

Business Rates Retention (Pilot) Additional Projects

Final Decision-Maker	Policy & Resources Committee
Lead Head of Service	Mark Green, Director of Finance and Business Improvement
Lead Officer and Report Author	Chris Hartgrove, Interim Head of Finance
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

The level of income generated from Business Rates growth and retained locally as part of the Business Rates Retention pilot in 2018/19 has exceeded initial projections, with total funding of £1,130,000 accumulating in the "Financial Sustainability Fund" (FSF) compared to £640,000 anticipated at the start of the financial year, which has been used to fund a number of projects aimed at furthering the Council's corporate objectives (the "2018/19 projects").

After allowing for a small underspend anticipated on the 2018/19 projects, additional resources of £509,000 are now available to fund further projects and – following development work by senior officers, and consultation with councillors – this report presents a new tranche of projects for the Committee's consideration.

The total value of the proposals is £667,950 (i.e. £158,950 higher than the additional funds in the FSF), so the Committee will need to make a balanced choice as to the projects to fund (and to what extent) if an optimal decision is to be reached in the further pursuit of the Council's corporate priorities.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That it agrees funding for the projects set out in Appendix 1.
2. To the extent that there is a shortfall in resources from the Financial Sustainability Fund, that it delegates authority to the Director of Finance and Business Improvement, in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, to identify funds from within unallocated resources for the agreed projects.

Timetable	
<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Member Briefing	13 June 2019
Policy & Resources Committee	26 June 2019

Business Rates Retention (Pilot) Additional Projects

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve its corporate priorities (with each individual project tailored and focussed on a minimum of at least one of the Strategic Plan's four objectives).	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Cross Cutting Objectives	The report recommendations support the achievement of the Council's cross-cutting objectives (e.g. the "Go Green, Go Wild" project will help to ensure that "Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected").	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Risk Management	See Section 5 below.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Financial	The subject of the report.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Staffing	None.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Legal	The Council has a statutory obligation to set a balanced budget. Allocation of resources in the way set out in this report supports achievement of a balanced budget.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Privacy and Data Protection	None.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement

Equalities	Where appropriate, Equalities Impact Assessments will be carried out for specific projects.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Crime and Disorder	None.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Procurement	Procurement of services in the course of delivering the projects will be in accordance with the Council's Procurement Procedure Rules.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members of the Committee will recall that the Kent Business Rates Pool (joined by Medway, Dover and Sevenoaks) was successful in a bid to become a 100% Business Rate Retention (BRR) pilot for 2018/19, meaning that 100% of Business Rates growth could be retained in the area, with the Government Levy requirement removed completely.
- 1.2 Locally it was decided that additional income generated from Business Rates growth was to be split 70:30 between a "Financial Sustainability Fund" (FSF) and a "Housing and Commercial Growth Fund" (HCGF). This report covers the FSF.

Financial Sustainability Fund (FSF): Original Allocation

- 1.3 The overall FSF is shared between Pool/Pilot members (to spend as they wish) comprising a basic allocation, enhanced by relative population and historic Business Rates growth.
- 1.4 The original Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) share of the FSF assumed for 2018/19 was £640,000. Consequently – in March 2018 – the Policy and Resources Committee agreed to fund 13 (one-off) projects aimed at enhancing the Council's strategic objectives. The projects (including forecast spending presented to the Policy and Resources Committee on 24th April 2019) are summarised in the table below.

MBC Financial Sustainability Fund Existing Projects 2018/19				
Ref.	Project	Budget	Forecast	Variance
		£000's	£000's	£000's
1	Housing First and Rough Sleepers	80	80	0
2	Regeneration Opportunity Areas	80	80	0
3	Property Asset Review	55	55	0
4	Members' Community Grant	60	46	14
5	Predictive Analytics and Preventing Homelessness	80	80	0
6	Housing Delivery Partnership	40	40	0
7	Go Green, Go Wild	90	90	0
8	Maidstone Business Capital of Kent – marketing strategy	35	35	0
9	Staplehurst Village Centre Masterplan	15	15	0
10	Maidstone Housing Design Guide	40	40	0
11	Electric Vehicle Charging Points	20	20	0
12	Bus Station Improvement – feasibility study	10	10	0
13	Data analytics for Inclusive Growth	35	30	5
Totals		640	621	19

2.5 The level of Business Rates retained in 2018/19 consistently exceeded expectations throughout the year. The MBC share eventually reached £1,130,000 (subject to external audit) by year end, rather than the original assumption of £640,000, as the FSF shares for all Pool members have been bolstered by the savings realised as a consequence of the 'nil Levy' requirement for 100% Pilot schemes.

Financial Sustainability Fund (FSF): Additional Allocation

1.5 The enhanced FSF allocation for MBC provides an opportunity to fund additional (one-off) projects in further support of the Council's strategic priorities, including potentially new priorities contained within the updated Strategic Plan (2019-2045) adopted in February 2019.

