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LETTER FROM THE LEADER

As Leader of Maidstone Borough Council I am determined to ensure that the people of Maidstone are able to access and take up the opportunities that arise from change.

We have ambitious plans for the town and borough as a whole. We are investing in infrastructure, health and leisure, housing and our environment. The funding and delivery of projects such as the Innovation Centre will make us an even more attractive place for business and inward investment.

Our commitment to supporting the retail high street will continue. We are committing to additional work alongside the Maidstone BID to regenerate the town, resulting in benefits which can be shared across the borough as a whole.

As well as greater local job opportunities, we are working to enable further investment in our transport infrastructure, as well as tackling air quality. This is important for the health and wellbeing of us all.

Our Strategic Plan sets out the priorities for us as a Council, as well as our vision for Maidstone as a place of opportunity and ambition, building on the borough’s reputation as an attractive area for people to live and work for existing and future generations.

The community is at the heart of all that we do at MBC – as reflected within this issue of Borough Insight.

Martin Cox
Cllr Martin Cox
Leader of the Council

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Cover image: With kind permission of Andrew Critchell, www.aviationphoto.co.uk

Andrew Critchell is an aviation photographer and author of A Tale of Ten Spitfires, which examines the individual combat histories of ten Spitfire VCs. Through first hand accounts, combat reports, unit diaries and more, the book provides a unique looking glass into the period, told via the experiences of the Spitfire pilots themselves, tracing their fates and those of the machines that they flew.
Traders smooth things over with Gabriel’s Hill resurfacing

With improvement works now drawing to completion on Gabriel’s Hill, Cllr David Naghi visited a number of retailers to discuss their experiences of the resurfacing project. Feedback was positive, with the general consensus from shop owners being that whilst inevitable disruption occurred, the finished result is a tangible upgrade to the look and feel of the area.

‘It was a perfect process for us – we’re very pleased with the new look, and feel it ties in very well. They just cracked on with it, and we were out here bringing the workers cups of tea. We love it.’
Adam Nesbitt, Cornell Jewellers

‘It was disruptive whilst it was happening, but now it looks lovely, we’re very pleased with the facelift it’s given the hill. We’ve been here for over 20 years, and with a 16th Century listed building, we take a lot of pride in the way the shop looks – this work enhances that for us. We were very excited to meet the Mayor. We were very touched that he spoke with brides and looked at gowns – he seems to know his stuff!’
Kathryn Lister, Perfection Bridal and Menswear

‘I think it is a vast improvement. Although it hasn’t happened without a few hiccups and disruption for traders, the end result is well worth it. I hope it will bring new business to this part of town.’
Damon Lau, Lau Hairdressers

Home to Cygnet and KIMs hospitals, and with a new state-of-the-art care home currently under construction for Care UK, the Kent Medical Campus is firmly establishing itself as a fully integrated centre of excellence for health, science and education in the South East.

Making the most of the opportunity to be part of a dynamic and forward-thinking initiative, Maidstone Borough Council has submitted a Reserved Matters planning application for an Innovation Centre: a four storey, 37,000 square foot co-working hub for Small and Medium-sized Entreprises in the medical sector.

The proposal comprises a range of flexible office spaces, meeting rooms, hot desking areas and a conference facility with roof terrace. It is anticipated that the centre will support around 270 jobs and generate a further £120m of additional gross value for the local economy. MBC has applied for substantial European Regional Development Fund monies to help deliver the project and hope to hear the outcome of this bid in spring 2019.

The building is intended to support business growth and encourage further entrepreneurship within the business capital of Kent, helping cement the core vision and development of the Kent Medical Campus as a whole.
A new adventure for Mote Park

Spring 2019 sees the opening of an exciting new activity area, which boasts a high rope Sky Trail, mini dinosaur golf course, climbing walls and Segway hire. For intrepid explorers and curious climbers, Mote Park’s brand new Adventure Zone will give big and little kids alike the chance to get amongst the tree tops and see the beautiful landscape from new heights.

Nestled amongst the existing trees, within the Grade II listed surroundings, the Sky Trail Navigator course gives thrill-seekers a safe way to clamber through a 2-level 10-pole rope system, an exhilarating Walk the Plank feature. In keeping with the heritage of the park, this attraction allows users to experience the trees close-up without affecting the tree roots or canopy.

The Sky Trail course will enable around 40 people per hour to enjoy the new adventure experience. The course includes options for participants to repeat their favourite sections, and ‘overtaking’ facilities avoid the bottlenecks so often encountered on other courses. The adventure area will also include an impressive 10-metre high, four person climbing tower, supplied and installed by Innovative Leisure.

