

Financial	<p>Investment in developing the Garden Community proposal forms part of the Council's five-year capital programme and meets the Council's criteria for capital investment. The capital programme allows for development of the proposal including securing options over the land and obtaining planning permission, and budgetary provision exists for the expenditure described in the report and the future plans outlined here. The budgeted expenditure in the capital programme will be funded in part by Homes England as set out in this report.</p> <p>Funding of the Heathlands development, as set out in Appendix L, is beyond the scope of the Council's existing capital programme.</p>	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing. 	Director of Regeneration & Place
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers There are no direct legal implications arising from the report at this stage, however, legal input will continue to be provided as the project develops 	Principal Solicitor - Commercial
Privacy and Data Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact. 	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers will commence the preparation of an Equalities Impact Assessment or equivalent should the proposal feature in the draft spatial strategy of the Local Plan Review. 	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	<p>Whilst new developments will have varying impacts on the health of the population or individuals the masterplan vision document seeks to address section 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework, promoting healthy and safe communities.</p>	Public Health Officer
Crime and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendation will not have a 	Head of Service

Disorder	negative impact on Crime and Disorder.	or Manager
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A. 	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The revised masterplan brief seeks a biodiversity net gain within the proposed redline. 	Head of Policy Communications & Governance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The council is pursuing this project as it is consistent with its Strategic Plan priority of “embracing growth and enabling infrastructure” and the desired outcomes within it:

- The Council leads master planning and invests in new places which are well designed.
- Key employment sites are delivered.
- Housing need is met including affordable housing.
- Sufficient infrastructure is planned to meet the demands of growth.

2.2 This report will provide an update on the progress made since the last report to this committee and make recommendations in respect of the next decisions and steps, and will address the following areas:

- Second stage submission to the LPA
- Feedback from the LPA
- Financial model
- Promotional costs and programme
- Delivery model and the role of Homes England
- Landowners
- Potential motorway junction
- Community engagement
- Broader considerations

2.3 **Second stage submission to the LPA.** During the week of the 15th June, the following documents were submitted to the LPA (at their request):

- A) Maidstone Borough Council vision statement
- B) Maidstone Borough Council position statement
- C) Maidstone Borough Council delivery model
- D) Maidstone Borough Council 2nd Stage Masterplan Client Brief
- E) Maidstone Borough Council 2nd Stage Masterplan and Explanation
- F) Landscape and Visual Technical Advice Note
- G) Second stage masterplan vision document
- H) Housing statement
- I) Employment statement
- J) Infrastructure statement
- K) Transport statement

L) Financial model

2.4 These can all be viewed as correspondingly labelled appendices (although K & M are private appendices. Appendices A-K are in draft form and may evolve in response to further feedback from the LPA so should be considered in that context, inasmuch they represent a position in time rather than being definitive. Furthermore, in time the LPA will most likely publish similar documents for the other garden community proposals. Committee Members may wish to particularly focus on Appendix G, the second stage masterplan vision document, but a summary of its provision is as follows:

- 770 acres gross
- 4,000 homes, of which 40% affordable housing
- 27.4 acres of employment land
- 2 primary schools
- 117.3 acres of country park
- New train station / halt
- Safeguarded area for a potential motorway junction

2.5 **Feedback from the LPA.** The LPA appear to be broadly content with the second stage submission and they have sought further clarification around the following matters:

- The financial model, and some changes have been agreed that are reflected in the model provided as appendix L.
- The sewerage treatment plant, in terms of its capacity and potential impact on development. Accordingly, a meeting is scheduled with the water authority in the coming weeks.
- Discussions with Network Rail in respect of the new train station. Homes England are now leading on the more detailed exploration of this matter.
- The impact of the mineral's allocation in the Kent County Council Minerals and Waste Plan that broadly covers the southern half of the third phase of development (western parcel) best illustrated on page 29 of appendix G. A meeting has taken place on this topic with the Minerals Authority, the LPA and their advisor Stantec, and all parties appear content that residential development could indeed follow extraction, but it will introduce some programme risk to the final sub-phases. Rather than pre-empt any views it is appropriate to allow time for the LPA to firm up their view on this matter in the coming weeks. However, it might be that the LPA might indicate that the time frame for the development period be lengthened or indeed the quantum of development be reduced to take account of it.
- Possibly with the previous point in mind, the LPA have asked that the availability of a ribbon of land to the north of the railway line be explored for much longer-term development. It is uncertain as to whether this would be the preference of those landowners, but as garden community promotor the Council is in effect obliged to explore the possibility of this in principle, but to be clear, the proposal doesn't include this land at the present time.

- 2.6 At the time of writing, all five of these areas are being positively explored with the LPA and the appropriate stakeholders.
- 2.7 **Financial Model.** This is provided at Appendix L. This shows the project as having a fifteen year construction timeline commencing in 2027, delivering a commercially acceptable margin and a residual land value that is understood to be acceptable to the principal landowners whilst also delivering sufficient land value capture (in the form of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106) to deliver a fully fundable proposition. Whilst the overall value of the proposal is considerable, it would not ultimately be funded in the main by the Council, as the Council working with Homes England, intends to take an enabling or master developer role, which will be explained further in the subsequent sections.
- 2.8 The financial model shows the total receipts will come from a combination of the sale of homes for private sale, the sale of affordable housing (to a Registered Provider/s), and the sale of commercial property too. So, whilst the overall value of receipts it is considerable, different sectors will contribute to the overall funding mix.
- 2.9 At the time of writing, the LPA is providing further feedback on the financial model, and may request some changes, although these are not expected to be material.
- 2.10 **Promotional costs and programme.** At risk expenditure on the proposal will be circa £300,000 at the point at which the LPA publishes its public consultation stage of the LPR, the LPA's preferred spatial distribution for future development in the borough. Should the Heathlands proposal feature in this, and continue to gain traction thereafter through to being allocated in the Local Plan Review, and on to securing a Planning consent, inclusive of securing "Options" over the principal landownerships, costs would reach £3m over the first five years of the project ending March 2024. It is these costs that Homes England have undertaken to share 50:50, this is subject to Homes England approval which is due to be considered at internal committee in September following a period of initial project due diligence which will shortly be underway.
- 2.11 These indicative costs are detailed in exempt appendix M.
- 2.12 **Delivery model and Homes England (HE).** In high level terms, MBC/HE would be most likely in time to pursue one of the following delivery strategies:
- A. Sell the land options on to a private sector developer or developer consortium, soon after securing Planning consent, for a fee that reflects the sunk costs to that point inclusive of a reasonable risk margin.
 - B. Exercise the land options and so acquire the land soon after securing Planning consent, most likely on a phased basis, potentially undertaking some infrastructure and site servicing works, so readying the site for onward sale, most likely on a phased basis, to a private sector developer or developer consortium at a price that reflects land value uplift generated through the securing of outline planning,

infrastructure investment, infrastructure investment, sunk promotional costs and margin.

- 2.13 Given the residual land value in Appendix L, even if this were shared 50:50 with HE, delivery strategy B would be too costly an investment and too high a risk for the Council. However, it is possible that HE may favour this option alone but at the time of writing their position is not yet known. Or indeed they might wish to pursue Option B if MBC were prepared to join them as a minority partner.
- 2.14 The Council should take account of the views of Homes England as to which strategy is most appropriate, and it is envisaged that they will have reached a conclusion on this by the Autumn.
- 2.15 In the meantime, the financial exposure for strategy A would be £3m shared 50:50 with HE as the default and less risky option. The worst case scenario would be that there might prove to be no appetite from private sector developers (or consortia) to acquire the options, in which case they would eventually expire and the investment made jointly by the Council and HE would be lost. Or indeed, HE might then choose to exercise the land options themselves.
- 2.16 A key factor that contribute to Heathlands being a potentially attractive proposition to the developer sector is land being available for acquisition with the benefit of Planning consent at a price that is evidenced as being commercially viable inclusive of the required land value capture.
- 2.17 That said, perceived down side risks, from the developer perspective, might be that the garden community concept is unproven in the borough, that the infrastructure requirements mean an unacceptably high level of peak debt, or that more broadly the overall timelines of the project are too long for their respective business plans. That said, having HE as a partner is an important mitigation to this risk.
- 2.18 However, much progress has been made inasmuch there is a reasonable chance of Heathlands featuring in the LPA's preferred spatial strategy, the land requirement is known and understood, and the principal landowner's are willing to make their land available via Option agreements, and HE are willing to share the next stage of financial exposure. Accordingly, a fork in a road is effectively now being reached inasmuch as this Committee is being asked to consider reinforcing its commitment to the project and signalling this intent to the LPA, and in doing so commit itself to the financial exposure set out in the promotional costs and programme section. Should the LPA not favour the proposal at the next stage of the LPR, this financial commitment wouldn't materialise beyond the sunk costs to date.
- 2.19 In terms of entering into Option agreements with the principal landowners, the details of those proposed deals will now be taken forward but will be brought back to this Committee prior to entering into them, most likely in the Autumn, coupled with a firm delivery strategy informed by HE.

- 2.20 In terms of the partnership with HE, the possible governance structures for this are currently being explored and firm proposals will be brought back to this committee in the Autumn too, and this will also take forward the work outlined at the 22 April 2020 meeting of this committee in terms of the possible structures set out by Pinsent Mason, that were;
- MBC in house delivery
 - MBC arm's length vehicle
 - Jointly owned vehicle
 - Locally Led New Town Development Corporation
- 2.21 These options will be explored and evaluated with HE too, and their views and future intentions will inform to some degree the recommendations that officers make at the time.
- 2.22 There are also other mechanisms by which the council might choose to invest in the broader proposal once development is underway. For example, the council could pre purchase some or all the c1600 affordable homes that will be made available through the S106 agreement to Registered Providers on terms consistent with Maidstone's newly approved Affordable Housing Supplementary Guidance. Or indeed it could choose to invest in the commercial property that will be provided on the site.
- 2.23 **Landowners**. The position with the principal landowners is unchanged since the last report, and preliminary discussions have taken place with the landowners north of the railway in terms of the two access roads that would be required (via their agent).
- 2.24 **Potential Motorway Junction**. As advised at the previous Committee meetings, this matter is now being explored by the LPA through Duty to Cooperate meetings, but an area of land has been safeguarded for it in the latest vision document / masterplan. However, if Highways England were eventually minded to provide it, they might well prefer an alternative location elsewhere on the A20 / M20 corridor.
- 2.25 **Community Engagement**. The Parish Council and Ward councillors opted to defer the intended meeting in June until such time as the second stage masterplan can be shared with them.
- 2.26 **Broader considerations**. Good progress continues to be made but Members should be mindful that the project will be complex and challenging to deliver, and no doubt many obstacles and complications will be encountered and need to be overcome on the journey. The success of the project will also depend to some degree on different stakeholders inclusive of the local community itself, and the Council's ability to provide them with clear and consistent messaging, and to form strong productive working relationships with them, both at officer and Member level. Also, there will be complex political structures to work through, for example the Local Enterprise Partnership, in terms of building consensus around the railway station for example, as well as the ongoing ambition for the motorway junction on the A20 / M20 corridor.

- 2.27 That said, the project does present huge opportunities for the borough. These are set out in the employment statement (Appendix I) in terms of the following:
- £1bn construction value
 - 1,000 direct and indirect jobs
 - 4,000 new homes, of which 40% would be affordable
- 2.28 Furthermore, the project does present the opportunity for the council to lead the way in terms of place making, with an emphasis upon eco and biodiversity credentials.
- 2.29 In conclusion, from the outset, it has always been highlighted that progress on the project will be of an iterative nature. Much progress has been made and there is now greater clarity around the land required, the will of the principal landowners to participate and the proposed partnership with HE, but there is still further work to do. The LPA will soon be publishing its draft preferred spatial strategy, at which stage it will be known whether the Heathlands proposal is to be taken forward to the next stage of the LPR. It has now been estimated what the project will cost to fund through to securing Planning consent, and options for a delivery strategy have been identified, taking account of the need to minimise risks.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option A: To endorse the second stage submission made to the LPA and in doing so signal the Council's intention to continue to work with HE to act as master developers to bring forward the Heathlands proposal, and specifically approve:
- A. The second stage vision document and revised masterplan provided as appendix G, as well as the other supporting appendices too.
 - B. The financial model for the Heathlands proposal provided as private appendix L.
 - C. The shared (with HE) impending financial commitment to continue the promotion of the proposal through the Local Plan Review (LPR) process, to secure the land options and to secure Planning consent over the coming years.
 - D. The use of the second stage vision document as a means and basis for further community engagement in collaboration with the Parish Council.
- 3.2 Option B: To withdraw from the Heathlands proposal and notify the LPA so that it can be removed from the LPR process.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is A, as it is consistent with the council's strategic plan. The council has taken a bold step in pursuing the proposal, has made good progress to date, and so it would be appropriate to continue to invest prudently to see it through to the next key milestone in the LPR and beyond, with the best likelihood of success.

5. RISK

- 5.1 When this proposal was presented to this Committee in September 2019, the likely risks were set out as follows:
- At risk consultancy expenditure.
 - A period of uncertainty for the community affected.
 - Possible negative perceptions of a broader role for the Council in the context of acting as master developer.
 - Maintaining cohesion amongst the landowner group.
- 5.2 These risks have to some degree crystallised and largely remain. However, the level of cohesion amongst what is a now smaller landowner group, is now strong.
- 5.3 When the proposal was last reported on 24th June, further risks were identified, that broadly remain unchanged, as follows:
- Terms cannot be agreed with the landowners.
 - That the LPA does not support the proposal at the next stage of the LPR.
 - Challenge from individuals or organisations that oppose the principle and/or the specific details of MBC's council-led garden community.
- 5.4 In terms of new and emerging risks, these are as follows:
- Now is that the LPA could move to support the proposal in the next stage of the LPR process, but this Committee falters in its resolve to continue to back the project over the long term. I.e. This committee must decide if it intends to move forward, in careful and measured steps, cognisant of the fact that more work needs to be undertaken, with greater detail provided, particularly in relation to the financial terms with the landowners and the preferred delivery model, both of which will be brought back to this Committee in the Autumn.
 - The Council will also need to work in collaboration with the LPA and other key stakeholders to continue to explore the opportunities and constraints presented by the Minerals allocation and the Southern Water Plant and refine mitigation strategies for them. The LPA will be seeking assurance on these matters and will provide their definitive views on them in due course.

6 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 Nothing further to report since June 24th.

7 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 The next steps will be to:

- Advance the commercial negotiations with the principal landowners and bring the final terms of the proposed deal/s back to this Committee prior to moving to contract stage.
 - Continue to promote the proposal to the LPA through the LPR process.
 - Develop the preferred delivery model with Homes England.
 - Continue dialogue with Lenham Parish Council and other community groups / stakeholders.
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8 REPORT APPENDICES

Appendices A to M of which L&M are private.

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter A: Maidstone Borough Council Vision Statement

- A.1 The Borough Council has adopted an ambitious Strategic Plan (2019-2044), containing priorities such as “Embracing Growth” and “Enabling Infrastructure”. The decision to promote a Council-led new settlement, whereby the Council leads master planning and invests in new places which are well designed, are a direct reflection of this. In order to deliver on these priorities, the Borough Council is taking the bold and ambitious approach of acting as both land promotor and master developer.
- A.2 The Government has set ambitious housing growth targets for the South East. Not only must these homes be delivered, but they must be of the very best quality, capable of delivering strong and sustainable communities with all the supporting infrastructure they require. A Council-led proposition at Heathlands can deliver on all fronts and reflects Government objectives in seeking to achieve this. The Borough Council will take a long-term leadership and stewardship position at Heathlands, setting a framework within which many public and private sector partners will be invited to contribute in terms of delivery. The Borough Council’s ambitions for Heathlands are to create:
- A new garden community with exemplar eco credentials and bio-diversity net gain;
 - A mix of high-quality homes, of which 40% will be for affordable housing let at genuinely affordable rents to local people; and,
 - A sustainable community with a blend of homes, businesses, community, social, as well as green and blue spaces, with the right infrastructure provided at the right time.
- A.3 The Borough Council has held several preliminary discussions with Homes England and has recently received formal support from Homes England¹ in promoting this development. As the government’s “housing arm”, this will be a very secure public partnership that will provide certainty and ensure the delivery of this vision and ambition.

¹ Homes England letter dated 08 June 2020



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter B: Maidstone Borough Council Position Statement

- B.1 The Borough Council, acting as master-developer took the decision to submit a Council-led Garden Community proposal, Heathlands, into the Local Plan Review “call for sites” exercise in May 2019.
- B.2 Since then, the Borough Council has advanced its commercial negotiations with the 5No “principal landowners” and has letters of intent from each of them, outlining their willingness to make their land available for the development. These landowners are being jointly represented by Hobbs Parker who has recently re-confirmed the landowner position of support in seeking to create a new sustainable community¹.
- B.3 In examining Heathlands’ wider core area, the extent of controlled land within the revised site boundary, including retained (unaffected) land-uses/properties, presently extends to circa 88% of that identified.² This also includes other landowners who have subsequently expressed an interest in forming part of Heathlands.
- B.4 The Borough Council has also over the past year procured several technical and environmental surveys to better understand the various development opportunities and constraints of the core area. In effect these findings have directed development away from some locations and towards others within the site, and these findings have been crystallised in a truly landscape-led second stage masterplan that has been provided as part of this latest submission.
- B.5 This evidence, coupled with land availability, has informed a reduced redline and corresponding reduced quantum of development, now at circa 4,000 homes. Also, the survey findings have informed a revised and sustainable transport strategy for Heathlands.

¹ Hobbs Parker letter (dated 08 June 2020) – appended to this submission.

² The accompanying Land Control Plan and submission provides more detail on this.

- B.6 It was always the aspiration of the Borough Council that it would secure a promotion partner for Heathlands. We are delighted that Homes England has committed its backing of the project, including match-funding financial support, and a “letter of intent” from them is provided with this submission.³

³ Homes England letter (dated 08 June 2020) – appended to this submission.



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter C: Maidstone Borough Council Delivery Model

- C.1 The Borough Council acting in partnership with Homes England will act as master developer for the Heathlands project, and will perform the following functions:
- Secure the land options
 - Promote the proposal through the Local Plan Review process
 - Create an exemplar landscape led masterplan and secure planning consent
 - Create a design code
 - Create an infrastructure delivery plan supported by land value capture
 - Create a stewardship structure
 - Install high quality management arrangements
 - Bring in development partners to undertake phased development of land parcels
- C.2 The Borough Council, and joint working with Homes England, will fund the promotion of Heathlands through the Local Plan Review process, through to securing planning consent, and exercising the land options.
- C.3 It does not intend to fund Heathlands in full and take on the full development function, but rather will invite in private sector partner housebuilders and developers to undertake the various phased parcels of development and associated infrastructure. Land value capture will be integral to funding the on-site (and off-site) infrastructure, and this infrastructure is demonstrated as being fully funded in the accompanying financial model.¹
- C.4 The Borough Council, working with Homes England, and acting jointly as master-developers, will maintain an overall enabling function which will possibly include the direct delivery of certain infrastructure items.

¹ Martin Arnold letter/report (dated 10 June 2020) – accompanying this submission.



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter D: Maidstone Borough Council 2nd Stage Masterplan Client Brief

D.1 The Council is committed to delivering an exemplar garden community at Heathlands. Accordingly, it set out the following ambitious brief (March 2020) for the procurement of the 2nd Stage landscape-led masterplan, in as much it should meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrates how the new community could sensitively interact with the existing community.
- Demonstrates how the existing community could benefit from the overall proposal.
- Provides plentiful green buffers around existing homes and hamlets.
- Dispels any misconceptions that existing homes would be lost.
- Matches green space requirements to site constraints as identified by the various technical consultants (RSK & BW Landscape).
- Matches a high-level phasing plan to site constraints and opportunities identified by the technical consultants.
- Adopts Garden Community design best practice as set by the Town & Country Planning Association.
- Adopts principles set out in the Maidstone Borough Council "Garden Communities' prospectus".
- Demonstrates healthy town principles.
- Demonstrates smart city principles, most notably around sustainable transport modes as set out by RSK Transport, with an emphasis upon a sustainable transport strategy.
- Demonstrates biodiversity net gain principles.
- Demonstrates exemplar eco principles.
- Suggests practical alterations to the proposed red line shown in the original call-for-sites submission – BW Vision Document (May 2019).

- D.2 Following the Borough Council's resolution¹ to continue to pursue a new settlement in the target location, and its role as master developer, the Borough Council commissioned the above 2nd Stage Masterplan work.
- D.3 The output of the above work is set out in the accompanying submission.

¹ MBC Policy & Resources Committee (29 April 2020)



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter E: Maidstone Borough Council 2nd Stage Masterplan and Explanation of Evolution

- E.1 The “original” masterplan was prepared/submitted in response to the LPA’s “call for sites” in May 2019. This represented the preliminary thoughts of the Borough Council in terms of what “could” potentially be provided for and was largely based upon a desk-based exercise at the time due to the embryonic stage of the Local Plan process. The illustrative layout that accompanied the submission at the time was purely indicative, and this was made very clear in all documents at that time.
- E.2 The LPA subsequently sought further information from our Client (in Oct 2019), which in the main comprised survey information and using their findings to justify (or indeed amend) the intended red-line and project scope. Following a procurement process, our Client commissioned a series of technical studies – RSK – and they provided their draft reports in late Feb/March 2020. These survey findings indicated that the initial masterplan, which was purely illustrative, would need to be updated (ie. the 2nd Stage masterplan) so as to respond to the various opportunities and constraints identified by RSK.
- E.3 The primary matters that have evolved relate to the following:
- *Potential new motorway junction & HS1 stop* - RSK Transport advised against a motorway junction and HS1 stop, and instead advocates a sustainable transport strategy to include making use of Charing and Lenham stations via a guided bus loop, with the possibility of a new station between them in the future. This reflects subsequent discussions with Highways England, who would not support a new access onto the motorway for a new settlement less than 10,000 dwellings.
 - *Areas of high archaeological potential* – RSK Heritage (and KCC Archaeology) advised of an area of significant archaeological interest in the central part of the site, between

Chapel Farm (Royton Manor) and Mount Castle Farm – that should ideally be kept free from development (and preserved in-situ).

- *Need for new Secondary School* – subsequent engagement with KCC Education have indicated there is substantial spare capacity (circa 50%) at the existing Lenham Secondary School, which should be utilised in advance of the consideration of any new provision. Secondary provision is now proposed in the form of off-site financial contributions (i.e. CIL).

E.4 The above matters give rise to the subsequent main changes in the evolution of a (technically informed) 2nd Stage masterplan:

- *New vehicular links to/from the A20* – in the absence of a new motorway junction, vehicular access will need to be gained via the A20. RSK Transport has advised this should be in the form of 2No new junctions heading southwards to the proposed new settlement south of the mainline railway. They also advise the need for 2No new rail bridges, in addition to the existing Forstal Road bridge.
- *Potential new mainline rail station/halt* – in the absence of a potential new HS1 station, RSK Transport advocates an enhanced sustainable transport strategy, inc the potential for a new mainline station/halt in the medium/longer term. This will require enhanced links to Lenham Railway Station in particular, both for buses and ped/cycle routes in the western part of the Site.
- *New "Royton Manor Town Park"* – in seeking to fully respect the area of highest archaeological interest, it is proposed to retain this extensive area for a "Town Park", and it will create a new focus for the central part of the scheme. This area was also identified as having significant "landscape views" looking out from the Site, and its enhancement as a Town Park will capitalise upon such views. It will be carefully landscaped designed and also provide for substantial biodiversity net gains. It will become a "green heart" at the centre of the new Garden Community.
- *Relocated "Country Park"* – in the absence of a new motorway junction, any new development south of the M20 would require significant new infrastructure over the M20 and CTRL/HS1. This would not only likely be costly prohibitive but would also result in a more segregated form of development from the "main core". In the light of

this, and the proposed new “Town Park” in the centre of the scheme, and the need to provide for

enhanced bus/ped/cycle links from the western part of the scheme, it is proposed to relocate the Country Park to the area south of the M20. This would form part of an integrated network of blue and green infrastructure, following the Great Stour, enhancing some of the existing wetlands in this location and utilising existing footpaths/bridges to create circular links to the core of the development.

- *Western parcel* – following the relocation of the previously proposed Country Park (for the reasons above), this area now provides for an increased level of development:
 - In the southern part, this will respect the extant mineral allocation (at Chapel Farm) in forming the latter phase of development;
 - a suitably designed “cordon sanitaire” will be provided to the existing sewage treatment works;
 - an enhanced biodiversity corridor to the Great Stour River (at twice the distance recommended by RSK Ecology);
 - In the northern part (ie outside the extant mineral allocation), this will form an early phase of development in order to ensure the enhanced bus/ped/cycle links to Lenham Station and Secondary School from the outset.

E.5 In addition to the above major changes, the following principles are also reflected in the “revised” masterplan:

- *Retention of existing Rose Lane Industrial Estate* – this is now shown to be retained and extended to provide for new employment area. This would also utilise the eastern new access road from the A20.
- *Retention of all existing properties* – all existing properties (within the red-line) are shown as being retained. We have also provided for a “10m green buffer” to each retained property.
- *Revised red-line* – we have excluded areas of land where we have been advised that landowners do not wish to form part of the proposed scheme, ie most notably the area to the south of Lenham Heath Road and Hubbard’s Farm (south of the M20).
- *“Green hubs”* – in the light of RSK Heritage comments, we have created extended formal/informal “green spaces” at “The Forstal” and in the vicinity of “Crabbe Farm”.

- E.6 The reasoning and evolution behind the above changes and subsequent reflections upon the 2nd Stage Masterplan are also set out in the accompanying booklet: "Heathlands Design Concept" (June 2020).



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter F: Landscape and Visual Technical Advice Note

Introduction

- F.1 Barton Willmore Landscape Planning and Design has been requested to provide an addendum to the Landscape and Visual Technical Advice Note (TAN) produced in May 2019, in order to reflect the findings of the various technical studies subsequently procured by the Borough Council.
- F.2 These changes have resulted from the wider project technical design team, including the landscape planning and design team, to inform the refinements to the emerging masterplan. This consultation comprised a landscape-led approach to the masterplan design to ensure that the future Garden Village continues to respond to its landscape setting in a sensitive and positive way and seeks opportunities to protect, restore and enhance the local landscape features as part of an integrated multi-functional green and blue infrastructure network.
- F.3 Key changes to the masterplan from that included within the 2019 Vision Document are as follows:
- Removal of proposed motorway junction (M20) and revised access to be provided with two roads extending south from the A20 resulting from technical advice (RSK Transport and Highways England).
 - Provision of green pedestrian/ cycle route and bus way to Lenham Rail Station.
 - Relocation of the proposed Country Park from the west to the south of the M20/HS1 corridor and connection with circular walks and with new development in the area previously shown as country park.
 - Movement of District Centre north to create a new Town Park to east of Royton Manor
 - Exploration of potential for future development to the north of the mainline railway and south of the A20.

- F.4 This Technical Advice Note (TAN) Addendum addresses the landscape and visual implications of the changes set out above, in particular impacts upon landscape and visual sensitivity and the setting of the AONB and the justification in supporting these proposed changes.

Removal of Proposed Motorway Junction and Revised Access from A20

- F.5 Further to consultation with the borough councils' technical consultants (and Highways England) the proposals no longer presently include a new motorway junction. Access to the Site will, instead, be obtained from two access points from the A20 east and west of New Shelve Farm which extend southwards in a sympathetic topographical alignment flanking and screened/ softened by existing landscape features including hedgerows, tree belts and woodland.
- F.6 The removal of the motorway junction would negate the need for a large physical intervention in the landscape, including bridges, slip roads and associated lighting. Roads extending south from the AONB are characteristic of the area and would not be out of context, being in keeping with the prevailing grain of the landscape. Care would be taken, however, regarding the design of the A20 junctions, particularly in relation to lighting, due to their proposed location on the edge of the AONB, and in terms of any sensitive landscape mitigation required to accommodate them as discreetly as possible into the landscape.
- F.7 The proposed access roads will extend through Kent County Landscape Character Area 6: Hollingbourne Vale, and area described as being "*unusually open*" to the east of Lenham. The landscape character of this area is described as 'poor', due to the extensive loss of landscape features, and the sensitivity is described as 'low', due to few distinguishing features, unremarkable topography, and moderate visibility. This loss of historic landscape features is marked in the area south of New Shelve and Old Shelve Farms, between the A20 and the mainline railway.
- F.8 Within the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment (2013), the proposed access roads would be passing through LCA 17: East Lenham Vale. This assessment assesses the landscape sensitivity as high and as an area which contains open views.
- F.9 The proposed access roads would be routed alongside existing field boundaries, bordered by native hedgerows on both sides with native trees to prevent visual intrusion into the views from the AONB and to restore and enhance the landscape structure within an area that has been subject to the removal of such features.

Moving of Country Park to South of M20/HS1 corridor and Extension of Residential Development to West

- F.10 Due to the removal of the motorway junction from the masterplan design, residential development to the south of the M20/HS1 corridor would result in a fragmented settlement with poor vehicular connection. This area is subsequently less suited for residential development.
- F.11 In addition, although both areas are currently identified in TAN Figure 5: Landscape and Sensitivity Plan as being of medium sensitivity, the land in the west of the Site, previously shown as a Country Park in the 2019 Vision Document, is allocated for minerals extraction. This extraction process will result in the loss of landscape features and integrity, resulting in a landscape of low sensitivity. The logical solution and opportunity that derives from this, therefore, is to place the Country Park on the medium (and thus higher) sensitivity landscape to the south of the motorway and the residential development on the lower sensitivity landscape to the west, thus protecting the existing landscape features south of the M20/HS1 corridor and incorporating them into the integrated green-blue infrastructure along the route of the Great Stour River.
- F.12 This area of development in the west of the Site will bring the Garden Village edge closer to Lenham and strong consideration will be given to the treatment of the western edge of the Garden Village and the physical, visual and perceptual separation from Lenham. This can be achieved through extensive native planting in the west, creating characteristic landscape features, restoring Green Infrastructure in this area and connecting other more isolated landscape features to aid in providing enhanced green corridors for both amenity and habitat enhancement value.

Movement of District Centre North to Create New Town Park East of Royton Manor

- F.13 The area to the east of Royton Manor has been identified as an area of significant archaeological interest. In addition, as shown on the TAN Figure 6: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan, this area contains a number of footpaths, and provides slightly elevated panoramic views out of the Site towards the AONB to the north and the Greensand Ridge to the south. The creation of a Town Park will protect the archaeological remains, the setting of the footpaths and the views out, providing a strong visual and physical context to the Garden Village whilst connecting into the green and blue infrastructure along the route of the Great Stour River.

Exploration of Area to North of Mainline Railway and South of A20 for Potential Future Development

- F.14 The provision of access from the A20, provides the opportunity to explore the land north of the Mainline Railway for potential future development and landscape restoration. As addressed above, the landscape north of the Mainline Railway and south of the A20 is situated within Kent LCA 6: Hollingbourne East and Maidstone LCA 17: East Lenham Vale (see 2019 LV TAN for more information).
- F.15 The Kent Character Assessment assesses LCA 6 as being of low sensitivity due to the extensive loss of landscape features south of the scarp slope of the Downs. As set out in the 2019 LV TAN, guidance notes for this LCA include the creation of woodland and re-introducing cross-contour shaws to link the existing streams. Analysis of the historic OS maps demonstrates significant loss of landscape infrastructure in the area south of the A20, particularly to the south of Old Shelve and New Shelve Farms.
- F.16 The MBC Character Assessment assessed LCA 17 as being of high sensitivity due to its visual openness. Suggested actions for this LCA include the preservation of the undeveloped foreground of the AONB, the restoration of the historic hedgerow and shaw pattern and the planting of new standard oaks in hedgerows.
- F.17 The two character assessments appear contradictory in their findings but stem from similar issues, i.e. the historic loss of landscape features on the land south of the AONB escarpment. The land south of the Mainline Railway is generally of lower visual sensitivity due to its strong network of landscape features, particularly hedgerows, trees and woodland. Development is visible but is seen set within this strong landscape framework. The landscape to the north of the Mainline Railway is generally more open, with fewer landscape features providing strong infrastructure, due to their historic removal.
- F.18 The North Downs Way/Pilgrims' Way is bordered by vegetation for much of the distance between the War Memorial at Lenham and the settlement at Highbourne, but expansive open views are available from the stretch west of the memorial (see LV TAN Site Photograph 26), to the east of Highbourne (see LV TAN Site Photograph 28) and from the viewpoint at Great Pivington Farm (see LV TAN Photograph 27).

- F.19 Photograph 27 demonstrates how the settlement of Lenham integrates sensitively into the landscape and views, due to careful choice of materials and the setting within a strong landscape infrastructure. Further to the west, the Marley Works site demonstrates how strong landscape infrastructure can make development almost disappear from view. Conversely, Ashford Business Park at the junction of the A20 and the Old Ashford Road, demonstrates how a lack of vegetation can create a visually detracting feature within the landscape.
- F.20 The potential for future development north of the Mainline Railway provides the opportunity for macro-scale landscape restoration, reversing historic landscape decline in this area. The success of development north of the Mainline Railway, therefore, depends on the re-creation of a strong landscape infrastructure, including native hedgerows and trees alongside roads, new areas of woodland and shaws, and the provision of space within the development for canopy trees, and the use of materials and housing styles that respond to the local vernacular in tone and colour. The provision of such a landscape infrastructure would result in the restoration of historic landscape features and the enhancement of local landscape character, whilst preserving the openness of the foot of the North Downs escarpment north of the A20, in line with the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment.

Green Infrastructure Strategy

- F.21 The landscape led masterplan design has evolved from a robust understanding of the baseline conditions and context of the Site, in particular its landscape and visual context, and opportunities for improved sustainable transport links. The design is arranged around the retention and enhancement of the existing green-blue infrastructure, anchored on the proposed Royton Manor Town Park, the proposed Country Park south of the M20/HS1 corridor, and the route of the Great Stour River. The latter feature has been provided with twice the recommended landscape buffer, providing a linear green park through the development. These areas of green space will connect to the existing right of way network and landscape features, such as areas of woodland in the north and south of the Site and connecting to a new pedestrian /cycle route and bus way to Lenham Station.
- F.22 Any proposed potential development north of the mainline railway line would also be anchored in a robust landscape framework, resulting from the restoration of the historic landscape and the enhancement of local landscape character in line with the published landscape character assessments.

F.23 The planting of a robust linear tree / woodland belt on an east-west alignment, set at the most topographically elevated point of this area, along the northern edge of such a development together with strategically located additional tree planting flanking the southern side of the A20 would significantly reduce the visual impact from the elevated Pilgrims' Way / North Downs Way and would result in a development characteristic of the locality whilst restoring historic landscape features. Keeping such potential future growth to the south of New Shelve Farm, would enable the protection of the open character of the A20 in this area in line with the published landscape character assessments. It is therefore recommended that such planting be established as early as practicable, to maximise any beneficial effects on views.

Summary and Conclusion

F.24 The proposed changes to the masterplan layout from those shown in the 2019 Vision Document have been informed by the landscape led approach together with consultation with other professionals and based on a robust understanding of the Site and its context. These changes provide additional opportunities for wholesale landscape restoration and integration, restoring landscape features in an area that has historically seen substantial losses, particularly to the north of the mainline railway, and in the west of the Site, the latter of which will be further degraded through future minerals extraction. These existing and restored landscape features will be integrated into a connected green blue infrastructure network, providing improved opportunities for access and recreation, biodiversity enhancement and visually containing the development whilst anchoring it sympathetically within its landscape context.



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

MASTERPLAN DESIGN CONCEPT
JUNE 2020



**BARTON
WILLMORE**



Artist Impression of District Centre

1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides an overview summary of the driving principles that underpin the masterplan design concept for Heathlands Garden Community.

This Stage 2 of the masterplan develops the strategies and ideas of the 2019 vision document, incorporates revised land control information and takes account of the extensive technical work covering archaeology, transport, ecology amongst other disciplines prepared by RSK, commissioned by the Borough Council to refine the masterplan design.

This masterplan takes a deeper review of the site constraints and a more surgical approach to the preservation of existing archaeology and environmental assets to create a variety of habitats to achieve biodiversity net gain and environmental resilience, alongside greater sensitivity to retained dwellings and preservation of the local character of the area.

In parallel a comprehensive multi-modal transport strategy is considered, initially focusing on the provision of compact neighbourhood planning with ease of walking between home and required daily services, supported by high quality strategic cycle 'greenways' between key destinations connected to Lenham Railway Station. Over the longer term, provision is made for a new railway halt within the latter phases of the development.

Another critical component of our revised approach is the preservation and enhancement of identified heritage assets related to areas of high archaeology potential such as Royton Manor, Chapel Farm, Mount Castle Farm and areas around Forstal Road to create new parks and recreation areas, providing enhanced settings for retained listed buildings and preservation of archaeological features.

At a scale of around 4,000 units with a diverse mix of uses, the opportunity to integrate exemplar sustainable design, operational and management principles will be maximised, alongside ambitions for creating carbon neutral development. The planting of a new Country Park to the south of the M20, the preservation of Bull Heath and the extension of the Nature Reserve adjacent to the Main Line Railway provides prime opportunities for carbon offsetting and achieving biodiversity net gain.

The Borough Council has worked closely with the team of consultants to ensure its ambitions for Heathlands have been embodied in creating an exemplar landscape led Garden Community to meet the below strategic objectives:

- Create new Garden Community with exemplar eco credentials and bio-diversity net gain.
- Provide a mix of high-quality homes, of which 40% will be for affordable housing let at genuinely affordable rents to local people.
- Develop a sustainable community with a blend of homes, businesses, community, social, as well as green and blue spaces, with the right infrastructure provided at the right time.

2. ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

The 2nd Stage masterplan provides a landscape led vision for Heathlands Garden Community underpinned by a multi-functional grid of green and blue infrastructure that holds the development together. Concentrated between definitive infrastructural boundaries to the north and south the site is compact and easily lends itself to creating walkable and well-connected mixed-use neighbourhoods connected by a network of sustainable transport modes.

The following pages sets out the design concept and essential design principles for the masterplan, to create a resilient and adaptable development framework. The plan envisages a wide range of homes and places to work that can adapt and evolve to changing living requirements and economic needs. Placemaking is focused on enhancement of landscape and heritage assets and creating a strong sense of community. This approach will deliver a vibrant and dynamic place where residents have access to nature, and high quality recreational spaces and leisure on their doorstep, to promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

Following the RSK technical work key changes to the 2019 masterplan are:

1. Provision of two new vehicular links from the A20 to the north. The scale of the development does not presently support the creation of new junction on the M20.
2. Consideration for a new Railway Halt along the Main Line Railway in the later phases of the development.
3. Repurpose the highest areas of archaeological importance through the creation of main public spaces including Royton Town Park and Forstal Cricket Green centrally located in the scheme.
4. Relocation of Country Park to the south incorporating the Great Stour River corridor and nature areas as a major part the site's blue and green infrastructure.
5. Extension of developable area to the west as the latest phase of development vacated by relocating the Country Park to the south, increasing proximity to Lenham Railway Station.
6. Consolidation of the Rose Lane Industrial Estate into an employment campus providing accommodation for a variety of incubator, office, and light manufacturing spaces.
7. Removal of the Secondary School site due to available capacity at the Lenham Secondary School.
8. Safeguarded area: not presently proposed, but land for potential new motorway junction (if required) in the future.

