

## 1. Mission and Purpose

Our mission is to provide high-quality technical education and training to drive the ambitions and prosperity of the communities of Maidstone, Medway and the surrounding areas, while responding to national and regional skills priorities, and meeting local needs.

We will be known as a provider of high-quality professional and technical education and training that responds to local need. This will provide students with the skills they need for the future, raising the aspirations of the communities of Maidstone, Medway and the surrounding areas. We will be the destination of choice for students, staff, parents, employers, and the community.

Our education and training will be delivered by skilled, passionate, and inspiring industry practitioners, and we will build strong relationships with key partners to equip individuals who come to the College with skills to take their next steps in employment or entrepreneurship. Our programs will be designed to provide students with the flexibility and adaptability needed to succeed in a rapidly changing job market.

Our mission is supported by seven strategic priorities that underpin our vision and will guide our activities through to 2030. These priorities will help the leadership team to proactively make decisions about the future of the College and ensure that we act in the best interests of the students, staff, and local communities, including employers.

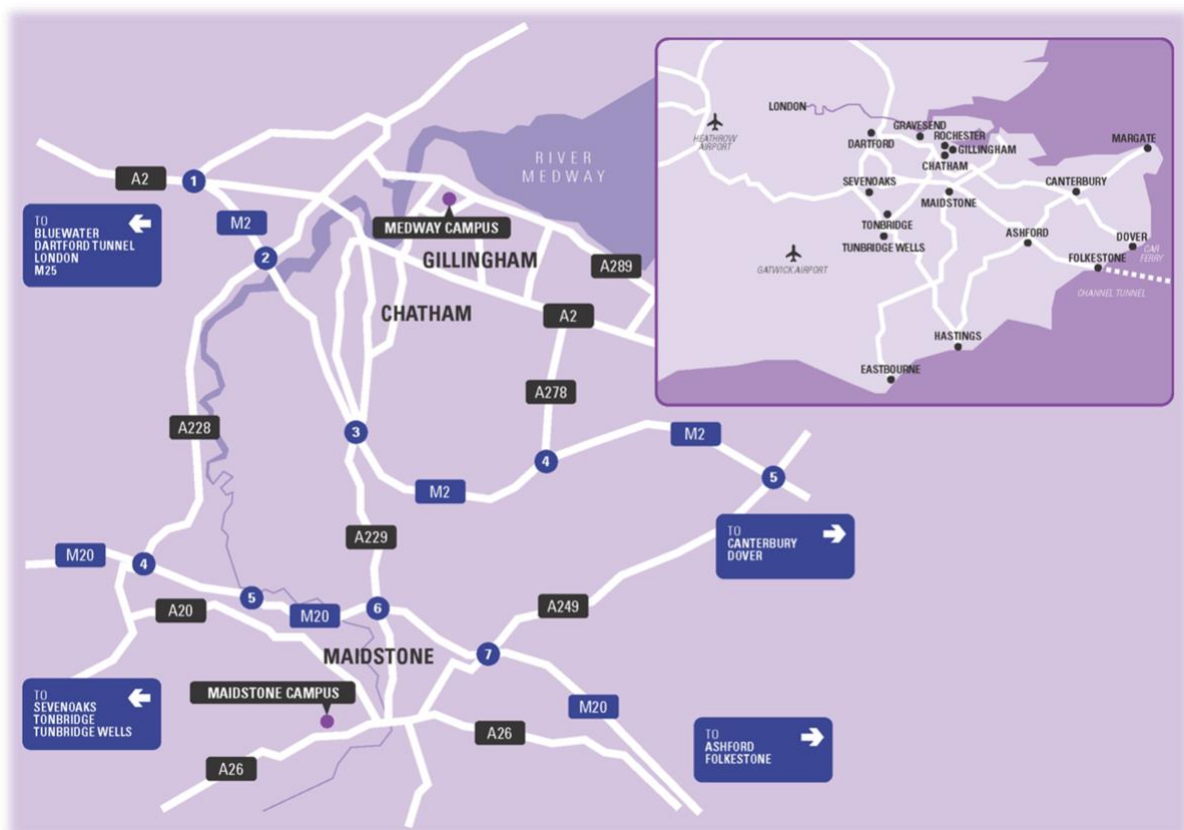
The seven strategic priorities are:

- **Community**  
We will contribute to the transformation of the communities of Medway, Maidstone, and surrounding areas through working collaboratively to raise aspirations.
- **Education**  
We will be the first choice locally for high-quality technical education and training delivered by industry practitioners and qualified educators.
- **Economy**  
We will contribute to the prosperity of the local economies of Medway, Maidstone and surrounding areas, and horizon-scan to ensure we operate in a way that is financially sustainable.
- **Digital Transformation**  
We will be a pioneer in leveraging digital technologies to transform our teaching, learning, and assessment processes, as well as our business operations, placing our staff and students at the centre of our activities.

