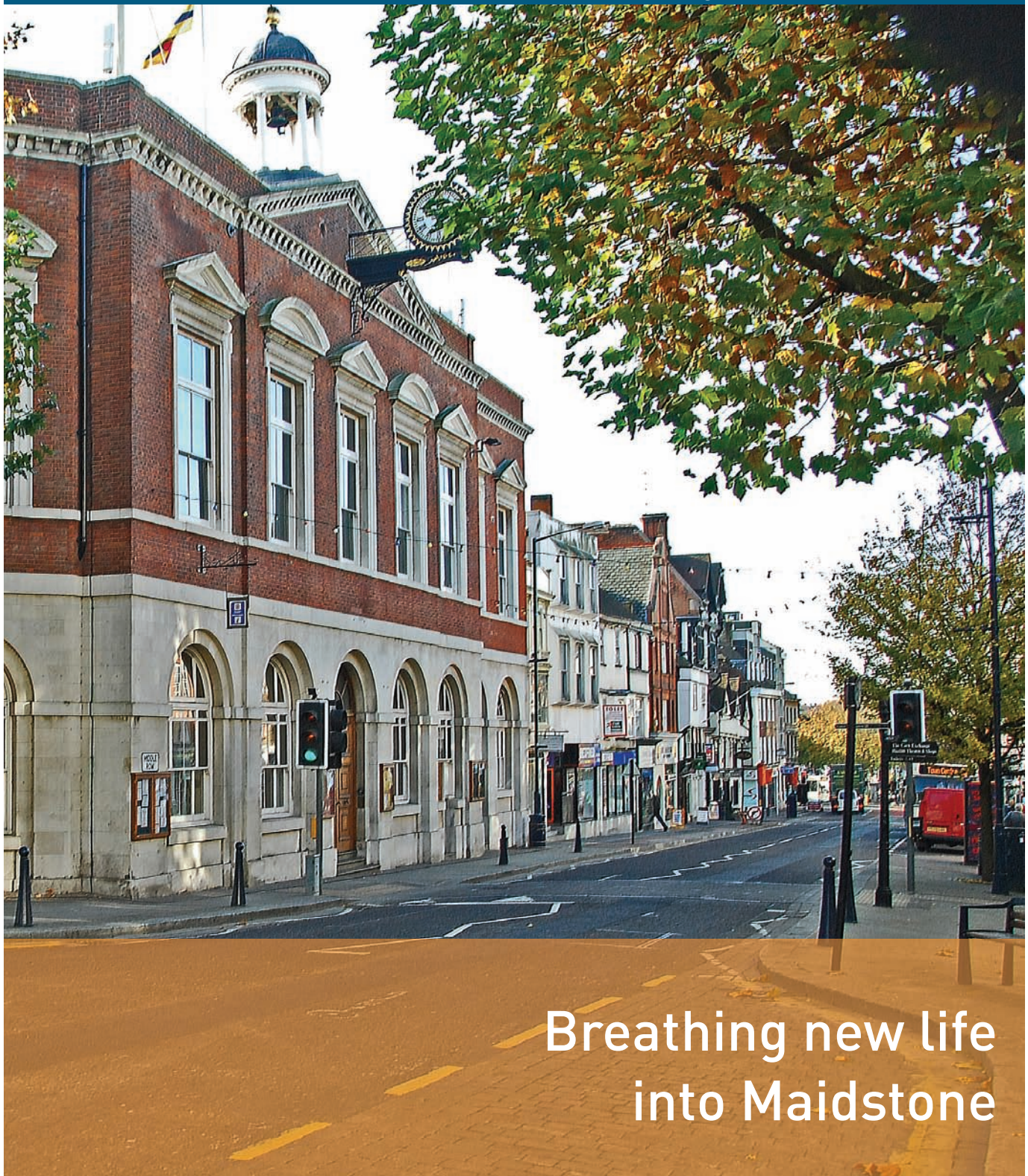


South February 2009



Borough Update

Your Maidstone Borough Council Newsletter



Breathing new life
into Maidstone

Maidstone's Olympic legacy

Maidstone Borough Council is working to make sure that Maidstone and its athletes benefit from the London Olympics in 2012. A new sponsorship website will attract funding and support for our potential stars of London 2012. The website will offer companies the chance to adopt an athlete or team. It will have athlete profiles, details on companies which have provided sponsorship, testimonials from businesses and sponsorship stories.

