

Maidstone Council's Strategic Plan 2015-2020





I am writing this foreword as an update to our strategic plan during a period of severe financial constraints as we continue to focus on delivering a full range of services with all funding from central government removed. Despite this challenge the council remains ambitious for this year and has identified three areas for action:

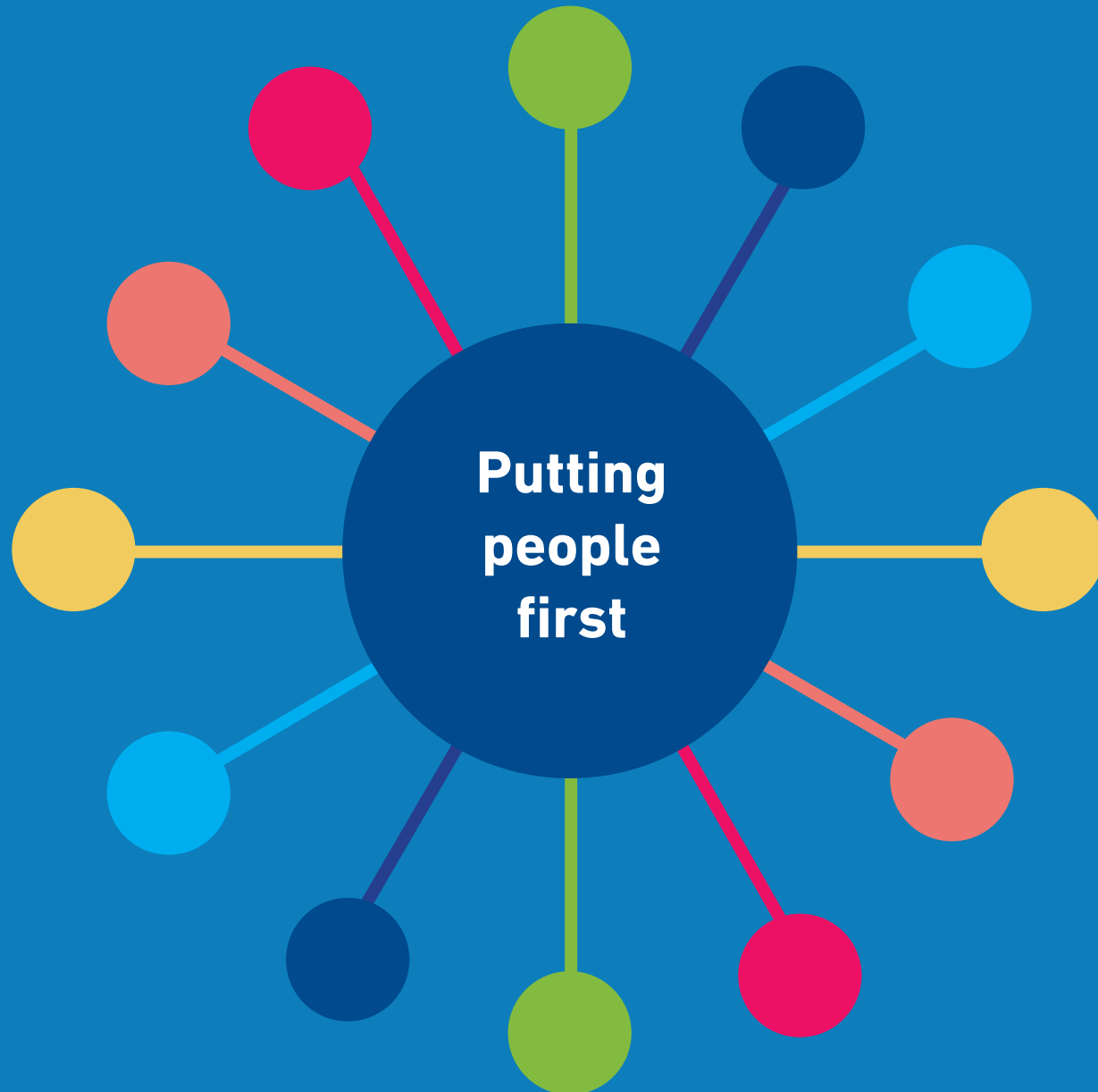
- A home for everyone
- A clean and safe environment and;
- Regenerating the town centre