The development achieves around 4,000 dwelling and delivers the following:

- Two new 3-Form Entry Primary Schools
- A 47ha Country Park
- A 5ha Employment Campus
- Over 150ha of multifunctional green and blue infrastructure
- A mixed-use District Centre of around 4ha and two Local Centres at 1ha each





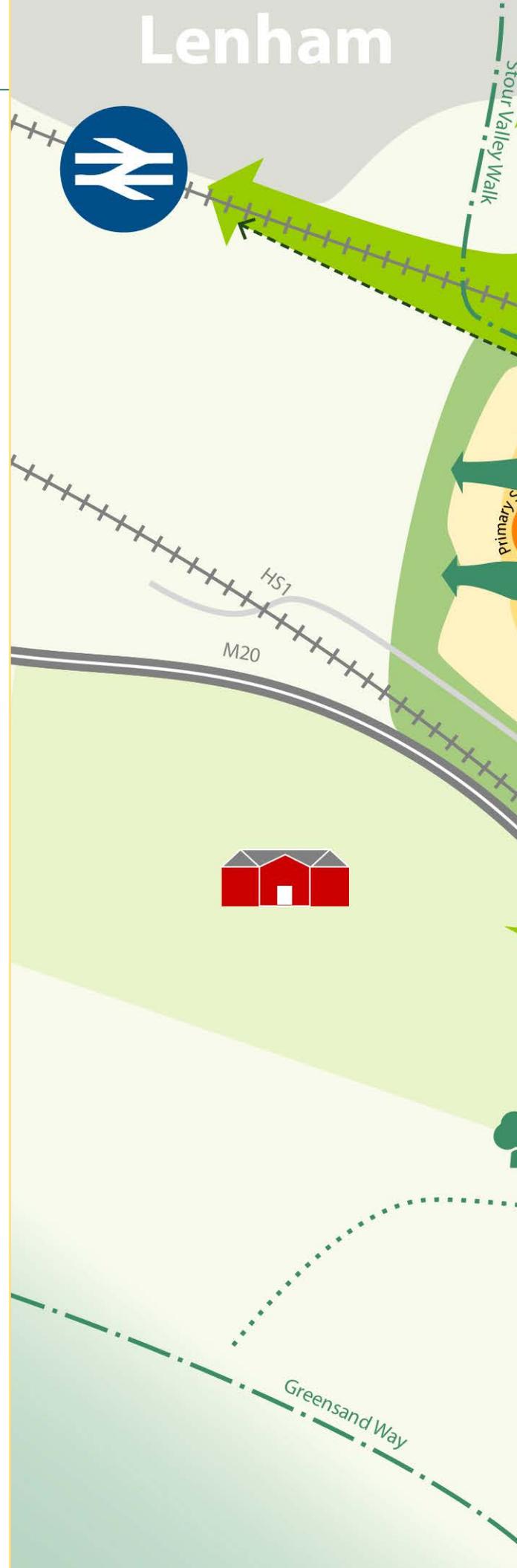
3. MASTERPLAN DESIGN CONCEPT

Our approach for Heathlands Garden Community is to root the place in its context, embracing and showcasing its landscape and heritage assets which will give this new settlement a clear and distinctive identity.

In keeping with the core principles of garden communities, the importance of a landscape led and contextual responsive approach are fundamental to the environmental and placemaking aspirations for Heathlands Garden Community.

The linear profile of the site lends itself to three compact neighbourhoods with a larger district centre sitting at the heart of the site. An internal loop of highways circuits connects the neighbourhoods together. Linear networks of east-west 'greenways' provide priority for sustainable modes and offer strategic connectivity for pedestrians and cyclist to Lenham Station.

A 'green grid' totalling over 150ha covers more than 50% of the site area. This is formed by the Great Stour River corridor and a new 47ha Country Park alongside a new Town Park, local greens and nature habitats. The green grid stitches the site together in a verdant and ecologically biodiverse setting, ensuring that every resident is never more than a minute's walk from a diverse collection of multi-functional open spaces with access to recreational spaces, leisure pursuits and active living.





A20

Mainline Railway

Nature Reserve

Royton Manor Town Park

Bull Heath

Forstal Cricket Green

Innovation Centre

Rose Lane Industrial Estate

Primary School

Country Park

4. CREATING HOMES FOR EVERYONE

Heathlands Garden Community will positively respond to Maidstone's housing needs including a range of units typologies, mix, tenures including self-build

Undoubtedly a development delivering around 4,000 homes will have a mix of tenures, variety of unit sizes and typologies. However the way we live, with greater reliance on extended family units, multi-generational living, increased need for better quality space to work effectively and successfully from home, also suggests that traditional housing forms need to evolve to become more flexible and adaptable to cope with the ever changing needs of modern life.

Key principles include:

- Allow a proportion of homes to come forward as self/custom build to enable residents to build bespoke to their needs
- Challenge the 'norm' of volume housing and place delivery through the proactive application of design standards such as such as MHCLG's

Building for Life 12, MBC's own Building for Life, BREAAAM and the Build Better Build Beautiful Commission mandate to create a truly diverse range of accommodation and raise design quality

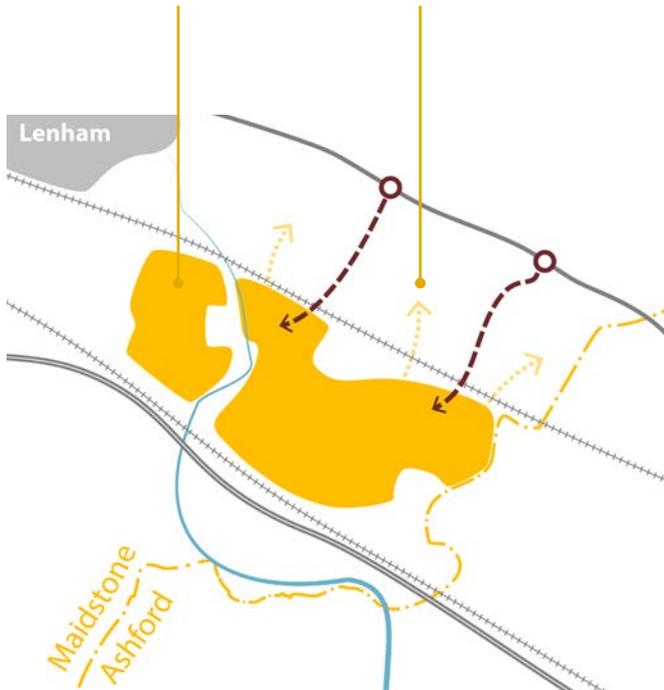
- Employ new innovative technologies for housing delivery such as prefab and modular construction to create energy efficient and accelerated delivery of high-quality homes
- Promote invention and delivery of beautifully designed new housing typologies to support a greater diversity of lifestyles such as communal living and scalable live work units
- Provide housing options for accommodating young individuals and families, and ensure opportunities for socially rented properties are readily available
- Make provision for later living accommodation close to public transport and local services and optimise potential synergies with community facilities and proximity to schools

HOUSING PROVISION

- **40% affordable** target ensured by the Borough Council as master developer
- The current **SHMAA** will guide the mix of the homes to be provided.
- Neighbourhoods with different densities and design character will foster **diversity** of the housing provision with regard to **type, mix and tenure**
- Offer a variety of development parcel sizes to appeal to **both national and local housebuilders**

Around 4,000 within core area

Potential additional capacity with land north of the railway?



A PLACE WITH ROOM TO GROW

- Whilst not part of our present proposal, the decision to focus presently upon a package of sustainable measures (with access via the A20, as opposed to the M20), brings into the play the potential for future development in the area between the A20 and mainline railway line.
- This is where the principal vehicular access points are proposed, and further technical work could establish the ability or otherwise of some of these additional areas to see how Heathlands Garden Community could “grow” in the future.



Self-Built Precedent: Graven Hill, Bicester



Factory Built Precedent: Ebbsfleet

Live-Work Precedent: Dragonfly Place, Brockley



Cohousing Precedent: Older Women Cohousing, Barnet

5. WORKING WITH HOMES ENGLAND

The Borough Council will be working in partnership with Homes England to deliver the Heathlands project.

Established Garden City principles enable ambitious Councils to form alliances with delivery partners to create and deliver new sustainable new communities, with good place-making at its heart. The Borough Council has held several preliminary discussions with Homes England, and has recently received formal support from Homes England in promoting this development.

As the Government's "housing arm", this will be a very secure public partnership that will provide certainty and ensure the delivery of this vision and ambition.

Homes England supports the ambitious and visionary position the Borough Council is adopting, as it will have a positive economic, social and environmental impact - including for the wider region. The scheme will deliver a high-quality designed scheme that accords with 'Building For Life 12' – a cornerstone for Homes England.

Homes England will be a joint partner and support promotion costs on 50/50 match funding basis. Homes England will also assist in the land partnership agreements necessary to deliver a comprehensive scheme.



Homes
England



AS A MASTER DEVELOPERS, THE BOROUGH COUNCIL AND HOMES ENGLAND WILL PERFORM THE FOLLOWING FUNCTIONS:



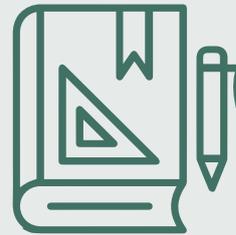
SECURE THE LAND OPTIONS



PROMOTE THE PROPOSAL THROUGH THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW PROCESS



CREATE AN EXEMPLAR LANDSCAPE LED MASTERPLAN AND SECURE PLANNING CONSENT



CREATE A DESIGN CODE



CREATE AN INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY PLAN SUPPORTED BY LAND VALUE CAPTURE



CREATE A STEWARDSHIP STRUCTURE



INSTALL HIGH QUALITY MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS



BRING IN DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS TO UNDERTAKE PHASED DELIVERY OF LAND PARCELS

6. SUSTAINABLY DESIGNED AND CONNECTED

As experienced over the past three months the lack of access to services, shops and quality open space within easily accessible reach and walkable travel distances, has sharpened our focus on the benefit of having these facilities on our doorstep.

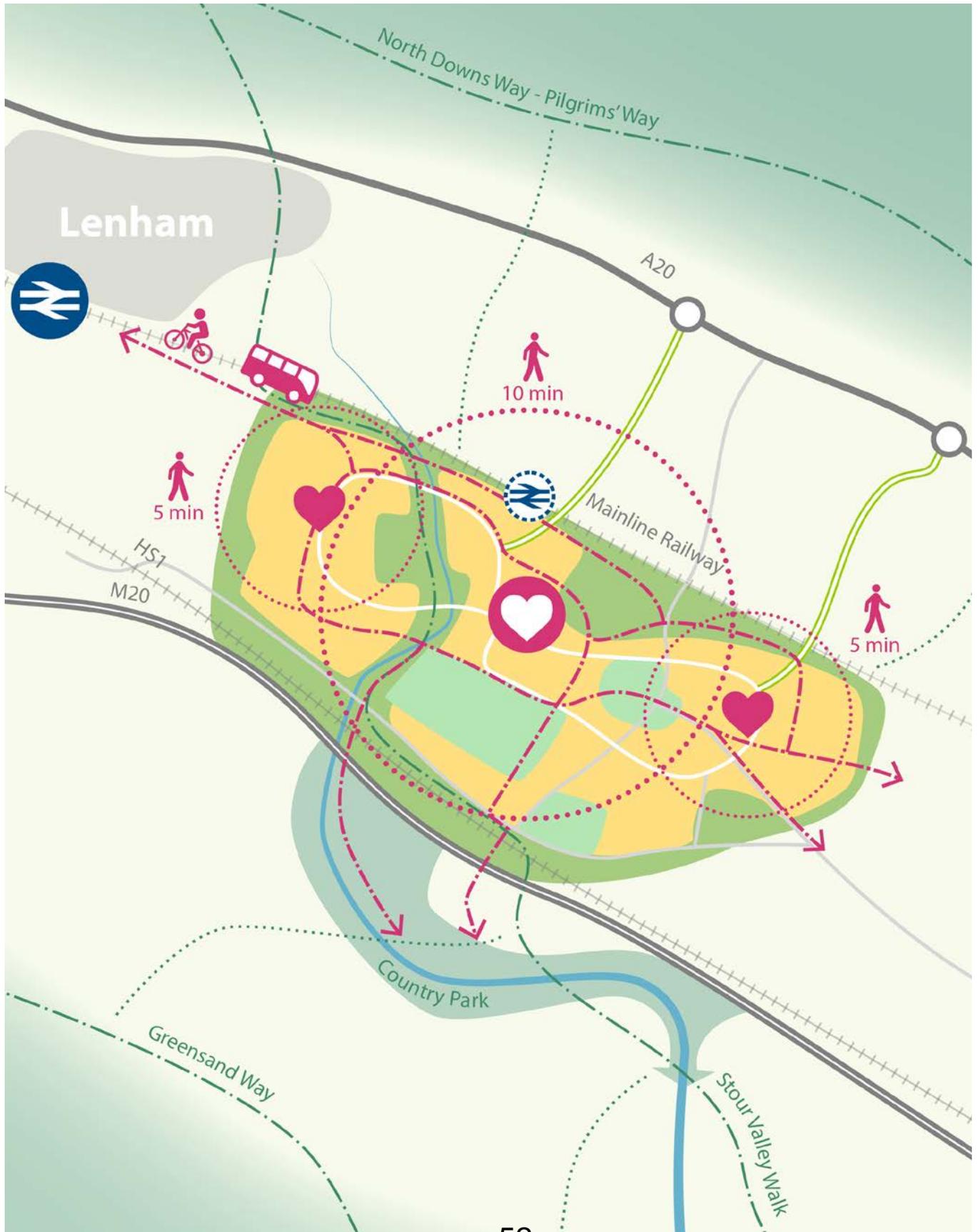
Supporting 'local', a sense of community and a compact neighbourhood structure has never been more important to support the Borough Council aspiration to meet its climate emergency objectives. As such, we are employing the following principles for creating Heathlands Garden Community:

- Capitalise on the relatively flat terrain within the site to create a network of 'greenways' shared between pedestrians, cyclists and in some cases public transport on a dedicated set of routes separated from general vehicular movement
- Use 'greenways' to connecting local parks, community, and neighbourhood hubs along with strategic connections to rapid mass transit service at Lenham Railway Station, thus promoting an active and healthy lifestyle and supporting the climate change agenda.
- Develop compact walkable neighbourhoods, based on the co-location of local education, health, community, and daily services within 7-10 minutes' walk of residents, to create a vibrant and sociable local heart
- Push densities traditionally associated with greenfield development sites to create critical mass to support viable sustainable transport options
- Provide dedicated routes for a reliable and efficient electric bus service for local and district centres in a 'figure of 8' circuits, linked to Lenham Railway Station and potential future rail halt located between the Great Stour River corridor and the Ancient Woodland block west of Forstal Road.

NOT A COMMUTER TOWN

- The provision of new local services and an innovative approach to inward employment opportunities, will **reduce the need for outward journeys.**
- Further detail of proposals covered in the "Social and Community" and the "Employment" sections.





WALKING

Walkable neighbourhoods will make walking and cycling the preferred options for internal movement

Improved existing and new links to the site surroundings will provide enhanced access to the countryside



HEALTHY COMMUNITY

- Walkable neighbourhoods foster **healthy lifestyle and social interaction**, and discourage the use of cars

LEISURE AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- Walking tourism is a growing sector which could add to the economic **growth of the area** and provide local jobs



Pilgrims' Way



CYCLING

Direct cycle route to Lenham Station

Cycling at the forefront of design



AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HEATHLANDS

- Contribute to the delivery of new regional cycle infrastructure
- Promote active lifestyle and tourism
- Accommodate Electric-cycling as a sustainable travel option

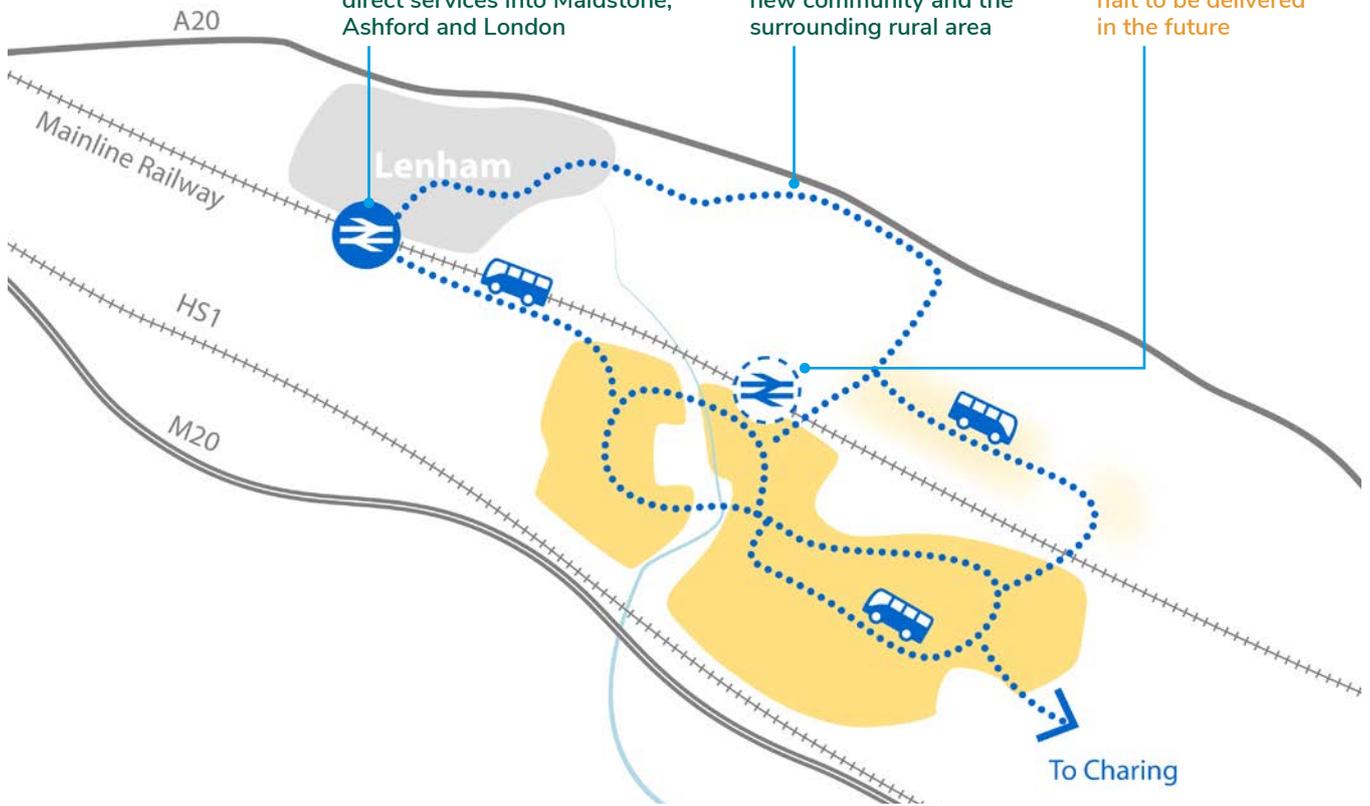


PUBLIC TRANSPORT

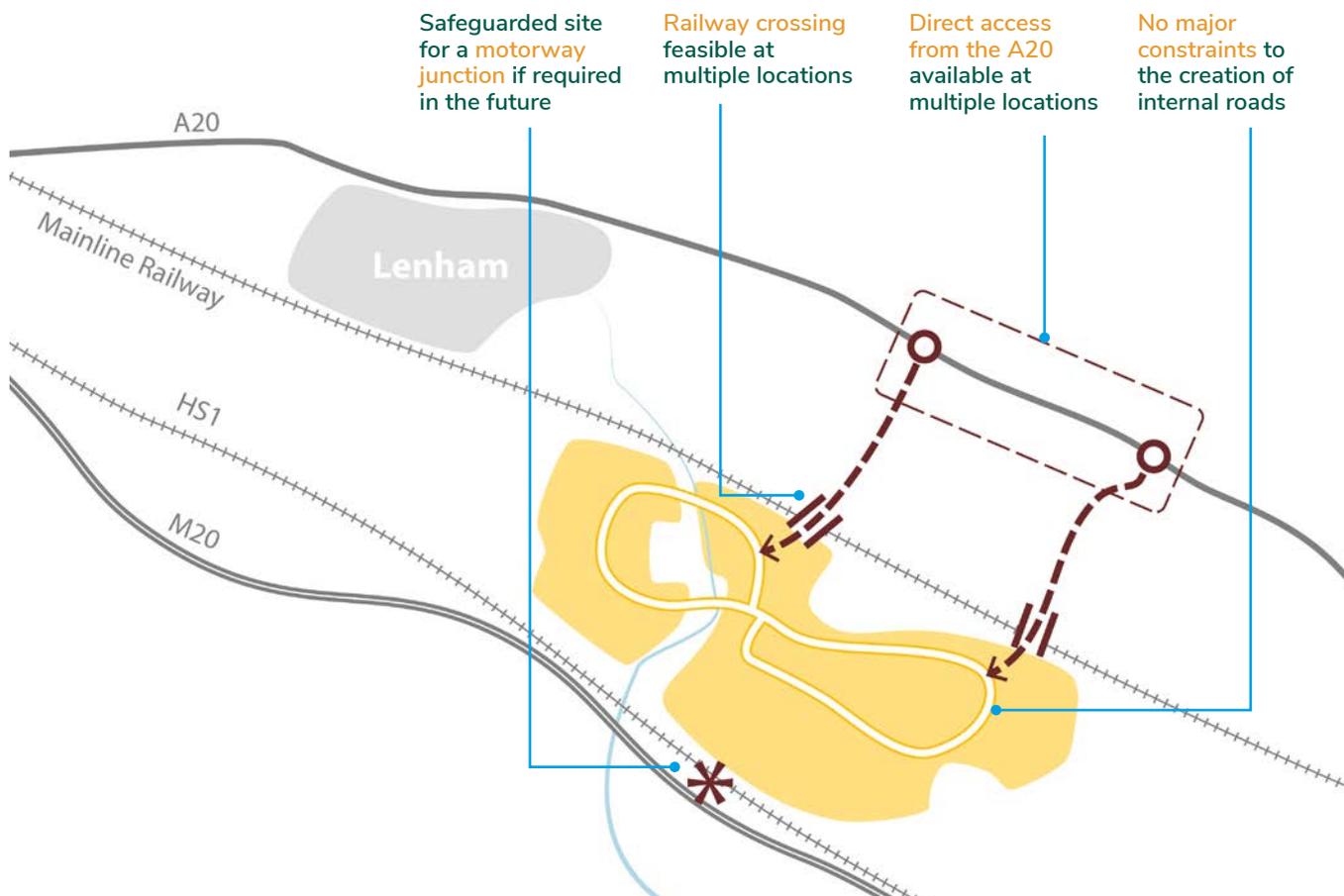
Within accessible reach of Lenham and Charing Stations (10 min by bike), with frequent direct services into Maidstone, Ashford and London

Sustainable scale of the development supports new bus services linking the new community and the surrounding rural area

Main Line Railway adjacent to the site. Potential for new rail halt to be delivered in the future

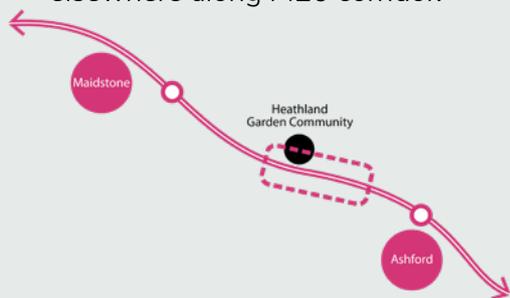


HIGHWAYS



POTENTIAL NEW JUNCTION

- Potential for a new junction on the M20, if scheme grows to a larger scale in the future and/or in conjunction with other future new schemes along M20/A20 corridor.
- Land for a potential junction has been safeguarded on site, albeit it could ultimately be elsewhere along M20 corridor.



FOSTER INNOVATION AND CLEAN TRANSPORT OPTIONS

- On-demand transport
- Car sharing
- Electric vehicles
- Each house pre-wired for vehicle charging

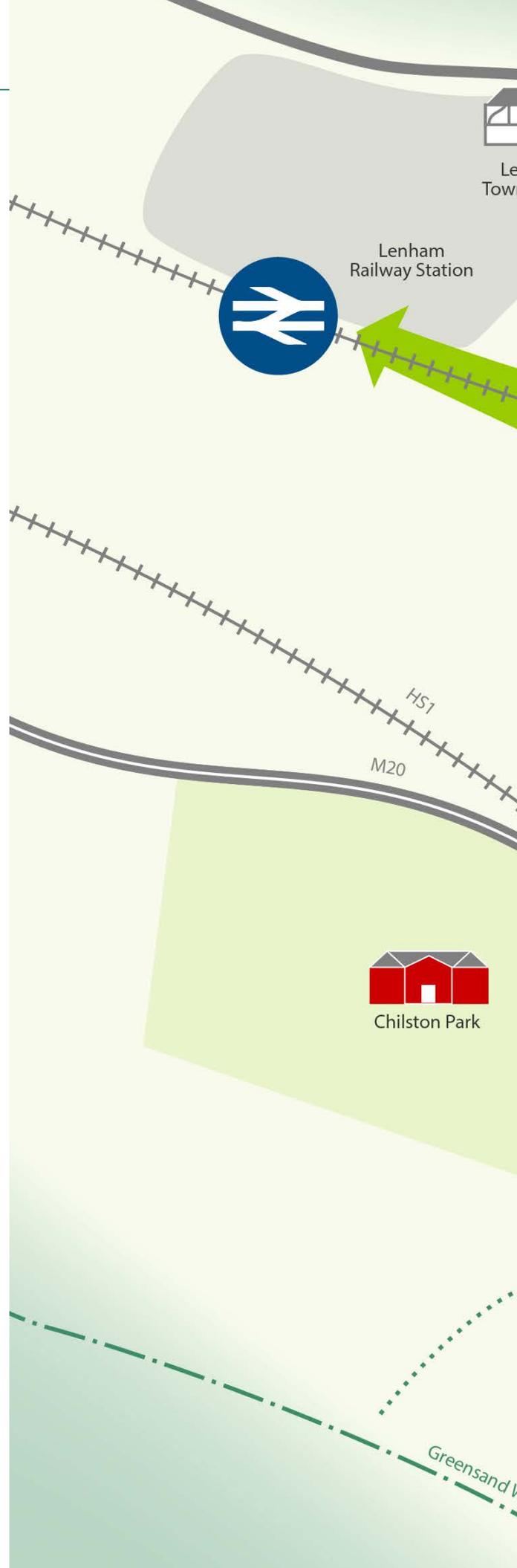


7. BEAUTIFULLY DESIGNED AND MAKING VIBRANT PLACES

The spatial organisation of streets, location of parks, alignment of connecting green corridors and the scale of buildings will be the primary characteristics that define a sense of place for Heathlands Garden Community.

Fundamental to our place making strategy are:

- Preserve and enhance existing archaeological assets through the creation of Royton Manor Town Park and Forstal Cricket Green as key event spaces and meeting places for the new community
- Protect Ancient Woodland and nature reserve adjacent to the Main Line Railway, Bull Heath and existing hedgerows corridors as important ecological assets to improve habitat creation along with new open spaces to increase biodiversity net gain in a comprehensive 'green grid' threading the development together
- Promote a variety of densities and building heights with a higher density district centre core (50-75dph), with supplementary mid density surrounding local centres(35-50dph) and sensitive lower density edges (25-35dph) to the east and adjacent to existing retained dwellings
- Promote an architectural style that is contemporary in feel but embedded in the characteristics of its locality, using local materials, incorporating detailing and form of local buildings and structures to create an identity that is unique, yet familiar to its locality
- Develop a Design Code to guide the quality of design and creation of places which support flexibility and evolution at building and land use scales incorporating Building for Life 12 principles for place making





8. A VERDANT AND PRODUCTIVE PLACE TO LIVE

LANDSCAPE LED APPROACH

Heathlands Garden Community will be nestled in a rich and diverse landscape setting incorporating the many assets across the site. Access to nature for all residents and protection of views from the Kent Downs AONB through careful design, are paramount to our landscape led approach. The role of the green and blue infrastructure is not only to provide drainage, offer opportunities for food production and offer spaces for sport, leisure and recreation, but ultimately it will be the ‘glue’ that binds Heathlands together and ensure it is experienced as a holistic community:

- Creation of the ‘Heathlands Ring’ a collection of multifunctional open spaces, anchored by Bull Heath Nature/Wildlife Reserve, Royton Manor Town Park, North Nature Reserve and the Great Stour River corridor.
- Creation of a new 47 ha Country Park linked to Great Stour River corridor and Bull Heath accessed by Bowley lane and PRow leading to Hubbard’s Farm Cottages.
- Reinforcement of structural planting along the Main Line Railway to mitigate views from the Kent Downs AONB.
- Incorporation of “green buffers” adjacent to retained buildings and homes along Lenham and Forstal Roads in particular to ensure a sensitive and soft interface between existing and proposed development.





GROWING COMMUNITY

During the present enforced isolation, our connection to nature and the renaissance of 'grow your own' have been some of the most comforting aspects in maintaining our mental health along with rediscovering the benefits of quality family time and having a sense of community.

Historically 'scratchy' back of house allotments have become pride of place as new social meeting places, hosting barbeques, vegetable exchange markets and plant nurseries.

Looking back at the original Ebenezer Howard Garden Village vision, the principles of access to nature and food production have been lost and diluted over the years though the evolution of new settlement movements. However, the opportunity to create an exemplar garden community with these features as fundamental components to the creation of community and place is now.



9. GOVERNANCE OF SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The potential social value gain is significant, with numerous opportunities to empower locals to take ownership of local ventures with the support of the local authority to provide training and financial support. This will support local initiatives to evolve into self-sustaining businesses, creating a spirit of enterprise and self-reliance.

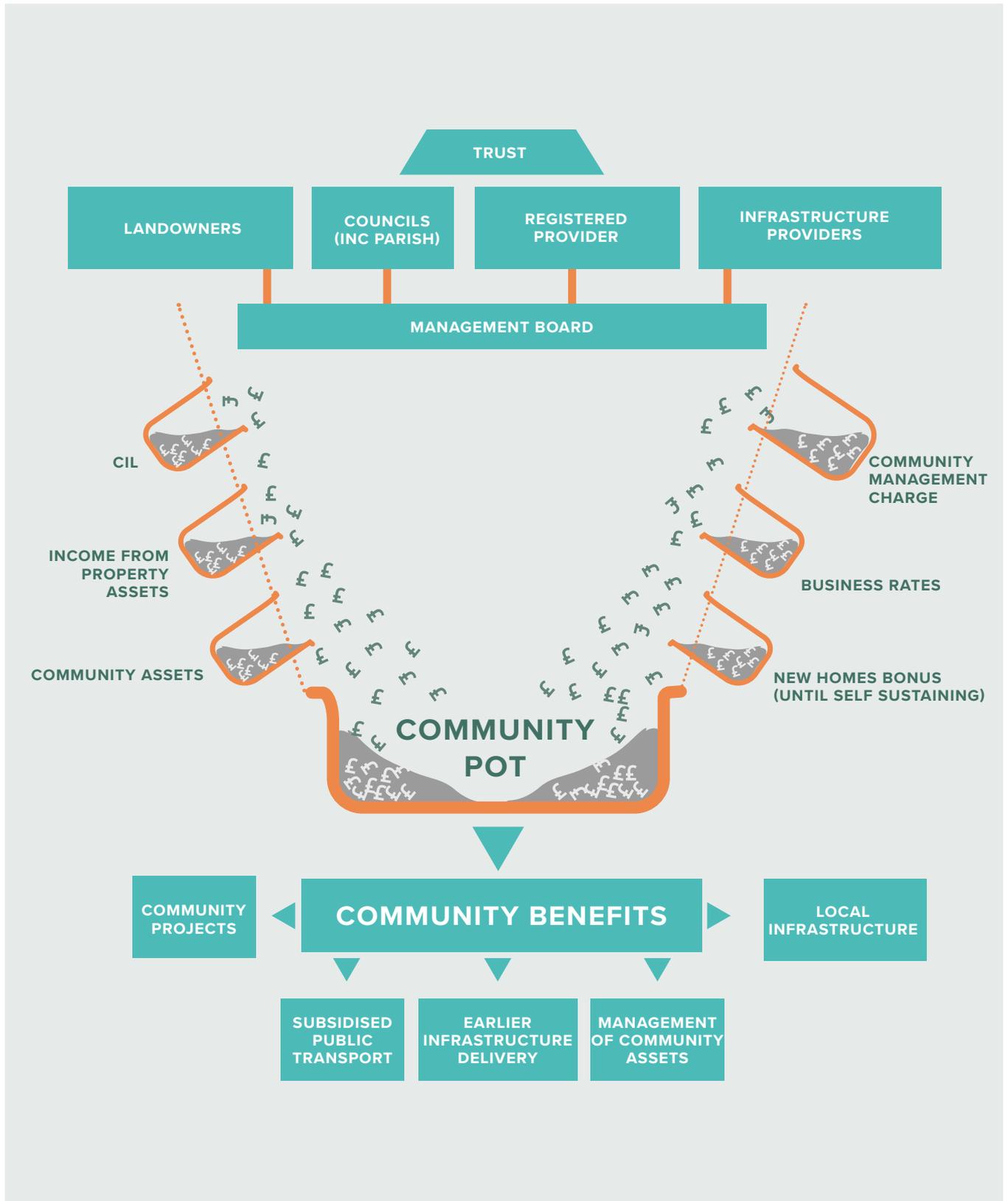
Specific proposals for Heathlands being promoted are:

- Create a management structure combining professional expertise and residents to establish governance and stewardship of the development to ensure that value created by the development is held in perpetuity. This accrued value is then reinvested in the development for residents to shape their community, supplement the maintenance of open spaces and support community programmes and enterprising initiatives.
- Create programmes for optimising social value across the themes of job creation and economic growth; health, wellbeing and the environment; community engagement and empowerment over the life cycle of the project, from Investment, planning, design, construction through to operation.
- Provide a "Community Hub" within the Local Centre for a variety of locally run events and groups to meet.
- Provision of space for a community run Garden Centre as a social hub, where every resident is given a tree for their garden as a welcome to the community.
- Co-location of education, health, community, and local services within Local Centres adjacent to open space, to create a neighbourhood heart; a place to meet, socialise and exchange ideas.
- Allow for the future development of later living accommodation and care facilities close to Local Centres to capitalise on potential synergies with Primary Schools and Community Hubs.

WHY NOT?

- Every resident is given a tree for their garden as a welcome to the community
- Establish a local plant nursery in the Country Park to support the greening of the community
- Offer new and existing residents free advice from the newly formed Heathlands Resident's Association on what and how to grow
- Offer design expertise on how to create an entry for the annual 'best in show front garden' competition
- Create apps based and social media platforms to enable communication and encourage community engagement





10. AN ENTERPRISING COMMUNITY

The lines between living and working have become more blurred during recent times, with the real possibility of flexible agile home-working being the norm rather than the exception.

The ability to foster and accommodate this must be an essential component for Heathlands Garden Community. Opportunities to create and support the needs of an enterprising community through the provision of incubator spaces, home businesses and Co-Working Hubs are core aspects for creating jobs and a vibrant local economy.

- Establish a Co-Working Hub within the District Centre co-located with local services and shops supplemented with smaller flexible working spaces in Local Centres, that are well connected to local sustainable transport and strategic mass transit
- Deliver high speed fibre broadband throughout the site to facilitate efficient digital connectivity and smart technologies to support a wide variety of business operations, monitoring, analysis, and management systems
- Provide interim, flexible incubator studio space adjacent to Rose Lane Industrial Park alongside a mix of B1, B2 and possibly small B8 uses to create an employment campus with sustainable critical mass to support growth and succession of businesses
- Further employment uses to be considered for future expansion areas north of the mainline railway line with more direct access to strategic roads
- Create a proportion of purposely designed accommodation for home businesses e.g. professional services and online operations

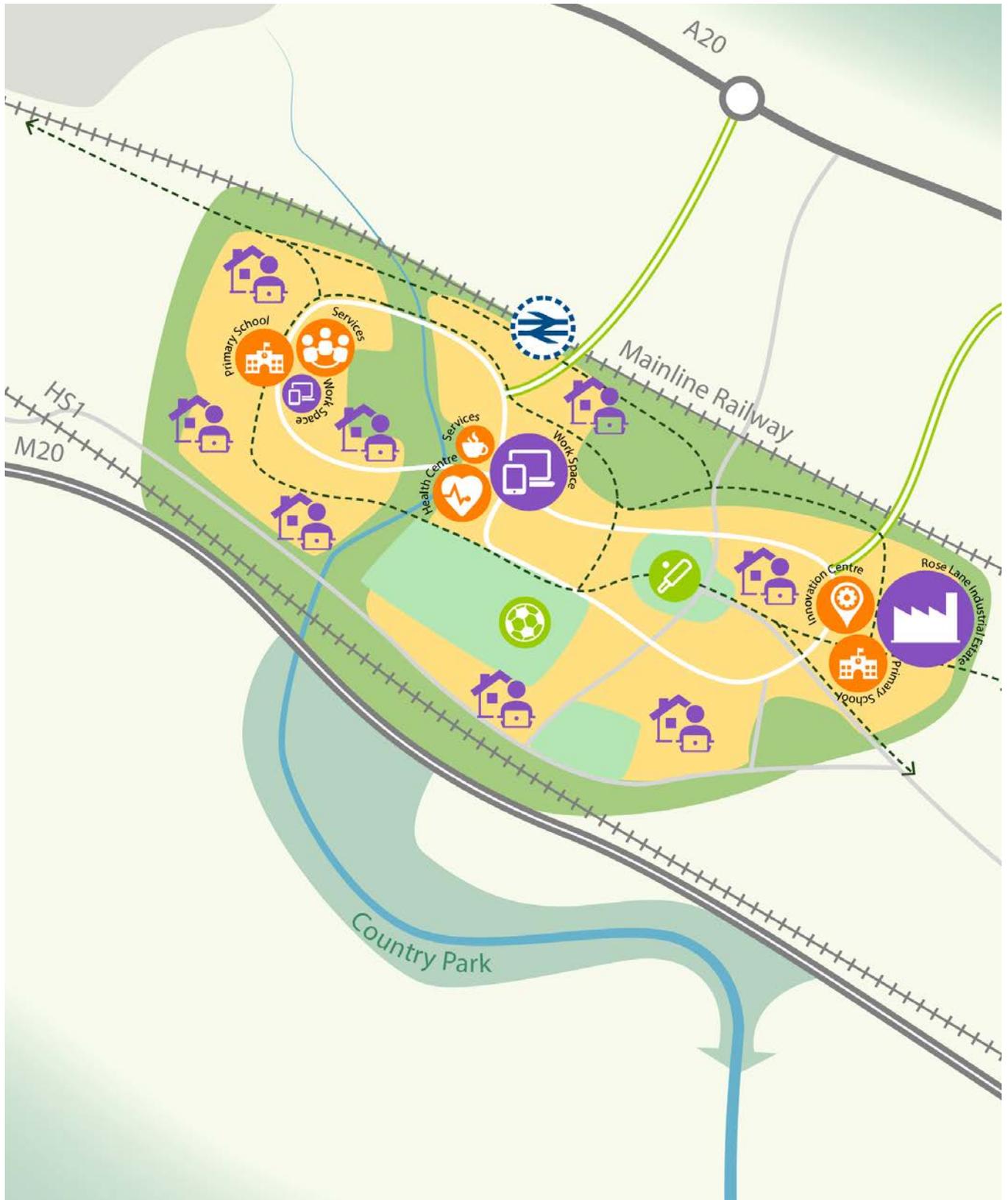
21ST CENTURY EMPLOYMENT

- The way we work is changing
- New homes will be designed with home working in mind
- Self build opportunities will encourage the creation of live-work units
- High Street offer will divert from traditional retail to favour leisure and production type of activities

BENEFIT TO THE EXISTING BUSINESSES

- Existing businesses will not be disrupted and will benefit from enhanced accessibility and new services





FOSTER BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE

- A flexible approach to land uses will support an ever-changing demand for diverse range of production and business spaces
- Meanwhile uses such as a Start-Up Hub will foster the early establishment of new businesses in the area



MBC Leader Martin Cox breaking ground for Maidstone Innovation Centre

PRECEDENTS: MAIDSTONE INNOVATION CENTRE

The Maidstone Innovation Centre will offer flexible, serviced office accommodation combined with extensive on-site business support. Catering for businesses in the high net-worth med-tech, life science and health sectors.

