



Parish Newsletter July 2026

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government has confirmed that Maidstone will become part of a new West Kent unitary council alongside Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells from April 2028.

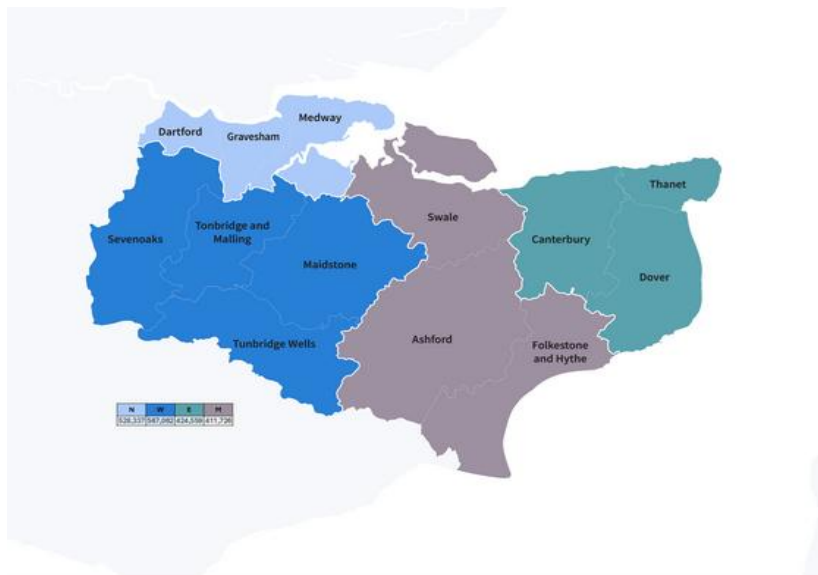
The decision forms part of the biggest change to local government in Kent for 50 years.

The government is replacing Kent County Council, Medway Council and the 12 district, borough and county councils that currently deliver services in the county with four new unitary councils.

Those councils will deliver all of the services in their area, much like Medway Council does today, including education, social services, highways, libraries, emptying your bins, leisure centres and housing services.

Following a government consultation, which attracted around 3,000 responses, the Secretary of State has opted for:

- a unitary council covering the areas currently served by Dartford, Gravesham and Medway in the north
- a unitary council covering the areas currently served by Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells in the west
- a unitary council covering the areas currently served by Swale, Ashford and Folkestone and Hythe in the middle of Kent
- a unitary council covering the areas currently served by Canterbury, Thanet and Dover in the east



For further information and further maps of the new areas please visit [here](#)

Land Transfer to Parishes

In light of local government reorganisation, there has been increased interest in the transfer of assets from the borough council to parish councils. The Council has an asset disposal policy, which was approved by Cabinet in September 2026. This sets out the criteria for disposal of assets.

At the Parish Conference in November 2025 parishes were reminded about the opportunity to seek transfers in the run-up to local government reorganisation. As a result, a number of parishes have approached the Corporate Property team at the Council.

As of July 2026, transfers to three parishes are due to take place. These involve Harrietsham, Coxheath and West Farleigh parish councils. Details of the transfers were reported to the Council's Climate Transition, Corporate and Environmental Services Policy Advisory Committee on Monday 6 July. The transfers are formally made under an authority delegated to the Director of Finance and Resources. However, they were reported to the Committee in the interests of transparency.

Discussions with other parishes are ongoing and it is expected that a further report to Maidstone Borough councillors will be brought forward in due course in relation to these.

If you are interested in discussing a possible land transfer, please contact deborahturner@maidstone.gov.uk.

Planning Committee Reforms

The following summary from the Planning Team outlines the changes to planning committees being brought in by the Government and due to start in November 2026.

The aim of the change is to make decision-making more efficient with committees focusing on more significant, strategic applications, leaving more technical decisions to planning officers. The changes remove call-in powers and automatic referral of applications to committee once a certain number of objections has been received.

The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 (the Act) gives new powers to the Secretary of State to set out which planning functions should be delegated to planning officers for decision and which should go to a planning committee.

These are defined as Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 items, with Schedule 1 items to be determined by planning officers (the items cannot go to the committee) and Schedule 2 to be determined by Planning Officers, unless the nominated Member and Officer consider it needs to go to committee - the nominated Member and Officer are the Planning Chairman and the Head of Planning.

The following is taken from Government information:

Schedule 1 examples include:

- householder development and minor commercial development (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015)
- minor residential development (up to 9 new dwellings (flats or houses) on a site smaller than 0.5 hectares)
- Certificates of Lawful Development

Schedule 2 examples include:

- an application for outline planning permission for a large multi-phase residential development allocated in the local plan
- an application for planning permission for change of use of a community shop in a rural area
- an application for planning permission or listed building consent for changes to a notable listed building in a town centre

Applications in Schedule 2 may only be referred to Planning Committee if the nominated Councillor and officer agree that a proposal raises:

- one or more issue of economic, social or environmental significance to the local area, or
- one or more significant planning matters having regard to the development plan and other material considerations

Further details of what falls into which category etc. can be found at on these [government pages](#)

Committee Size

The Act also gives a new power to the Secretary of State to control the size of planning committees, which must be no more than 13 councilors.

Training

It imposes a new requirement for planning committee members to be trained, and certified, in key elements of planning. Maidstone Borough Council already train planning committee councilors, before they are allowed to sit on the committee, so we await details on what training the Government will require.

Next steps

At the time of writing, we are awaiting the Secretary of State's final sign off of these national changes, but after that happens MBC will need to amend the Council's Constitution to take on board the changes ready to start the new system in November.

