

East August 08



Borough Update

Your Maidstone Borough Council Newsletter

The 2008 Maidstone Mela

*Vouslez Vous
Main Stage
Act*

Celebrating the diversity of
Maidstone through
music, food and dance.

Sunday 14th Sept
1 to 7pm

Mote Park
Maidstone

Admission FREE



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Free bulky rubbish service

Most weekends Maidstone council refuse lorries collect bulky household rubbish from locations in your area. Take your refuse to the Weekend Freighter Service at the times shown:

Saturday 9th August

12.30 – 13.30 Walderslade. Impton Lane/Olivine Road
14.00 – 15.15 Vinters Park. Snowden Parade car park

Saturday 16th August

07.45 – 08.45 Platts Heath. Green Lane
09.15 – 10.30 Leeds. Brogden Crescent
11.30 – 13.00 Bearsted village green

Sunday 17th August

15.45 – 17.15 Vinters Park. Hampton Road

Saturday 23rd August

12.30 – 13.30 Otham
13.45 – 15.15 Madginford. Merton Road - by the shops
09.15 – 10.15 Grove Green. Grovewood Drive North
10.30 – 11.30 Grove Green. Grovewood Drive/Provender Way
12.30 – 13.30 Bearsted. Ashford Road/Rosemary Road

Saturday 30th August

12.15 – 13.15 Frinsted Church
07.45 – 08.45 Walderslade. Impton Lane/Spenslow Drive
09.00 – 11.00 Bredhurst. Hurstwood Road
12.00 – 13.00 Detling village hall

Sunday 7th September

13.45 – 14.45 Senacre. Woolley Road
13.00 – 15.15 Stockbury village hall
07.45 – 08.45 Grafty Green. Church Road/Headcorn Road
09.00 – 10.30 Lenham. Lenham Heath Road/Boughton Road
11.30 – 12.30 Lenham. Ham Lane/Cherry Orchard
12.45 – 13.45 Lenham. Warren Street, near the Harrow Inn
14.15 – 15.15 Wormshill. The Street/Bedminton Lane

Sunday 14th September

10.00 – 11.00 Walderslade. Gleamingwood Drive/Badger Road
15.45 – 17.15 Vinters Park. Marston Drive

Saturday 20th September

07.45 – 08.45 Hollingbourne. Troys Mead/Eyhorne Street
09.00 – 10.00 Harrietsham. The Roebuck car park
10.15 – 11.30 Harrietsham. Church Lane/Marley Road
12.30 – 14.00 Lenham. Honeywood Road
14.15 – 15.15 Lenham. Douglas Road

Sunday 21st September

15.00 – 16.00 Grove Green. Provender Way

Saturday 27th September

12.00 – 13.00 Senacre. Betsham Road garages

Sunday 28th September

10.00 – 11.00 Walderslade. Impton Lane/Olivine Road
11.30 – 12.30 Vinters Park. Snowden Parade car park

The household waste recycling centre at Burial Ground Lane, Tovil, Maidstone is open Monday to Saturday, 8am to 4.30pm, and Sunday and Bank Holidays, 9am to 4pm.

For more information about our bulky rubbish services, including paid for doorstep collections, visit digitalmaidstone.co.uk or call the cleansing hotline on 01622 602162.



WIN a trip to the panto



Jake Hendriks is appearing in this year's panto.

The Hazlitt theatre is offering three family tickets to this year's panto 'Jack and the Beanstalk' with Hollyoaks star, Jake Hendriks who plays Father Kieran Hobbs! All you have to do is answer these questions about our annual report for the year 2007-08:

Name

Address

Telephone

Is the council's annual report, on the following pages useful – **YES/NO**

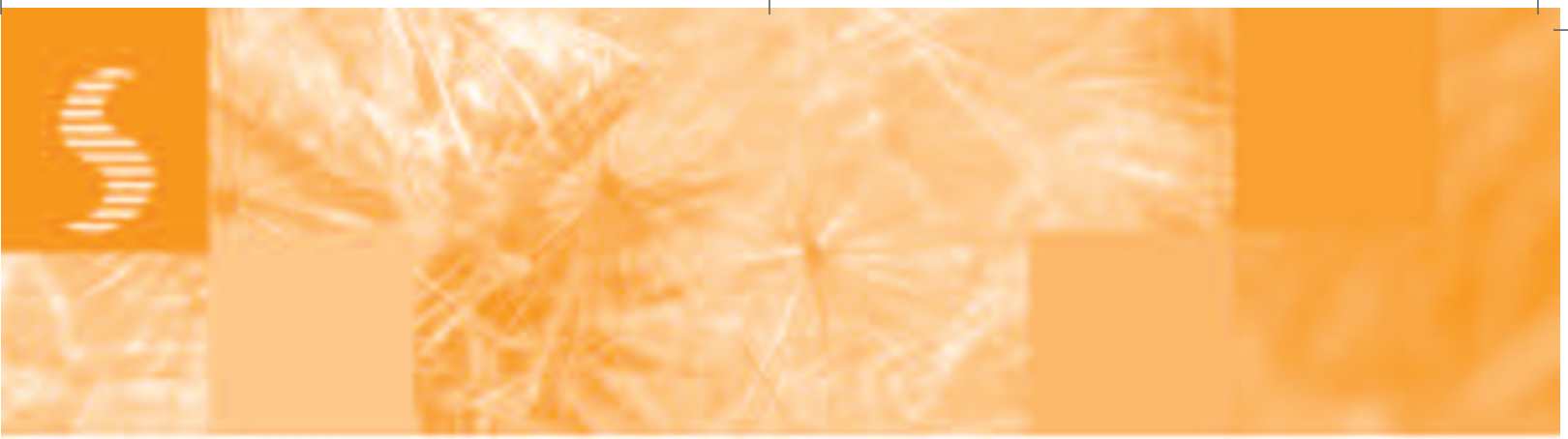
What other financial, performance or other information about the council would you like?

Please send your entry to Communications, Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House, Maidstone ME15 6JQ – By 25 August 2008. Or email your answers to pr@maidstone.gov.uk One entry per Maidstone borough resident – **Not open to Maidstone councillors or council employees.**

Borough Update

This is your council newsletter, produced up to six times a year in the Downs Mail newspaper. It is written, edited and designed by the council's communications team, London House, 5-11 London Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 8HR. Email: pr@maidstone.gov.uk. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome. It is typeset by DesignZero6 and printed by Uckfield Press.

If you are visually impaired and would like the newsletter text in large print, please call us on 01622 602807, and we will be happy to send you a copy.



Maidstone Borough Council

Annual Report for 2007-08

Welcome to Maidstone council's annual report for the year to 31 March 2008. The council has done particularly well this year in terms of customer satisfaction – with a big increase to 61% satisfaction – one of the highest in Kent! However, you have told us that you are concerned about traffic congestion, crime, health services, affordable housing, public transport and cleaner streets, and these will be reflected in our priorities for the coming year and our work with other agencies in the borough.

The demands on our resources have been immense with one of the worst financial settlements from central government seen in the last decade, on top of our desire to keep council tax as low as possible. Over the next three years we will be expected to make three per cent efficiency savings, which we are aiming to do alongside service improvements.

Maidstone council was again recognised by central government as an 'excellent' authority, continuously making improvements.

"The council is delivering very good performance and a faster rate of service improvement compared to other councils. This reflects high standards of service and strong leadership. It is very ambitious, in that it takes a broad view of the council's role in the community and many of its actions have involvement by partners to secure progress. This is commendable performance".

Annual Audit Letter

Improving the range of information available to the public was a priority in the last year. The council's website was revamped to provide more services electronically, improve the quality of the information and links to other sites, and make the site more user-friendly and easy to navigate. Further improvements will be made in 2008-09.