Due for opening in Autumn 2021, Maidstone Innovation Centre is expected to support around 270 jobs and will generate a further £120m of additional gross value added to the local economy over the next decade.

MEDWAY'S INNOVATION STUDIOS

Customised shipping containers have been used to create Medway Council's new Innovation Studios Strood at Watermill Wharf, offering small and medium sized companies a sustainable, robust and affordable premises solution.

The Innovation Studios Strood is the second project in Medway's growing 'innovation business series'. With 13 of the 15 Innovation Studio Strood units already reserved, there's an appetite from the council to get going on its next business hub.



Medway's Innovation Studios

PROMOTE LEISURE AND TOURISM

- Heathlands is an attractive area which is well connected to London and other well established destinations
- Maximise opportunities for the creation of local businesses and jobs related to leisure and tourism
- Promote an active and healthy lifestyle with enhanced pedestrian and cycle access to local attractions and the countryside



11. A PLACE DELIVERED OVER TIME

The delivery of Heathlands Garden Community will happen incrementally over a number of years.

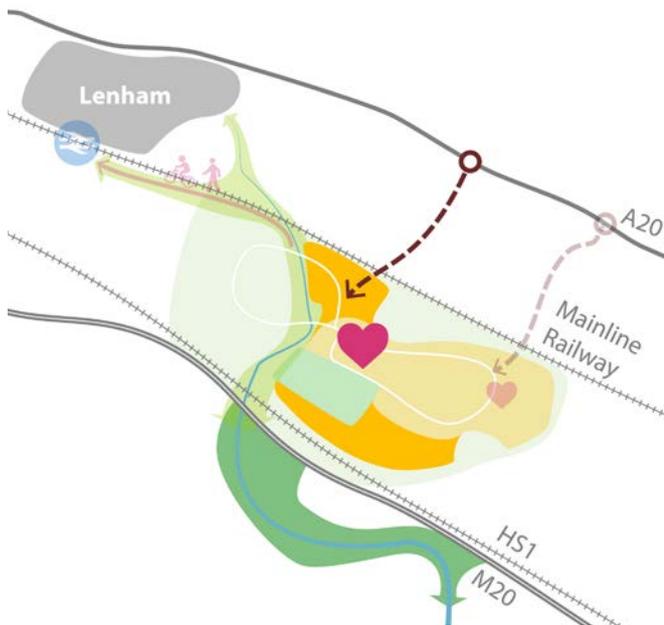
The adjacent diagrams indicate one possible road map for how the project could evolve and be delivered in three high level steps; accepting that there will be many sub phases and concurrent activities between phases as required.

The phasing for Heathlands Garden Community will take into account the existing and committed uses within the site, to ensure that strategic infrastructure is delivered when needed and new residential uses does not conflict with existing uses.



FIRST PHASE

- Focus development within the central area inclusive of a new Primary School, Local Centre and associated community uses
- Provide vehicular access from the A20 to the north and a new bridge across the Mainline Railway to service the site
- Install high quality pedestrian and cycle connections to Lenham Railway Station along new environmental corridor
- Enhancement of green and blue infrastructure as a linear park along the Great Stour River
- Delivery of Royton Manor Town Park
- Implement structural planting along Mainline Railway



SECOND PHASE

- Extend development to the west and south consolidating development around the Local Centre neighbourhood heart
- Intensification of non residential uses and higher density residential development around District Centre to strengthen critical mass and increase the provision of retail and community facilities
- Implement Country Park to the south with enhanced pedestrian and cycle connections linked to Great Stour River corridor
- Delivery of second vehicular connection to the District Centre
- Expansion of Employment Campus around Rose Lane Industrial Estate
- Establish Co-Working Hub in the District Centre



THIRD PHASE

- Expand development to the west following completion of mineral mining operations
- Creation of a second Neighbourhood Heart inclusive of a second Primary School, Local Centre and associated community facilities
- Enhancement to landscape buffer around existing Sewage Treatment Plant
- Creation of western landscape buffer with increased ecological habitat provision
- Potential consideration for development expansion north of mainline Railway

12. LAND USE AND SCHEDULE

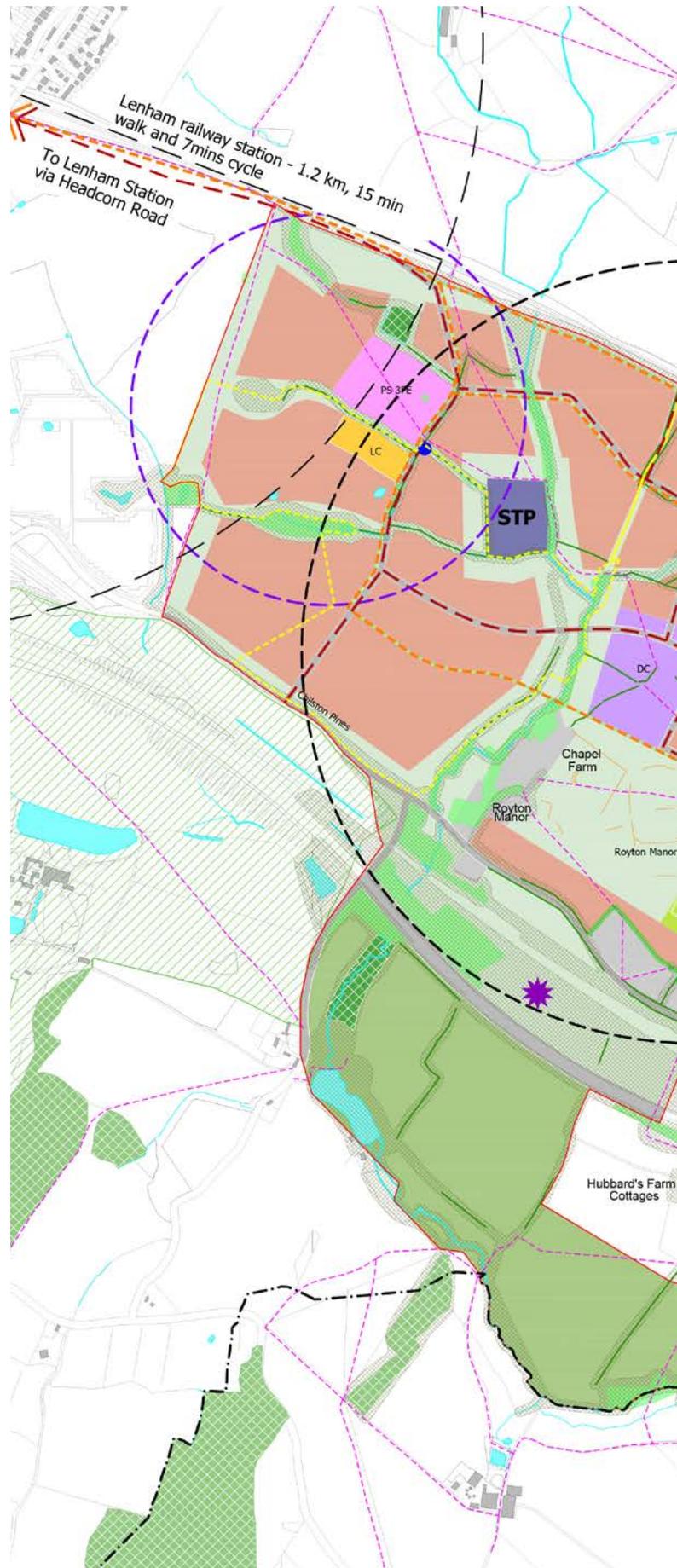
- Borough Boundary
- Local Wildlife Site
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Cat A & B Trees
- Hedgrows
- Ecological Connectivity
- 800m Catchment (10-15mins walk)
- 400m Catchment (5-7mins walk)
- Possible Bus Stop Location
- Indicative Connection Route from the A20 into the Site.
- Potential Railway Halt
- Mineral Boundary
- PRoW
- Gypsy / Traveller Site
- Green Buffer to Existing Properties
- Area Safeguarded for Potential Motorway Junction - if required in the future

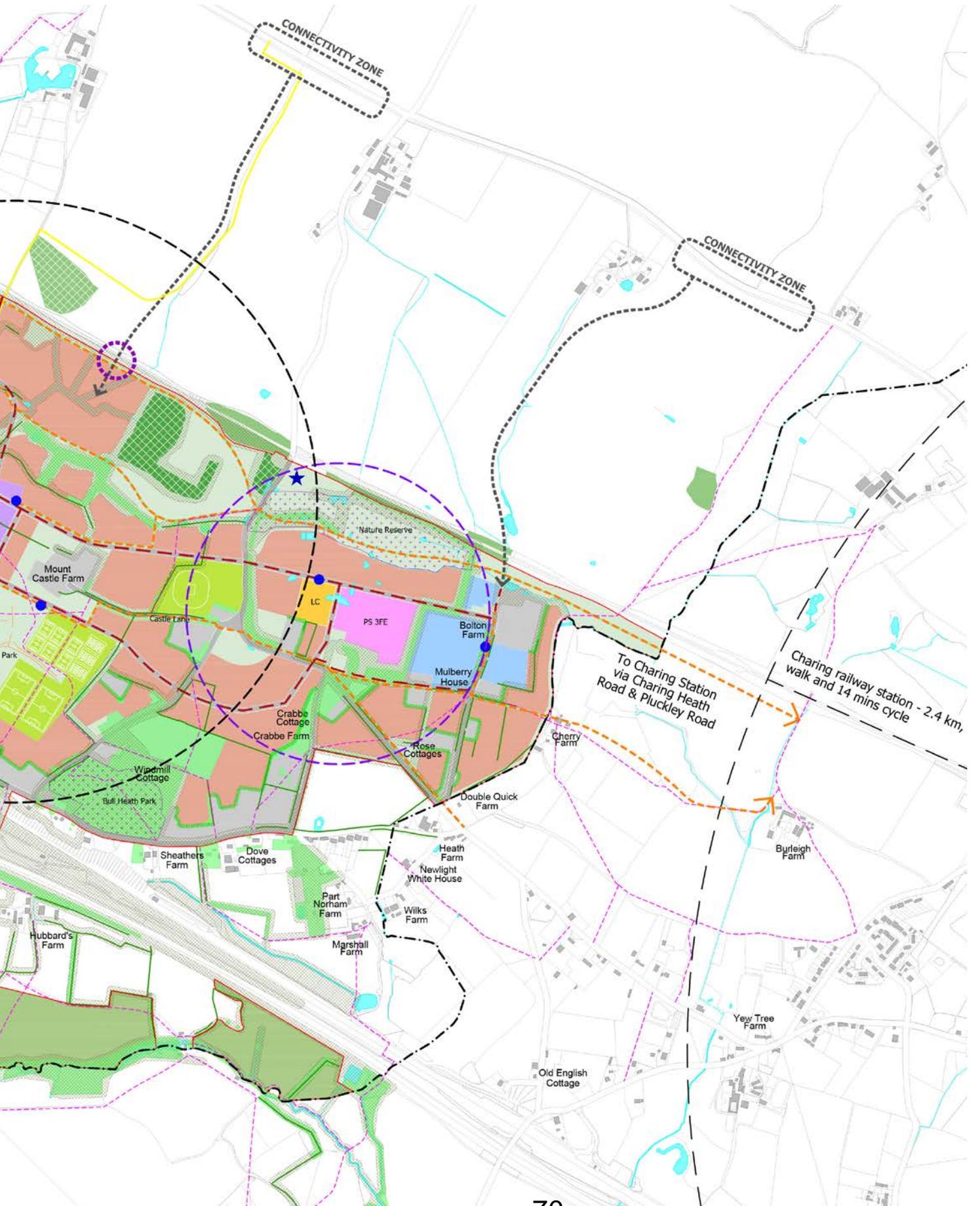
Area	Ha	Ac	DPH	Units	DPH	Units
Development						
Core Residential	100.00	247.11	40	4000	45	4500
District Centre (Including Employment)	4.01	9.90				
Local Centre (Including Employment)	2.00	4.95				
Employment	5.08	12.55				
PS 3FE Primary School (3FE)(x2)	5.80	14.34				
Sewage Treatment Plant	1.91	4.72				
Primary Road	8.16	20.16				
Existing Development	21.62	53.44				
Existing Road	11.86	29.32				
Development Total	160.45	396.48		4000		4500
Open Space						
Formal / Outdoor Sports	8.42	20.81				
Green Cycle / Bus Ways	4.56	11.26				
Ancient Woodland	4.81	11.90				
Country Park	47.47	117.30				
Natural / Semi Natural	88.61	218.97				
Open Space Total	153.88	380.24				
Sub Total	314.33	776.72		4000		4500

Maidstone Local Plan November 2017 - Policy DM19

Based on 2.4 people per dwelling = Dwellings: **4,000**
 Therefore the population = Population: **9,600**
 The Multiplier for the Allocations below = Multiplier: **9.600**

ALLOCATION	Ha/1000 pop	Requirement (Ha)
Amenity green space	0.70	6.72
Provision for children and young people	0.25	2.40
Publicly accessible outdoor sports	1.60	15.36
Allotments and community gardens	0.20	1.92
Natural/semi-natural areas of open space	6.50	62.40
TOTAL		88.80





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HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter H: Housing Statement

Opportunity to Deliver a Wide Range of New Homes

- H.1 The emerging masterplan for Heathlands includes a District Centre and two Local Centres together with a range of neighbourhood characters areas that will ensure ample opportunity to deliver a wide range of housing options for the whole community, from starter homes, affordable homes, homes for later living to larger homes and self-build.
- H.2 MBC acting as Master Developer, and in partnership with Homes England, will deliver a development strategy that, to accelerate delivery, will encourage diverse housing tenure options and a wide range and type of new homes attractive to the entire spectrum of the housing market.
- H.3 This will be achieved by:
- Progressing a policy framework that requires the delivery of a diverse range and type of housing products - providing variety in the market will assist in promoting rapid market absorption and build-out rates; and,
 - Progressing a master plan and policy framework that supports the provision of self-build and serviced parcels of land, to create a level playing field for all sizes of housebuilder to competitively purchase.
- H.4 The joint public partnership between the Borough Council and Homes England wholly accords with the Government's objectives in seeking to ensure the delivery of "the right homes" in "the right place" and "at the right time". Homes England's recent letter (dated 08 June 2020) confirms Heathlands unique credentials in this regard.

Delivering the Right Mix of Homes

- H.5 Heathlands will be delivered over a period of 20+ years. Over that period, it will deliver a diverse mix and tenure of new homes that will respond to both MBC's and Ashford's (given its proximity) housing needs. This will be informed by market demand and the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment evidence available at the time each phase of the development is progressed.

Delivering Affordable Housing

- H.6 In line with Government and TCPA 'Garden City Principles' to deliver mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are genuinely affordable, 40% of all new dwellings at Heathlands will be delivered as affordable housing for local people, of which 70% would be for social rent.

Delivering Housing for Young People

- H.7 MBC's SHMA (Section 6, 2019) highlights the 'younger' person population in the Borough is expected to grow by 20% between 2019-2037. Moreover, that affordability barriers prevent many younger households from buying a home, which has led to increasing levels of private renting.
- H.8 Heathlands will contribute significantly towards meeting the housing needs of younger people, through a policy framework that will expect a range of tenures to be provided, including affordable homes, build to rent, starter homes and self-build properties.
- H.9 The District and Local Centres and surrounding neighbourhoods with different densities and character will provide opportunities for a mix of housing options for younger people and families to be delivered, including one and two-bedroom flats/ houses well suited to younger people and families.

Delivering Homes and Specialist Accommodation for Older People

- H.10 The need to provide housing for older people is critical (PPG ID: 63-001-20190626), with MBC's SHMA (2019) identifying that the number of over 65's in the Borough is expected to increase by 54% between 2019-2037. Ashford's SHMA (2014) also expects growth of 76% in older persons (comparing 2011 with 2031).

- H.11 The policy framework for Heathlands will support the provision of specialist accommodation for older people, as well as require a percentage of the new homes to be built to Lifetime Homes standard and to M4(3) of the Building Regulations to support suitable housing provision for wheelchair users.

Delivering Land for Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Show people

- H.12 There is an existing Gypsy Travellers site within the Site area, identified by the 'star' on the Land Use Budget Plan. This site has been sensitively incorporated into the masterplan.
- H.13 It is anticipated that future policy framework will require consideration to be given to delivering land for Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Show people as required to meet an evidenced need and this will be considered at the appropriate time.



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter I: Employment Statement

Introduction

- I.1 A sustainable Garden Community should provide for a vibrant, diverse and affordable community – with the provision of a range of employment, community facilities and a range of housing opportunities.
- I.2 Without this, new garden communities run the risk of becoming dormitory commuter suburbs – something that is the antithesis of the original Garden City idea.
- I.3 In examining this, it is important to recognise that both the Government and TCPA do not consider there is a “*single template*” or “*one size fits all*” and that it is important for “*local areas to adopt innovative approaches and solutions to creating great places, rather than following a set of rules.*”
- I.4 The TCPA is very clear that its Garden City principles “*are not a blueprint or rigid set of rules*”, but rather “*a framework for good place-making*” and upon which “*innovation and imagination should be applied to the specific context of individual projects and locations.*”
- I.5 The starting point in this exercise is to first establish an understanding of the existing employment patterns of local residents, and then secondly, to understand the wider context within which other local employment opportunities are available.

Existing Employment Patterns

- I.6 The first part of our response establishes the context for employment at Heathlands, based on the relationship between place of residence and place of work revealed by the last Census.
- I.7 The Census analysis is focused on the Lenham and Charing area, settlements that sit either side of the proposed location for Heathlands, using data collected at middle super output area¹ Maidstone 011 and Ashford 002.

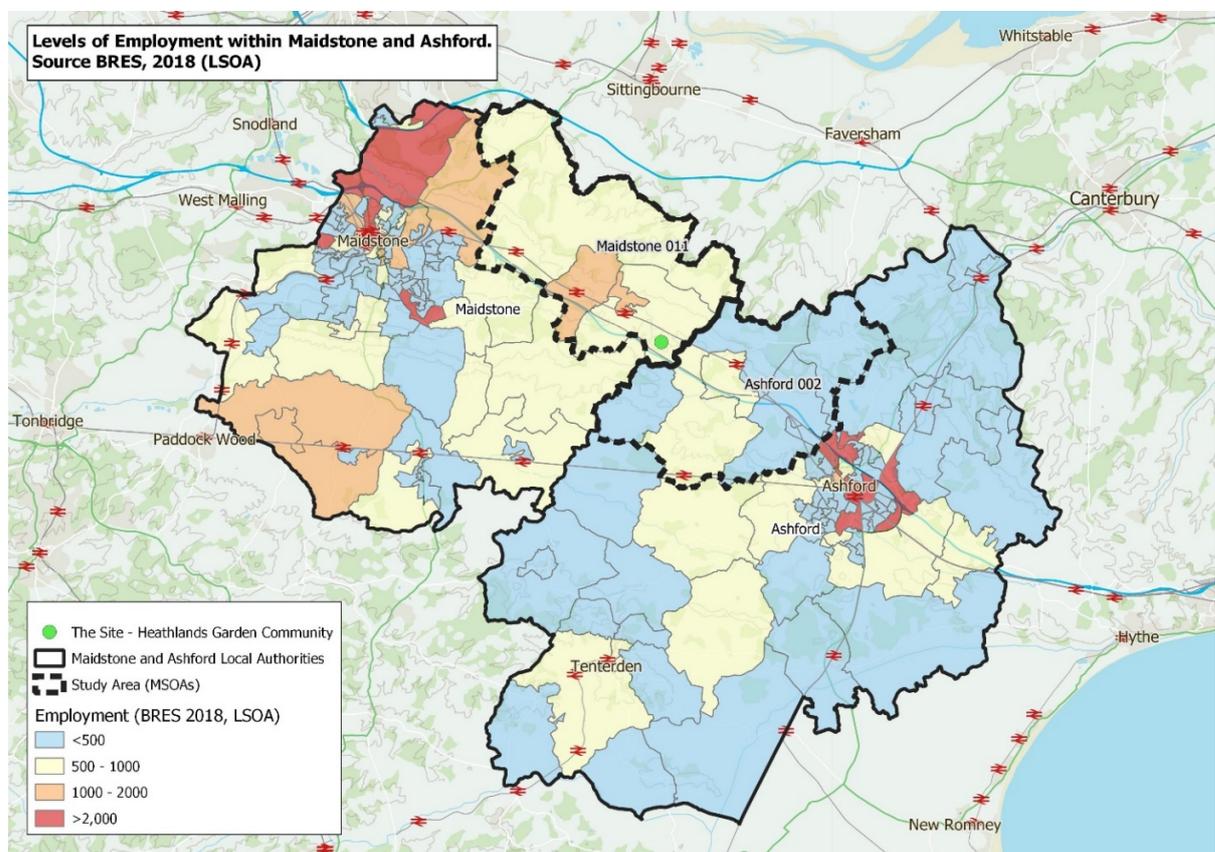
¹ Output areas contain in the region of 110 to 140 households and are the building blocks of Census geography. Census data is made available at ‘super output area’ level, which are groups of output areas. ‘Lower super output area’ (LSOA) are smaller groupings and ‘middle super output area’ (MSOA) are larger groupings.

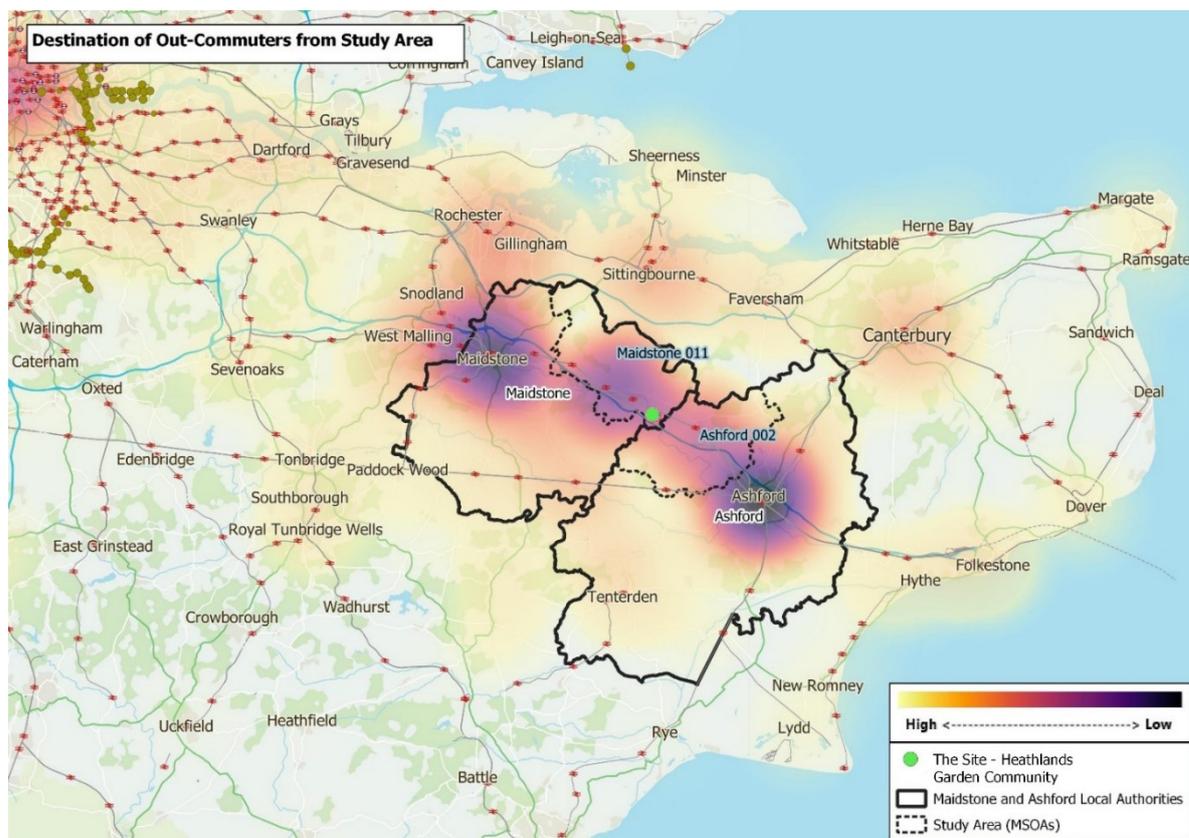
I.8 In common with the Borough-wide position for Maidstone and Ashford, the Census analysis reveals a degree of self-containment that contradicts popular opinion that these are dormitory settlements for long distance commuters. Of Lenham/Charing’s working population (age 16+) in 2011 (about 7,600 persons), the workplace destinations were as follows:

- a) 19% mainly worked at or from home
- b) 10% had no fixed place of work (e.g. trades/construction workers)
- c) 40% worked within Maidstone or Ashford district (including 12% who worked locally to Lenham and Charing)
- d) 32% worked further afield (long distance commuters, widely dispersed; 20% in other parts of Kent and 9% working in Greater London)

I.9 The workplace distribution of Lenham/ Charing residents is mapped at Figure 1. Note the influence of Maidstone and Ashford, where the concentration of employment opportunities in each town define the extent of a “dumbbell-shaped” area of influence, connected by a less significant (in numerical terms) concentration of more local workplace destinations along the M20/A20 corridor.

Figure 1: Place of Work Destination for Lenham/Charing Residents





Source: Barton Willmore and ONS 2020

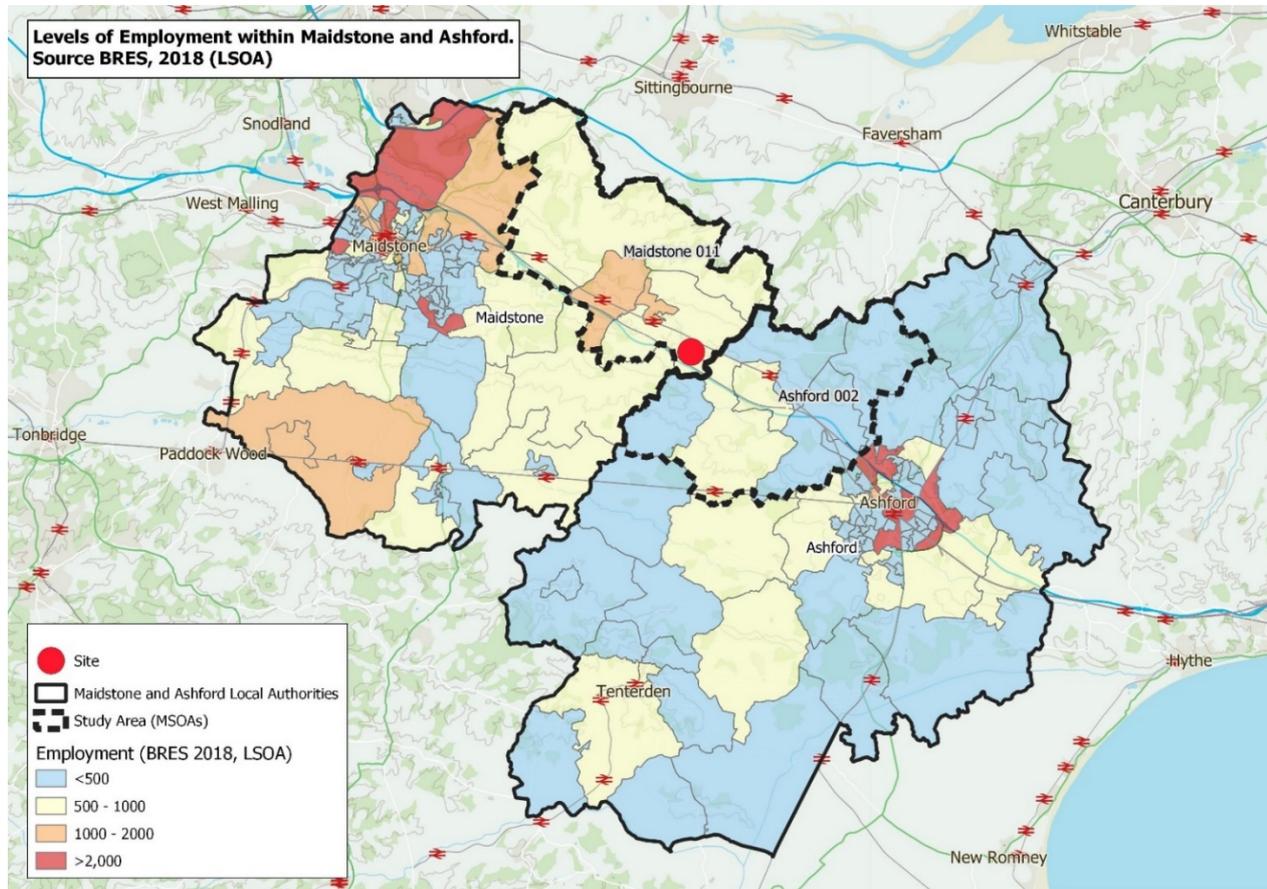
Wider Employment Opportunities

- I.10 The Lenham/ Charing Census analysis establishes a sound starting point for understanding the potential relationship between residents of a new community at Heathlands and their place of work.
- I.11 Heathlands lies almost equidistant from Maidstone (15km) and Ashford (12km), and between Lenham Station (4km) and Charing Station (4km). From Lenham and Charing, the centres of Maidstone and Ashford can be reached in about 15 minutes by rail. A rapid bus service from Heathlands could connect to the local stations at Lenham and Charing in under 10 minutes. A Heathlands rail stop would reduce travel time further.
- I.12 To put the accessibility to the major local centres of employment from Heathlands in context, average commuting times for Ashford and Maidstone residents is 31 and 35 minutes respectively (ONS, 2016).

- I.13 The significance of Maidstone and Ashford is best understood by reference to survey data² collected on behalf of ONS that provides the basis for estimated job number in each town:
- The Maidstone urban area accommodates an estimated 54,000 jobs, over 70% of the Borough;
 - Similarly, the Ashford urban area accommodates over 35,000 jobs, 65% of the Borough total.
- I.14 In total, Heathlands would sustainably connect to circa 90,000 jobs today, a number that is predicted to increase over the next 10 years, by 7% in Maidstone and 8% in Ashford (Oxford Economics, April 2020).
- I.15 Forecast employment growth is the result of losses in some activities and gains in others. There are forecast to be gains in professional services, a grouping of activities that can be continued at home if necessary. In Maidstone, employment in professional services is forecast to increase by 11% and in Ashford by 12%.
- I.16 Essential to Heathlands being a sustainable and future proofed place, resilient to changing demographics and future growth, is the principle of enshrining and integrating smart technology measures into its design. Preliminary discussions have therefore been held with BT on how to integrate 21st Century thinking and technology into 21st Century Garden Villages.
- I.17 The installation of “high speed fibre” to the premises as standard at Heathlands will improve the ability to work from home, meaning that for residents who work in professional services, homeworking could become a more regular occurrence than before the present Coronavirus pandemic, increasing daytime activity with obvious benefits to local services and local economic resilience.
- I.18 Furthermore, Heathlands is also being designed in anticipation of the opportunities presented by technological change such as driverless cars and renewable energy measures.

² The Business register and employment survey (BRES), the official source of employee and employment estimates by detailed geography and industry.

Figure 2: The Local Concentration of Employment Opportunities in Maidstone and Ashford



Source: Barton Willmore and ONS 2020

I.19 The Lenham/ Charing Census based position implies the following distribution of an assumed 4,000 employed residents.

I.20 Commentary is added concerning the potential for this number to either be increased or reduced, based on our understanding of the local economy and emerging thinking on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic:

- a) 750 would work mainly at or from home; a figure we would expect to be greater if Heathlands existed today and remain relatively high until a coronavirus vaccine is available.

Thereafter, the ability to work from home, which is sector dependent, will have a bearing on the amount of time spent working at home;

- b) 390 would have no fixed place of work; it is reasonable to assume this remains constant;
- c) 1,580 would work within Maidstone or Ashford district; the potential for this to increase includes:
 - i. Heathlands employment land, the district and local centres at Heathlands (700 to 900 jobs);
 - ii. The employment allocation at Junction 8 M20 (800 to 1,200 jobs);
 - iii. Employment growth in (the towns of) Maidstone and Ashford, where the bulk of local employment is based (e.6,600 net new jobs over the next ten years under a baseline scenario);
- d) 1,280 would work further afield; a number we would expect to reduce if, i) the prevalence of home working increases and ii) the developments listed above (including serviced offices / workspace at Heathlands) create opportunities that our new residents are attracted to and able to take advantage of.

I.21 A key issue; how many of the 1,280 (32%) 'long distance' commuters can we reasonably expect to retain more locally, either at home, regularly using serviced office space in the District Centre, working at our employment allocation, working at M20 J8 (Segro/Roxhill's development at Woodcut Farm), or working in either Maidstone or Ashford.

I.22 We have already introduced the prospect of more working from home, by residents employed in professional services (in Maidstone and Ashford and further afield, but largely in Kent) who able to work from home.

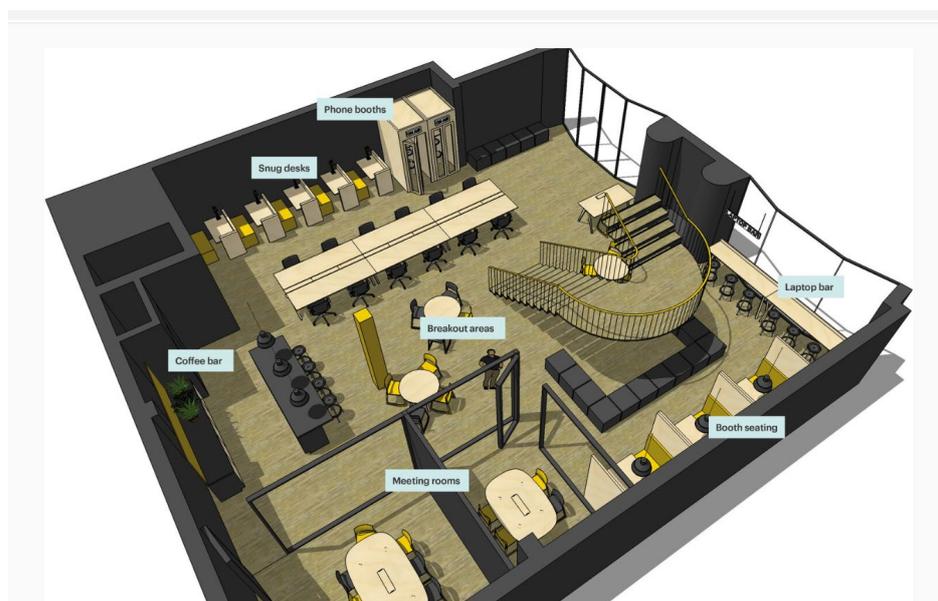
I.23 This would not necessarily impact upon the proportion of home or mainly home-based workers, but it could reasonably be expected to create a significant cohort of part home based employed residents, contributing to the daytime vitality of Heathlands.

The Proposed Employment Offer at Heathlands

I.24 Just as the decision to promote land at Heathlands has been informed, amongst other factors, by the need to embrace sustainable commuting, a key objective of the employment offer is to improve upon the existing relatively high containment rate of about 70% of employed residents working in the tightly defined dumbbell shaped area of influence, bookended by Maidstone and Ashford and identified at Figure 1.

- I.25 To that end, the employment offer, supporting a total of 850 new jobs, will comprises the following:
- District and local centre:
 - 110 retail jobs (A1-A5) across 2,500 sqm GEA
 - 200 office jobs (B1a) across 3,000 sqm GEA managed workspace / offices
 - 120 jobs in the three primary schools (approximately 40 in each)
 - Employment land:
 - 420 B1c/B2/B8 jobs across 20,320 sqm GEA (80% B1c/B2; 20% B8)
- I.26 230 jobs at the District Centre and two Local Centres will ensure that Heathlands satisfies its own local retail and primary school place needs.
- I.27 In the District Centre, we propose office uses in premises to be operated as managed workspace. This will support self-employed residents, micro start-ups and residents who do not need to be permanently office based but require office services, facilities, or meeting space not available at home.
- I.28 We provisionally estimate that a 3,000 sqm purpose-built serviced office / workspace would have the capacity for about 200 users and we would expect relatively high turnover / casual use alongside some more permanent occupiers.
- I.29 An example of managed workspace offer envisaged is Contingent Works in Bromley, due to open this summer. The offer comprises hot desks, fixed desks, private offices and shared studios, a mix of spaces to suit a range of needs, plus meeting rooms, phone booths, refreshments, super-fast wifi, exhibition space and networking opportunities.

Figure 3: Contingent Works, Bromley



- I.30 Turning to the employment land, the Maidstone EDNS Stage 1 Report identifies that industrial demand tends to fall within a size range of between c.5,000sqft and 20,000sqft (460sqm – 1,900sqm), with smaller units generally sought for B1c/B2 uses. At the smaller end of the market, there is also reported to be pent up demand for freehold units between 1,500 and 2,500sqft (140sqm – 230sqm) for flexible B1c/B2/B8 uses. Demand for industrial space tends to increase with proximity to the M20 motorway and to centres of population, with the M20 corridor representing the prime location for demand within the Borough.
- I.31 The Stage 1 report adds that most demand is reported to come from locally based firms, seeking new premises for expansion and/or to upgrade. The Stage 2 report adds that just over two thirds of businesses expect to or possibly will expand or relocate during the next 5 years. Of these most hope to relocate to another site in the borough.
- I.32 We would expect Heathlands to attract locally based firms seeking to expand or upgrade, the site benefiting from its location along the M20 corridor, equidistant and easily accessible to both Maidstone and Ashford by road and rail. Employment for up to 420 could be supported across 20,000 sqm in a mix of small units of 140sqm to 230sqm and larger units up to 1,000 sqm, the majority (circa 60%) for B1c and B2 uses, the remainder for small scale B8.
- I.33 On some of the employment land workspace for small, clean industrial /environmental start-up and follow on businesses could also be developed. Examples of the workspace envisaged include the under-construction Maidstone Innovation Centre at the Kent Medical Campus and the Innovation Studios in Medway. Offering both large and small office and storage space, this workspace ensures that new businesses can be retained as they need to expand.

