

## MEETINGS WITH FORUMS AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

### 1. Disability Focus Group 4<sup>th</sup> March

1.1 At the request of the Disability Focus Group a special meeting was arranged to enable the group to review the draft strategy. Barry Ginley and Vicci Chittenden, the two LSP representatives on the group recommended that 'accessibility' should be given a higher profile within the strategy and to that effect the word 'all' should be added to the vision ie 'where all people can realise their aspirations'. It was suggested that there should be an 'accessibility and inclusion statement' in addition to the 'Definitions of Sustainable Development'. These words (taken from the previous community strategy) have been utilised: 'The strategy needs to take account of the needs of the whole community. This includes disabled people, young people, older people, people on low incomes and those who live in rural areas.' It was felt that the wording of objective 4: Create healthier community and more active older people needed clarification. It is suggested that these be amended to reflect more closely the detailed objective in Topic 4: '... and support older people to lead healthier, more independent and active lives.'

### 2. Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Focus Group 26<sup>th</sup> February

2.1 A special meeting with the VCS Focus Group was arranged. A link to the on-line consultation was circulated to all VCS bodies within Maidstone Borough. As suggested, the community road-show has gone out to meet up with people in their communities to get their views on the strategy. It was suggested the strategy needed to more overtly address what makes a community ie facilities where people can get together. Further it was suggested that as the VCS were largely underpinning the strategy that detailed objective 6.8 should be amended to 'Make Maidstone Borough a centre of excellence for the VCS by encouraging active citizenship, civic participation and active volunteering.' An exercise was undertaken to prioritise the topics:

| Topics                                      | Top 3 |
|---|-------|
| Homes and communities                       | 11    |
| Children, young people and families         | 8     |
| Health and older people                     | 7     |
| Economy and prosperity                      | 6     |
| Sport, creativity and culture               | 6     |
| Sustainable and integrated transport        | 3     |
| Crime and safety                            | 2     |
| Environmental excellence and climate change | 2     |

### 3. Age Concern 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> March

3.1 Because of the emphasis given in the plan to supporting older people and the highlighted aging demographic in Maidstone Borough, workshops were held in Age Concern/Maidstone Housing Trust's Day Centres in Staplehurst, Loose and Shepway. Key issues emerging from the workshops largely supported the issues within the draft SCS – with the possible exception of a high level of praise for Age Concern and Brighter Future Group's work for elderly people. Other areas singled out as 'good' included: Lockmeadow market, the Gateway,

Maidstone itself and parks. Areas highlighted as 'bad' included: public art, toilets, disabled parking and public transport. Most areas in the 'dream' category were covered by the draft strategy with the exception of a plea for more independent shops in Maidstone itself, improvements to community transport and moving the market to the town centre. The road-show will also attend the Older People's Forum on 31<sup>st</sup> March.

| <b>Good</b>  | <b>Bad</b>   | <b>Dream</b>   |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Traffic   | 1. The Maidstone Marker (is) far too expensive.  | 1. More support to hospital transport service.         |
| 2. Market  | 2. Not enough toilets.   | 2. A decent wet fish shop.                             |
| 3. Christmas lights  | 3. Parking for disabled not enough.  | 3. Green grocers.                                      |
| 4. Council offices into town   | 4. Roughest (poor quality) buses on services to Collier Street (rural areas). Accessibility is poor. | 4. More fresh meat shops.                              |
| 5. The Gateway is lovely.  | 5. Last bus into Maidstone at 1.45.  | 5. Theatre in Maidstone.                               |
| 6. This club is very good (Age Concern).                             | 6. Green sacks too expensive.  | 6. Market not in a nice place – need a market square.  |
| 7. They (Age Concern) do a lot to help you if you need it.           | 7. Parking & (too many) cars.  | 7. Bring back the carnival                             |
| 8. There is so much going on that's good in Maidstone.               | 8. Do not like the monument (Maidstone Market) – waste of money.                                     | 8. Better health service.                              |
| 9. Shopping  | 9. New pole dancing bar.   | 9. Easy access to information.                         |
| 10. River  | 10. No youth clubs.  | 10. Better traffic control.                            |
| 11. Leisure centre.  | 11. The sheep.   | 11. A decent market.                                   |
| 12. Shopping centre.   | 12. Maidstone Marker a waste of money.   | 12. A nice theatre.                                    |
| 13. Market.  | 13. Disabled parking.  | 13. Ice cream parlour.                                 |
| 14. Week Street.   | 14. Too many road works at once.   | 14. Late buses on some routes.                         |
| 15. Mote Park  | 15. Toilets in High Street – few and far between.  | 15. Maidstone should have their own community centre.  |
| 16. Bus Service  | 16. Disabled parking.  | 16. Need new buses for Age Concern.                    |
| 17. River  | 17. Toilets  | 17. Stone Street improved.                             |
| 18. Mote Park  | 18. Hazlitt Theatre.   | 18. Street lights at Linton.                           |
| 19. Day Centre (Age Concern)   | 19. Shops closing down.  | 19. More support for Age Concern and Brighter Futures. |
| 20. Leisure Centre.  | 20. Not enough dropped kerbs.  |  |
| 21. Bus passes.  | 21. Shortage of toilets.   |  |
| 22. Museum – very good.  | 22. Parking on the footpaths.  |  |
| 23. Turning on Christmas lights – is a good atmosphere all day long. | 23. Too many road works.   |  |
| 24. Parking  | 24. Too many mobile phone shops.   |  |
| 25. Bus service in our area is good.                                 | 25. Bad bus service in certain areas.  |  |
| 26. The day centres (Age Concern)                                    | 26. Park and ride expensive if you have more than one in the car. Cheaper to park in                 |  |
| 27. Flower beds and baskets.   |  |  |
| 28. It is a nice place to live in.                                   |  |  |
| 29. The Age Concern do a lot to help us old age pensioners.          |  |  |
| 30. We love Mote Park.   |  |  |
| 31. Fairly good shopping centre.                                     |  |  |
| 32. Market in Lockmeadow.  |  |  |
| 33. Very Friendly Place.   |  |  |

