

AGENDA

COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING



Date: Tuesday 18 July 2017

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: Town Hall, High Street, Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Barned (Chairman), M Burton, Joy, D Mortimer (Vice-Chairman), Perry, Mrs Ring, Mrs Robertson, Webb and Webster

Page No.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Substitute Members
3. Urgent Items
4. Notification of Visiting Members
5. Disclosures by Members and Officers
6. Disclosures of Lobbying
7. To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information
8. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 20 June 2017 1 - 5
9. Presentation of Petitions (if any)

Continued Over/:

Issued on Monday 10 July 2017

Alison Broom

**Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone ME15 6JQ**

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| 10. Questions and answer session for members of the public (if any) | |
| 11. Committee Work Programme | 6 |
| 12. Report of the Head of Environment and Public Realm - Review of Waste Strategy 2014 - 2019 | 7 - 29 |
| 13. Report of the Head of Environment and Public Realm - Waste Collection - Proposed New Charges | 30 - 42 |
| 14. Report of the Head of Housing and Community Services - Housing Allocations Scheme Review and Update | 43 - 85 |

PUBLIC SPEAKING

In order to book a slot to speak at this meeting of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee, please contact Caroline Matthews on 01622 602743 or by email on carolinematthews@maidstone.gov.uk by 5 pm one clear working day before the meeting. If asking a question, you will need to provide the full text in writing. If making a statement, you will need to tell us which agenda item you wish to speak on. Please note that slots will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact Democratic Services on committeeservices@maidstone.gov.uk or 01622 602743**. To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit www.maidstone.gov.uk

Agenda Item 8

Should you wish to refer any decisions contained in these minutes to **Policy and Resources Committee**, please submit a Decision Referral Form, signed by **three** Councillors, to **the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance** by: 4 July 2017

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 20 JUNE 2017

Present: Councillors Barned, M Burton, Joy, D Mortimer, Perry, Mrs Ring, Mrs Robertson, Webb and Webster

6. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

7. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no Substitute Members.

8. **URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items.

9. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

There were no Visiting Members.

10. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members and Officers.

11. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

12. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be taken in public.

13. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 APRIL 2017**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed.

14. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 MAY 2017**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed.

Should you wish to refer any decisions contained in these minutes to **Policy and Resources Committee**, please submit a Decision Referral Form, signed by **three** Councillors, to **the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance** by: 4 July 2017

15. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

16. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (IF ANY)

There were no questions from members of the public.

17. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

In response to questions from Members, it was agreed that:-

- A report on enforcement action against litter thrown from cars would be put on the work programme for later in the year once the new legislation was in place.
- Parish Services Scheme – this item would be taken off the work programme as this was now dealt with by the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Committee Work Programme be noted.

Subsequent to the meeting the Director of Finance and Business Improvement confirmed that the Parish Services Scheme had not been transferred to Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee. The Scheme was being reviewed and a report would be presented to the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee in September/October 2017.

18. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY, COMMUNICATIONS AND GOVERNANCE - STRATEGIC PLAN PERFORMANCE UPDATE QUARTER 4

The Head of Policy and Communications presented a report on the Strategic Plan Performance Update Quarter 4 2016/17.

The Committee was informed that:-

- 7 out of the 8 targeted KPIs reported achieved their target for this quarter.
- The weight loss programme at the Leisure Centre had been a success with 65 people having completed the course and had all lost weight.

In response to questions from Members, Officers advised that:-

- To measure the amount of detritus on relevant land and highways, some 300 roads were inspected and graded according to DEFRA

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regulations.

- The Child Sexual Exploitation training was delivered to staff at McDonalds as this was classed as a high risk area.
- The safeguarding training for Members would be carried out over the next two months and would be added to the Committee Work Programme to ensure progress on this was monitored.
- That Officers would be contacting the Police to check if the figures quoted were correct.
- The Housing Team were monitoring the backlog on the processing of housing applications. It was noted that the length of time to process medical assessments had reduced due to additional resources being directed to the work. The Head of Housing and Community Services undertook to provide a regular update to the Committee by email.
- The increase in crime incidences could be raised as an issue by the Committee to the Safer Maidstone Partnership when acting as the Crime and Disorder Committee.

RESOLVED: That:

1. The summary of performance for Quarter 4 of 2016/17 for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and corporate strategies and plans be noted.
 2. Where complete data was not available this be noted.
 3. The progress of Strategic Action Plan updated at Appendix II to the report of the Head of Policy and Communications be noted.
 4. No action needed to be taken or any amendments made to the Quarter 4 report.
19. **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT - FOURTH QUARTER BUDGET MONITORING**

The Director of Finance and Business Improvement presented a report on the Fourth Quarter Budget Monitoring.

The Committee noted that at the end of the fourth quarter there was an overall underspend for services within the Committee's remit of £380,390.

In response to a question from a Member the Head of Housing and Community Services advised that the adverse variance for CCTV related to

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loss of income and works that needed to be carried out but this did not form part of the current review of CCTV.

RESOLVED: That the financial position at the end of the fourth quarter for services within the Committee's remit be noted.

20. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES - HOUSING STRATEGY ANNUAL UPDATE

The Head of Housing and Community Services presented a report on the Maidstone Housing Strategy 2016-2020 Annual Update.

The Committee noted the work undertaken during the first year of the current Maidstone Housing Strategy and the three Key Priority Themes which formed the action plan.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Housing and Community Services advised that:-

- The Maidstone Health and Wellbeing Group was chaired by the Council's Chief Executive and there were various sub-groups that focussed on specific areas to deliver the Health Inequalities Action Plan.
- Following the recent tragic events at Grenfell Towers in London the Chief Executive had been in contact with Kent Fire and Rescue and other partners to ensure that necessary checks were being carried out on high rise blocks of flats in the borough and fire safety plans were in place. Members asked for the results of this to be reported back once it had reached a certain stage.
- The Council had recently acquired 8 properties for the homeless and another 5 were nearing completion.

RESOLVED:

1. That the work undertaken during the first year of the Maidstone Housing Strategy 2016-2020 be acknowledged.
2. The progress made in achieving the stated aims of the three Key Priority Themes highlighted in the Maidstone Housing Strategy as detailed in Appendix A to the report of the Head of Housing and Community Services be noted.

21. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE - MAIDSTONE COMMUNITY LOTTERY

The Director of Regeneration and Place presented a report on the Maidstone Community Lottery.

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The Committee considered the proposal to set up a local lottery to benefit local community groups and charities.

Members raised a number of concerns, which included:-

- The consultation undertaken with the voluntary sector was only responded to by 10% of those targeted which did not give a true reflection of support or otherwise for the lottery scheme.
- There should have also been a public consultation to test the views of the 'man on the street'.
- The principle of gambling to raise funds for voluntary organisations felt uncomfortable.

Arising from the discussions it was proposed and seconded and agreed that the recommendations as set out in the report be refused.

RESOLVED: That recommendations 1 to 3 be refused.

Voting: For: 8 Against: 0 Abstentions: 1

22. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.55 p.m.

2017/18 WORK PROGRAMME SORTED BY COMMITTEE

Report Title	Work Stream	Committee	Month	Lead	Report Author
Waste Collection - Proposed New Charges	Corporate Finance and Budgets	CHE	Jul-17	Jennifer Shepherd	Jennifer Shepherd
Review of Waste Strategy 2014-2019	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Jul-17	Jennifer Shepherd	James Gibson
Housing Allocations Policy Review	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Jul-17	John Littlemore	Tony Stewart
CCTV Review including Mobile CCTV	Changes to Services & Commissioning	CHE	Sep-17	John Littlemore	Matt Roberts
Fleet maintenance arrangements	Changes to Services & Commissioning	CHE	Sep-17	Jennifer Shepherd	Ian Packer / John Edwards
Parish Services Scheme Review	Changes to Services & Commissioning	CHE	Sep-17	Mark Green	Matt Roberts
First Quarter Budget Monitoring	Corporate Finance and Budgets	CHE	Sep-17	Ellie Dunnet	Paul Holland
Commercial Waste Future Proposal	Regeneration and Commercialisation	CHE	Sep-17	Jennifer Shepherd	John Edwards
Q1 Performance Report 2017/18	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Sep-17	Angela Woodhouse	Anna Collier
Waste Collection - Members Workshop	Workshop	CHE	Sep-17	Jennifer Shepherd	Jennifer Shepherd
Service Level Agreement Review and Grant Budgets	Changes to Services & Commissioning	CHE	Oct-17	John Littlemore	Tony Stewart
Litter Enforcement	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Oct-17	Jennifer Shepherd	Martyn Jeynes
National Litter Strategy	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Oct-17	Jennifer Shepherd	Martyn Jeynes
Mid Kent Waste Contract Review & Clean and Safe Strategy	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Oct-17	Jennifer Shepherd	Jennifer Shepherd
Second Quarter Budget Monitoring	Corporate Finance and Budgets	CHE	Nov-17	Ellie Dunnet	Paul Holland
Q2 Performance Report 2017/18	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Nov-17	Angela Woodhouse	Anna Collier
Review of the Council's Accommodation Strategy	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Dec-17	John Littlemore	Tony Stewart
Review of the Council's Allocation Scheme	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Dec-17	John Littlemore	Tony Stewart
Fees & Charges	Corporate Finance and Budgets	CHE	Jan-18	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Medium Term Financial Strategy & Budget Proposals 2018/19	Corporate Finance and Budgets	CHE	Jan-18	Mark Green	Ellie Dunnet
Strategic Plan Action Plan 2018/19	Corporate Planning	CHE	Jan-18	Angela Woodhouse	Angela Woodhouse
Setting new Key Performance Indicators (please note that there will be workshops with each committee prior to the report in January/February)	Corporate Planning	CHE	Feb-18	Angela Woodhouse	Anna Collier
Q3 Performance Report 2017/18	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Feb-18	Angela Woodhouse	Anna Collier
Homelessness Reduction Act	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Feb-18	John Littlemore	Tony Stewart
Parish Charter - Update	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Jun-17	John Littlemore	John Littlemore
Homelessness Reduction Bill Update	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	TBA	John Littlemore	Ellie Kershaw
Safeguarding Policy Update	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	TBC	John Littlemore	Matt Roberts
West Kent CCG Forward Plan/Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS STP	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	TBC	TBC	TBC
Community Toilet Scheme	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Mar-18	Jennifer Shepherd	John Edwards
Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Oct-17	John Littlemore	Matt Roberts
Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny	Updates, Monitoring Reports and Reviews	CHE	Mar-18	John Littlemore	Matt Roberts

9

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

18 July 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Review of Waste Strategy 2014-2019

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing and Environment Committee
Lead Director or Head of Service	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Lead Officer and Report Author	Interim Environmental Improvement Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the Committee notes the progress made so far against the objectives set out in the Waste Strategy 2014 – 2019 (Appendix A).
2. Agrees that the current Waste Strategy 2014 - 2019 no longer delivers the Council's ambition for its Waste and Recycling Services and that a new Waste Strategy for 2018 – 2023 should be prepared and presented to the Committee by April 2018.
3. That a workshop is held in September with Members of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee to shape the new Strategy and determine the level of ambition, investment and appetite for bold service changes.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – the strategy supports the management of waste in a sustainable and environmentally sensitive manner

Timetable

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	20 July 2017

Review of Waste Strategy 2014-19

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 In 2014, the Council adopted its second 5 year waste strategy with the objective to provide services which focus on waste reduction, reuse and recycling, following the principles of the waste hierarchy.
 - 1.2 The purpose of this report is to review the progress against the objectives set out in the current Waste Strategy over the past 12 months (Appendix A) and provide an update on the action plan. The report also sets out a proposal to identify the level of ambition and investment the Committee wishes to see for the Service and future Waste Strategy.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council first adopted a 5 year waste strategy in 2010 in order to provide a focused and target driven approach to managing waste in Maidstone. At the time the Council's recycling rate had reached 34% through a slow, progressive increase in recycling services and the Council was starting discussions to consider a partnership collection contract for the delivery of waste and recycling services.
- 2.2 The Strategy intended to act as a step change for the Council's waste and recycling services, setting out some extremely challenging targets and bold decisions including the introduction of weekly food waste collections and fortnightly refuse collections.
- 2.3 The success of this Waste Strategy exceeded all expectations, predominantly driven by the implementation of major service changes. The recycling rate reached 50% by 2014, a year ahead of schedule, the total waste declined by 11% and 80% of households participated in the weekly food waste service.
- 2.4 The implementation of the Mid Kent Joint Waste Contract in 2013 also supported the success of the Strategy, with the introduction of glass recycling into the existing mixed recycling service, as well as reducing the cost to the Council by over £1 million per year.
- 2.5 The successful delivery of this Waste Strategy resulted in a new 5 year strategy being adopted in 2014 which aimed to replicate the ambitious objectives, however without identifying any significant service changes. This, as well as national trends, has resulted in a very different outcome for the Strategy.
- 2.6 Last year the Strategy was reviewed and the recycling rate objective was reduced from 60% to 55% by 2019. This was due to the recycling rate plateauing and showing some indication of decline. The review highlighted that contamination posed a significant risk to recycling success and therefore a target of below 8% was introduced to the Strategy. However the review did not

propose to change the direction of the Strategy or its objectives, or set out any significant service changes.

2.7 Over the past 12 months there has been a focus on engagement and behavioural change, predominately targeted at the food waste collection and the waste generated from properties with communal collection points, specifically flats. A brief summary of the activities are shown below.

2.8 **The Big Maidstone Food Waste Challenge Incentive Scheme** – The Council was successfully awarded funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to offer a residents' incentive scheme to encourage and reward use of the weekly food collection service. The uptake of this has been fairly slow despite incentives including shopping vouchers and free swims at the Leisure Centre. It has however continued to maintain a small amount of interest with 550 people registered and 2 further prize draws scheduled for August and November 2017.

Following feedback from other Councils who participated in the scheme, advice was provided by DCLG that the incentive schemes should focus on comprehensive communications. This funding has therefore driven a number of initiatives including school theatre workshops, roadshows, leaflets and advertising as well as offering the incentives.

2.9 **Design a Bus Advert Competition** - The aim of this was to engage with children on the topic of food recycling and encourage them to reflect on why they felt it was important. Assemblies and workshops were also carried out in some primary schools to increase awareness and knowledge of recycling.

2.10 **Kent-wide Communications** – the Council worked with the Kent Resource Partnership to deliver Kent-wide messages about food recycling including placing “No Food Waste Stickers” on refuse bins and delivering the Informational Leaflets detailed below. This was in addition to supporting ongoing national campaigns with Keep Britain Tidy.

2.11 **Informational Leaflet** – a new recycling leaflet was designed and delivered to all households. It had been designed to improve awareness of the waste services provided whilst educating and reminding residents about the benefits of recycling and items which can be recycled.

2.12 **Creation of Short Video** – the animated Caddy Family was created along with a short video for use on social media and as part of the school's event programme. This was used to help appeal to a wider audience with bite-size information and on social media. The characters were also used as part of the theatre workshop which visited local primary schools.

2.13 **Engagement Events** – the following have been carried by the team over the last 12 months:-

- Visited 12 primary schools with the Caddy Family as part of the food recycling promotion funded by DCLG.

- Set up roadshows across the Borough, with 9 dates at: Morrison's, Tesco Grove Green, Waitrose Allington, Jubilee Square and Sainsbury's Town Centre, to promote food recycling with give-aways such as: "Love Food" Kits, caddy liners, recipes, badges etc – funded by the DCLG grant.
- Various school and village fetes, community groups and seasonal events promoting recycling – including Mote Park Fun Day, Staplehurst, Ulcombe, Senacre Wood, South Borough Primary, local scout groups, Christmas and Halloween events in Town Centre

2.14 A key focus of this Strategy is increasing the capture of good quality recycling from the 10% of Maidstone properties that have communal collections. Previous research identified that the unlimited refuse capacity in flats results in poor quality, low levels of recycling and high quantities of rubbish, which has a significant impact on the overall recycling rate for the Borough.

2.15 Over the past couple of years, the number of refuse bins in each block have been reviewed and are now limited to 140 litre capacity per flat. Weekly food waste collections have been introduced where possible along with the provision of recycling bins. This ensures those living in flats have an equal service to those within their own wheeled bins.

