

MAKE IT MAIDSTONE

FIGHT THE CREDIT CRUNCH

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Maidstone Borough Council is working to fight the effects of the credit crunch. In this issue of Make it Maidstone we highlight how Maidstone is weathering the storm.

Park Wood residents plan their future

More than 350 people, including school children, families and elderly residents, have been preparing the Park Wood Neighbourhood Action Plan.

Residents put their issues and ideas directly on to a giant 3D model of Park Wood. It was organised by residents and Maidstone council's Community Planning Unit with help from Maidstone Housing Trust, KCC, the police and other agencies.

Cabinet Member Marion Ring said: "During the next month residents and local agencies will choose the key actions to take forward; starting with what residents will be able to change



themselves. A five-year Neighbourhood Action Plan will be published in the spring."

For more information contact Jim Boot, Community Planning Co-ordinator - 01622 602246/jimboot@maidstone.gov.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 0800 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

Our economy

Maidstone fared better than most during the recession - our unemployment rate remained around 2.8%. That compared favourably with the rest of Kent. In December the rate for the county was 3.3%, below the national rate of 4.1%.

Whilst the outlook for the national economy remains uncertain it is important that the borough creates the right conditions for economic growth. Investment in skills will be critical. The £62 million New Line Learning Academy is currently under construction. The University for the Creative Arts is now offering broadcast media courses at the Maidstone Studios. Kent County Council has agreed to increase its investment in a Vocational Skills Studio at Senacre Community Centre.

Maidstone attracts interest from businesses looking to invest. Locate in Kent, reports that of 302 active enquiries, 97 are interested in Maidstone.

Travelodge boosts Maidstone's economy



Not everyone likes the design of Maidstone's new £4 million Travelodge but many do and no one should doubt its benefit to our economy. Travelodge research shows that their customers will spend £36 a day in the local community. That could see up to £1.9 million added to Maidstone's economy every year.

Ten pence a week

Council tax payers in Maidstone will be asked to pay an extra 10p a week (band D) for Maidstone council services, next year, April 2010-March 2011. The Council has agreed a 2.49% increase in Maidstone council's bill. Council Leader, Chris Garland says: "We made savings of £1.6 million. Our consultation told us that people

were prepared to pay a little extra to keep frontline services, provided we made savings where we could, particularly in staff. We are making £700,000 of savings in staff budgets. The increase is 2.49% or about 10p a week for an average taxpayer. I expect it will be one of the lowest in Kent."

Help for older people to stay in their homes

Maidstone Borough Council is part of an innovative project with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to enable asset rich but cash-poor older people pay for additional support at home, which could help to make their lives easier and allow them to stay in their own homes for longer, rather than move into a care home. It

provides access to a unique new equity release product - the Home Cash Plan - provided by retirement specialists Just Retirement who are a member of SHIP (Safe Home Income Plans) and therefore the product carries a 'no negative equity guarantee'. It has been designed specifically for income-poor older people,

and unlike other equity release products, allows home-owners to release small sums of money from their property safely and easily, without jeopardising their benefits.

For more information call Just Retirement Solutions, who provide the advice service for this project on 0800 232 1306.

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

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