Prosperity

- In 2006, we achieved 'Growth Point Status' and last year we received infrastructure funds (for roads, schools and facilities) to ensure that development is planned and sustainable. We are set to receive £1.8 million in the next year and £5 million over the next three years.
- Maidstone is a shopping and retail magnet – in the top 50 nationally.
- Maidstone Museum received heritage lottery fund money for a new reception and East Wing, to make its collections more accessible, in particular to schools and students.
- Maidstone welcomed the Tour de France which attracted people in their thousands.

Lifelong Learning

- The Art at the Centre initiative achieved funding of £115,000 for 28 pieces of new art.
- Wireless internet is now up and running in Park Wood, providing more opportunities for residents and young people in the area.
- A new learning and access officer for Maidstone Museum has improved learning programmes and increased visits by school children.

Sustainable Communities

- The council is working to become carbon neutral and we have been developing a climate change action plan to help us achieve this.
- We have made sure that our new offices at Maidstone House in King Street will use less energy and be more environmentally friendly.
- We kept our weekly refuse collections and introduced new fortnightly recycling collections of paper, card, cans and plastics to 20,000 homes – every home will soon have the same service.
- As a leader in Kent, the council has lobbied to include action on climate change in the Kent Agreement. All the public bodies will be working with local communities to:
 - reduce carbon emissions and help those most in need to improve the energy efficiency of their homes; and
 - develop risk based action plans to adapt to climate change and tackle flooding.

Quality Living

- The Local Area Agreement, of which we are a part, has exceeded its four percent target in reducing crime. CCTV continues to be a key feature in reducing crime.
- Alcohol Control Areas in the town centre, Mote Park and Park Wood now help the Police to combat anti-social behaviour.
- 'Clean Sweep' volunteers spruced-up their neighbourhoods.
- A new Leisure Centre Trust was set up and we prepared a new contract for the management of the Maidstone Leisure Centre. We have allocated £6 million for improvements.

- We committed to build a new council depot to high environmentally- friendly standards.
- We improved Maidstone's green spaces.
- We held a multi-agency summit on tackling areas of fly-tipped woodlands and a clean-up action plan.
- Boxley Warren was transformed from a fly-tipping black spot where the dumping of cars was carried out at an industrial scale into a haven for wildlife.

A Healthy Environment

- We rejuvenated South Park and opened a new Skate Park area for young people.
- We won Heritage Lottery Fund money to prepare a conservation plan for Mote Park.
- A series of stunning 'Walk Maidstone' packs were produced to encourage people to walk in the borough, enjoy the scenery, learn more about Maidstone and improve their health along the way.
- New play equipment was installed at Giddyhorn Lane, Weaving Heath and Braunstone Drive.
- A BIG Lottery grant for £274,000 was achieved to help refurbish play areas, develop new sites at Park Wood and Upper Fulling Pits and provide floodlighting of the multi games areas at Mangravel and Clare Park.
- We declared Air Quality Action zones and plan to improve air quality in the borough.
- We appointed an outreach nurse to help reduce teenage pregnancy.

Quality, Decent Homes that People Can Afford

- In March 2008 we achieved our target to deliver 450 new affordable homes following the transfer of our housing stock to the Maidstone Housing Trust.
- We helped even more people find a home. We helped 470 households find rented accommodation through our housing association partners and our rent deposit scheme.
- We achieved the government's target to reduce our use of temporary accommodation by 50% – two years ahead of the deadline.
- We brought up to 'decent homes' standard a further 221 homes occupied by vulnerable people in the private sector.
- Working with partners we provided over 170 energy efficiency grants to homeowners and tenants in the private sector.
- Through our Handy Person Scheme we completed nearly 500 small repairs/improvements for older and disabled people.



Financial Report

This section has a range of financial information based on our published accounts for 2007-08. In the year the council collected £1,401 for band D properties excluding parish precept, of this 15% or £207 was used to pay for local services provided by Maidstone Borough Council. The rest was passed on for Police, Fire and Kent County Council services.