Martin Brockman, a 21-year-old decathlete, is one Maidstone sportsman hoping to benefit from the website and be part of Maidstone's Olympic legacy. Since discovering his talent for the decathlon, Martin, of Gleneagles Drive, Maidstone, has been training full time for at least three hours a day. His favourite training session is the pole vault and his proudest achievement was when he cleared 2m in the high jump for the first time.

The council will also support a pre-games training camp at Sutton Valence Athletics Track, a Maidstone Leisure Centre Beach Volleyball facility, Pegasus Gymnastics Centre and other sports clubs and community events that clearly show a legacy for 2012.



No crisis here

Reports in the national press have suggested that recycling is in crisis with rubbish carefully sorted by householders piling up in vast warehouses as the market for waste paper collapses.

That isn't the case in Maidstone. None of the recycling collected by Maidstone people is being stockpiled or sent to land fill. In Maidstone:

- Paper is reprocessed at Aylesford Newsprint (Kent) where it is recycled into newsprint
- Card is reprocessed in Kent into new cardboard
- Glass is reprocessed in the UK into new glass bottles and jars
- Cans are reprocessed in the UK into steel and aluminium for various uses
- Plastics are reprocessed in the UK into plastic for various uses
- Garden waste is composted in Essex

So keep on recycling – we're going to make it even easier for people to recycle once the council's new recycling service is fully rolled out by May.

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, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ.

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.

What's important to you?

Maidstone Borough Council's overview and scrutiny team is looking for the important issues that affect local people. The scrutiny committees act as a 'critical friend' to the council and its partners – they consider decisions which have been, or are about to be made, and recommend ways to improve them.

Last year the committee looked at areas which included mental health services, diverse communities, planning enforcement, road safety, housing, public toilets and the council's budget.

If you have a suggestion to make improvements for 2009-10, email osc@maidstone.gov.uk, call 01622 602620 or write to Maidstone Borough Council, Scrutiny team, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ

Companion bus passes and transport vouchers

Disabled people who receive a high rate mobility component or higher rate attendance allowance can get a free companion bus pass from Maidstone Borough Council so that they can take an unnamed escort to help them on bus journeys.

The council supports a transport voucher scheme to help those who, through severe disability, are unable to use conventional bus services.

The scheme is run by Age Concern Maidstone. It offers up to £70 of vouchers for a full year to pay for journeys on taxis and voluntary transport schemes.

The scheme, which is funded and supported by Maidstone council, is only available to those who do not hold a free bus pass. Chris Garland,

Leader of Maidstone council, says the scheme allows the council to help those most in need of its help: "The Government's national bus pass is fine for most people but this local scheme, which is funded and supported by Maidstone council, fills the gap for some of our most severely disabled residents who can't use buses."

To apply for a bus pass or a companion pass, call Maidstone council's concessionary travel team on 01622 602334.

To apply for the transport voucher scheme contact Age Concern Maidstone, 11 Mill Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6XW, call 01622 753618 or email info@ageconcernmaidstone.org.uk

Ideal budget leads to hamper happiness

Maidstone resident Cath Witney received a Marks and Spencer hamper in time for Christmas for helping Maidstone council set its budget.

The council asked residents in the borough to help set the budget for next year. The online budget simulator asked residents to decide how much money they would allocate to the council's services in 2009-10. The results have been used to help set the council's budget and spending priorities for the year.

The cabinet has recommended that the council makes savings of at least £1.9 million next year. That should keep any increase in Maidstone council's tax to less than 5%, about £10 a year for an average taxpayer.

The council tax bill also includes Kent County Council, Kent Police, and Kent and Medway Towns Fire and Rescue. Maidstone Borough Council receives about 15p of every pound collected.

The council will set its budget on February 25.

Recycling rolls out

Maidstone's new fortnightly recycling service will be rolled out across the borough by May and everyone will keep a weekly rubbish collection.

Soon everyone will have the improved fortnightly recycling service for paper, cardboard, tins & cans and some types of plastics by May 2009.