2.16 In the past 12 months, a robust enforcement process has been put in place and is used to tackle communal collections where waste is accumulating and the recycling bins are not being used. Where needed, residents, managing agents and housing trusts are being issued with formal Section 46 Notices which dictate how the waste should be presented for collection and then Community Protection Warnings and Notices are issued where there is ongoing failure to comply. This approach has been very successful with 51 Notices issued and all are now taking actions to address the issues and improve resident engagement.

2.17 This year has also seen the benefit of the street arising recycling which was introduced in May 2016. The grit, sand, detritus and low levels of litter swept from the highway are now sent to a facility in Sussex for recycling and was anticipated to boost the Borough's recycling rate by 1-2%.

Progress Update

2.18 The past 12 months has seen some improvements in performance compared with the previous year. There has been an increase in the Borough's recycling rate from 47.79% to 49.9%, a reduction of 6kg per household in the total waste produced and the contamination rate reducing by just over 1%.

2.19 Both in the national and local context, this performance has been good, with many authorities particularly high performers seeing a reduction in recycling rates and increase in waste growth. The main reasons for this appears to be the light-weighting of packaging, where packaging producers use less plastic in their products to reduce costs, an improving financial climate and growing public apathy. In Maidstone specifically, it has also been identified that the enhanced recycling collections have created "spare" capacity in refuse bins which in some

cases is being used for garden waste or DIY waste, which should not be disposed of in this way.

2.20 There is no doubt that the communications campaign has contributed to the increasing recycling rate, specifically the “No food waste stickers” on the refuse bins which saw a 28% increase in the amount of food waste recycled in the following month.

2.21 However it is clear that the engagement work has had limited success at driving positive performance beyond that achieved in previous years. Without significant service changes, it is unlikely that engagement alone will have a step change in performance needed to achieve the targets set out in the Waste Strategy.

2.22 The current performance for each of the objectives in the Waste Strategy is shown below:

	2015/16	2016/17	Trend	Target
Objective 1: <i>To maintain low levels of total household waste and recycling at the level achieved in 2011/12 of 813kg per household</i>	845kg	839kg	Positive	813kg
Objective 2: <i>To increase the amount of household waste sent for recycling, reuse or composting to 55% by 2019</i>	47%	50%	Positive	55%
Objective 3: <i>To achieve zero waste to landfill by 2015/16</i>	0.3%	1.56%	Negative	0%
Objective 4: <i>To maintain the value for money of the waste collection service and achieve a cost per household below £40 per year</i>	£35.07	£32.68	Positive	£40
Objective 5: <i>To improve residents’ satisfaction with Maidstone Borough Council’s waste and recycling services</i>	82%	To be completed in October 2017	Positive	82%
Objective 6: <i>To achieve a contamination rate of 8% or lower</i>	9.9%	8.8%	Positive	8%

<p>Objective 7: <i>To support the Council's objective of 3% annual carbon reduction by 2015 and to continue to contribute to the Council's Carbon Management Plan in order to meet the targets set out in the Kent Environment Strategy</i></p>	<p>No specific data</p>	<p>No specific data</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
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- 2.23 Overall the results above show positive trends compared to the previous year, however are significantly below the targets within the Strategy. The table shows that only 2 of the 6 measurable indicators are on track to be delivered.
- 2.24 However it is particularly important to highlight objective 4 which relates to the value for money of the services. Although the recycling performance has been lower than expected, the cost per household is at an all-time low and 18% below the original target. Given the reducing investment in the service, the performance should be considered to be good. This is further supported by the Bi-Annual Residents Survey that has maintained a satisfaction rate of 82%. Although this overall figure has remained the same, it should be noted that there has been a 2% increase from "Fairly Satisfied" to "Very Satisfied."
- 2.25 The recycling rate has recovered the 3% decrease in 2015/16, predominately due to the recycling of street arisings, the withdrawal of the Saturday Freighter and the increase in food waste recycling following the comprehensive communications campaign.
- 2.26 The only negative trend is the percentage of waste sent to landfill. Although there was a small increase in the percentage of waste sent to landfill, this is still an exceptionally low amount and when introduced, the target of zero waste to landfill was considered aspirational. The small increase is largely due to the bottom ash produced by the Energy from Waste facility and a small amount of bulky waste which could not be sent for recovery into energy.

Future Waste Strategy

- 2.27 Whilst the performance has been positive, it has not delivered what the Waste Strategy intended and without substantial service changes, it is unlikely that the targets will be achieved by 2019/20. This is likely to require significant investment along with bold decisions to limit the amount of waste which can be thrown away and encourage residents to recycle more.
- 2.28 Therefore it would not be advisable to continue with this Strategy with targets which are purely aspirational.

- 2.29 It is recommended that a new Waste Strategy for 2018 – 2023 is prepared and presented to the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee for approval by April 2018.
- 2.30 In order to achieve this it is also recommended that a workshop is held in September with Members of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee to shape the new Strategy and determine the level of ambition, investment and appetite for bold service changes.
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3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee could agree that a new Waste Strategy is needed to reflect the current ambition of the Council and therefore make the decision to support the delivery of a workshop with Committee Members.
- 3.2 Alternatively the Committee could determine that the Council no longer needs a 5 year waste strategy.
- 3.3 The final option that the Committee could consider is to retain the current waste strategy and pursue the existing objectives through continued engagement with residents and within current resources.
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4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree that a new 5 year waste strategy is prepared and that a workshop is held with Members of the Committee to shape the new Strategy and determine the level of ambition, investment and appetite for bold service changes. The reason for this is that the objectives set out in the current Waste Strategy are considered to be undeliverable without a significant service change. However this will require bold decisions and an ambition vision for the services. Therefore it is important for the Committee to have the opportunity to discuss their appetite for ongoing challenging targets or whether the current performance, which is above the national and EU targets should be maintained.
- 4.2 Whilst the current Strategy is no longer considered deliverable, it is not proposed that the Council should no longer have a Waste Strategy. Having a waste strategy ensures any future decisions are aligned with the Council's vision and objectives for the Services. Without such a strategy there is a risk that decisions could be made piecemeal and without a clear direction, which could elevate the overall cost of the service and impact the viability of the service to be retendered in 2023.
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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 There have not been any public consultations regarding the Services since the first Waste Strategy was adopted and significant service changes were

introduced, However the Services receive a high level of customer satisfaction through the bi-annual Place survey and historically have maintained high satisfaction despite some significant services changes.

- 5.2 Feedback from the Budget Consultation carried out in 2016 in preparation for the Medium Term Financial Strategy, highlighted that the Service was considered to be a priority for the Public however was not identified as an area for investment, with some suggestions that further savings could be found in this area.
- 5.3 Within the recommendations it is proposed to hold a workshop with Members of the Committee in order to understand their vision for the Service and future Strategy.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Following the decision by the Committee, further work will be required to prepare a strategy which reflects the vision and ambition of the Council. This will include consultation with key stakeholders and partner organisations.
- 6.2 It is proposed to hold the workshop with Members in September and further engagement with both Members and key stakeholders and partners may be required.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – the proposals support this priority by continuing to encourage and support responsible waste disposal and reuse and recycling.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Risk Management	<p>Failure to communicate how to use the service could result in residents not engaging and not manage their waste correctly.</p> <p>Failure to meet the EU target of 50% recycling of household waste by 2020 may result in financial penalties.</p> <p>Recycling performance will continue to be monitored monthly to determine the effectiveness of the actions.</p>	Head of Environment and Public Realm

Financial	The Council's expenditure budgets for waste collection and recycling amount to around £3 million per annum. The proposed member workshop is critical in defining the various options for the future. The costs and benefits of all options will need to be considered before any choice is made about future strategy.	S 151 Officer and Finance Manager
Staffing		
Legal	None identified. The Council does have a statutory duty to provide a household waste collection service and any proposed waste strategy will ensure that this duty is met.	Interim Deputy Head of Legal Partnership
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	None at this time – There is no proposal to change the services provided at this stage. However, an EqlA will be carried out as part of the development of a new Strategy.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Environmental/Sustainable Development	The Waste Strategy and proposed Action Plan offer the most sustainable service to Maidstone tax payers and focus on reducing the Council's impact on the environment through waste prevention, minimisation, reuse and recycling.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Community Safety	None	
Human Rights Act	None	
Procurement	None	
Asset Management	None	

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A – Waste Strategy 2014 – 2019
- Appendix B – Maidstone Borough Council Recycling Rate
- Appendix C – Maidstone Borough Council Total Waste Arisings

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Waste Strategy 2010 - 2015

Waste Strategy 2014-2019



Introduction

Over the past 5 years, Maidstone Borough Council has demonstrated its commitment to deliver cost effective and sustainable waste and recycling services. This has included the introduction of comprehensive recycling collections, notably a weekly food waste service and a fully co-mingled collection of paper, cardboard, cans, glass and plastic packaging.

In 2010, the Council adopted its first five-year Waste Strategy to outline the key principles for waste management in Maidstone and set ambitious targets for reducing waste and increasing recycling. By following the principles of the waste hierarchy, the Council achieved the objectives set out in this strategy in 2013/14.

In August 2013, Maidstone Borough Council joined with Ashford and Swale Borough Councils and Kent County Council to deliver the Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnership. Waste collection and some elements of street cleansing are now operated by Biffa Municipal Limited across the three boroughs. The new collection contract has delivered significant savings for the Council, in excess of £1 million per year, whilst improving services for local residents.

As part of the Mid Kent Joint Waste Partnership, Maidstone Borough Council will benefit from shared disposal savings generated from reductions in waste arisings and through increased recycling.

This new strategy looks to build upon the successful service improvements introduced over the past few years and set new objectives for the next five years.

As part of the Kent Resource Partnership, Maidstone Borough Council continues to support the Kent Waste Strategy which was refreshed in 2012/13.

This focuses on three key policy areas: Materials Security and Resource Efficiency; Value for Money for Kent Taxpayers; and Supporting Kent's Interests

These are reflected in Maidstone's vision and the objectives set out in this strategy.

Nationally, the government carried out a review of waste policies in England in 2010 and has recently issued guidance regarding waste collections. Following this the government set out their principle commitments which included managing waste in line with the waste hierarchy, supporting incentives, improving the quality of collections and making it easier for people to recycle. This strategy supports these commitments and the government's ambition for a zero waste economy.

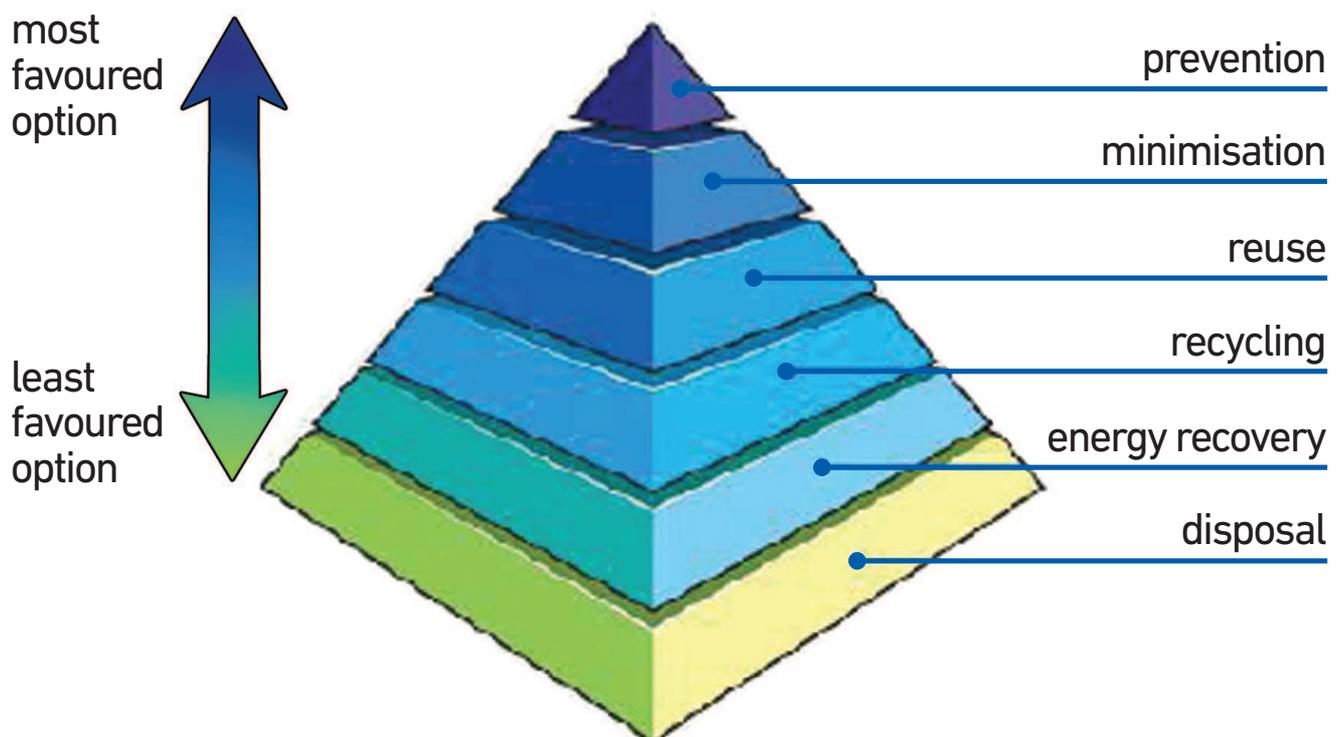


The revised EU Waste Framework Directive has also now been adopted into UK legislation and the key focus is on the quality of recycle as well as the application of the waste hierarchy into UK legislation. The EU Directive requires the separate collection of paper, metal, plastic and glass by 2015 and there is currently national debate regarding the acceptable quality of these recyclables through co-mingled collections. Separate collections are required where they are “technically, environmentally and economically practicable” (TEEP) otherwise co-mingled collections will be allowed. The Council is committed to ensuring the recycling services meet the requirements and that quality recycling is collected.

This strategy supports the revised directive, the recycling targets set and the collection of high quality recyclables.

This is the second Waste Strategy that the Council has produced and will sit alongside the Council’s medium term plans (Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan).

Whilst the Council launched a commercial waste service in 2013/14, this will not be included as part of this Strategy. Commercial waste is required by law to be measured separately to household waste and therefore will be excluded from the Waste Strategy.



Our Vision

Overall the Council wants Maidstone Borough to be a great place to live and one that provides value for money for local taxpayers. For waste services this is to provide an excellent service which will reduce waste, ensure sustainable and cost effective recycling collections and enable Maidstone residents to achieve high levels of participation.

Objectives - what are we going to do?

In order to achieve the vision for the future of the service, the following objectives are proposed:

1. To maintain low levels of total household waste and recycling at the level achieved in 2011/12 of 813kg per household
2. To increase the amount of household waste sent for recycling, reuse or composting to 55% by 2019.
3. To achieve zero waste to landfill by 2015/16
4. To maintain the value for money of the waste collection service and achieve a cost per household below £40 per year
5. To improve residents' satisfaction with Maidstone Borough Council's waste and recycling services
6. To achieve a contamination rate of 8% or lower.
7. To support the Council's objective of 3% annual carbon reduction by 2015 and to continue to contribute to the Council's Carbon Management Plan in order to meet the targets set out in the Kent Environment Strategy.

How are we going to do it?

In order to achieve the objectives and ultimately the vision for Maidstone's waste and recycling services, there needs to be a combination of innovative service improvements and targeted promotion. Priority will be given to development options which best support the objectives and principles of the waste hierarchy, starting with waste prevention as the most favourable option.

1. Waste Prevention

Waste prevention primarily focuses on the avoidance of waste from manufacturers and retailers; however it is important that residents are aware of ways they can also help. This will remain a key message throughout the educational campaigns, with advice about avoiding products with excessive packaging and using their consumer power to force manufacturers to improve their sustainability.

The Council also supports the Kent Resource Partnership's "Fresher for Longer" campaign with Marks and Spencer which aims to prevent the unnecessary waste of food. Information will be provided to residents at promotional events and on the Council's website..

2. Waste Minimisation

This is a key priority for the Council and it is important that local residents understand the benefits of reducing the amount of waste they throw away. All options which support this priority will be considered by the Council.

Following the introduction of comprehensive recycling collections and fortnightly refuse collections, the total amount of waste produced by residents in the borough reduced by 11%. This was an incredible achievement and was the result of residents having a better understanding of what they threw away, especially in relation to food waste.

It is essential that residents understand what happens to the waste they throw away. Therefore the Council will carry out an engagement campaign to identify the potential barriers to recycling as well as possible incentives to promote waste reduction.