The high energy Adventure Zone will be complemented by a new children’s playground and new skate park. The Adventure Zone facility will be operated by a commercial operator on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council, and forms part of MBC’s long term investments in improving the visitor experience across the borough.

For activity booking and pricing enquiries for the Mote Park Adventure Zone: www.moteparkadventure.com
Maidstone and Mid-Kent Mind (MMKM) is bringing it’s Wellbeing Café to those looking for mental health provision in Maidstone. Based upon a similar model to the successful service the charity already delivers in Ashford, the Wellbeing Café is designed to be accessed as a drop-in service by anyone who may benefit from peer to peer support. The service will offer people the opportunity to network with individuals with similar experiences and take part in wellbeing activities and games – all in a warm and welcoming environment. The service is aimed at those who are not in crisis, but who may benefit from additional out of hours support.

The service will run on Wednesdays from 5pm – 7:30pm, held at MMK Mind, 23 College Road, Maidstone, ME15 6YH. This location is a ten-minute walk from the Mall, and approximately fifteen minutes from Maidstone West train station.

The Wellbeing Café is a pilot service which will be available until the 31st March 2019. If the service proves popular, MMKM hopes to seek additional funding to continue providing the café service in the Maidstone area.

For more details, please email mindhelp@mmkmind.org.uk

No change? No problem!

Arriva passengers in Maidstone can now buy bus tickets in a brand new way, using secure contactless technology that allows travellers to pay using a credit or debit card, as well as Apple or Google pay.

To mark the official launch of the new initiative, a special event was held in Jubilee Square, with Cllr Martin Cox, Leader of Maidstone Borough Council, officially cutting the ribbon and becoming the first customer of the service.

Tay Arnold, Planning, Projects and Delivery Manager for Maidstone Borough Council, said: “MBC is pleased to see contactless payment being installed throughout Arriva’s fleet in Maidstone. This step reflects the positive work taking place between MBC and bus operators through the Quality Bus Partnership to ensure technological improvements are made to improve payment options and support modal choice throughout the borough.”

A warm welcome in the darkest moments

- From December until March, the Maidstone Winter Shelter provides hot food and overnight accommodation for those with nowhere to go.
- Supporting up to 15 service users a night, the team opens the doors of the Methodist Church in Union Street to rough sleepers from around the Maidstone area.
- Project workers provide shelter, provisions and company to those in need of a bed.

Powered by volunteers, the shelter urgently needs new recruits to register as project workers for the end of the 2019/2020 season. Even volunteering your time for one or two overnight sessions over the 13 week opening period can make a huge difference. To find out more about giving your time, contact the office on 01622 296450, email mcwsoffice@maidstoneshelter.org.uk, or visit www.maidstoneshelter.org.uk

www.maidstone.gov.uk
For over 30 years, the Maidstone Community Support Centre has been offering discounted office accommodation to local charities, providing them with a town centre base that they would otherwise struggle to afford. With around 45,000 people coming through the site each year, the Victorian building is a vibrant co-working space, where professionals in fields such as mental health, domestic abuse and offender rehabilitation can process their service users in a safe and welcoming environment.

"Everything is confidential for those who visit us, and everyone is treated exactly the same."

Maidstone Mediation has been resident in the building since the 1990s. Manager Kim Salisbury, says of the centre: “We were offered space in another office unit, free of charge, but we wanted to stay here. We can network with other charities, and sign-post our clients to other relevant services that are based here. Everything is confidential for those who visit us, and everyone is treated exactly the same. The facilities are ideal, with training rooms and a café – we have everything we need all in one place and it suits us very well.”

A charity itself, the MCSC is entirely self-funded, relying on income generated from businesses and good causes looking for somewhere to hold their gatherings. Although charges particularly favour those with not-for-profit status, commercial ventures can also take advantage of the town centre location and affordable rates for room hire, with hall space, meeting and training rooms ready for use. Some offices are available for start-ups who are willing to give back to the resident charities through volunteering or support.

The Maidstone Community Support Centre is located at 39-48 Marsham Street, Maidstone.
Flying High
AT HEADCORN AERODROME

For Flt Lt Antony ‘Parky’ Parkinson MBE, and Flt Lt Charlie Brown, keeping their feet on the ground is not something that comes naturally. Having both served in distinguished RAF careers, the famous fliers now soar through the skies as display pilots for Aero Legends. The Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr David Naghi, and local ward member Cllr Martin Round met with the aviation aces at their Headcorn Aerodrome HQ.

