



Maidstone Borough Council Community Development Strategy 2012- 2016

Your community, our priority

1. Foreword by Councillor John A Wilson, Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services



I am delighted to introduce Maidstone Borough Council's Community Development Strategy 2012 – 2016. This Strategy is essentially about enabling Maidstone Borough's communities to develop through empowerment, learning and pro-actively embracing change while valuing and enhancing the best of what already exists.

Community development will make an important contribution to The Vision for Kent, the countywide strategy for the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of Kent's communities. This strategy supports the Vision's Ambition, 'Put the citizen in control' and will show how community development's values and skills can be used in practical ways to improve life for communities to help them become more active and capable of controlling their own circumstances and play a constructive role in society.

This is an ambitious document establishing a long-term commitment and approach to giving every child the best start in life and building the 'Big Society' - central government's vision for reshaping relationships between individual citizens and their communities to ensure communities play a central role in securing our vision for the borough and delivering the priorities of both the Borough Council's Strategic Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy.

In these challenging economic times, the Council must be sure of the value provided by community development. We acknowledge the benefit that community development brings to people's lives and recognise that it is our job, as a local authority, to ensure that as many people as possible have access to that benefit. The well-being that community development can bring to people right across the borough is even more important when the economic climate has such significant implications.

Everybody in Maidstone Borough can help achieve the strategy's objectives and its action plan shows how local organisations, communities, families and individuals can be involved. Fulfilling the activities identified within the Strategy is the key to success. However, it is vital to recognise that the Strategy represents the beginning of a process, rather than an end in itself and it is therefore essential that we continue to work together to take forward the values and principles of the Strategy and make our vision a reality.

2. Introduction

Community development is at the heart of the Council's aim to enable a vibrant and economically stable community. Engaging local people on a range of issues, so that they can influence the decisions affecting their local area and the development of services to meet local need will be at the heart of our approach. This strategy encourages strong partnerships between the Council, other agencies and residents and promotes good working relationships internally between councillors and council officers, in order to achieve better outcomes through more effective and targeted allocation of scarce resources.

The Strategy provides a strategic framework under which community development can take place in the borough. Community development, as we interpret it, is an effective means of achieving a better quality of life, encouraging personal development, responsibility, social interaction and active participation in the community as a whole. It gives focus to the skills, awareness, knowledge and experience of existing and potential partners working in the private, statutory, voluntary, community and faith sectors. By working together with these partners the Strategy will identify needs and gaps and secure new funding sources.

In five years' time the Borough Council, alongside partners, intends to have produced measurable differences to the lives of residents of the Borough in the programme areas within its brief. It will provide an important contribution toward improving skills and training, building healthier and sustainable communities and enhancing the quality of life of residents in the borough.

The Community Development Strategy priorities have been reviewed and determined using evidenced based information, including comparative county-wide performance and strategic needs assessments. No priority community groups (e.g. black and minority ethnic groups, disabled or older persons etc.) were highlighted as requiring focused intervention. Therefore, this Strategy will focus on the Borough's priority geographical communities as well as priority issues such as tackling disadvantage, reducing worklessness and building stronger communities. However, this may shift as the local context changes and it is our aim to realise improvement right across the whole social-economic spectrum.

This Strategy will play a full part in delivering a successful outcome to the county's 'Vision for Kent' strategic ambitions to; help the Kent economy grow; put the citizen in control and; tackle disadvantage. There will be in place a range of successful community partnerships delivering many of these outcomes, involving the public, private, voluntary, community sectors.

This document is a joint strategy between the Borough Council and local people, who will be involved in the development and delivery of this strategy at a number of levels, as planners, participants and beneficiaries. The diverse civic life of the borough, its communities and people are all central to the success and range of work that takes place. The skills and experiences of all these people and their right to participate, voice views and opinions is recognised and valued. Consultation and participation are

often talked about as separate approaches. However, they can more usefully be considered as part of a single continuum, which moves from non-engagement to true participation.

3. The national, regional and local context

- **New Political Leadership**

Britain has been going through a state of change, having come out of a recession and entered a new political environment. The election in May 2010 resulted in a hung parliament and a coalition government being formed between the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parties. The coalition government has stated their top priority is cutting Britain's budget deficit, "with the main burden of deficit reduction borne by reduced spending rather than increased taxes".