1.6 Estimated additional resources available from the FSF are as follows:

- Original FSF allocation £640,000
- Original Projects (*13); forecast outturn (£621,000)
- Additional FSF allocation (£1.13m - £640k) £490,000
- Net Additional Resources (2019/20) £509,000

Financial Sustainability Fund (FSF): New Project Bids

- 1.7 Senior officers have considered up to 30 different projects with a total value approaching £1.5 million, all of which could potentially further enhance the Council's strategic objectives.
- 1.8 A shortlist of 15 projects (total value of circa £700,000) was drawn up by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and considered by councillors at a Workshop held on 13 June 2019.
- 1.9 A positive consensus emerged from the Workshop with all projects receiving at least some support from councillors. Consequently it was agreed that, acting on feedback from the Workshop, officers would further develop and prioritise the short-listed proposals, including giving consideration as to how the potential funding gap (due to a resource requirement in excess of £509,000) might be bridged.
- 1.10 The project list has now been reviewed and re-prioritised as requested by councillors. Significant changes to note since the Workshop on 13 June 2019 include the following:
 - Inward Facing Projects/Alternative Funding – following a review of potential alternative funding sources, the three 'inward facing' projects ("Smart Meeting Rooms", "Enhanced Technology for Customer Transactions" and "Digital Working for Building Control") have been removed from the Financial Sustainability Fund proposals, with a total funding requirement of £98,000 now planned to be met through the "Transition Grant" and similar resources; and
 - Climate Change Initiatives – acting on feedback from the Workshop, officers have now developed two additional project proposals aimed at tackling the Council's priorities on Climate Change ("Climate Change Commission" £40,000 and "Urban Trees" £50,000).
- 1.11 The updated project list now comprises 13 project bids with a total value of £667,950 and is summarised in Appendix 1 (with further detail included in Appendix 2).

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 **Option 1:** Choosing from the projects listed in Appendix 1, decide how the additional funding of £509,000 from the Financial Sustainability Fund is to be applied (containing that choice within allocated resources); or
- 3.2 **Option 2:** Approve all 13 projects, and, to the extent that there is a shortfall in resources from the Financial Sustainability Fund, delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Business Improvement, in consultation with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, to identify funds from within unallocated resources for the agreed projects. The total shortfall amounts to £158,950, most of which could for example be met from the revenue underspend for 2018/19 (as reported elsewhere on this agenda).

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The preferred option is Option 2, as all the projects are considered to have merit and have been subject to scrutiny by Officers and Members.

5. RISK

- 5.1 As with any projects, those described in this report could fail to be delivered, or could be delivered but exceed their budget allocations. This risk is mitigated in several ways:
- There is a strong project management culture in the Council
 - Monitoring arrangements will be put in place for all the projects, to ensure that they deliver within budget and to the agreed timetable; and
 - Post project reviews will be carried out to evaluate the outcomes and to derive any lessons learned from the projects.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 6.1 Following the conclusion of a member-consultation exercise – on 28 March 2018 – the Policy and Resources Committee approved the original funding of 13 (one-off) BRR projects with a total value of £640,000 from the Financial Sustainability Fund.
- 6.2 The Policy and Resources Committee received an update report on progress on the BRR initiative on 24 April 2019, which indicated that Business Rates growth had exceeded expectations and that additional resources would be available to fund additional projects in 2019/20.

- 6.3 All councillors were invited to attend a Briefing on 13 June 2019 to consider a short-list of project bids for additional resources of £509,000. Feedback from that Workshop has been used to inform the content of this report.
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7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 7.1 If agreed, the projects described in this report will be delivered during 2019/20 with regular reports back to the Committee on progress.
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8. REPORT APPENDICES

- 8.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- **Appendix 1:** *Financial Sustainability Fund (Additional Resources): Summary of Project Bids (June 2019)*
 - **Appendix 2:** *Project Bids: Background and Objectives*
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9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 There are no background papers.

**Financial Sustainability Fund (Additional Resources):
Summary of Project Bids (June 2019)**

MBC Financial Sustainability Fund Additional Project Bids		
Ref.	Project	Budget Requirement
		£'s
1	Arterial Route Improvements (A20)	128,250
2	CCTV Live Monitoring (Waste Collection)	30,000
3	Go Green Go Wild (Community Fund)	20,000
4	Lower High Street Master Plan	80,000
5	Archbishop's Palace Options Appraisal	60,000
6	Phoenix Park Regeneration	75,000
7	Invicta Park Planning Guidance	15,000
8	Inclusion Through Enterprise	67,500
9	Cycle Parking Infrastructure	60,000
10	Floodlighting for Jubilee Field, Staplehurst	36,000
11	Domestic Abuse Awareness	6,200
12	Climate Change Commission	40,000
13	Urban Trees	50,000
Total		667,950

