

Cabinet Information Bulletin

Mike FitzGerald – Community Services



I would this month like to focus on young people

It has been a busy summer for The Maidstone Youth Forum, firstly in preparing a bid for the Youth Capital Fund and then making a presentation before a Young Peoples Panel. The bid is for money to support the proposed youth café. They are at the same time 'negotiating' for the right lease and conditions on a council owned property for use as a Youth Café and a report is being prepared for the Cabinet Member.

I am very hopeful that the two outcomes will make this long awaited ambition become reality.

Members of the Youth Forum also attended the August meeting of the Scrutiny committee with me and presented their latest DVD and I gave an update of the portfolio responsibilities and answered Members questions.

I would like to thank all the young people for giving up another evening. They plan to hold their own Scrutiny meeting as agreed by Council at the end of September or early October and final arrangements will be made when everyone can come together after the holiday period.

Just prior to the Tour De France, a Bike Fest was held in Mote Park with, first, the young peoples event, and then later the opportunity for us adults to take part and it was very successful.

The big event Peace One Day was held in Whatman Park on Saturday 15th September and the Youth Forum members have been busy sorting out all the music for the event.

On the wider remit of youth opportunities, more local provision and support, I am meeting with the KCC Cabinet Member this month to discuss joint issues and joint working.

Freefall in August

The Sports Play and Youth Development Team provided a full programme of events for children aged 8 to 20 years during this summer holiday, the ever popular Swattenden Outdoor Activity centre saw us taking some children for a day full of team building activities, with challenges such as the High ropes, postman's walk and much more. Further to this we took another group of children on our first ever visit to Tree Jumpers, and as the name suggest we spent the day swinging from tree to tree to complete the Aerial Adventure Course.

Special points of interest:

- Best Value Review Update - Pg 3
- Launch of Scores on the Doors - Pg 5
- Museum Lottery News - Pg 9

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Night Hoops 2007



Also on offer this summer was a chance to see the Archery world champions in their fully glory showing their truly professional skills in the art of archery, with a trip to the Archery World Championships in Dover.

FREE TENNIS

Young people in Maidstone were given the opportunity to use Penenden Heath, South Park and Clare Park tennis courts for free during August.

Night Hoops 2007 League Begins

Following the success of last season the Night hoops basketball just grows and grows and we have seen some 200 young players attending our events this summer. With more Night Hoops events due to take place on Sunday 23rd September and

9th December 2007. (future dates to be arranged) At a cost of £2.00 Per player (squads of up to 9 players). Age 13+

Uprockin 2007

This year's annual BMX and Skateboarding event was amazing, with a record number of young people entering on the hottest day of the summer so far (unverified); it was great! The DJ's pumped out rocking tunes all day and we had fantastic support from local businesses, Surf Shack, Love n Skate, Revolution and South Skate, as well as support from the KCC Youth Service, this event just gets better and better.

Do please contact me if you require any other information.



*Swattenden
Outdoor Centre*



Uprockin' 2007



Peter Hooper — Corporate Services

The Cabinet have agreed three Best Value Reviews for 2007-08. These cover CCTV, Concessionary Fares and Grants. The grants review covers a wide range of funding which the authority provides to the community including grants to outside bodies, funding to parish councils (called concurrent functions) and the devolved budgets of our elected Members.

On the CCTV review there have been best practice visits to four other local authorities (including for example Medway Council) to look at a range of options in terms of what other organisations are doing to ensure the best use of CCTV. As part of this a benchmarking questionnaire was sent to 38 other local authorities (with 15 responses to date). Questionnaires are going out to a range of residents and stakeholders in the borough whilst street surveys have already been undertaken.

A new national Concessionary Fares scheme will be introduced in April 2008. It is therefore an appropriate point for us to look at our current scheme through a Best Value Review and assess the impact the new National Scheme will have on our scheme. Briefings will be taking place on the review and with copies of the scoping paper circulated for comment from stakeholders and comparisons with discretionary schemes elsewhere are also being undertaken.

The Best Value Review of Grants was considered by the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny

Committee on 5 September following Cabinet approval in mid-July. Letters have been written to a range of organisations and Members to highlight that the review is taking place and obtain further details on what has been provided during the past year.

There are three stages to the reviews: the first is to set out the parameters of the review (the scoping paper). The second is an options appraisal based on additional research and the third stage is an improvement plan setting out the proposals and action to be taken to improve the service.

These are clearly key service areas with an impact on the local community, residents, businesses and a range of other stakeholders. Our programmes of consultation are extensive and we are trying to ensure that a wide range of people have the opportunity to be involved. Further updates will be provided over the coming months. If you have any queries regarding the reviews please contact Alex Sharman, Policy and Performance Manager.