Balance Sheet at 31 March 2008

What the Council owns and is owed	£000
Fixed Assets owned by the Council	60,372
Investments	26,253
Money owed to the Council	9,808
Money owed by the Council	-44,456
	51,977

Financed by:

Distributable Reserves	22,297
Non-Distributable Reserves	29,680
	51,977

Distributable Reserves made up of:

Capital Receipts	13,970
Revenue Balances	8,327
	22,297

The Cost of Council Services for the year ended 31 March 2008

	£000
Leader of the Council	285
Corporate Services	1,181
Community Services	1,564
Environment	8,397
Regeneration	9,754
Leisure & Culture	5,775
Net Cost of Services	26,957
Payments to Parishes	784
Investment Income	-2,216
Capital Accounting & Pensions Adjustments	-5,037

Amount to be met from Government Grants & Local Tax Payers

Council Tax	12,569
Revenue Support Grant	1,329
Business Rates	7,919
Total	21,817
Net Surplus	1,329

Cash Flow

Cash Resources at 31 March 2007	£000
Cash In – Capital	-1,125
Cash In – Revenue	4,815
Cash In – Investments Repaid	177,841
	194,688
	377,344
Cash Out – Capital	-15,262
Cash Out – Revenue	-177,241
Cash Out – Investments Made	-185,238
	-377,741

Cash Resources at 31 March 2008

-1,522

Capital Expenditure

	£000
Office Accommodation	486
CCTV	28
Grants to Parished Areas	29
Corporate Property & DDA Works	265
Vehicle & Equipment Purchases	92
Fremfins CPO Payments	345
IT Projects	311
Land Drainage	65
Recycling	275
Other Minor Environmental Works	68
Playground Improvements	242
Exchange Studio Redevelopment	223
Green Space Strategy	367
Leisure Centre	89
Museum Improvements	219
Improvements to Leisure Facilities	93
Renovation Grants	1,522
Acquisition of Land for New Depot	1,590
Support for Social Housing	4,072
Other Minor Regeneration Works	42
Total Capital Expenditure	10,423

We have tried to make this finance information as clear as possible but some technical terms are needed. If you would like further information you can find it on our website.

The council's audited full accounts for 2007-08 are available on our website. If you'd prefer a paper copy, contact Paul Holland – 01622 602038, paulholland@maidstone.gov.uk



How did we perform?

We closely monitor our performance to make sure we achieve our goals and targets. Last year we published targets and we met over 75% of them.

Highlights included:

- Over 240 new affordable homes – exceeding the target of 480 over the past three years;
- The level of waste composted or recycled rose from 19% to 25%;
- Working with the Police a reduction of 10% in the level of recorded crime;
- Collected 99% of council tax and business rates;
- Paid 97% of our invoices on time;
- Processed new benefit claims in less than 11 days – twice as quickly as the national average;
- Exceeded the targets for dealing with major, minor and other planning applications quickly;
- A 25% increase in pupils visiting the museum; and
- Satisfaction in dealing with complaints rose by a third.

Performance is measured against a range of indicators and where we have not achieved targets we will be working to improve them. For a full picture on how we did, see the performance pages on our website together with our Performance Plan 2008-11.

The council is looking to maintain the quality of its services – to meet people's needs and provide value for money. We will achieve this through performance improvements, partnership working and shared services.

We consulted residents on our budget for 2008-09 using an online survey. More than 700 people gave us their views. Generally they agreed with the proposed level of tax and found it difficult to make savings as the model showed the potential impact on services. In addition the Leader of the Council held workshops with the public to discuss the council's finances. The views were very helpful in the discussion on setting the budget for the year.

Carbon Footprint

We are committed to reduce our carbon footprint (1,545 tonnes of CO₂ in 2006-07) and become carbon neutral in 2010.

So far we have:

- Introduced low emission Park & Ride and refuse vehicles;
- Set CO₂ limits on our cars;
- Bought 'green' electricity and low energy equipment;
- Provided energy advice to over 1,000 people and a range of grants for vulnerable households; and
- Ensured new and affordable homes are built to high eco standards.

In 2008 we will reduce our carbon footprint further still as a result of our move to new energy efficient offices in the town centre, which are close to transport links, have less staff parking and a wood-fuel boiler. We are a member of the local government Carbon Trading Scheme and we will establish an environmental management system to reduce energy, water and material use and costs.