Project Bids: Background and Objectives

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
1	Arterial Route Improvements (A20)	128,250
Background		
<p>Whilst individually some work has been undertaken by the Grounds Maintenance, Parks and Street Cleansing Teams to improve the arterial routes into and through the Town Centre, there is a need for a more joint up approach which encompasses key stakeholders and landowners, such as KCC and Network Rail.</p> <p>The arterial routes have historically been problematic due to their heavy traffic flow and high-speed health and safety restrictions. However as major routes across the Borough they are fundamental in many visitors' first impressions of the Borough and Town. In isolation the improvements already made, such as the gyratory planting, welcome signage and enhanced cleansing, have less of an impact than a more focused effort to tackle 'grot-spots', improve the green spaces and introduce new features. It is therefore recommended that a few improvements are focused on one of the main routes – the A20 from Willington Street into the Town.</p> <p>This particular location is identified as there are specific opportunities relating to green spaces along the route and existing features which could be enhanced, such as the railway bridge, Art Deco railings and Mote Park wall.</p> <p>The intention is to declutter where possible, enhance and improve street furniture, introduce colourful planting, improve maintenance of open spaces and deep clean. However, it is important that areas of natural habitat are still retained on the route as there are a number of "wild" areas that need to be retained and celebrated. It is important that visitors to the Borough understand the importance of these areas and they are not consider neglected.</p> <p>Some of the areas on the A20 are owned and maintained by Kent County Council and therefore in order to deliver this project there will need to be a level of cooperation and support from the County Council.</p>		

Project Objectives

The key objectives for the project are:

- To improve the visual appearance of an arterial route into and through the Town Centre
- To create a more welcoming and vibrant environment when entering the Town Centre
- To enhance biodiversity through considered species selection and habitat management
- To declutter through the removal of unnecessary signage and street furniture
- To deep clean the route including jet washing signage and removal of detritus on back lines

The project will consider all factors that affect the visual appearance of the route and identify opportunities to remove, replace or enhance them to improve the overall perception of the area rather than piecemeal changes.

The intention is for this project to act as a potential 'blueprint' for the other routes into the Town.

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
2	CCTV Live Monitoring (Waste Collection)	30,000

Background

Maidstone as part of the Mid Kent Joint Waste Contract works with Biffa Municipal Ltd to deliver a waste and recycling service which meets the needs of our residents. Customer satisfaction levels for the services have always been high, however given 7.5 million collections are made every year, errors inevitably occur. Although as a proportion of the collections made, complaints are very low – the actual number which have to be investigated and responded to is high and therefore requires significant resource.

Within the contract, Biffa are required to record collections on their PDAs (on board computers). This includes confirming collections and recording 'lockouts' where collections could not be made due to bins being contaminated, not out for collection or access issues. Where a 'lockout' is recorded there is no contractual requirement for the contractor to return if the resident reports a missed collection. However, these issues can sometimes escalate to formal complaints or Member involvement where the resident disputes the issue. With contamination this is usually easy to resolve by a visit from the Monitoring Officer however proving a bin is not out for collection is difficult.

In 2018/19, the customer insight information shows over 30k calls recorded and over 7% of these related to complaints or queries about missed collections where the contractor would not be returning. These have the potential for significant customer dissatisfaction and the possibility of being escalated to official complaints requiring significant officer time to investigate. Biffa have also suggested that if they are then required to return for collections where a 'lockout' has been recorded there may be a charge as they have complied with the contract.

In addition to the requirement to resolve residents' complaints there is a legal obligation for the Council to monitor the contractor to ensure they are complying with health and safety requirements and carrying out their work in line with the specification and safe working procedures. This is currently covered by a full-time monitoring officer who carries out crew checks to identify any non-compliance which is then raised with the contractor.

A couple of Biffa's vehicles used in Maidstone are fitted with 360-degree CCTV which has successfully been used to resolve problems on that round and in one instance was used to investigate a vehicle which was involved in a serious accident.

Project Objectives

The objective for this project is to support Biffa with the installation of 360-degree live CCTV cameras on the 13 frontline vehicles to enable real-time monitoring of their performance, H&S compliance and to resolve complaints quickly and with certainty.

The cameras will also improve monitoring for contamination by enabling officers to view recycling as it is tipped into the vehicle and evidence of black sacks or heavy contamination could be identified. This would enable targeting of communications campaigns to areas where contaminated recycling was evident.

The Council would have access to the footage and can therefore save time and potential resource investigating and monitoring the contract. There will also undoubtedly be a benefit to Biffa for the investment and they have estimated a benefit of £4,500 saving per year in Maidstone from the cameras. The intention would be to share the cost of the installation.

It is proposed 13 new 360 Live DVR Systems are installed as there are 4 vehicles with the cameras already installed. The cost is £3,600 per vehicle and therefore the total cost would be £46,800. Therefore £30,000 funding is requested to fund half of the cost for the 17 systems in Maidstone.