Mayor: So Parky, what led you to join the RAF at the age of 18?

Parky: I guess a love of flying. I’d watched every war movie, I’d made every Airfix kit – I loved aviation and to me it was a no brainer. As soon as I could I joined the Cadets, got my Pilot’s license when I was 17 through the RAF, and was fortunate enough to be selected just up the road at Biggin Hill. I was flying the Phantom F-4 when I was 21 years of age, and it was wonderful.

Mayor: Was there a family connection?

Parky: My grandfather was Royal Flying Corps, so flew in World War One – I don’t remember meeting him, he passed away when I was about three, but I remember getting his wings and his log books, so it was in the blood. Aviation is a wonderful thing.

Mayor: You could say you’re here today in his honour, in his memory.

Parky: Absolutely, and Charlie will back me up, it’s a real privilege for all of us to have met the veterans, the boys that flew these aircraft in war – we’re so lucky, we do the odd air show and we fly passengers in them when the weather’s nice, but what the boys did in these aircraft just beggars belief, they were so brave. That’s always with us when we fly them. There’s something magical, certainly about the Spitfire. The sound of it, the sight of it, brings out all those emotions, and it’s got a fond place in this country’s ethos – it’s testimony that people come and fly our beautiful two-seat Spitfire with us in Headcorn.

Mayor: Charlie, is there any place or areas that you particularly like flying over in Kent?

Charlie: I love flying where we are, out at Headcorn, and Hawkinge, where the Battle of Britain was fought, it doesn’t get better. And I’ve got an association with Kent, I was educated here.
Mayor: What makes flying at the Headcorn Aerodrome so special?

Parky: I think of all the air shows, and Charlie will have flown at more air shows certainly than most people in the world, it’s one of the most engaging. The take-off and landing and where you’re parking the aircraft is really nice and close to the crowd. The site is a lovely back-drop, the venue – it’s one of my favourite shows I think actually, Headcorn. There’s a really nice vibe to the show.

Charlie: It sounds strange but one of the most fundamental features of the show is that the sun is behind the cloud, so the aircraft are lit up, and you’re not squinting as you are sometimes at other airfields—the sun’s behind you and you can see the aircraft nicely. And as Parky said you’re very adjacent to the crowd, so Parky and I will get straight out of the aeroplane and go and speak to the crowd, just chat to people. I think that’s part of what you don’t get elsewhere.

It’s a lovely back drop to have the Downs there in the distance, it really is wonderful, there’s nothing out there that gives the game away that it’s not the 1940s.

Mayor: Is the Spitfire your ultimate choice of plane?

Parky: Yes! It’s very strange—you keep a diary of every sortie, every flight you’ve ever done, but without a doubt, the first time you write Spitfire in your log book it is ridiculously special. Every time you fly a Spitfire, and I really, really mean this, it is special. It never loses that magic – there is some ridiculous quality about that aircraft.

Charlie: It’s just the getting it airborne and getting it back down on the ground that’s the tricky bit!

Mayor: What has been your career highlight so far?

Parky: I’ve been so lucky in my RAF career. I flew with the Red Arrows for four years, and then ended up flying the Typhoon, a wonderful aircraft. I ended up flying a 1,000 hours on that – I was the first pilot to achieve that which was a milestone I was very proud of. I think though those are all trumped by my time flying the Spitfire and the Hurricane within the Battle of Britain Memorial Flights, and within the RAF flying their aircraft—we did multiple fly pasts, numerous occasions over London for various events. With the Red Arrows I flew with Concord for the Golden Jubilee of the Queen, in 2002, and that was the last time the Reds flew with Concord, which was pretty special. To have had the flying career that I’ve had, I absolutely realise I’ve been so, so lucky.

Charlie: I’ve flown 1,000 hours in Tornados, 1,000 hours in Spitfires, and I picked that up in 2015 so now I’m on my way to the second 1,000.

Mayor: What is the record?

Charlie: I think I’ve probably got the most.

Mayor: The most experienced Spitfire pilot in the world and you’re in Headcorn!

Charlie: Who would have thought when I got on the train to Wye College that it would all turn out the way it has? Somehow my life has gone full circle and I’ve ended up back down in Kent. There’s nowhere I’d rather be than here, taking part in operations and meeting our guests, and everything else that goes with it.

WIN a signed copy of Spitfire by John Nichol

Visit Aero Legends at www.aerolegends.co.uk
Green Fingered?
Get yourself a brown bin!

The brown bin service is a fortnightly collection of your garden waste, available by subscription.

We offer two sizes of brown bin, and an option for properties that cannot have bins.