Most households will be getting a new 190 litre bin for their weekly rubbish collection. Residents will be asked to use their existing green bins for their fortnightly recycling collections. Special arrangements will be made for people who don't have wheelie bins or space for a second bin.

Glass bottles and jars can be taken to recycling banks, where they will be recycled into new bottles and jars but if you put them in with your rubbish they will be collected and burnt and used as aggregate in road construction.

Garden waste will be collected in the same containers as usual.

Get set for Big Day Out

This year's Big Day Out will be on Saturday, March 28. Thousands of free tickets to top tourist attractions will be given away to Kent residents.

Last year 130 of the county's many attractions, including castles, historic houses and gardens, steam trains and sports centres took part to provide more than 16,000 Big Day Out free tickets.

This year more cultural and sporting venues will be joining the ranks of destinations opening their doors to Kent Big Day Out ticket holders.

The free tickets will be available from the Visit Kent website - visitkent.co.uk - and through visitor information centres from Tuesday, March 3.

Beating Town Centre Congestion

New fares and more flexible tickets have been launched to encourage more people to use our award-winning Park & Ride buses to and from Maidstone.

A survey, which looked at why people didn't use the service found that many people wanted more discounts and more flexible tickets.

As a result we've replaced the weekly ticket with a **new 10 trip ticket** that can be used whenever you like - its £10 for 10 single tickets, giving a discount of £2.50!

It provides the same great value and helps people who travel less frequently, and can be used for more than one adult - just have each person's journey clipped.

To encourage car sharing, we've also introduced a **new Saturday price** for adults travelling together. Until October, 2009 it's **£1 return per person for two adults travelling together** - that's a saving of 50p on each ticket.

For more information visit our website digitalmaidstone.co.uk or phone Clive Cheeseman on 01622 602365.

High Street Design Competition



The Maidstone design will be influenced by cities such as Vienna

Maidstone High Street is set for a major makeover. Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Cllr Malcolm Greer, says Maidstone is in for a big change and wants the transformation to be bold and imaginative to create an inspirational public space.

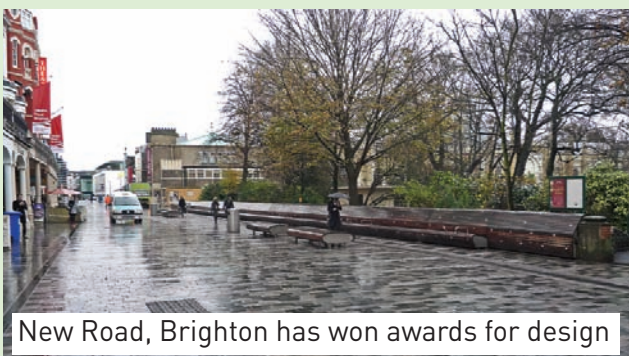
Only the best designs will be considered and ideas will be sought through an international design competition to mirror places such as Vienna, Paris and Barcelona.

Cllr Greer said: "My vision is to create views of the river from the High Street and make the most of the special character of the All Saints area. I have high hopes that we can make the High Street the focal point of the town."

Maidstone council is working with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) to select a shortlist. The best designs will go out to public display and consultation in April.



There's plenty of space to work with



New Road, Brighton has won awards for design

The winner is due to be announced in late May or early June.

Cllr Greer says the design will offer long-term sustainability and successfully re-balance the competing needs of pedestrians, vehicles and traffic.

He added: "We have visited and studied a number of good examples of public realm improvement schemes such as New Road in Brighton and the benefits are clear."

A panel of experts

The judging panel will be made up of Maidstone Borough Council's Director of Prosperity and Regeneration, Alison Broom; Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Cllr Malcolm Greer; Kent County Council's Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Cllr Kevin Lynes; Robert Sakula, of Ash Sakula Architects, acting as the RIBA Architect Advisor; Francine Norris from the University for the Creative Arts and John Farmer of KCC.

James Porter, RIBA Competitions Officer, will be an observer and there will be an advisory group of other experts to help the judges.

Timetable of works

Entrants have until March 5 to submit their design proposals before the judges pick up to five schemes to go on public display and consultation.

The entrants will then have until April 23 to refine their proposals and there will then be another chance for the public to comment.

A winner is expected to be announced in May.