Digitalmaidstone Website

The new website is still on target for end of October

E-Billing

E-billing will be launched in November/December. This will enable customers to receive their Council Tax bills electronically from next April should they wish to do so.





Fran Wilson – Leader of the Council

Most of us are returning from well earned holidays. Every member has more than earned the break and I suspect that few will have completely got away from the demands of constituency and other council work.

The Council has quickly adapted to another new administration and that is a credit to all group leaders and every member.

I am pleased, therefore, to share my thoughts on some of our current most important topics.

There is nothing more important than our budget and, as has happened frequently in the past, we find ourselves having to make record savings. Cabinet Members are currently working to identify and prioritise up to £1.5 m in savings to prepare for the next comprehensive spending review and fund new priority areas, such as improvements to our waste minimisation and recycling services.

This year public consultation on the budget will include focus groups and meetings with hard to reach groups, partners and stakeholders and general consultation via Borough Update and our website. For the first time we will be using an 'internet budget simulation' which will explore preferences for funding the budget.

I can report that we are continuing to work towards better partnership working with Kent authorities. Maidstone is leading on the production of a price book which will highlight the most efficient

services and which could lead to savings across the county.

On a lighter note, I attended Invicta Grammar School when officers from Democratic Services facilitated the year 12 Focus Day "Your Vote Counts". A full mock election was held with the roles of Councillors, Election Agents, Returning Officer etc taken by pupils. It was a fun day with a serious intent of de-mystifying our electoral and voting system for young people who are just becoming eligible to vote for the first time.

I also joined Captain Clean in judging the Litter Sign competition. This competition formed part of MBC's campaign to keep Maidstone clean and tidy. Year 3 pupils from primary schools across the Borough entered the competition. The winners will have their anti-littering designs mounted onto metal weatherproof signs that can be displayed in the school or grounds as desired.

It was very difficult to choose as all the designs were of a very high standard, however the following have been announced as winners:

Liam O'Gorman - Madginford Junior School
Vicki Smithers & Megan Lloyd - St Michaels CoE Junior School
Tia - Oak Trees Community School

The following children were highly commended for their work and will each receive a Captain Clean certificate:

Garima Rae - Archbishop Courtenay Primary School

Tom Reed - Headcorn Primary School
Tom McLaughlin & Danielle Knight -
Loose Junior School

The competition will be running again
this term so there will be another
chance to enter your school!

There will be an exhibition of the
children's work in Maidstone Museum
from the 8th October until mid
November.

The Focus Day and the Litter Sign
competition are, I consider, excellent
examples of how the Borough Council
engages with the younger members of
our community.

Tony Harwood — Environment

Scores on the doors - Publicising and driving up local food hygiene standards

The publication of the Freedom of
Information Act 2000 means that
local authorities must publish
information on local food hygiene
inspections. The publication of such
information has been backed up by
the Information Commissioner and a
range of different publication
schemes exist across the UK.

Now, as a result of an innovative
pilot scheme, customers of local
restaurants and take-aways will be
able to see how well a business has
done on its last inspection. The pilot
scheme is called Scores on the
Doors.

Under this scheme, inspection
information is displayed on the door
or window of each food outlet,
supported by information on a
website. Maidstone Borough Council
has been selected along with
Ashford, Canterbury, Tonbridge and
Malling and Sevenoaks Councils to
pilot the scheme, first seen in
London Boroughs.

Restaurants, cafes, shops and other
food outlets will be given a

certificate and a sticker to display in
their door or window that shows
their food hygiene rating as
stars. Aside from giving the public
the informed choice they demand
the scheme should also work to
drive-up food hygiene standards.

A star rating is awarded only
following a full inspection by an
officer from the MBC Food and
Safety Team. It is determined from
a combination of three elements of
the food hygiene risk rating scheme
namely: food hygiene and safety
compliance; structural compliance;
confidence in management.
Individual scores for each category
are combined to give the star rating.

The scheme for Maidstone will be
introduced in January 2008.

Replacement Bus Services for Coombe Quarry Area

One of our main concerns in deciding
to close the Coombe Quarry Park and
Ride site was that alternative
transport facilities should be
available, particularly for those who
live near to the site. Following
discussions with Arriva I am



Tony Harwood – Cont'd. / ...

pleased that we have been able to arrange for service 84 to be diverted along Armstrong Road, Enterprise Road and Postley Road to provide an hourly service, primarily in the off peak. Unfortunately, Arriva are not initially able to provide low floor buses on this service but it is hoped that this can be remedied before long. To remedy this situation Kent County Council have agreed to provide a Kent Karrier service from the area to the town centre. This service is specifically provided for those who cannot access ordinary bus services, but will also pick customers up at their home address. I am sure this will be of considerable benefit not just to former Park and Ride users but also to other eligible people in the area.