In May 2010, the Government published 'The Coalition: our programme for government' which outlined the key policy areas, with an emphasis on 'freedom, fairness and responsibility' creating the Big Society, giving citizens, communities and local government a central role in creating a new approach to sustainable, low carbon economic growth. To enable some of these changes, the Government has introduced the Localism Bill to devolve greater powers to Councils and neighbourhoods.

- **The bigger picture - Big Society and Localism**

The Big Society is central government's vision for reshaping relationships between individual citizens and their communities. This Strategy supports the development of communities to become more active and capable of controlling their own circumstances by playing a more constructive role in society. The backbone to the Big Society is the Localism agenda, which will see more power and freedoms being devolved from central to local government and local neighbourhoods.

At its core are three principles:

- Empowering Individuals and Communities
- Encouraging Social Responsibility
- Creating an Enabling and Accountable State

- **The Marmot Review**

The review chaired by Professor Sir Michael Marmot examined the social determinants of health inequalities and established a range of cross-cutting themes that included education, housing, employment and social well-being. The review established six actions:

- Give every child the best start in life
- Enable all children young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- Create fair employment and good work for all
- Ensure healthy standard of living for all
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention

The review identified that significant savings across a range of budgets as well as major improvements in community health and well being could be

achieved. Furthermore the review stated that delivering these policy objectives will require action by central and local government, the NHS, the third and private sectors and community groups.

National policies will not work without effective local delivery systems. The review concluded that effective local delivery requires effective participatory decision-making at local level. This can only happen by empowering individuals and local communities.

- **Local context: Maidstone the place**

Maidstone is an exceptionally green Borough with a number of parks, the largest of which is Mote Park, which is Grade II on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and home to thriving rugby and cricket clubs. There are numerous smaller parks and squares within the town and villages which have benefited from a major playground and sports facility investment programme in recent years. We recognise the importance of maintaining a quality environment for residents including our heritage and conservation areas. The attractive countryside offers high quality landscape and biodiversity and a wide range of informal recreation opportunities.

Maidstone Borough is considered a good place to live and work with high rates of employment, relatively low levels of adults claiming incapacity benefits and a higher proportion of residents who have a degree than the South East average.

Larger numbers of people commute into than out of the Borough. The Borough has a very mixed business sector with large numbers of small and medium size businesses with particular strengths in professional services (law and accountancy) and construction. There is a growing media industry led by Maidstone Studios and the Kent Messenger Group. Maidstone has an extensive further education campus (Mid Kent College) and a higher education offer with both the University for the Creative Arts and Mid Kent College seeking to increase their range of courses and facilities.

Mid Kent College is widening the range of courses and facilities it provides as part of a £23 million redevelopment of Maidstone' Oakwood Park Campus. This major project is due to commence in 2012/13 and the College is one of just a handful of UK further education colleges currently investing in a major capital scheme. Over the next three years the University for Creative Arts will be expanding the broadcast media courses being delivered at Maidstone Studios.

Residents living in the Borough have relatively high wages (although many higher earners commute out of the Borough to achieve these). Maidstone came out as the top destination for business in the 2010 study of locations for business in Kent.

Transport links are generally good although rail travel could still be improved. 2011 saw the introduction of High Speed services from the Maidstone west to St. Pancras. Rail journey times to London from some of the smaller rural towns (Staplehurst and Marden) are as low as 40 minutes. The Borough is well served by the motorway network with the M20 and M2 both providing links to the M25 and the Channel Ports. The international high speed railway stations at Ebbsfleet (15 mins) and Ashford (25 mins)

are also extremely accessible. The Council is pleased that an extension to the Thameslink network is being proposed to provide a direct link to London from Maidstone. With regard to travelling in and around the Borough by car, congestion is an issue particularly at peak time in the town centre. The bus transport network serving Maidstone town is relatively strong whilst rural transport presents distinct challenges. Road safety is a concern for Maidstone, with the poorest record in Kent. Following a scrutiny review of road safety, the Council will be supporting the Safer Maidstone Partnership in taking initiatives forward to address this issue.

Maidstone's Local Strategic Partnership carried out work in 2010 looking at how public money is spent locally. It has identified that £602 million has been spent in Maidstone in 2010 by various bodies including Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Kent Police and the local Primary Care Trust. Just over 35% of the money is spent on health and social wellbeing, nearly 17% is spent on education and 15% on housing.

In November 2011, the Maidstone Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was replaced by the Maidstone Locality Board, which draws together local public services for greater effectiveness and efficiency to oversee and shape the local delivery of services.