The majority of methods to encourage waste minimisation are through education and increasing public awareness, including the use of the Love Food Hate Waste campaign. The Council recently carried out a large recycling event in Jubilee Square which incorporated a Love Food Hate Waste roadshow with cooking demonstrations. This gained a large amount of publicity and was well supported by local residents. Waste minimisation initiatives such as this will continue along with school workshops and community events.

The Council also continues to promote home composting as this offers two major benefits; the composting of garden waste and vegetable peelings produces nutritious plant food whilst also reducing the amount of waste which needs to be collected for disposal or treatment. Although the recycling of garden waste through the kerbside collection or



the Household Waste Recycling Centre is preferable to disposing of it in landfill or burning it, reducing the amount of garden waste collected significantly reduces the transportation and energy requirements, providing environmental and financial benefits. The Council currently promotes subsidised home compost bins in order to encourage residents to use this option for waste reduction over the alternatives. The scheme has continued to be popular over the past few years and will be monitored throughout 2014/15 to identify ways to increase uptake year on year.

3. Reuse

The reuse of items, such as furniture, is a very effective way of reducing the amount of waste sent for disposal.

Alongside the fortnightly rubbish collection, the Council operates a bulky waste collection and Saturday freighter service which enable residents to dispose of unwanted household items. Unfortunately neither of these services currently supports the Council's objectives as the waste is sent to landfill, the least favourable option of the waste hierarchy.

In order to reduce unnecessary waste, it is important that these services are reviewed and more sustainable options are identified. Many items collected through these services have the potential for being reused or recycled, whilst for other items there are already better disposal options available.

The existing bulky collection and Saturday freighter services do not allow items to be reused or recycled easily. The waste is currently mixed together and in the case of the Saturday freighter, it is crushed by the vehicle. Discussions have already taken place with private and voluntary sector organisations regarding the reuse of furniture and electrical items, however the current arrangements limit the opportunities.

The Council will combine these services into a single service which aims to separate reusable items either by signposting residents to a voluntary sector organisation or through separate collections for reusable items.

Another key area for improvement is the reuse of textiles. The Council launched a kerbside collection of textiles in August 2013; however uptake has been fairly low. Promotion of this service is essential to improve participation; however this will be carried out alongside the existing promotion of charity shops and textile banks within the borough.

Smaller scale reuse also plays a fundamental role in the educational activities, with workshops and school assemblies showing children how to reuse everyday items into fun creativity. These remain an essential part of the Council's comprehensive educational campaign along with fostering children's imaginations through challenges and competitions.

4. Recycling

Following the expansion of recycling services in 2013, Maidstone's recycling rate increased from 45% to nearly 50%, however it is important that the Council maintains this performance and looks to build upon this success in the future. Despite the improvements, participation levels have declined over the past 2 years. It is essential that the Council focuses on re-engaging local residents and communities and promote the huge benefits of recycling more.

Recent informational visits to local authorities with similar recycling services have shown that a recycling rate of 55% is ambitious but achievable.

The Council intends to achieve a recycling rate of 55% by 2019 through the implementation of the following improvements to the existing recycling service:

Recycling for Residents living in Flats

There are over 7,000 flats in Maidstone, many of which have weekly collections of rubbish. Recycling bins have been provided for many of these, however there is little incentive for residents to use them and they regularly become contaminated with general rubbish.

It is essential that residents living within flats are encouraged to recycle and options which make recycling easier will be explored. A key step will be to bring collections in line with those provided to individual houses and apply a single policy across all housing stock. This will include limiting the amount of rubbish collected.

Communal food waste bins will also be provided to flats along with kitchen caddies to help



residents separate food waste in their kitchen.

Extra recycling bins will also be provided where needed and the Council will work with managing agents and landlords to encourage residents to separate their recycling correctly. Direct engagement with residents through face to face activity as well as providing welcome packs and posters will be used. Where possible, recycling points will be designed with the support of managing agents and landlords in order to improve accessibility and visual appearance.

Street Litter Recycling

Although Maidstone has previously trialled on-street recycling bins unsuccessfully, there is still a significant opportunity to recycle more from the litter collected from our streets.

Many other authorities have introduced on-street recycling bins which are clearly visible and can be differentiated from other litter bins. These have been very successful and therefore Maidstone will identify other options to separate litter using on-street recycling bins.

A significant amount of litter collected manually or mechanically can still be recycled. Therefore the Council will explore all opportunities to separate this recycling, including using recycling sacks on the hand-barrows and working with Kent County Council to procure an outlet for waste from the mechanical sweepers.

Extra Recycling Capacity

Currently households who produce more recycling than can fit in their recycling bin or black box are able to leave extra recycling next to it. This can be difficult and unfortunately many residents appear to stop recycling when their bin or box is full.

The Council will engage with residents to identify options for increasing the capture of recycling, particularly when their bin or box is full.

Initially a trial of clear recycling sacks will be explored with residents who currently are not able to store wheeled bins. Opportunities to make these sacks available to other residents via local retailers will also be investigated.

5. Energy Recovery

Maidstone's priority is to reduce the overall volume of waste requiring treatment and maximise diversion of waste from energy recovery to recycling and reuse. Energy recovery however presents a more favourable option to disposal through landfill. Therefore household waste which cannot be reused or recycled will be sent for energy recovery wherever possible. The Allington Energy from Waste (EfW) facility allows the recovery of energy from the majority of Maidstone's household waste.

6. Disposal

Disposal is the least favourable option as it is costly both environmentally and financially. Maidstone Borough Council is committed to maximising the diversion of waste away from disposal.

At present the only waste which is sent to landfill from Maidstone is bulky waste collected through the bulky waste service and the Saturday freighter. The Council is committed to achieving zero waste to landfill by 2015 with the support of Kent County Council, the waste disposal authority.

Public engagement and community ownership

The key to achieving the targets set out in this strategy will be engaging with the public and ensuring they understand the importance of managing their rubbish effectively, by reducing, reusing and recycling as much as possible.

Throughout the implementation of the Strategy, customer satisfaction will be measured and feedback sought in order to understand residents' views to waste reduction, reuse and recycling. This information will be used to focus campaigns on dispelling myths and overcoming barriers as well as ensuring initiatives with proven results are prioritised.

The following campaigns will be implemented to increase public engagement and community ownership:

Doorknocking

A widespread face to face engagement campaign will be carried out to firstly understand the barriers to recycling and then to dispel some of the myths and improve awareness.

It is important that this campaign compliments the service improvements, for example it will be carried out to support increasing recycling in flats.

Think Green NOT Grey

A comprehensive campaign to encourage residents to recycle more and promote awareness that most items can now be recycled will be launched. This will include branding of the services, information stickers on residents' wheeled bins and roadshow events.

Resident feedback has demonstrated that some are still confused about what can be recycled and if in doubt the items are often thrown away. It is important to change this behaviour so recycling is considered in the first instance and only the few non-recyclable items are put in the rubbish bin.

Monitoring of the campaign's success will help shape it going forward. This will enable new initiatives to be trialled following feedback from residents about barriers to recycling.

A strong brand will be created to ensure that residents can relate to the services and understand what happens beyond the bin being left out for collection.

Incentives

The use of incentives to encourage recycling has been trialled widely across the UK following recent government support. These vary greatly from complex loyalty point systems to simple raffle prizes; however overall have been found to have a positive impact on recycling.

The Council will explore options to introduce an incentive for local residents to regularly participate in the recycling services. Due to the high administrative requirements, a complex loyalty card scheme will not be considered, however other incentives will be identified.

Reuse and Recycling Directory

An online reuse and recycling directory will be designed to help residents understand what can be recycled as well as some more innovative ideas on recycling and reuse around the home. This will be used in conjunction with the other campaigns to help boost recycling awareness and increase capture rates.

Recycling Champions

Prior to the launch of the weekly food waste collections in January 2011, the service was trialled with some "foodies". Testimonials from these residents were used to great effect on the radio, website and in the local press.

Using local residents who are already committed to recycling to engage with others less interested will help reinforce the Council's key messages. A recycling champion scheme will be set up to identify key people within the community who would be happy to assist with the promotion of recycling services

Social Media

Social media is becoming an increasingly important tool to engage with people in a more informal way. The Council already uses Twitter and Facebook to promote services, however there is still a greater potential to use these to spread wider recycling and reuse messages. The use of social media will be incorporated into all awareness campaigns in the future.

Financial implications

Over the past three years, Maidstone has significantly improved the efficiency of the waste and recycling services. Joining in partnership with Ashford and Swale Borough Councils and Kent County Council has enabled Maidstone to save in excess of £1 million per year. At the same time, services have also been improved with enhanced recycling collections and weekly food waste collections. The Services are projected to cost £2.5 million in 2014/15, which is in the region of £38 per household. However, the contract price will be reviewed annually to take into account property growth and inflation.

By increasing recycling above 50%, Maidstone will benefit from a share in any additional savings generated by Kent County Council through reduced disposal costs and additional recyclate income. Whilst the specific financial benefits of exceeding 50% are currently unknown, if recycling levels are not maintained costs are expected to increase. The Council will continue to work with Ashford and Swale Borough Councils and Kent County Council to maximise the value of recyclate and manage the share of profits across the Partnership.

The costs of implementing this strategy will predominantly be met from the existing recycling budget. Partnership funding will be sought for larger initiatives including the reuse of bulky waste and street litter recycling.

The Kent Resource Partnership has also committed to provide funding in the region of £40,000 towards a residents' communication campaign.

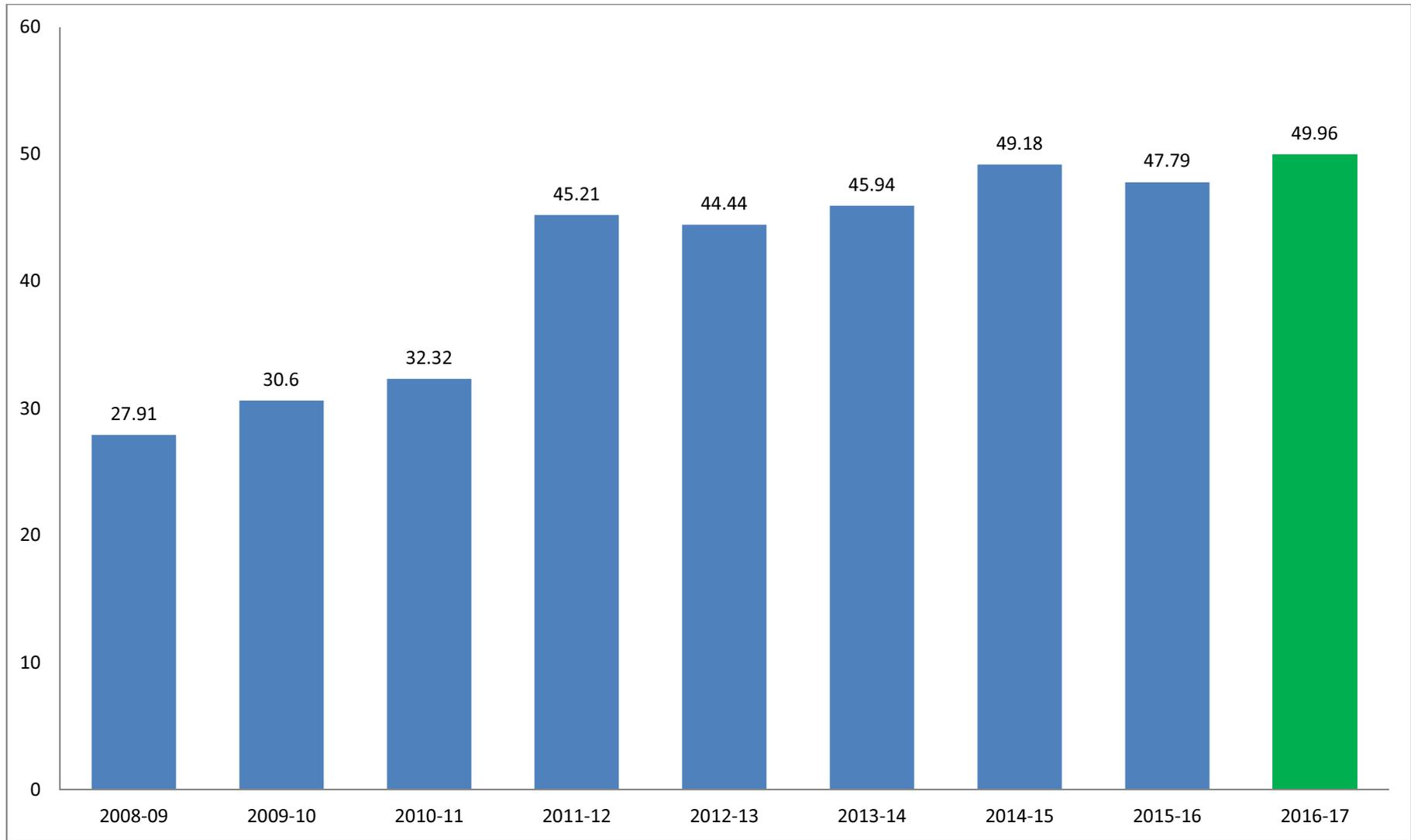
Further details

If you require any details please contact the waste and recycling team on 01622 602600 or email waste@maidstone.gov.uk

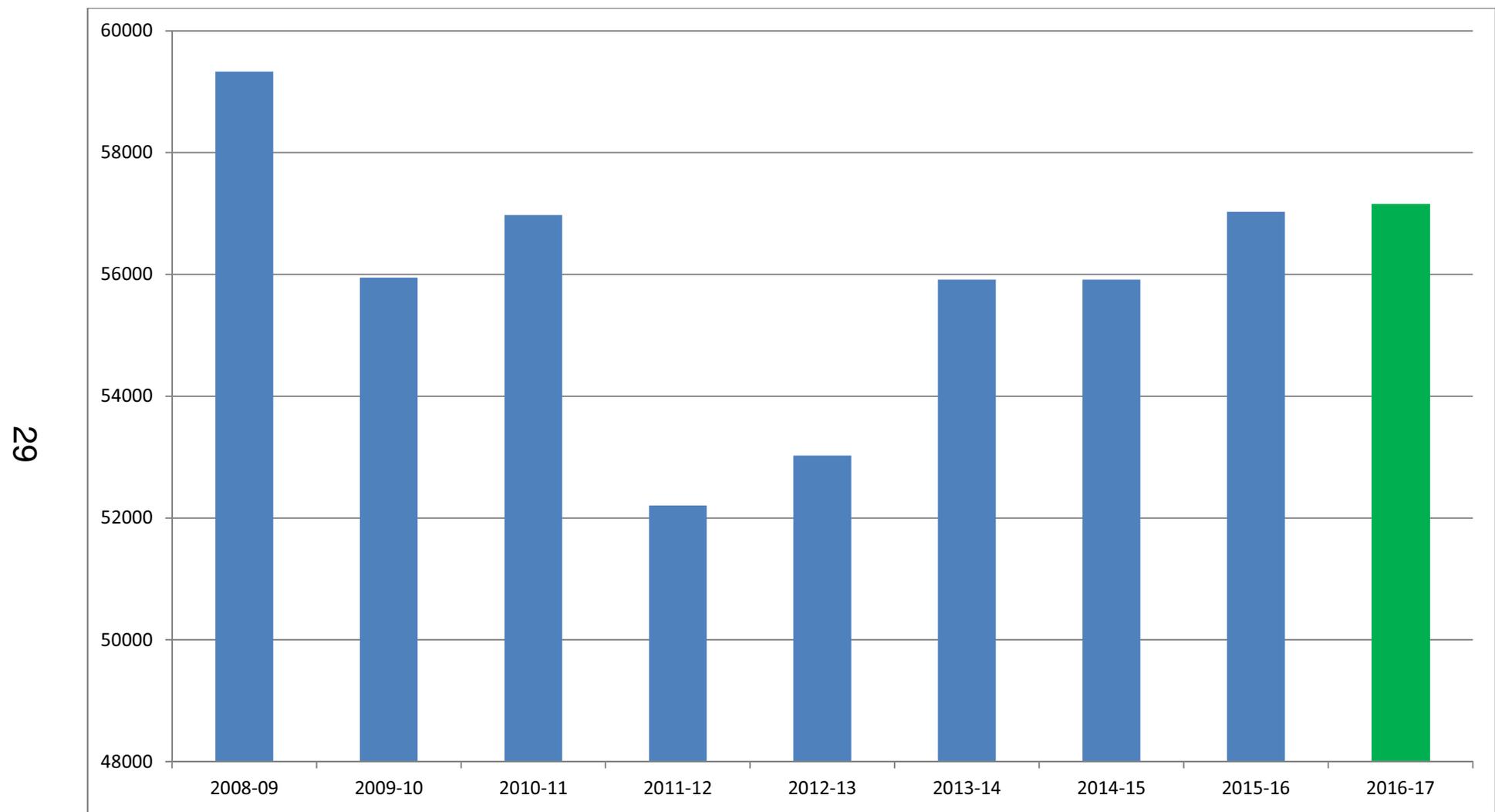
Alternatively information on waste and recycling initiatives can be found on the Council's website at www.maidstone.gov.uk/recyclingrubbishandwaste