Work is also well-underway to achieve early delivery of a state of the art Park and Ride site on the A274 Sutton Road, linked to radical improvements in local public transport services.

Pressing problems with congestion, road-safety and air quality in Maidstone mean that tough decisions are inevitable if we are to provide the step-change in transportation services required to persuade residents to swap the private car for public transport.



Smokefree Implementation in Maidstone

Around 11,700 premature deaths per annum in the UK are attributed to second hand smoke. MBC's implementation of the Government's Smokefree legislation is going some way to tackling this grim toll. The choreography for roll-out of the legislation in Maidstone has been



complex, staff intensive and to-date extremely successful. The statistics speak for themselves:

- £70,214 contributed by the Department of Health to assist implementation;
- 4,000 plus premises written to explaining the legislation;
- advisory visits to more than 1,600 premises;
- 767 premises visited for compliance;
- warning letter issued to 154 businesses;
- 2 temporary staff employed to advise smokers and pubs and clubs about the impact of smoke free and the need to address smoking litter;
- A zero tolerance approach to enforcement of smoking litter from day one with Fixed Penalty Notices issued to smoking litter louts;

Partnership with Kent Fire and Rescue to publicise Smokefree and address the other public safety risks arising from smoking.

A by-product of the Smokefree legislation has been an explosion in sales of gas patio heaters for outside smoking areas enlarging the UK's already excessive carbon footprint (each heater produces 50kg of CO₂ a year). This is an area where I am keen for MBC to use its community leadership role over climate change to encourage alternative and more sustainable behaviour.

Finally, and less seriously, an unintended social positive of the ban

Tony Harwood — Cont'd./

is the interaction and mixing now experienced in outside smoking areas (often the best spot in the joint). It is also clear that tobacco smoke masked a range of fairly unpleasant odours and a night out since the smoking ban has become a whole new olfactory experience!

Cleaning Up Maidstone's Act

A number of exciting projects are now underway or in development to address key public concerns on waste minimisation, recycling, littering and fly tipping. Ongoing projects include:

Commercial waste recycling: Business is responsible for 85% of the overall waste stream. To address this fact officers are working with the Business Resource Efficiency & Waste programme to obtain funding for a full scoping study into the potential for commercial waste minimisation and recycling activity in the Maidstone area. For this programme to work it is vital that a good working partnership on waste is achieved between MBC, KCC and local business.

Re-usable Maidstone Bag:

Development work continues apace with the Town Centre Management Initiative on the evolution of a widely available re-usable 'Maidstone bag' to promote the town, raise awareness of the waste minimisation message and hopefully make a dent in the 17 billion plastic bags given to British shoppers every year.

Education work: Over the summer holidays, the Environmental Education Officer, Alison Sollis, visited the play schemes being held around the borough. Fun educational activities were delivered aimed at increasing

local children's awareness of the "3 Rs" Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

Maidstone Mela: Officers were at the Maidstone Mela on Sunday 9th September, raising awareness of food waste and food packaging. Over a third of all food and drink bought in the UK ends up being thrown-away, and volumes of food packaging are on the increase.

On-street recycling/litter bins:

With the planned introduction of the new recycling service in February, it should be possible to introduce on-street recycling litter bins. The bins, which will take paper, cans and plastics in one side, and other litter in the other, will be trialled in the Town Centre, and, if successful, may be rolled out to shopping parades and train stations across the Borough.

New Look Clean & Tidy Borough: A new-look Clean Sweep campaign will be launched this autumn. The high profile event will raise residents' awareness of environmental crime, such as littering, fly tipping and graffiti, and will encourage community groups and businesses to help the Council keep Maidstone a clean and pleasant place to live, work and play

Working with KCC

The Borough Council is working with KCC to ensure street trees are replaced when they have been removed. Over the past few years, street trees have been removed by KCC as part of the maintenance of the highway network but very few have been replaced. The Council has given KCC a list of sites with "missing"



Councillor Tony Harwood and locals cleaning up Boxley Warren

Tony Harwood — Cont'd./

trees and with the help of KCC officers, it is expected that some will be replaced this winter.

In addition, I have asked MBC officers to look for locations where new street trees can be provided. I am optimistic that new trees will be planted this winter which will significantly enhance the street scene.

It is pleasing to note that work has started on the provision of a

pedestrian phase at the Barker Road/ Tonbridge Road junction. This will considerably improve the crossing arrangements for pedestrians at this very busy junction.