Figure 4: Medway Innovation Studios (left) and Maidstone Innovation Centre under construction (right)



- I.34 The Maidstone EDNS Stage 2 Report concludes that there is a need for at least 6.8ha and up to 22.7ha B1c/B2 employment land and 10.2 to 27.8 ha B8 employment land. On an 60/40 basis, Heathlands would account for 5% to 18% of B1c/B2 need and 3% to 8% of B8 need.
- I.35 Construction of Heathlands will create employment in construction and associated sectors. Assuming a construction cost of £1bn, we can expect approximately 500 direct full-time equivalent jobs and 500 indirect full-time equivalent jobs to be created and sustained over a 20-year construction period.



Concluding Comments

- I.36 The area local to Heathlands (Lenham, Charing and environs) creates a relatively narrow area of commuting influence, evidenced by the fact that in 2011, about 70% of residents either worked from home, had no fixed place of work, worked in the immediate surroundings or travelled to Maidstone or Ashford. Of the remainder, most worked elsewhere in Kent and 9% in Greater London.
- I.37 In employment terms, the vision for Heathlands is to increase that level of containment. This will be supported by new employment opportunities at Heathlands, at nearby Woodcut Farm and in both Maidstone and Ashford.
- I.38 The offer at Heathlands will enable people who are able to work from home to do so more often. It will provide a base for the self-employed and employed who require office services that may not be available at home. In this way it will enable more daytime activity, supporting local services and promoting well-being by reducing the need to commute daily, whether to Maidstone, Ashford or London.
- I.39 In addition, it will meet identified need for industrial premises and provide a base to start and incubate new business. In combination and supported by a new ped/cycle and bus link to Lenham Station, these factors will improve upon the extant high level of self-containment and support sustainable economic growth.
- I.40 The above reflects the present variation and flexibility of existing employment opportunities, and it is fully intended that such flexibility continues into the evolution of Heathlands. We will continue to engage with MBC Economic Development Team, Locate in Kent and LPA Officers in achieving an innovative and responsive employment offer.
- I.41 Such employment opportunities could be further expanded if we were to also explore the area north of the mainline railway and south of the A20 – as part of the “future development potential” areas identified on the latest masterplan.



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter J: Infrastructure Statement

Introduction

- J.1 This Infrastructure Statement further explores the social and community infrastructure to be provided within Heathlands Garden Community. Placemaking will be at the forefront of the provision of infrastructure and this is further illustrated by the 2nd Stage revised Heathlands Masterplan.

Education

- J.2 There have been subsequent discussions with KCC Education (since the May 2019 “call for sites” submission) relating to related education provision at Heathlands.
- J.3 We have been advised there is substantial spare capacity at the existing Lenham Secondary School, and that this should be utilised before the consideration of any new secondary provision. This will be secured in the form of off-site financial contributions (ie CIL), and Heathlands therefore no longer presently proposes its own new Secondary School.
- J.4 Heathlands would provide 2No. 3FE Primary Schools, suitably located close to the 2No Local Centres to provide accessibility for all and further enhance the “community heart”. This accords with DfE advice which recommends a minimum of 2FE primary schools in Garden Communities (Education Provision in Garden Communities, April 2019). The extent of Primary provision has been calculated on the established local formula of 1 Form of Entry per 700 dwellings, which equates to circa 6FE (based upon circa 4,000 dwellings).
- J.5 It is anticipated that Early Years provision would also be provided alongside the Primary provision, whereas Sixth Form provision would be accessible in either Maidstone or Ashford.

Primary Healthcare

- J.6 Preliminary discussions with the local GP Practice (the associated services of Len Valley, Lenham & The Glebe Medical Centre, Harrietsham) have indicated that it is still accepting new patients, ie that it has spare capacity. This understanding is reflected in the latest patient data (as of 30 Dec 2019) as there being 9,423 patients registered at the Practice and 6.1 FTE GPs. The GP to patient ratio is therefore 1:1,545 which is below the HUDU standard of 1:1,800. This indicates capacity at the surgery which is equivalent to 1,556 places.
- J.7 Established CCG practice is to utilise existing spare capacity before the commissioning of a new GP surgery. A new GP practice would be required for circa. 12,000 population, whereas Heathlands is currently predicted to have a population of circa 9,600 (based upon 4,000 homes). It is therefore anticipated that off-site contributions (ie CIL) would be required to provide expanded facilities at Lenham, once any spare capacity has been utilised.
- J.8 Whilst this may be the case in pure numerical terms, there may be the opportunity within the District or Local Centres to provide a 'healthcare hub' as part of the community facilities which would be easily accessible via public transport, cycling and walking. This would assist in promoting healthy, sustainable communities as per recognised Garden City Principles. This will be explored further with the local CCG.

Community Facilities

- J.9 The development provides opportunities to include a central community space, such as a Community Hall within the District Centre. There would also be potential for a smaller community area within one of the Local Centres, paired-up with a smaller working hub to provide a multi-functional space.
- J.10 Providing these community and working hub spaces within the District and Local centres would ensure maximum accessibility through sustainable modes of transport such as public transport, cycling and walking (as demonstrated by the revised Masterplan). Paring the two spaces together, or close to one another, would promote an interrelationship between those working within the community and economic support for the community facilities through the use of potential on-site cafes and exhibition spaces.
- J.11 Existing community facilities, such as Lenham Library, will be enhanced by increased use and the provision of off-site financial contributions.

Open Space, Play Space and Sport Facilities

- J.12 Heathlands provides vast opportunities to create significant open spaces and play spaces that would have a strong relationship with the surrounding built form, resulting in meaningful, inclusive spaces for the use of all, in line with Garden City Principles.
- J.13 The accompanying "Land Use Budget Plan" illustrates how MBC Policy DM19 requirements for open space, play space and sport facilities can be accommodated within the Garden Community. These include notably larger areas for amenity green space and natural/semi-natural spaces than the policy requires.
- J.14 The revised Masterplan includes the sizeable 'Royton Manor Town Park', which will provide a "Green Heart" for the Heathlands Garden Community - while ensure the important archaeological remains are protected.
- J.15 There would also be the potential for the history of these to be communicated to the Park users through information boards or similar, thus better revealing significance (NPPF Para 200).
- J.16 The proposal would also include a substantial Country Park, creating an integrated network of blue green infrastructure, utilising existing footpaths and providing a meaningful open space for users while providing significant biodiversity net gains in line with Garden City Principles. These spaces would be complimented by additional "Green Hubs" as illustrated by the revised Masterplan.
- J.17 The amenity greenspaces will provide opportunities for informal and formal play, with sport pitches provided close to the centre of the development and Primary Schools to promote accessibility.
- J.18 These will provide new opportunities to meet the needs of current and future generations as promoted by Sport England's Playing Fields Policy and Guidance (2018). MBC's Playing Pitch Strategy (2018) indicates that there is a lower provision for football, cricket and rugby in the Lenham area. The revised Masterplan provides several areas of sports provision, including the potential for providing '3G' football pitches, as recommended by the Strategy.

Retail and Services within Centres

- J.19 As discussed in the preceding sections, the proposed District and Local Centres within Heathlands provide the opportunity to create multi-functional spaces which provide a range of community facilities within one, easily accessible place.
- J.20 These community facilities could include a GP hub with a visiting GP on certain days of the week and pharmacy as service linked to the Lenham GP practice. This provision could be increased where necessary once the separate development around Lenham comes forward (currently circa. 1,000 homes).
- J.21 The District Centre also has the potential to offer small start-up retail units for local residents/businesses, thus promoting local, sustainable employment to create a self-sufficient Heathlands Garden Community.

Utilities

- J.22 The Utility Report undertaken by RSK (Feb 2020) has identified the areas of existing utilities both overground and underground. These are provided within the original report, but were also on the relevant RSK drawings (Ref. 194707-DB-01(00): Sheet 1 of 10 to Sheet 10 of 10) – sent previously.
- J.23 These have been considered as part of the revised Masterplan. For instance, the majority of underground sewers follow the route of existing roads, thus would require little interference. There is an area around the Sewage Treatment Plant where the sewer lines traverse north/south across open land rather than following a road. However, these areas will be retained as open space, thus demonstrating how the revised Masterplan has taken such utilities into account.
- J.24 Further conversations will be held with the utility providers as to the extent of any necessary local improvements to utility infrastructure capacity to accommodate the proposed development.
- J.25 It is acknowledged that Heathlands presently have certain “known unknowns”, particularly in respect of the Western Parcel following the recent revisions reflected in the 2nd Stage Masterplan, ie. the relocated Country Park (to the south of the M20) and development now being proposed in the Western Parcel.

J.26 By way of an example only - this relates to the existing waste-water treatment works (WWTW) – and we recognise that further technical work is required in respect of:

- The capacity of the WWTW to be able to process the new development;
- The present “odour contours” from the existing WWTW – to establish the necessary *cordon sanitaire* to surrounding development; and
- Whether there are any potential technical improvements to the WWTW – to potentially reduce the odour contours/cordon sanitaire.

J.27 It is recognised this may ultimately reduce the net developable area in the Western Parcel, but that such assessments will form part of the ongoing iterative technical/design process in the evolution of the Garden Community.



HEATHLANDS GARDEN COMMUNITY

Matter K: Transport Statement

Introduction

- K.1 This Transport Assessment (TA) Addendum has been prepared (by RSK Transport) to provide additional information to support the Revised TA, dated 28 May 2020, in relation to Heathlands Garden Community.
- K.2 The topics presented below address specific queries raised during the review of the TA and identify where further work may be necessary as the project evolves.

Cycle connectivity

- K.3 The A20 connects Heathlands to Maidstone to the north west and Ashford to the south east and passes through several villages in between. The extents of highway along this section of the A20 provide a generous corridor within which transport infrastructure can be provided. There is a 2.0m footway alongside most of its length, often overgrown due to a lack of maintenance, with wide grass verges.
- K.4 As part of the Garden Community proposals, there is an opportunity to widen this footway along the whole section to provide a suitable width (minimum 3.0m) shared footway / cycleway.
- K.5 This will provide connectivity to other villages, major employment sites and the towns of Maidstone and Ashford.
- K.6 Furthermore, this will offer a valuable connection for those living in those villages to also access those same destinations.
- K.7 While the outskirts of Maidstone and Ashford are around 12km from the site, these are within reasonable reach for commuting purposes by cycle, particularly if using an e-bike which extends the achievable journey length.

Severance through villages

- K.8 It is acknowledged that an increase in traffic flows along the A20 could have an effect on the road environment for existing users, such as pedestrians and cyclists. The provision of a continuous link between Maidstone and Ashford will mitigate these effects for those travelling along it. For those communities living along the A20, it is recognised that additional mitigation may be necessary to reduce the effect of severance.
- K.9 The recent scheme in Harrietsham is an example of how this has been delivered and further improvements may be required in this specific location as well as the remainder of the route through Harrietsham and in Charing. However, it should be noted that the sustainable transport provisions for the site will help to minimise the additional traffic generated by the development.

Connectivity to Lenham and rail station

- K.10 The current masterplan indicates a PRow upgrade along the southern side of the railway line that would connect Heathlands to Headcorn Road to lead into the village and rail station. It is intended that this would be at least upgraded to a bridleway to allow for pedestrians and cyclists. Subject to discussions with landowners, this could be improved further to provide a bus-only link alongside a shared footway/cycleway. There is also potential for alternative and/or secondary access to Lenham village on foot and by cycle via Old Ashford Road, potentially via site allocations within the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan.

Proposed rail station/halt

- K.11 The potential for a new rail station/halt within the development will offer a significant contribution to sustainable travel choices with convenient connections to Maidstone and Ashford with services extending beyond to central London. The village stations along this route are only served by one train per hour in each direction for most of the day. With passenger numbers expected to be similar to those using Bearsted, the proposed station could be served by the express service too, subject to discussions with South Eastern, improving the frequency to two trains per hour and thereby increasing its attractiveness. Discussions will also need to be held with Thameslink as new services are due to serve Maidstone with extended services being planned for Bearsted and Ashford. The passenger numbers at the proposed station are likely to justify being served by the Thameslink service, which will offer increased permeability into central London and further connections beyond.

- K.12 Detailed feasibility studies will be required to examine the options available, which could ultimately include relocating Lenham Railway Station, that consider effects on timetable, signalling, rolling stock, track requirements and engineering to accommodate the station itself. Examination of other comparable rail stations completed in recent years, which offer a single platform either side of a twin track and limited changes to existing infrastructure, such as "Ilkeston" and "Lea Bridge", indicate that a new station could be delivered for a cost in the region of £12m.

A20 towards Maidstone / M20 Junction 8

- K.13 The TA analysis indicates that the majority of traffic generated by Heathlands would travel along the A20 towards Maidstone with a large proportion leading onto the M20, Jn 8. It is acknowledged that there are congestion problems around the A20 between the Penfold Hill roundabout and Junction 8, encompassing four roundabouts. The complexity of the traffic patterns and queue interaction between these junctions will require micro-simulation modelling to assess the overall impacts of the Garden Community on this part of the network as well as assess the likely success of proposed improvements. However, such a model would be created to encompass all the local network and provides a greater level of detail than is typically required at the land promotion stage of the process.
- K.14 Notwithstanding the above, improvements identified in the TA comprised partial signalisation of the M20 roundabout or construction of a slip lane, and creation of two lanes for motorway-bound traffic at the A20 Ashford Road roundabout, which is likely to require widening to accommodate a separate ahead lane for Maidstone-bound traffic. At the Penfold Hill and Eyhorne Street roundabouts, it is likely that improvements will also be required, which could include signalisation of both junctions. However, further analysis will be required to understand the implications of downstream junction improvements on the level of congestion at these locations.
- K.15 Combined with these improvements leading up to the motorway, the M20 westbound on slip is understood to be below DMRB standards due to the constraints of the bridge over the railway downstream. Further detailed modelling of this slip road, using the methodology in CD122, and discussions with Highways England will be required to assess the likely impacts of the traffic generated by Heathlands on the safe operation of this slip road. This may need to consider the associated impacts with any future scheme for managing the M20 during periods of congestion around Channel crossings.

Bus service provision

- K.16 It is likely that any rail station/halt option will only be implemented during the latter phases of development and therefore an interim solution for connectivity to existing stations would be to introduce a shuttle bus service. Although a service could be provided to connect to both Charing and Lenham stations, it is likely that a single service to Lenham, being the closer station and towards the prevalent direction of travel, would offer a more reliable and frequent service that would ensure its attractiveness. This service would also connect residents with the local facilities and secondary school in Lenham.
- K.17 The A20 already benefits from an hourly bus service between Maidstone and Ashford with plans being explored by the bus operator to increase this to a 30-minute frequency. There is the potential to introduce a Bus Rapid Transit Scheme between Maidstone and Ashford with the TA indicating the option of using guided busways and higher frequency services. The rural section of the A20 operates adequately for a bus service to travel along without requiring intervention to provide bus priority. The sections toward the built-up areas are constructed as dual carriageway sections with generous verges. This presents the opportunity to introduce bus priority through reallocation of road space.
- K.18 As travel habits change over a period of time, this will improve the opportunity for road space reallocation into Ashford Town Centre, including Ashford International Station, and along the approach to Junction 8 where congestion would otherwise affect the reliability of services.
- K.19 It is evident that the anticipated improvements to bus services and other sustainable transport measures will be of benefit to existing and new residents alike.

A20 access roads and junctions

- K.20 The future alignment of access roads between the development site and the A20 will be determined through examination of potential constraints in conjunction with discussions with landowners. It is noted that the majority of this land is under the same control as several of the "principal landowners" family group(s).
- K.21 The access roads are likely to intersect with the A20 at a roundabout junction towards either end of the development site, dispersing the traffic across different locations. The exact form and scale of these junctions will be subject to further work at a more detailed stage with the TA demonstrating that a suitable form of junction is possible.

- K.22 The likely cost of each junction will be around £1m. The link roads not serving development frontage are expected to cost in the region of £1k per linear metre, with the distance between the railway and A20 being around 1km. Two new all-purpose road bridges will be required across the railway with likely costs of circa £5M each.
- K.23 Infrastructure to the south of the development, such as crossings of HS1 and the M20 are likely to utilise existing bridges. It is recommended that any new bridges would only be for use by pedestrians and cyclists and would be in the region of £2-3M per crossing, acknowledging the required closures of important infrastructure that this would entail.

Internal trip implications

- K.24 The TA presents assumptions around the internalisation of trips given the mix of uses on the site and the principle of the development being one where people can 'live, work and play'. The trip rates have been conservatively reduced for several trip purposes including employment, schools, shopping and leisure uses.
- K.25 A recent study for a sustainable community in Cambourne Village has shown that there is a complex matrix of internal and external trips depending on the uses and individual catchment areas. For example, a specialist shop will have a different pattern of visitors to a community facility and will still attract external trips, such as staff. Further consideration will be needed at later stages when more detailed assessment of impacts is examined.

**POLICY AND RESOURCES
COMMITTEE**

21 JULY 2020

Corporate Planning Timetable

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance and Anna Collier, Policy and Information Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report sets out the proposed timetable for a review of the priorities and outcomes in the Strategic Plan 2019 to 2045 and updating the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to cover the five year period 2021 to 2026

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To adopt the corporate planning timetable

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	21 July 2020

Corporate Planning Timetable

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>The strategic plan sets the corporate priorities. This paper sets the timetable by which the refresh of those outcomes will be undertaken.</p>	Head of Policy Communications and Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The Strategic Plan sets the corporate priorities. This paper sets the timetable by which the assessment of the cross-cutting objectives will be made.</p>	Head of Policy Communications and Governance
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section	Head of Policy Communications and Governance
Financial	<p>The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation. Financial implications of the Strategic Plan will be addressed by developing an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy in parallel with the Strategic Plan. A report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy is included on this agenda.</p>	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Policy Communications

		and Governance
Legal	The Strategic Plan aligns with the Council’s general duty, as a best value authority, to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness – section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999. If adopted as recommended the corporate planning timetable enables the Council to monitor its performance against the agreed Strategic Plan outcomes.	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	Any data collected as part of the Strategic Planning process will be processed in accordance with GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	The COVID-19 Public Health crisis has posed a number of acute risks to society due to the virus itself but also the measures taken to contain it. There will be longer term risks to residents’ health due to the impact on the wider determinants of health. The COVID-19 pandemic has also shown that the risks are greater to particular groups of the population further highlighting the health inequalities that already existed prior to the outbreak. This will need to be a consideration when moving forwards with the Strategic Plan and recommendations of this report.	Senior Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	No Impact	
Procurement	No Impact	

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The corporate planning process within the Council ensures the overall vision for the borough is clear and delivered. The priorities and outcomes in the Strategic Plan are developed alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as the financial expression of the Strategic Plan.
- 2.2 The current Strategic Plan was adopted in December 2018 and covers the period until 2045. The plan was agreed after careful analysis and consultation, the decision taken for it to be a 26-year plan to ensure continuity, and a basis on which all other internal plans and strategies could be developed.
- 2.3 The Council's strapline is 'A borough that works for everyone' expressed through our vision with 4 key priorities and 4 cross cutting objectives:

Priorities

- Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure
- Safe Clean and Green
- Homes and Communities
- A Thriving Place

Cross Cutting Objectives

- Heritage is respected
 - Health inequalities are addressed and reduced
 - Deprivation is reduced and social mobility is improved
 - Biodiversity and Environmental sustainability is respected
- 2.4 Outcomes for 2019/24 were set under each priority and progress against these outcomes can be seen at **Appendix A**. Progress has been made across all four priorities in line with our plan.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

Retain and update the existing strategic plan

- 3.1** The current Strategic Plan was developed involving a wide cross section of Councillors, staff and other stakeholders in 2018 before being adopted in December of that year, the vision and priorities are clear and relevant. Progress has been made across all priorities as can be seen in the outcomes update as can be seen in **Appendix A**.
- 3.2 In-light of the pandemic and its significant impact, work will now need to be carried out to refresh our outcomes for 2019/24 to a refreshed set of outcomes for 2021/26 in the plan. This should be a light touch piece of work to ensure the outcomes we are aligned to our recovery approach.

3.3 Work is underway on recovery as per the report from the Chief Executive in June to Policy and Resources Committee developing impact assessments and plans. The actions resulting from these should inform the development of outcomes in the strategic plan. It is also proposed to conduct consultation to identify the impact of the pandemic on our residents to help inform our recovery plans.

3.4 A light-touch refresh of the Strategic Plan would include:

- Identification of areas of focus for 2021/26
- Refresh of any contextual information in the document such as statistics
- Refreshing the foreword.

3.5 Outlined below is a proposed timetable for updating the Strategic Plan and development of budget proposals. A report on the MTFs has been included on this agenda and that has been taken into account in the proposed timetable below.

3.6 Corporate Planning Timetable

Date	Action
21 July 2020	Policy and Resources Committee consider the corporate planning timetable
July 2020	Recovery Impact Assessments undertaken
July 2020- August 2020	Resident COVID-19 Impact and Recovery Consultation launched
July 2020- October 2020	Engagement with Members Engagement with Unit Managers Engagement with Staff
September 2020 – November 2020	Develop detailed budget proposals Refresh strategic plan
October 2020	Budget survey
December 2020	Budget Proposals considered by Policy and Resources Committee; Strategic Plan refresh considered alongside consultation results
January 2021	Consultation with Service Committees on Budget Proposals and Strategic Plan refresh
February 2021	Policy and Resources consider for submission to Council Strategic Plan refresh and final Medium-Term Financial Strategy
February 2021	Strategic Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy considered at full Council

Create a new Strategic Plan

- 3.7 The Committee could decide that the existing strategic plan is not fit for purpose. It should be noted that creating a new Strategic Plan would have a substantially greater impact on resources.
- 3.8 The timetable proposed would also need to be revisited and this could have an impact on the development of the Local Plan, as the spatial expression of the Strategic Plan. The timetable agreed for the Local Plan Review at Strategic Planning Infrastructure Committee is outlined below.

Preferred approached consultation (Regulation 18b) (with emphasis on future strategies for growth)	Preferred approached consultation (Regulation 18b) with emphasis on detailed topic areas	Draft DPD Consultation (Regulation 19)	Examination	Adoption
October 2020	February 2021	December 2021	June/July 2022	October 2022

Amend or create a new timetable for a new strategic plan

- 3.9 The Committee can amend the timetable proposed for the refresh of the plan. Members would need to consider the impact that this would have on the development of the Local Plan. The corporate planning timetable proposed includes the development of the MTFS which is also included on this agenda.

Do not refresh the Strategic Plan

- 3.10 Councillors may identify that the current plan does not need refreshing in-light of the impact of the pandemic. Whilst the vision, priorities and cross cutting objectives are long-term and therefore would not need redrafting; this would miss the opportunity to look again at the shorter-term outcomes we want to achieve to determine if they are fit for purpose in light of the impact of COVID-19. We may for example want to put more emphasis on community infrastructure and capacity, an area that features in our priorities but does not feature in the present outcomes for 2019/24.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that as the current Strategic Plan was only written in 2018, the present plan was refreshed to ensure contextual information is up to date and areas of focus in relation to outcomes for 2021/26 refreshing those for 2019/24 are agreed.

- 4.2 Not updating the plan is not recommended as there has the local and national landscape has significantly changed and the Council needs to demonstrate how it is planning and manage and respond to this change.
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 As outlined in the table above a resident COVID-19 impact and recovery survey is planned for the summer and budget consultation for October 2020. These will inform the Strategic Plan and the Medium-term Financial Strategy.
- 6.2 Members and Officers will be engaged throughout the corporate planning process.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The proposed details for next steps are set out at in the options section of this report.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Strategic Plan Outcomes Update
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Progress against outcomes in the Strategic Plan 2019-45:

Between 2019-24 we will place particular importance on:

Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure	Actions completed to date
Engaging with our communities on the Local Plan Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full public consultation on the Local Plan Review took place over a 10-week period between 19th July 2019 and 30th September 2019.
The Council will take a proactive role in creating and consider investing in new places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Planning service has created Planning Guidelines documents for five town centre opportunity sites. These were approved by the Strategic Planning & Infrastructure Committee and were published in early 2020. The documents have stimulated lots of interest and dialogue with the existing landowners as well as potential investors and developers. The work has also helped stimulate market activity, where by the Len House site was sold to Classicus Estates who have since submitted a Planning application for the site that is consistent with our vision for it. The application is due to be determined in July 2020. • The Planning service has published a Garden Communities prospectus as part of the “call for sites” exercise, early in the Local Plan Review process. This stimulated in the submission of a number of well considered private sector led proposals spanning all four quadrants of the borough, some of which may feature in the Council’s preferred spatial strategy that will become subject to public consultation in the Autumn of 2020. • The Council, acting as master-developer is also promoting its own council-led garden community proposal, Heathlands, which is also gaining traction in the Local Plan Review process, and has attracted Homes England as a partner.
Expanding the Council’s role in the delivery of affordable and market rent housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A draft Affordable and Local Needs Housing Supplementary Planning Document has been produced and has been subject to full public consultation. The document notes that the Council is considering playing a role in delivering affordable housing in the

	form of social rent on S106 sites. The document also seeks to facilitate delivery of affordable homes in Maidstone Borough.
Working with partners to get infrastructure planned, funded and delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to taking forward the delivery of projects associated with the adopted Local Plan, the Strategic Planning Team has updated the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy Regulation 123 list. In respect of the Local Plan Review, there has been consistent and on-going engagement with infrastructure providers as key milestones have been reached in the production process.
Intervening where necessary in the market, to deliver key employment sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has acquired land at Kent Medical Campus, one of the largest employment allocations in the current Local Plan, and is developing a new Innovation Centre on it that will provide start up accommodation for businesses in the life sciences sector, coupled with wrap around business support. The project is part funded by ERDF monies, and the contractor, Rydon, is on site, with the project due to complete in the summer of 2021. This investment decision has been strengthened by the Council working in partnership with Kent County Council and the Department for Transport to fund the early provision of road nearby infrastructure improvements.

Safe, Clean and Green	Actions completed to date
Taking action against those who do not respect our public spaces, streets, green spaces and parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since the launch of the new waste crime team in 2018 there have been 727 FPNs for littering, 20 FPNs for fly tipping, 30 for Duty of Care offences and 4 for dog fouling, 32 vehicle seizures linked to duty of care or fly tipping offences The team have succeeded in 3 prosecutions for fly tipping The number of unauthorised encampments reduced during the year compared to the previous year as a result of a change of approach in the use of community protection notices (6 encampments were dealt with) 2 FPNs issued in relation to the Town Centre PSPO 25 Community Protection Formal Warnings and 6 Community Protection Notices
Improving community safety by working with our partners to make people less vulnerable to crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between August 2019 and March 20 there were 41 Rural Surgeries held at 4 locations - Staplehurst, Marden, Coxheath and Headcorn. No. of cases assisted through MARAC/Sanctuary/DA One Stop Shop - 195 cases heard at DA MARACs/ 37 Sanctuary referrals / 262 One Stop Shop attendances (Oct 2018 - Sep 2019)

Raising resident satisfaction with the cleanliness of the Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review undertaken into the future provision of the service, including a resident survey to understand customer needs and priorities • Investment in four new sweepers and street washer • Delivery of 3 Blitz Days in the Town Centre funded by the Business Improvement District • New mobile technology and online reporting processes in place to enable full management of responsive street cleansing services
Implementing the “Go Green Go Wild” project to embrace and encourage biodiversity and protect and enhance our green spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 wildflower meadows planted across the Borough • Tree planting schemes taking place in Allington • 20,000 bulbs planted along A20 • £20k community fund implemented to deliver 10 grants to local groups to support their work on Go Green Go Wild initiatives
Improving air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacing strimmers and other grounds equipment with battery operated versions • Purchased 2 electric vehicles for Street Cleansing • A20 improvement project has planted 20k bulbs, grasses and trees • Tree planting schemes across several open spaces within the Borough

A Thriving Place	Milestones completed to date
Development and commencement of delivering the new gallery at the museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Lottery Heritage Fund bid submitted in November 2019. • Bid unsuccessful February 2020 • Meeting arranged with NLHF to discuss further progress on March 17 2020 • Project Partnership Board met monthly between Sept 2019 and March 2020 • Project Partnership Board leading review of options to offer proposal of future actions to Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee.
Enabling events which assist people in increasing their pride in communities and our environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proms in the Park • Community Mela • Brenchley Garden Bandstand concerts • Mote Park events including Ramblin Man • Series of small PR events in support of Elmer

<p>Reviewing and delivering leisure and cultural services that meet future needs e.g. sports facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched the Making Maidstone More Active project • Appointed the leisure project officer • Assembled the Making Maidstone More Active project board • Launched the Making Maidstone More Active residents' survey which reached more than 2,000 people and achieved more than 1,250 full responses • Used the survey results to design the Making Maidstone More Active residents' forums • Booked residents on to forums, the first of which is held in late March 2020 • Actively working with The FA on future artificial football provision in Maidstone • Actively working with the LTA on increasing access to tennis courts in Maidstone • Undertaking a feasibility study on providing a larger theatre in Maidstone
<p>Building the innovation centre at Kent Medical Campus, promoting inward investment in the Borough</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERDF funding agreement signed 23.12.2019 • Rydon site possession 06.01.2020 • Completed MHCLG Project Implementation Meeting 30.01.2020 • Business Support Contract signed 31.01.2020 • Turf turning ceremony 04.03.2020 • Contractors, Rydons started on site 23.03.2020
<p>Working with partners to redevelop the Maidstone East site and modernise the bus station in the County Town</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bid for Small Sites Fund submitted and successfully through stage 1. • Savills masterplan unviable and new more viable residential scheme on Maidstone East produced. • Commercial terms with Solum and KCC under review as KCC have announced their requirement to build circa 100,000 sq.ft. on the Maidstone East Site. • Bus Station scope of works redefined September 2019. Designs for public consultation to be approved by ERL 31st March 2019.
<p>Developing and delivering plans for the five opportunity sites in the town centre and the Staplehurst regeneration project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites promoted at internal lead and external events; MIPIM Kent Construction Expo, Business Forum, MEBP • Planning Guidance adopted by Committee Oct 2019 • Business Forum held on the 27th January 2020 • All Landowners contacted to understand intentions and scope/appetite for MBC intervention • Staplehurst:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified and engaging with current owners to understand current and future plans – including proposition to change from commercial to residential. • Lobbied Sainsbury's to build their planning permission and successful. • Undertaking research with property services to justify remaining need for commercial space and challenge existing developer research suggesting no commercial demand
Working with parishes and community groups on neighbourhood plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between April 2019 and March 2020 only the Loose Neighbourhood Plan was made (adopted) in September 2019 • At the end of 2019/20 a total of 3 neighbourhood plans were made • At the end of 2019/20 a further 13 are in progress (at various stages) • The following have reached significant milestones in the last year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Marden Neighbourhood Plan = subject to referendum in February 2020 which was successful. A report will be taken to SPI in June 2020 and then Council in July to make the plan. This plan is very near to the end ○ Lenham Neighbourhood Plan = the final stage of public consultation on the plan took place between February and March 2020. The current position of the plan is it that it is at examination.

Homes and Communities	Milestones completed to date
Reducing Rough Sleeping in a sustainable way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfigured outreach service to provide support to clients helped from the street. • Number of rough sleepers fell over the year and last official count in January 2020 was zero. • Discussions with MHCLG to obtain funding for a West Kent support service focused on mental health resulted in successful bid (due to start June 2020).
Reducing the use of temporary accommodation for homeless families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of families in temporary accommodation reduced from 107 in March 2019 to 95 in March 2020. • The number of MBC owned temporary accommodation rose during the year to 97 units, reducing the need for nightly paid accommodation. • The number of successful prevention (472) and relief (615) outcomes increased over the financial year compared to the previous year.

Improving housing through use of our statutory powers to promote good health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 618 households were assisted through the helping you home scheme (from hospital). • The number of disabled facilities grants approved was 103 equating to £907,390.00 of grant being committed.
Increasing our interventions with Houses of Multiple Occupation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of licences approved was 58 making the total licensed premises to 122, demonstrating compliance with housing standards.
Supporting the health service to improve access to primary care including local care hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributing through engagement with health colleagues at various levels, both operational and strategic.

Agenda Item 15

Policy and Resources Committee

21 July 2020

Communication and Engagement Action Plan 2020-21

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance and Julie Maddocks, Communications Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Policy and Resources Committee agreed a new Communication and Engagement Strategy for 2019-24. This report sets out the action plan for 2020-21 to deliver our strategic priorities and services.

Purpose of Report

Decision

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To approve the Communication and Engagement Action Plan for 2020-21

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Corporate Leadership Team	7 July 2020
Policy and Resources Committee	21 July 2020

Communication and Engagement Action Plan 2020-21

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place 	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected 	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Legal	<p>No specific legal implications are identified. Under Section 3 of the Local Government Act Team Leader 1999 local authorities have a duty to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". The Council's Strategic Plan and the Communication and Engagement Strategy demonstrate compliance with the statutory duty. The council is required to observe the code of recommended practice on local authority publicity; the action plan supports this. The Policy and Resources</p>	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS

	Committee are responsible for all policy matters not otherwise allocated to any other committee or to Council as part of the policy framework. As such it is for the Policy and Resources Committee to approve the strategy.	
Privacy and Data Protection	The Communications team process data in accordance with the principles of data protection.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	The communications team supports activities to promote public health initiatives and campaigns.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The communications team will provide communication and engagement support to the community safety team.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Procurement	The communications team will act within the procurement guidelines.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Communication and Engagement Action Plan is driven by our Strategic Plan which sets out the Council’s long-term aspirations for the whole borough and how they will be achieved. At the centre of the Strategic Plan is a vision to make Maidstone a vibrant, prosperous, urban and rural community at the heart of Kent where everyone can realise their potential. Communications plays a key role in achieving this. Through effective communications and engagement, we will support and deliver the four priorities contained within the Strategic Plan.
- 2.2 It is vital that the Council communicates and engages with a wide range of stakeholders including: residents, businesses, councillors, staff, charities and other public sector services. By providing efficient and effective engagement the Council can improve local understanding, perception, and involvement.
- 2.3 The communications team supports all service areas across the Council. **Appendix A** highlights services that the communications team have supported with campaigns, press releases, events and design work during 2019-20. The support includes the Business Terrace, Business Forum, Cobtree Park, Visit Maidstone, Housing, Community Protection, Waste Services and Recycling, COVID-19 response. The team have remained flexible and adaptable to ensure the Council can respond to new initiatives

and emergencies such as the recent pandemic and the flooding earlier this year.

- 2.4 The team over the past year have responded to over 480 local, national and trade enquiries compared to 271 in 2018-19, they have also issued 138 press releases in 2019-20 compared to 18 in 2018-19 a huge increase in reactive and proactive engagement. There has also been significant amounts of social media activity increasing the Council's reach across these channels. This has been achieved alongside a reduction in staffing to achieve a budget saving of £30,000.
- 2.5 The Communication and Engagement Action Plan at **Appendix B** sets out the planned work for the next year to support Council services and deliver the Council's priorities. This plan is a living document and will be updated as services identify actions and support needed throughout the year, not every activity can be planned for in advance.
- 2.6 The Action Plan for 2020-21 includes actions to promote a large range of services across a variety of channels. The work planned for 2020-21 shows how communications supports service delivery and includes the following:
- Markets
 - Clean Air for Schools
 - Waste and Recycling
 - Go Green Go Wild
 - Parking Services
 - Local Plan Review
 - Regeneration Projects
 - Lockmeadow
 - Consultations
- 2.7 Included at **Appendix C** is a separate COVID-19 recovery communications plan for information.
- 2.8 The Communications team also runs engagement activities and briefings for all staff including a weekly newsletter, one council events and we now use monthly webinars with the Chief Executive as more staff are working remotely. **Appendix D** sets out the staff internal engagement plan for information.
- 2.9 Councillors are engaged through the monthly member bulletin, regular briefings on strategic issues, committee meetings, forums and boards. Training and briefings will be made available online wherever possible.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

Amend the Action Plan

- 3.1 The Committee could request that actions are removed/amended or additional actions are included. This will need to take into account the

capacity of the team, the expectations of council services and potential impact on services and key projects

Approve the Communications Action Plan

- 3.2 The Committee is asked to approve the action plan for 2020-21 to deliver the Council's Communication and Engagement Strategy
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The action plan is recommended for approval as it has been developed following consultation with Heads of Service and unit managers with the aim to support service delivery. The plan provides a clear focus for the work of the communication and engagement team supporting council services to achieve their priorities.
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 The Communication and Engagement Strategy seeks to minimise and manage risks in relation to the Council's services and reputation. The associated risks are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the policy.
-

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 The action plan includes promotion and support for the council's consultations planned for 2020-21. Heads of Service have been consulted with regarding their planned need for communication support in 2020-21.
-

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 Following approval, the plan will be implemented. Staff and Councillors have a role in amplifying the Council's messages and communicating and engaging with residents. To support this an internal engagement plan has been created for staff which includes the regular staff bulletin, briefings and events. Councillors are engaged through briefings, committees, boards and the regular member bulletins. Following approval of the plan the Member Communication Sounding Board will be convened to look at the Councillor role in communication and engagement as community leaders and as a key stakeholder.
-

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A: Communications activity 2019-20
 - Appendix B: Communication and Engagement Action Plan 2020-21
 - Appendix C: COVID-19 Recovery Communications Plan
 - Appendix D: Internal Staff Communications Plan 2020-21
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Communications Team – April 2019 – March 2020:

Campaigns:

The communications team supports all service areas across the council. The following are some of those we have been involved with during the 12month period between April 2019 and March 2020:

1. The Business Terrace – ongoing:

- Business Newsletters
- Networking events

2. Cobtree Park:

- Volunteers Week – April 2019
- Pounding Plastic – May 2019
- Maidstone Zoo Memory Day – September 2019

3. Maidstone Parks:

- Children’s Play Area Opens – April 2019
- Green Flag Awards – July 2019
- Mote Park Outdoor Adventure Area Opens – July 2019
- South Park Fountain restoration – August 2019
- Maidstone Leisure Centre – New Gym Equipment – February 2020

4. MBC Strategic Plan launch – May 2019

5. The Business Forum – January 2020

- Stakeholder event
- Press releases
- Newsletters
- Social media

6. Climate Change and Biodiversity:

- EVC points – April 2019
- Clean Air for Schools – May 2019
- Wilding Event – 13 March 2020

7. Arriva Park & Ride – relaunch – May 2019

8. Going Cashless – April 2019 – March 2020

9. Environmental Health:

- Flood Wardens – October 2019
- Mote Park Dam works – October 2019
- Flood protection – December 2019 – February 2020
- Food Hygiene certificates – ongoing

10. Mayor's Community Charity Chest – May 2019 – March 2020:

11. Grow 19 – September 2019 – January 2020

12. Democratic and Electoral Services campaigns:

- Brexit preparations – April 2019 – ongoing
- Local Elections – May 2019
- European Election – May 2019
- Outgoing Mayoral Civic Parade – April 2019
- Mayor Making – May 2019
- Mayor's Tea Party – June 2019
- Remembrance Sunday – November 2019
- General Election – December 2019

13. Making Maidstone More Active – September 2019 - ongoing

14. Elmer's Heart of Kent Hospice – Big Parade – May 2019

15. Maidstone Museum:

- Memory Days – ongoing
- Steampunk – June 2019
- Endangered and Extinct – June 2019
- Festival of Archaeology – July 2019
- Big Cat Safari Experience – September 2019
- Black History Month – October 2019
- Sports Crazy – Putting All in Football – November 2019
- Father Christmas and Craft Market – December 2019
- Website Relaunch – April 2019 – ongoing

16. Maidstone Market – Love your Local - March 2020- ongoing

17. Recycling:

- Bin the Nappy – August 2019
- National Recycling Week – September 2019
- Love your Pumpkin – October 2019
- Five Ways to Recycling – November -2019
- Christmas Recycling – December 2019

18. Waste Services:

- Bank Street Blitz – May 2019
- Waste Crime Team progress – October 2019
- Could do better – November – December 2019
- Responsible Parking – January 2020 – ongoing
- Road Improvement Schemes – January 2020
- Week Street Blitz – February 2020
- Waste Crime Team – Fly-tipping – February 2020
- Love your Binmen – March 2020
- A20 Ashford Road Tree Carving and installations – March 2020

19. Maidstone Local Plan Review:

- Launch of LPR - March 2019
- Call for Sites – April 2019
- Call for Sites submissions – September 2019
- Call for Sites published – November 2019
- Letter to Secretary of State – January 2020
- LPR update – February 2020

20. Maidstone – 5 Opportunity Sites – May 2019

- MIPIM Trade event
- Video
- Construction Expo
- Marketing Brochures & signage

21. Lenham Garden Community – September 2019 – ongoing:

- Press releases
- Media interviews
- Stakeholder event

22. Maidstone Innovation Centre:

- Innovation Centre launch – May 2019
- ERDF Funding – September 2019
- MIPIM Trade event – October 2019
- Construction Expo – November 2019
- Rydon Construction partnership – December 2019
- Spade in the Ground – March 2020

23. Lockmeadow – January 2020 - ongoing:

- New Landlords – January 2020
- Lockmeadow Lockdown – March 2020

24. Go Green Go Wild – March 2019 – onwards:

- Wild Meadows – July 2019
- Small Grant Scheme – May 2019
- Large project grants – October 2019
- Autumn Watch – October 2019
- Bee's Needs Awards – October 2019
- Annual Seed Gathering – October 2019

25. Housing Services:

- KHG Housing Awards – August 2019
- Homefinder – September 2019
- Landlord Efficiency Rating – October 2019
- Homeless Count – November 2019
- Homeless SWEP - December 2019
- Outreach Team Grant Funding – January 2020

26. Community Protection:

- Penenden Heath patrols – June 2019
- Rural surgeries – July 2019
- Domestic Abuse - including Stakeholder event – May 2019
- Voice of Maidstone Youth - March 2020
- Loan Sharks – January 2020
- Loan Sharks – Community Protection – February 2020
- K9 Dog Boarding scheme – February 2020

27. Revenues and Benefits:

- Struggling to pay Council Tax – November 2019
- New way of paying online – January 2020

28. Visit Maidstone:

- Visitor Guides – April 2019
- Rambling Man – July 2019
- Proms in the Park – July 2019
- Walking Festival – February 2020

29. Covid-19 – March 2020:

- Press Releases x 11
- Social media
- Covid-19 Insight Magazine

Design and Brand:

The graphics officers in the design and brand section of the communications team achieved 214 separate pieces of work.

