**Maidstone Town Centre Strategy Development**

**Context**

Maidstone Council is producing a town centre strategy the purpose of which is to establish and provide clarity on the long-term vision for the town centre, complemented by a comprehensive delivery plan to achieve this. This work will be underpinned by a set of core principles which reflect the vision for both the county town at the heart of Kent and a borough with vibrant and prosperous urban and rural communities.

The aim is for the strategy to

* Strengthen the economic base of the town centre
* Bring about the re-invention and renaissance of Maidstone town centre as an exemplar of sustainability and design
* Have a strong focus around heritage, arts, culture, leisure, and the visitor economy including the evening economy
* Create a place where people want to live and feel safe including in the public realm
* Have an equal emphasis upon the town centre as the County Town including as a district/regional destination for those visiting it from within the borough and beyond and its role as a local centre for those who live in the town centre or in the surrounding area.

It will

* Guide regeneration, investment (including directly by MBC) and development
* Guide infrastructure provision
* In the short / medium term enable the provision of support to town centre communities and businesses in continuing to recover from, and respond to, the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and a post-Brexit economy
* Enable proactive management of potential change resulting from the relaxation of planning rules
* Be complemented in the short term by investment of resources via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (around £1m) and Safer Streets Fund (£.56m)

More detail on the background and scope of this work is contained in a report to the Council’s Policy and Resources Committee in March 2022 available via the Council’s web site.

The strategy will be used to

* Complement the current Local Plan (at examination in September 2022) and inform the next plan potentially being developed into a Development Plan Document
* Deliver actions of the Economic Development strategy (adopted 2021) in particular Priority 5 ‘Destination Maidstone Town Centre.
* Inform actions and projects undertaken to achieve the future vision
* Inform future bids for funding including through Levelling Up
* Promote inward investment into the town centre

**Market Engagement**

To achieve this MBC is looking to engage a professional team which will work collaboratively with the council’s project team and assist in producing

* A “masterplan” of what goes where, connectivity within the town centre and of the town centre to surrounding residential areas and transport systems
* Urban design principles for the town centre including for exemplar quality public realm
* An infrastructure plan to include transport and public realm improvements
* Review of current development guidelines for 3 opportunity sites (nb the council produced and published guidelines for 5 opportunity sites in 2020 of which 2 have progressed to planning application/development stages)
* Production of development guidelines for any further opportunity sites identified in the master-planning work
* Specific proposals relating to lighting including short- and longer-term improvements
* Specific proposals with respect to green infrastructure including short- and longer-term improvements

How the spaces in the town centre are used, business support and inward investment activities are outside the scope of the commission.

**Submission requirements**

At this stage we are seeking feedback as to:

* The important issues or decisions which would influence value for money for partners/suppliers in this commission
* Views about the structure of any procurement to achieve the aims set out above
* What information to be provided by the Council would enable the outputs to be delivered effectively
* What resources would be needed
* How long could the work take
* Views about the most effective methodology for collaboration and engagement with key stakeholders including the public, anchor institutions, key landowners, existing and future investors
* For engagement with the public views based on experience of strategies to reach those who are difficult to engage e.g. young people, 18-34s, digitally excluded, those with language barriers, and the disillusioned
* Views about the type of digital tools preferred for both engagement of the public, politicians and key stakeholders in the master planning and urban design process
* How much is it likely to cost

Interested parties are invited to submit their responses to the bullet points above, in either Microsoft Word or PDF format. Responses should be limited to 500 words per bullet point for the purposes of this exercise.

**All submissions must be made via the ‘Messaging’ section of the Kent Business Portal. Submissions must be received by 5pm on 7th September 2022.**

The information will then be considered by the council and key stakeholders with a view to developing a specification for a formal tender in early October. Timescales below are provided for indicative purposes but are subject to change at the Council’s discretion.

**Timetable**

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| **Event** | **Expected Date** |
| Produce scope for Supplier Engagement process | 17th August 2022 |
| Issue Supplier Engagement documents | 22nd August 2022 |
| Return of supplier responses | 7th September 2022 |
| Assess issues raised  | 12th September 2022 |
| Consultation/engagement with Informal Executive | 21st September 2022 |
| Stakeholder Event | 26th September 2022 |
| Finalise Tender Documentation | 30th September |
| Issue ITT via Find a Tender Service methodology | 3rd October 2022 |
| Tender Clarification Deadline | 31st October 2022 |
| Return of Final Tender Documents  | 7th November (ie 35 days) |
| Evaluation of Tenders – and shortlisting | 11th November |
| Interview short listed suppliers | 14th November |
| Evaluation and conclusion on appointment | By 18th November |
| Internal review and approvals | w/c 21st November |
| Inform tenderers of outcome of evaluation  | By 25th November |
| Standstill Period | 25th November to 5th December |
| Start of Contract Period | 6th December |