As a council our mission is to put people first. The three areas of focus will see action to ensure we have an attractive borough that respects our heritage and environment. This year we will deliver a new housing and regeneration strategy which will focus on providing much needed sustainable housing for our residents across the borough and further investment in Maidstone town centre. The importance of maintaining clarity of communication between us and all our stakeholders cannot be over emphasised if we are going to achieve our priorities and ensure we are all working towards a common goal. I want our residents to be proud of where they live, our businesses to be enabled to thrive and our visitors to enjoy our offer to the extent that they would come back to Maidstone over and over again.

Fran Wilson
Leader of the Council



Our Mission



Our Vision

That our residents live in decent homes, enjoy good health and a pleasant environment, with a successful economy that is supported by reliable transport networks.



Providing a Clean and Safe Environment

Current

Maidstone Council has demonstrated its commitment to deliver cost effective and sustainable waste and recycling services, as a result our recycling rate has improved significantly. Maidstone does not experience high levels of crime. We have with our community Safety Partnership agreed that reducing anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, reoffending and improving road safety are our priorities up until 2018. During the first year of the Strategic Plan the Council has introduced a street cleansing service designed to meet the current and future needs of the Borough.

We mean:

People feel safe in the Borough and they live in an attractive and clean environment.

We will:

- Work with our partners to improve all areas of the public realm
- Deliver the waste and recycling strategy
- Deliver an efficient and effective street cleansing service
- Deliver the Community Safety Plan 2017-18
- Deliver the Air Quality Action Plan

Proposed

Maidstone Borough Council is committed to creating an attractive environment which is safe, well maintained and clean. Our borough does not experience high levels of crime and through the Community Safety Partnership, we aim to protect the most vulnerable people in our community.

Our recycling levels have reached 51%. Maidstone has areas of poor air quality due to high concentrations of nitrogen dioxide associated with road traffic and has designated the urban area of the borough as an Air Quality Management Zone.

We want:

People to feel safe in the borough and experience an attractive, clean and safe environment.

We will commit to:

- Investing to improve street infrastructure and the efficiency of cleansing services in accordance with our medium term financial strategy
- Delivering the Waste and Recycling Strategy
- Delivering the Community Safety Plan 2017-18
- Delivering the Low Emissions Strategy



Encouraging Good Health and Wellbeing

Current

Deprivation in the borough is lower than average, however 14.1% (4,100) of children (under 16 years old) in Maidstone live in poverty. There is a difference in life expectancy of men and women; women are expected to live 3 years longer than men and there is a 13 year gap between the ward with the highest life expectancy and the one with the lowest life expectancy

We mean:

- Addressing the social determinants of health through our role in services like Housing, Environmental health and Community Development and our provider role in terms of leisure activities
- Improved health outcomes for residents, reduced health inequality

We Will:

- Deliver our Housing Strategy
- Deliver our Health and Wellbeing Action Plan

Proposed

Deprivation in the borough is lower than average, however 15.2% (4,455) of children (under 16 years old) in Maidstone live in poverty. There is a difference in life expectancy of men and women; women are expected to live 3 years longer than men and there is a 11 year gap between the ward with the highest life expectancy and the one with the lowest life expectancy

We want:

- To address the social determinants of health through our role in services like Housing, Environmental Health and Community Development and our provider role in terms of leisure activities
- To improve health outcomes for residents, reduced health inequality

We will commit to:

- Delivering our Housing Strategy
- Delivering our Health and Wellbeing Action Plan
- Adopting and delivering our Parks and Open spaces 10 year strategic plan