MBC has to work out how to implement the changes – we are expecting some guidance to be prepared by the national Planning Advisory Service during July, however it is anticipated much will be left to councils to work out.

The local planning authority has to keep a record of cases the nominated officer and nominated councillor have considered for referral to committee, the outcome of their consideration and the reasons for their decision. This has to be published.

The Government have said they will review how this new system is working by 31 October 2028.

New Landscape Character Assessment

The final version of the Maidstone Borough Landscape Character Assessment Update 2026 is now available to view and can be found at [New Local Plan - MBC Local Plan](#) under the heading Evidence informing the New Local Plan

Consultations and Surveys



Resident Survey 2026.

We want to hear about your day-to-day experience of living here, from your local neighbourhood to the services you use and rely on. ***What matters to you most in your local area?***

Your feedback will help shape future services, priorities and investment across the borough. The survey takes just 9–12 minutes to complete and covers topics including:

- Local communities
- Health and wellbeing
- Parks and green spaces

- Opportunities and skills
- Council services

As a thank you, everyone who completes the survey will receive a 15% discount at Go Ape, Leeds Castle and will be entered into a prize draw to win a range of local prizes.

The consultation closes on 30 August 2026.

Taking part is a quick and easy way to make sure your voice is heard and help shape the future of Maidstone.

[Share your views here](#)

Polling Districts & Places 2026 (Interim Review)

An interim Polling District and Polling Place review is taking place. The consultation on the proposals for change runs Wednesday 8 July to Wednesday 19 August 2026.

The use of technology in a polling station, has enabled more centralised polling places to be created. Electoral registers for more than one polling district/parish to vote in the same place. The tablet assists the polling staff in verifying and recording the issue of ballot papers in a polling station. An elector can be found by searching their name, address or QR code on their poll card.

- A Council's area is divided into polling districts; one or more polling districts can make up a ward.
- A polling place is an area or building within a polling district in which a polling station is situated.

The suitability of polling stations is assessed along with their accessibility, facilities for voters and, in particular, for those with a disability.

How to get involved

Survey - Completed surveys are treated as single responses. All comments received during the consultation period will be considered as part of the review.

[Click here to start the survey](#)

Survey takes 4-8 minutes to complete.

Consultation Closes: 19 August 2026

To find out more on how you can have your say with surveys and consultations please visit [Let's Talk Maidstone](#)

Eco Hub 2026

Join us for workshops, arts and crafts or to speak to our excellent partners to celebrate the wonderful biodiversity our borough has to offer.

Location: Creative Maidstone Community Arts Hub, Gabriel's Hill, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6JR

Dates and times:

Wednesday 12 August	10am-4pm
Thursday 13 August	10am – 4pm
Friday 14 August	1 – 4pm
Saturday 15 August	10am – 4pm
Wednesday 19 August	10am – 4pm
Thursday 20 August	10am – 4pm
Friday 21 August	1 – 4pm

Are you interested in contributing, either as a stallholder or volunteer?

Please email: ClimateAndBiodiversity@Maidstone.gov.uk

A BIG Thank you!

To the kind residents who gave crews water and soft drinks during the recent hot spell,
Your kindness is much appreciated!
During very hot weather, collection times may vary. Keep an eye on our social media channels and website to see if you need to put your bins out the night before for early morning collections.



Shake it Out Update!

We've issued over 35,000 colourful stickers on recycling bins, reminding residents to shake recyclable materials out of plastic bags.

Keeping the materials loose in the recycling bin is important, as it helps the sorting process.

Council giveaway could save over 300,000 litres of water a year

A [council giveaway](#) could save enough water to fill a 25m swimming pool once fully rolled out.

Maidstone Borough Council is expanding its rainwater harvesting giveaway scheme, offering around 1,000 free water butts to residents across the area to help capture and reuse rainwater. When added to the 555 water butts given out earlier this year, the project has the potential to save 315,000 litres of water a year – enough to fill 7,000 bathtubs!

The initiative is aimed at reducing reliance on mains water during dry periods while helping to slow the effects of surface water flooding during periods of heavy rainfall.

The expanded scheme follows the success of a pilot launched last year, which saw over 500 water butts distributed to Maidstone households. After these were snapped up by residents the council has extended its partnership with Wickes Maidstone to provide the additional units free of charge for residents on a [first come first served basis](#).

For households impacted by flooding or facing increasing pressure on water supplies during extended dry spells and hosepipe bans, water butts can provide a simple but effective solution. By collecting rainwater from roofs and guttering, they help maintain gardens and green spaces without using treated drinking water, while also reducing the volume of rainwater entering drains during storms.

Each water butt is manufactured in the UK and has a capacity of 210 litres. They are supplied with a stand and filler kit for easy connection to existing guttering. Residents must be able to provide proof of a Maidstone address to take part. Collection will be from Wickes Maidstone, St Peter's Street, ME16 0SN, and installation is not included.

Before applying, residents are encouraged to check they have suitable outdoor space for a 210-litre water butt and access to guttering from a house, shed or outbuilding.

Alongside the scheme, Maidstone Borough Council is introducing rainwater harvesting measures across its own buildings and sites. The Council is also exploring further opportunities to reduce demand on treated drinking water supplies by identifying alternative non-potable water sources where appropriate, reducing the need to draw on mains water supplies.

Residents can apply for a water butt by completing a [short online application form](#). Those unable to complete the form online can email climateandbiodiversity@maidstone.gov.uk or call 01622602000.



Please share this newsletter with your Councillors.