Visions of the future

In his vision for the High Street, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Cllr Malcolm Greer wants it to mirror places such as Vienna and a recently completed scheme in New Road, Brighton.

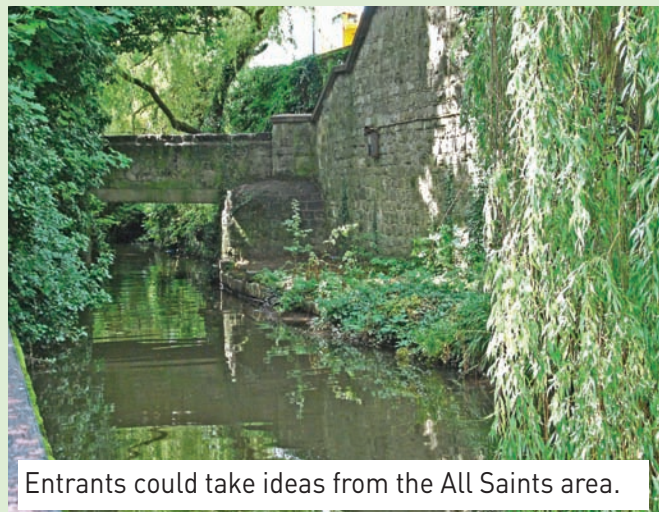
Managed by RIBA

The competition will be managed by the Royal Institute for British Architects on behalf of Maidstone council. The selection process will follow the format of a two-stage, international design competition. The anonymous first stage seeks ideas and approaches for public realm improvements to the High Street and up to five schemes will be short-listed (plus two reserves). These will then go through to the second stage. Anonymity will be lifted and the shortlist will be issued with feedback from the stage 1 assessment and expected to attend a group site visit. Teams will have to develop their design proposals and present their scheme to the judges at a final interview. Teams must be led by a practising, registered or landscape architect.



Keep in touch

Maidstone council has launched a website for the competition – <http://highstreet.digitalmaidstone.co.uk>. It will have all the latest news on the competition and a number of video news items over the progress of the competition. The site also has all information on how to register and full details about the competition and a photo gallery of what the area looks like now. In time this will be updated and will show the transformation of Maidstone's High Street. If you have any questions or want to sign up for an e-newsletter email highstreet@maidstone.gov.uk



Open for business

Maidstone Gateway is open for business and provides access to a wide range of public and community services under one roof and is a partnership of Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council.



David Petford, Chief Executive of Maidstone council said: "The new Gateway in Maidstone is a tremendous asset for the public and all the partner organisations providing services in this environment.

"Its central location, friendly atmosphere and superb facilities will enhance the experience for all our customers. The Gateway will be open six days a week with a late opening on Thursday, making our services even more accessible."

At the Gateway there is access to planning advice, housing advice, council tax and benefits advice, highways, registrars and much more. Customers will be able to find out about volunteering opportunities, and make appointments to meet with Citizens Advice.

There is information about adult social care services, education and occupational health and for a free health check using the automated Wellpoint, which is at the far end of the Gateway. There are also regular themed events, drop in sessions and surgeries.

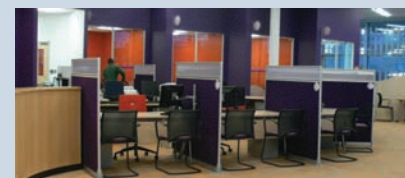
Facilities include free access to self-help computers;



three automated payment kiosks; private interview rooms with hearing induction including a family interview room, and toilets with

baby change facilities. For those with special needs, Gateway is pleased to introduce changing place, a fully equipped, free to access facility for registered, radar key holders.

Alex King, Deputy Leader of Kent County Council, says: "By bringing together a range of services, including local government, central government, NHS and the voluntary sector, the Gateway at Maidstone will provide an excellent way of putting public services in a place that can easily be accessed by residents.



"It follows previous successful Gateway ventures in Thanet, Tunbridge Wells, Ashford and Tenterden and is part of a programme being rolled out across Kent. Having a site that is in the shopping heart of Maidstone means that it is exactly where people need it to be. It's a very exciting project and I know everyone involved is determined to make a success of it."