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion  
We will be a welcoming and supportive environment for our staff, students and communities where people from different backgrounds can achieve their potential.
- Sustainability  
We will be a mindful and considerate organisation that evaluates and mitigates the impact of its operations on the local and global environment.
- Workforce  
We will be recognised as a first-choice local employer that invests in the training, working environment, and welfare of its staff.

## 2. The Communities We Serve

The college has two campus locations. Our campus located in Gillingham primarily serves the communities for the Medway towns and our second campus located in Maidstone serves the needs of the Mid Kent area.



We work closely in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure that we meet the economic, skills and social needs of our communities. As the College serves a distinct geographic area, we deliver a co-ordinated curriculum provision, providing clear progression pathways, while specialising where appropriate to meet local needs in each location.

The working age population (16-64) for the borough of Maidstone at the last census (2021) was 109,100, with over 86% being economically active, and 2.3% unemployed. The latest ONS data shows a slight increase in residents that are unemployed to 2.9%, which remains lower than the national profile. However, there are significant variations across the borough with communities where deprivation is high and unemployment higher than the average.

The economy and main industries in Maidstone as classified by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) are Construction, followed by Professional, Scientific and Technical Industries and Retail. The borough also benefits from a site that forms part of the North Kent Enterprise Zone and the location of the Kent Medial Campus, which is where we've witnessed a growing medical sector with an increasing presence for MedTech businesses.

At the same census date, Medway had a working age population (16-64) of 176,400, with over 71% being economically active, and 4.9% unemployed. The latest ONS data shows a reduction in residents that are unemployed to 3.6%, which is equal to the national profile.

The economy and main industries of Medway are SIC classified as Health, followed by Education, Manufacturing and Professional and Retail. The area also has a growing creative sector with an increasing presence for Arts, Media, and Digital businesses.

A total of 17,000 registered businesses operate in the Maidstone and Medway area and in common with the rest of Kent, 91% of these businesses employ nine or fewer people, while less than 1% are deemed large and employ 250 or more people.

Employment within the local area has a predominance of four sectors contributing up to 40% of the jobs in Kent and Medway: Health & Social Care, Education, Retail, and Business Admin & Support. The Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) acknowledges that the sectors of Accommodation & Food, Manufacturing, Construction, and Professional Scientific & Technical are also significant in terms of employment numbers, making up a further 27% of all jobs.

The resident qualifications profile differs between Maidstone and Medway when compared nationally:

- In Maidstone, the ONS Census 2021 confirms:
  - Residents with qualifications at Level 2 or below (43.6% compared with 41.2% nationally) is further behind when compared to the south east region (39.1%).
  - Residents with qualifications at level 3 (17.5%) is equal to the regional and national profile.
  - Residents with qualifications at level 4 or above (29.9% compared with 33.8% nationally) is further behind when compared to the south east region (35.8%).
  - 17.4% of residents have no qualifications at all, which is greater compared to the south east region (15.4%).

- In Medway, the ONS Census 2021 confirms:
  - The qualifications profile is consistently below national and the south east comparators.
  - With fewer residents having qualifications at level 3 or above (43.5% compared with 53.2% regionally).
  - Fewer residents have qualifications at level 4 or above (25.6% compared with 33.8% nationally).
  - 19.4% of residents have no qualifications at all, which is greater compared to Maidstone (17.4%) and regionally (15.4%)

The demand for education and skills following a period of contraction in the number of 15-19 year olds is expected to significantly increase over the next 5-7 years. By 2028 there will be around 20% more 15-19 year olds across Kent & Medway than now.

We work strategically to ensure we deliver an inclusive curriculum that reflects the needs of our communities, including development of our offer for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), English as a Second Language (ESOL) and students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### **3. Meeting National, Regional and Local Needs**

In developing this statement, we have ensured that the aims and objectives in this Accountability Plan align with our Strategic Plan. These include objectives that relate to our social and civic responsibilities as an anchor institution for the communities we serve, and that support our pursuit to be an education provider and employer of choice for the residents of Maidstone, Medway, and the surrounding areas.

In developing the aims and objectives in this Accountability Plan, we have carefully considered the national, regional, and local priorities, particularly where these directly align.