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
3	Go Green Go Wild (Community Fund)	20,000
Background		
<p>As part of the first tranche of the Business Rates Retention Pilot funding, the Go Green Go Wild initiative was launched. The funding was used to provide a 'Community Partnership Officer' to work with existing community groups and support the initiation of new ones to enhance biodiversity in the Borough, improve open spaces and create a website which records work to encourage wildlife and habitat creation.</p> <p>This project is already working well with a number of groups now actively engaging and carrying out work to get more residents interested in their environment. The Community Partnership Officer has already started working with key local stakeholders and groups including Kent Wildlife Trust, Maidstone Community Support, Maidstone River Park Group, Friends of Whatman Park, Friends of Weaving Heath and Wents Wood, Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) and Golding Homes.</p> <p>The Go Green Go Wild project is gaining traction with residents and volunteering sector as people understand the support on offer and the forum for likeminded people sharing good practice and resources.</p> <p>The website is now being developed to be able to record actions being taken by groups and individuals and to act as a directory for Project Partners who run Maidstone based groups.</p> <p>It has now been identified that being able to provide a small grant to some of these groups would enable them to reach a wider audience and deliver more small projects on the ground. A small amount of the initial Go Green Go Wild funding is going to be diverted into a grant scheme however further funding would enable the project to grow through greater community support, which was the original intention of the initiative.</p>		

Project Objectives

Project Objective 1

Enable 10 local environment groups to achieve their ambitions for the natural environment during 2019 and 2020. This could include :

- Habitat improvements
- Monitoring & recording biodiversity
- Community engagement & education events
- Communicate biodiversity message to residents
- Volunteer workdays.

Project Objective 2

We project that 1500 volunteer hours of work will be undertaken through the Go Green Go Wild Grant Scheme.

Project Objective 3

Capacity Building - increasing the skills, confidence and ambitions for local groups to undertake practical projects benefitting the environment. Grant funding will be utilised to provide access to training, health and safety advice, insurances and improving skills.

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
4	Lower High Street Master Plan	80,000
Background		
<p>Maidstone Borough Council own Medway Street Public Car Park, an adjacent parking area to the rear of the lower High Street, let to local business and 4 adjoining commercial properties, two of which front the High Street.</p> <p>The Medway Street site is currently allocated in the Local Plan for residential development.</p> <p>The buildings known as 32B, 34a and 34 are let on short term leases, are not particularly well maintained and are not producing significant rental revenue. 35 High Street is listed and is let on secure tenancy. The properties include fast food outlet and a barber and this area of the lower High Street is a little run down, has lacked investment and does not attract high quality tenants or rents.</p> <p>The Lower High Street area requires investment to become more attractive to both prospective occupiers and passing trade and as part of the town centre regeneration.</p> <p>The public realm requires additional investment, being the main pedestrian route from town centre to the River and to the Lockmeadow development.</p> <p>Whilst the existing public car park produces revenue for the Council, it is close to other town centre parking facilities.</p> <p>Although the car park has already been allocated in the Local Plan for residential development, the redevelopment project requires a joined up strategy with the adjoining High Street buildings and the public realm area, to avoid future ransom strip issues, to maximise value from the Council's property assets and create an attractive and improved lower High Street environment.</p> <p>As a significant land owner in this vicinity, the Council have an opportunity to improve this area, invest in the public realm and create the 'Thriving Place' in line with the Strategic Plan.</p>		

Project Objectives

The Local Plan allocates Medway Street for residential development. Over the next 3 years the Council can obtain possession of the adjoining High Street frontage buildings, therefore widening the development opportunity from a residential scheme to more of a mixed development scheme which could incorporate some mixed use retail/cafe uses and the re-provision of some parking. By being able to identify possible development opportunities in this location now, there is an opportunity for the Council to extend its Town Centre improvement programme over the next few years.

The lower High Street provides the main pedestrian corridor from the town centre to the River and the Lockmeadow area. However the area is unattractive and has lacked targeted investment.

The Council want to maximise value from its own property assets and at the same time create new opportunities and encourage investment to an area of the town centre which at present lacks interest and attention.

The Council have identified the five Town Centre Opportunity sites and the Lower High Street leads directly onto the Riverside area and these prime sites.

The Council's investment and development of its own town centre assets in the Lower High Street area demonstrates the commitment to the Council's Strategic Plan for creating Homes and Communities, Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure and Creating a Thriving Place.

The Council wish to commission a Feasibility Study and Master Plan for the Lower High Street, incorporating both the land the Council own and the existing public realm areas.

The Council will appoint a planning consultant/urban designer to undertake initially:

Development Appraisal, Initial Design and Masterplan

The output of this project would be a document setting out the viable options for the Council's assets at Medway Street/High Street, fully costed with planning guidance and development options advice.