The key difference between the LSP and Locality Board will result in a greater input from county and district councillors, but with representation from the wider public sector, including Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, NHS, the voluntary and community sector and the business community. The first formal meeting of the Maidstone Locality Board was held on 20 January 2012.

- **Local issues – a snapshot**

72% of the borough's population live in the Maidstone urban area with the remaining 28% living in the surrounding rural area and settlements.

Overall Maidstone has a very similar age profile to the county average. Maidstone has a slightly higher proportion of people in the 25-59 age groups, and a smaller proportion of teenagers and retired people compared to the Kent County Council average. However, the population of elderly residents (85 years plus) has risen year on year from 2,700 in 2004 to 3,400 in 2011. 94.6% of Maidstone's population is of white ethnic origin, with the remaining 5.4% being classified as of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) origin. The proportion of Maidstone's population classified as BME is lower than the county average of 6.3%.

In 2007, Maidstone Borough was ranked as the 9th most deprived district in Kent (out of 12 districts, with the most deprived being ranked 1). Nationally, Maidstone ranks 248th out of 354 local authority districts in England. This rank places it just outside of England's top 60% deprived authorities. The county rank of Maidstone has remained at number 9 between 2004 and 2007. On the national ranking, Maidstone has moved up 22 positions from 270th in 2004 to 248th in 2007. This indicates that Maidstone's level of deprivation has increased, relative to other areas in England.

Maidstone’s unemployment rate (2.4%) is lower than the county average (2.9%) and much lower than the national rate (3.6%). Unemployment rates vary across the borough, with the lowest in Bearsted ward and highest Park Wood ward. The majority (28%) of those unemployed are aged 18-24, and this group is most likely to exhibit risky behaviour in terms of alcohol, drugs and vehicle crime and other related anti-social behaviour.

Life expectancy for men and women living in the borough is comparable with the regional average. However, life expectancy for men in the most deprived wards is five years below the borough average and for women is 2.4 years lower.

Maidstone has a higher estimated percentage of obese adults than the England average – at 26.5 per cent (24.2% nationally). Reception year children classified as obese is similar to the England average, but school aged children spending at least 3 hours a week on physical activity at school is 11.3% below the national average.

4. The Corporate priorities

The Council is committed to and shares the vision for Maidstone, identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2020:

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

The Council has identified the following three priorities and six outcomes to deliver the vision for Maidstone over the next four years:

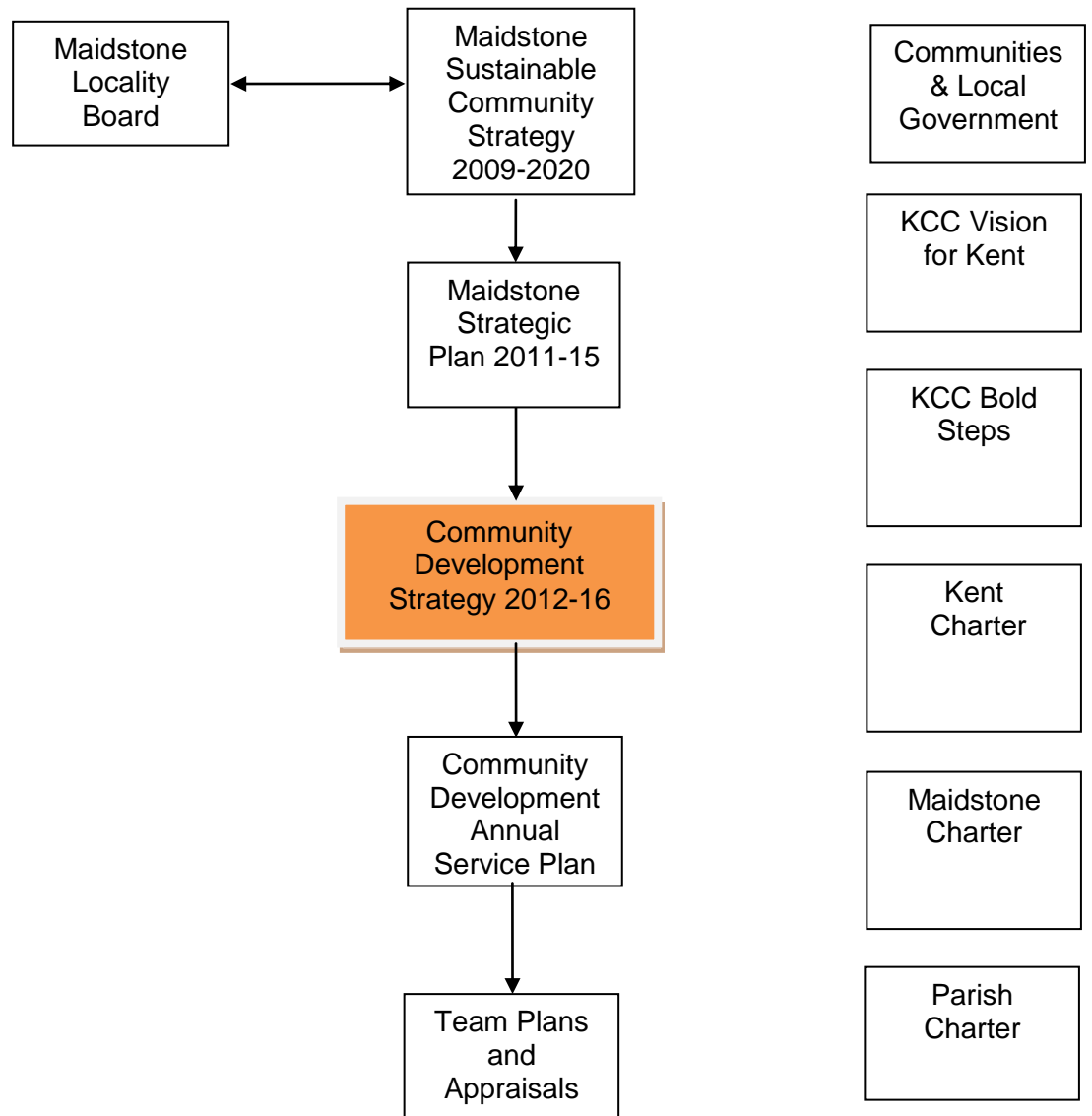
Priorities	Outcomes
1. For Maidstone to have a growing economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A transport network that supports the local economy • A growing economy with rising employment, catering for a range of skill sets to meet the demands of the local economy
2. For Maidstone to be a decent place to live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decent, affordable housing in the right places across a range of tenures • Continues to be a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit to Borough
3. Corporate and Customer Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced • The Council will continue to have value for money services that residents are satisfied with

The Community Development Strategy will contribute to the strategic objectives set out in the Strategic Plan (2011-15), the five year delivery plan for the Borough Council. The Strategic Plan identifies the Community Development Strategy as the key delivery vehicle for achieving the outcome; *"By 2015 residents in Maidstone are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced."*

Under this outcome the Strategic Plan sets out the role of the Community Development strategy as working to;

- Reduce inequalities with communities through preventative action
- Promote active citizenship – to facilitate and support increased involvement by local people in decision making and involvement in their neighbourhoods
- Review the Park Wood Planning for Real activity to inform further work and activities supporting communities in identifying and meeting their needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities
- Implement meaningful community commissioning of services for local people

5. How the Community Development Strategy links with other plans and strategies



6. Priorities and outcomes for this strategy.

Priority 1: Tackling disadvantage

Outcomes – What we plan to achieve?

- 1a. Improve early years development to enable people to develop to their full capability and have control over their lives
- 1b. Reduce the gaps in health inequalities to enhance the health and quality of life of all Maidstone citizens.

Why is this important to Maidstone?

- By enabling young people to develop their life skills they will be more ready to achieve better whilst in education, become ready for employment and learn those skills and have positive aspirations to pass onto their children
- The Marmot report identified that by age 6 the attainment of a child from a poor socio economic background with high cognitive skills will be overtaken by a child with poorer cognitive ability from a better off background
- 50% of offenders leaving prison are unable to read and write – improving basic education attainment will reduce the cost of re-offending and crime
- Life expectancy for men in the most deprived wards is five years below the borough average and for women is 2.4 years lower
- Maidstone has a higher estimated percentage of obese adults than the England average – at 26.5 per cent (24.2% nationally). Reception year children classified as obese is similar to the England average, but school aged children spending at least 3 hours a week on physical activity at school is 11.3% below the national average
- Kent has seen an overall reduction in teenage pregnancy of 18%, compared to a national reduction of 19%; however Maidstone figures have increased by 11%. However, rates in hotspots have significantly reduced.

