

### Overview:

- County Town and Business Capital of Kent.
- Strategically located for European and London markets.
- Four motorway junctions on two motorways.
- Three central train stations, connect to London, Ashford, Tonbridge and Medway.
- Good housing
- Good schools and Further Education.
- Quality retail and leisure offer.
- Outstanding green space and open countryside.
- Maidstone has a Business Improvement District in shopping area with a surcharge on retailers for cleaning and events. Population
- Population increase 44,800 people = 13,200 jobs 19,669 homes

### Economic Vision:

By 2030 Maidstone will excel as the 'Business Capital of Kent' defined by a strong entrepreneurial spirit, unrivalled urban-rural economic offer with opportunities for all of our communities.

### Five strategic priorities

- **Open for business:** Maximising our economic role at the heart of Kent and a strong public sector base to create a positive and entrepreneurial environment in which businesses can grow and thrive
- **Greener more productive economy:** Diversifying our economic base and boosting productivity by growing high value activity, including existing strengths in life sciences and new opportunities for clean growth.
- **A thriving rural economy:** Realising the potential of our rural assets (such as sector strengths in viticulture and tourism) and overcoming barriers to growth through enhanced infrastructure and connectivity.
- **Inclusive growth:** Taking an inclusive approach to growth to ensure that all of our communities can benefit from economic success and prosperity.
- **Destination Maidstone:** Re-imagining Maidstone's town centre as a vibrant, mixed-use destination with a welcoming economy befitting a modern county town.

### Local Plan – key features

- Plan for long term sustainable growth.
- Coordinated delivery of new homes & jobs to support population growth.
- Important to provide sufficient employment sites to ensure sustainable economic growth of the borough.

### Maidstone Town Centre

### Approach:

Lift the tone of the town centre to make it a thriving place for projects and events which is characterised by MBC putting on event's and so community groups not charged. Mote Park events are charged with the money raised used to support community groups.

Aim:

Empasis on re-invigorating the town centre through events and activities as well as supporting rural communities.

Funding: UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Project A - Building Pride in Place through promotion of the Town Centre and Events.

Actions taken:

- Creative Community Fund
- Festive trail event
- Literature Festival
- Digital and Physical Trail
- Events expertise to develop bespoke events
- Event advertisement
- Borough Insight
- Promotional video for events and businesses

For 24/25:

- Launch of digital and physical sculpture trail in the Town Centre
- Creative Community Fund
- Borough Insight
- Arts Carnival
- Partner for Shaun the Sheep trail

Project B- A Safe and Attractive Town Centre achieved through Greening and Lighting

Actions taken:

- Feasibility study and agreement of priorities for greening and lighting

For 24/25:

- Updating MBC's existing lighting infrastructure
- Implementing a digital management system to improve management and maintenance of MBC's lighting infrastructure.
- Projects to enhance safety.
- Projects to elevate the quality of the night time experience with a focus on heritage assets
- Green Pockets in four key areas:
  - Jubilee Square
  - Remembrance Square
  - Gabriel's Hill - Week Street junctions with Brewer Street,
  - St Faiths Street and Union Street

Project C - A Community Arts Hub & Maker Space

Action taken:

- Feasibility Study and Business Case

For 24/25:

- Creative Maker Space created in Granada House

### Project D - Links from the Town Centre to Lockmeadow

For 24/25:

- Callisthenic Equipment installed by Lockmeadow – linked to project B

### **Rural areas within the borough**

Aim:

Supporting and Improving community infrastructure

Funding: Rural Prosperity Fund

Actions Taken:

- Just over 100k in Awards made
- Staplehurst Free Church
- Teston Parish Council
- Hollingbourne Parish Council
- Boxley Parish Council

For 24/25:

- Over 400K in Awards to:
- The Harrow Pub
- Headcorn Village Hall
- Detling Village Hall
- Chart Sutton PC
- Bearsted District Guide Association
- Langley Village Hall
- Marden Memorial Hall
- Sutton Valence Village Hall

### **Housing**

1,000 Affordable Homes Programme

- MBC Housing with Golding Homes
- 10 year plan to build 1000 homes directly as a £200m investment
- Housing pressures rising
- Stock transfer Council Approved Jan 2022, 10-year project
- Social, Affordable & Market Rent
- Homes England & DLUHC grants
- Not competing with housebuilders or RPs
- Unlocking “market-failure” town centre sites
- All for rent in different guises so will not compete with house owners or housing associations Aims to unlock market failure sites with examples being:
  - Royal Mail/KCC Cantium House site 217 homes proposed
  - Springfield site 107 homes
  - Small brownfield sites Granville Rd, Bath Store and Len House
  -
- Next steps:
  - Senior & Supported housing

- One Public Estate opportunities – new developments for disabled/elderly via joint ventures
- Mixed use schemes
- Joint funding bids/opportunity for JV with KCC on downsizing for older people
- Leveraging CIL & S106: sites for new uses in the town centre and cooperation with Kent County Council to ensure KCC 106 CIL money is spent

## **Businesses Statistics**

- 8,000 VAT or PAYE businesses.
- 85.7%, employing between 0 and 9 people.
- Top 4 sectors Construction, Professional, Scientific and Technical, Transport services, and Business Administrative services.
- Enterprise birth & survival rates above Kent and England.
- Higher levels of self –employed than Kent and England.
- Larger employers include:
  - Maidstone Studios
  - KIMS
  - Marley
  - Burtons
  - Scarab, BG
  - MidKent College
  - KCC
  - NHS Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells Trust

## **Key strategic sites for employment**

- Woodcut Farm (Loc8)
- Former Sygenta Works (Yalding Enterprise Park)
- Lidsing Garden Community
- Heathlands Garden Community
- Town Centre – Maidstone East & Maidstone Riverside

## Examples:

### **Investment in SME: Maidstone Innovation Centre:**

The Centre generates income by offering several membership packages through the provision of flexible work space:

- Office Space from 141 sq ft
- Hot Desk & Co-working Studio
- Conference & Event Space
- Breakout Areas

### **Occupancy**

- All businesses need to meet the requirements of the planning conditions being directly related to the medical sector.
- Coming quarter the centre will exceeds its forecasted occupancy rate of 51% from the original business plan to 67%.
- Currently supports over a total of 52 businesses made up of 32 inhouse businesses & 20 virtual businesses, providing employment for 200 individuals.

2023-24 Success:

- Successfully completed the European Regional Development Fund Project. The Centre will be used as an example of Good Practice.
- Won an award for “Best Architectural Design” at the South East Construction Awards.
- Created an ecosystem as the Hub for MedTech, Life Science and Healthcare.
- Welcomed over 10 new businesses with a 100% retention on current tenants.
- Facilitated over 300 meetings and events. 65% repeat bookings
- Meeting Hub for health care sector.60% of bookings from NHS

Supporting KMEP via Growing Kent Kent and Medway’s Economic Framework’s 5 Ambitions:

- Enable innovative, productive and creative businesses
- Widen opportunities and unlock talent
- Secure resilient infrastructure for planned, sustainable growth
- Place economic opportunity at the centre of community wellbeing and prosperity
- Create diverse, distinctive and vibrant places and Medway’s Life Science and Med Tec sector.

**LOC8 at Junction 8 of the M20** - part of the afternoon site visits included this logistics and warehousing site on a former 450 acre farm site with phase two in planning for delivery.

**Yalding Enterprise Park** - located on the former Syngenta site in the south-west of the borough. A rural area brownfield old chemical works. Phase 1 comprising 20 units including dirty trades and both leasehold and freehold as freehold makes it more attractive to occupiers.

***Information sources: Maidstone Borough Council***