

MAKE IT MAIDSTONE

FIGHT THE CREDIT CRUNCH

www.digitalmaidstone.co.uk



Maidstone Borough Council is working to fight the effects of the credit crunch. We help residents with housing and council tax benefits, heating, insulation and home improvement grants, free bus travel and money advice organisations. In this issue Make it Maidstone sets out some of the things the council is doing to help business and reinvigorate the local economy.

High Street moving forward

Plans for the multi-million pound regeneration of Maidstone High Street are now firmly on the drawing board. The cabinet chose Letts Wheeler Architects to improve and renew the area.

Cabinet member for Regeneration, Cllr Malcolm Greer said: "We picked Letts Wheeler because they can deliver the High Street Maidstone wants. We will develop their ideas and carry out consultation to add details to their design. Their design is clutter free and simple."



Chris Tipping, a Kent based artist, will be working with the architects to refine the design. For more information visit <http://highstreet.digitalmaidstone.co.uk>

Useful numbers

Citizens Advice Bureau – 01622 752420 or 01622 757882
Council tax – 01622 602003
Housing benefit and general housing advice – 01622 602557
National debtline – freephone 0808 808 4000
Heating and insulation grants – 01622 602470
First time buyers' grants – 01622 602470
Energy Saving Trust – 0800 512 012
Concessionary Travel – 01622 602334
Jobcentre Plus – 01622 702700
Business link – 0845 6009006

Flagship projects

Funding plans are now in place for all three of Maidstone's flagship regeneration schemes.

Mote Park will get a £2.5 million lottery windfall to repair and conserve the lake and grounds, and to improve visitor facilities.

Maidstone Museum's east wing project to house new displays will proceed with another £2 million lottery grant. And our High Street regeneration scheme is well underway (see left).

Could you claim free-school meals?

Helping residents gain extra benefits is on the menu at Maidstone Gateway.

Parents in receipt of - Income Support, Income-based Jobseekers Allowance, an Income-related Employment and Support allowance, Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) - and have an annual income that does not exceed £16,040 or the Guarantee element of State Pension Credit, can claim free school meals straight away. Forms can also be requested from schools.



New Depot work under way

Maidstone's new council depot at Park Wood will be built to save energy and conserve resources. Cabinet Member for the Environment, Cllr Mark Wooding says: "We expect this building to achieve a 'Very Good' BREEAM environmental assessment.

As part of our commitment to reduce carbon emissions we're developing a travel plan to encourage environmentally friendly forms of travel."

The new depot will be funded by the sale of the old depot, at Armstrong Road. It should be open in September 2009.

Help for Homeowners

Maidstone CAB has a number of schemes to help homeowners who are having difficulty keeping up with their mortgage payments.

Visit Maidstone CAB at Maidstone Gateway in King Street, five days a week from 10am-4pm or call 01622 752420/757882.



Jobs, skills and housing

A new strategy will guide how the council and its partners will improve Maidstone's economy, clearly setting priorities for business, economic development, skills and housing.

The Regeneration Strategy will complement the Local Development Framework which will set out how planning will be managed in our borough.


New affordable homes

Maidstone council is investing £6m to provide more than 450 new affordable homes over the next three years. Council leader Chris Garland says: "We want to increase the availability of affordable housing during this period of economic uncertainty. We will be working with social housing partners with a track record of delivering quality homes and neighbourhoods."

Towergate opts for Maidstone

Europe's largest independently owned insurance intermediary is settling in well at Maidstone. Cabinet member Cllr Malcolm Greer welcomes Towergate to the county town. He said: "Maidstone needs high quality jobs so that our people don't have to commute to work. Towergate has attracted good quality personnel."

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