The county has a rich source of intelligence to support our curriculum planning, and this forms the evidence base in decision-making underpinned by an understanding of the wider environment and context of needs and enables us to rationalise our planned offer every year. The evidence base includes:

- [Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan](#)
- [Kent & Medway Workforce Skills Evidence Base](#)
- [Greater North Kent Workforce Skills Evidence Base](#)
- [Medway Skills & Employability Plan](#)
- [Kent County Council Post-16 review: Pathways for All](#)

The College has a rigorous and robust business planning cycle designed to ensure that it meets local needs. This process provides financial predictions to support planning. It also enables us to meet the demands of students and ensure that the curriculum is reactive to changes in national policy, new initiatives, and educational reform. It is responsive to changes in local needs and to employment and

demographic data. In short, business planning helps us ensure that students attain the best possible destinations and support the local economy effectively when they graduate from college.

While the College currently delivers a wide range of provision in priority sectors, we recognise that priorities and needs can change rapidly. Our subsidiary training company, MKC Training Services Ltd (MKCTS) is equipped to provide a rapid response to market needs, particularly upskilling existing employees within a workplace. MKCTS has extensive experience in delivering Engineering and Construction training solutions to military and civil clients, with specialisms in developing new products and innovative delivery options. It supports our response in meeting National, Regional and Local Needs. A recent and significant example of a rapid response to local and regional skills needs that was identified by the trade body CITB resulted in a commissioned contract to deliver management training for up to 4,500 construction industry front line managers, site supervisors and site managers.

The LSIP outlines three key sectors of higher need across the county: Construction, Land-Based & Food Production, and Manufacturing & Engineering; alongside these, the plan also acknowledges significant needs in Professional Services, Visitor Economy, and the wider Health and Care sector. In addition, the most recent LSIP research identifies cross-cutting themes of decarbonisation and digitalisation as skills deficient across all sectors.

The investment we are making in our capital resources will help to meet these needs, including the newly-opened Green Skills Construction Factory and Home Energy Centre. These new training suites are equipped to deliver innovative new training to support employers in the Construction and Building Services sectors to decarbonise the industry, and to embed these skills in our learning programmes. In 2023/24 we will also introduce a suite of immersive classrooms with resources that will utilise augmented reality to accelerate learning and provide access to new skills programmes in automation and digitalisation.

To support the national, regional, and locally identified needs for higher technical skills we have gained investment to establish an Institute of Technology (IoT) for the construction and engineering sectors. We are founding members of the South East Institute of Technology (SEIoT), a regional partnership that brings together expertise, specialism and geographical reach, spanning seven further education colleges, three universities and a number of key employers.

We have developed a portfolio of Apprenticeship Standards that are aligned to the needs identified by employers, and that supports their existing employee and workforce development plans. Most of these programmes match the occupational demand within the construction and engineering sector, with the remainder serving cross-cutting business occupations in areas such as accountancy, IT and administration. The nature of the Apprenticeships product provides continuous feedback on the changing skills demands from employers and therefore our portfolio of standards on offer remains demand-led and under constant review.

There has been significant growth and demand in the local Creative Industries sector as new and expanding businesses establish themselves in the area increasing the requirement for a range of emerging technical and creative skills. In addition to our extensive provision available to develop skills for this sector, we are now embarking on an ambitious project to grow significant Higher Education provision in response to identified market needs. We are collaborating with an array of local stakeholders (University of Kent at Medway, Medway Council and Adult Education, the Institute of Creative and Cultural Industries, and community groups such as Creative Medway) to ensure our offer provides progression pathways between existing providers. The Medway School of Arts is due to open in 2023-24.

Both Kent County Council and Medway Council have acknowledged a significant growth in demand to cater for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP), along with a rising need to support English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) qualifications for overseas students, including refugees and asylum seekers, particularly those of Afghan and Ukrainian origin.

Meeting the needs of adult students is equally important and our recent work with Medway Adult Education to ensure that our provision is complementary, aligns strategically and supports progression pathways which continues to remain a key focus in our collaboration with Medway Council. Similarly, our long-standing relationship with Job Centre Plus (JCP) is imperative to supporting the needs of the unemployed. We will continue to develop Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAP) in areas that are jointly identified and that support local people back into work.

To ensure that the College is recognised as a part of the post-16 educational landscape in our communities and helps to address needs, we recently participated in the Kent County Council post-16 review. This identifies the need for a wider sixth form choice for students in Kent, and the need to develop digital skills and adopt blended or remote learning models to widen participation for harder to reach students, as well as develop clear pathways from level 2 and below to support aspiration for young people from all backgrounds. The reintroduction of A Levels at our Maidstone campus this coming year will support this review. The College has also contributed to the Medway Council post-16 review and this is due for publication in the summer of 2023.