Items we WILL collect in your garden bin:
- Flowers & plants
- Grass cuttings
- Hedge trimmings & prunings
- Leaves and small branches

Things we CAN’T take in your garden bin:
- Turf & soil
- Stones
- Rubble
- Kitchen scraps

Bin alerts
If your bin collection is going to be delayed or revised, we can now text you to let you know, wherever you are.

Whether it’s severe weather or major delays, if something affects collections over a wide area, we’ll send the information straight to your phone.

Good to know – there will be no changes to bin collections over the spring Bank Holidays

Annual price from 1st April 2019:
- 140 litre bin £36
- 240 litre bin £40
What happens to your GARDEN WASTE

The garden waste that we collect is taken directly to Blaise Farm, West Malling where it is mixed with other garden and food waste to be composted on an industrial scale.

Blaise Farm is an In-Vessel Composting Facility (IVC) which allows the composting process to take place in an enclosed environment where the temperature can be closely monitored and controlled. The IVC method is typically much quicker than home composting, with the finished article ready for use within a matter of weeks.

Once the garden waste arrives, it is visually inspected and any contamination, such as plastic bags, is removed. The waste is shredded to a uniform size and loaded into a bay.

The micro-organisms already present in the waste are sustained by a supply of air and kick start the breaking down of waste into compost.

As the material breaks down it releases nutrients and in doing so increases the temperature of the waste to between 60° and 70°, which is hot enough to kill pathogens and weed seeds.

The material is then moved to another area where the composting process continues.

The oxygen level, moisture and temperature are carefully monitored and controlled during both composting stages to ensure the material is fully sanitised.

Once the sanitation process is complete the compost is left to mature in an open area called a windrow, or an enclosed area for approximately 10-14 weeks.

At the end of the process, any pieces that are too large begin the process again.

Photos courtesy of Blaise Farm
If you are a landlord with a property in excellent condition, we want to hear from you!

**FLEXI SCHEME**
- Cash incentive per property size
- Affordable rent
- Minimum 6 month tenancy
- Free inventory
- Bond (6 weeks of rent)
- Tenancy sustainment visits

**HOMEFINDER**
- Negotiable incentive to £4,000
- Minimum 12 month tenancy
- MBC have nomination rights for 2 years
- Rent set at the local housing allowance rate
- Free inventory
- Bond (6 weeks of rent)
- Tenancy sustainment visits

**GUARANTEED RENT**
- Minimum 12 month tenancy
- Rent set at the local housing allowance rate
- Free Inventory Bond (6 weeks of rent)
- Tenancy sustainment support

To find out more, contact the Housing Team on 01622 602252 or homefinders@maidstone.gov.uk

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**Thursday 28th February is the day that the council opens its ‘Call for Sites’, a key early step in the preparation of our Local Plan Review.**

The ‘Call for Sites’ is an open request for information about land which may have potential for new housing and other uses, and new commercial development – employment, shopping and leisure - in the future. It is particularly aimed at landowners and developers but anyone can submit a site, provided you can confirm that the land is available for development.

The deadline is Friday 24th May.

The Call for Sites feeds into the Local Plan Review, an important planning document which sets the blueprint for new development in the borough.

Additional development land will undoubtedly be needed. To achieve its aim of 300,000 new homes per year, the Government has a standard way to calculate the number of new homes an area needs.

For the Maidstone borough, the figure is around 1,200 new homes/year. Innovative approaches may be needed – such as planning brand new settlements or neighbourhoods following ‘garden city’ principles. But that is a decision for the future when we have more information on what the possible options could be.

MBC will comprehensively assess the sites’ merits before deciding which could be included in the Local Plan Review. Wider factors will inform these decisions – including what impacts there will be on traffic, local services and the environment and whether these can be overcome.

We have prepared an information pack including a dedicated New Garden Communities Prospectus as guidance for those who are planning to submit a site https://maidstone.gov.uk/callforsites

The first public consultation on the evolving Local Plan Review document is scheduled for July-August 2019.
The team taking the fight to fly-tipping!

Since July 2018 the Waste Crime Team has been fully operational and out on the frontline dealing with all aspects of waste crime!
They've recently invested in further covert and overt CCTV equipment in known fly-tipping hotspots across the Borough, including locations within Leeds, Langley, Boxley, Allington, Headcorn and Staplehurst. Money raised from Fixed Penalty Notices is re-invested back into the borough, including clean-up costs, new street litter bins and new equipment used in the catching of offenders.

The team has worked closely with Kent Police on a number of joint operations, deterring illegal waste crime activity and catching those who are carrying waste illegally.