Media Enquiries:

The communications team respond to local, national and trade press enquiries throughout the year. Replying to specific questions, providing copy and articles for publications and arranging TV, Radio and newspaper interviews.

In total we responded to 480 during this 12month period (compared to 271 the previous year).

Press Coverage:

According to Kantar (Precise) – the media monitoring service we currently use, MBC has achieved the following press coverage:

Media reach = 67.55m people

Value = 12.17m

Total number of items (press cuttings) = 5,053

Press Releases:

The communications team issued a variety of press releases to support the service area campaigns between April 2019 to March 2020 totalling 138 (compared to 18 the previous year).

April:

- Innovation Centre – planning permission granted
- Registering to vote
- Paying Council tax online
- Outgoing Mayor Parade

May - total releases 12 including:

- Local election results
- Arriva taking over Park and Ride
- EU elections
- Improving recycling
- New Mayor
- Volunteers week – Cobtree pounding plastic
- New Leader
- Proms in the Park

June - total releases 10 including:

- Street cleaning blitz
- Museum exhibitions – Steampunk, endangered and extinct
- Clean Air for schools
- Brenchley Gardens summer bands

July - total releases 17 including:

- Strategic Plan launched
- Shape your local plan review
- Parks and Open Spaces - Green Flag awards for parks and South Park Fountain restored
- Community Protection – Penenden Heath patrols
- Museum – Festival of archaeology
- Visit Maidstone events – Ramblin man, Rock the Mote
- GGGW – wildflower meadows
- Business Terrace Summer Networking
- Launch of Mote Park Outdoor Adventure
- Electric vehicle charging points

August - total releases 11 including:

- Biodiversity and Climate change group
- Not enough money for Brexit
- GGGW 11 schemes
- Heritage open days
- Bin the nappy
- Museum – Big Cat Safari experience

September - total releases 9 including:

- MIPM and Construction Expo

- Fly tipping
- Maidstone Zoo at Cobtree
- National Recycling Week
- Making Maidstone More Active
- Garden Community at Lenham

October - total releases 11 including:

- Recycling pumpkins
- Call for sites
- Mote Park Dam works
- GGGW – Bees Award, seeds gathering and Autumn Watch
- Museum – black history month and new online arts directory
- Remembrance parade

November - total releases – 11 including:

- Kent Housing Group Excellence Awards 2019 – 5 categories entered
- Museum – Football Exhibition
- Lockmeadow – new landlord
- Homeless Count and Homefinder
- Call for sites published
- General Election

December - total releases – 14 including:

- Landlord energy efficiency rating
- Museum – Christmas shop
- GGGW – Invicta Gramma plant bulbs
- Grow 19
- Homeless SWEP
- Cashless
- Flooding
- Maidstone Radio

January - total releases 11 including:

- Loan Sharks – Community Protection
- New gym equipment – Serco
- Walking festival – Visit Maidstone
- Room hire for Community Groups – Mote Hall
- Flood action week
- Rough Sleepers money
- GGGW – Go Wilder grants

February - total releases 9 including:

- Fly tipper prosecuted
- Home dog boarder prosecuted
- Housing Delivery test
- LPR second stage review

March - total releases 18 including:

- Innovation Centre – ground-breaking event

- Cashless
- GGGW - £20,000 awarded
- A20 improvements
- Mixed Grill prosecuted

Social Media:

Across the 12month period MBC achieved the following using social media.

Facebook:

1 April 2019

Followers – 5,257

Likes – 5,029

31 March 2020

Followers – 6,780

Likes – 6,024

Twitter:

Impressions 28.17m

Twitter Reach 7.08m

Total number of tweets 9119

Engagement 75.37%

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
SAFE CLEAN AND GREEN				
121	Biodiversity and Climate Change Working Group and Action Plan	Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan and Strategy – ongoing	Helen Miller	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Posters & flyers Marketing Material Photography Signage Newsletters Events Business comms Environmental press
Community Protection	Domestic Abuse Rural Surgeries K9 Dog Boarding Anti-social behaviour SAG PSPO	Domestic Abuse – ongoing K9 Take the Lead consultation – June – July 2020 Public Safety Protection Order consultation – June - August 2020 Safety Advisory Group – ongoing	Martyn Jeynes	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Posters & flyers Marketing Material Photography Signage Newsletters Events Business comms Environmental press

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
Environmental Services	Environmental Health	Clean Air for Schools – ongoing Anti-idling schools – ongoing Environmental Health food inspections – ongoing Electric vehicles and charging points	Tracie Beattie	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Marketing Material Events
Environmental Waste Team	Environmental Waste Bin Collections Waste Crime Bereavement Services Garden Bins	Waste & Recycling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bin collections – ongoing – Vehicle graphics –June 2020 – Garden Bins promotion – summer 2020 – Keep Kent Clean (KRP) – autumn 2020 – Contamination - ongoing – Irresponsible Parking –ongoing – DROPS – September 2020 	Jen Shepherd	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Marketing Material <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Flyers – Posters – Stickers – Brochure Photography Uniforms Branding Website Trade press
Flood protection	Emergency Planning - Flood protection PR and support to promote the areas in our borough in danger of flooding	Flood preparation – winter 2020/21 -Danger of Floods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Signing up for Flood Alerts - Protection of Floods - Working with Environment Agency - Working with Parishes 	Uche Olufemi	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Media interviews Marketing Material

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
				Photography Website
Waste Crime Team	Waste Crime and Rural task force with Kent Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fly-tipping • Rural Task Force 	Jamie Duffy	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Press interviews Marketing Material Photography Signage Website
Parks and open spaces 23	Parks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mote Park • Reopening of parks • Cobtree Park 	Dam and sluice gates work – June – Dec 2020 Tree planting – ongoing Mote Hall hire – ongoing Post lockdown reopening of play areas and parks – July 2020 Volunteer opportunities – autumn 2020	Mark Green Andrew Williams Mike Evans Alan Frith	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Posters & flyers Advertising Marketing Material Photography Signage Newsletters Website
Go Green Go Wild	Promoting and supporting local and national campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bee Friendly & seed planting – July • Wildflower Meadows – June/July • Grants Scheme announcement - TBC • Autumn Watch - October 2020 	Nicola Toulson	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Tree Week – November • Recognition Events – Wildflower Meadows – Spring 2021 		Radio interviews TV interviews Posters & flyers Marketing Material Photography Signage Website
Making Maidstone More Active	Promoting and supporting the Making Maidstone More Active campaign and consultation	Making Maidstone More Active <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation results – tbc 	Mike Evans	Press Release Marketing Material Photography Signage Website
Recycling 124	Promoting and supporting the continued message of recycling campaigns both locally and nationally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Recycling Week – September 2020 • Love the Pumpkin – October • Five Ways to Recycle – December • Contamination in recycling – January 2021 	Liz Duncan Graham Gosden	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Posters & flyers Marketing Material Photography Signage Website
Street Cleansing	Bank Street Blitz Week Street Blitz Town Centre Deep Clean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street Blitz with One Maidstone – 4 per year • Post lockdown road to recovery – town centre deep clean project – June – July 2020 	Jen Shepherd John Edwards John Foster William Cornall	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
				TV interviews Marketing Material Engaging with Parish Councils
Vinters Park Crematorium	Supporting and promoting the work of Bereavement Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid19 Changes to Services – June 2020 • Annual Service of Remembrance – TBC 	Sharon Smith Jen Shepherd	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Marketing Material
A THRIVING PLACE				
Maidstone – The Business Capital of Kent	Business Terrace	Networking Events – bi-monthly Business Newsletter – monthly Maidstone Business webinars: Lasting through lockdown – 3 June 2020 Best Business adapting after lockdown (autumn 2020) Enterprise Zone: (inhouse) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Judging – August 2020 – Winners (case studies) – Sept – Dec 2020 Enterprise Zone: - Kent County Show – July 2021	Chris Inwood	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Marketing Material Photography Website Newsletter Webinars
Economic Development	Tourism – Visit Maidstone	What's on Guide – twice yearly – February & July British Tourism Week – April 2021 (tbc) Elmer's Big Parade – June – September 2021 Ramblin Man – Summer 2021	Laura Dickson	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
		Rock the Mote – Summer 2021 Pocket Guide/ Welcome to Maidstone - December Christmas shopping & events – Nov/December 2021		TV interviews Flyers Advertising Marketing Material Photography Posters Newsletters Website Events Trade press Business comms
Young Artist of the Year 126	Promoting and Supporting event and competition	Young Artist of the Year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch • Competition • Results 	Victoria Barlow	Press Release Media interviews Posters & flyers Marketing Material Photography Signage Website
Archbishops Palace	Archbishops Palace Change of lease	KCC change of use postponed – Spring 2021	Mark Green	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Advertising Marketing Material Photography

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
				Website Business comms Trade press
127	New Bus Station Development	Consultation – July -September 2020	John Foster	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Advertising Marketing Material Photography Website Business comms Trade press
Lockmeadow	New Landlords of Lockmeadow	New Landlord – January 2020 Marketing plan – March 2020 Lockdown Lockmeadow – April – June 2020 Community Hub – April – June 2020 Pop-up space and events – autumn 2020 Markets promotion – ongoing Events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Easter 2021 – Cinema Refurbishment – October 2020 – Book Week – February 2021 – School Holiday promotions – Elmer’s Parade – summer 2021 	Mark Green	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Flyers Posters Radio interviews TV interviews Advertising Marketing Material Photography Newsletter Events Website

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Halloween – October 2021 - Christmas Lights & events – Nov/Dec 2021 		Trade press Business comms
Maidstone Markets	Farmers Market Maidstone Market Auctions Town Square at Lockmeadow	Farmers Markets – Jubilee Square -monthly Auctions - at Lockmeadow Weekly markets – Lockmeadow Christmas Markets – TBC	Chris Inwood Alexa Kersting-Woods Richard Feakins Gemma Perry	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Marketing Material Flyers Posters Trade press Business comms
Public Realm	Road to recovery A20 Improvement works	Road to recovery post Lockdown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening of town centre June – Oct 2020 - Reopening of pubs – July 2020 A20 Ashford Road improvements – ongoing	Jen Shepherd John Edwards John Foster William Cornall	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Marketing Material Engaging with Parish Councils
Maidstone East Railway Station	Development Plans for Maidstone East Railway Station	Ongoing – due to delays in infrastructure	John Foster	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
				TV interviews Advertising Marketing Material Photography Website Business comms Trade press
129 Maidstone Museum	Promoting and supporting events and exhibitions at the Museum throughout the year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reopening after lockdown – July 2020 • Memory Days – ongoing • Events and exhibitions – ongoing • Father Christmas and Craft Market – December 2020 • Website Relaunch – ongoing 		Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Advertising Marketing Material Signage Photography Website Business comms Trade press
EMBRACING GROWTH AND ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE				
Planning	Local Plan Review Call for Sites	LPR – Amended timeline – June 2020 LPR update – July 2020 LPR – 2 nd stage consultation - October 2020 LPR Consultation (Reg 19B) – February 2021	William Cornall Phillip Coyne James Bailey Mark Edgerton	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Media interviews Industry features Business comms

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
				Websites
CIL Consultation	Planning	Community Infrastructure Levy – applications - Autumn 2020	Carole Williams Anna Collier	Borough Insight Press Release Social Media Marketing material
Opportunity Sites	Planning and Economic Development	Len House Maidstone West Gala Bingo & Granada House Riverside Mote Road	William Cornall Rob Jarman Mark Edgerton John Foster	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Media interviews Industry features Business comms Marketing Material Websites
Maidstone Innovation Centre 130	Promoting and supporting the marketing and PR of the Maidstone Innovation Centre	NCL Training programme launch – July Rydon construction continues – September Promotion of business opportunities – October Time Capsule – December 2020 Open for business – Spring 2021 Trade Events – ongoing	Sean Henry Chris Inwood John Foster	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Media interviews Industry features Business comms Marketing Material Websites
Parking Services	Parking tickets ECV parking points Park & Ride	Virtual parking season ticket change – March Resident Parking restrictions lifted – March-July 2020 Parking in Parks (Covid19) – May 2020 ECV parking bays – ongoing	Jeff Kitson Alex Wells	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Marketing Material Photography

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
				Trade press Business comms
Lenham Garden Community	MBC Development	LPR submissions – June 2020 LPR consultation – (Reg18b) October LPR consultation 2 – (Reg18b) February 2021	William Cornall	Press releases Media interviews Stakeholder event Trade press Business comms Borough Insight
HOMES AND COMMUNITIES				
Housing 31	Homefinder Rough Sleeper Initiative Outreach Team Helping You Home	KHG Housing Awards – August 2020 Homefinder –ongoing Homeless Count – November SWEF – winter 2020/21		
Compassionate City	Policy and Governance	Compassionate City: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Champions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch – July 2020 Judging – September Awards – October <p>Compassionate City – May 2021</p>	Anna Collier Orla Sweeney Kent Messenger Heart of Kent Hospice	Media sponsorship Posters & flyers Marketing Material Photography Signage Website
Equalities	Policy and Governance	We will support and promote diversity and inclusion in the borough through our communications and events	Anna Collier Orla Sweeney	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
		Create a diversity calendar and promote events		TV interviews Marketing Material Flyers Posters
ALL PRIORITIES				
Brexit	Emergency Planning	Preparing for Brexit – October 2020 The way ahead – November 2020 Brexit is upon us – December 2020	Uche Olufemi	Press Releases Website Inside MBC Borough Insight Member Update Social Media Media Interviews Business Press
Democratic and Electoral Services	Elections Members Bulletin Civic Team Charity Councillors Remembrance Services Civic Parade - Mayor Making Full Council Mayoral comms	Annual Canvass – July 2020 Committee Meetings – (virtual) April 2020 – ongoing Full Council – virtual – July 2020 Remembrance Sunday – November 2020 Mayor Community Chest Mayoral Electric Car	Ryan O’Connell	Press Release Media Statements Social media All Staff Email Inside MBC Marketing Material Videos Posters Public Notices Photography Borough Insight Member Briefings Presentations Events

**MBC COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN
JUNE 2020 – MARCH 2021**

Appendix B

Priority Area	Projects	Campaigns/events and dates	Service leads	PR tools
		Digital–Web Content Accessibility Guidance - Sep 2020 Facilities: Staff Badges Office Moves Road to recovery – returning to office	Gary Hunter Ethan McDowell Georgia Hawkes	Business comms Signage
134 Partnership Working	Kent Resilience Forum Kent Resource Partnership Public Health England NHS Hazlitt Theatre Mid Kent College Golding Homes, mhs and Mote Housing Maidstone Winter Churches Kent County Council Maidstone Samaritans Fusion Community Arriva Maidstone United Football Club One Maidstone (BID) Royal British Legion Heart of Kent Hospice – Elmer National Campaigns	Ongoing - according to requirements and various projects and campaigns.	Sacha Taylor Michelle Woodland Karen Hall – MKC Paul Clarke Michelle Woodland Isla Britchford/ Genevieve Case -KCC Craig Taylor Ian Tucker - MUFC Ilsa Butler – BIC Sue Christmas - Sams Sarah Pugh – HOKH	

**COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT
COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN**

Appendix C

Priority Area	Task and support	Key messages requiring communications	Service leads	PR tools
Covid-19 Risk of second outbreak	To prepare messaging for the possibility of a second outbreak of Covid-19 to help support businesses, stakeholders, residents, Councillors and colleagues.	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shut down of facilities and attractions • Restrictions to use of MBC parks and open spaces • Changes to MBC services • Provide regular updates regarding government guidance • Schedule regular and timely messaging to reflect situation as it changes 	CLT Alison Broom Mark Green Stephen McGinnes William Cornall	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Posters & flyers Marketing Material Photography Signage Newsletters Events Business comms Environmental press
Climate Change impact	To help support and promote positive outcomes as part of Covid-19 recovery	To recognise and promote positive outcomes including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduced traffic • reduced pollution • better work/life balance • community spirit 	Helen Miller	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Posters & flyers Marketing Material Photography Signage Newsletters Events Business comms Environmental press
Reopening of reopening of hospitality sector	Economic Development	Help promote and support events, venues and attractions including :	John Foster Laura Dickson	Press Release Social media

**COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT
COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN**

Appendix C

Priority Area	Task and support	Key messages requiring communications	Service leads	PR tools
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reopening of Maidstone Museum – 14 July • Kite Mark for accommodation providers and attractions • Maidstone as a visitor destination again with stay local campaign <p>- Work with operators at Maidstone Leisure Centre, Cobtree Golf Course, Kent Life and Hazlitt Theatre to support their reopening</p>		<p>Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Marketing Material Photography Website Newsletter Webinars</p>
<p>Business Terrace 36</p>	<p>Economic Development</p>	<p>Promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe working practices implemented within the Business Terrace • Engagement with tenants to support their recovery, including possible downsizing or upsizing • Promote the Terrace to increase occupancy levels 	<p>John Foster Rachael Inwood</p>	<p>Press Release Trade articles Social media Business interviews Inside MBC Borough Insight Media interviews Marketing Material Photography Signage Website</p>
<p>Maidstone open for business</p>	<p>Promoting and communicating key messages to align with the Kent</p>	<p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC Kent Together campaign 	<p>John Foster</p>	<p>Press Release Media interviews Posters & flyers Marketing Material</p>

**COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT
COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN**

Appendix C

Priority Area	Task and support	Key messages requiring communications	Service leads	PR tools
	Economic Recovery plan. To ensure that the public feel safe to visit town centres and visitor attractions as they re-open and that there is consistent information and messaging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical: supporting co-ordination of messages • Place marketing: primarily the work Visit Kent, Produced in Kent, Locate in Kent • KRF Kent Together • Growth Hub 		Photography Signage Website
Accelerating employment and supporting the labour market	Focussing on training and learning for people to get back to work	<p>To promote: the development of better signposting to training provision focused on current economic need</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with MidKent College • Skills commission • Messages conjunction with SELEP 	John Foster	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Radio interviews TV interviews Advertising Marketing Material Photography Website Business comms Trade press
Investing for the future:	To promote the Kent and Medway Economic Recovery Plan and the Kent and Medway Infrastructure Cell.	<p>To focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and commercial delivery • transport (including public transport, walking and cycling) • waste 	John Foster Chris Inwood	Press Release Media interview Social media Borough Insight Inside MBC Advertising Marketing Material Photography

**COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT
COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN**

Appendix C

Priority Area	Task and support	Key messages requiring communications	Service leads	PR tools
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • green infrastructure • digital infrastructure 		Website Business comms Trade press
Maidstone Innovation Centre	Promoting and supporting the marketing and PR of the Maidstone Innovation Centre	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with developer Rydon • Working with Marketing Agent Impact • Promoting the business opportunities and facilities available 	Sean Henry Chris Inwood	Press Release Social media Borough Insight Media interviews Industry features Business comms Marketing Material Websites Logo and branding
Housing	To promote and support the work of the MBC Housing services	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate need to accommodate street homeless to reduce the risk of infection and manage migration to more permanent accommodation. • Manage future risk of homelessness as protection from eviction is lifted 	John Littlemore Bex Astin Hannah Gaston	Press Releases Website Inside MBC Borough Insight Member Update Social Media Media Interviews Photography Videos
Community Safety	To promote and support the work of the MBC	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic violence 	John Littlemore Martyn Jeynes	Press Release Media Statements Social media

**COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT
COVID-19 RECOVERY PLAN**

Appendix C

Priority Area	Task and support	Key messages requiring communications	Service leads	PR tools
	Community Protection Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults • Debt advice and support • Anti-social behaviour 		All Staff Email Inside MBC Marketing Material Videos Posters Public Notices Photography Borough Insight Presentations Events
Voluntary Sector and Communities 139	To engage with the voluntary sector and communities to build on relationships in place post-Covid-19	To promote the work of the voluntary sector in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the number of volunteers • provide an increased community benefit • Support positive mental health 	Anna Collier Orla Sweeney	Press Release Media Statements Social media All Staff Email Inside MBC Borough Insight Posters

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Appendix D

May 2020 - March 2021

140

ACTIVITY	DATE / FREQUENCY	STAFF ENGAGEMENT	COMMUNICATIONS
<p>CLT Staff webinars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First steps to recovery • Next steps to recovery • Thank you and office guidance • Depot showcase (link to priorities), Staff Survey Actions update • Corporate and Budget Update • Strategic Plan update • Subject TBC • One Council and Staff Awards 	<p>Monthly</p> <p>May 2020 June 2020 July 2020 August 2020</p> <p>September 2020 October 2020 November 2020 January 2020</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<p>Inside MBC All Staff emails Intranet links to recorded version Internal posters Webinar Photographs Video</p>
<p>Back to the office – staff guidance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Handbook • Posters and signage • Introduction video 	<p>July 2020 July & August 2020 August 2020</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<p>Inside MBC All Staff emails Webinar Photography Video Internal posters and signage</p>
<p>Back to the Floor</p> <p>Jen Shepherd Rob Jarman</p>	<p>September 2020</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<p>Inside MBC Photography Video Internal email</p>

Steve McGinnes Angela Woodhouse	November 2020 January 2021 March 2021		Written review
Staff Survey Results	June & July 2020	Team Talk – all staff	Inside MBC Webinar All staff emails Intranet
Unconscious bias training	September & October 2020	Team Talk – all staff	Inside MBC Webinar All staff emails Intranet
Mental Health Awareness	May 2020	All staff	All staff emails Inside MBC Webinar Social media Intranet
Employee Benefits		All staff	All staff emails Inside MBC Intranet Webinar
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Savers Loans and Savings • Cycle to Work • Total Reward Statements • Days out with the kids • Purchase of leave • Employee Assistance Programme • Tusker Lease Car • Days out with the kids • Employee Benefits 	May 2020 June 2020 & October 2020 July 2020 August 2020 September 2020 November 2020 January 2021 February 2021 March 2021		

Resilience Week	September 2020	All staff	Inside MBC All staff emails Intranet Social media Photography
One Council and Strive Awards	January 2021	All staff	Inside MBC All staff emails Posters and signage Intranet Photography Videos
Wellbeing Week	February 2021	All staff	Inside MBC All staff emails Photography Intranet Social media

Policy and Resources Committee

21 July 2020

Equalities Objectives and Action Plan – Update

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Anna Collier, Policy and Information Manager Orla Sweeney, Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the current Equalities Objectives and Action Plan. A revised Action Plan is proposed to communicate the Council's current position and response to COVID-19 and its ongoing commitment to tackling disadvantage and supporting inclusion and diversity within its communities. This report is for decision.

Purpose of Report

To note the update and agree the revised document for decision.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. To note the Equalities Objectives and Action Plan update at appendix 1 to the report.
2. To agree the revised Equalities Objectives and Action Plan at appendix 2.
3. To note the inclusion of a new protected characteristic in the equalities impact assessment (outlined in paragraphs 2.17 to 2.19).

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	21 July 2020

Equalities Objectives and Action Plan – Update

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council’s ability to achieve all four strategic priorities.</p>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report recommendations support the achievements of ‘Heritage is Respected’, ‘Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduce and ‘Deprivation and Social Mobility are Improved’ cross cutting objectives by proposing actions which support their delivery.</p>	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Risk Management	Please refer to paragraph 5.1 in the report.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance

Legal	Accepting the recommendations will fulfil the Council's duties under the Public Sector Equalities Duty. Failure to accept the recommendations without agreeing suitable alternatives may place the Council in breach of Equality Act 2010.	Legal Team
Privacy and Data Protection	Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with our retention schedules.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment.	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	No impact identified.	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Procurement	No impact identified	Head of Policy, Communications and Governance

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Equalities Policy approved by Committee in 2017 sets out the way in which the Council will fulfil its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equalities Act 2010.
- 2.2 The Equalities Policy, objectives and action plan communicate the Council's long-term commitment to tackling disadvantage and promoting inclusion and diversity in Maidstone.
- 2.3 Diversity is not only an asset to our community, it is a defining characteristic of our time, affecting every element of our society. In our globally connected world, the need to understand the impact and dynamics of diversity in local areas is more important now than ever before.

- 2.4 In 2020 diversity and equality issues that have come to the fore relate to race and differential impacts of the COVID-19 impacts on different groups in our communities.
- 2.5 The Black Lives Matter movement has been given added profile by the death in the USA of George Floyd. Recent demonstrations and associated debates about the role of historical figures and memorials in the UK have sparked counter protests and divisive debate that could translate into local community tensions. This has not been our experience in Maidstone. A local BLM protest was held peacefully here in June. Councillors in Maidstone borough play an important role as the eyes and ears of their communities, engaging with residents and sharing concerns about specific local tensions and provide positive routes for engagement.
- 2.6 The impact of BLM highlights the continuing need for open and honest conversation between those deeply affected by racism within our own society and those, including public service providers like the borough council, who are committed to learning more, understanding more and changing the way they think and act to ensure equality of opportunity and treatment.
- 2.7 This provides an opportunity for the Council, as a Community Leader, Employer and Service provider to develop further our work to meet the council's vision of a borough that works for everyone. The Council's objectives and revised action plan will continue the Council's ability to understand and support the diverse needs of its community and staff and remain in a position to lead and respond to change.
- 2.8 COVID-19 experience and data at a national level suggest differential impacts which reflect and reinforce health inequalities and particularly adverse impacts for Black and Minority Ethnic communities. Development of understanding on this topic is at an early stage; data for local impact for Kent and Maidstone borough will need to be analysed carefully for us to develop an understanding of local impact and to inform our work and role in reducing health inequalities. As community leaders councillors know and understand their communities and have demonstrated that they are well placed to help ensure that messages around support packages reach those who might need them. It is important that the council reviews the impact of COVID-19 and its response to the pandemic to collect lessons learnt and identify how future emergency responses can be strengthened.
- 2.9 The Equalities objectives and action plan are reviewed, and progress is reported on an annual basis. This report (and appendices) provides:
- An update on the existing actions identified to deliver the objectives set (Appendix 1)
 - A revised set of actions to consider and agree for 2020/21 (Appendix 2)
 - Background to the Equalities Impact Assessment and inclusion of an additional characteristic

Update on existing actions

2.10 The previous set of actions were developed with departments across the organisation, reflecting their current workstreams and areas where development was required.

2.11 These actions are detailed at appendix 1 along with an update on progress. Nine actions were previously identified across the Council's three roles, Community Leader, Employer and Service Provider:

- Overall, action taken across the organisation has been positive. In terms of accessibility standards, the focus was on meeting the timescales set for the EU accessibility standards for public sector websites set by Government. The initial deadlines have been met and work is continuing to meet the pending September 2020 deadline.
- Consultation remains strong and engagement with the community voluntary sector has been consistent. The Council undertook 14 surveys in 2019-20 with robust reporting and analysis provided which underpins decision making and informs us on our demographic, who we are reaching and who we need to focus on reaching.
- The inclusion of the Armed Forces Covenant in the Equalities Action Plan has proved positive. In 2019, The Armed Forces Officer Champion attended a Government Consultation at the MOD and contributed to the development of a 'Strategy for our Veterans UK.'
- Dementia training was rolled out successfully across the organisation and work has started on evaluating the Link from a dementia friendly perspective. This work will provide a basis for work on the accessibility of our public spaces. The Museum has held Dementia Friendly openings. There are now early opening on four Sundays a year to allow free entry to People living with Dementia and a guest to explore the museum and temporary exhibitions in a quiet, unhurried way and enjoy a tea and biscuit afterwards.
- The Museum has also held art workshops for the blind in association with Art UK. These sessions encouraged people with visual impairments and visual disabilities to explore sculpture from the museum's collection and to make their own in clay.
- It has held sessions with an LGBTQ+ youth group, to explore identity and museum collections and this is part of an ongoing film project about their experiences.
- The Museum is forming a Black, Asian and minority advisory panel with a first full meeting in the Autumn to agree Terms of Reference.
- The ongoing programme of work at the Museum will form an important part of the new equalities objectives and action plan.

New actions to deliver the Council's equalities objectives.

- 2.12 The Equalities action plan has been redesigned around the existing roles and objectives. However, the context about the importance of its role as Community Leader, Employer and Service Provider is now clearly communicated and this is then linked to the actions that will be taken to support delivery of each role and objective.
- 2.13 This approach has made it easier to clearly illustrate what the Council's drivers are for ensuring its Public Sector Equality Duty is met in a transparent manner.
- 2.14 It is important that staff understand how the work they do contributes to the delivery of these objectives and in relation to the organisational aims, set out in the Strategic Plan.
- 2.15 The actions in the revised document are positive commitments based on insight. They are matters identified as being of importance to Maidstone where the Council can positively impact the lives of Maidstone residents.
- 2.16 As a Council, we are responsive to local needs as well as national impacts which now include responding to the impacts of a global pandemic and continuing to lead and respond to the diverse needs of our communities. In identifying where our commitment lies, we can more easily focus action and achieve outcomes. This connection to the delivery of our strategic priorities and is also reflected in the revised equalities objectives and actions.

Background to the Equalities Impact Assessment and inclusion of new characteristic

- 2.17 The revised Equality Impact Assessment, in line with legislation, is required to consider the nine protected strands or characteristics. Other strands or characteristics can be considered, and this is advocated by bodies including the Consultation Institute and can be seen in impact assessments undertaken by other local authorities.
- 2.18 The Equalities Impact Assessment is due to be refreshed and is included as an action in the revised action plan at appendix 2. As we respond to COVID-19 and move towards a recovery phase, it is important now, more than ever, to be able to consider hidden needs. Poverty is a barrier to social mobility. It is one of the Council's cross-cutting strategic priorities and there is an opportunity to ensure it is a holistic consideration as part of our decision-making process by including it in the Equality Impact Assessment.
- 2.19 This is an evidence-based assessment and requires decision makers to look at Social Mobility Index Indicators and other data sources available when considering impacts. It will provide an opportunity to make mitigations at an early stage and therefore demonstrate a commitment by the Council to influence the effect of poverty on the most disadvantaged within our communities.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Keep the current the Equalities Objectives and Action Plan. This is not recommended as, whilst there have been no legislative changes and the current actions have mostly been achieved, there have been national events that could have extreme and negative impacts on groups already facing disadvantage in our community. It is essential that the Council responds positively and demonstrates through its Equalities action plan. Not updating the plan would mean that the Council is taking no formal activities to meet its Equality Duty.
 - 3.2 The Council could decide to do nothing, this course of action is not recommended because the Council has a legislative responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty.
 - 3.3 Approve the revised Equalities Objectives and Action Plan (as detailed in Appendix 2) to enable the organisation to continue to improve on the way in which it fulfils the Public Sector Equalities Duty.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 To approve the new objectives and actions as detailed in Appendix 2.
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 The report is an information report, providing an update on the progress made on actions agreed by Committee. The recommendations made are either actions which are natural next steps to those already agreed or in terms of the new objectives – raising the profile and complementing streams of work that have already been agreed.
-

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 If agreed by Committee, the document will be made available on the intranet and internet for staff and residents.
- 6.2 The action plan will continue to be monitored by the Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer.

7. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Equalities Objective and Action Plan 2017-21 - Update
 - Appendix 2: Revised Equalities Objective and Action Plan 2017-21
-

Appendix 1

Equality Objectives and Action Plan 2017-2021 Update

As a Community Leader We will engage with residents in an open and meaningful way.	
Provide a consistent approach to providing information to residents in alternative formats across the authority	<p>The first version of the Accessibility Statement has been published on the website. This will be amended where necessary following the completion of a full accessibility audit which was carried out in October 2019.</p> <p>https://www.maidstone.gov.uk/home/accessibility-statement</p>
Demonstrate effective engagement with the community, charity and voluntary sector, providing evidence of involvement in the Council's decision-making process.	<p>The Council undertook 14 surveys in 2019-20 including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff Satisfaction & Engagement• Annual Budget Survey• Customer Contact Satisfaction• Leisure Service• Street Cleaning Satisfaction Survey• Climate Change Resident Opinion & Priorities Survey• Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Policy Priorities Survey <p>The average response rate for our external surveys was 1094 (these response rate applies to general public consultations only).</p> <p>Consultation remains strong and engagement with the community voluntary sector has been consistent. This is achieved in collaboration with the Communications team and the Equalities and Corporate</p>

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Appendix 1

Equality Objectives and Action Plan 2017-2021 Update

	<p>Policy officer. Consultations are promoted via the Council's social media channels and via Community forums. Involve Maidstone, for example, include Council consultations in its weekly newsletter which reaches over 700 recipients. The Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer also attends forum meetings with partners and will report on live consultations, as appropriate.</p> <p>The team also devise and run focus group sessions, for example member sessions as part of the Waste review were devised delivered in 2019 for the transformation team.</p>
<p>Raise the profile of the Military Covenant in Maidstone</p>	<p>The inclusion of the Military Covenant in the Equalities Action Plan and the role of officer champion being assigned to the Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer has provided continuity and served to raise the profile of the Covenant within the organisation. The Armed Forces officer and Member champions have attended a number of events on behalf of the Council. These have included the annual Kent and Medway Civilian Covenant conference and briefing sessions at 36 regiment. In 2019, The Armed Forces Officer Champion attended the Government Consultation at the MOD and contributed to the development of a 'Strategy for our Veterans UK.</p> <p>The Officer Champion is responsible for the dissemination of information across the organisation on a regular basis to support and inform the Mayoralty, Communications and Events teams. The role now supports the Mayoralty team in engaging and shaping civic events with 36 Regiment.</p>
<p>As a Service Provider We will ensure our services are inclusive, accessible and support residents and customers.</p>	

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Appendix 1

Equality Objectives and Action Plan 2017-2021 Update

<p>Ensure sensitive personal data is only collected where required and managed securely</p>	<p>All consultation requests now need to complete a scoping form which includes identifying audience/ customers / key users that are needed to consult, and to establish key outputs, to ensure justification behind data collection.</p> <p>The new consultation system allows the Policy and Information team to manage personal data more securely.</p>
<p>Raise standard of Equalities Impact Assessments (EqIAs)</p>	<p>The standard of Equalities Impact Assessments has improved and the knowledge within the organisation of the process has grown significantly. Guidance is available on the intranet and support and guidance is offered to all officers by the Policy and Information team. There is continuous uptake from Services across the Council. Training for unit managers was delayed but will now take place in late summer/autumn. Training has been rolled forward into the new action plan.</p>
<p>Provide a consistent approach to contract management across the services.</p>	<p>The commissioning, procurement and contract management processes have been improved and follow a consistent approach across the Council. Procurement exercises are carried out in compliance with the Equalities Act. The production of a Commissioning and Procurement Strategy is still in progress. The action has been rolled forward into the new action plan.</p>

Appendix 1

Equality Objectives and Action Plan 2017-2021 Update

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<p>To take steps to becoming a Dementia Friendly Organisation</p>	<p>Dementia Awareness Training sessions have been held with staff.</p> <p>The Museum has held Dementia Friendly openings. On four Sundays a year and allow free entry to People living with Dementia and a guest to explore the museum and temporary exhibitions in a quiet, unhurried way and enjoy a tea and biscuit afterwards.</p> <p>The Customer Services team are looking to develop a similar offer to Ashford Borough Council who have worked with Phoenix Group towards becoming a dementia friendly Gateway. The Link are exploring a similar offer with a Maidstone based group called Memorybillia. There is no fixed date to take this forward, progress was halted as COVID-19 began to impact in March 2020.</p> <p>The Senior Public Health Officer attends 'Building a Dementia Friendly Maidstone Group' quarterly</p> <p>A Dementia Friendly Golf Programme was provided for free in partnership with Cobtree Golf Club (Mytime Active). This programme was delivered free of charge until the end of Sept 2019. Mytime Active secured funding to continue providing the programme with a (subsidised) cost to the participant.</p> <p>A volunteer led weekly dementia friendly walk in Mote Park has been developed. This incorporates the dementia talking posts in Mote Park which were installed a few years ago.</p> <p>Maidstone Leisure Centre deliver a 'Young Activity Dementia Group' http://www.maidstoneleisure.org/young-activity-dementia-group/</p>
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Appendix 1

Equality Objectives and Action Plan 2017-2021 Update

As an Employer To have a workforce that feels valued and respected.	
To deliver annual Equalities training to all elected members as part of ongoing professional development	Equalities training has been included in the member training programme but postponed due to other training or briefing sessions taking precedence. It will be included in the proposed schedule of training for 2020/21 to be taken to the Democracy and General Purposes Committee in September. The action has been rolled forward into the new action plan.
To ensure newly elected members are offered appropriate support to be effective in their role	A process has been implemented which ensures member's accessibility needs are met. This can include, for example hard copy agendas and large print agendas. Information on equalities is now provided in new member packs.