Respecting the Character and Heritage of our Borough

Current

Maidstone is the county town of Kent. In terms of its geography it is largely rural and the countryside offers high quality landscape and bio-diversity. Approximately 50% of the borough's population lives in a parished area. We are focussed on achieving economic prosperity, whilst at the same time protecting the environment and landscape that makes the borough of Maidstone a great place to live work and visit

We mean:

- Thriving and resilient urban and rural communities
- Listening to our communities
- Respecting our heritage and natural environment
- Devolving services where we can and working with Kent County Council to do the same

We will:

- Deliver and honour our Parish Charter
- Deliver the Communication and Engagement Action Plan
- Work with our parishes and Communities on the design of their communities

Proposed

Maidstone is a largely rural borough with high quality landscapes, countryside and urban green spaces and associated rich bio-diversity. Our borough has many attractive and protected buildings and we want these to remain in place for future generations. Our focus on economic prosperity embraces the need to protect and enhance these features so that the borough remains a great place to live, work and visit.

We want:

- Thriving and resilient urban and rural communities
- To continue to listen to our communities
- To continue to respect our heritage and natural environment
- To continue to devolve services where we can and working with Kent County Council to do the same

We will commit to:

- Delivering the Local Plan
- Delivering the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy
- Adopting and delivering our Parks and Open Spaces 10 year strategic plan
- Delivering and honouring our Parish Charter
- Working with our Parishes and Communities on the design of their neighbourhoods



Ensuring there are good leisure and cultural attractions

Current

There is always something to see or do in Maidstone with the river, two museums and a theatre in the town centre, four green flag parks, a well used leisure centre, a castle and various markets and a variety of festivals and events held across the borough and throughout the year

We mean:

Maidstone has leisure and cultural offers which attract visitors and meet the needs of our residents.

We will:

- Deliver the Destination Management Plan with a shared statement of intent to manage, develop and promote our borough
- Deliver the Festival and Events Strategy
- Adopt and deliver the Museum 20 year plan
- Deliver the programme of projects for a sustainable future for Mote Park

Proposed

There is always something to see or do in our borough reflecting the wide variety of venues, facilities and good quality public spaces. This not only enhances quality of life for Maidstone residents but also contributes significantly to the local economy. Our population is increasing at the highest rate in Kent. We are also growing as a destination for visitors and so our leisure and culture offer has continued importance for those living in and visiting the borough.

We want:

Maidstone to have a leisure and cultural offer which attracts visitors and meets the needs of our residents.

We will commit to:

- Delivering the Commercialisation Strategy which refers to a sustainable future for our parks
- Delivering the Destination Management Plan
- Delivering the Festival and Events Strategy
- Adopting and delivering the Museum's 20 year plan
- Adopting and delivering the Parks and Open Spaces 10 year Strategic Plan



Regenerating the Town Centre

Current

Maidstone has had a historically thriving town centre, however we need to ensure that we keep pace with the changing economic environment and continue to meet the demands of business and consumers. Investment in Maidstone town centre is needed if it is to continue to be a popular place for leisure, to live, shop and work

We mean:

Ensuring we have a thriving and attractive town centre that is fit for the future.

We will:

- Deliver the Town centre Development Plan
- Deliver the Destination Management Plan

Proposed

Maidstone has a thriving town centre benefitting from its role as the county town and has a diverse mix of residential, business, retail, cultural uses and public services. The changing economic environment has created challenges and the need for further investment in the town centre to meet the expectations of residents, businesses and visitors.

We want:

To ensure we have a thriving and attractive town centre that values our heritage and is fit for the future.

We will commit to:

- Delivering the Local Plan
- Delivering the Housing and Regeneration Strategy
- Delivering the Destination Management Plan



Securing Improvements to the Transport Infrastructure for our borough

Current

Maidstone is strategically situated between London and the channel ports and is serviced by two motorway networks, the M20 and the M2, with rail connections to central London. With regard to travelling in and around the borough by car, congestion is an issue particularly at peak times in the town centre. The bus transport network serving Maidstone town is relatively strong whilst rural transport presents distinct challenges

We mean:

A transport network that meets the needs of residents and businesses.