The Waste Crime Team in numbers:
- **9 £400 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)** issued across the borough in relation to fly-tipping
- **6 vehicles seized** in relation to fly-tipping and carrying waste illegally, with 2 vehicles crushed
- **41 abandoned vehicles** removed from Maidstone’s roads
- **450 FPNs** issued for littering offences
- **22 FPNs** in relation to illegal waste carriers offences
- **3 FPNs** issued for dog fouling offences
- **2 FPNs** for fly-posting offences
- **8 statutory notices** in relation to waste crime

Since the team commenced in September 2018 we have:
- **Worked with 76 homeless and rough sleepers.**
- **Accommodated 39 people across a number of temporary accommodation sites.**
- **Settled 22 people into longer term accommodation.**

Our Outreach Officers are confident in securing a similar amount during the next round of funding in order to build on this progress.

We also provide emergency accommodation throughout the winter months so no one should be sleeping out.

If you see anyone sleeping out in Maidstone and would like to report it please email outreach@maidstone.gov.uk or using the StreetLink website at www.streetlink.org.uk

NEW TEAMS SERVING THE COMMUNITY

Funding secured to offer a better future

Maidstone Borough Council has been awarded funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to increase its support for those who may be homeless or rough sleeping. With a boost of nearly £384,000 now available, the team has been extended and an Assessment Centre has been established, providing 24 hours of help and safety to those in need.

The team’s impact was felt almost immediately – whilst the September street count estimated a total of 48, by November this had decreased to nine. Only two people were found out on the night of the count, both of whom have now been placed in accommodation.

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www.maidstone.gov.uk
Sponsored by Weston Homes

PROMS IN THE PARK
WHATMAN PARK RIVERSTAGE
SATURDAY 25 MAY  FREE ENTRY

A great musical afternoon and evening with friends and family.

Bring your deckchairs and hampers, candelabras and bottles of fizz and enjoy Maidstone Wind Symphony conducted by Jonathan Crowhurst.

PICNICS FROM 3PM, WITH MUSICAL ENTERTAINMENT TO FOLLOW
CONCERT AT 6PM APPROXIMATELY
## Exhibitions

**Maidstone Young Artists Award**
*9 February - 21 April*
An exhibition of works shortlisted for the Maidstone Young Artists Award. Visitors can vote for their favourite artwork. **FREE**

**Albert Goodwin: Visionary Landscapes**
*9 February - 21 April*
An exhibition of paintings from the Museum collections. **FREE**

**Curiouser & Curiouser**
*9 February - 21 April*
Foundation degree students from West Kent College display artworks influenced by the museum’s collections, history and buildings. **FREE**

**Endangered & Extinct**
*4 May - 1 September*
An exhibition by creative recycling artist Val Hunt exploring endangered and extinct animals through ‘throw away’ material sculptures. **Adults £4, Children £2, Family £10**

## Special Events

**Mother’s Day Cream Tea & Costume**
*31 March*
Enjoy a delicious cream tea then go behind-the-scenes to see our gorgeous costume collection. 2 sessions at 3pm (tour & tea or tea & tour). **£18, MMF £16**

**Easter Holiday Make It! Sessions**
*9 - 18 April*
Creative craft activities ideal for children aged 5 - 11 years. 3 sessions per day at 10.30am, 12pm & 1.30pm **£3, MMF £2.50**

**Family Science Day**
*11 May*
Have fun exploring crazy liquids and science experiments using everyday household materials. 3 sessions at 10.30am, 12.30pm & 2.30pm **£5 per child (accom. adult free)**

**History Mystery Tour**
*30 May*
Meet the characters who built, lived and worked in the museum’s buildings, and try a glass of Tudor spiced wine! 6.30pm - 9pm **£10, MMF £8**

**Japanese Evening with Wagamama**
*25 April*
Enjoy a Studio Ghibli anime film and examine our Japanese objects with the curator. Welcome and interval drinks provided by Wagamama included in ticket (gin and yuzu juice). **£12, MMF £10**

## Museum Lates

Join us on the last Thursday of every month for a special evening when we’re open until 9pm. Over 18s only.

**Quiz Night**
*28 March*
Five fiendish rounds including mystery museum objects and a round in the galleries. Bring your own snacks and nibbles. 6.30pm - 9pm **£5**

See the full event listings on our website: [maidstonemuseum.org](http://maidstonemuseum.org)
Maidstone Market

**General market, every Tuesday, 7:30am-1.30pm.**
Located in Barker Road, a free shuttle bus runs every 20 minutes from The Mall – jump on the 505, from 9.30am – 1.30pm.