Revised Equality Objectives and Action Plan 2017-2021

As a Community Leader
Objective
<p>To lead by example, to ensure every individual resident is connected and supported.</p>
Why it Matters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection with our wider community is vital because it allows us to support one another, interact, and learn from each other through shared experiences. • Working together with partners provides the opportunity to maximise our combined efforts, avoid duplication and make the greatest impact on communities. • Building on an increased sense of community generated by Covid-19, we will continue to work to link our rural and urban communities, Parish Councils, businesses and resident and community groups and facilitate change using all the tools at our disposal. • Communication and engagement are key and are central to everything we do, creating the opportunity for residents to have a greater say and control over decisions which affect their lives and their futures. • We know where engagement and participation are low and recognise that the prospect of rising inequality can cause a disconnect in participation with the democratic process.
Actions
<p>We will work with the Heart of Kent Hospice, Kent County Council, local businesses, community and faith groups to achieve Compassionate Borough Status.</p> <p>We will take an evidence-based approach to leading recovery in Maidstone including a specific work stream on communities.</p> <p>We will seek to build on the relationships we have developed with our communities as a result of the recent pandemic. We will communicate, engage with, and disseminate information to support and engage our wider communities including through the local Parish Councils and voluntary groups.</p> <p>We will undertake a review of consultation and engagement activities to ensure that they maximise resident participation and are representative of Maidstone’s demographic.</p> <p>We will appoint an internal Equalities Group to lead and provide join-up across Council services.</p>

We will support and promote diversity and inclusion in the borough through our communications and events – with a focus on our seldom-heard communities.

We will audit and appraise historical assets within the borough of Maidstone.

We will support our serving and veteran communities through our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant with training/guidance provided to staff across all services.

Outcomes

- Compassionate Borough Status
- A calendar of diversity as part of the Communications Strategy
- Increased response rates from underrepresented groups
- Increased volunteering participation
- Equalities Group formed and terms of reference set
- Training/guidance to all staff on Armed Forces Covenant
- Stronger relationships with the voluntary and community sector including our Parish Councils
- Review of historical assets completed, and action recommended

Connections to other plans

- **Strategic Plan**
- **Communications Plan**
- **Covid-19 Recovery Plan**

Support delivery of Strategic Plan Priority: All

Cross Cutting Objectives:

Heritage is Respected
Health inequalities are addressed and reduced
Deprivation is reduced and social mobility is improved

As an Employer
Objective
To lead a diverse and inclusive workforce that is reflective of the borough of Maidstone where residents and colleagues feel safe, confident, and empowered to challenge and bring about change.
Why it Matters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maidstone Borough Council is one of the largest employers in Maidstone and it is important that the Council leads by example to facilitate change. • Diversity is an asset to any community; the Council must be proactive as an employer in ensuring that this is reflected across its own workforce. • Understanding the mental health needs of our staff and residents is essential and more so than ever, with the additional impact of events in our very recent history. • We must take an evidence-based approach to understanding where cumulative impacts of deprivation are felt and respond to this. • It is essential staff are trained to understand and respond to differing needs to ensure an equitable level of access to Council services. • Staff should be enabled to challenge behaviours that are unacceptable.
Actions
<p>We will undertake a regular Staff Survey so that the organisation can identify where it needs to change and adapt.</p> <p>We will undertake a self-assessment as an Inclusive Employer.</p> <p>We will look after the mental health of our staff and recognise when this offer needs to change.</p> <p>We will provide training and support to staff so they can recognise and manage unacceptable behaviours.</p> <p>We will enable staff to understand and respond to the mental health needs of residents, particularly after challenging life events.</p>
Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Staff Survey • Self-Assessment of Inclusive Employers standard • Training for all staff in collaboration with Heart of Kent Hospice • New equalities training and support tools for all service areas. To include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training in unconscious bias ○ Inclusion of Social Exclusion as a characteristic in the Equalities Impact Assessment
Connections to other plans
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan • Workforce Strategy • Local Plan Consultation
Support delivery of Strategic Plan Priority: All
Cross Cutting Objectives: Health inequalities are addressed and reduced

As a Service Provider
Objective
To deliver inclusive services in accordance with Council’s values.
Why it Matters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No resident should be disadvantaged. • Whether a resident needs our support or services on an ongoing basis, an occasional basis or at a point of crisis, we want them to know how to access what they need, when they need it. • COVID-19 has challenged service providers to react and respond quickly to customer needs. Our recovery from this global pandemic provides the opportunity to reassess our service delivery from a completely fresh perspective. We must continue to be responsive to factors outside our control that impact and influence our communities. • Our recovery from COVID-19 must be inclusive. We must be in a position to consider and respond appropriately to ensure that the socio-economic impact is mitigated so it does not disadvantage some of our communities more than others. • To be in a position to do this, we must fully understand who our communities are, and it is essential that our staff understand our residents’ expectations in order to meet their needs. • Resident involvement is an essential part of our decision-making process for it to be considered robust and fit for purpose. • Publicising our data and using it to inform and underpin our decision-making process is crucial for transparency. • Smarter use of our data and data analytics will in turn inform our staff of who our communities are. • Through our service delivery we will strive to make positive impacts on residents’ mental health. This will be made possible through our

- commitment as an employer.
- We will improve our service delivery by reviewing access to our services and ensuring this is equitable.

Actions

We will review and identify our policies where we consider Equalities impacts and identify how we can improve outcomes through revisions to policy.

We will appoint an Equalities Group to lead and provide join-up across Council services.

We will work with the community through consultation processes, increasing our offer of focus group and participatory methods to increase engagement with seldom-heard groups.

We will work collaboratively with the museum and its programme of events to promote diversity and inclusion and strengthen ties to seldom-heard communities.

We will undertake a Councillor-led Access to Services Review which will assess:

- Digital Inclusion and website accessibility
- Enabling communications
- Our buildings

We will work in partnership to deliver the Rough Sleeping initiative delivery plan to provide mental health outreach.

We will review Equalities Impact Assessment processes.

We will develop processes to ensure Social Value is a core consideration of our decision making.

Measures

- Outreach – vulnerabilities data.
- Increased completion of Equalities Impact Assessments with clearer and more transparent evidence of Equalities in decision making.
- Clear Equalities evidence base produced to inform social value as part of the Commissioning and Procurement strategy.
- Museum collection with clearer links to the local community and to the communities of the collections' origins.
- Equalities Group formed and terms of reference set.
- Outcomes from the Access to Services review.

Connections to other plans

- **Strategic Plan**
- **Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy**
- **Museum's 25-year plan**

Support delivery of Strategic Plan Priority:

Homes and Communities
A Thriving Place

Cross Cutting Objectives:

Health inequalities are addressed and reduced,
Deprivation is reduced and social mobility is improved

Agenda Item 17

Policy and Resources

21 July 2020

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021-22

Final Decision-Maker	Policy and Resources
Lead Head of Service	Stephen McGinnes Director of Mid Kent Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Sheila Coburn Head of Revenues and Benefits
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

- 1.1 Each year Full Council has to approve the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the following year.
- 1.2 Where there are changes proposed, it is necessary for a public consultation to take place, requiring an early decision on any proposed changes.
- 1.3 This report updates on the progress that has been made on the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and options for public consultation in advance of taking a decision on the scheme to be implemented for 2021-22.

Purpose of Report

To update the Committee on the progress that has been made on the review of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and options for public consultation in advance of taking a decision on the scheme to be implemented for 2021-22.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee notes the findings of the review of the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme
2. That the Committee notes the potential impact of the proposed changes to the scheme on working age claimants with the protected characteristics of disability, age and sex, under the Equalities Act (2010); and
3. That the Committee delegates authority to the Head of Revenues and Benefits to finalise and commence consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme to be implemented for 2021-2022.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
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Policy and Resources Committee	21 July 2020
Public Consultation	August/September 2020

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021-22

1.CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The council needs to balance the needs of low-income households with the wider interest of local taxpayers to ensure that vulnerable residents are protected whilst providing a scheme that is affordable.	Sheila Coburn (Head of Revenues and Benefits)
Cross Cutting Objectives	The report recommendations support the achievement of the Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved cross cutting objective by providing support to low income households.	Sheila Coburn (Head of Revenues and Benefits)
Risk Management	The risks associated with implementing and operating the scheme are not considered high. Endorsement of a scheme helps reduce the risk. The overall cost of the CTRS is subject to the risk of household incomes falling, as may be the case if the Covid-19 pandemic leads on an increase in unemployment.	Sheila Coburn (Head of Revenues and Benefits)]
Financial	The cost of the CTRS impacts on the council tax base and thereby the council tax yield. If the cost of awards were to increase, this would mean the council tax base and overall council tax income would reduce. Any change in the cost of the scheme is shared through the collection fund between the Council and preceptors. It is intended that the change to a banded scheme as described in this report would be cost-neutral.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Sheila Coburn (Head of Revenues and Benefits)
Legal	Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to adopt a Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Schedule 1A	Team Leader (Corporate

	<p>of the Act requires the Council to consider whether to revise or replace its scheme for each year.</p> <p>The Act contains a statutory duty to consult on a proposed scheme, with guiding principles for fair consultation set out in case law. As there are changes proposed for the 2021-2022 scheme further consultation is necessary</p>	Governance), MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	<p>It is recognised the recommendations will impact on what information the Council holds on its residents.</p> <p>The data will be held and processed in accordance with the data protection principles contained in Schedule 1 to the Data Protection Act 1998.</p>	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	<p>We recognise the recommendations may have varying impacts on different communities within Maidstone. Therefore, we have completed a separate equalities impact assessment.</p>	Policy & Information Manager
Public Health	No impact	Sheila Coburn (Head of Revenues and Benefits)
Crime and Disorder	No impact	Sheila Coburn (Head of Revenues and Benefits)
Procurement	No impact	Sheila Coburn (Head of Revenues and Benefits)

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) was introduced in April 2013 as a replacement for Council Tax Benefit (CTB), a national scheme administered on behalf of the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP).

2.2 Each year the scheme must be approved by Full Council.

2.3 Any changes to the scheme for any year have to go for public consultation before being approved.

2.4 Since its introduction in April 2013, our local scheme has been 'refreshed' annually for general changes in applicable amounts (primarily in relation to disability premiums) and taking into account the introduction of Universal Credit.

2.5 Under the Council Tax Reduction provisions, the scheme for pensioners is determined by Central Government and the scheme for working age applicants is determined by the Council.

2.6 The current scheme for working-age applicants is a means tested one and all applicants, irrespective of their financial circumstances, are currently required to pay a minimum of 20% towards their Council Tax liability.

2.7 Council Tax Reduction provides financial assistance in the form of a rebate on the Council Tax bill and this has reduced over recent years.

2016/2017	£10,679,971	
2017/2018	£10,264,000	
2018/2019	£ 9,058,176	
2019/2020	£ 8,652,758	
2020/2021	£ 8,500,000	(estimated)

2.8 The introduction of Universal Credit Full Service (UCFS) on 21 November 2018 brought a number of challenges to both the administration of Council Tax Reduction and also the collection of Council Tax.

2.9 There is a tendency for Universal Credit (UC) claimants to delay making a claim for CTR leading to a loss of entitlement. A high number of changes to UC cases are received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) requiring a change to CTR entitlement. On average, 40% of UC claimants have between eight and twelve changes in entitlement per annum.

- 2.10 These changes result in amendments to Council Tax liability, the re-calculation of instalments, delays and the demonstrable loss in collection.
- 2.11 The existing scheme is complicated, so it is not easy for customers to understand and has high administration costs to maintain.
- 2.12 It is clear with this in mind, the existing means tested CTR scheme, which is completely reactive to any change, is no longer viable and it is imperative to move to a new, more efficient scheme from April 2021.
- 2.13 Many authorities are now moving to Banded Income Schemes and these have been successfully in operation in authorities in Kent and across the country for a few years now.
- 2.14 The proposed new banded income scheme will have an in-built, simplified claiming process. In the case of UC applicants, any UC data received from the DWP will be instantly treated as a claim for CTR and entitlement will be processed automatically with minimum need to request further information from the applicant.
- 2.15 This will have the following distinct advantages:
- Speed of processing will improve significantly because claims will be able to be calculated automatically and promptly, which will reduce delays
 - Entitlement for every applicant will be maximised because there will be no requirement for UC applicants to apply for CTR. This will help to reduce the risk of applicants losing out on their entitlement as well as eradicating the need to consider backdate requests
 - Only significant changes in income will affect the level of discount awarded
 - Applicants who receive CTR will not receive multiple Council Tax demands and adjustments to their instalments
 - Collection rates will be maintained because the new scheme will avoid constant changes in entitlement and the need for revised bills to be issued with changes to the instalments due.
- 2.16 It is proposed that the income ranges will be wide ranging in order to avoid having to make constant changes in the level of discount awarded.
- 2.17 The current CTR scheme is very reactive and entitlement will alter even if the overall change in the applicant's income is relatively small. This leads to constant changes in Council Tax liability, the need to recalculate monthly instalments and the requirement to issue a large number of Council Tax adjustment notices, the overall effect being that Council Tax collection is detrimentally affected.
- 2.18 The current CTR scheme is based on an old-fashioned approach which alters entitlement on a frequent basis. The new scheme is designed to reflect a more modern approach where discount changes will be effective from the day of the change, rather than the Monday of the following week which is currently the case.

- 2.19 Income-banded schemes award different levels of discount based on set bands of income.
- 2.20 Reassessment of cases will only be required if income crosses one of the income-band thresholds.
- 2.21 An income-banded scheme allows the council to convey a relatively simple eligibility message to residents.
- 2.22 An example of an income banded scheme for households with no children, 1-2 children and 3 and over children would be:

Band	Household size and earnings threshold			Maximum Award
	No children	1-2 children	3+ children	
Band 1	Passported/ max UC	Passported/ max UC	Passported/ max UC	80%
Band 2	Less than £316	Less than £387	Less than £441	65%
Band 3	£316-£631.99	£387-£774.99	£441-£882.99	50%
Band 4	£632-£947.99	£775-£1,162.99	£883- £1,324.99	25%
Band 5	£948- £1,263.99	£1,163-£1,550.99	£1,325- £1,766.99	10%

- 2.23 More detailed information is contained in Appendix A showing three banded income schemes with comparison to the current scheme.
- 2.24 The current CTR scheme also contains a provision for applicants to make an application for additional financial support where they experience exceptional hardship. It is proposed that the new scheme will contain the same provisions and where any person, or group of persons, is likely to experience hardship as a result of the introduction of a new scheme, this will be addressed within an application for exceptional hardship.
- 2.25 Prior to the approval and implementation of any change to CTR Scheme, we are required to carry out a public consultation.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Option 1 – maintain current scheme. In doing so, the issues with the current scheme being outdated, complex, difficult to understand and administrate will not be addressed.
- 3.2 Option 2 – revise the current scheme. Any revisions to the scheme would be limited, difficult to identify and implement as well as being temporary.
- 3.3 Option 3 – introduce a new simplified income banded scheme and carry out a public consultation with the 3 schemes shown in Appendix 1.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Option 3 - Taking into account all the matters referred to above, it is recommended that the Council introduces a new banded income scheme and consults with the public on the 3 banded income schemes set out in Appendix 1.
 - 4.2 It is our intention that the resultant scheme will retain longevity.
 - 4.3 An important feature of the new scheme would be the retention of the Exceptional Hardship Policy to protect those who may otherwise experience severe financial hardship.
-

5. RISK

- 5.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Prior to the implementation of any change to Council Tax Reduction Schemes (CTRS), authorities are required to consult with the public.
- 6.2 There have been a number of legal challenges to CTRS consultations and it should be noted that a judgment handed down by the Supreme Court has defined what is meant by 'good consultation'.
- 6.3 The guiding principles which have been established through case-law for fair consultation are as follows:
 - The consultation must be carried out at a stage when proposals are still at a formative stage;
 - Sufficient information on the reasons for the decision must be provided to permit the consultees to carry out intelligent consideration of the issues and to respond;
 - Adequate time must be given for consideration and responses to be made; and
 - The results of the consultation must be properly taken into account in finalising any decision.
- 6.4 It is anticipated that the consultation will be website based with information put on the website and in the media to encourage residents to participate.
- 6.5 Where we have email addresses, we will contact those in receipt of Council Tax Support by email.

- 6.6 It will be important to involve stakeholder groups such as the CAB, local debt advice agencies, registered social landlords and other organisations with a significant interest, to obtain their views.
- 6.6 There is also a duty to consult with the major precept authorities (County Council, Fire and Police) who are statutory consultees.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 The outcome of the consultation will be reported to Policy & Resources Committee 25 November 2020 with a recommendation of the scheme to be implemented for 2021-2022.
- 7.2 It is intended a recommendation on the final scheme to be implemented will be taken to Full Council for decision on 9 December 2020.
- 7.3 The final scheme will be publicised through the local press with any households affected by specific changes also notified in writing in advance of any change, which will take effect from 1 April 2021.
- 7.4 The final decision at Full Council will be notified to key stakeholders.
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8 REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Income Banded Scheme

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Policy in Practice CTS Modelling Report

Appendix 1 - Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021-22

1. Income Banded Schemes

Income banded schemes award different levels of support based on set bands of income.

Three models have been considered when looking at an income-banded scheme.

Full migration to Universal Credit is not expected before 2024. A 20% increase in Universal Credit applications has been anticipated for the purpose of the 2021-2022 Income Banded Scheme.

Model 1 is a simple scheme made up of five income bands with maximum support of 80% as under the current scheme.

Model 2 is the same as Model 1 except for an additional 5% uplift to Council Tax Support for households in receipt of disability or illness benefits in respect of the claimant or their partner (subject to a maximum level of support of 80%).

The following objectives were considered:

- Maintain the maximum basis of award of 80% of liability
- Protect disabled households
- Simplify assessments and reassessments
- Maintain costs in line with the current scheme in 2021-22
- Understand the impact on specific groups based on gender, disability and age

Model 3 is a further model but with maximum support of 70%, except for households in receipt of disability or illness benefits which will have support uplifted by 10% to 80% in Band 1.

2. Models 1, 2 and 3 v current scheme 2021-22

	Current scheme	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Cost	£9.44 million	£9.43 million	£9.44 million	£9.19 million
Claim numbers	5,340	75.5% of households fall into Band 1 with maximum support of 80% 25 households are no longer eligible due to their income	75.5% of households fall into Band 1 with maximum support of 80% 25 households are no longer eligible due to their income	75.5% of households fall into Band 1. 34.3% have 70% support. 41.2% have 80% support. 25 households are no longer eligible due to their income being

		<p>being higher than the upper earnings threshold.</p> <p>286 households will see their support reduce by more than £5 per week including households in receipt of disability or illness benefits.</p> <p>505 households will gain more than £5 per week.</p> <p>Both losers and gainers tend to be larger households which are employed or self-employed.</p> <p>Legacy benefit households are more likely to lose compared to their Universal Credit counterparts.</p>	<p>being higher than the upper earnings threshold.</p> <p>268 households will see their support reduce by more than £5 per week. Those in receipt of disability or illness benefits will have an uplift of 5%.</p> <p>508 households will gain more than £5 per week.</p> <p>Both losers and gainers tend to be larger households which are employed or self-employed.</p> <p>Legacy benefit households are more likely to lose compared to their Universal Credit counterparts.</p>	<p>higher than the upper earnings threshold.</p> <p>281 households will see their support reduce by more than £5 per week.</p> <p>471 households will gain more than £5 per week.</p> <p>Fewer households gain because of the reduced maximum support</p> <p>Unlike the previous models, Model 3 reduces support across households in receipt of Universal Credit and households in receipt of legacy benefits. Universal Credit claimants remain less negatively impacted, however.</p>
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		<p>Employed households in receipt of Universal Credit see the largest average increase in Council Tax Support, followed by lone parents and couples with children in receipt of Universal Credit.</p> <p>Households in receipt of legacy benefits will generally see a reduction in Council Tax Support.</p>	<p>The increase in support for couples with children is also slightly greater than under Model 1 reflecting that some of these households now benefit from the 5% uplift.</p> <p>Although the general pattern of redistribution from legacy households to Universal Credit households remains, the reduction among households in receipt of legacy benefits is generally smaller.</p>	<p>Employed households and couples with children in receipt of Universal Credit see an increase in Council Tax Support.</p> <p>More groups in Model 3 see a reduction in support. These include couples with no children in receipt of Universal Credit, couples with children in receipt of legacy benefits and households in receipt of out of work benefits, both Universal Credit and legacy.</p>
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3. Earnings breakdown under Models 1, 2 and 3

Band	No children	1-2 children	3+ children
Band 1	Passported/max UC	Passported/max UC	Passported/max UC
Band 2	Less than £316	Less than £387	Less than £441
Band 3	£316- less than £632	£387 - less than £775	£441 - less than £883
Band 4	£632 - less than £948	£775 - less than £1,163	£883 - less than £1,325

Band 5	£948 - less than £1,264	£1,163 - less than £1,551	£1,325 - less than £1,767
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4. Numbers of awards per household for Models 1, 2 and 3

	Band 1		Band 2		Band 3		Band 4		Band 5		Total
	Max Award	No.	Max Award	No.	Max Award	No.	Max Award	No.	Max Award	No.	
Model 1	80%	4,100	65%	270	50%	661	25%	268	10%	80	5,379
Model 2	80%	4,100	65% 70%	234 36	50% 55%	601 60	25% 30%	236 32	10% 15%	65 15)) 5,379
Model 3	70% 80%	1,865 2,235	65% 70%	234 36	50% 55%	601 60	25% 30%	236 32	10% 15%	65 15)) 5,379

5. Comparison of weekly support for Models 1, 2 and 3 to current scheme

Comparison of Council Tax Support (£/week) 2021-22				
	Current scheme	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
All working age	£18.57	£18.51	£18.56	£17.68
Legacy benefits	£19.13	£18.38	£18.42	£17.84
Universal Credit	£17.80	£18.70	£18.74	£17.47
CT Band				
A	£14.97	£15.00	£15.02	£14.38
B	£17.28	£17.51	£17.53	£16.66
C	£19.14	£19.20	£19.25	£18.34
D	£21.04	£20.62	£20.70	£19.69
EFGH	£27.96	£25.98	£26.08	£25.02
Tenure type				
Private tenant	£17.41	£16.97	£17.03	£16.35
No HB	£19.09	£19.61	£19.65	£18.12
Supported housing	£18.10	£17.82	£17.87	£17.67
HA tenant	£18.74	£18.61	£18.65	£17.93

Temporary accommodation	£18.95	£18.10	£18.14	£17.30
Tenure Unknown	£16.66	£18.83	£18.83	£17.01
Household type				
Single	£17.93	£17.57	£17.59	£17.08
Lone Parent	£17.45	£18.53	£18.54	£17.11
Couple no children	£23.67	£21.70	£21.82	£21.46
Couple with children	£21.23	£19.90	£20.06	£19.37
Economic Status				
Employed	£12.75	£13.51	£13.65	£13.21
Out of work benefits	£20.41	£20.40	£20.40	£19.32
Self-employed	£18.84	£14.90	£15.08	£15.06
Barriers to work				
DLA or similar	£19.96	£19.62	£19.76	£19.76
ESA or similar	£20.60	£20.32	£20.36	£20.36
Lone Parent child under 5	£18.05	£19.13	£19.13	£17.13
Carer	£22.84	£22.85	£22.97	£22.02

6. How these models meet the Council's objectives

6.1 Maintain maximum level of protection

Models 1 and 2 maintain the maximum level of support in line with the current scheme of 80%.

Model 3 maintains the maximum level of support for households with an illness or disability benefit of 80%.

80% maximum support is consistent with many other Kent authorities.

6.2 Protect disabled households

Model 2 protects households living with an illness or disability in bands 2-5. Support is increased by an additional 5% for households in which the claimant or partner receives DLA/PIP or ESA.

Model 3 protects households living with an illness or disability in all bands 1-5.

6.3 Simplify assessments and reassessments

Models 1, 2 and 3 only require basic household information to calculate the initial award. All models only require reassessments when income crosses income-band thresholds.

For the 3 models, a 20% increase in UC customers has been factored in as those in receipt of legacy benefits are not expected to migrate to UC in full before 2024.

6.4 Maintain costs in line with the current scheme into 2021/22

Both Models 1 and 2 keep costs in line with the current scheme (£9.44 million).

Model 3 comes in under at £9.1 million.

6.5 To understand the impact on specific groups (age, gender and disability)

The report in the background papers gives full details of the impact on specific groups.

Female households are over-represented compared to male households.

Disabled households are under-represented in the worse-off group across models. This is because of the 5% uplift for disabled households.

Households aged 18-24 are under-represented where they have low earnings or are in receipt of out-of-work benefits.

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

21 July 2020

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

No

Financial impact of Covid-19 and development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22-2025/26

Final Decision-Maker	Council
Lead Head of Service	Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Covid-19 has had a major impact on the Council's financial position. This report sets out an updated assessment of the impact of Covid-19 and the implications for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). It describes the measures that are proposed to address the impact of Covid-19 in the current financial year and the approach that it is proposed to take in developing an updated MTFS, covering the period 2021/22 to 2025/26, which will take into account the changed environment.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's financial position in 2020/21 is noted.
2. That the proposed deployment of reserves and other budget variations to accommodate the projected impact, as set out in paragraph 3.36, are agreed.
3. That the approach outlined to development of an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2021/22 – 2025/26 and a budget for 2021/22 is noted.
4. That the assumptions described in this report for planning purposes and to establish the remit for future budget development are noted.
5. That the principles for transformation initiatives set out at paragraph 5.11 are agreed as the basis for meeting the budget remit.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Policy and Resources Committee	21 July 2020
Policy and Resources Committee	25 November 2020
Council	9 December 2020
All Service Committees	January 2021

Policy and Resources Committee	10 February 2021
Council	24 February 2021

Financial impact of Covid-19 and development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22-2025/26

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Medium Term Financial Strategy and the budget are a re-statement in financial terms of the priorities set out in the strategic plan. They reflect the Council's decisions on the allocation of resources to all objectives of the strategic plan.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Cross Cutting Objectives	The MTFS supports the cross-cutting objectives in the same way that it supports the Council's other strategic priorities.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Risk Management	This has been addressed in section 5 of the report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Financial	The budget strategy and the MTFS impact upon all activities of the Council. The future availability of resources to address specific issues is planned through this process. It is important that the committee gives consideration to the strategic financial consequences of the recommendations in this report.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	The process of developing the budget strategy will identify the level of resources available for staffing over the medium term.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Legal	Under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972) the Section 151 Officer has statutory duties in relation to the financial administration and stewardship of the authority, including securing effective arrangements for treasury management. The S151 Officer also has a personal duty under Section 114(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to report to the Council if it appears that the set budget will be exceeded. Key considerations for the Council include the need for adequate reserves, the S151 officer's guidance on the financial prudence of options before members and ensuring that there are reasonable grounds for making decisions. The Medium Term Financial Strategy demonstrates	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS

	<p>the Council’s commitment to fulfilling its duties under the Act.</p> <p>The Council has a statutory obligation to set a balanced budget and development of the MTFS and the strategic revenue projection in the ways set out in this report supports achievement of a balanced budget.</p>	
Privacy and Data Protection	<p>Privacy and Data Protection is considered as part of the development of new budget proposals. There are no specific implications arising from this report.</p>	<p>Section 151 Officer & Finance Team</p>
Equalities	<p>The MFTS report scopes the possible impact of the Council’s future financial position on service delivery. When a policy, service or function is developed, changed or reviewed, an evidence based equalities impact assessment will be undertaken. Should an impact be identified appropriate mitigations will be identified.</p>	<p>Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer</p>
Public Health	<p>The resources to achieve the Council’s objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p>	<p>Public Health Officer</p>
Crime and Disorder	<p>The resources to achieve the Council’s objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p>	<p>Section 151 Officer & Finance Team</p>
Procurement	<p>The resources to achieve the Council’s objectives are allocated through the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p>	<p>Section 151 Officer & Finance Team</p>

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council’s financial position has been drastically altered by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council set a balanced budget for 2020/21 at its meeting on 26th February 2020 on the basis of the information available at the time and the assumptions set out in the budget report. Since then, the position for 2020/21 and future years has changed completely. The Council has incurred substantial additional costs in combatting the pandemic and all the Council’s main sources of income have been adversely affected. This report sets out a current assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on the Council’s finances in **Section 3**.

- 2.2 As well as addressing the position for the current financial year, this report sets out the implications for future years in **Section 4**. The way in which the Council describes how it will deliver its strategic plan in financial terms is through its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The existing MTFS, covering the period 2020/21 to 2024/25, reflects the Strategic Plan 2019 – 2045, which was adopted by the Council in December 2018. As explained by the Chief Executive in her report to this Committee on 24th June, Covid-19 will lead to a reappraisal of how the ambitions set out in the Strategic Plan can be achieved and the timescales.
- 2.3 Even if there is a rapid recovery from the pandemic, the financial impact will be felt for some time. The Council will have to draw on its reserves to fund the current financial year's deficit. This poses the question of how quickly reserves can be rebuilt and the right level at which to maintain them in the future. Income and expenditure projections for future years also need to be reassessed in the light of the latest assumptions about the pattern of recovery.
- 2.4 Reassessing the future financial position challenges the Council to consider how it will adapt to the changed environment. A number of areas for investigation are described and principles set out for developing savings proposals in **Section 5**. These will be pursued over the next four months, prior to an updated MTFS being submitted for Council's approval in December 2020.
- 2.5 Given the Council's central role in the community, members will wish to consider how it can contribute to the recovery from Covid-19, in the same way as it has contributed to the immediate response. Although the financial position of the Council has been impaired by the pandemic, it is appropriate to seek out creative and affordable ways in which it can play its part.
- 2.6 All these factors need to be taken into account in updating the MTFS, whilst keeping in mind the key objective of ensuring a balanced budget. Specifically, the MTFS must set out how Council can agree a level of council tax for 2021/22 at its meeting on 24 February 2021 that will enable this. This report is the first step towards achieving that objective.

3. CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION

Revenue Budget

- 3.1 The Council's financial position prior to the onset of Covid-19 was sound. Unallocated reserves as at 31 March 2020 amounted to £8.819 million, well in excess of the agreed minimum level of £2 million. An overall summary of the financial position as at 31 March 2020 is set out in the Narrative Report that accompanies the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts and is included as Appendix A.
- 3.2 Since the end of March, the position has been drastically altered by the pandemic. The table below sets out the current projected revenue spending position for 2020/21, as compared with the original budget.

- 3.3 Local authorities have been required to report to MHCLG each month on the impact of additional expenditure pressures and reductions in income. The figures set out below reflect the projections set out in the return submitted to MHCLG on Friday 19 June. Any significant changes of which we have subsequently become aware will be reported verbally at this meeting.

Table 1: 2020/21 revenue budget and latest projections

	Service	Original budget	Add'l spend	Income red'n	Total Covid impact	Revised proj'n
		£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
CHE	Communities & Housing	3,512	321	101	422	3,934
	Environment & Public Realm	4,994	60	289	349	5,343
ERL	Heritage, Culture & Leisure	627	721	555	1,276	1,903
	Economic Development	312	20	28	48	360
SPI	Planning Services	945	15	781	796	1,741
	Parking & Transportation	-2,271	55	1,055	1,110	-1,161
P & R	Property & Investment	1,031	0	1,547	1,547	2,578
	Corporate and Shared Services	9,785	132	10	142	9,927
	Total	18,935	1,324	4,366	5,690	24,625
		100.0%	+7.0%	+23.1%	+30.1%	130.1%

Details by service area are set out below.

Communities and Housing

- 3.4 During the pandemic, the Housing Service received and assisted new clients who were not previously known to them. The Accommodation Team was able to create capacity within the Council's owned temporary accommodation stock, which enabled MBC to avoid procurement of large scale usage of hotel and Bed and Breakfast accommodation which has been the case elsewhere in the UK. During the crisis, the Outreach and Accommodation Teams continued to provide a front-line service and provided accommodation to over 40 people, of whom 17 remained in temporary housing last month. These clients are being assisted back into settled accommodation or reconnected with their areas of origin where that is not Maidstone. This is expected to give rise to additional costs as set out in the table above.

Environment & Public Realm

- 3.5 Street cleaning, grounds maintenance and waste collection services remained fully operational throughout the pandemic. The street cleansing, grounds maintenance and commercial waste teams have assisted Biffa by providing staff and vehicles, which it is considered will enable the Council to resist any claim for additional costs as well as ensuring all services have remained fully operational. The closure of the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) resulted in an increase in new garden waste customers.

However, a net loss of income is projected from other services provided by Environment & Public Realm, including commercial waste and grounds maintenance.

- 3.6 The Bereavement service has remained fully operational throughout despite increased demand and cremator breakdowns. The team worked shifts, sometimes starting at 4am and working until midnight to carry out cremations during the busiest weeks. The additional costs are reflected in the table above.

Heritage, Culture & Leisure

- 3.7 The Leisure Centre and the Hazlitt Theatre have closed as a result of the pandemic. Whilst these facilities are operated by third party suppliers, there is a potential liability on the Council's behalf to help mitigate losses suffered by the contractors, as well as a loss of income that would normally be generated from these facilities. An estimate of the liability is included within the table above.

Economic Development

- 3.8 Lockmeadow Market is included within the Economic Development budget. The Market was closed in April and May, re-opening on Saturday 13 June. The estimated loss of income is shown within the above figures.

Planning Services

- 3.9 During the pandemic the planning service has continued to operate largely by staff working from home. However, the volume of planning applications and therefore fee income has reduced. The likely future volume of planning applications remains unclear. It is assumed in the figures above that there will be an income reduction of 33% for the year as a whole.

Parking & Transportation

- 3.10 On-street and off-street parking income from pay and display machines fell steeply at the beginning of lockdown, with income only 7% of the previous year's level in April. Although it was not possible to collect cash from the machines, the new pay units helped to an extent by allowing contactless payments as well as the normal RingGo payment options. These payments represented 62 % of all payments in April and May. Car park income is now slowly recovering.
- 3.11 Civil Parking Enforcement patrols have continued, with a focus on maintaining traffic flow and highway safety rather than the issue of penalty charge notices.

Property & Investment

- 3.12 The impact from Covid-19 has been significant in terms of rental income, with most tenants experiencing financial difficulties. Grant funding has however helped many of our smaller commercial tenants to continue operating. There has been a rise in rent arrears, but repayment plans are

being made where appropriate with tenants. In a limited number of cases we have agreed a lease extension in exchange for a rent holiday. As of the time of writing, the only major tenant whose status has changed is The Restaurant Group (TRG), owner of Frankie and Benny's, Lockmeadow. TRG is entering a creditors voluntary administration, under which it will close 125 sites. The Maidstone site will remain open, but as part of the CVA the rent receivable will be reduced for the next two years. Otherwise, we have not lost any commercial tenants. Lettings do not appear to have been impacted and we continue to complete on new leases and have good interest in vacant commercial premises.

Corporate & Shared Services

- 3.13 The cost of providing a Community Hub during the pandemic has been accounted for under Corporate & Shared Services. The Community Hub comprised a contact centre where people could seek support, a physical distribution hub, a befriending service and a dedicated part of the MBC website to provide information for people needing support and a place where volunteers could offer support. The Community Hub provided free phone and web based contact channels, the team developed processes for managing contact with residents and the provision of support, sourced and procured food and household essentials and linked in with parish councils, community services, voluntary groups, KCC, health providers and volunteers.

Council Tax and Business rates

- 3.14 As well as service budgets being affected by additional expenditure and loss of income, the Council's income from Council Tax and Business Rates has suffered as a result of Covid-19.
- 3.15 As of the end of May, the Council faced a reduction in Council Tax receipts of 5% as compared with the same point in time last year. With the increase in unemployment and the general uncertainty about economic prospects, it is likely that many households are struggling to pay. Given the importance of cash flow to enable the Council to continue delivering services, we are emphasising to Council Tax payers the importance of keeping up to date with their payments. If they are unable to pay the full amount of Council Tax, for example through redundancy, they may apply for Council Tax support, which reduces their Council Tax by 80%. The existing shortfall in Council Tax receipts is assumed to continue being experienced for the rest of the year, although it is obviously hoped that the position will recover. This gives a projected shortfall for Maidstone's share of Council Tax of £948,000.
- 3.16 As at the end of May, the Council faced a reduction Business Rates receipts of 7% for those businesses still liable to pay rates (leisure, retail and hospitality businesses are entitled to 100% relief, which is funded by central government). As with Council Tax, we are encouraging businesses to pay. The projected shortfall for Maidstone's share of Business Rates is £1.925 million.
- 3.17 The shortfall in Council Tax and Business Rates is accounted for in 2020/21

through the Council's Collection Fund, rather than the General Fund. However, as the General Fund will ultimately have to bear the cost of the shortfall, these deficits are included for the purposes of this report within the overall deficit that the Council must address.

Overall Position

- 3.18 The overall deficit for 2020/21, in the absence of any mitigating action, is currently projected to be as follows.

Table 2: Projected deficit for 2020/21 before mitigations

	£000
Service overspend as per table 1	5,690
Projected shortfall on Council Tax income (Maidstone share)	948
Projected shortfall on Business Rates income (Maidstone share)	1,925
Total projected deficit	8,563

So far, we have received £1,777,000 in central government grant to offset this.

- 3.19 The government announced a further package of support on 2nd July, comprising:
- £500 million additional unringfenced grant to cover cost pressures;
 - a commitment to cover 75% of lost income from sales, fees and charges (excluding commercial income) above a threshold adverse variance of 5%;
 - phasing over three years of Collection Fund deficit repayments.
- 3.20 An announcement about the £500 million to cover cost pressures is expected imminently and the details will be reported verbally at this meeting if available. Early indications are that the distribution will be based on a formula intended to prioritise spending according to local authority needs. If the needs assessment replicates the assessment of needs that is built into the 2020/21 local authority finance settlement, this would mean approximately £100,000 for Maidstone Borough Council.
- 3.21 The most significant of the three items in the package for Maidstone Borough Council is the commitment to cover 75% of lost income, excluding commercial income, over a 5% threshold. Taken at face value, this could reduce our service overspend by around £1.5 million on the basis of the latest MHCLG return. It is expected that lost income will be reimbursed in arrears, based on periodic returns to central government of actual income lost.
- 3.22 The third element listed above, the phasing of Collection Fund deficit repayments, is designed to mitigate the impact of the loss of Council Tax and Business Rates revenue on the General Fund next year. Normally any loss would have to be made good through an additional charge to the Council's General Fund in 2021/22. By spreading the loss over three years,

it should be easier for Councils to meet the legal requirement to set a balanced General Fund budget next year. However, the total amount of the loss will not change and there is no cash contribution from the government to mitigate it. The only potential concession from the government is that it has committed to reconsider the apportionment of the loss between central and local government in the next Spending Review.