APPENDIX B - MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL RECYCLING RATE (%)

28



APPENDIX C - MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL TOTAL WASTE ARISING (TONNES)



Agenda Item 13

Communities, Housing and Environment Committee

Tuesday 18 July 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Waste Collection – Proposed New Charges

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing and Environment Committee
Lead Head of Service	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Lead Officer and Report Author	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That a new charge of £20 for the collection of White Goods as part of the Bulky Waste Collection Service is introduced.
2. That the Subsidised Bulky Charge is changed to offer those in receipt of Council Tax Reduction Benefit either one white good or one 1-4 item collection per year.
3. That the annual provision of black sacks to properties not suitable for wheeled bins is withdrawn.
4. That a limit of two free collections per year is introduced for the collection of Clinical Waste Sharps Boxes and a charge of £5 is made for additional requests.
5. That a register of interest for a seasonal weekly garden waste service as a supplement to the existing fortnightly collections is carried out to determine its viability.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – The waste and recycling services, which includes the collection of bulky waste ensures that residents are able to deal with their waste responsibly and with minimal impact on the environment. The proposals will ensure that these services can continue to be provided in a cost effective manner.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Communities, Housing and Environment Committee	Tuesday 18 July 2017

Waste Collection – Proposed New Charges

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 As part of the Mid Kent Partnership, Maidstone Borough Council currently contracts the waste and recycling collections to Biffa Municipal Ltd for an annual cost of approximately £2.6 million per year. The cost of this contract is reviewed annually and property growth and indexation is applied. In 2017/18, the additional cost to the Council will be in the region of £180,000.
 - 1.2 The purpose of this report is to present the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee with two proposals to recover some additional cost to the Council which is not currently recovered through Council Tax or the existing fees and charges.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2013 Maidstone Borough Council entered into partnership with Ashford and Swale Borough Councils and Kent County Council to let a 10 year waste collection contract, which was awarded to Biffa Municipal Ltd. The contract includes waste and recycling collection, garden waste, clinical waste, bulky collections and some street cleansing.
- 2.2 Every April an annual review is carried out to identify contract growth, specifically changes in household numbers, garden waste subscriptions, bulky and clinical waste collections as well as a calculation of the annual indexation. The annual indexation is calculated through a complex equation including Average Weekly Earnings Index, CPI and DERV (Diesel).
- 2.3 Over the past three years the annual indexation applied has been +0.383%, -1.184% and -2.012% respectively and the number of properties increased by 2,500 households. This resulted in a £144,000 increase in contract costs, which equates to 5.5% compared with the original tender price.
- 2.4 The annual review for 2017/18 has identified a significant rise in property numbers of 1,400 and an indexation rate of +5.577%. This means the contract price will increase by almost £180,000. As part of the budget setting process an estimate of 3% was included for 2017/18, therefore there is an actual budget shortfall of £95,000. This is in addition to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings which had already been identified for the service, including £45,000 reduction from marketing and staff budgets and £44,000 additional income from the Garden Waste Service.
- 2.5 Whilst the provision of many of the waste and recycling services is funded through Council Tax, some additional charges are made for the Garden Waste Service and Bulky Collection Service. The Council also provides some services for which an additional charge could be made as set out in the Environmental Protection Act, but currently is not.

2.6 Therefore in order to close the gap between the original budget estimate and the uplifted contract costs, the current fees and charges have been reviewed.

Bulky Collections

2.7 The Council already offers a chargeable Bulky Collection Service for the removal of larger household items, including kitchen appliances and furniture. The charges are set annually as part of the Council's Fees and Charges. Currently the charges are £24 for 1-4 items and £34 for 5-8 items.

2.8 Within the Contract Specification all white goods are classed as an individual collection (i.e. 4 items) as this is how the service operated in Swale. This means if a resident requests a fridge freezer to be collected along with 3 items of furniture, from a contractual point of view this will be treated as two collections. However at Maidstone, the pre-existing pricing structure has been retained which means the resident only pays for one collection of 1-4 items, currently £24. For this reason, a cap has been placed on the number of white goods which can be included per booking.

2.9 The table below explains the charges to the Council and to the resident for bulky collections:

	No. of contractual collections	Contract cost to MBC	Charge to Resident	Subsidised Charge to Resident	Net cost / income to MBC (exc. subsidy)
1-4 items (no white goods)	1	£15.50	£24	£16	£8.50 income
1-4 items (1x white good)	2	£31	£24	£16	£7 cost
1-4 items (2x white goods)	3	£46.50	£24	£16	£22.50 cost
5-8 items (no white goods)	2	£31	£34	N/A	£4 income
5-8 items (1x white good)	3	£46.50	£34	N/A	£12.50 cost
5-8 items (2x white goods)	4	£62	£34	N/A	£28 cost

2.10 Over the past 12 months there have been 4,283 bookings equating to 5889 contractual collections. This has generated an income of £98,631 against a cost of £95,380, resulting in a contribution of £3,251 towards other contract costs.

2.11 However it is clear that a proportion of the bulky collections are costing more than the income they generate, reducing the overall income to the Council. Given the current budget shortfall it is therefore recommended

that the charging structure for the Bulky Collection Service is changed to reflect the contract arrangements.

2.12 The table below shows some of the charges for bulky collection and white goods from other local authorities in Kent and those within our CIPFA family group:

Local Authority	Standard Charge 1-4 items	Separate White Good Charge
Swale Borough Council	£23	£23
Test Valley Borough Council	£50	£27.75
Chelmsford City Council	£30	N/A
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	£148.80	Included in standard charge
Sevenoaks District Council	£38	£17 £40 for American style
Thanet Borough Council	£25 (1-5 items)	£25
Medway Council	£20	Included in standard charge
Canterbury City Council	£60.40	£29.05
Shepway District Council	£41.95	£23.95 (included in standard)

2.13 As this information shows many authorities make an additional charge for the collection of white goods. This is predominantly because they are classed as hazardous waste and therefore need to be collected and disposed of separately.

2.14 It is recommended that a new charge of £20 for the collection of White Goods as part of the Bulky Waste Collection Service is introduced. Based on the current use of the service, this is estimated to generate an additional contribution of approximately £15,000 per year towards the increased contract costs.

2.15 There is no evidence from authorities who make a separate charge that there is an increase in the fly tipping of white goods. For residents wishing to dispose of a white good only, the charge for the bulky collection would be reduced under the new charging mechanism. The table below shows a comparison between the current and proposed charges for bulky collections.

	Current Charge	New Proposed Charge
1-4 items (no white goods)	£24	£24
1-4 items (1x white good)	£24	£44
1-4 items (2x white goods)	£24	£64
5-8 items (no white goods)	£34	£34
5-8 items (1x white good)	£34	£54
5-8 items (2x white goods)	£34	£74

2.16 Whilst the proposed charges appear significantly higher than the current charges, it is important to highlight that 84% of bookings made in 2016/17 would not be affected by these changes. In addition only 5% of bookings would result in a charge of more than £44.

Black Sacks

2.17 The majority of properties in Maidstone Borough have black wheeled bins for the collection of their rubbish which were originally provided by the Council in 2008/09. However there are 2,400 households who are not able to have wheeled bins and are currently provided 104 black sacks every year. This costs the Council £12,480 per year.

2.18 Although originally it was considered that the provision of black sacks provided equality to the provision of wheeled bins, this is no longer the case. Owners of new builds and new occupiers of all properties are required to purchase wheeled bins if there are none already at the property. The cost for a complete set is £50. In addition, most residents with wheeled bins place their waste in sacks which they are required to purchase themselves.

2.19 Therefore it is recommended that the annual provision of black sacks to properties not suitable for wheeled bins is withdrawn.

2.20 However if any of these properties are able to find a way to accommodate wheeled bins, the Council will provide these free of charge.

Clinical Waste

2.21 In the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the collection of Clinical Waste is listed as a service for which the Council can charge.

2.22 However it is recognised that this service is essential for a number of residents, some of who are vulnerable and require significant levels of support. Therefore it is not proposed to introduce charges for this service to reduce the budget deficit, however it is recommended the current policies are updated.

2.23 Currently there are 3,284 residents registered for the Clinical Waste Service. In addition every month there are approximately 30 requests from GPs and district nurses for residents to register for the Service.

2.24 There are 15 residents currently receiving a weekly collection of clinical waste due to it being classed as infectious. The remainder have an "on-request" service for sharps boxes, whereby they are required to book online or via the Contact Centre. Sharps boxes are for the disposal of needles usually used for Diabetes or for medication following surgery. The boxes are secure and clean and therefore there is no risk for storing them for a period of time within the resident's house.

2.25 It is therefore recommended that a limit of two free collections per year is introduced for the collection of Clinical Waste Sharps Boxes and a charge of £5 is made for additional requests. Most residents already store up a

number of boxes and present them for collections once or twice per year. However special consideration will be given if residents are physically unable to store their boxes or have an exceptionally high number of sharps requiring collection.

- 2.26 This proposal will ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the existing service to accommodate the growing demand for the Service without incurring any additional costs to the Council through the Contract.
- 2.27 Residents who require weekly clinical collections for other forms of waste i.e. not sharps, will continue to receive this free of charge.

Weekly Garden Waste Collections

- 2.28 The Council currently offers a fortnightly garden waste collection for a charge of £37 for a 240 litre bin and £33.30 for a 140 litre bin. As part of the MTFs savings it is already planned to increase the charges to £40 (240 litre bin) and £36 (140 litre bin) over the next 4 years.
- 2.29 This service currently has almost 23,500 subscribers, which is 34% of all households in Maidstone. The uptake in the service is slowing and it is not expected to increase significantly. Nationally the expected uptake for a chargeable garden waste service is in the region 25%, so the service is already exceeding this.
- 2.30 However anecdotal feedback from subscribers to the Service has suggested an interest in more frequent collections during the peak growing season, for which an additional charge could be made.
- 2.31 The current garden waste service costs £10.80 per household to provide, based on 49,696 subscribers across the Mid Kent Partnership. Assuming an annual subscription charge of £55 per year for a weekly service for 6 months of the year and a fortnightly service for the remaining 6 months, and an uptake of 2,350 households (10% of current subscribers) the potential income is in the region of £30,000.
- 2.32 It is therefore recommended that current garden waste subscribers are asked to register their interest in the seasonal weekly service as a supplement to their current service. This would be carried out in September and October with the results brought back to the Committee in November to enable a decision to be made to launch the new service in March 2018.

Summary

- 2.33 Whilst the proposals identified here will not meet the budget shortfall, it is anticipated that they will contribute £57,480 over a full 12 months. It is therefore important to implement the changes as soon as possible to maximise this contribution. However it is likely only half of the saving for black sacks will be realised this financial year as one delivery has already been made. Other opportunities for savings will be explored to cover the remaining shortfall.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Communities, Housing and Environment Committee have the option to agree all or in part the implementation of:
- a new charge of £20 for the collection of White Goods as part of the Bulky Waste Collection Service
 - changes to the Subsidised Bulky Charge to offer those in receipt of Council Tax Reduction Benefit either one white good or one 1-4 item collection per year
 - the withdrawal of the annual provision of black sacks to properties not suitable for wheeled bins
 - a limit of two free collections per year for the collection of Clinical Waste Sharps Boxes and a charge of £5 is made for additional requests
 - a register of interest for a seasonal weekly garden waste service as a supplement to the existing fortnightly collections
- 3.2 Alternatively the Committee could propose alternative changes to the existing charging mechanisms and service policies in order to identify savings or additional income to contribute to the budget shortfall.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended that the changes to policy and charges listed in 3.1 are agreed by the Committee and implemented as soon as possible to maximise the contribution to the budget shortfall.
- 4.2 Consideration has been given to the whole service to identify where there are opportunities to make savings or generate appropriate additional income. The weekly garden waste service has the greatest potential to grow and produce further income to the Council as the estimates included in this report are conservative.
- 4.3 The other recommendations are designed to reflect our costs and enable to continue to provide cost effective services for residents. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is included in Appendix A.
-

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 There has not been any formal consultation with regard to these changes, however with regard to the seasonal weekly garden waste service it is proposed that residents are asked to register their interest in the service prior to it being agreed and launched.
- 5.2 The Bulky Collection charges have previously been agreed by the Committee.
-

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 It is proposed that if the Committee agree the recommendations implementation will be as follows:

Proposal	Anticipated Implementation
New Bulky Collection Charge	1 September 2017
Withdrawal of Black Sack Deliveries	Immediate
Limit of 2 Sharps Collections per year	1 September 2017
Seasonal Weekly Garden Waste Service	Register of Interest - Sept/Oct 2017 Decision - Nov 2017 Implementation - Mar 2018

6.2 A communications plan for the changes will be developed, particularly regarding the implementation of a seasonal weekly garden waste service. The focus for this will be on existing subscribers to the Service.

6.3 Direct communication will be made with residents currently registered for clinical sharps collections to advise them of the new requirements for them to store the sharps boxes for collection twice per year.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – The waste and recycling services, which includes the collection of bulky waste ensures that residents are able to deal with their waste responsibly and with minimal impact on the environment. The proposals will ensure that these services can continue to be provided in a cost effective manner.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Risk Management	The key risk for the Council is failure to deliver a balanced budget and therefore the recommendations listed in this report aims to reduce the current shortfall to mitigate this risk. However the changes present a low reputational risk to the Council due to increasing charges, withdrawal of black sack supply and limitations on	Head of Environment and Public Realm

	<p>the Clinical Service. However an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out to ensure that protected groups are not unfairly disadvantaged, and the changes are in line with many other Councils in the area and across the UK. With particular regard to the Bulky Collection Service, the subsidy is being retained; the new charge is lower than the private sector; it offers a number of residents a cheaper method of disposal for a single white good; and is unlikely to affect 84% of current users.</p>	
Financial	<p>The proposals should mitigate the current budget shortfall for the waste and recycling contract as they are estimated to save £57,480, although only half of the saving will be realised in 2017/2018.</p> <p>Other measures will need to be explored to compensate for the remaining £66,260.</p>	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing		
Legal	<p>The report identifies where there are specific statutory provisions for charging.</p>	Interim Deputy Head of Legal Partnership
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	<p>The EqIA has carefully considered the possible impact of this proposal, identifying that there is no detrimental impact on individuals with a protected characteristic.</p>	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Environmental/Sustainable Development		
Community Safety		
Human Rights Act		
Procurement		
Asset Management		

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment
-

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Stage 1: Equality Impact Assessment

1. What are the main aims purpose and outcomes of the Policy and how do these fit with the wider aims of the organization?

The proposed changes have been identified to ensure the Bulky, Garden Waste and Clinical Services can continue to provide value for money whilst help cover the additional contractual costs due to property growth and indexation. This will enable the services to cover their costs as well as contribute to the additional costs for the household waste and recycling services.

It is essential that the Council has a balanced budget and the 2017/18 contract growth and indexation has created a budget shortfall of £94,000. These changes will help cover this shortfall and ensure that the savings already identified with the Environmental Services will continue to contribute to the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

2. How do these aims affect our duty to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the act.**
- **Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**
- **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

The policies / charges will have no affect on the Council's duties as described above as.

Bulky collection charges – this is already a chargeable service which is discretional. Residents have the option to dispose of their waste free of charge at the local household waste recycling centre (HWRC) or using a private contractor. The charges will reflect the hazardous nature of white goods and the contractual arrangements for disposing of these items. Many local authorities already operate this policy / charge successfully. It is also proposed that the subsidy for those in receipt of Council Tax Reduction Benefit is retained.