On Saturdays, market stalls are accompanied by an undercover boot fair, **7:30am-1:30pm.**

Maidstone Farmers’ Market

A Farmer’s Market takes place on the fourth Friday of every month, held in Jubilee Square from 10am to 2pm. A selection of fresh local produce is available.

You may have heard about the exciting new retirement village coming soon to Leeds, Kent.

As well as creating stunning homes for the over 55s, we’ll be building an array of fantastic facilities that will be accessible to the wider community.

A state-of-the-art wellness centre, with pool, spa and gym, a bistro restaurant and deli are just some of the exciting amenities coming in 2020.

Our villages are places to savour the company of family and friends, to discover new passions, to explore new places and rediscover old interests – we offer an outstanding lifestyle choice for people whose existing homes no longer suit their needs.

If you are aged 55 or over and would like to be involved in shaping the future of the village or would like to be a founder member of our free-to-join Inspired Club, offering deals and discounts to members, please contact jane.shotliff@inspiredvillages.co.uk

*Inspired Villages is a best in class operator and developer of later living accommodation. The company has the long-term financial support of Legal & General, one of the UK’s leading financial services companies.*

www.inspiredvillages.co.uk

--

Great Alne Park, Alcester, Warwickshire

Millbrook Village, Exeter, Devon

Malbrook Village, Exeter, Devon

*www.maidstone.gov.uk*
Lee Mead: My Story

Television and West End actor Lee Mead is ready to tread the boards in Maidstone, appearing at the Hazlitt Theatre in May. Accompanied by a grand piano, Lee tells his story in an intimate interview, talking about his journey from reality star to leading man. Friday 10th May, 7.30pm

Mote Park Adventure Zone
coming in Spring 2019...

Carriage Museum

Looking for an informative and unique way to step back in time? Put the wheels in motion with a trip to the Tyrwhitt-Drake Museum of Carriages, located in Mill Street.

Open for the summer season, more than 60 vehicles are on display, preserved within the 14th century backdrop of the Archbishops’ Stables. Open 3rd May – September 2019, Fri-Sun 12-4pm

Armed Forces Day

Join MBC for a flag raising event to mark Armed Forces Day, on Monday 24th June at 10.30am. Military guests and local dignitaries will mark the occasion in Jubilee Square in the centre of town.

The Coffee Caravan

The Rural Kent Coffee and Information Project was launched to help tackle isolation and loneliness by providing a mobile pop-up café and information hub, free to communities and open to all.

The Coffee Caravan ventures out into rural communities, often in remote areas, and is a great vehicle (pardon the pun) through which other organisations can also reach out to those communities.

To find out more about the project, visit their website: www.ruralkent.org.uk/coffeeproject

www.maidstone.gov.uk
Go Green Go Wild

Maidstone is launching a brand new, exciting initiative to Go Green Go Wild!

There are many unsung heroes around Maidstone, giving their time and working hard to look after our many green spaces. From parks to lesser known nature reserves, both people and wildlife benefit from friends’ and environmental groups that give numerous volunteer hours to help improve and conserve these spaces.

Go Green Go Wild is a new project that aims to connect the community with nature and green spaces, and to continue to grow a nature-rich borough. You may wish to join an existing group or create your own. You may even just want to encourage and monitor the wildlife activity in your own garden, balcony or window-box. However big or small, the purpose of Go Green Go Wild is to help you do this.

Maidstone Borough Council would like local individuals, communities, schools and businesses to come together. Activities can range from nurturing a larger green space, creating ponds or planting boxes, to litter picking or creating your own bug hotel. There are many activities, big and small, that can enhance our environment and increase biodiversity by providing shelter and food sources for our wildlife.

We aim to create a Go Green Go Wild website where you can find out about existing groups and projects, register your interest and find ideas and inspiration for your own project. It will include maps of areas of interest and existing projects.

“ I am delighted with this Council initiative. Whether it’s watching birds, planting a wild patch in a garden or taking a walk in natural surroundings, supporting wildlife not only brings great pleasure, but it can also improve our physical and mental health. Here is a way for all of us to join together and truly make our borough the heart of the Garden of England.”

Wildflower Meadows Project

One of the first initiatives for Go Green Go Wild is an exciting new venture, as we sow the seeds to create eight new wildflower meadows around the borough.

Wildflower meadows are more than just pretty flowers – they are a lifeline for many different species of insects and animals. We hear numerous reports of dwindling butterflies, bees and birds as well as small reptiles and mammals. Wildflower meadows are a simple but effective way to provide rich habitats for wildlife and improve biodiversity, as well as creating attractive open spaces for residents and visitors.