Alongside skills and economic needs, we also ensure that we deliver against the needs of students, such as students requiring courses below a traditional Level 2. We plan to improve capacity and provision for students with a range of SEN and EHCPs to meet a growing local need. We also offer a range of programmes designed to meet the educational needs of a significant number of students with low prior attainment scores, all aimed at progressing students onto higher levels of study and/or developing employability skills to enable effective transition into the workplace.

We will build on and integrate our existing strategic planning to ensure that it meets the new statutory duty to undertake regular reviews on how well our provision meets local needs. We will continue to work closely with the Kent Invicta Chamber of

Commerce (KICoC), our local Employer Representative Body (ERB), key employers, providers, and other stakeholders to fully involve them in the review process, whilst ensuring we align our provision with the LSIP and other identified needs.

We will continue to be fully engaged in the development and contribution of the LSIP employer panels that represent the key sectors across Kent & Medway to provide ongoing insight, support and challenge to our existing provision and future plans. This will be further shaped by our involvement in the LSIP solution panels, where we will collaborate with other providers to cultivate solutions to identified skills challenges facing the region in the context of policy and the funding landscape.

All the above will enable MidKent College to combine ongoing dialogue, data sets, evidence bases, and the work of other partners in our reviews. This in turn will be reflected in the strategic aims and objectives of our accountability statements and longer-term Strategic Plan.

#### **4. Key Stakeholders**

The College recognises the importance of strong stakeholder engagement and the benefits this brings to our students and the wider community. Our culture is built on a foundation of collaboration, evident in the numerous strategic partnerships we've developed and continue to support.

The College will continue to work closely with a range of key stakeholders to achieve its strategic objectives. These include:

- Medway Council
- Maidstone Borough Council;
- Kent County Council;
- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce;
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership;
- Job Centre Plus;
- Strategically-important employers;
- Business representative groups and networks;
- Local MPs.

We are a key signatory for the Medway Civic Charter, along with our local authority, universities, the NHS Trust, and the Dockyard Trust. This recognises and solidifies our position as an anchor institution that is committed to work in partnership to address Medway's challenges and priorities. The initial priorities will be determined by community consultation to be commenced in the summer of 2023 and the College will play an active role in supporting the partnership.

We supported the establishment of a Place Board for Medway in order to help raise the aspirations of the area for its residents, businesses and visitors. The Principal and CEO Chairs the Community Interest Company (CIC) set up to lead this partnership work. This has led to supporting the City of Culture 2025 bid that has led to raising the importance of the Creative Industries across the region, leading to priority funding status being awarded to Medway in 2019 by Arts Council England. In 2021 Creative Medway was established to bring together the growing number of

Creative Sole Traders and Businesses. In 2023 Medway saw 7 organisations receive NPO (National Portfolio Organisation) status. These have helped galvanise and co-ordinate the Creative Sector across Medway helping to provide students with the aspirations locally to contribute, experience and work in the Creative Sector.

The recently established Anchor Institution (AI) network hosted my Maidstone Borough Council has been instrumental in bringing together local stakeholders to tackle common challenges, such as employee recruitment, cost of living and social deprivation. The AI network enables the college to forge relationships with local stakeholders and to start to solve these challenges with a collaborative approach.

Engagement with Other Providers in the Area:

#### *Further Education Providers*

MidKent College collaborates closely with the other two General Further Education College groups in Kent and Medway, EKC Group and North Kent College. All three institutions form Kent Further Education (KFE), a pro-active partnership of FE Colleges that acts as a voice for the county's Further Education sector and to ensure it delivers the skills and training required.

A recent example of this close collaboration includes a Strategic Development Fund (SDF) project focused on addressing the cross-sector theme of decarbonisation identified in the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) with each College group focusing on a designated industry sector in line with existing specialisms. Further funds were secured to support an additional cross-sector skills shortage theme identified by the LSIP for the development of digitalisation and automation provision, and again this was a KFE collaboration.

We have also enjoyed a long-standing series of county-wide collaborative activities to support our students and workforce, which include projects and events such as our annual teaching and learning conference and skills competitions.

#### *Schools*

A selective education system operates in Kent and most schools have a sixth form which has created a highly competitive environment. This results in the significant majority of young people studying an academic A level pathway. The Kent and Medway area has a much lower proportion of Year 11 students moving away from school and as a result fewer than the England average of young people take pathways that help improve their technical skills. The College has helped in supporting our Local Authorities to engage in a review of Post16 education across the county. We also collaborate with schools in supporting careers events, and technical and vocational taster experiences days.

