

Borough Update



Your Maidstone Borough Council Newsletter

Maidstone council prepares to weather financial storm

The global financial crisis has far reaching effects for people and businesses everywhere. Maidstone council is no different. On the one hand income from services such as land charges, building control and car parking is falling; and on the other hand demand for services such as benefits and homeless advice is increasing. Investment income is down and the council has to pay much more in fuel charges.

Whilst the council is looking at charges, such as new Sunday parking fees, to bring it in line with other Kent towns, it is also looking to cut costs and at smarter working. This Borough Update page sets out how the council is dealing with the fallout from the credit crunch to protect its services to you.

Budget savings

Maidstone council leader Chris Garland and his cabinet have recommended that Maidstone council makes savings of £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.



Chris Garland, says the council is examining every line of expenditure in its budget and looking for value for money, efficiency savings and better ways of working.

The council will set its budget on February 25. **For full details of the budget proposals visit digitalmaidstone.co.uk/budget.**

Consultation

250 people took part in an online budget consultation to help make savings of at least £436,000 to keep Maidstone council's tax increase to no more than 5%. Less than 12% of people managed to do it. Their average increase was 7.6%. The areas where

there was a preference for savings were - planning, grants, museum, theatre and outdoor events, tourism and housing. There was some preference for increased spending on waste and recycling, street cleansing, and CCTV and community safety.

Iceland

Reassuring news. Maidstone Borough Council had no money invested in Icelandic banks.

Priorities

During these financially challenging times it is important that the council re-examines its priority areas, to rank all that it does in terms of the key objectives required to keep Maidstone vibrant and competitive.



Frontline services will be maintained.

Smarter working

Maidstone is 'working smarter' to be as efficient as possible. The council has a business transformation process to examine its services in detail. It is also working with Swale, Ashford and Tunbridge Wells councils to jointly provide services. By working smarter it plans to save around £200,000 next year and to improve the range and type of service to customers.

The Maidstone Gateway is an

example of working together with KCC and many other public services to share costs and to provide better services.

The council is looking at other ways to save money. For example the proposal to operate the London Road Park and Ride service with regular Arriva 71 buses during off peak times would save the tax payer more than £100,000 a year and the buses will be just as frequent.

Staff savings

The cabinet's proposals include significant cuts in management staff, saving more than £500,000 on the wage bill. The council regularly reviews its staff structure to make sure that staffing levels are tailored for current services and circumstances.

Tel: 01622 602000 email: customer care@maidstone.gov.uk www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk

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