- 3.23 The Chancellor's Summer Statement on Wednesday 8th July included no further assistance for local government. However, it was confirmed that the government will set out further details on its spending plans at the next Budget and Spending Review. No date has been set for the Budget and Spending Review, but they are expected to take place in the autumn.
- 3.24 Future spending plans may reflect the aspirations of the government's forthcoming Devolution White Paper. Indications are that the White Paper will encourage the formation of further unitary authorities with elected mayors. It is therefore possible that there will be financial incentives for local government to reorganise along these lines.

Capital Programme

- 3.25 The capital programme plays a vital part in delivering the Council's strategic plan, since long term investment plays an essential role in realising our ambitions for the borough. The cost of the capital programme is spread over the lifetime of investments, so does not have such an immediate impact on the revenue budget position. However, there are revenue consequences to the capital programme. Maidstone Borough Council borrowed to fund its capital programme for the first time in 2019/20. The cost of borrowing is factored into the 2020/21 budget, along with a Minimum Revenue Provision which spreads the cost of loan repayments over the lifetime of an asset. The budgeted total revenue costs of the capital programme in 2020/21 amounted to £1.870 million.
- 3.26 The existing capital programme was approved by Council at its budget meeting on 26th February 2020. Major schemes include the following:
- Completion of Brunswick Street and Union Street developments
 - Granada House extension
 - Further mixed housing and regeneration schemes
 - Purchase of housing for temporary accommodation
 - Flood Action Plan
 - Mote Park Improvements
 - Further investment at Lockmeadow Leisure Complex
 - Commercial Property Investments
 - Kent Medical Campus Innovation Centre
 - Mall Bus Station Improvements
 - Biodiversity and Climate Change.
- 3.27 The capital programme for 2020/21 has been reviewed in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of projects in the current programme are either already under way, are required for health and safety reasons, or must be carried out to meet contractual commitments. However, it is proposed that a number of projects are deferred to 2021/22, which will have

the effect of reducing the in-year revenue costs of capital expenditure.

- 3.28 The capital programme is reviewed every year. In carrying out the annual review, prior to presentation of revenue and capital budget proposals to Council in February 2021, consideration will be given as to how the capital programme can support the process of recovery from Covid-19, eg by investing in projects that have a positive effect on employment and economic regeneration.
- 3.29 In recent years, a number of local authorities have used the capital programme as an opportunity to acquire commercial property to generate rental income. Government ministers have made a number of critical statements about this practice, which they see as detracting from core local authority activities. The Covid-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the riskiness of the practice. The government is currently consulting on revising the terms of PWLB lending to ensure that local authorities continue to invest in housing, infrastructure, and public services. Any review of the Maidstone Borough Council capital programme will therefore need to take into account that it will be unlikely to secure funding for purely commercial investments in future: the primary purpose of capital investment must be to meet the Council's strategic priorities.

Reserves

- 3.30 The Council maintains reserves as a safety net to allow for unforeseen circumstances. There is no statutory definition of the minimum level of reserves: the amount required is a matter of judgement. However, the Council has a longstanding policy whereby £2 million is the agreed minimum General Fund balance. This is equivalent to around 5% of Council turnover (income from Council Tax, Business Rates, Sales, Fees and Charges and Commercial Rent), which is an accepted benchmark when setting reserves levels.
- 3.31 In addition to uncommitted General Fund balances, the Council holds reserves that are earmarked for specific purposes. The most substantial of these in the past was earmarked New Homes Bonus funding for capital expenditure. However, this was fully utilised as at 31 March 2020, given that it has been deployed to fund the capital programme.
- 3.32 Council agreed last year to set aside the £1.589 million which would have been required in order to fund negative Revenue Support Grant as a contingency for future funding pressures. This is treated as an earmarked reserve.
- 3.33 Full details of reserves held are set out below:

Table 3: General Fund balances as at 31 March 2020

	31.3.19 £000	31.3.20 £000
Earmarked Reserves		
Local Plan Review	200	309

Neighbourhood Plans funding carried forward	64	75
Planning Appeals Contingency	300	286
Accumulated Surplus on Trading Accounts	31	32
Civil Parking Enforcement	419	164
Future Capital Expenditure	431	431
Future Funding Pressures	0	1,589
Housing Prevention & Temporary Accommodation	700	681
Unspent Business Rates Growth (Pool and Pilot)	3,682	3,887
Occupational Health & Safety Contingency	0	31
Lockmeadow Complex – income smoothing	0	335
Sub-total Earmarked Reserves	5,828	7,820
Unallocated Balances	9,228	8,819
Total General Fund balances	15,056	16,638

3.34 In developing the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Members will wish to consider the appropriate future level of reserves. Whilst this is projected to remain above the existing specified minimum level of £2 million as at 31 March 2021, it could be argued that the increased level of risk highlighted by the Covid-19 pandemic justifies increasing the minimum.

3.35 The appropriate level of reserves is a matter of judgement. However, to further guide Members' thinking, the current corporate risk register is included at Appendix B, together with a very approximate financial quantification of the risks. By allocating probabilities to these risks, it is possible to come up with a notional desired reserves level. It is accepted that many of the judgements involved are debatable, but this exercise gives an idea of the order of magnitude of reserves that may be appropriate. The table shows a financial evaluation of the risks of £3.5 million. Allowing for risks not captured on the table and to allow some flexibility, it is suggested that £4 million may now be an appropriate safe minimum reserves level. A key objective of the MTFS will therefore need to be to ensure that reserves remain above this level.

Mitigating actions

3.36 In order to mitigate the deficit set out in Table 2 above, the following management actions have been taken.

- CLT authorisation of any new recruitment
- Review of all new discretionary spend on goods and services
- Review of all new procurements in excess of £25,000
- Review of capital programme (as described in paragraph 3.27 above).

These measures are estimated to generate a saving of approximately £500,000.

Summary

- 3.37 The effect of these mitigating actions on the projected deficit and on unallocated reserves is shown below.

Table 4: Projected deployment of unallocated reserves

	£000	£000
Unallocated reserves as at 1 April 2020		8,810
Total projected deficit	8,563	
Government grant already received - tranches 1 and 2	-1,777	
Estimated grant – tranche 3	-1,600	
Mitigating actions	-500	
Net projected drawing on reserves	4,686	-4,686
Projected unallocated reserves as at 31 March 2021		4,124

It should be noted that this is a preliminary estimate at a relatively early point in the financial year. There are a whole range of factors that could affect this both adversely (eg the risk of a resurgence of Covid-19) and favourably (eg further government grant).

- 3.38 It can be seen that the projected position above shows reserves in excess of the existing minimum agreed level of £2 million, but only just above the 'safe' minimum reserves level of £4 million proposed in paragraph 3.35. The Council is therefore in a position of considerable vulnerability, and any further shocks, such as a resurgence of the pandemic, could lead to reserves falling below a safe level.

4. FUTURE FINANCIAL POSITION

- 4.1 The Council's future financial position will be considered by looking firstly at the local authority funding context. Next, potential scenarios for the national economy, bearing in mind the pace of recovery from Covid-19, will be considered. Assumptions are then made about the key variables for the Council's budget, in order to arrive at a set of strategic revenue projections which can be used as a starting point when updating the MTFs.

Local authority funding

- 4.2 For the past five years, local authority funding has been subject to a national settlement, originally announced in 2016. 2019/20 was due to be the final year of a four year settlement. In the event, the key elements of the four year settlement were rolled forward to 2020/21, owing to Brexit, and are now set to be rolled forward for a further year to 2021/22, owing to Covid-19. The extended four-year settlement has provided a degree of certainty about the Council's funding position, even though the amount of central government support for local government has fallen steadily. The effect in Maidstone has been that the percentage of revenue raised locally has increased from 82.3% in 2014/15 to 92.7% in 2020/21.

4.3 It should be noted that the four year funding settlement has given no Revenue Support Grant (RSG) to Maidstone Borough Council since 2017/18. It was originally envisaged that the funding settlement would incorporate a clawback of £1.6 million from the Council in the form of negative RSG in 2019/20. Under pressure from local authorities like Maidstone and our parliamentary representatives, the government withdrew the proposal to levy negative RSG. However, the threat of negative RSG, or a measure with a similar effect has not entirely disappeared. Without an overall increase in funding available to local government, it is not clear how the local government financial settlement will be balanced in future years without the 'lost' negative RSG being recouped in some form.

4.4 There are a number of variables to be determined in the future local government funding regime to be introduced in 2022/23, including:

- the Council Tax referendum limit
- review of relative needs and resources (previously referred to as the Fair Funding Review)
- proportion of business rates retained by local government (currently 50%)
- the Business Rates Baseline (which dictates the amount of business rates that individual local authorities may retain locally)
- future of specific grants, eg New Homes Bonus.

The existing MTFs has taken a cautious view of the likely outcome for Maidstone, for a number of reasons.

- Within the overall local government landscape, pressures on upper tier authorities which are responsible for delivering social care have had a higher profile than those faced by lower tier authorities like Maidstone. This is likely to affect the outcomes of the Fair Funding Review.
- Maidstone has benefited disproportionately from business rates growth since the introduction of the current funding regime. Much of this benefit risks disappearing if the business rates baseline is reset.
- In any equalisation of business rates income between local authorities, Maidstone risks losing out because of its relative prosperity. This was illustrated by the fact that Maidstone Borough Council was due to pay a larger amount of negative RSG than any other district in England. Even though 'negative RSG' as a measure may not be employed, there remains a risk that we will be penalised in any equalisation process.

4.5 Covid-19 may lead to the government reconsidering its plans for future local authority funding. For example, emergency measures introduced as a result of Covid-19 to provide business rates relief may be retained. Whilst this in itself would have no direct financial impact for local authorities, as these measures are fully funded by central government, the reliefs challenge the underlying direction of government policy towards greater devolution of business rates income to local authorities. If there is significantly less business rates income available, there would be less merit in allocating a notionally higher percentage of the income to local authorities.

4.6 At this stage it is not known when we will have clarity about the funding position for 2021/22 or about the way that the new funding regime due to be introduced in 2022/23 will impact the Council. Given the usual pattern whereby the local government finance settlement is announced just before Christmas, we may not have any definitive figures for 2021/22 until late December.

Scenario Planning

4.7 At this stage, the pace and scale of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic is extremely difficult to predict. It is therefore proposed that, as in previous years, we model a number of different scenarios when developing the Medium Term Financial Strategy, as follows:

Scenario 1 – Favourable (OBR reference case)

Lockdown impacts sharply on output in 2020 Q2, but rebounds in the second half of the year, with a strong return to growth in 2021.

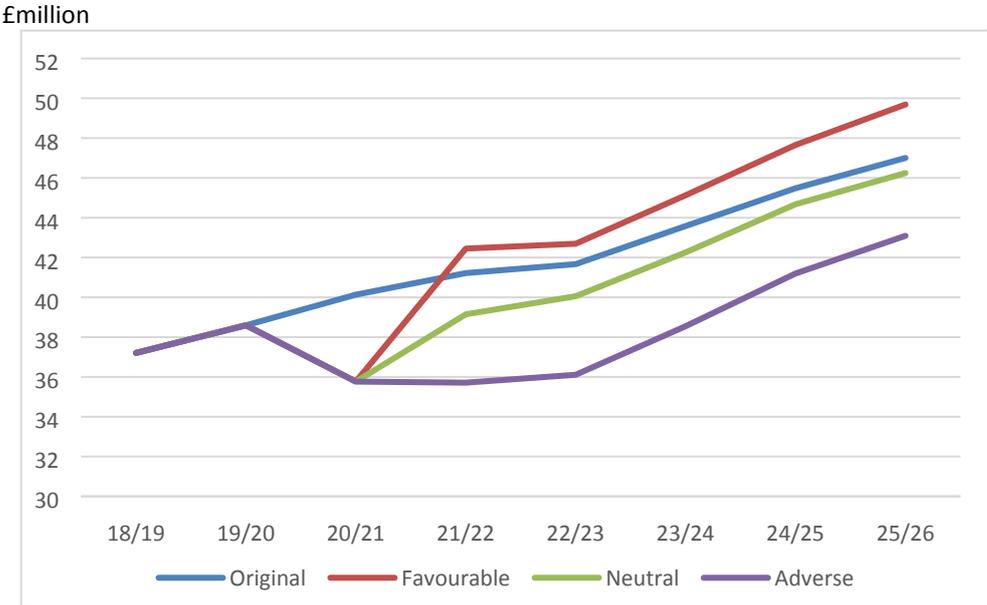
Scenario 2: Neutral (Recovery, relapse, growth)

The economy is slower to rebound, due to (some combination of) a reimposition of restrictions to contain a second infection wave, weaker than expected market responses to the loosening of restrictions (i.e. savings hoarding, poor investor confidence), or continued lockdown in supplier/customer markets.

Scenario 3: Adverse (Great Depression)

‘L shaped ’ recession, similar to that experienced after 1929: permanent loss of output, with combination of persistently weak demand, over capacity and high unemployment.

These scenarios have been translated into the following income profiles for the Council, with the original MTFS assumptions also shown for comparison:



4.8 Specific assumptions underlying each of the scenarios are set out below.

Strategic Revenue Projection

Council Tax

4.9 Council Tax is by far the Council’s biggest single source of income. It is a product of the tax base and the level of tax set by Council. The tax base is a value derived from the number of chargeable residential properties within the borough and their band, which is based on valuation ranges, adjusted by all discounts and exemptions.

4.10 The tax base has increased steadily in recent years, reflecting the number of new housing developments in the borough. See table below:

Table 5: Number of Dwellings in Maidstone

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of dwellings	67,721	68,519	69,633	70,843	71,917
% increase compared with previous year	0.81%	1.18%	1.63%	1.74%	1.52%

Note: Number of dwellings is reported each year based on the position shown on the valuation list in September.

4.11 Given the impact of Covid-19 on housebuilding and the general economy, it has been assumed for the purposes of the neutral scenario that growth will slow to 0.5% in 2021/22, but will then revert to 1.5% in 2022/23 and subsequent years.

4.12 As has been seen, Council Tax collection has been 5% lower in the current financial year than last year. Some of this reduction may foreshadow a more long-lasting decline in Council Tax revenues, with reductions in household earnings leading to a higher number of CTRS claimants. It has therefore been assumed in the neutral scenario that the Council Tax base will be 3% lower as a result in 2021/22. Taking into account the projected increase of 0.5% in the number of dwellings, this would result in a reduction in the Council Tax base of 2.5%

4.13 The level of council tax increase for 2021/22 is a decision that will be made by Council based on a recommendation from Policy and Resources Committee. In practice, the Council’s ability to increase the level of council tax is limited by the need to hold a referendum for increases over a government set limit. In 2020/21, the limit was the greater of 2% or £5.00. The Council approved the maximum possible increase. The rationale for this approach was that:

- pressures on the Council’s budget mean that even a marginal difference in Council Tax income is of value;
- the referendum limit might revert to a lower level in later years;

- because the starting point for calculating the referendum limit in any given year is the previous year's Council Tax, agreeing a lower increase reduces the Council's room for manoeuvre in later years.

4.14 The referendum limit of 2% was intended broadly to reflect the rate of inflation. Although the government target for inflation remains at 2%, current projections are that inflation will not increase to this level for some time to come. On the other hand, cost pressures for local councils may make it difficult for central government to justify reducing the referendum limit. Accordingly, the current MTFS projections assume that Council Tax increases will be at the referendum limit, and that this limit will be 2%.

Retained business rates

4.15 Under the current business rates regime, local government in aggregate retains 50% of business rates income. However, most of the 50% share collected locally is lost to Maidstone, because it is redistributed to other authorities through a system of tariffs and top-ups.

Table 6: Baseline Business Rates Income 2020/21

	£000	%
Baseline Business Rates income	56,496	100
Government share	-28,248	-50
Kent County Council / Kent Fire & Rescue Authority	-5,649	-10
Government tariff	-19,339	-34
Baseline Business Rates income retained by MBC	3,260	-6

4.16 To the extent that business rates income exceeds the baseline, this growth element is retained locally, subject to a levy payable to central government by tariff authorities like Maidstone. The Council has been able to minimise the levy payable on business rates growth through its membership of the Kent Business Rates Pool. This is because the levy payable by some pool members (district councils) is offset against the top-up received by the major preceptors (Kent County Council and Kent Fire and Rescue).

4.17 The Council includes the non-pool element of business rates growth as part of its base budget. Maidstone Council's 30% share of the growth arising from membership of the pool is allocated to a reserve which is used for specific projects that form part of the Council's economic development strategy. A further 30% represents a Growth Fund, spent in consultation with Kent County Council. This has been used to support the Maidstone East development. Another 30% goes directly to Kent County Council; the residual 10% is held back to compensate pool members whose business rates income falls below the baseline and would otherwise have benefited from the government's safety net.

4.18 A further element of growth was retained locally for one year only in 2018/19 as a result of Maidstone's participation in the Kent & Medway 100% Business Rates Retention pilot. Kent & Medway local authorities were successful in bidding for pilot status, which meant that 100% of business rates growth, rather than 50%, was retained locally. Unfortunately, a bid

for pilot status in 2019/20 was unsuccessful and there were no further pilots in 2020/21.

- 4.19 Unspent Business Rates pool and pilot proceeds are included within earmarked reserves as at 31 March 2020 (see table 3 above). This reserve includes both amounts that have subsequently been spent, or are contractually committed to be spent, and uncommitted amounts.
- 4.20 The Government has announced a further deferral of its commitment to introducing 75% business rates retention, and its review of relative needs and resources (previously referred to as the Fair Funding Review). Linked to this, the planned revaluation exercise which had been scheduled for 2021 has also been deferred. It is likely that the planned resetting of business rates baselines against which growth is measured will also be deferred.
- 4.21 This presents significant uncertainty in the budget estimates as they currently stand, particularly in relation to business rates, which are subject to the following variables:
- Retention: due to the deferral of the planned reforms, the 50% retention scheme will continue to operate, with Maidstone retaining 40% of business rates collected. However, as shown in table 6 above, the government applies a tariff to this which reduces the actual amount retained down to the Council's baseline funding level (i.e. its assumed spending requirement). The level at which this is set is likely to be announced in the Autumn.
 - Growth: Under the current 50% retention scheme, the Council is able to retain the first 50% of growth generated against its business rates baseline, which was set in 2013. Due to the significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the local and national economies, in addition to Brexit, it is likely that growth will be affected. However, the unprecedented nature of this situation makes this difficult to predict.
 - Appeals and VOA announcements: these have always presented a source of volatility in estimating business rates income, with recent examples including blanket rulings on ATMs and GP surgeries. There is limited information available to enable the level of appeals and likelihood of success to be estimated. The planned revaluation is likely to give rise to further challenges over the coming years.
 - Recovery: as stated above, the Covid 19 pandemic and containment measures have caused significant financial stress to many local businesses, and it is likely that some businesses may struggle to pay their business rates bills as a consequence. The true impact of this is yet to be seen.
 - Reliefs: the government announced significant levels of relief to support businesses in the retail, hospitality, leisure and nursery sectors as part of its support package to businesses impacted by Covid 19. The effect of this is that a significant proportion of the Council's business rates income is currently paid through government grant, rather than by ratepayers. It is currently unclear as to whether or not

this subsidy will continue.

- Pooling: consideration will need to be given to the merits of continuing with such an arrangement in 2021/22, in light of the increased risks for all pool members.
- Future reforms: the delay to the planned reforms calls into question the future of business rates retention which presents an additional layer of uncertainty in the forecasts.

4.22 The Strategic Revenue Projection reflects the following assumptions in relation to retained business rates:

- The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22 will be a roll forward of the current year's settlement, given the deferral of the planned reforms.
- In the neutral scenario, business rates growth retained by the Council will be lower than it has been in previous years.

Revenue support grant

4.23 As has already been mentioned, the Council no longer receives Revenue Support Grant.

Local income from sales, fees, charges and commercial rent

4.24 Other income is an increasingly important source of funding for the Council. We have a policy that guides officers and councillors to set the appropriate level of fees and charges based on demand, affordability and external factors. The policy is not influenced directly by the MTFs with the exception that charges should be maximised within the limits of the policy.

4.25 These sources of income have been badly affected by Covid-19. The projections assume a gradual recovery, with the previously projected level of income being attained again in 2024/25 in the neutral scenario.

Revenue Projections

4.26 Strategic revenue projections, based on the assumptions set out above, are summarised in table 7 below for the 'neutral' scenario. More detailed projections are included in Appendix C.

4.27 In light of the many uncertainties around future funding, it is important to note that projections like these can only represent a 'best estimate' of what will happen. These projections will be updated as more information becomes available, prior to a final version of the projections being included in the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Table 7: Strategic Revenue Projections 2021/22-2025/26

	20/21	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
	Orig budget	Latest projn	Forecast				
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Council Tax	16.8	15.9	16.7	17.3	17.9	18.6	19.2
Business Rates	4.5	2.6	3.9	3.4	3.6	3.8	4.1
Other Income	21.7	17.3	18.6	19.4	20.8	22.3	22.9
Total Funding Available	43.0	35.8	39.2	40.1	42.3	44.7	46.2
Predicted Expenditure ¹	43.0	44.3	43.4	41.0	42.1	44.2	46.1
Budget Gap	0.0	-8.5	-4.2	-0.9	0.2	0.5	0.1
Existing Planned Savings			0.9	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.0
Contribution to Reserves			0.0	0.0	0.4	0.5	0.1
Savings Required			-3.3	-0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0

¹ Predicted Expenditure assumes that Existing Planned Savings and Savings Required arising in the preceding year have been delivered and are built into the budget.

- 4.28 The above table shows that, based on the 'neutral' scenario, income will recover from the levels projected in 2020/21, and one-off additional expenditure will reduce. However, there will not be a full recovery, with income remaining below the levels previously projected. In the absence of any mitigating action, this would lead to a deficit, smaller than the £8.5 million projected in the current year, but still very significant.
- 4.29 The savings required in 21/22 of £3.3 million, as set out in the table above, amount to nearly 10% of total income. This scale of saving, which is more challenging than the Council has faced for the past ten years, demands a radical reassessment of how it operates, if we are to maintain service delivery standards and achieve our strategic priorities.

5. UPDATING THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

5.1 The MTFs must balance the very severe financial pressures set out in the previous section with the requirement to deliver the Strategic Plan. The Council's Strategic Plan 2019 - 2045 was adopted by the Council in December 2018. It sets four key priorities, as follows:

- Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure
- Homes and Communities
- A Thriving Place
- Safe, Clean and Green.

'Embracing growth and enabling infrastructure recognises' the Council's role in leading and shaping the borough as it grows. This means taking an active role in policy and master planning for key sites in the borough, and where appropriate, investing directly ourselves.

'Homes and communities' expresses the objective of making Maidstone a place where people love to live and can afford to live. This means providing a range of different types of housing, including affordable housing, and meeting our statutory obligations to address homelessness and rough sleeping.

'A thriving place' is a borough that is open for business, attractive for visitors and an enjoyable and prosperous place to live for our residents. We will work to regenerate the County town and rural service centres and will continue to grow our leisure and cultural offer.

A 'safe, clean and green' place is one where the environment is protected and enhanced, where parks, green spaces, streets and public areas are looked after, well-managed and respected, and where people are and feel safe.

- 5.2 Covid-19 compels a reappraisal of how these ambitions can be achieved and the timescales. Nevertheless, it is proposed to update the MTFS on the basis that the underlying principles continue to apply. The challenge in updating the MTFS is therefore to realise the Council's ambitions within the financial constraints defined above.
- 5.3 In previous years, where projections have indicated a significant budget gap, the approach taken has been to seek a blend of revenue savings and additional income, including reduction in discretionary services which are not strategic priorities and reconfiguring statutory services which are not strategic priorities. Although individual initiatives may have been modest in scale, in aggregate they have been sufficient to meet the budget remit.
- 5.4 Unfortunately, this approach will not deliver the scale of savings / additional income required to meet the budget gap that we now face. A much more radical and ambitious approach is therefore required.
- 5.5 In order to generate savings or additional income on the scale required, without having a catastrophic impact on individual front-line services, it is proposed that a suite of organisation-wide transformation measures are taken. Only organisation-wide initiatives are likely to deliver the necessary scale.
- 5.6 The pandemic has illustrated the potential from one type of organisational transformation, namely a significant reduction in office accommodation. The expiry of the lease on Maidstone House in 2023 puts the Council in a strong position to exploit this opportunity.
- 5.7 The cost of occupying Maidstone House is around £1 million per annum, so this alone will not be sufficient to close the budget gap identified above. Other areas proposed for investigation include:
- Better use of technology
 - External grant funding
 - Income generation
 - Overhead costs of delivering the capital programme
 - Overhead costs of project delivery

- Service commissioning
- Shared service arrangements
- Staff reward packages
- Structure of democratic representation
- Synergies between service areas.

The overall approach will be that nothing is excluded from consideration, including proposals made in the past but rejected at the time.

- 5.8 Together with office accommodation, these areas for further investigation will be fully tested in a number of task and finish groups over the next two months. The objective will be to develop viable proposals, consistent with the certain key principles which are set out below. It is likely to be an iterative process, given the scale of the budget gap.
- 5.9 The financial impact of initiatives based on these principles is unlikely to be sufficient to close the budget gap within twelve months. In evaluating such initiatives, consideration will therefore need to be given as to how to fund their implementation over the necessary timescales. For example, savings from new office accommodation will not be deliverable before 2023. In the meantime it may be necessary to deploy earmarked reserves, including resources hitherto earmarked for other purposes, such as New Homes Bonus and uncommitted Business Rates Growth proceeds.
- 5.10 It is essential to retain a focus on the strategic priorities, as the local community recovers from the pandemic. Even if revenue resources are constrained, the Council still has the potential to use the capital programme, which impacts the revenue budget over a longer period of time, to deliver many of the priorities. This could for example mean a stronger focus on regeneration projects, which create local employment, and this will be reflected in the annual review of the capital programme due to be undertaken this Autumn.
- 5.11 The principles set out below are proposed in order to guide the development and implementation of the necessary transformation measures.

PRINCIPLES FOR TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVES

Scope of transformation

- Nothing is excluded from consideration, including measures previously considered and rejected
- The transformation measures will reflect strategic priorities and will include an assessment of their impact on strategic priorities.

Achieving the necessary financial impact

- The scale of the measures must be sufficient to deliver the budget remit
- Individual measures within the overall programme must contribute significantly to the budget remit
- The measures must be capable of realising significant savings or additional income within the first three years of the MTFS period

- One-off costs of delivering any measures must be recouped over the same period.

Designing the transformation measures

- Appropriate professional and technical advice will be taken at all stages of the process
- Consultation will be carried out with residents, councillors and staff as part of the budget process.

Managing the process

- Clear responsibility will be assigned for delivery of each measure
- Appropriate levels of resource will be assigned to individual projects.

5.12 Following these principles, it is proposed that plans for transformation initiatives are therefore developed, which will support an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy to be considered by this Committee in November 2020 and by Council in December 2020.

5.13 The importance of this work cannot be under-estimated, given the scale of the budget challenge faced by the Council. The work will therefore be given a suitably high priority and will be addressed as a matter of urgency.

6. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

6.1 Current Financial Position

Option 1 – Do Nothing

Option 2 – Adopt the mitigations set out in paragraph 3.36 and deploy reserves to accommodate the residual impact of Covid-19.

6.2 Updating the Medium Term Financial Strategy

Option 1 – Do Nothing

Option 2 – Adopt the principles set out in paragraph 5.11 as a means of meeting the budget remit defined by the Strategic Revenue Projection.

7. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Current Financial Position

The preferred option is Option 2, adopt the mitigations set out in paragraph 3.36 and deploy reserves to accommodate the residual impact of Covid-19. Failing to take these steps would mean that the Council had no plan for addressing the financial impact of Covid-19.

7.2 Updating the Medium Term Financial Strategy

The preferred option is Option 2, adopt the principles set out in paragraph 5.11. The scale of savings required means that alternative approaches are unlikely to deliver the necessary sums without a degradation of the Council's service offering.

8. RISK

- 8.1 The preceding paragraphs have indicated at several points the unprecedented risks and uncertainty surrounding the Council's financial position. The report has set out proposals for maintaining a suitable level of reserves to address this uncertainty.
- 8.2 The Council already has an established framework for addressing risks in a structured way and ensuring that appropriate mitigations are developed, through the corporate risk register. Reference has already been made to the corporate risk register and details are set out in Appendix B.
- 8.3 In addition, a report on financial risks is reviewed by the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee at each meeting. This seeks to capture all known budget risks and to present them in a readily comprehensible way.

9. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 9.1 Consultation with all relevant stakeholders is an important part of the process of developing the MTFS. A public budget consultation will take place this Autumn, then individual Service Committees will be consulted on the details of the MTFS proposals as they affect the respective Committee portfolios. Specific consultation will take place on individual transformation initiatives as appropriate.

10. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 10.1 An outline timetable for developing the Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget for 2021/22 is set out below.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Action</i>
21 July 2020	Policy and Resources Committee	Agree approach to development of updated MTFS and key assumptions
August – October		Update MTFS and SRP ; develop savings proposals
25 November 2020	Policy and Resources Committee	Agree updated MTFS for submission to Council
9 December 2020	Council	Approve updated MTFS
October – December		Develop detailed budget proposals for 2021/22
January 2021	All Service Committees	Consider 20/21 budget proposals

10 February 2021	Policy and Resources Committee	Agree 20/21 budget proposals for recommendation to Council
24 February 2021	Council	Approve 20/21 budget

11. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A: Narrative Report – Review of 2019/20 Financial Year
 - Appendix B: Corporate Risk Register
 - Appendix C: Strategic Revenue Projections – 2021/22 – 2025/26:
 - Adverse
 - Neutral
 - Favourable
-

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

NARRATIVE REPORT

for the year ending
31st March 2020







Key Facts about Maidstone

POPULATION OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH

2019	171,800
2018	170,000

GROSS VALUE ADDED IN BOROUGH

2018	£4.1 billion
2017	£4.0 billion

NUMBER OF ACTIVE BUSINESSES IN THE BOROUGH

2018	7,990
2017	7,935

BUSINESS RATES GENERATED

2019/20	£60.3 million
2018/19	£59.9 million

WEEKLY PAY FOR A FULL-TIME WORKER

2019	£579.20
2018	£589.50

COUNCIL GROSS REVENUE

2019/20	£96.6 million
2018/19	£97.2 million

COUNCIL REVENUE GENERATED LOCALLY

2019/20	92.7%
2014/15	82.3%

COUNCIL SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) AGAINST BUDGET

2019/20	-1.2%
2018/19	+0.9%

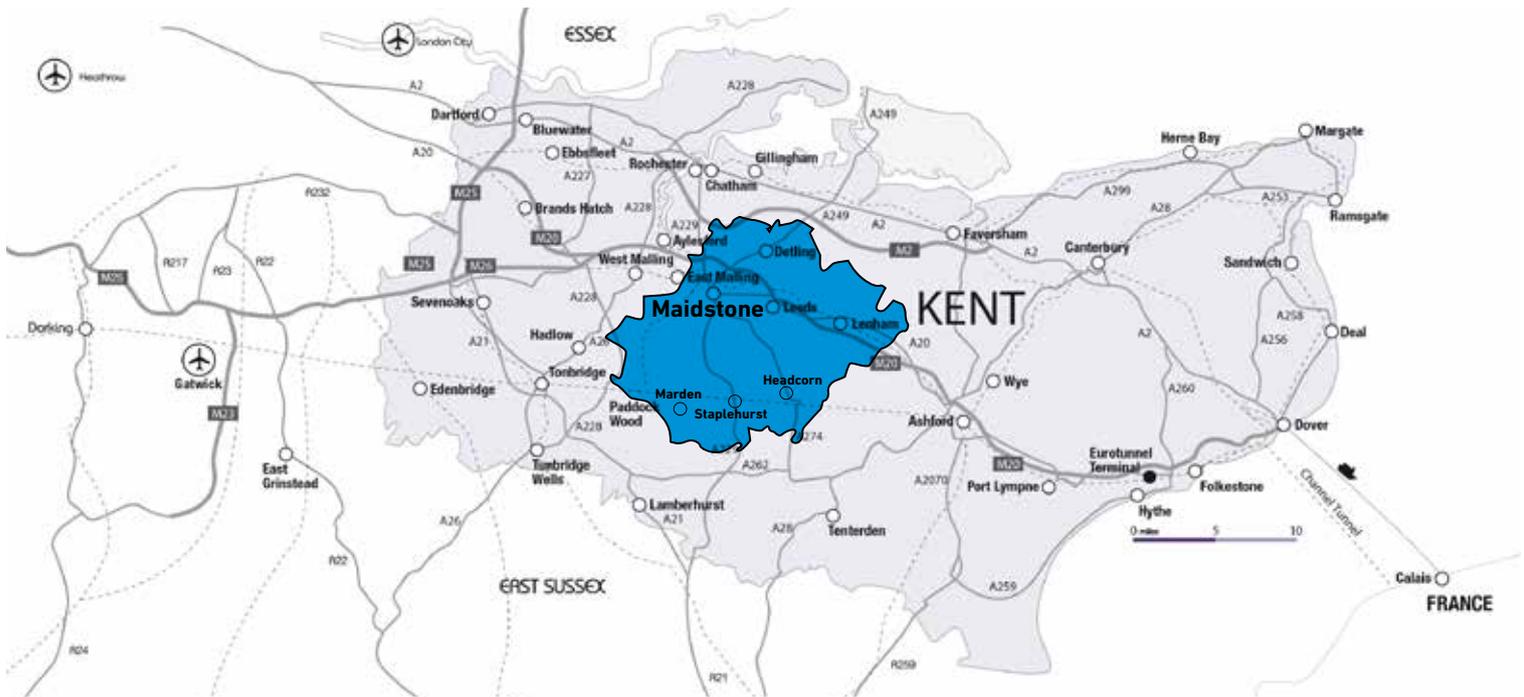
COUNCIL INVESTMENT IN LONG TERM ASSETS

2019/20	£158.9 million
2018/19	£119.1 million

COUNCIL'S USABLE RESERVES

2019/20	£17.2 million
2018/19	£15.7 million

About Maidstone



Maidstone is the largest borough council district in Kent, with an estimated 171,800 residents in mid-2019. Around 70% live in Maidstone, which is the County Town of Kent. In the surrounding rural area there are local service centres such as Staplehurst, Marden, Headcorn, Lenham and Harrietsham and many smaller villages.

Maidstone has the largest economy of any Kent borough, generating an estimated £4 billion Gross Value Added per annum. The borough has around 8,000 businesses covering a diverse range of sectors including life sciences, healthcare, ICT, construction and civil engineering, professional and business services, agriculture and horticulture, and education.

The M20 from London to the Kent coast runs through the borough, providing good transport links and the opportunity for further business growth.

The town of Maidstone is surrounded by a rural area that stretches from the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the North to the Weald in the South. The borough has a rich historical heritage, with 2,000 listed buildings and 28 scheduled ancient monuments. The River Medway flows through the borough and the town centre and, together with its tributaries, is one of the borough's prime assets. All these natural and physical advantages help the borough attract around four million visitors each year.



About the Council

The Council is accountable to local residents through its 55 councillors, who are elected by thirds for terms of four years, such that elections are held in three years out of every four. Borough elections were due to be held in May 2020 but have been postponed for a year owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conservative	24
Liberal Democrat	20
Labour	4
Independent	4
Independent Maidstone	2
Vacancy	1

The Council operates a Committee system, with decisions being made by four main Committees: Policy and Resources; Communities, Housing and Environment; Economic Regeneration and Leisure; and Strategic Planning and Infrastructure. The Council elects a Leader each year, who is also Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee. The current Leader of the Council is Martin Cox (Liberal Democrat).

The Council employed 540 people (503 full time equivalent) at 31 March 2020, based at the Council's administrative offices in Maidstone House, King Street, and at service locations including the Council's depot at Bircholt Road, Parkwood.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Council and the community it serves have been profoundly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council has been at the forefront of the response to the pandemic, for example in supporting rough sleepers and the homeless, establishing a community hub to support vulnerable members of society, and distributing nearly £30 million of grants to small businesses.

The impact of the pandemic on the period covered by the Statement of Accounts was limited, with lockdown measures only taking effect on 24 March 2020, right at the end of the period. However, there will be a very significant financial impact in the new financial year, both from additional costs incurred by the Council in responding to the pandemic, and from a reduction in income across almost all the Council's revenue streams, including Council Tax, Business Rates, and fees and charges for the services that we provide.

At the time of publishing the draft Statement of Accounts, the government had provided the Council with £1.7 million of non-ringfenced grants to offset additional costs and loss of income, but this is expected only partly to address the likely financial shortfall. As set out in the Statement of Accounts, the Council holds £17 million of usable reserves, which provides the Council with a reasonable level of financial resilience. However, drawing on these reserves would leave the Council with relatively greater exposure to the risk of further pandemic outbreaks and/or other unforeseen events. Furthermore, the need to rebuild reserves would constrain the Council's capacity for service delivery and to support community recovery.

Maidstone's Strategic Plan

The Council adopted a Strategic Plan in December 2018, setting out its aspirations through to 2045. The vision set out in the Plan is for Maidstone to be a vibrant, prosperous, urban and rural community at the heart of Kent, where everyone can realise their potential. Within the overall Strategic Plan, we have defined four strategic priorities: embracing growth and enabling infrastructure; making Maidstone safe, clean and green; providing homes and supporting communities; and making the borough a thriving place. Achievements in 2019/20 against these objectives and key performance indicators are set out in the following section.

We are currently considering how the Strategic Plan may need to be refreshed in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Key achievements

EMBRACING GROWTH AND ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE

- **Bus Station Improvements**

The council is leading a project to invest around £1m in improvement works to Maidstone Bus Station. The facility is situated underneath the Mall Shopping Centre in the town centre and has been earmarked for investment within the council's infrastructure delivery plan. This investment decision has been made because of the council's desire to support and promote sustainable transport. The council is working in partnership with the owner of the facility, Capital & Regional, the main bus operator, Arriva, and Kent County Council, all of whom are contributing financially too. The design proposals are now at an advanced stage, and construction is envisaged to start during 2020.

- **Kent Medical Campus Enabling Infrastructure**

The council has facilitated a package of highways improvements adjacent to the Kent Medical Campus that are being accelerated by a successful bid to the National Infrastructure Productivity Fund, with Kent County Council. Monies secured exceeded £9m, to include a £0.5m loan from the council. This will fund improvements to two nearby roundabouts and provide dualling of the road between them. Works on site will commence in 2020. The Kent Medical Campus is one of the largest employment sites in Maidstone, hence our desire to bring about early enabling infrastructure to support the growth in jobs.

- **Junction Improvements**

The council has worked closely with Kent County Council to secure Local Growth Fund (LGF) monies to part fund a programme of junction improvements to mitigate housing development in the current local plan. Whilst programmes such as this are complex to deliver, public consultation by Kent County Council commenced in early 2020 for the detailed design proposals and works on site are expected to commence in the coming months. The allocation of LGF monies demonstrates support for the proposals from the Local Enterprise Partnership.

HOMES AND COMMUNITIES

- **New housing developments**

Work is under way on two new housing developments in Maidstone town centre, at Union Street and Brunswick Street. When complete in late 2020, the developments will provide 94 new homes, comprising a mix of affordable housing, housing for market rent and housing for sale.