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
5	Archbishop's Palace Options Appraisal	60,000
Background		
<p>The Archbishop's Palace is owned by Maidstone Borough Council and is currently let to Kent County Council as their Registry Office for Maidstone area. The Lease to KCC expires October 2020 and subject to an agreed short term extension, Maidstone Borough Council are likely to gain full possession March 2021. The property is Grade II listed with gardens to the front, adjacent to the River Medway and has rooms on the ground and first floors.</p> <p>The Carriage Museum was originally part of the Archbishop's Palace but now sits on the opposite side of Mill Street but is also owned by the Council and is currently run by Maidstone Museum. It houses approximately 60 vehicles.</p> <p>It has limited opening hours, offers free entry and Maidstone Borough Council currently carry out regular and planned repairs and maintenance to the building.</p> <p>Given the 5 Town Centre Opportunity Sites and the close proximity of these two historic buildings to those sites, in particular Len House, Maidstone Borough Council have an opportunity to consider the future of these buildings in conjunction with the wider Town Centre Development opportunity, in particular to create a 'Thriving Place' whilst ensuring Heritage is respected.</p>		

Project Objectives

Given the historic nature of the two properties and their key town centre location the Council have the opportunity to review the current use and condition of the buildings and to consider future uses and ensuring their future preservation.

An Options Appraisal would be the first step to identify options that the Council could consider when it takes possession of the Archbishops Palace in 2021.

The Options Appraisal would include:

- Review of the existing uses of both buildings
- Assessment of the current condition of both buildings
- Future costs of repair and maintenance of the buildings
- Demand for the existing use
- Possible alternative uses
- Any adaptations required for alternative uses and the possible costs of such adaptations.
- Possible income generation from alternative uses
- Possible alternative locations for Carriages
- Recommendations and costs of preserving the historic nature of the buildings
- Impact of the two buildings on the Town Centre Development Opportunity Sites
- Advantages/Disadvantages of including the sites within the wider Town Centre Development strategy.
- Any possible joint uses/collaborations with third parties for uses of the buildings.

The Appraisal Plan to the Council should include detailed recommendations based on findings, next steps, advice on how best to take forward the recommendations and an implementation programme.

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
6	Phoenix Park Regeneration	75,000
Background		
<p>Phoenix Park is 11 commercial business units on the Parkwood Industrial Estate that the Council owns the freehold for. The units were built in the early 1980's and are of steel frame construction with a mix of brick and profiled steel sheet cladded elevations. The units are arranged in three terraces, varying in size from 800 square foot to 5000 square foot.</p> <p>In 2015 an opportunity arose to purchase the leasehold interest in the site and regain control of the units and therefore benefit from the full rental income. The units were purchased with tenants in situ and a net rental income of £219,535pa.</p> <p>Since 2015 there has been a steady churn in tenants and rent levels haven't reached the 2015 level again. Recently we have found it difficult to secure good quality tenants and reach good rental levels, and as the market for commercial units is very strong there is clearly another reason why the Phoenix Park units aren't attractive to potential tenants.</p> <p>The Council hasn't invested in the Estate since purchasing it, and the units are looking tired, worn and dated. Improving the appearance and quality of the Estate will make the units more appealing to prospective tenants, help achieve current market rents and improve the revenue return from the investment.</p>		
Project Objectives		
<p>The improvements that will make the biggest impact on the Estate are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • external repairs and redecoration of the metal sheet cladding • replacement and improved signage • improved external security arrangements • resurfacing of the Estate road • improvement of the fire escape paths • replacement of damaged doors and glazing; and • maintenance of landscaped areas. 		

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
7	Invicta Park Planning Guidance	15,000
Background		
<p>Invicta Park Barracks occupies a site of 41 hectares to the north of Maidstone Town Centre. It is the base of 36 Engineer Regiment, which incorporates the Queen's Gurkha Engineers. The Ministry of Defence announced in November 2017 that it would dispose of the site as part of its Better Defence Estate programme, with a scheduled disposal date of 2027.</p> <p>Anticipating closure of the site, Invicta Park was included in the draft Maidstone Local Plan published in July 2016 as a site for 1,300 new homes. Initial discussions have taken place with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, the MoD's property arm, about their disposal plans. The DIO state that their preferred approach with disposals of this scale is to engage actively with local authorities and other key stakeholders to secure the best outcomes both for the MoD and for the local community.</p> <p>This project would set out planning guidance for the site in order to ensure that the Council's aspirations for the site are addressed at an early stage by the MoD, other stakeholders and potential developers.</p>		
Project Objectives		
<p>The objective of the project is to provide a Planning Guidance document for the Invicta Park Barracks site by the end of 2019.</p> <p>Successful delivery of the project will help to secure achievement of the following related objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consensus amongst stakeholders and the local community about the future use of the site • Delivery of Local Plan housing targets • Economic development along the M20 corridor. 		