Listening To You...

We asked you what information you'd like to see in our annual report and here's the answers to the comments you raised that are not covered elsewhere in this report.

You asked for

What we've done

"Recycling Costs"

We collected 9,263 tonnes of waste for recycling. We received income of £646,995 and the net cost was £645,940.

"The number of fines issued for littering etc."

We issued 263 fixed penalty notices for litter and dogs mess in 2007-08.

"Salary costs year on year"

In 2007-08 our direct employee costs were £12.2m compared to £11.7m in 2006-07.

This report is available in alternative formats. If you would like the text in large print or another format, please call us on 01622 602807, and we will be happy to send you a copy.



Register to Vote - it's easy!

If there are changes to the form you have to complete it in the normal way and pop it in the post.

You must register either by phone or internet or by post.

Don't delay. Every reminder we send out costs us money, your money.

And if you don't register or re-register you won't be able to vote come election time and you could be refused a mortgage or a mobile phone because you won't be on the register.

For more information call the Registration Team on 01622 602007 or email registration@maidstone.gov.uk or visit www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk

It's easier than ever before to sign up to Maidstone Borough Council's register of electors. You can do it by post, phone or internet- it's free, quick and easy to do.

Registration forms will be delivered to all homes in the borough at the end of August. If there are no changes to the details on the form, you can use the freephone or internet service to confirm your details or sign it and return it by post. The freephone is available in several languages.

It's as easy as one, two, e-billing

Next time your letter box rattles with the sound of letters and packages dropping on the mat, think of the money that could be saved by signing up to e-billing.

Thousands of residents have registered to receive their council tax bills by email, as part of Maidstone Borough Council's e-citizen service.

The service also allows customers to view council tax and housing benefit accounts online.

E-billing could save the council thousands of pounds. The service is more efficient and cost saving with reduced expenditure on stationery,

printing and postage.

Cabinet member for corporate services, Richard Ash says: "More than 1,400 residents have already signed up to the e-citizen facility, with around 700 of those opting to receive either their council tax or business rate bill by email.

This service allows residents to access services and information electronically from the comfort of their own home."

For more information about becoming an e-citizen visit www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk and follow the e-citizen link or email counciltax@maidstone.gov.uk

Through the Looking Glass

A shop window with a difference! Once the old Boro'line Office, the window now hosts a changing programme of work by Maidstone's student and early to mid-career artists, designers and craftspeople, which can be viewed during the day by passers-by. Through the Looking Glass is one of many outcomes of the Art at the Centre project.

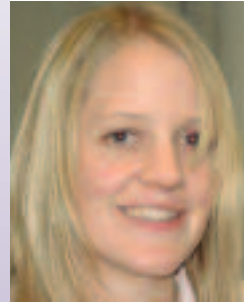
The current display is the work of Annie Ross, who is an architectural glass artist. Her fantastic work will be on display until September 7th.

Through the Looking Glass is located in Rose Yard in the heart of the town centre



Involving YOU!

Maidstone's overview and scrutiny committees are a 'critical friend' to the council and its partners. They consider decisions and recommend ways of improving them. They are keen to act on behalf of residents and look at issues that affect local people.



In the coming year the committees will be carrying out reviews targeting issues of concern to residents,

councillors and local organisations: Elections – should the council move from electing a third of councillors most years to electing the whole council once every four years?

Council decision-making – can it be speeded up, or is the system the best it can be in light of legal or constitutional requirements?

Maidstone's diverse communities – do residents from ethnic minorities, whether settled or economic migrants, feel welcome? Does the Council do enough to encourage integration between different communities?

Mental health services – what are the gaps in provision and how can they be addressed?

Public Conveniences – do you think they are adequate, clean and of a high standard?

How safe are our roads? – how could we improve our roads and increase safety?

The committees want to appoint interested members of the public to help with the reviews and to submit written submissions via email or letter.

To get involved contact

Angela Woodhouse or her team - email osc@maidstone.gov.uk, telephone 602620 or write to Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ. For more information visit www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/osc.