We will:

- Deliver an Integrated Transport Strategy and work with our partners to seek improvements to the transport infrastructure
- Deliver the Local Plan
- Introduce a Community Infrastructure Levy
- Create a transport operators group

Proposed

Maidstone is strategically situated between London and the channel ports and is serviced by two motorway networks, the M20 and the M2, with rail connections to central London. We do however recognise that travelling in and around the borough by car during peak periods can be difficult due to congestion. The bus transport network serving Maidstone town is relatively strong whilst rural transport presents distinct challenges

We want:

A sustainable transport network that meets the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.

We will commit to:

- Delivering the Integrated Transport Strategy
- Delivering the Walking and Cycling Strategy



Promoting a range of employment skills and opportunities across the borough

Current

There were 83,100 people employed in the Maidstone economy in 2015 with a high proportion in the public sector, reflecting the town's status as Kent's County Town and administrative capital. There were 6,735 registered businesses in Maidstone in 2015, equivalent to 42 businesses per 1,000 population, compared to 39 for England and above average rate of self-employment

We mean:

Meeting the skills and employment needs of our residents, supporting and attracting businesses and not becoming a dormitory borough.

We will:

- Deliver our Economic Development Strategy with partners
- Work with businesses and support them to grow and develop
- Build on the success of the Enterprise Hub
- Work with our partners to support those not in education, employment of training (NEET)

Proposed

There were 83,200 people employed in the Maidstone economy in 2015/16 with a high proportion in the public sector, reflecting the town's status as Kent's County Town and administrative capital. There were 7,080 registered businesses in Maidstone in 2016, equivalent to 43 businesses per 1,000 population, compared to 39 for England and above average rate of self-employment

We want:

To meet the skills needs of our residents and employers, supporting existing businesses and attracting new ones.

We will commit to:

- Delivering our Economic Development Strategy
- Working with businesses to support them to grow and develop



A Home for Everyone

Current

The supply of new affordable housing within the borough has been greater than in neighbouring authorities, although still less than historical levels. 163 new affordable homes were built in the borough in 2014/15.

We mean:

Having enough homes to meet our residents' needs with sufficient homes across a range of tenures.

We will:

- Deliver the Local Plan
- Deliver the Housing Strategy
- Implement the Housing Assistance Strategy
- Deliver the Homelessness Action Plan
- Deliver the affordable housing programme
- Deliver the Temporary Accommodation Strategy

Proposed

The supply of new affordable housing within the borough has been greater than in neighbouring authorities, although still less than historical levels. 139 new affordable homes were built in the borough in 2015/16. 13% of Maidstone households live in socially rented accommodation which is comparable to the rest of Kent.

We want:

To have enough homes to meet our residents' long term needs, to include homes for affordable rent and affordable home ownership. These must be economically sustainable for all our residents.