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
8	Inclusion Through Enterprise	67,500
Background		
<p>The proposed project aims to provide a route into meaningful occupation, training and employment for those with a history of entrenched/problematic rough sleeping locally.</p> <p>The work will build upon and support the successes of the 'Rough Sleeper Initiative' funded outreach team which has radically reduced the actual numbers of those sleeping rough in the borough (down over 80% since September 18).</p> <p>While this project has been successful engaging rough sleepers and supporting into accommodation we recognise an ongoing need to challenge and overcome associated social exclusion for this service user group. Isolation and lack of opportunity both threaten the chances of tenancy sustainment and increase the risk of ongoing criminal and anti-social behaviours associated with street homeless culture.</p> <p>The project will seek to challenge prejudices and barriers faced by this service user group within the wider community and provide a link through which better communication and understanding can be engendered. The proposed project will thus provide a 'shopfront' community focal point through which business and the general public can contribute to and directly benefit from an innovative approach that supports ending repeat homelessness and associated social exclusion in the borough.</p>		

Project Objectives

The project aims to provide a platform through which former rough sleepers and homeless individuals can develop and deliver a business model which has a visible presence in and benefits the wider local community.

The concept has been formulated in partnership with Maidstone BIDS and The Mall Limited Partnership who have offered free use of a retail unit within the Mall and agreed hours of staff support. The business will be a 'co-production' initiative supported by the Maidstone Borough Councils Outreach service and the above, but importantly formulated and delivered by those who have experienced street homelessness and associated issues (substance misuse, offending behaviour, unemployment etc) in the district.

An initial group of known service users (ex-rough sleepers) will be supported in setting up as a social enterprise and achieving charitable status. The business model will be to formulate and deliver a retail enterprise from within this town centre shop premises that both showcases existing skills and provides accredited training and work experience for those rebuilding their lives following street homelessness. The key performance indicators will reflect the expected outcomes of – improved tenancy sustainment, a reduction in anti-social behaviour within the business district and measurable improvements in access to employment and formal training for the service user group.

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
9	Cycle Parking Infrastructure	60,000
Background		
<p>The Walking and Cycling Strategy (W&CS) identifies limited availability of secure and safe cycle parking at key locations as being a key constraint to the attractiveness of cycling within Maidstone Borough. Action C6 in the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) and W&CS is to: Improve cycle security and parking at all key transport hubs and public amenities (including schools, healthcare facilities and retail locations). In order to achieve this action, alongside increasing the overall uptake of cycling, it is necessary to undertake an audit of current provision and identify key locations requiring cycle parking, additional and or improved provision.</p> <p>This project also supports countywide strategies, such as Kent's Active Travel Strategy (ATS). Specifically, Action area 2 of the ATS is to "Provide and maintain appropriate routes for active travel." To quote the strategy document: "There is a need to provide facilities such as safe crossings along routes and secure cycle storage at destinations." Action area 3 is "Support active travel in the community", which would clearly be contributed towards by improvements to cycle parking provision.</p> <p>It should also be noted that any improvements to sustainable travel facilities (such as cycle parking) would support the Kent Environment Strategy, particularly on its 2nd Key Theme, to "Support sustainable access and connectivity for businesses and communities".</p>		
Project Objectives		
<p>To encourage more people in the borough to cycle, specifically at peak journey times, resulting in less vehicles on the road. Cycling is a low cost, efficient, healthy and environmentally friendly mode of transport. Benefits include improved mental and physical wellbeing amongst local residents, as well as a positive impact on the efficient and reliable operation of the highway network, and helping to realise a better environment for everyone through reduced air pollution.</p> <p>To achieve this:</p> <p>A complete audit of cycle parking provision and identified gaps for the borough. The audit will also provide an evidence base to support the revision of the W&CS as part of the Local Plan Review.</p> <p>Installed safe and secure parking at those locations identified in the audit as requiring work.</p> <p>Comprehensive promotion of the new and existing cycle parking infrastructure and associated cycling routes in collaboration with KCC. Including updates to the Maidstone Explore Kent map, poster maps and other associated marketing.</p>		