For more information visit digitalmaidstone.co.uk

Next Council Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Full Council will set the council's budget and council tax for the year April 2009 to March 2010. The cabinet has recommended that the council makes savings of £1.9 million next year to keep any increase in Maidstone council's tax to less than 5%, about £10 a year for an average taxpayer.

The meeting will start at 6.30pm on Wednesday February 25 in the Council Chamber, Maidstone Town Hall. Residents can present petitions and ask questions, if they give prior notice. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Chris Garland, will report on current issues and the leaders of the other groups will respond. The leader, cabinet members and committee chairmen will answer questions from councillors and the full council will debate and decide on the important business. For more information call democratic services on 01622 602030.

Most council meetings are now web-cast and can be viewed online at digitalmaidstone.co.uk.

Annual report competition winners

Three lucky people won family tickets to see the panto in December because they completed a survey in Borough Update.

82% of readers said they found the council's annual report useful and made comments about the things they'd like to see in future reports. Thank you to everyone who entered.



Hazlitt Arts Centre

Hazlitt Comedy Club Night

7.30pm every first

Wednesday of the month.

Exchange Studio. £10 bookable in advance or on the door.

Steve Gribbin with Joe Wilson - March 4

Ivan Brackenbury with Kevin McCarthy and Maff Brown - April 1

Hazlitt Music Night

7pm every first Friday of the month.

Exchange Studio. £12 bookable in advance or on the door.

Peter Litman & The Oratory Singers - March 6

Classical Guitar Recital by Robert Drury - April 3

Playlitts

every Tuesday morning - 10 to 11am

Activities for pre-schoolers.

To book or find out more email natalieprice@maidstone.gov.uk £5



Half Term at Maidstone Museum

Monday February 16 - make

dinosaur bones; Tuesday February 17 - storytelling and craft; Wednesday February 18 - make a Greek plate; Thursday February 19 - handle a Roman object, brass-rubbing and make covered hangers; Friday February 20 - make a Japanese toggle. Times; generally 10.30am - 12.30pm, 1.30 - 3.30pm. Cost free or £2. Maidstone Museum, St Faith's Street. 01622 602838. www.museum.maidstone.gov.uk

Admission to museum FREE



Hazlitt Youth Theatre Half-Term Workshop and Performance

The Fantastic Mr Fox - A Play in a Week February 16 to 21 - 10.30am to 3.30pm daily except Saturday 10.30am to end of performance

For 6-11 year olds - £65 includes two performance tickets. Performance tickets £6

Simon and Garfunkel: Homeward Bound February 22, 7.30pm

Enjoy the sounds of the 60's and 70's. £15 concs £14



The Loves and Laughs of Henry 'Blowers' Blofield

February 25, 7.30pm

Sparkling conversation from pigeons to double decker buses. £16

Country Legends - Solid Gold Tour Part 2

February 27, 7.30pm

The best country music in town. £15 concs £14

Robin Ince - Bleeding Heart Liberal February 28, 8pm

Straight from The News Quiz, Just a Minute, Loose Ends and The Now Show. £12 concs £10

The Blues Band March 11, 7.30pm

The best blues in the UK today. £17 concs £15

Night Mayor on Earl Street March 13, 7.30pm

Join the Mayor for a night of murder and intrigue! All proceeds to the Mayor's charities. £17.50

Shappi Khorsandi March 14, 8pm

Straight from Just a Minute and Woman's Hour. £12 concs £10

The False Servant March 25, 7.30pm

An entertaining interpretation of a French classic. £12 concs £10

Fascinating Aida March 27, 7.30pm

Britain's top female comedy trio celebrate 25 years. £18 concs £16

Chicago Blues Brothers March 28, 7.30pm

The boys are back in town. £16 concs £15

The Real Thing 5 April, 7.30pm

Britain's No 1 soul band - relive 'You to me are everything'. £17.50 concs £15

Call the Box office 01622 758611 or visit www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk



Maidstone Music

Annie Get Your Gun

February 18-21, 7.30pm (Saturday Matinee 2.30pm)

The Chandeliers Drama Group presents this star spangled musical. £10 & £12.50, concs £10, children £6. Hazlitt Arts Centre hazlittartscentre.co.uk 01622 758611.