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Hazlitt Arts Centre

Jeremy Hardy



BBC Radio 4 comedian and star of the News Quiz.

Friday 5 September, 8pm. £14.50, concs £13.50.

The Woman who Cooked her Husband

The way to a man's heart is through his stomach

- strong language and adult themes.

Thursday 18 to Saturday 20 September, 8pm. £12, concs £10.

Zion

A tribute to Bob Marley. Sunday 21 September, 7.30pm. £15, concs £14.

David Benson Sings Noel Coward.

Mad dogs and English men! Saturday 27 September, 7.30pm. £12, concs £10.

T-Rextacy

A tribute to Marc Bolan and T Rex. Sunday 28 September, 8pm. £15, concs £14



The Searchers

This famous band plays Maidstone. Tuesday 30 September, 7.30pm. £16, concs £15.

NEW Comedy Club Nights at the Exchange Studio

This is where new talent can 'strut its stuff' and comes out of the same stable as stars such as Jo Brand, Jack Dee, etc. We kick-off with MC Kevin 'Man with the Beard' McCarthy with Headliner Simon Evans. Open mic competition during the interval.

Monthly from Wednesday 3 September, 8pm.

NEW Classical Music Nights at the Exchange Studio

Relax and listen to some delightful compositions. Monthly from Friday 5 September, 7.30pm.

SPECIAL OFFER - 'Jack and the Beanstalk' with Hollyoaks star, dishy, Jake Hendriks aka Father Kieran Hobbs!

Book before 1 October and get £1 off every ticket!

19 November to 4 January. Tickets £6.95 to £12.50.

Box Office 01622 758611 or visit www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk

Maidstone Museum

Kaleidoscope: 150 years of colourful collecting.

This free exhibition showcases the museums history and explores its weird, interesting and rare objects, telling the stories of the collectors and museum benefactors along the way. From bikes to flamingos to hands by Henry Moore!

Art Inside the Walls

The museum has teamed-up with Maidstone Prison to bring you a series of mini art exhibitions. 'Meaningful Objects' runs from 5 August to 31 August in the café.

Adult Art Class

Learn how to use colour and texture in art. Wednesday 6 August, 6.30 to 8.30pm. £5 (£3.50 to members of the

Museums' Foundation). Places strictly limited - must book.

Summer Family Activities

Until the end of August all the weeks are colour-coded and there's an activity going on every day! Mondays and Wednesdays are craft activities, Tuesdays is storytime, Thursdays are hands-on stations, Fridays are a collage and weekends are colour trails and brass rubbing. Thursdays and weekends are free; there is a small charge at other times.



What's On!

Hotfoot Summer Play Scheme To 22 August
Various venues 01622 602222

Summer Holiday Fun To 31 August
Museum of Kent Life, Sandling 01622 763936

A Midsummer Night's Dream To 9 August
Various outdoor venues 01622 758611

Classic Car Weekend 9 - 10 August, Leeds Castle, Maidstone 01622 765400

Cobtree Country Fayre 24-25 August
Museum of Kent Life, Sandling 01622 763936

Maidstone Handover Day Festival of sport, art & culture 24 August
Whatman Park, Maidstone 01622 602222

Kixx Martial Arts Sports Camp 28 August
Kixx fitness gym Granville Road, Maidstone 01622 602222

Classical Music Night 5 September
Exchange Studio, Earl Street, Maidstone 01622 758611

Family Fun Weekend with Jousting 6-7 September
Leeds Castle, Maidstone 01622 765400

Peace One Day 13 September, Whatman Park, Maidstone 01622 602222

Snap Club Night 19 September
Maidstone Leisure Centre, Mote Park 08451 552277

Graham Clarke's Up the Garden Studio 20-21 September
Green Lane, Boughton Monchelsea 01622 743938

Time Talk: The Origin of the Species.

George Fussey talks about the impact of Darwin's book and how its themes resonate today. Thursday 20 September, 6.30pm. £3 (£1.50 to members of the Museums' Foundation).

Pick up a brochure, call 01622 602838 or visit www.museum.maidstone.gov.uk