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
10	Floodlighting for Jubilee Field, Staplehurst	36,000
Background		
<p>Jubilee Field in Staplehurst provides well-needed open space to village residents. It has two adult football pitches, two junior pitches, accompanying changing room block, clubhouse building, a skate park and small car park.</p> <p>The field is owned by the Parish Council and used by villagers for formal and informal recreation, dog walking and informal gathering. It is also the home of Staplehurst Monarchs Football Club, which comprises 15 teams across multiple age groups and both genders.</p> <p>Jubilee Field lies on the edge of the village and despite being accessible on foot it is vastly underused in the winter months because of the lack of sufficient lighting across the field area. Despite the lack of winter access Staplehurst is the most active ward in the borough, proving there is the appetite for active lifestyles. This bid will help ensure that facilities are in place to meet that appetite.</p> <p>Residents avoid it during the winter because the vast, unlit landscape is not safe and welcoming for people. The football club are able to use it during the day on winter weekends but are unable to use it for evening training or midweek fixtures for approximately six months of the year during the bulk of the football season, because of the lack of floodlighting.</p> <p>Staplehurst Monarchs' Men's First Team are being refused promotion to a higher division, after a successful season, because of the lack of infrastructure at their Jubilee Field home ground.</p> <p>This bid seeks capital funds of £36,000 to provide 50% of the costs of floodlights, fencing and standing areas at the field:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making it accessible to village residents all year round • Improving its suitability as a venue for the Staplehurst Monarchs' many teams • Providing high-quality open space and recreation facilities for hundreds of young residents and their families. <p>Matched funding will be sought for the balance of the cost.</p>		

Project Objectives

This project will increase accessibility to public open space for all village residents in Staplehurst.

It will bring a public open space and its associated infrastructure in to use 12 months of the year, which will double the amount of usage from football players, runners, young skaters, dog walkers, families and individuals.

Usage is currently limited to approximately six months of the year because of the field's remote, dark, countryside location.

Providing lighting will enable sporting groups, who currently travel outside of the borough to access facilities in the winter, to use the field all year round.

It will also enable the Staplehurst running group, which uses dimly-lit streets in the winter for its running sessions, to use the field for its twice-weekly group running sessions. This will enable more people to take part in a much safer and more welcoming environment.

The Jubilee Field management team, comprising representatives from the Parish Council and the football club, will also advertise to other community groups and establish other regular community activities which will be able to take place all year round.

The project can report the increase in usage of the open space as a KPI.

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
11	Domestic Abuse Awareness	6,200
Background		
<p>Currently Maidstone Borough Council offers support to those of domestic abuse by facilitating a 'One Stop Shop' in which victims are able to access a number of services; these include support charities, social services and housing advice. However, the location of this service, which is situated in Maidstone town centre, means that some users are prohibited from utilising the service due to limitations in access to transport in order to attend.</p> <p>In order to support those who cannot travel to Maidstone, a more fluid and dynamic outreach service is required, i.e. a service that will be able to access the more rural areas of the borough. It is proposed to facilitate and run a number of 'open days' in rural towns and villages, this will allow those services that currently engage in the one stop shop sessions to present how they can assist and help a more isolated victims of domestic abuse.</p> <p>It is also proposed to facilitate a number of 'Domestic Abuse Awareness' workshops for hairdressers within the borough. A similar project has recently been facilitated in Norfolk with great success, over 250 hairdressers from the local area attended and gave extremely positive feedback.</p> <p>Coupled with the two awareness sessions the attendees will be given literature along with posters and stickers for use in their place of work. This material will identify the premises as a 'partner' in confronting and stopping domestic abuse, coupled with demonstrating to victims that they can seek assistance by way of information on these premises. Information will be displayed by way of a discreet counter display of key facts and useful contact numbers for victims.</p> <p>The aim of the project is to raise awareness amongst hairdressers of the signs of domestic abuses, what the law and guidance is relating victims and how to either report or suggest a service to a potential victim; as a result it is hoped victims will then be able to access the support that they require.</p> <p>In terms of the identification of need for this cohort of people in the borough, we know that domestic abuse through 2016/17 (latest available figures) rose by 15% and the attendance at the one stop shop through 2017/18 saw an increase of 19% as such this would indicate there is an increase within rural communities of both domestic abuse and the need for assistance, which may currently be unmet.</p>		

Project Objectives

Outreach Days

The project will deliver 8 outreach days (approximately 4 hours) in the following rural areas:

- Marden, Yalding, Staplehurst, Headcorn, Harrietsham, Hollingbourne, Stockbury and Boxley; and

Each event will consist of the attendance of the following services:

- Community Protection Team, KCC Wardens, Clarion, Choices, Housing Officers, Wardens and PCSOs.

Following the 'Outreach Days' Clarion will then operate a 2-hour surgery at each venue for four weeks after the event once a week; 4 x 2 hour surgery sessions. This will allow for follow up work with any identified service users and to give service coverage in at risk areas.

We propose to use the Village Halls in each of the areas outlined above, and engagement with the parish councils will be key to facilitate successful advertising of the event. Publicising the events will be critical to the success, and we are developing plans to use social media outlets including Twitter and Facebook along with local advertising by way of leaflets and posters.

Outreach Events

In addition, the project will deliver 2 outreach events (approx.2 hours) in two venues: Village Hotel, Maidstone (August) and Mercure Hotel, Maidstone (December).

However; in terms of monitoring the immediate outputs of the events, we would seek to record the amount of people accessing each event, and then the number of Sanctuary visits conducted by the Community Protection team will be compared to identify any increase in rural cases (18/19 to 19/20). In addition, partners will be asked to record any increase in cases as a result of this event and a survey will be given out exploring the effectiveness of the event for any attendees.