- **Temporary accommodation**

Despite an increase in the number of households approaching the Council as homeless, the housing service was able to continue the decrease in the number of families having to go into temporary accommodation. In addition, the Council's strategy to acquire its own temporary accommodation stock led to fewer people being placed into nightly paid accommodation, thereby providing better quality accommodation for the client and reducing the cost to the Council.

- **Helping Rough Sleepers**

Like other towns, Maidstone has seen a significant increase in the rough sleeper population in recent years. The Council has expanded its outreach service, established a centre for emergency supported accommodation, and expanded hostel support. These interventions have had a major impact on the number of rough sleepers.

- **A20 improvements**

A wide range of street scene and landscaping improvements have been carried out along the A20 approach into Maidstone from Willington Street. These have included the planting of 20,000 bulbs, shaping of the wild areas, a new Welcome to Maidstone sign, deep cleaning, white-lining and painting of lamp columns. In addition, a number of focal points have been introduced. Two large tree stumps have been transformed into beautiful sculptures to illustrate Go Green Go Wild and the Borough's farming heritage. A dinosaur sculpture and metal bicycle silhouettes are due to be added. Feedback from residents and visitors has been extremely positive, with many appreciating the colour and vibrancy the work has created.

- **Go Green Go Wild**

The Go Green Go Wild initiative has continued to develop since its launch last year, with more community groups getting involved to promote and support biodiversity. We launched a community grant scheme which has led to a number of new local initiatives being started including tree planting. The project was also recognised by DEFRA this year for the pollinator project where a number of new wildflower meadows were created. Further wildflower meadows have been sown this year with the support of local groups. The Go Green Go Wild website has also been set up to help inspire local residents to get involved and find out about local groups.

- **Mote Park dam works**

The Council has started works to the sluice gates, boat house, spillway, dam and area around Mote Park lake. The lake was formed in the 1830s when the River Len was dammed. As a result of a reservoir safety inspection, which the park is required to undertake every ten years, essential work is now required. If the dam were to fail, the risk posed could see the water swell rapidly over 40 acres of land, which would see Turkey Mill, Mote Park and surrounding areas under water. With estimated depths of 12 feet this would endanger lives and damage homes and businesses. The works will improve the capacity to control the transfer of flow across the dam and ensure that the dam does not fail during extreme flood events.

A THRIVING PLACE

- **Maidstone Innovation Centre**

Maidstone Borough Council has awarded Rydon the contract for the construction of the £9.5m Innovation Centre, which is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund. Located on the Kent Medical Campus, part of the North Kent Enterprise Zone, the Innovation Centre will bring together businesses and organisations involved in finding solutions to complex healthcare issues and scientific research and development. The four storey, 37,000ft² building – designed by Bond Bryan Architects – will provide high quality flexible office, hot desking and meeting space, conference facilities and business support for small and medium-sized enterprises working in the life science, healthcare and med-tech sectors. Work on site started in March 2020.

- **Maidstone East Station Improvement Project**

Planning permission for the refurbished and extended ticket office and new forecourt has been granted to Network Rail. The project is a partnership between Maidstone Borough Council, Kent County Council, Network Rail and Southeastern Railways. The former Victoria Pub has been demolished and ground works have commenced setting out the new forecourt which will include soft landscaping, wayfinding signage and a new public art installation inspired by the Council's coat of arms – an Iguanodon. In addition a further £641,000 of Local Growth Fund has been approved this year to encourage walking and cycling and improved disabled access.

- **Lockmeadow**

Lockmeadow is a leisure centre with an Odeon multiplex cinema, 18-lane bowling alley, a trampoline park, restaurants and a two-level David Lloyd swimming pool and gym complex. The Council already owned the freehold of the site, and in November 2019 acquired the long leasehold interest (105 years unexpired) for £19 million. The acquisition is intended to support the objective of making Maidstone a thriving place, with the Council working as an active landlord to make improvements to the appearance of the building and facilities to **208** make it a key destination for residents and visitors.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Key Performance Indicators are set for each Council priority in consultation with the relevant Service Committee. Performance against targets is set out below. Please note that direction of travel indicates an improvement or decline in performance for KPIs with targets. For Data Only Pls it indicates an increase or decrease in volume.

PRIORITY: A Thriving Place

Performance Indicator	Service	2019/20 Out-turn	2019/20 Target	Status	Compared to 2018/19
Percentage of all available tickets sold at the Hazlitt	Leisure & Tourism	66.27%	50%		
Number of visits per month to Visit-Maidstone.com	Economic Development	334,556	367,535		
Footfall in the Town Centre	Economic Development	10,994,050	11,836,415		
Number of students benefiting from the museum's educational service	Economic Development	8,884	8,378		
Footfall at the museum and Visitor Information Centre	Leisure & Tourism	98,314	65,000		
Number of attendees to informal events (at the museum)	Leisure & Tourism	3,532			
Number of people attending paid for exhibitions	Leisure & Tourism	972			
Contacts to the Visitor Information Centre	Leisure & Tourism	3,059	3,315		
Number of users at the leisure centre	Leisure & Tourism	758,290	805,257		
Percentage of vacant retail units in town centre	Economic Development	Data collection suspended owing to Covid-19	11%	N/A	N/A
Business Rates income from the Town Centre	Revenues & Benefits	£21,720,949			
Total value of business ratable properties (New 2019/20)	Revenues & Benefits	£147,123,115			N/A

PRIORITY: Clean, Safe and Green

Performance Indicator	Service	Value	Target	Status	Last Year
Percentage of unauthorised encampments on Council owned land removed within 5 working days	Environmental Crime Team	100%	90%		
Percentage of fly tips resulting in enforcement action	Environmental Crime Team	87%	80%		
Percentage of fly-tips cleared or assessed within 2 working days	Environmental Crime Team	96.38%	94%		
Average weight of fly-tipped collected materials (kg)	Environmental Crime Team	92.80kg			
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	Waste & Recycling	49.12%	52%		
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	Depot Services	98.18%	98%		
The percentage of land and highways with acceptable levels of detritus	Depot Services	94.87%	95%		
Maintenance per hectare spent on Parks and Open Spaces	Parks & Open Spaces	£6,016			N/A
Number of Green Flag parks	Parks & Open Spaces	209 3	5		

Section 106 spending (against estimate)	Parks & Open Spaces	£495,335			
Percentage of people using amenity green space at least once a week	Parks & Open Spaces	Due 2020 Resident Survey			N/A

PRIORITY:

Homes & Communities

Performance Indicator	Service	Value	Target	Status	Last Year
Satisfaction with the local area as a place to live (Resident Survey)	Policy & Information	53.10%		N/A	^(2017/18)
Percentage spend and allocation of Disabled Facilities Grant Budget (YTD)	Housing & Health	130.40%	100%		
Number of households living in temporary accommodation last night of the month	Housing & Health	94			
Number of households living in nightly paid temporary accommodation last night of the month	Housing & Health	36			
Number of households housed through housing register	Housing & Health	576	600		
Number of households prevented or relieved from becoming homeless	Housing & Health	571	330		
Percentage of successful Relief Duty outcomes	Housing & Health	56.64%	60%		N/A
Percentage of successful Prevention Duty outcomes (New 2019/20)	Housing & Health	62.44%	60%		N/A
Number of completed housing assistances	Housing & Health	471			
Number of houses of multiple occupation brought to compliance by private rented sector licensing	Housing & Health	31			

PRIORITY:

Embracing Growth & Enabling Infrastructure

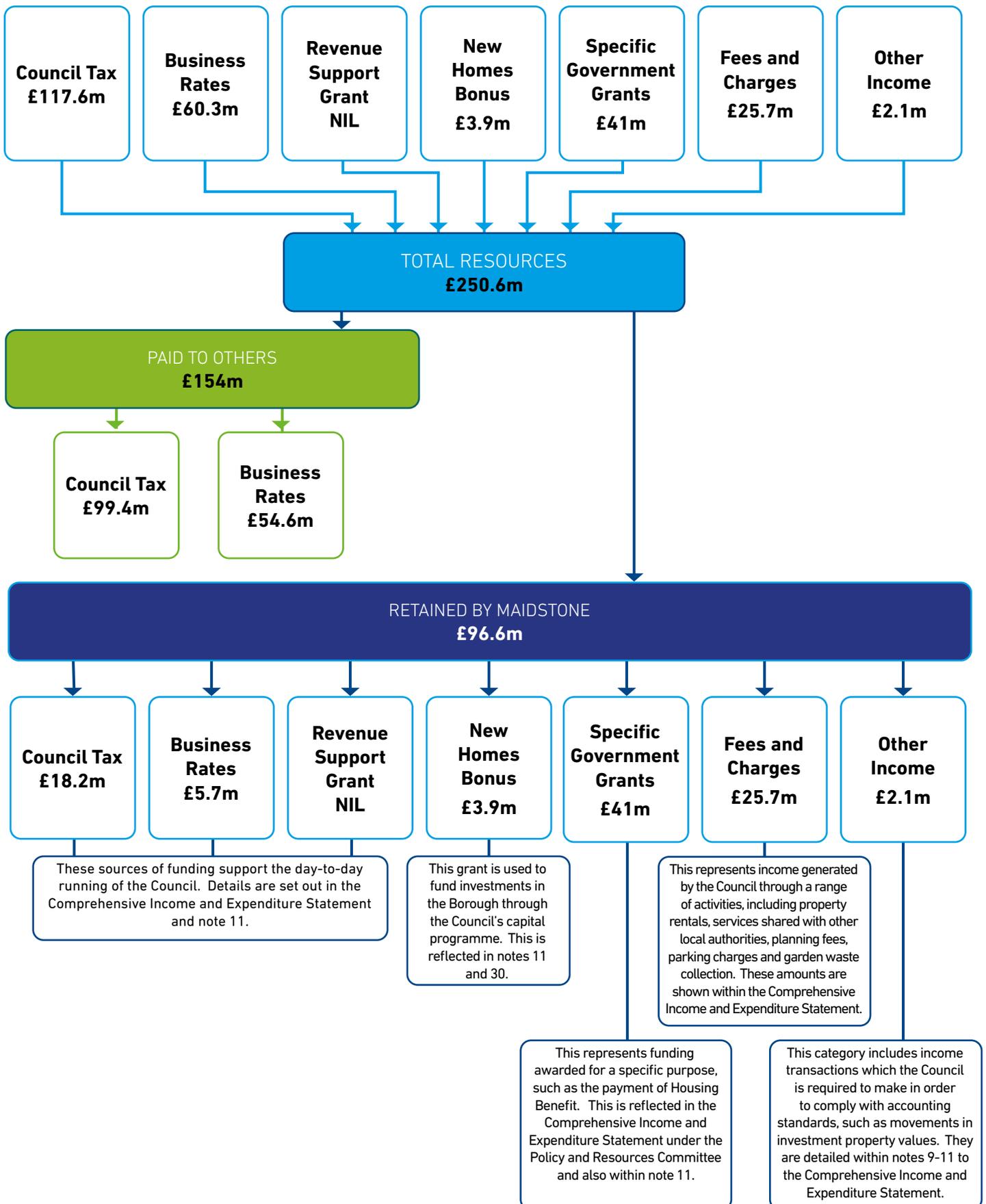
Performance Indicator	Service	Value	Target	Status	Last Year
Percentage of priority 1 enforcement cases dealt with in time (New PI 2019/20)	Development Management	100%	100%		N/A
Percentage of priority 2 enforcement cases dealt with in time (New PI 2019/20)	Development Management	95.10%	90%		N/A
Total number of complaints received within period (New PI 2019/20)	Development Management	566			N/A
Number of priority 1 enforcement cases dealt with in time	Development Management	15			N/A
Number of priority 2 enforcement cases dealt with in time	Development Management	524			N/A
Number of appeals in period	Development Management	93			
MBC success rate at planning appeals (rolling 6 months)	Development Management	66.67%	75%		
Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	Economic Development	325	180		
Percentage of new homes provided that are affordable	Economic Development	AWAITING DATA FOR THIS KPI	20%	N/A	N/A
Net additional homes provided	Development Management	AWAITING DATA FOR THIS KPI	973	N/A	N/A



Data only indicator - reported for information but no target set *Does not include data for February & March

Financial Performance

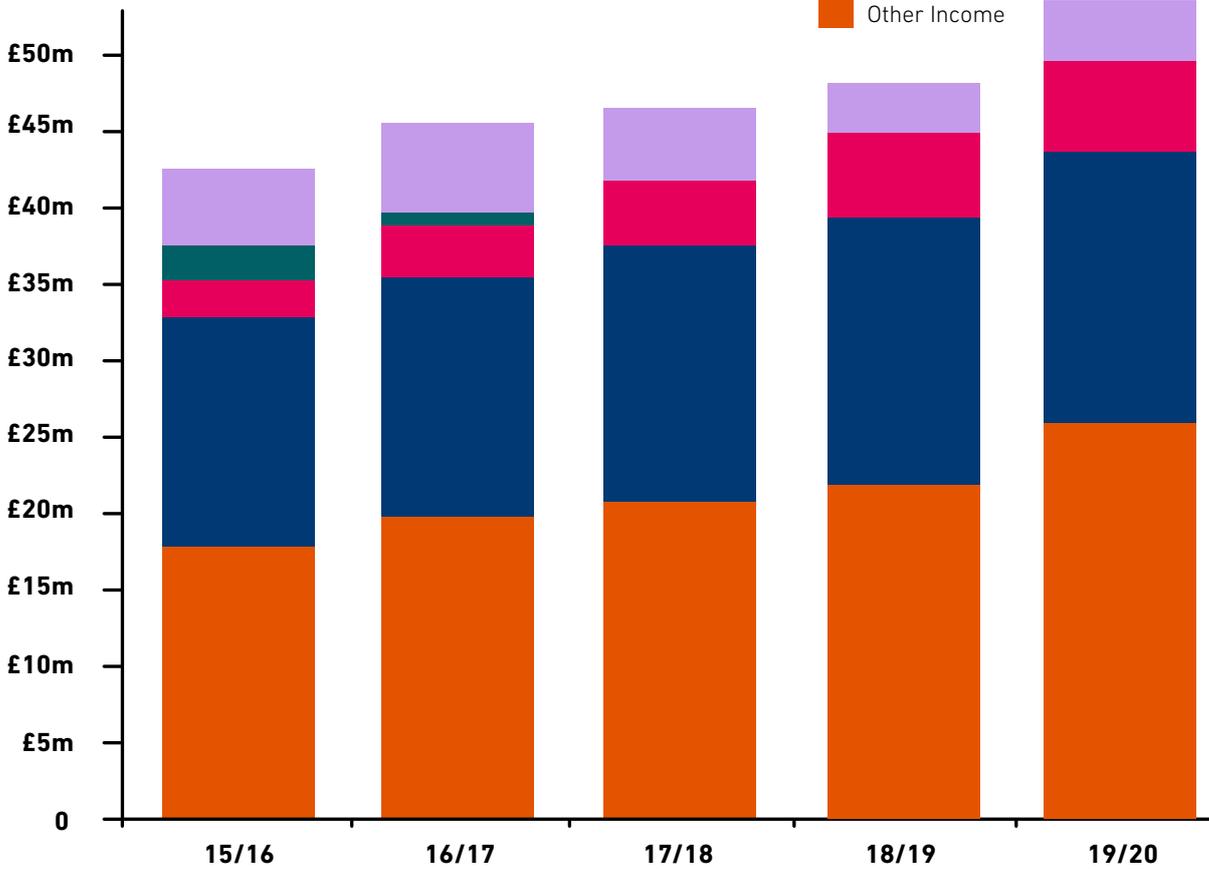
Maidstone Council's financial turnover, including Council Tax and Business Rates collected on behalf of other local authorities and government, amounted to £251 million in 2019/20 (£246 million in 2018/19). The table below shows the flows of income and expenditure.



Income

The Council no longer receives Revenue Support Grant from central government. It depends on income generated locally in Maidstone, comprising Council Tax, our share of Business Rates, and Fees and Charges for the services that we provide.

- Non-ringfenced Government Grants
- Revenue Support Grant
- Business Rates
- Council Tax Income
- Other Income



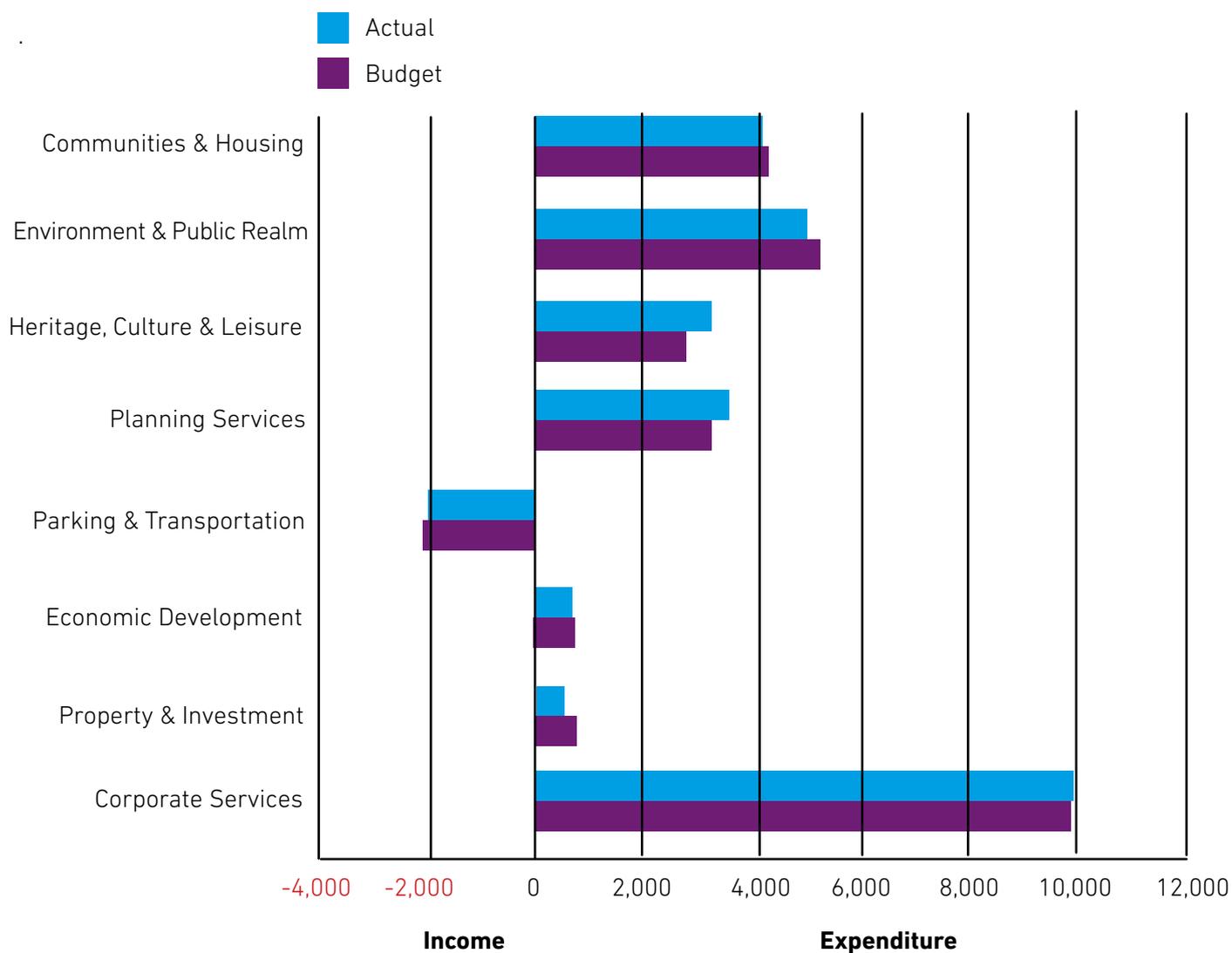
These sources of income are shown in note 11 to the Statement of Accounts, **Taxation & Non-Specific Grant Income**, and in the income totals for the relevant Committee in the **Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement**.



Expenditure

The Council spends money to meet its statutory obligations - delivering services like refuse collection, and making transfer payments such as housing benefit – and to meet our strategic priorities.

Delivering expenditure in line with budget is an important performance indicator. This objective was achieved in 2019/20. The outturn for the year was an overspend compared with the budget of £237,000 (1.2%).



The Council's income and expenditure is shown in the **Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement** in the Statement of Accounts.





Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet shows the value of the Council's assets less its liabilities at the end of the year. The net assets of the Council (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Council. The Council's net assets increased from £47.9 million to £62.0 million, mainly because of upward revaluations of the Council's property assets.

2018/19 £000		2019/20 £000
83,038	Property, Plant & Equipment	124,490
10,393	Heritage Assets	10,393
23,014	Investment Properties	23,270
2,647	Other Long Term Assets	715
32,935	Money owed to the Council	31,834
-29,150	Money owed by the Council	-50,946
-74,983	Long Term Liabilities	-77,709
47,894	Net Assets	62,047
15,659	Usable Reserves	17,193
32,235	Unusable Reserves	44,854
47,894	Total Reserves	62,047

Property, Plant and Equipment are assets held by the Council to deliver services or for administrative purposes. The increase reflects capital expenditure during the year. Further details of capital expenditure are shown overleaf.

Money owed to the Council includes amounts receivable from debtors and cash balances, being cash in hand, bank deposits and investments that are readily convertible to cash. The **Cash Flow Statement** provides an analysis of the movement in cash during the course of the year.

Balance Sheet (continued)

Money owed by the Council includes amounts payable to creditors, provisions for business rates appeals and grants received in advance. The Council currently has no long term borrowing.

Usable reserves include money set aside for specific purposes and sufficient contingency to cover unforeseen events. In particular, the Council has decided that the New Homes Bonus that it receives will be set aside for capital investment to improve and enhance the borough. £3.9 million of New Homes Bonus has been used in this way during the year (18/19 - £4.6 million).

Unusable Reserves will only become available at some future date, for example if assets are sold. Unusable reserves rose, reflecting the revaluations and change in pension liabilities described above.

Changes in Reserves are shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement in the Statement of Accounts.

Capital Expenditure

During the year, £34 million was spent on delivering the projects identified within the Council's capital programme.

These projects included:

- Expenditure on new housing developments at Union Street and Brunswick Street
- Purchase of properties for use as temporary accommodation for homeless people
- Acquisition of long leasehold interest in Lockmeadow Leisure Complex
- Public realm improvements in the Town Centre

The Council has an ambitious capital programme for the coming five years, totalling over £100 million. The largest element in the capital programme is the Council's housing and regeneration strategy. The programme will be funded both through New Homes Bonus receipts and other internal resources, and through external borrowing, in line with the regulatory requirement that such borrowing be affordable, prudent and sustainable.

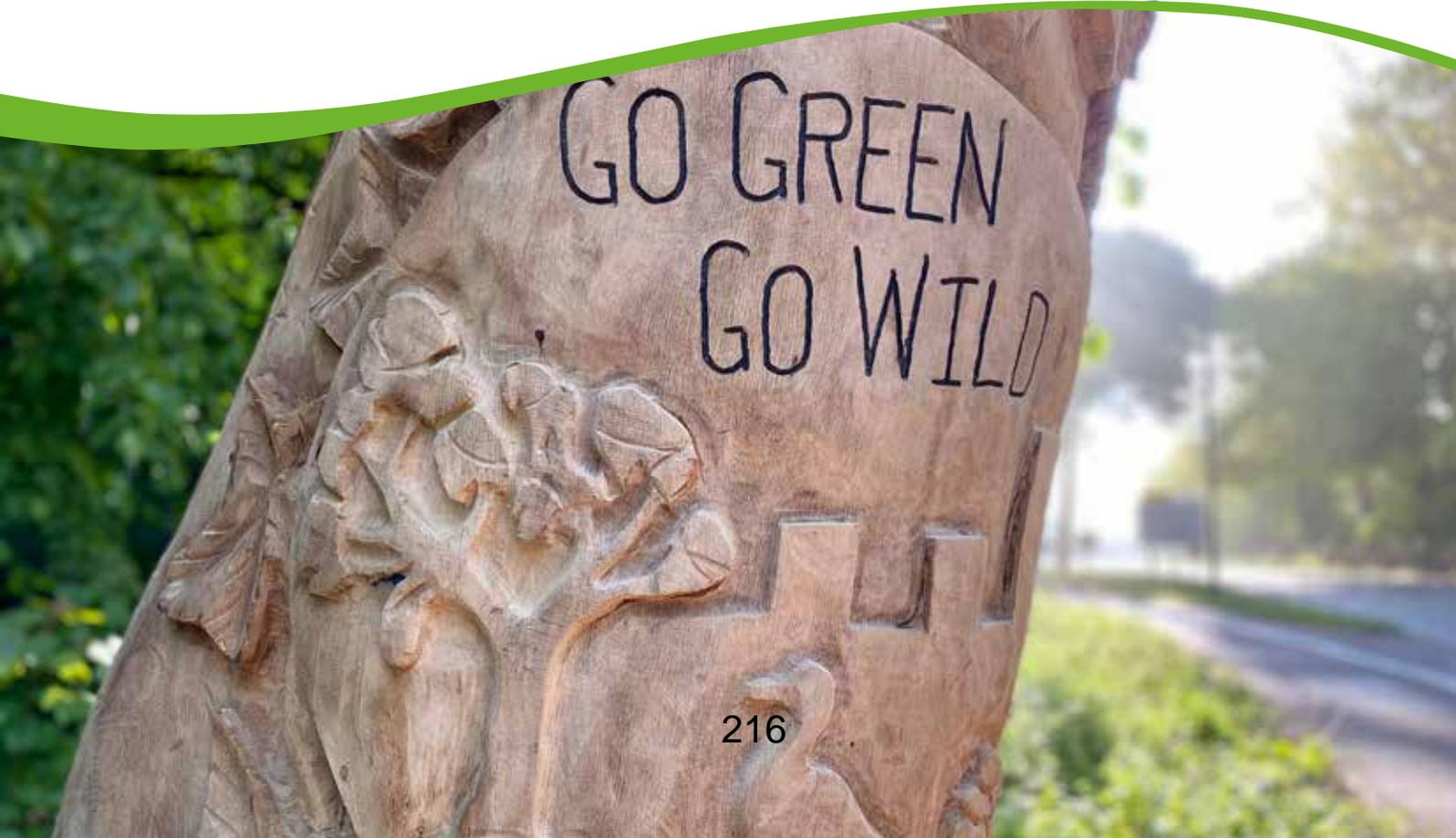
	Actual	Five year plan					Total
	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Housing Development and Regeneration	5,840	12,022	14,023	12,516	10,680	10,680	59,921
Temporary Accommodation	3,083	2,190					2,190
Disabled Facilities Grants	793	800	800	800	800	800	4,000
Flood Action Plan	0	300	300	300			900
Mote Park Improvements	297	3,650	840				4,490
Town Centre Regeneration	688	40					40
Property Investments	20,281	6,500	3,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	17,500
Kent Medical Campus Innovation Centre	1,535	8,250	1,500				9,750
Infrastructure delivery	0	600	600	600	600	600	3,000
Corporate Property	699	1,430	175	175	175	175	2,130
Biodiversity and Climate Change		1,000					1,000
Mail Bus Station Redevelopment	53	750					750
Section 106 Contributions	0	57	63	480	59	69	728
Other	1,113	676	495	309	270	270	2,020
	34,382	38,265	22,296	17,680	15,084	15,094	108,419

FUTURE PLANS

At the time of publishing the Statement of Accounts, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic remains very unclear. Whilst the Council is absolutely committed to fulfilling its responsibilities for service delivery and to supporting the community's recovery from the pandemic, the way in which it will do this remains to be determined. The Council's Strategic Plan objectives are currently being reviewed to consider how they might need to be refreshed in light of the pandemic.

The Strategic Plan depends on the Council's five year Medium Term Financial Strategy, which sets out how our strategic priorities will be delivered, given the financial resources available to the Council. The Council's resources are very largely generated locally, with most of its income coming from Council Tax and other local sources, including parking, planning fees and property income. Given the high dependence on self-generated income, which risks being affected adversely by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council is currently also reviewing the Medium Term Financial Strategy and will modify it as necessary.

The Council's capital programme is intended to support local public services and to help the Council achieve its strategic priorities for the borough. The Council plans to continue investing through the capital programme, to the extent that investments are sustainable in terms of our ability to fund interest payments and ultimately repayment of capital, and provided that resources are available whether through Public Works Loan Board borrowing or other sources of finance.



GO GREEN
GO WILD



RISK MANAGEMENT

The Council manages risk through a comprehensive risk management framework. This involves identification of risk at corporate and service levels, ownership of individual risks by named officers, development of controls to mitigate risks, and regular reporting. Quarterly reports are presented to the Corporate Leadership Team and bi-annual reports to Policy and Resources Committee. Members take an active interest in the risk management process and engage fully in discussion about individual risks.

The following table sets out what we have assessed as being the key corporate risks.

Ranking	Risk description	Risk rating	
		Inherent risk	After planned mitigations
1	Contraction in retail and leisure sectors	25	20
2=	Resurgence of current Covid-19 pandemic	20	16
2=	Environmental damage	16	16
4	Major emergency with national / international impact	15	15
5=	Financial restrictions	20	12
5=	Poor partner relationships	16	12
5=	IT security failure	12	12
8=	Housing pressures increasing	12	9
8=	Not fulfilling residential property responsibilities	12	9
8=	Short term impacts from end of Brexit transition period	12	9
8=	Building of incomplete communities	9	9
12=	Major project failure	12	8
12=	Governance failures	8	8
14=	Significant contract failure	12	6
14=	Loss of community engagement	12	6
14=	Not fulfilling commercial property responsibilities	8	6
17	Insufficient workforce capacity and skills	4	4



Appendix B

Corporate Risk Register

The Council's corporate risks are those risks which could impede the achievement of our strategic objectives. The corporate risk register was last reported to Members in June 2020.

Risks are assessed based on likelihood and impact, as defined on the following page. **Current** risk, considering any existing controls in place to manage the risk, is assessed initially, then **Mitigated** risk, taking account of planned further controls, is assessed.

A notional financial evaluation of mitigated risk for each of the risks on the Corporate Risk Register is set out below.

Risk	Financial impact			Likelihood %	Weighted £000
	Lower £000	Upper £000	Mid-point £000		
Major emergency	500	1,500	1,000	50	500
Resurgence of current Covid-19 outbreak	250	750	500	75	375
Environmental damage	250	750	500	75	375
Poor partner relationships	250	750	500	50	250
Financial restrictions	250	750	500	75	375
IT security failure	250	750	500	50	250
Loss of community engagement	25	75	50	50	25
Housing pressures increasing	125	375	250	50	125
Not fulfilling residential property responsibilities	125	375	250	50	125
Major project failure	250	750	500	25	125
Contraction in retail and leisure sectors	250	750	500	95	475
Significant contract failure	125	375	250	25	63
Building of incomplete communities	125	375	250	50	125
Short-term Brexit impacts	125	375	250	50	125
Governance failures	250	750	500	25	125
Insufficient workforce capacity and skills	25	75	50	25	12
Not fulfilling commercial property responsibilities	125	375	250	25	63
Total Weighted Financial Impact					£3,513

Risk Impact

Level	Service	Reputation	H&S	Legal	Financial	Environment
Catastrophic (5)	Ongoing failure to provide an adequate service	Perceived as a failing authority requiring intervention	Responsible for death	Litigation almost certain and difficult to defend Breaches of law punishable by imprisonment	Uncontrollable financial loss or overspend over £500k	Permanent, major environmental or public health damage
Major (4)	Failure to deliver Council priorities Poor Service, 5+ days disruption	Significant adverse national publicity	Fails to prevent death, causes extensive permanent injuries or long term sick	Litigation expected and uncertain if defensible Breaches of law punishable by significant fines	Financial loss or overspend greater than £250k	Long term major public health or environmental incident (1+ yrs)
Moderate (3)	Unsatisfactory performance Service disrupted 3-5 days	Adverse national publicity of significant adverse local publicity	Fails to prevent extensive permanent injuries or long term sick	Litigation expected but defensible Breaches of law punishable by fines	Financial loss or overspend greater than £50k	Medium term major public health or environmental incident (up to 1 yr)
Minor (2)	Marginal reduction in performance Service disrupted 1-2 days	Minor adverse local publicity	Medical treatment required Long term injuries or sickness	Complaint or litigation possible Breaches of regulations or standards	Financial loss or overspend greater than £10k	Short term public health or environmental incident (weeks)
Minimal (1)	No performance reduction Service disruption up to 1 day	Unlikely to cause adverse publicity	First aid level injuries	Unlikely to cause complaint Breaches of local procedures	Financial loss or overspend under £10k	Environmental incident with no lasting detrimental effect

Risk Likelihood

Level	Probability	Description
Almost Certain (5)	90% +	Without action is likely to occur; frequent similar occurrences in local government / Council history
Probable (4)	60% - 90%	Strong possibility; similar occurrences known often in local government / Council history
Possible (3)	40% - 60%	Might occur; similar occurrences experienced in local government / Council history
Unlikely (2)	10% - 40%	Not expected; rare but no unheard of occurrence in local government / Council history
Rare (1)	0% - 10%	Very unlikely to occur; no recent similar instances in local government / Council history

**REVENUE ESTIMATE 2021/22 to 2025/26
STRATEGIC REVENUE PROJECTION - ADVERSE**

2020/21 £000		2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
16,817	COUNCIL TAX	16,296	16,788	17,295	17,817	18,355
3,260	RETAINED BUSINESS RATES	3,097	3,097	3,097	3,097	3,097
1,210	BUSINESS RATES GROWTH	0		180	362	546
	COLLECTION FUND ADJUSTMENT					
21,287	PROJECTED NET BUDGET	19,393	19,885	20,572	21,276	21,998
21,709	OTHER INCOME - EXISTING	21,924	15,731	17,072	18,781	19,920
	FORECAST CHANGE IN INCOME	-5,603	493	906	1,139	1,173
42,996	TOTAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE	35,713	36,109	38,549	41,196	43,091
41,314	CURRENT SPEND	42,996	35,713	36,109	38,549	41,196
	INFLATION & CONTRACT INCREASES					
1,013	PAY, NI & INFLATION INCREASES	1,401	1,471	1,536	1,603	1,675
	EXTERNAL BUDGET PRESSURES					
150	PENSION DEFICIT FUNDING	40	40	150	150	150
	LOCAL PRIORITIES					
24	GROWTH TO MEET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES					
10	ADDITIONAL GROWTH AGREED BY P&R	-10				
	REPROFILE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW		100	-280	60	120
	OTHER SERVICE PRESSURES					
1,870	PROVISION FOR MAJOR CONTRACTS	893	646	500	583	
	REVENUE COSTS OF CAPITAL PROGRAMME			562		
	CONTINGENCY FOR FUTURE PRESSURES	-1,589				
50	GENERAL GROWTH PROVISION	50	50	50	50	50
44,431	TOTAL PREDICTED REQUIREMENT	43,781	38,021	38,626	40,996	43,190
-1,435	SAVINGS REQUIRED	-8,068	-1,912	-77	200	-100
1,611	EXISTING SAVINGS	890	603	200	0	0
-89	NEW AND AMENDED SAVINGS / (GROWTH)	0	0	0	0	0
87	SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	-7,178	-1,309	123	200	-100

**REVENUE ESTIMATE 2021/22 to 2025/26
STRATEGIC REVENUE PROJECTION - NEUTRAL**

2020/21 £000		2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
16,817	COUNCIL TAX	16,725	17,315	17,926	18,559	19,214
3,260	RETAINED BUSINESS RATES	3,260	3,325	3,392	3,459	3,529
1,210	BUSINESS RATES GROWTH	605	0	180	362	546
	COLLECTION FUND ADJUSTMENT					
21,287	PROJECTED NET BUDGET	20,589	20,640	21,498	22,380	23,288
21,709	OTHER INCOME	21,924	17,967	20,264	21,562	22,296
	FORECAST CHANGE IN INCOME	-3,367	1,449	495	734	660
42,996	TOTAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE	39,146	40,056	42,257	44,676	46,244
41,314	CURRENT SPEND	42,996	39,146	40,056	42,257	44,676
	INFLATION & CONTRACT INCREASES					
1,013	PAY, NI & INFLATION INCREASES	978	1,008	1,038	1,070	1,102
	EXTERNAL BUDGET PRESSURES					
150	PENSION DEFICIT FUNDING	40	40	150	150	150
	LOCAL PRIORITIES					
24	GROWTH TO MEET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES					
10	ADDITIONAL GROWTH AGREED BY P&R	-10				
	REPROFILE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW		100	-280	60	120
	OTHER SERVICE PRESSURES					
	PROVISION FOR MAJOR CONTRACTS			500		
1,870	REVENUE COSTS OF CAPITAL PROGRAMME	893	646	562	583	
	CONTINGENCY FOR FUTURE PRESSURES	-1,589				
50	GENERAL GROWTH PROVISION	50	50	50	50	50
44,431	TOTAL PREDICTED REQUIREMENT	43,359	40,990	42,076	44,169	46,099
-1,435	SAVINGS REQUIRED	-4,213	-934	181	507	146
1,611	EXISTING SAVINGS	890	603	200	0	0
-89	NEW AND AMENDED SAVINGS / (GROWTH)	0	0	0	0	0
87	SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	-3,323	-331	381	507	146

**REVENUE ESTIMATE 2021/22 to 2025/26
STRATEGIC REVENUE PROJECTION - FAVOURABLE**

2020/21 £000		2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
16,817	COUNCIL TAX	17,153	17,846	18,567	19,318	20,295
3,260	RETAINED BUSINESS RATES	3,423	3,526	3,631	3,740	3,852
1,210	BUSINESS RATES GROWTH	1,210	0	180	362	546
	COLLECTION FUND ADJUSTMENT					
21,287	PROJECTED NET BUDGET	21,786	21,372	22,379	23,420	24,693
21,709	OTHER INCOME - EXISTING	21,924	20,073	22,168	23,552	24,235
	FORECAST CHANGE IN INCOME	-1,261	1,247	581	683	761
42,996	TOTAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE	42,449	42,692	45,127	47,655	49,689
41,314	CURRENT SPEND	42,996	42,449	42,692	45,127	47,655
	INFLATION & CONTRACT INCREASES					
1,013	PAY, NI & INFLATION INCREASES	534	534	545	557	568
	EXTERNAL BUDGET PRESSURES					
150	PENSION DEFICIT FUNDING	40	40	150	150	150
	LOCAL PRIORITIES					
24	GROWTH TO MEET STRATEGIC PRIORITIES					
10	ADDITIONAL GROWTH AGREED BY P&R	-10				
	REPROFILE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW		100	-280	60	120
	OTHER SERVICE PRESSURES					
	PROVISION FOR MAJOR CONTRACTS			500		
1,870	REVENUE COSTS OF CAPITAL PROGRAMME	893	646	562	583	
	CONTINGENCY FOR FUTURE PRESSURES	-1,589				
50	GENERAL GROWTH PROVISION	50	50	50	50	50
44,431	TOTAL PREDICTED REQUIREMENT	42,914	43,819	44,219	46,527	48,543
-1,435	SAVINGS REQUIRED	-465	-1,127	908	1,128	1,147
1,611	EXISTING SAVINGS	890	603	200	0	0
-89	NEW AND AMENDED SAVINGS / (GROWTH)	0	0	0	0	0
87	SURPLUS / (DEFICIT)	425	-524	1,108	1,128	1,147

Agenda Item 20

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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