Withdrawal of black sack provision – the provision of black sacks is based purely on the nature of residents' properties and whether they are able to store a wheeled bin. Most residents with a refuse bin still purchase black or white sacks to put their waste in before putting it in their bin, so therefore it is not considered to be an excessive cost for households who cannot have

wheeled bins to purchase black sacks.

Clinical Waste – whilst this service offers a service to some more vulnerable residents with medical conditions, the proposal is to retain a free collection which meets the standard needs for those with a Sharps Collection and offers those who wish to have an additional collection a small fee to cover the collection cost and administration. Those with more acute needs will continue to receive their weekly collections free of charge.

Seasonal Weekly Garden Waste Collections – this proposal will consider offering residents with an optional additional chargeable service to enhance the existing fortnightly service.

3. What aspects of the policy including how it is delivered or accessed could contribute to inequality?

The four proposals do not contribute to inequality, but enable the existing services to be maintained and offered to all residents. The limitation on the clinical service will ensure the service can cope with continuing demand and therefore is able to offer all those who need the service with free collections.

All services are available online and via the contact centre to ensure they are available to all and maximise accessibility.

4. Will the policy have an impact (positive or negative) upon the lives of people, including particular communities and groups who have protected characteristics ? What evidence do you have for this?

The proposals will have the following impacts upon people’s lives:

Bulky Collections – the new charging mechanism will reduce the cost to residents wishing to dispose of a single white good. The majority of users of the service (84%) will not be impacted by the changes. A small number of users who have multiple white goods or a white good and a number of other items will experience an additional charge, however this reflects the actual costs of the service.

Black Sacks – withdrawal of the black sacks will mean that the 2,000 households currently receiving them will be required to purchase their own bags in future. However this will cost approximately £5 per year which is not considered excessive. The majority of residents with wheeled bins still contain their waste in sacks and therefore already have this cost.

Clinical Collections – the limit on the number of Sharps collections will not affect many residents as most already store their boxes and request a collection a couple of times per year. This will ensure there is not a waiting list for collections as there is a limit of 100 “on request” clinical collections per week and with growing demand at times residents may have to wait a week or two.

Seasonal Weekly Garden Waste Collection – this will enable residents with larger amounts of garden waste in the growing period to dispose of it in their existing garden bin and reduce the need to supplementary visits to the HWRC.

Overall the policy changes / charges will have minimal impact on residents or service users’ lives. With the exception of the black sacks the additional costs will be optional, and the black sack costs are minimal and in line with the costs already incurred by most residents.

If the answer to the second question has identified potential impacts and you have answered yes to any of the remaining questions then you should carry out a full EQIA set out as stage 2 below.

Community Housing and Environment Committee

18 July 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Housing Allocations Scheme Review and Update

Final Decision-Maker	Community, Housing and Environment Committee
Lead Head of Service	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Tony Stewart, Homechoice and Strategy Manager
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All wards

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee accept the proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Scheme

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Community, Housing and Environment Committee	18 July 2017

Housing Allocations Scheme Review and Update

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is detailing proposed changes to the Council's Allocations Scheme.
 - 1.2 Amendments to the scheme are being proposed ahead of the Homelessness Reduction Act that is planned to be introduced next year.
-

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Nominations made by the Council to housing association vacancies are governed by Part 6 Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The Act requires that nominations may only come from the Council's Housing Register and the Act provides the framework that sets who can join the Housing Register and how priority is determined between applicants. The Council's interpretation of the framework legislation must be set out in a document adopted by the Council and called an Allocation Scheme.
- 2.2 The Council's Housing Allocation Scheme is designed to ensure that access to subsidised housing supports the needs of residents, the corporate aims of the Council and reflects current legislation.
- 2.3 The current Allocation Scheme was introduced in 2013. The policy is designed to make best use of the limited stock available and awards additional priority to applicants in work or who assist the local community in other ways, such as serving in the Armed Forces or undertaking voluntary work.
- 2.4 Minor amendments to the Allocation Scheme can be made with the agreement of the Director of Place and Regeneration in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities, Housing & Environment Committee. Several minor amendments have been made since the policy was introduced in 2013. However, due to the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and the enhanced homelessness prevention service within the Housing and Inclusion Team, more significant changes to the scheme are now required, which requires the Committee's approval.
- 2.5 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 amends the current legislation to increase the period of time in which a person is deemed to be threatened with homelessness from 28 days to 56 days. Not only does this provide a longer period in which to work with someone threatened with homelessness but also better reflects the most commonly used ground for ending tenancies known as Section 21 Notices that require a two month notice-period.
- 2.6 The current Allocation Scheme reflects the statutory homelessness position that relies on using the 28 day notice period. It is anticipated that the Homelessness Act will be enacted after April 2018; however, the Council

has put resources in place to enable the prevention service to commence now. This will provide a period in which to better understand the implications brought about by this major change in homelessness legislation and to develop our services to have most impact. In order to assist with this process it is proposed to bring the Allocation Scheme into line with the statutory amendments that we know will take place early in 2018.

- 2.7 There are also some further changes being proposed to other parts of the Scheme to clarify and amend some points. These are intended to provide clarity for applicants and officers in applying the Scheme based on feedback received from stakeholders and service users.
 - 2.8 A table detailing the changes and the reasons for them is attached at **Appendix A**.
 - 2.9 A copy of the amended Housing Allocation Scheme version 1.8 is attached at **Appendix B**.
-

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 Accept the proposed amendments to the Housing Allocation Scheme. This will ensure that the published scheme remains relevant ahead of the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and makes best use of the limited stock of social housing that is available in the borough.
 - 3.2 Do not accept the proposed changes to the scheme. This is not recommended as the allocations scheme will then not be up to date with the amendments required to ensure that it remains relevant and fair.
-

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 It is recommended to accept the proposed amendments to the Housing Allocation Scheme as detailed in **Appendix A**.
 - 4.2 It is important that the scheme continues to remain relevant and up to date with housing policy and the proposed changes will ensure this.
-

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The current Housing Allocation scheme was introduced in 2013. The scheme was devised after an extensive consultation process with both internal and external stakeholders. Minor amendments do not require the Council to consult with housing providers and as the more significant change is to comply with statutory change brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 it is not proposed to consult on this point either.
-

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Once the recommendations have been agreed, all relevant stakeholders will be issued with the updated scheme, including all our housing providers. The updated Housing Allocation scheme will also be published on the Councils website.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Housing Allocations scheme assists in the delivery of the council's corporate priorities.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Risk Management	The scheme depends upon the effectiveness of partnership working between the Council and its housing providers.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Financial	Any proposed amendments to the allocation scheme will be met within existing agreed budgets.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	Appropriate staffing resources are required to be in place for the delivery of the scheme.	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Legal	The amendments to the scheme ensure that it is consistent with current Government Guidance and prospective legislative changes which will potentially reduce the likelihood of successful legal challenge.	Donna Price, Interim Deputy Head of Legal Partnership
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	The Housing Allocation Scheme potentially affects all population	Anna Collier, Policy & Information

	sections and groups.	Manager
Environmental/Sustainable Development	N/A	
Community Safety	N/A	
Human Rights Act	N/A	
Procurement	N/A	
Asset Management	N/A	

8. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix A: Housing Allocation Scheme – Table of Amendments
- Appendix B: Housing Allocation Scheme Version 1.8

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
Housing Act 1996

Housing Allocation Scheme

Table of Amendments

Section	Current wording	Amended wording	Reason for amendment
9.3	Family - the applicant must have immediate family that qualify as residents based upon the definition in paragraph 9.2. The Council may confirm these details with other data held internally.	Family - the applicant must have immediate family that has been residing within Maidstone Borough for a continuous period of 5 years immediately prior to the application. The Council may confirm these details with other data held internally.	A family connection for a continuous period of at least 5 years will match the residence period published in the DCLG's supplementary Code of Guidance on homelessness.
9.5	Returning Resident – the applicant must have been residing in the borough for 2 of the last 5 years but does not currently live within the Borough. The only exception to this are applicants being released from prison where their sentence exceeds 5 years the Senior Homechoice Officer may accept an applicant as being a returning resident in exceptional circumstances.	Returning Resident – the applicant must have been residing in the borough for a continuous period of at least 2 of the last 5 years but does not currently live within the Borough. The only exception to this are applicants being released from prison where their sentence exceeds 5 years the Senior Homechoice Officer may accept an applicant as being a returning resident in exceptional circumstances.	Clarification that in order to qualify as a returning resident, that the minimum of 2 years should be for a continuous period.

10.7.1	<p>Housing need will apply to those applicants to whom a main housing duty has been accepted under S193 (1) and S195 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 Part 7. The date of the application will be set to the date of the original homeless application, unless the applicant had an existing housing application and continues to qualify under the Community Contribution or Health Assistance Band. Those applicants where a duty has been discharged under S190 (2), S193 (5) and S195 (4) will also be considered as having a housing need, will be processed under the housing register and the qualifying criteria for local connection will still apply. The application date will be set to the date the duty discharge decision is made.</p>	<p>Housing need will apply to those applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in 56 days. In order for the applicant to be considered under this category the applicant must be actively engaged with the Homelessness Prevention Team. The date of the application will be set to the date of the original application for advice and assistance confirmed by a member of the Homelessness Prevention Team. Applicants who deliberately and unreasonably refuse to take any step in accordance with the advice given by the Homelessness Prevention Team will no longer be considered to have a housing need under this category.</p>	<p>The Homelessness Reduction Act which is expected to receive Royal Assent in 2018 will require local authorities to engage with applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days.</p> <p>This amendment, for qualification for the housing register through housing need, recognises the change in statutory duty on the Council and provides an option through the Housing Register at an earlier stage than is currently permitted.</p> <p>Applicants will need to be actively engaged with the new Homelessness Prevention Team in order to be verified under this category of housing need.</p>
10.8	n/a	<p>In exceptional circumstances, the Head of Housing and Community Services has the discretion to accept an application that does not meet any of the above Housing Need criteria.</p>	<p>Paragraph added to enable the Head of Housing and Community Services to accept applications that do not meet any other housing need criteria in exceptional circumstances. This enables the Council to avoid a legal challenge based on fettering its discretion.</p>

11.5	The Council considers that a total of £30,000 in capital, investments and savings constitutes sufficient financial means to rent privately or buy a property. The Council will only consider priority payments, such as rent and council tax, when taking debts into account.	The Council considers that a total of £16,000 in capital, investments and savings constitutes sufficient financial means to rent privately or buy a property. This includes equity from a property. The Council will only consider priority payments, such as rent and council tax, when taking debts into account.	A reduction in the figure that an applicant can hold in capital, investments and savings brings this in line with the maximum amount that would usually mean that a claimant would not be entitled to housing benefit. Clarification that this figure would also include equity from a property.
11.6	A household's gross income of £60,000 will also constitute sufficient financial means.	A household's gross income of £40,000 will also constitute sufficient financial means.	A reduction in the figure of a household's gross income to ensure that applicants who are accepted on to the register have the greatest financial need.
12.2.3	The Council in applying the above test will consider whether there is a sufficient degree of permanence or regularity to constitute normal residence as a member of the household.	n/a	Paragraph deleted as already in 12.2.2
14.1	Applicants should be aware that whilst their area preference will be respected, Maidstone has a limited supply of subsidised housing. In order to make best use of this limited resource, and for an applicant to maximise their chances of being housed,	Applicants should be aware that whilst their area preference will be respected, Maidstone has a limited supply of subsidised housing. In order to make best use of this limited resource, and for an applicant to maximise their chances of being housed,	Final sentence deleted as already covered at 22.4

	applicants should bid on all properties that are suitable regardless of location. If applicants do not bid within a four week period for properties the Council will place a bid on any suitable available property and the standard refusal penalties (Section 29) will apply.	applicants should bid on all properties that are suitable regardless of location.	
20.1	This band is for those applicants who have a housing need due to unsatisfactory housing conditions, such as statutory overcrowding or insanitary or hazardous properties, or those that need to move to prevent or alleviate hardship or on the grounds of welfare. Other applicants who do not meet the requirements of Band A, Band B, or Band D will join this band if they qualify to join the housing register.	This band is for those applicants who have a housing need due to unsatisfactory housing conditions, such as statutory overcrowding or insanitary or hazardous properties, those with a medical need not requiring specific adaptations, or those that need to move to prevent or alleviate hardship or on the grounds of welfare. Other applicants who do not meet the requirements of Band A, Band B, or Band D will join this band if they qualify to join the housing register.	'Medical need not requiring specific adaptations' added to clarify that an applicant who would meet this criteria would be placed in Band C.
22.4	Applicants will be expected to actively seek a property via the Kent Homechoice Scheme and the Council may place bids on behalf of the applicant. If an applicant does not bid on any property in a four week period, the Council will suspend their application. The	Applicants will be expected to actively seek a property via the Kent Homechoice Scheme and the Council may place bids on behalf of the applicant. If an applicant does not bid on any property in a four week period, the Council may suspend their application. The	Wording changed from, 'the Council <i>will</i> suspend their application,' to 'the Council <i>may</i> suspend their application,' to allow more flexibility before implementing a suspension due to not bidding on properties.

	<p>applicant will be contacted within 7 days and asked to explain the reason for not bidding. If the applicant fails to respond within 14 days their application will be removed. If the reason for non-bidding relates to their inability to use the Kent Homechoice system the Council will provide assistance to the applicant and the application can be reinstated by the Senior Homechoice Officer without any penalty. Alternative forms of bidding are available, such as by telephone, text messaging and a dedicated television channel.</p>	<p>applicant will be contacted within 7 days and asked to explain the reason for not bidding. If the applicant fails to respond within 14 days their application will be removed. If the reason for non-bidding relates to their inability to use the Kent Homechoice system the Council will provide assistance to the applicant and the application can be reinstated by the Senior Homechoice Officer without any penalty. Alternative forms of bidding are available, such as by telephone or text messaging.</p>	<p>Deletion of option to bid via a dedicated television channel as this option will no longer be available from Kent Homechoice due to lack of use.</p>
22.5	<p>Applicants are able to see on Kent Homechoice whether they have been successful in bidding on a property, and if not, where on the shortlist they have been placed. Applicants within the same band will be prioritised strictly in the order of the date of their application so the longer someone has been in housing need, the more likely they are to be successful.</p>	<p>Applicants are able to see on Kent Homechoice whether they have been successful in bidding on a property, and if not, where on the shortlist they have been placed. Applicants within the same band will be prioritised strictly in the order of the date when a valid application was received, i.e. the date that the completed application and all required supporting information was received by the Council. The longer someone has been in housing need, the more likely they are to be successful.</p>	<p>Clarification that an applicant's priority date is set when a completed application and all supporting documentation has been received.</p>

27.2	Previous or current rent arrears equivalent to a minimum of 8 weeks rent or where the applicant is unable to demonstrate a repayment agreement is in place and being maintained. These include arrears gained from either private or social tenancies, or where the applicant owes the Council a debt.	Previous or current rent arrears equivalent to a minimum of 8 weeks rent and where the applicant is unable to demonstrate a repayment agreement is in place and has been maintained for a reasonable period; the period to be determined on a case by case basis by the Homechoice and Strategy Manager. These include arrears gained from either private or social tenancies, or where the applicant owes the Council a debt.	A change of wording so that an applicant may be ineligible for an offer if they have rent arrears of a minimum of 8 weeks rent <i>and</i> is unable to demonstrate a repayment programme is in place. The previous wording was <i>or</i> .
27.4	Applicants found ineligible under section 27.2 and 27.3 will be suspended for 6 months. The application will be reviewed and reassessed after this time, and further suspensions may be applied. An applicant's priority date will be amended to the date on which they become eligible for an offer of accommodation.	Applicants found ineligible under section 27.2 and 27.3 will be suspended for 6 months. The application will be reviewed and reassessed after this time and a further suspension may be applied. If after a further 6 month period an applicant is still found to be ineligible, they will be removed from the register. An applicant's priority date will be amended to the date on which they become eligible for an offer of accommodation.	If an applicant is found to be ineligible and suspended for a period of 2 consecutive 6 month periods, the applicant will then be removed from the register.
Various	Housing and Enabling Team	Homechoice Team	Updated to show change in team name
Various	Housing and Enabling Manager	Homechoice and Strategy Manager	Updated to show change in Managers title

Allocation Scheme

Version 1.8
July 2017

Contents

Aims and Priorities.....	3
Part 1 – Introduction	
1. Lettings not covered by the policy.....	4
2. The legal framework.....	4
3. Eligibility for allocation of housing.....	5
4. Equality and diversity.....	5
5. Access to personal information.....	6
6. Review of the scheme.....	6
7. Review of decisions requested by the applicant	6
Part 2 - The Housing Register	
8. Entry on to the register.....	7
9. Local connection.....	7
10. Housing need.....	9
11. Financial circumstances.....	12
Part 3 – Applying to join the housing register	
12. Who can be considered part of an application.....	13
13. Pregnancy.....	14
14. Area preferences.....	14
15. Bedroom allocation.....	14
16. Being on the register.....	15
Part 4 – Housing Register Bands	
17. The Bands.....	15
18. Band A - Community Contribution.....	16
19. Band B – Health Assistance.....	18
20. Band C – Reasonable Preference.....	18
21. Band D - Homeless.....	18
Part 5 – Allocations	
22. The bidding process.....	18
23. Adverts.....	19
24. The quota.....	19
25. Direct allocations.....	20
26. Nominations.....	20
27. Ineligibility for an offer.....	20
28. Suitability.....	21
29. Refusals.....	21

30.	Applicants in prison.....	22
31.	High-risk offenders.....	22
32.	National Witness Mobility Scheme.....	22
33.	Other Accommodation.....	22
34.	Selection criteria and priorities for supported housing.....	23
35.	Processing applications from older people.....	23
36.	Adapted properties.....	24
37.	Local letting plans.....	24
38.	Decants.....	25
39.	Management Moves.....	25
40.	Glossary.....	26
41.	Appendix A (Documents list).....	28
42.	Appendix B (Review of decisions).....	30

Aims and Priorities

Maidstone Borough Council's Allocation Scheme has been designed to ensure that access to subsidised housing supports the needs of residents, the corporate aims of the Council, as well as reflect the current legislation. The Council's vision is for our residents to live in decent homes, enjoy good health and a pleasant environment with a successful economy. In order to support this ambition, the Council has decided to award additional priority to applicants in work or who assist their local community in other ways, such as serving in the Armed Forces or undertaking voluntary work. There is an extremely limited supply of subsidised housing within Maidstone, and this policy is designed to work with our housing providers to make best use of the stock available and promote Maidstone as an attractive place to live.