Actions – What we will do in order to achieve the stated outcomes

Outcome	What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date
1a.	Increase targeted support for families with children aged 0-3, particularly the most vulnerable and deprived	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary and community sector • Children's Centres and Groups • Parenting Groups 	By December 2015
1a.	Organise and deliver a stakeholder event celebrating children's services in the Maidstone borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Children's Trust • Maidstone schools/colleges • Voluntary and community sector 	31 March 2012
1b.	Develop and deliver a sustainable programme of preventative health work focusing on the Borough's health priorities, including obesity, smoking,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical Commissioning Consortia • NHS Trusts • Health and Wellbeing Board 	31 March 2016

	substance misuse, sexual health, self harm and mental health in priority areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Children's Centres • Voluntary and community sector • Ward councillors 	
1b.	Develop a referrals process whereby GPs can refer patients to Community Development's health prevention programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Trainers • Clinical Commissioning Consortia • NHS Trusts • Health and Wellbeing Board • Voluntary and community sector • Maidstone Leisure Centre • Zeroth Gym 	By 30 April 2012

Performance measures

- Reduce percentage of obese adults (currently 26.5% of Maidstone adult population) to the national average of 24.2% by 2020.
- Increase physically active children (currently 46.2%) to the national average of 55.1% by 2020.
- Reduce hospital stays for self-harm (currently 226 admissions per annum), to the national average of 198 by 2020.

Priority 2: Reduce Worklessness

Outcomes – What we plan to achieve?

- 2a. Enable people who are not in employment or training to aspire to and engage in positive activities leading to employment
- 2b. Numbers of young people engaged in apprenticeships and volunteering are increased

Why is this important to Maidstone?

- Unemployment in the borough is increasing. As at January 2012, 2,611 people (2.7%) of Maidstone's population were registered unemployed.
- 760 (31.1%) of 18 to 24 year olds are claiming unemployment benefit.
- 5.59% of 16 to 18 year olds are categorised as Not in Education, Employment or Training compared to the county average of 5.66%.

Unemployment is a national issue and a particular issue for Maidstone Borough Council to tackle in conjunction with our partners. The Government has set up Community Budget projects in a number of areas and the Maidstone Locality Board has adopted the approach as a tool to tackling six wards of Maidstone which have unemployment rates almost twice as high as the Kent average.

The Community Budget project seeks to improve the lifestyle of those households who pose the most problems for members of their own family as well as the communities in which they live. Often characterised by intergenerational

unemployment these households account for less than 1% of the population but can cost central and local agencies up to £330,000 a year.

Maidstone's Community Budgets project will focus on families who have:

- Household unemployment/NEET 16-18 year olds
- At least one adolescent aged 13-18 experiencing difficulties (school non-attendance, exclusion, emotional/behavioural, and offending)
- Parental need or existing involvement in adult services (Police, Probation, mental health, social services)

The community development function ensures priority communities are able to maximise these opportunities, through facilitating appropriate capacity building, learning, training and volunteering opportunities to give people the confidence, experience and support to access employment opportunities working alongside other agencies such as Job Centre Plus, the academies, the new Senacre Skills Centre, Mid Kent College and voluntary and community groups such as Tomorrow's People.

Actions – What we will do in order to achieve the stated outcomes

Outcome	What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date
2a.	Establish a Community Budgets pilot in Maidstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maidstone Locality Board • Maidstone Local Children's Trust Board 	31 March 2016
2a.	Organise and deliver a Worklessness stakeholder event addressing sustainable employment through targeted support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maidstone Locality Board • Maidstone schools/colleges • Business Forum • Voluntary and community sector • Connexions • Registered Providers • Kent Probation 	30 April 2012
2b.	Develop a training action plan for young people (including work placements, apprenticeships, mentoring and volunteering)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maidstone Locality Board • Maidstone schools/colleges • Business Forum • Voluntary and community sector • Connexions • Registered Providers • Kent Probation 	30 June 2014

Performance measures

- Reduce percentage of 17 year olds and under claiming unemployment benefit, currently 0.4% to the county average of 0.3%.
- Reduce the percentage of 16 to 18 year olds categorised as Not in Education, Employment or Training, currently 5.59% to 5.0%.

Priority 3: Building stronger communities

Outcomes – What we plan to achieve?

- 3a. An increase in local people actively participating and influencing local community provision and delivery
- 3b. A reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour

Why is this important to Maidstone?