Peter Pan - Let the Magic Begin March 4-7, 7.30pm (Saturday Matinee 2.30pm)

The Stage Theatre Society presents a journey through Neverland. £8.50, concs £7. Hazlitt Arts Centre hazlittartscentre.co.uk 01622 758611.

Bach - St John Passion March 21, 7.30pm

Maidstone Choral Union sings 'The Sixteen'. Mote Hall, Maidstone Leisure Centre.

Evening of English Classical Music March 21, 7.30pm

English music at its best. All Saints Church, Maidstone £8 (accompanied children £1) 01634 376979/01795 843228.

Maidstone Symphony Orchestra March 28, 7.30pm

Mote Hall, Maidstone Leisure Centre.

Anything Goes March 30 - April 4, 7.30pm (Saturday Matinee 2.30pm)

Maidstone Amateur Operatic Society. Tickets £11 to £14.50. 01622 761998 until February 26 then hazlittartscentre.co.uk 01622 758611.



Shappi Khorsandi



Fascinating Aida

What's On!

To find out what's on in Maidstone Borough visit www.tour-maidstone.com

Green Update



green news from around our borough

Green Update is brought to you by Maidstone Borough Council and Downs Mail to highlight green issues in our borough. We want residents, businesses and schools to use Green Update to find out about climate change and environmental initiatives and to share events and ideas. If you'd like to contribute, contact the communications team - email: pr@maidstone.gov.uk. Call 01622 602807 if you would like Green Update in an alternative format.

Green diary dates

February 19
RSPB talk – Operation Osprey
Grove Green Community Hall,
Maidstone
01580 892458

March 5
A general guide to growing vegetables
Baptist Church Hall, Knightrider
Street, Maidstone
01622 737323

April 4
Spring Show
Baptist Church, Knightrider
Street, Maidstone
01622 737323

May 2
Plant sale
St Michael's Church, Tonbridge
Road, Maidstone
01622 737323

Fast Food Litter Campaign

Maidstone council has launched a campaign to clear the town of fast food litter.

A number of events have taken place to encourage people to think before they drop their burger wrappers, chip packets and other fast food related waste.

The council has been out and about on the streets of Maidstone to help spread the message. There have been promotional giveaways and a competition to win tickets to a show at the Hazlitt Arts Centre for guessing

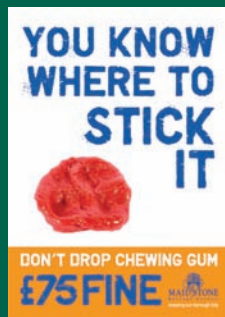
the number of cans in a sack.

The council's fast food litter campaign team hit the town to promote the campaign but is now enforcing the regulations to make sure the town centre is clean and tidy.

Cabinet Member for the Environment, Cllr Mark Wooding said: "We are continuing to keep the borough clean and tidy, with clean sweeps and advertising, and this campaign is adding to our efforts. It's good for the council and I hope the momentum and message continues throughout 2009."

Street litter signs

New litter signs have been put up in Week Street to warn people they will be fined if they are caught dropping litter.



Challenging new carbon reduction target

Maidstone council has set a challenging new target to reduce its carbon emissions by 3% a year. The decision is a response to the government's new stance on reducing emissions.

Total carbon dioxide emissions from the council's buildings, lighting and vehicles amounted to 5,600 tonnes in 2006-07. If the council meets its target it will have achieved a 20% reduction in that figure by 2015-16 (to 4529 tonnes CO2) and a 30% reduction by 2020-21 (3889 tonnes CO2).

The new targets replace a previous aim to be carbon neutral. The new targets are in line with other leading authorities, including Kent County Council, which aims to reduce its carbon emissions by 10% by 2010 and by 20% by 2015.

Cabinet Member for the Environment, Cllr Mark Wooding explains: "The Cabinet made the change because becoming carbon neutral doesn't necessarily mean that you will reduce the emissions you produce. We could become carbon neutral at a stroke by paying up to £100,000 to offset the emissions we produce. But this way, by concentrating on reducing our emissions we will be consuming less energy and saving money at the same time."

Mark Wooding is confident that, although the target has changed, the council is working along the right lines and the overall aim of addressing climate change remains.

Tel: 01622 602000 email: customercare@maidstone.gov.uk www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk/environment

Maidstone Council, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone ME15 6JQ