Maidstone Borough Council's Allocation Scheme is designed to treat all applicants for subsidised housing in a fair and equitable manner. The Allocation Scheme is designed to offer applicants some choice in their accommodation and ability to express preference on their accommodation type and location. This individual choice and preference must be balanced with the needs of all applicants and the need for the Council to offer best value through its housing services. In cases of acute need e.g. homelessness, Maidstone Borough Council may prioritise the need for accommodation whilst responding to choice. Applicants should be aware that the housing stock in Maidstone is limited and that they may be moved to a more suitable property faster if they are more flexible in the type or location of the property that they require.

Part 1 - Introduction

1 Lettings not covered by the policy

1.1 The following are examples of lettings not covered by, or specifically excluded from the Allocation Scheme, under the provision of the Housing Act 1996:

- Offers of non-secure tenancies to homeless households pursuant to any duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996;
- The conversion of introductory tenancies into secure tenancies or their Housing Association equivalent;
- Offers of tied accommodation made to Council employees;
- Offers or nominations of accommodation made at the Council's own instigation for example offers to tenants being moved from their homes to allow major works to take place;
- Transfer of tenancies made by a Court Order under the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 or other family legislation;
- Granting or disposal of tenancies by order of a Court.

2 The Legal Framework

2.1 Maidstone Borough Council keeps a Housing Register of people who want to be considered for subsidised housing. The Council's Allocation Scheme operates in accordance with the statutory provisions contained in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

2.2 The Housing Act 1996 (as amended) requires all Local Authorities to introduce a lettings scheme to reflect the priorities defined by the Act, and to give reasonable preference to:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 of the 1996 Act (amended 2002));
- People who are owed duties by any Local Authority under Section 190(2), 193(2), 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section 192(3);
- People occupying unsanitary housing or who are overcrowded or living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others);

- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds including grounds relating to disability.

3 Eligibility for Allocation of Housing

3.1 Certain persons subject to immigration control are not eligible for the allocation of housing under s160A (1) (a), (3) and (5) under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This includes:

- Over-stayers and visitors to the country
- Illegal entrants
- Asylum Seekers
- People in the country on condition that they have no recourse to public funds
- "Persons from abroad" who fail the habitual residence test
- "Persons from abroad" who are in breach of the European Community Right of Residence directive
- "Persons from abroad" who have been the subject of a sponsorship agreement for less than 5 years and whose sponsors are still alive.

3.2 The above list provides examples. It should be noted that the statutory framework for eligibility is subject to alteration by the Secretary of State.

3.3 An applicant is able to request a review of the Council's decision by writing to the Senior Homechoice Officer (see Appendix B).

4 Equality and Diversity

4.1 The Council has given due regard to the Equality Act 2010, particularly Chapter 1 Protected Characteristics and Chapter 2 Prohibited Conduct, in drafting and applying the Allocation Scheme.

4.2 The Council operates an equality and diversity policy and is committed to delivering a fair and equitable service that is appropriate and accessible to all sections of the local community, as well as working to eliminate discrimination on any grounds.

4.3 The implementation of a clear and consistent Allocation Scheme goes hand in hand with careful equalities monitoring. As part of the housing register application, we ask questions around ethnicity, disability, sexuality, religious beliefs, age, employment and support needs. The data provided by the applicant will help us to monitor that the scheme is operated in a fair and non – discriminatory manner as well as for service improvements.

4.4 It is important that the Allocation Scheme is understood by all current and prospective applicants. Straight forward information through leaflets is available in a variety of formats and where appropriate, interpreters are used for applicants seeking advice and assistance. If an applicant has specific requirements for an interview, they should inform the Council when the interview is booked and we will endeavour to meet those requirements.

5 Access to Personal Information

- 5.1 An applicant has the right to see and to confirm the accuracy of information about them which is held by the Council.
- 5.2 In order to request access to personal information, applicants must put the request in writing to the Homechoice and Strategy Manager (see Appendix B).
- 5.3 The Homechoice Team will collect and prepare the information within 40 days. Files may be edited where necessary to exclude information restricted by law or evidence provided by a third party, for example a healthcare professional. In the latter case, information can only be released if the professional concerned has given their written consent. Applicants wishing to see information provided by third parties must seek consent from the third party (ies) involved.
- 5.4 If the applicant considers the personal information they have received is inaccurate, they may request that it is amended or removed from their records. If the Homechoice and Strategy Manager agrees the information is incorrect, appropriate action will be taken to amend the records. In the event of a disagreement, the information will remain and the applicant's comments will be recorded on file.
- 5.5 Disclosure of information may be denied by the Council in any of the following circumstances:
- The information could prejudice criminal proceedings;
 - Legal professional privilege could be claimed;
 - A care professional is of the opinion that disclosure could result in a risk of serious harm to the applicant or others as a result of disclosure.
- 5.6 The Council will not pass information to a third party without an applicant's consent unless they have a legal right to obtain it.

6 Review of the Scheme

- 6.1 To ensure the continued effectiveness of the policy, certain improvements may need to be made to ensure the policy is kept up to date. Minor amendments can be made once approved by the appropriate Director. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee will be advised of the change with the opportunity to provide comments within one calendar month before the amendments are incorporated.

7 Review of decisions requested by applicants

- 7.1 Applicants have a statutory right to request a review of a decision relating to their application, (Housing Act 1996 as amended). Where an applicant wants to introduce a medical issue not previously considered under the original application the applicant must follow the procedure set out in paragraph 10.2 Medical Grounds. In addition Appendix B lists those subjects on which applicants can request a

review, together with the timescale for requesting a review and receiving a response. All requests for a review must be made in writing (this can be in the form of an email).

Part 2 – The Housing Register

8 Entry to the Register

- 8.1 The Council operates a 'closed list' housing register. Unlike previous versions of the Allocation Scheme there are now qualifying entry requirements in order to be accepted onto the register. As the supply of subsidised housing in the borough is limited, the Council will concentrate its resources, which includes its access to subsidised housing (nominations) and staff resources on those applicants most likely to receive an offer of accommodation.
- 8.2 In order to be accepted onto the register all applicants must meet the two qualifying criteria; these are local connection (see Section 9) and housing need (explained in Section 10). Applications will not be processed on to the housing register until all the necessary requested information has been provided by the applicant. Incomplete new applications will not be processed and the applicant will be contacted to provide the required information. The applicant will be given 28 days to provide all their relevant information; otherwise the application will be removed. A list of relevant documents is contained in Appendix A.
- 8.3 Where an application is accepted onto the housing register the applicant's priority date will be set as the date when a valid application was received, i.e. the date that the completed application and all required supporting information was received by the Council.
- 8.4 Applications will not normally be accepted from persons under 18 years of age, one exception are people who are owed duties by any Local Authority under Section 190(2), 193(2), 195(2) of the 1996 Act (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any housing authority under section 192(3) e.g. 16 and 17 year olds owed the main housing duty.
- 8.5 Local Connection will not be deemed to be an overriding factor when it is necessary for an applicant to leave an area, such as in cases of domestic abuse.

9 Local Connection

- 9.1 In order to access the housing register, applicants need to fulfil at least one of the following local connection criteria.

- 9.2 Resident – the applicant has been residing within Maidstone Borough for a continuous period of 2 years immediately prior to the application. The Council may confirm these details with other information held internally by the Council e.g. Council Tax and Housing Benefit records.
- 9.3 Family - the applicant must have immediate family that has been residing within Maidstone Borough for a continuous period of 5 years immediately prior to the application. The Council may confirm these details with other data held internally.
- 9.4 Employment – the applicant must have employment or an offer of employment within Maidstone Borough. The place of work, rather than the business address must be within Maidstone Borough. The employment must be for a minimum of 12 months and be for more than 16 hours a week (For zero hour contracts see 18.4.1)
- 9.5 Returning Resident – the applicant must have been residing in the borough for a continuous period of at least 2 of the last 5 years but does not currently live within Maidstone Borough. The only exception to this are applicants being released from prison where their sentence exceeds 5 years the Senior Homechoice Officer may accept an applicant as being a returning resident in exceptional circumstances.
- 9.6 In cases where the main homeless duty is confirmed by a decision letter (in accordance with section 184 Housing Act 1996) the Local Connection requirements will be those contained within the relevant legislation and Code of Guidance, which takes precedence over those contained within this document. A copy of the relevant Code can be viewed at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7841/152056.pdf
- 9.6(a) Persons placed in Maidstone Borough by another local housing authority under the provision of the homelessness legislation will not become eligible for an offer of accommodation until the period of 5 years has expired from the date of their placement and would not amount to a local connection for other family members under paragraph 9.39.7 In exceptional circumstances the matter will be considered as part of the review process and discretion can be applied by the Head of Housing and Community Services, if an applicant is able to demonstrate a local connection that does not readily match the local connection criteria stated above. For example, applicants may have a need for support, special school placements or medical treatment which cannot be met in any other reasonable location. Applicants may also have felt the need to leave an area where they have a local connection. This is often supported by the police or another external agency. If the Head of Housing and Community Services is satisfied with the evidence provided in these cases, the applicant may be accepted onto the housing register.
- 9.7 In exceptional circumstances the matter will be considered as part of the review process and discretion can be applied by the Head of Housing and Community Services, if an applicant is able to demonstrate a local connection that does not readily match the local connection criteria stated above. For example, applicants may have a need for support, special school placements or medical treatment which cannot be met in any other reasonable location. Applicants may also have felt the need to leave an area where they have a local connection. This is often supported by the police or another external agency. If the Head of Housing and

Community Services is satisfied with the evidence provided in these cases, the applicant may be accepted onto the housing register.

9.8 **Right to Move**

The Council supports the Government's guidance on the Right to Move that permits Armed Forces personnel access to the housing register. The Allocation Scheme supports increasing mobility for social tenants to enable them to meet their employment aspirations and to support them into work. Where a social housing tenant needs to move to Maidstone to take up a job or apprenticeship offer or live closer to work, they must be able to demonstrate to the Council's satisfaction that the work or job offer is genuine and that they need, rather than wish to move, and that if they were unable to do so, it would cause them hardship. The Council will consider and take into account the factors recommended by the Secretary of State in determining whether a tenant needs to move to be closer to work or take up a job/apprenticeship offer. These include:

- The distance and/or time taken to travel between work and home.
- The availability and affordability of transport, taking into account level of earnings.
- The nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available closer to home.
- Other personal factors, such as medical conditions and child care, which would be affected if the tenant could not move.
- The length of the work contract.
- Whether failure to move would result in the loss of an opportunity to improve employment circumstances or prospects, for example, by taking up a better job, a promotion, or an apprenticeship.

The Council will seek appropriate documentary evidence and may also contact the employer to verify the position (see Appendix A).

9.9 An applicant is able to request a review of the Council's decision not to agree local connection by writing to the Homechoice and Strategy Manager (see Appendix B).

10 **Housing Need**

10.1 Applicants must be in housing need to access the register and must qualify for one of the reasonable preference criteria as set out in S167 (2) of the Housing Act 1996. Further clarification is provided below.

10.2 **Medical**

10.2.1 To qualify on medical grounds, applicants must be able to demonstrate that their current accommodation is unsuitable for their households' needs due to a medical condition. This includes people who have a physical disability, mobility needs, mental illness or learning disabilities.

10.2.2 Applicants must be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Homechoice Officer that their current accommodation is not suitable. Medical conditions include

physical disabilities, mobility needs, mental illness and learning disabilities and documentation to support the application must be provided from an NHS medical professional, or an equivalent external agency.

- 10.2.3 If the Homechoice Officer is unable to determine if an applicant qualifies, all details will be sent to an independent medical advisor who will assess the application. The independent medical advisor's assessment will form part of the information to determine whether an applicant qualifies on medical grounds.
- 10.2.4 All applicants are entitled to one medical assessment for each member of the household that will be moving with them at no cost. Any further medical assessments must be paid for in full by the applicant unless there has been a significant change in the medical condition of an applicant or someone in the household.
- 10.2.5 The fee for a medical assessment will be £75. This will be reviewed annually by the Homechoice and Strategy Manager.
- 10.2.6 Following an initial application for a medical assessment, a request must be made in writing to the Senior Homechoice Officer which must include all documentation that an applicant wants to be sent for medical assessment. The Homechoice and Strategy Manager will then review whether a free medical assessment is appropriate.

10.3 Welfare

- 10.3.1 A move on welfare grounds may encompass a wide range of individual circumstances and will include, but not be limited to:
- Someone moving on from care.
 - Someone moving on from a drug or alcohol recovery programme.
 - Someone who wants to live independently but requires some additional support, such as someone with learning disabilities.
 - Someone who provides or receives care or support.
 - Someone who needs to leave their current accommodation due to being a victim of crime or intimidation or domestic abuse.
- 10.3.2 A move on welfare grounds should be accompanied by supporting evidence from an appropriately qualified professional connected with the applicant. The Senior Homechoice Officer will assess whether an applicant qualifies in this category.

10.4 Hazardous Properties

- 10.4.1 A property will be defined as hazardous by reference to the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) prescribed within The Housing Act 2004 Part 1 (or any replacement standard).
- 10.4.2 A property will be considered as being hazardous where an HHSRS assessment identifies:
- i) one or more Category 1 hazards, and where;
 - ii) a member of the applicant's household falls within the vulnerable age group for the hazard/s (as detailed in the relevant guidance), and;
 - ii) the hazard/s cannot be resolved within a period of 6 months.

- 10.4.3 Properties, located in Maidstone, assessed as containing Category 1 hazards that can be resolved within a period of 6 months will be subject to enforcement action to remove the hazard. The owner of the property will be responsible for all costs incurred in the resolution of the problem, including any requirement for temporary accommodation that may result due to the hazard.