As with the outreach days, publicising the events will be critical to their success, and we are developing plans to use social media outlets including Twitter and Facebook along with local advertising by way of leaflets and posters. As part of this process local hairdressers will also be engaged in their premises by way of visits in order to generate interest and attendance.

Due to the nature of both types of project, specific key performance indicators used to measure effectiveness of the proposed activities against outcomes for individuals are difficult to monitor; it is suggested that a longer term approach which could involve a multi-year thematic analysis of agencies such as NHS, Police and Social Services is used to explore any impact of awareness sessions supported by metric results.

However; in terms of monitoring immediate outputs, we would seek to record the amount of people accessing each event, and then seek feedback from the participants by way of a survey exploring any potential increase in knowledge around domestic abuse and reporting functions. Key agency and charity partners will also be asked to record should any service users disclose that they have attended any 'One Stop Shops' (OSS) following information being provided a result of these events.

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
12	Climate Change Commission	40,000
Background		
<p>At its meeting on 10 April 2019 the Council agreed the following motion which will be further considered at Policy and Resources Committee on 26 June 2019 for approval as a review/project:</p> <p>“That this Council notes with concern the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on global climate change impacts and the recent Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reports on global species and habitat loss.</p> <p>Further to this, Council:</p> <p>(1) Declares its recognition of global climate and biodiversity emergencies;</p> <p>(2) Requests the Policy & Resources Committee to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake a short review of MBC governance policies and progress aimed at addressing locally these twin threats and to report on findings. This would include, inter alia, a review of the current provision of electric charging points throughout the Borough and bring forward an ambitious plan to make Maidstone Borough the friendliest place in the country for driving electric or hybrid vehicles. • consider a target date of 2030 for the whole of the Borough of Maidstone to be carbon neutral; • consider how the Council can strengthen local protection and enhancement of species, habitats and ecosystems services under available powers; <p>(3) Requests the Chief Executive to (a) write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer stating the concern of the Council with respect to the above, the likely national impact on the economy and on the wellbeing of citizens, and requesting government funding be made available to implement swift appropriate actions in response and (b) include at the beginning of the proposed letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the following additional sentence:</p> <p>“This Council welcomes the Chancellor’s recent announcement that a “future homes standard” will mandate the end of fossil-fuel heating systems so as to “lower carbon and lower fuel bills too.”</p> <p>The nature of the subject and its ambition are such that extra resource and expertise are required in order to deliver a meaningful review, with realistic scope, objectives, timescales, risks and action plan.</p> <p>Without the investment the project would need to be supported from within existing staffing structures, this would be a combination of Democratic and Policy resource as well as drawing from multiple services across the Council – this would be impractical and inefficient and ultimately lead to a disjointed effort by the Council in tackling an ambitious and difficult project.</p>		

Project Objectives

- To produce a meaningful action plan, which will enable the cultural change required to address the long term and ambitious objectives of the project;
- Specifically the purpose of the proposed resource (up to £40k for a review officer) is:
 - To support the Policy and Resources Committee/member working group to review and understand the issues and choices to be made on the subject;
 - To deliver the necessary project start-up documents to support the Council's actions on biodiversity and climate change;

To support the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance in bringing together multiple services across the authority who have the relevant expertise and will be responsible for contributing to and delivering the action plan.

Project Ref.	Description	Value (£'s)
13	Urban Trees	50,000
Background		
<p>In 2018 a report by the Friends of the Earth highlighted that many areas of the UK were experiencing high levels of air pollution which exceeded national limits and were considered dangerous to people's health. Outside of London, Maidstone – in particular Upper Stone Street - was ranked the 5th worst by annual average level of NO₂ (in ug/m³).</p> <p>In April 2019 the Council subsequently passed a motion that:</p> <p>1 Declared its recognition of global climate and biodiversity emergencies;</p> <p>(2) Requests the Policy & Resources Committee to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •undertake a short review of MBC governance policies and progress aimed at addressing locally these twin threats and to report on findings; •consider a target date of 2030 for the whole of the Borough of Maidstone to be carbon neutral; •consider how the Council can strengthen local protection and enhancement of species, habitats and ecosystems services under available powers. <p>According to DEFRA urban vegetation can directly and indirectly affect local and regional air quality by altering the urban atmospheric environment. The ways in which trees affect air quality are through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Temperature reduction and other microclimatic effects •Removal of air pollutants •Emission of Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) <p>According to ONS, in a report put together by the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, an estimated 1.4 billion kg of air pollutants were removed by natural vegetation in 2015 – saving a potential £1 billion in avoided health costs.</p>		
Project Objectives		
<p>The objective is to improve air quality as set out above by planting more trees in the urban area of Maidstone, and particularly along the main road corridors through the town.</p>		