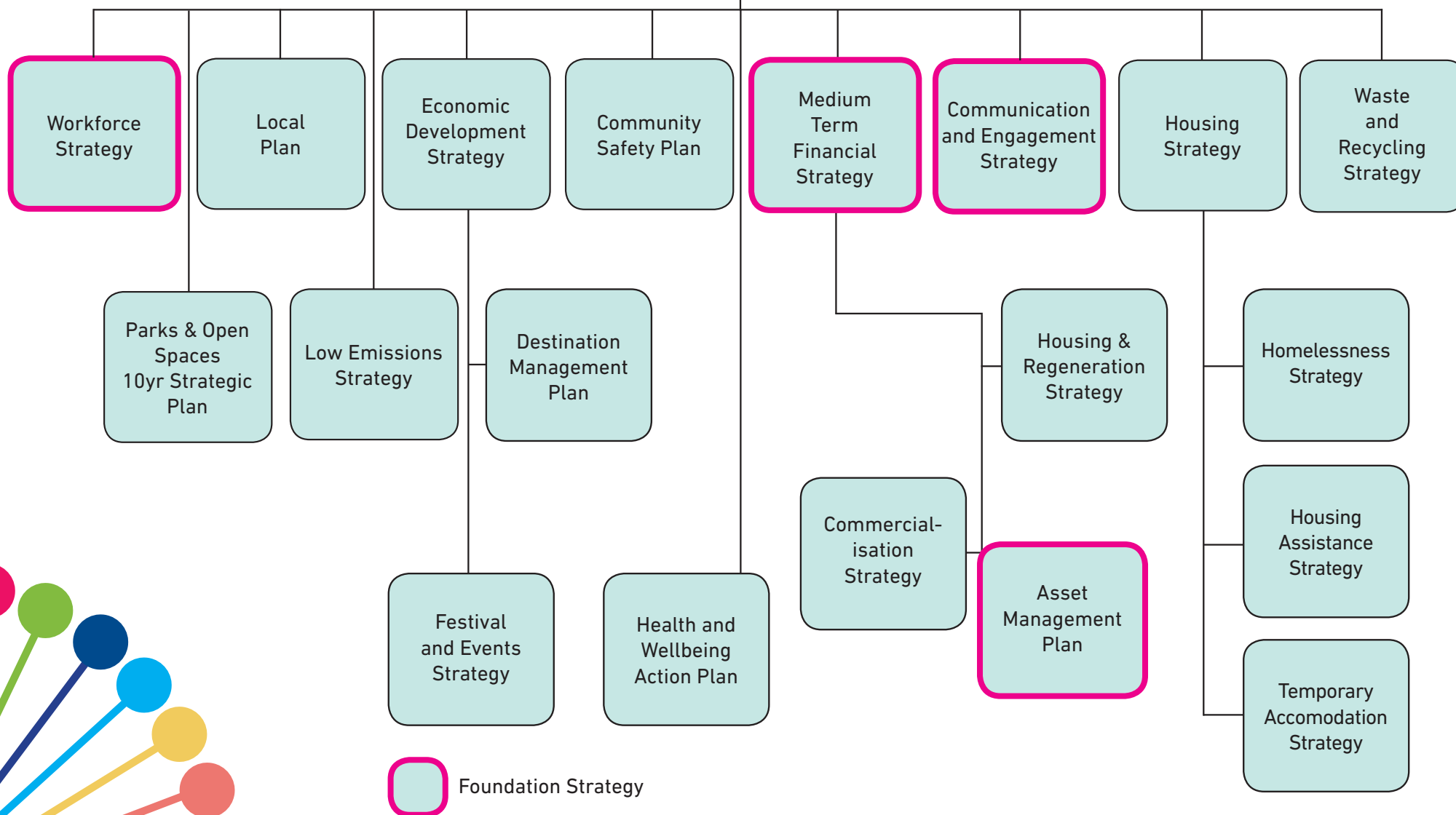
We will commit to:

- Delivering the Local Plan
- Delivering the Housing and Regeneration Strategy
- Delivering the Housing Strategy
- Implementing the Housing Assistance Strategy
- Delivering the Homelessness Action Plan
- Delivering the Affordable Housing Programme
- Delivering the Temporary Accommodation Strategy