10.5 Overcrowding & Under occupancy

- 10.5.1 A household will be deemed to be overcrowded if, when the bedroom standard in section 15 is applied, the household is lacking one or more bedrooms and their home is not considered suitable for their needs. In larger properties, where there are additional rooms that would not be typically used as bedrooms, any additional rooms should be counted as providing bed spaces. This is with the exception of a kitchen/dining/living area.
- 10.5.2 Households that have moved to a property and made themselves overcrowded will not be eligible under this category.
- 10.5.3 Whilst under occupying is not necessarily a housing need it is in the interest of applicants and landlords that best use is made of existing accommodation. A household will be deemed to be under-occupying if they are an existing social housing tenant and when the bedroom standard in Section 15 is applied, the household exceeds its need by one or more bedrooms.
- 10.5.4 In determining whether a property is overcrowded or under-occupied the Homechoice Officer will apply an objective test based on the size and type of property and not on how the property is being used by the occupants.
- 10.5.5 The Homechoice and Strategy Manager has the discretion to consider exceptional cases where the bedroom criteria does not readily match the household type, (e.g. bed space criteria)

10.6 Hardship

- 10.6.1 Households will be deemed to be in hardship if they need to move to alleviate or prevent hardship. This includes, but is not limited to those who need to move to give or receive care, and those who need to move to take up an employment, education or training opportunity.
- 10.6.2 Evidence of this must be provided and the Senior Homechoice Officer will assess whether an applicant qualifies as the basis of hardship.
- 10.6.3 Applicants who are applying due to financial hardship will need to provide a completed income and expenditure form for the household, in order for an assessment to be completed. A form to assist the applicant can be sent upon request.

10.7 Homeless

- 10.7.1 Housing need will apply to those applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness in 56 days. In order for the applicant to be considered under this category the applicant must be actively engaged with the Homelessness Prevention Team. The date of the application will be set to the date of the original application

for advice and assistance confirmed by a member of the Homelessness Prevention Team. Applicants who deliberately and unreasonably refuse to take any step in accordance with the advice given by the Homelessness Prevention Team will no longer be considered to have a housing need under this category.

- 10.7.2 Housing need will apply to homeless applicants owed only advice and assistance duty under S190 (2) and S192 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 Part 7. The Council has chosen to exercise its power to assist intentionally homeless applicants, and homeless applicants found to be non-priority as it recognises that homelessness is the most acute form of housing need. The application will be processed under the housing register and must meet the qualifying criteria for local connection. The date of the application will be set as the date of the decision letter sent. A fuller explanation of all homeless categories can be found here (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/contents>)
- 10.7.3 Where an applicant who is rough sleeping has their situation confirmed by a partner agency e.g. Maidstone Day Centre or any other registered agency working within the Borough for this client group, then the applicant will be assessed as having a housing need.
- 10.7.4 Applicants who are of no fixed abode where evidence has been provided may be considered as having a housing need, either because they are overcrowded or because they may be threatened with homelessness.
- 10.7.5 If an applicant does not meet any of the housing need criteria they will not normally be allowed to have access to the housing register and will be unable to bid on properties. An applicant is able to request a review of the Council's decision to refuse an application on housing need by writing to the Council (see Appendix B).
- 10.8 In exceptional circumstances, the Head of Housing and Community Services has the discretion to accept an application that does not meet any of the above housing need criteria.

11 Financial Circumstances

- 11.1 In order to access the Housing Register at the point of application, and upon request e.g. at the point of an offer of accommodation, applicants must provide details of all bank accounts, savings, investments and capital that belong to any member of their household.
- 11.2 An applicant's financial circumstances will be assessed at the time of their application and any material change in circumstances should be reported as a change of circumstances as per Section 16.
- 11.3 As subsidised housing is a limited resource, those who have the financial means to rent privately or to buy a property are unlikely to meet the qualifying criteria to enter the register unless a main housing duty has been accepted for them.
- 11.4 For the purpose of determining affordability for certain developments in Parish areas that are subject to specific planning requirements e.g. rural exception sites (See paragraph 37.5) the test applied is whether the applicant can afford the cost of housing in the Parish where the rural exception site has been delivered as

opposed to the cost of their current accommodation where this is away from the Parish area.

- 11.5 The Council considers that a total of £16,000 in capital, investments and savings constitutes sufficient financial means to rent privately or buy a property. This includes equity from a property. The Council will only consider priority payments, such as rent and council tax, when taking debts into account.
- 11.6 A household's gross income of £40,000 will also constitute sufficient financial means.
- 11.7 The Council will take into consideration any disposal of funds within 2 years of the application to assess financial circumstances. Where an applicant cannot demonstrate the appropriate disposal of funds, the Council may draw an inference as to how the funds have been used.
- 11.8 An applicant is able to request a review of the Council's decision to refuse an application on financial circumstances by writing to the Senior Homechoice Officer (see Appendix B).

Part 3 – Applying to join the Housing Register

12 Who can be considered part of an application?

- 12.1 The only persons who will be considered as part of an applicant's household will be:
- Partner
 - Children
 - Relatives
 - Carers
 - Any member of the household who can reasonably be considered residing with the applicant at the time of initial application
- 12.2 **Children**
- 12.2.1 Children must be under 18 years of age and the applicant must have legal responsibility for the children.
- 12.2.2 The test of normal residence as a member of the family will require residence as opposed to "staying" or "staying access" even in cases of joint custody or joint residence or similar orders. The Council in applying the test will consider whether there is a sufficient degree of permanence or regularity to constitute normal residence as a member of the household. Account may be taken of whether the child is dependent upon the applicant. The Council may also take into account the supply and demand for accommodation in the Maidstone Borough and any under-

occupation that may result where a child spends part of the week with one parent and part of the week with another parent.

13 Pregnancy

- 13.1 Pregnancy must be reported to the Council as a change of circumstances and relevant proof of pregnancy must be supplied.
- 13.2 Upon entering the last trimester (usually the last 12 – 14 weeks) of a pregnancy, the pregnancy will be considered as an additional child for the purpose of assessing the bedroom needs of an applicant

14 Area Preferences

- 14.1 Applicants should be aware that whilst their area preference will be respected, Maidstone has a limited supply of subsidised housing. In order to make best use of this limited resource, and for an applicant to maximise their chances of being housed, applicants should bid on all properties that are suitable regardless of location.
- 14.2 The Kent Homechoice website will provide details of bidding activity including details of successful bids. Information is provided through Kent Homechoice that will enable the applicant to make an assessment of how long it will take to be housed. Some areas are more popular than others and some property types attract more bids than others. As applicants can identify areas of the Borough where many or few vacancies of suitably sized accommodation may become available, they can make an assessment as to the likelihood of a property becoming available in that area.

15 Bedroom Allocation

- 15.1 Household composition determines the number of bedrooms in a home that an applicant can be awarded. The Council will use the bedroom standard recommended by the Secretary of State which allocates a separate bedroom to each:
- Married or co-habiting couple
 - Person aged 16 years or over
 - Two children of the same sex up to the age of 16
 - Two children aged under 10 years regardless of sex
- 15.2 Extra bedrooms may be allocated in exceptional circumstances such as where an overnight carer is required. This must be approved by the Senior Homechoice Officer having considered the evidence provided in accordance with Paragraph 18.2
- 15.3 An applicant is able to request a review of the Council's decision in respect of bedroom allocation by writing to the Homechoice and Strategy Manager (see Appendix B).

16 Being on the Register

- 16.1 Applicants must inform the Housing Service in writing or by email of any changes to their circumstances such as, but not limited to, change of address or composition of household within 30 days of the change occurring. This may result in a change to the band that the applicant has been placed in. This may affect an offer of accommodation if the information provided by the applicant is out of date and could result in the withdrawal of an offer.
- 16.2 Applicants are entitled to remain on the register until their housing need has been resolved unless they are removed by the Council, however, all applicants must be active on the register and bidding for properties whenever possible and appropriate.
- 16.3 Applicants are required to renew their housing register application every 12 months. The Council will contact applicants on an annual basis, reminding them of the requirement to renew, in order to remain on the Housing Register.
- 16.4 If an applicant fails to respond within 28 days of being asked to renew their application their application will be removed. When a new housing register application is submitted after one has been removed, the applicant will be treated as a new case. This means the applicants' priority date will be set at the date of the new valid application.
- 16.5 An applicant is able to request a review of the Council's decision to cancel an application by writing to the Senior Homechoice Officer (see Appendix B)

Part 4 – Housing Register bands

17 Bands

- 17.1 The Council operates a system known as banding to measure an applicant's housing need. When an application is received, it is assessed and placed into one of four bands depending on the housing needs of the applicant. These bands reflect the reasonable preference criteria set out in the relevant legislation.
- 17.2 The bands are as follows:
 A – Community Contribution
 B – Health Assistance
 C – Reasonable Preference
 D - Homeless
- 17.3 In order to achieve the aims and priorities (Page 3) a greater number of properties per applicant will go to Band A. The intention being to encourage applicants into

Band A Community Contribution, which it is anticipated the majority of future vacant dwellings will be let against. Applicants in Band A are more likely to receive an offer of accommodation compared to applicants in Bands C and D. As the majority of applicants in Band B are likely to need housing based on medical requirement the Council will work with its housing providers to match adapted property to applicants with a specific need for this type of housing.

18 Band A- Community Contribution

18.1.1 This band is for those applicants who have a housing need as per part 2 and in addition entry into this band requires a community contribution which is defined as follows:

18.1.2 Community contribution is defined by, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- Persons who are members of the Armed Forces or their families (see paragraph 18.6.2)
- Persons undertaking voluntary work
- Persons in employment
- Persons who are foster carers or adopters (see paragraph 18.5)
- Persons providing care (see paragraph 18.3)

18.1.3 Community contribution must be supported by evidence to demonstrate the persons within the application fit into one of the criteria set out in the following paragraphs.

18.1.4 Applicants must fulfil the community contribution requirements as stated in 18.1.2 at the point of application in order to enter this band.

18.1.5 Applicants must continue to fulfil the community contribution criteria whilst they are on the register and be able to prove that they fulfil the criteria when an offer of accommodation is made.

18.1.6 Where an applicant is placed in Band C or Band D, they are eligible to move into Band A once they have demonstrated that they meet the community contribution criteria.

18.1.7 If an applicant believes that they fulfil the community contribution test in another way they should provide as many details and evidence of their contribution as they can to the Senior Homechoice Officer who will decide if they qualify.

18.1.8 An applicant is able to request a review of the Council's decision that the community contribution criteria are not met by writing to the Senior Homechoice Officer (see Appendix B).

18.2 Persons Acting as Carers

18.2.1 Any applicant in receipt of the Carer's Allowance will qualify as a carer.

18.3 Persons Undertaking Voluntary Work

- 18.3.1 The Council believes that voluntary work provides a fundamental role in providing a community contribution, and the allocation of housing reflects the importance of this.
- 18.3.2 An applicant will qualify for this if they volunteer for a not for profit group or organisation that works in or is based within the borough.
- 18.3.3 Applicants must be able to prove that they volunteer for a minimum of 10 hours a week and have done so on a consistent basis for at least 6 months. A letter or email from an employee of the group/organisation to confirm this is required.

18.4 Persons in Employment

- 18.4.1 Employment must be for a minimum of 16 hours per week and with a contract of employment for at least 12 months. In relation to zero hours contracts if the applicant can provide evidence of continuous employment over a 12 month period this will be sufficient.

18.5 Persons who are Foster Carers or Adopters

- 18.5.1 KCC approved adopters and foster carers will fulfil the community contribution qualification. Those who are applying to be a foster carer or adopter will not qualify for community contribution until they have been approved by KCC and provided documentation confirming this.
- 18.5.2 As foster children are not included in bedroom allocation, an applicant who is an approved foster carer can request an additional bedroom to allow them to continue fostering.
- 18.5.3 When an applicant is an approved adopter, they are entitled to request an additional bedroom so as not to prevent them adopting a child.

18.6 Persons who are Members of the Armed Forces or their Families

- 18.6.1 Members of the Armed Forces, and their families, often struggle to fulfil local connection requirements due to having to move from base to base. As such, any household that fulfils the following criteria will bypass the local connection and housing need criteria and will automatically have a community contribution.

The criteria are:

- Current member of the Armed Forces
 - Served in the Armed Forces within the last 5 years (except where the applicant has been dishonourably discharged).
 - Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation and where the death of the spouse was wholly or partially attributable to their service.
 - Members of the Reserve Forces who need to move on medical or welfare grounds as a result of their service.
- 18.6.2 Members of the Reserve Forces qualify for community contribution, but must fulfil the local connection criteria.

19 Band B – Health Assistance

19.1 This band is for people who have a housing need due to significant medical grounds whose current accommodation is not suitable for them due to medical needs, such as a physical disability. Evidence of a medical condition must be supported by documentation from medical professionals or appropriately qualified persons (see section 10.2). It is the Council's intention to match where possible adapted properties to this band (see section 36).

20 Band C – Reasonable Preference (Unsuitable Housing)

20.1 This band is for those applicants who have a housing need due to unsatisfactory housing conditions, such as statutory overcrowding or insanitary or hazardous properties, those with a medical need not requiring specific adaptations, or those that need to move to prevent or alleviate hardship or on the grounds of welfare. Other applicants who do not meet the requirements of Band A, Band B, or Band D will join this band if they qualify to join the housing register.

21 Band D – Homeless Applicants

- 21.1 This band is for those applicants to whom a main housing duty has been accepted under The Housing Act 1996 Part 7 or confirmed as a Rough Sleeper.
- 21.2 An applicant placed in this band with a main housing duty will have their application date set to the date that a homelessness application with all the relevant supporting documentation was made to the Council.
- 21.3 Homeless applicants will be expected to actively seek a property via the Kent Homechoice Scheme and the Council may place bids on behalf of the applicant. The Council may seek to find and directly nominate to a suitable property in order to discharge its housing duty.

Part 5 – Allocations

22 The Bidding Process

- 22.1 Kent Homechoice (Choice Based Letting Scheme) is the mechanism the Council uses to enable applicants to bid on housing within the borough. Kent Homechoice is a web based scheme on which landlords advertise vacant properties. Kent Homechoice is a partnership between the 13 Local Housing Authorities in Kent and over 30 housing association landlords. Upon acceptance to the register, applicants will be sent details of their application number, which band they have been placed in, and details of the user guide for the website.
- 22.2 Applicants should familiarise themselves with the website as soon as they are able to.
- 22.3 Properties are advertised daily and all applicants are allowed to bid on up to three adverts while the bidding is open. Applicants should place bids on as many properties as they are able to that meet their requirements.

- 22.4 Applicants will be expected to actively seek a property via the Kent Homechoice Scheme and the Council may place bids on behalf of the applicant. If an applicant does not bid on any property in a four week period, the Council may suspend their application. The applicant will be contacted within 7 days and asked to explain the reason for not bidding. If the applicant fails to respond within 14 days their application will be removed. If the reason for non-bidding relates to their inability to use the Kent Homechoice system the Council will provide assistance to the applicant and the application can be reinstated by the Senior Homechoice Officer without any penalty. Alternative forms of bidding are available, such as by telephone or text messaging.
- 22.5 Applicants are able to see on Kent Homechoice whether they have been successful in bidding on a property, and if not, where on the shortlist they have been placed. Applicants within the same band will be prioritised strictly in the order of the date when a valid application was received, i.e. the date that the completed application and all required supporting information was received by the Council. The longer someone has been in housing need, the more likely they are to be successful.

23 Adverts

- 23.1 All adverts placed on the Kent Homechoice website are intended to be an accurate description of the property and include any alterations that have been made to assist independent living. Adverts are placed by the landlord and are not the responsibility of the Council. If an advert does not accurately reflect the property this should be drawn to the attention of the landlord. Applicants who are unhappy with the standard of the advert are advised to complain to the relevant landlord. Where necessary, e.g. persistently poor adverts whether notified by applicants or staff to the Homechoice and Strategy Manager will be referred to the Kent Homechoice Manager for further action to be taken.

24 The Quota

- 24.1 The Council will set a quota to allocate the percentage of properties for each band. This quota will be set at the beginning of every financial year for the following year.
- 24.2 The quota will be reviewed on a quarterly basis to ensure that best use of the housing stock is maintained. This review will be undertaken by the Homechoice and Strategy Manager. Any recommendation to change the quota must be approved by the Head of Housing and Community Services and the Chairman or in their absence the Vice Chairman of the Community, Housing and Environment Committee.
- 24.3 Properties which have been adapted to suit those with specific needs, such as those with flush floor showers, disabled access or stair lift etc will be advertised to the Health Assistance Band (Band B) first.
- 24.4 Properties that are subject to age restrictions (e.g. sheltered housing) or specific planning conditions such as Local Needs Housing will be advertised to all bands.