- Progressing developments in priority areas of deprivation – community development supports the engagement of local residents, agencies and partners in neighbourhood planning, which is vital to ensuring that physical regeneration of particular areas meets the identified needs of the local community
- Tackling crime and instances of anti-social promotes vibrant, active, and safe communities in which businesses can be attracted to and thrive

Actions – What we will do in order to achieve the stated outcomes

Outcome	What we plan to do	Key partners	Target date
3a.	Develop a neighbourhood action approach within priority communities (Park Wood, Shepway North, Shepway South and High Street Wards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maidstone Locality Board• Park Wood Neighbourhood Action Group• Residents• Ward councillors• Other partners – schools/children's centres	Park Wood: By 31 August 2012 Roll-out completed by 31 October 2016
3a.	Finalise model for engaging residents in priority areas in neighbourhood management/ neighbourhood policing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kent County Council• Kent Police• Golding Homes and other registered providers• Ward councillors	Pilot delivered and evaluated by 31 August 2012
3b.	Increase opportunities for children and young people to participate in community development activities to increase positive outcomes e.g. improved literacy and reduced levels of antisocial behaviour in priority areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maidstone Locality Board• Sports and play clubs/facilitators• Maidstone School Sport Partnership• West Kent Arts Partnership• Children's Centres• Community	By 31 March 2015

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent Archives and Library Service • Ward councillors 	
3b.	Implement diversionary activities and projects for young people to tackle ASB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer Maidstone Partnership • Voluntary groups • Contender - (Amateur Boxing) • Zeroth Gym 	31 March 2014

Performance measures

- Increase number of residents participating in Neighbourhood Action Planning as a percentage of the ward population, currently 11.6% to 30% by 2016.
- Reduce ASB incidents per 1,000 population, currently 22.67%, to 20% 2016.
- Reduce first time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10 to 17, currently 13.7% to Kent-wide comparison (12.8%) by 2020.

7. Implementation and monitoring arrangements

Community Development operates within a Council-wide performance management system which is structured around effective political and managerial leadership, a clear vision, action centred service planning, regular performance reporting and constructive challenge. This Strategy responds to other key strategies such as the Borough Council's Economic Development, Housing and Homelessness strategies. To ensure that the Community Development Strategy is delivered, the Council will review and monitor the Action Plan through various methods:

- The strategy's action plan has been developed by Maidstone Borough Council and its partners and the delivery of the action plan will be shared by the partners. Maidstone Borough Council will take responsibility for driving this work and for monitoring delivery. We will present an annual report and commentary on progress to achieve the vision and deliver the strategy's action plan, using this as an opportunity to challenge partners, to renew commitment to the plan and to update and increase the ambition of the plan when opportunities arise.
- Clear and effective communication with wider audiences who would be the future partners and stakeholders for delivery will increase the strategy's prospects for success. The strategy is a bold statement of intent and the foundation of a cohesive, partnership approach towards community development in the borough. The action plan links directly to the Borough Council's overarching Communications and Engagement Strategy, providing common ground on which to build partnerships and will help all contributors to broker discussions with new partners.
- Using the Covalent performance monitoring system, the Community Development performance indicators and action progress will be reported quarterly to Senior Management Team, Portfolio Holder and Cabinet.

- Satisfaction surveys - Community Development seeks the views of our customers and stakeholders through questionnaires.
- This strategy will be updated annually to ensure any relevant changes are taken into account and that the action plans are updated.

8. Equality and Diversity

Maidstone Borough Council believes everyone should be treated fairly and with respect. The Council recognises that diversity issues will impact on planning and delivery of services and we are committed to ensuring that our work has a positive impact for everyone in the Borough, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation or religious belief. We welcome the positive contribution that an increasingly diverse population will make to the future prosperity of Maidstone. Discrimination is a reality for some people in the Borough. Because of race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and other factors, people are denied opportunities, have difficulty accessing services, and suffer inequalities. We want to create an inclusive and supportive environment that offers equal opportunities.

Maidstone Borough Council will assess and monitor the relevance and effect of the Community Development Strategy on equalities through its Equality Impact Assessment. Our commitment to equality and diversity includes a commitment to promoting social inclusion for people who are disadvantaged by life circumstances or conditions, including the problems that can be associated with living within areas of deprivation, and with experiencing periods of unemployment, homelessness or other such difficulties.

Through this Strategy, Maidstone Borough Council commits to;

- Monitoring the Community Development Strategy's Equalities Impact Assessment on an annual basis.
- Ensuring all new Borough Council strategies are accessible and easy to read.
- Supporting the Maidstone Mobility Focus Group and Maidstone District Partnership Group (Learning Disabilities) to ensure their views are fed into the development and actions of this Strategy.