It is with great delight that I can report that KCC is proposing works to the high level bridge at Maidstone East Station. This has been in poor condition for some time and the improvements to surfacing and lighting are greatly needed.



Clive English — Regeneration

Planning Enforcement

I am pleased to say that significant progress has been made in introducing new systems and methods of working, which should produce a more manageable and effective system. In addition new information and explanatory material has been produced, which should enhance public understanding of the process and reduce dissatisfaction with the outcome of enforcement actions, which has commonly occurred.

Planning Policy

The necessity to deal with the weakness of the Councils planning policy framework remains a key objective and I and the Planning Policy Section, together with the Local Development Document Advisory Group, are taking the opportunity produced by the need to fundamentally review the Core Strategy, to bring forward as many other key policy documents as

possible, including for example Area Character Assessments and the desperately needed Gypsy and Travellers Policy to name but 2. Considerable work is also being undertaken to enable the Council to produce the policy tools and mechanisms necessary to provide the Infrastructure to support the Growth in Housing and Employment that Government policy has thrust upon us. A specific issue that is also being considered is the policy approach needed to support and produce the High Street Regeneration Scheme. I remain concerned that all of this policy activity will be doomed to at least fall seriously short of its potential unless the Council has more control over the type of housing that is built and we will continue to explore ways of increasing the Councils options in this respect.

Finally, in the policy area I have been working closely with Cllr Tony Harwood, Cabinet Member for the Environment, on improving the

Clive English – Cont'd..//

Boroughs Transportation Infrastructure through the LDF and other measures, including the provision of second generation Park and Ride facilities.

Housing

Real progress is now being made in bringing forward additional schemes to provide additional affordable Housing, and to address the slippage that has affected the housing programme in the past, with 7 more schemes having been recommended to Cabinet at their meeting on 12th September. In addition to the

contribution made to the Boroughs affordable housing stock by capital programmes it is vital to ensure a healthy contribution via section 106 agreements, Therefore a robust attitude in defending the Councils priorities for Section 106 contributions needs to be maintained.

Economic Development

The Council has received the report of the University of Westminster on the Nighttime Economy and Councillor Dan Daley, myself and Cabinet colleagues will be seeking to reinforce the many positive aspects of this part of the Boroughs economy whilst dealing with the identified



Dan Daley – Leisure and Culture

Maidstone Museum

HOT OFF THE PRESS—We have just received the magnificent news that the Museum have been granted lottery funding of £1,999,000.

(The Heritage Lottery Fund has asked that no public announcement be made until next week when they will issue a press release.)

Work is proceeding apace on the Museum East Wing extension project.

In the meantime, I have agreed to the appointment of the architectural team in order to get the important interior design work underway. The Museum itself is going from strength to strength, as month by month its visitor figures rise and visitors, both popular and professional, continue to praise the presentations and the exhibitions which are continually being changed to maintain interest.

My sincere congratulations to all connected with the management and running of the day-to-day operation of the Museum

My vision is to get the Tourist Information and other visitor facilities firmly based in this excellent location. The regeneration of this most valuable asset is therefore paramount as a priority - and the East Wing project is the important step forward to bring these needs into being.

'Elemental' - Art along the River

'Art' will be again on everybody's radar as two new works are likely to be unveiled in the near future in the 'Elemental' series funded by the Arts Council and Channel Corridor Partnership.

Dan Daley – Cont'd. / ...

The Maidstone Marker (Air), delayed by planning and structural issues, seems to have successfully cleared all the final hurdles and should now be in place down by the riverside at the Maidstone Bridge within the next few weeks and "Morning Thoughts" (Earth), the marble sculpture for the Rose Garden, is now being finished before it too arrives in Maidstone in the near future. In addition to this, work is also in hand to find a more permanent home for working artists in the centre of the Town.

Weaving Heath

Although this excellent project has begun now to bed down - and reports from locals say that it is being well used by all age groups, - there is still some concern over abuse of the more hidden areas by antisocial groups of youths. A very recent clean up operation has disclosed some very disturbing evidence and more police action is required to counter this.

On the continuing subject as to where to site some extra equipment for youth interests, I have recently had a meeting with all stakeholders who have now formed a small working group to come back to me in October with some, hopefully, sensible site suggestion acceptable to all for the sportswall and teen 'huddle' shelter.

Leisure Centre

Work is now in progress assessing immediately 'do-able' refurbishment before further decisions are taken concerning the future management of the facility.

Sailing Club in Mote Park

I am just about now to receive a report on the feasibility of supporting the needs of the Sailing Club in Mote Park which is being displaced by the refurbishment of Mote House. Early indications are that any provision is likely to be expensive and this whole situation will need very careful consideration.



Please send your comments and ideas for future Newsletters to:
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