|  |           |  |
|--|-----------|--|
|  | the town. |  |
|--|-----------|--|

#### 4. Youth Forum 1<sup>st</sup> April

4.1 The Maidstone Youth Forum (MYF) has been extensively involved in the development of the SCS. Initial workshops were held with MYF in July 2008 and the 'Stick-up' for Maidstone trailer was taken to the Peace One Day event in September. A further workshop was held with MYF to test the draft strategy with them on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. The group unanimously supported the Vision. Comments on the vision included:

- I think the vision covers all aspects of someone's life. Its good.
- Good Vision. I think they are good things to improve.
- It's not what I'd expect from it, but I agree with it. I like the way it concentrates on what would make the people happy and not all about the government. Recycling/eco-friendly?
- Sounds nice – too idealistic maybe?

| <b>Vision related objectives</b>  | <b>Top 3</b> |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Develop a vibrant economy, create prosperity and opportunities for all.  | 4            |
| 2. Develop an efficient, sustainable, integrated transport system.  | 8            |
| 3. Build stronger and safer communities.  | 2            |
| 4. Create healthier communities and encourage more active older people.   | 2            |
| 5. Make Maidstone borough a place where people of all ages - children, young people and families – can achieve their aspirations. | 7            |
| 6. Develop Maidstone Borough's urban and rural homes and communities as models for 21st century quality and sustainable living.   | 1            |
| 7. Build a thriving sporting, creative and cultural life for all.   | 8            |
| 8. Retain and enhance Maidstone borough's distinctive history, landscape and character.   | 3            |
| 9. Reduce inequalities within the borough.  | 2            |
| 10. Establish Maidstone borough's reputation as a place for environmental excellence and action on climate change.                | 2            |

4.2 Comments on the objectives included:

- I like 8. because although we want to modernise Maidstone, we want to keep some of its history and rural landscape.
- Government at a local level will have to work hard on the economy after the recession so 1 is very important. 2 is important because it is rubbish at the moment. Also 7 because we don't have much of this.

- I think that to get a more active older generation will ease the pressure on hospitals. Environmental excellence and action on climate change can also tackle our children's obesity and fitness problems although I can't see all those supposedly fat people.
- Is there some sort of flagship schemes involved in these objectives?
- I like 4 and 7 although possible be combined as I find it hard to choose between the two.
- Is 7 all one objective ie sport, creativity and culture?
- 7 I think it's important to encourage kids to be healthy ☺ and adults!
- 8 maybe promoting Maidstone as a historical town. Make it stand out. Interesting.
- 10 YAY for the environment We ♥ EARTH ☺

| <b>Key actions</b>   | <b>Top 3</b> |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Attract and retain higher paying employers in the Borough   | 2            |
| 2. Create a task force to tackle health, education and employment inequalities in areas of disadvantage  | 5            |
| 3. Regenerate the town centre and make more of the river   | 4            |
| 4. Develop transport and parking strategies to reduce congestion   | 7            |
| 5. Increase youth facilities and services as a means of tackling anti-social behaviour   | 4            |
| 6. Develop stronger licensing powers to tackle alcohol abuse and related crime   | 0            |
| 7. Campaign with the county council to reduce the high levels of deaths and injuries on the roads  | 1            |
| 8. Further develop with the health service a community health programme to tackle obesity, smoking, alcohol abuse and improve sexual and mental health | 8            |
| 9. Support with schools and the county council measures to improve GCSE results in schools and preparing people for work                               | 2            |
| 10. Work with schools to maximise the use of their facilities for sporting activities for all ages   | 4            |
| 11. Pursue the construction of more affordable homes to meet local need and bring empty homes back into use  | 0            |
| 12. Develop and implement carbon reduction and climate change adaptation plans ie against flooding   | 2            |

#### 4.3 Comments on the actions:

- 3 the river can be very pretty but you'd need to make sure it doesn't flood. 7 reduce speeding – nearly been run over a lot. 10 sports = fun – BENCHBALL!
- No key actions to do with historical and cultural improvements. No key actions to do with recycling.
- 1 is rather capitalist but it is what is needed at the moment. I ♥ 2 but a task force is not good enough – this is an important issue and needs more. So is 11 but you seem to do more with this which is good.
- 4 is limited – transport needs development but not just for congestion. It needs to be cheaper and more efficient.
- On the anti-social behaviour – I think we need to change the perception of young people as most of us are harmless and just get judged wrongly.