A wildflower meadow needn’t be a vast area and can come in a variety of shapes and sizes. The areas we’ve chosen first are varied and range from roadside strips to patches in recreation grounds. They’ll be easily visible to passers-by but won’t interfere with any already established habitats.

The intended mix of seeds for wildflowers and grasses has been carefully selected. The species are native to the UK and are all ‘perfect pollinators’. This will not only provide favourable conditions for bees and butterflies but also provides nectar and cover for a wide variety of insects, which in turn attracts birds and bats.

Proposed sites for wildflower meadows
• Grovewood Drive North
• Shepway Green
• Parkwood Recreation Ground
• South Park (Postley Road)
• Adjacent to Thai Orchid, Maidstone town centre
• Dickens Road
• Bearsted Road (Opposite Hilton Hotel)
• Gatland Lane Recreation Ground

MBC’s Nicola Toulson, who heads up the Go Green Go Wild project, plants trees with Cllr Derek Mortimer, Cllr Paul Wilby and Cllr Brian Clark to improve the Mangravet Recreation Ground.
Borough takes swans under its wing

Did you know that Maidstone is the only borough in the country where the swans belong to the Mayor rather than the monarch?

Ownership of the swans and cygnet was bestowed upon the Mayor in a charter of King James 1, dated July 12th, 1619. The charter granted this privilege within the stretch of the River Medway under the control of the borough corporation, and governed the Council until the great reforms of the 19th century.

Maidstone had charters previously, in 1549 setting up a Borough of Maidstone, amended in 1559 and 1604. The charters are currently held at the Kent History Centre.

2019 marks 400 years of swan upping tradition – also known as the Court of Survey Cruise, the Mayor and guests make an annual boat trip in order to monitor swan numbers.

The Swan Master normally assists in this endeavour, a position that is currently undertaken by Mark Brattle, Falconry and Wildlife Manager at Leeds Castle.

Park life

As the autumn leaves were falling in Mote Park, volunteers were busy preparing the ground for new growth, planting over 23,000 bulbs.

The spring flowers will be bursting into bloom along the entrance ways, with a display that includes snowdrops, bluebells, daffodils and snake head fritillaries.

To view volunteering opportunities and event information, visit www.facebook.com/motepark or www.moteparkfellowship.org.uk

The Fant Wildlife Group

was established in 1996 to manage an area of abandoned allotment gardens close to the town centre of Maidstone. Run entirely by volunteers from the local community, one of the first champions of the group was former Mayor of Maidstone, Morel D’Souza.

The charity’s primary aim is to maintain and diversify the Fant Wildlife Area, and to encourage educational use and local involvement.

Work is continuing to create a diversity of habitats for wildlife, through building ponds and planting native trees and plants, while encouraging use of the site by the local community.

Hollingbourne Meadows Trust Ltd

The Hollingbourne Meadows Trust Ltd works to regenerate, improve and maintain the meadows, hedgerows and habitats, as well as working to conserve and nurture the natural environment of the surrounding areas of the village. They promote biodiversity and encourage community use in the form of nature trails and accessible footpaths. They are ambassadors for strong community cohesion within the village.

Last year, the Trust undertook an ambitious special project to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of WWI. Project 100 set out to plant an ‘Avenue of Remembrance’ with 100 trees, and was successfully launched on Remembrance Day 2018 - a perfect example of community and nature working together.

Cllr Paul Harper, Chair of the Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee:

“I’m proud to be a member of the Fant Wildlife Group. Over 20+ years we’ve engaged the community in transforming this site into a home for wildlife, within a mile of the town centre. Please join us to help improve the site further.”

To find out more about the Group, including forthcoming events, visit their website (www.fantwildlife.org.uk) or find them on Facebook (facebook.com/fantwildlifearea)
Maidstone Borough Council
Local Elections

On 2 May 2019, local elections are happening in Maidstone. A third of seats throughout the borough will be contested – this map shows the wards that are up for election.

If you live in an area where an election is taking place, you’ll receive your polling card from the end of March onwards. If you are unsure if you are registered to vote, or have recently moved, you can apply at: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

For information on voting by post, or by proxy, visit: www.maidstone.gov.uk or contact electoralservices@maidstone.gov.uk

*Election date correct at time of going to print

Areas up for election

1  Boxley
2  Allington
3  North
4  East
5  Detling & Thurnham
6  Fant
7  High Street
8  Shepway North
9  Bearsted
10  South
11  Downswood & Otham
12  Leeds
13  Harrietsham & Lenham
14  Coxheath & Hunton
15  Loose
16  Sutton Valence & Langley
17  Marden & Yalding
18  Staplehurst

Council Tax

We’ll shortly be sending out new Council Tax bills for 2019/20.