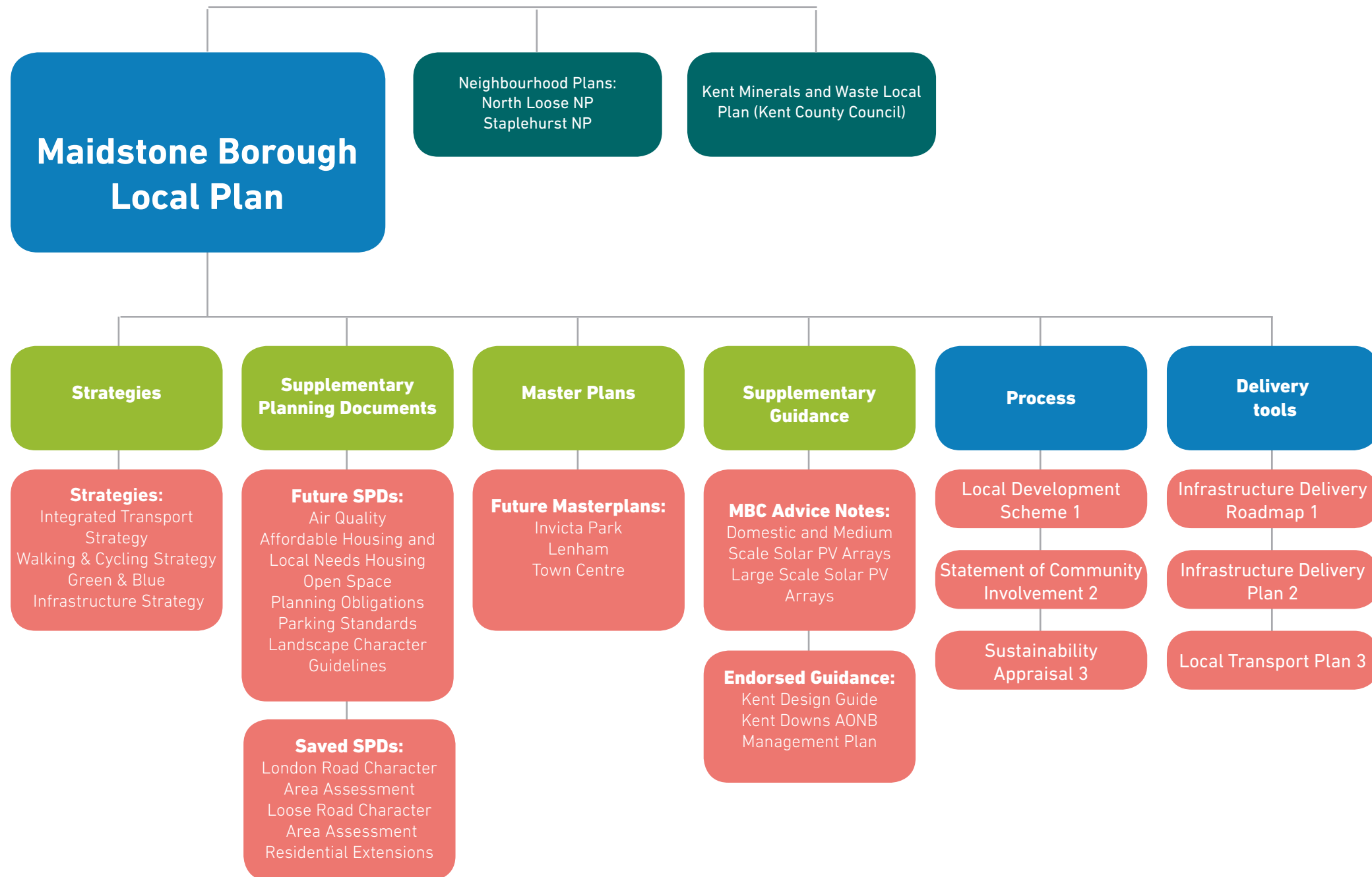


Strategy Map

Strategic Plan 2017 - 2020



Maidstone Local Plan Flow Chart



Our Values

Services

Everything we do impacts on our customers, both internal and external. We will listen to and understand their needs, then take action to provide the right service in a positive and professional manner.



Teamwork

Working together to achieve our objectives and goals in a way that utilises the talents and creativity of everyone in our organisation.



Responsibility

We work in an environment that encourages us to take ownership for our actions. Making the right choices and decisions that lead to a satisfactory outcome for all.



Integrity

We have the courage to act on our convictions to build trust and honesty. We work with our partners and customers to create a feeling of openness and transparency in everything we do.



Value

Taking care and weighing up our options, aiming to get the maximum effect for every penny of public money we spend.

Equality

Valuing our differences and understanding how they can contribute to a better working environment and services that are fair and easy to access