25 Direct Allocations

- 25.1 The intention of the Council and its Housing Partners is that all vacancies are advertised and let through Kent Homechoice. However, there are occasions when it is not practical to do so. For example, when the Council is ending its main Housing Duty to secure accommodation for a Homeless applicant. Alternatively, some properties may not attract any bids and to minimise the number of empty properties in the borough the Council will match an applicant to suitable property without the applicant necessarily bidding on the vacancy.
- 25.2 In the case where no bids have been received on a vacancy that was advertised to a specific Band, the advert will be extended and opened to all bands. In the event that no bids are received from any applicant the landlord can request a nomination from the Council which will constitute a direct allocation. These offers will be a suitable offer of accommodation and the usual penalties for refusal will apply.
- 25.3 A direct offer of accommodation can be a property that is either subsidised rent or private sector. The Council must make best use of whatever stock is available in the Borough. This may result in an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector.
- 25.4 The Council may agree with a landlord that certain properties in specific locations are more difficult to let. With the prior agreement of both parties these properties may be advertised to all Bands in the first instance. In certain cases, the Council may negotiate a reciprocal letting arrangement with another local authority, where one authority provides a vacant property on the basis that the receiving authority will provide one of their vacancies to the other authority at a later time.

26 Nominations

- 26.1 The Council will nominate applicants to a property in accordance with the Allocation Scheme. The Council acknowledges that some housing providers retain their own allocation policy. There may be circumstances where the Council's nomination is declined by the housing provider. In those circumstances the applicant will be referred to the relevant housing provider by the Council to enable them to challenge the decision made by the housing provider, if the applicant wants to do so.
- 26.2 Where a successful nomination is made the housing provider will attempt to contact the applicant. If the applicant does not respond to the housing provider within 7 days of the initial contact the nomination will be deemed to be refused and paragraph 29.2 will be applied.

27 Ineligibility for an offer

- 27.1 At the point of nomination, some applicants may be ineligible for an offer of accommodation. The Council reserves the right to determine an applicant ineligible for an offer of accommodation if it considers the applicant has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make them unsuitable as a tenant. The Council will contact the applicant to inform them of decisions made under this section. The reasons for determining an applicant ineligible for an offer may include:
- 27.2 Previous or current rent arrears equivalent to a minimum of 8 weeks rent and where the applicant is unable to demonstrate a repayment agreement is in place

and has been maintained for a reasonable period; the period to be determined on a case by case basis by the Homechoice and Strategy Manager. These include arrears gained from either private or social tenancies, or where the applicant owes the Council a debt.

- 27.3 A history of anti-social behaviour or has wilfully damaged a previous rented accommodation.
- 27.4 Applicants found ineligible under section 27.2 and 27.3 will be suspended for 6 months. The application will be reviewed and reassessed after this time and a further suspension may be applied. If after a further 6 month suspension period an applicant is still found to be ineligible, they will be removed from the register. An applicant's priority date will be amended to the date on which they become eligible for an offer of accommodation.
- 27.5 Inability to verify applicant information due to the failure or omission of an applicant who has not provided the relevant information.
- 27.6 An applicant may be asked to provide additional or updated information in order to verify their application at the point of nomination. If an applicant fails to respond to this request within 28 days their application will be considered incomplete and removed.
- 27.7 A change in the applicant's circumstances not previously notified to the Council that has a material change on their housing circumstances.
- 27.8 An applicant is able to request a review of the Council's decision that they are ineligible for an offer by writing to the Senior Homechoice Officer (see Appendix B).

28 Suitability

- 28.1 Will apply in the case of direct offers of accommodation, or where an applicant refuses an offer.
- 28.2 Suitability of accommodation will be determined by the following factors:
- Bedroom standard
 - HHSRS assessment
 - Affordability
 - Accessibility for those with mobility issues
- 28.3 Location will not ordinarily be a factor in suitability unless there are specific concerns relating to an area. In these cases, the Senior Homechoice Officer will decide if the offer was suitable or not. The Council will follow the relevant Code of Guidance (issued by the government) and case-law to determine the relevant factors to be considered in determining suitability.
- 28.4 An applicant is able to request a review of the Council's decision that an offer was suitable by writing to the Homechoice and Strategy Manager (see Appendix B).

29 Refusals

- 29.1 Refusals on the grounds of suitability will be assessed by the Senior Homechoice Officer based upon the suitability section (Section 28) of this document.

29.2 Applicants who refuse a property will have their priority date set to the date on which they refused the offer of accommodation, effectively reducing their priority within the band.

29.3 An applicant is able to request a review of the Council's decision to refuse an application by writing to the Homechoice and Strategy Manager (see Appendix B).

30 Applicants in Prison

30.1 If an applicant is due to be released from prison imminently and confirmation has been received from the Prison Service or Community Rehabilitation Company, an applicant may be considered as having a Housing Need. The normal local connection criteria would still apply. Where an applicant who is in prison does not meet the local connection criteria set out in Section 10 they will be unable to join the register and will be referred to the area in which they had a local connection prior to their sentence.

30.2 Applicants who have served a period in custody at a prison located in Maidstone, or at approved premises will not meet the local connection criteria on that basis alone.

31 High risk Offenders

31.1 The housing of high risk offenders will be carried out as part of a multi-agency arrangement with the Police, Probation, Social Services and other appropriate agencies. An area or type of property acceptable to the Council will be agreed in partnership with the agencies involved. High risk offenders will be offered limited choice through Kent Homechoice. Where there are urgent issues, the Homechoice and Strategy Manager may consider a direct offer, taking into account all relevant matters concerning the applicant.

32 National Witness Mobility Scheme (NWMS)

32.1 The NWMS is funded and managed by the Office of Criminal Justice Reform in the Home Office and works with police forces and housing authorities to assist with the re-housing of seriously intimidated witnesses.

32.2 The scheme enables witnesses to relocate outside their area to a place of safety.

32.3 NWMS work with Maidstone Council. The Council will investigate whether it has a duty to assist with accommodation because the applicant is threatened with homelessness and it is not reasonable for them to return.

32.4 The applicant will need to complete a housing register form and the Senior Homechoice Officer will consider the appropriate priority. Due to the high demand for subsidised housing in the borough the Council will accept up to 2 nominations per financial year from the NWMS under this voluntary scheme.

33 Other Accommodation

33.1 There are a number of supported housing projects in Maidstone that are suitable for people with support needs. These include supported housing for:

- Young people
- People with mental health needs
- People with substance misuse needs
- People with other vulnerabilities

- People who are homeless
- Offenders
- People who require assisted housing
- Almshouses

- 33.2 The Council has nomination rights to certain schemes managed by housing associations or other agencies. Some of the schemes provide long-term accommodation whereas others assume that there will be a requirement for the resident to move on either after a certain period or when they are capable of living independently.
- 33.3 Supported housing projects are often let on a short to medium term basis. Anyone in the last six months of their stay (subject to paragraph 33.4) in supported accommodation will be defined as having a housing need but must still fulfil the local connection criteria. Applicants in supported accommodation for more than 2 years will fulfil local connection criteria by virtue of residency.
- 33.4 When the supported housing provider considers that the applicant is capable of sustaining a tenancy in general needs housing (with appropriate support) within the next 6 months, the applicant will be deemed as having a housing need. The applicant will need to provide evidence from their supported housing provider.

34 Selection criteria and priorities for supported housing

- 34.1 Applicants who may require supported accommodation or support to be provided to sustain their tenancy will be referred to the relevant agency providing that support.
- 34.2 All applicants are assessed according to their needs and support requirements at the time of the referral, together with any potential risk they may present to themselves and others.
- 34.3 The assessment is made to determine the most appropriate type of accommodation for the applicant, the level and type of support and respective priority compared to other applicants.
- 34.4 Where a social or support service is provided in conjunction with the accommodation, only applicants who are considered to require and benefit from that service will be considered for that accommodation. Examples of this type of accommodation would include extra care housing for older people, housing designated for special needs such as young people, people with mental health problems, or those known to be sleeping rough or who have no housing whatsoever.
- 34.5 Some general needs accommodation will be allocated to those in need of floating support. Allocation to such properties will be agreed in partnership with the housing association concerned and the support provider via the Single Assessment Protocol process. Such applicants may be nominated to that accommodation regardless of their position under the Allocation Scheme.

35 Processing applications from older people

- 35.1 Some accommodation has criteria defined by age which will be in the property advert. Applicants over the age of 60 will be considered for sheltered accommodation if assessed suitable by the housing provider. Some housing providers will accept applicants aged 50 plus. Applicants can also bid for designated sheltered accommodation through Kent Homechoice. They may also be referred by relatives, social workers or GPs, or the Council's medical advisor may recommend

sheltered accommodation. If contact is made by a third party the applicant will need to be contacted and asked to complete an application form.

- 35.2 Once a bid is placed through Kent Homechoice, the visiting officer from the housing provider recommends whether the applicant is suitable for sheltered accommodation or whether extra care is thought to be appropriate. Those who appear to need a higher level of support and/or care may be referred to adult services. A recommendation for extra care will also be dealt with through the housing register. Adult services may make a referral direct to the Council.

36 Adapted Properties

- 36.1 Where accommodation has been designed or adapted to provide facilities which are intended specifically for use by a disabled person, only applicants whose household includes a person who is considered to require those facilities will be able to bid for that accommodation. These properties will be advertised to applicants in the Health Assistance band (Band B). This might include a wheelchair accessible property or a property which has been substantially adapted.
- 36.2 In the event that there are no suitable applicants bidding on the property the Council may consider a direct allocation to an applicant requiring the facilities to make the best use of the adaptations. In the event that there is no suitable applicant in any of the Bands, the property may be re-advertised to allow applicants to bid for the property who do not require the adaptations.

37 Local Lettings Policies

- 37.1 Local lettings plans are lettings policies which form part of the housing nomination process. They apply to a limited part of the housing stock where the Council has nomination rights and will be determined by site and when the properties are released for occupation. In consultation with relevant Housing providers, the Council may adopt a local letting policy. This is to achieve a balanced community on a new development or to tackle issues in an existing locality where there are management problems and the properties have become less desirable. The Council has referred to the principles agreed within the Kent Housing Group (Creating Successful Communities in Kent and Medway protocol) when drafting local lettings plans.
- 37.2 With the exception of paragraph 37.5, local lettings plans normally apply to the initial allocation on new developments. Where a local lettings plan is agreed for an established development the Council and relevant landlord may monitor the impact of the lettings plan to ensure it meets the stated aims of the plan.
- 37.3 The Council maintains a standard local lettings plan which will form the basis of all local lettings plans to assist developers, landlords and other interested parties in drafting the planning contribution agreement.
- 37.4 In order for the Council to meet the aims and priorities as stated at the start of this document, the Allocation Scheme takes priority over any agreed local lettings plan.
- 37.5 Where accommodation is subject to a planning agreement or other restrictions, only applicants who can meet the terms of the agreement or restriction will be allocated accommodation. This may be the case for housing in some rural areas which is intended for occupation by local people. The Council may also consider direct offers for properties subject to a local lettings plan or planning agreements.

38 Decants (urgently moving existing housing association tenants)

- 38.1 Decants apply to social housing tenants only. Where single properties are decanted, e.g. to undertake extensive planned or emergency repairs (where the tenants are required to be moved to temporary accommodation), the landlord will identify temporary accommodation from within their own stock and this will be allocated outside of the Kent Homechoice scheme. The tenant will return to their home following completion of the repairs.
- 38.2 Where large-scale redevelopment proposals require tenants to leave their homes whilst the properties or a specified area is redeveloped, the relevant landlord is required to consult with the Homechoice and Strategy Manager so that the approach can be agreed prior to the redevelopment scheme being confirmed. An appropriate Local Lettings Plan will be drafted that meets the requirements of the landlord, seeks to minimise the impact on the overall availability of vacant homes and on tenants, and where appropriate enables existing tenants to return to the same area.

39 Management Moves

- 39.1 Management moves will be the responsibility of the housing providers to operate and will not form part of the Allocations Scheme. Management Moves are intended to operate in exceptional circumstances where rapid housing to alternative accommodation is required within the landlord's stock, for example where the property has dangerous structural defect.
- 39.2 The landlord is required to notify the Council when such a move has been made, the reason and details of the properties concerned.

Glossary

Children

Children are defined as those aged under 18 for whom the applicant is legally responsible, or has proven shared legal responsibility. An adult child for the purposes of local connection would be considered immediate family.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is defined as violence from an associated person, which includes partner, siblings, and parents. The violence may include an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional.

Where a case of Domestic Abuse has been established and no other options are available/appropriate, including the Council's Sanctuary Scheme, the applicant will be placed into the relevant Band according to their characteristics.

Family

For the purposes of this Allocation Scheme, family will mean immediate family. This will include siblings, parents and children.

Hate Crimes

Hate crimes can be defined as violence/harassment based on an individuals' race, ethnicity, disability, gender or sexual orientation. The harassment may involve physical or verbal intimidation.

Where a case of hate crime has been established and no other options are available or appropriate, then a managed move may be agreed with a housing provider.

HHSRS

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System was established by the Housing Act 2004. It provides for the assessment of 29 health and safety hazards found in housing and a method by which they are rated to identify those hazards that present the greatest risk to occupiers.

Crime and Disorder

Where an applicant is the victim of a serious incident of crime or disorder in their home, the Council's Community Safety Unit will work with them to enable them to stay in their home, if that is the most appropriate option.

Social Housing Tenant

A social housing tenant is someone who rents a property from a local council or housing provider.

No Fixed Abode

Not having a fixed geographical location as a residence.

Appendix A

Documents required from the applicant to be accepted on to the housing register or upon consideration of an allocation of accommodation

Eligibility

1. EEA Nationals, but not UK citizens

Valid passport for each household member
 Evidence of at least one year's completed employment in the UK prior to May 2011
 Evidence of any employment since May 2011, for example a wage slip or P60
 Any other evidence that proves eligibility for subsidised housing

2. Non-EEA Nationals

Valid passport for each household member
 Proof of indefinite leave to remain
 Any other evidence that proves eligibility for subsidised housing.

Additional Information

1. Proof of identity

For each named applicant photographic identification, for example, a valid passport or photo driving licence, or similar document and your national insurance number.

2. Proof of income

Salary/wage slips for the past two months
 Proof of any income-related benefits received, for example, income support
 Statements from all bank, building society and savings accounts for the past two months

3. Proof of your address/tenure

Tenancy agreement if there is a tenancy, if not recently addressed correspondence.

4. If you have children living with you

Birth certificate for each child, and
 Proof of receipt of child benefit

5. If you have access to children that do not live with you full time

Residence Order if available, or letter from the child's full time carer detailing the access arrangements, including the frequency of visits, the length of time they have been in place, and any future arrangements.

6. If you own, or have ever owned, a property

Current mortgage statement and recent valuation of the property.
Confirmation of the amount received from the sale or transfer of the property.

7. Medical Information

Documentation provided from an NHS medical professional, or an equivalent external agency.

8. Voluntary, charitable work or training

A letter or email from an employee of the group/organisation to confirm that you volunteer or carry out charitable work for a minimum of 10 hours a week and have done so on a consistent basis for at least 6 months.

A letter or email from the college, university or training organisation providing the details of the course being undertaken including the start and finish dates of the course.

9. Right to Move

A contract of employment.
A formal offer/acceptance of employment letter.
Proof of current address.

Appendix B - Reviews

Section	Subject of Review Request	Officer Conducting the Review	Time Limit	Response Time
3	Eligibility for Allocation for Housing	Senior Homechoice Officer	28 days from decision	56 days from request
5	Access to Personal Information	Homechoice and Strategy Manager	Not applicable	Within 40 days
9	Housing Need	Senior Homechoice Officer	14 days from decision	56 days from request
10	Local Connection	Senior Homechoice Officer	14 days from decision	56 days from request
11	Financial Circumstances	Senior Homechoice Officer	14 days from decision	56 days from request
15	Bedroom Allocation – Extra bedroom	Homechoice and Strategy Manager	14 days from decision	56 days from request
16	Being on the Register	Senior Homechoice Officer	14 days from decision	56 days from request
18	Community Contribution Band	Senior Homechoice Officer	14 days from decision	56 days from request
27	Ineligibility for an offer	Senior Homechoice Officer	14 days from decision	56 days from request
28	Suitability	Homechoice and Strategy Manager	14 days from decision	56 days from request
29	Refusals	Homechoice and Strategy Manager	14 days from decision	56 days from request
37	Local Lettings Policies	Homechoice and Strategy Manager	14 days from decision	56 days from request