Over 25% of customers have now opted to receive their bill by email, helping us to reduce costs on printing and postage.

The most effective method of paying your Council Tax is by Direct Debit. Nearly 75% of customers already use this method; it’s simple to set up and keeps you in control.

If you don’t currently pay by direct debit or receive your bills via email but you’d like to in future, please contact us and we can help get you set up. Just email us on counciltax@midkent.gov.uk or visit www.maidstone.gov.uk.

Single person discount

Do you live on your own? You could be eligible for a single person’s discount of 25% off your Council Tax bill.

We regularly review all households claiming this discount, carrying out checks to establish whether people are genuinely living alone. This is done by cross-referencing with other sources of information about their household, such as Electoral Roll registers and financial sector information, amongst other sources.

If you think you could be eligible but aren’t currently claiming the discount, please contact us.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit was introduced in the borough on 21 November 2018. If you’re of working age changing from legacy benefits or you need to make a new claim, you will now need to apply for Universal Credit.

You can find out more at: www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk or call the Helpline on 0800 328 9344.
Contact the Council

Customer Services
To speak directly with a Customer Service advisor, contact 01622 602000.

Phone line opening hours:
Monday – 9am – 5pm
Tuesday – 9am – 5pm
Wednesday – 9am – 5pm
Thursday – 9am – 5pm
Friday – 9am – 4.30pm
Saturday – Closed
Sunday – Closed

Report it!
To report a missed bin collection, an incident of fly-tipping, a full public bin or a noise problem, visit: www.maidstone.gov.uk/reportit

www.maidstone.gov.uk

www.facebook.com/MaidstoneBoroughCouncil

www.twitter.com/MaidstoneBC

www.instagram.com/MaidstoneBC

Find your Councillor
Go to www.maidstone.gov.uk/yourcouncillors
Here you can view information about Maidstone Councillors, presented in a variety of ways.

Scroll down and click "Find your Councillor"
From the next page, you can search for a Councillor by name, political party, ward or postcode.

Enter your postcode in the relevant box and click ‘Go’.
Your Councillor(s) will be listed. Click on their name or image to see more details about them.

www.maidstone.gov.uk
A DAY IN THE LIFE of the Mayor

An important figurehead position, the Mayor of Maidstone takes on as many community engagements and charitable functions as he is able. With a full time job to juggle, Cllr David Naghi’s days can be very hectic!

Having been in the building and decorating trade since leaving school at 15, Cllr Naghi is a working Mayor. He often attends engagements in the evening and at the weekends, fitting in appearances around his day job.

To keep up with the work of the Mayor of Maidstone, and to view photos of recent engagements, visit: www.maidstone.gov.uk/mayorofmaidstone

Cllr David Naghi, Mayor of Maidstone
May 2018 - May 2019

The Mayor swaps his overalls for his official robes as he welcomes a visiting dignitary, the incoming Mayor of Peapack and Gladstone, New Jersey, Greg Skinner. Did you know that our current Mayor of Maidstone was born in New Jersey himself, moving to the UK when he was three.

The Mayor goes through his diary of appointments with PA Julie Webb. Julie manages the Mayor’s event invitations, and together they confirm RSVPs and plan his schedule.

The Mayor chooses a rosta of charities to support throughout the year, raising funds and awareness for the causes that they wish to highlight. Cllr Naghi meets many other charity workers and those doing good things within the community as he travels throughout the borough.

The Mayor presides over meetings of the full Council, ensuring Council procedure rules are met and that the forum debates matters of concern for the local community.

Cllr Naghi spends much of his time out and about meeting residents, local businesses, school children and services, promoting the borough and representing the Council.

Dave can most often be seen in his work overalls. Pictured working at Aylesford Priory.

www.maidstone.gov.uk/mayorofmaidstone

www.maidstone.gov.uk
Explore your options at our

MARCH OPEN EVENT

WEDNESDAY 13

MAIDSTONE CAMPUS
15.30 - 19.30

Register to fast-track the queues at the event at
www.midkent.ac.uk

Ofsted
Good Provider

MidKent College

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram
Kent County Show

MAKING MEMORIES FOR 90 YEARS

5, 6, 7 JULY 2019

www.kentshow.co.uk  01622 633060
Kent Showground, Maidstone ME14 3JF