#### *Universities*

We have an established partnership with each of the three universities in the county, University of Greenwich, University of Kent, and Canterbury Christ Church University. Our Higher Education programmes are complimentary to the universities' existing offers and build upon the strengths of the college to provide increased progression opportunities for students.

We participate in the Kent and Medway Collaborative Outreach Programme (KaMCOP), a partnership between our local universities, Kent County Council, KFE colleges and 49 schools in Kent and Medway to widen participation in Higher Education.

#### *Independent Training Providers*

Although national subcontracting policy has discouraged a supply chain of partnership provision, we are always open to working collaboratively with private providers where we are unable to meet a specific local need. An example of this is our long-standing partnership with JTL, where they act as a referral delivery partner for any employer looking for an Apprenticeship Standard in Plumbing or Electrical, and the college provides the End Point Assessment (EPA) service.

## 5. Aims and Objectives

Aims and Objectives	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills	Response to Learning & Skills		
		Local	Regional	National
1. Ensure that over 85% of study programme students achieve a positive destination in 2023/24	<p>Enable our students to succeed in their chosen technical and vocational programme and contribute to meeting the skills needs of Kent &amp; Medway.</p> <p>Supports employer workforce targets and the wider community benefit in driving aspiration.</p>	✓	✓	✓
<p>2. Ensure that all 16-19 study programme students in 2023/24 gain core transferable skills required for employment, through effective employer engagement incorporating a combination of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Industry placements</li> <li>• Industry speakers</li> <li>• Collaborative programme delivery with employers</li> <li>• Embedded digital skills</li> </ul>	<p>Meets national agendas in terms of work skills, independence, and digital skills.</p> <p>Dedicated hours in our curriculum design will develop core transferrable skills for all 16-19 students, which is a national priority.</p> <p>The LSIP identified a need for soft transferrable skills to increase employment prospects.</p>	✓	✓	✓

Aims and Objectives	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills	Response to Learning & Skills		
		Local	Regional	National
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved personal, social and communication skills</li> <li>Careers guidance to support their aspirations</li> </ul>				
3. To meet the increased demand from the Arts and Creative Digital sector in Medway we will launch the Medway School of Arts in 2023/24.	Contributes to meeting specific sector and occupational needs that have been identified by stakeholders, locally and regionally, in addition to supporting a specific sector that is seeing resurgence with significant economic growth within Medway.	✓		
4. Launch a new virtual learning environment in 2023/24 to engage and support students that would otherwise not attend college or another provider such as Elective Home Educated (EHE), and to expand opportunities for all students to learn at a time and pace that suits them, including options	Contributes to the post-16 review carried out by both Medway Council (report pending) and Kent County Council, to target and develop blended and remote post-pandemic learning opportunities, and to reduce barriers to wider social engagement challenges.	✓	✓	✓

Aims and Objectives	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills	Response to Learning & Skills		
		Local	Regional	National
for blended learning to widen participation.				
5. Launch the Kent and Medway centre for the South East Institute of Technology (IoT) in 2023/24 to offer enhanced access to industry leading resources in the sectors of engineering and construction	Contributes to meeting the needs identified by the Construction, Engineering and Manufacturing employers through the LSIP and South East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).	✓	✓	
6. Continue to expand our T Level portfolio in 2023/24 to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science</li> <li>• Health &amp; Social Care</li> <li>• Childcare</li> <li>• Built Environment</li> <li>• Animal Management</li> <li>• Information Technology</li> </ul>	Developing curriculum specialisations that meet local, regional, and national skills needs, government policy, and curriculum reform, that targets sectors with identified future skills and/or workforce needs.	✓	✓	✓

Aims and Objectives	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills	Response to Learning & Skills		
		Local	Regional	National
<p>7. Invest and deliver innovation projects in 2023/24 to support employers in accessing new technology and providing our students with specific skills in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decarbonisation</li> <li>• Digitalisation and automation</li> </ul>	<p>Contributes to meeting the needs of a priority sector and a specific cross-cutting theme identified in the LSIP Trailblazer and Kent and Medway Workforce Skills Evidence Base.</p>	✓	✓	
<p>8. Introduce Supported Internships to our SEND portfolio and increase the number of students studying supported learning programmes by 20% in 2023/24</p>	<p>Contribute to social and economic inclusivity by supporting SEND students into fulfilling careers, whilst meeting local skills needs.</p> <p>Meets post-16 review targets to improve offer and progression into employment for students with a range of SEN and EHCPs.</p>	✓	✓	✓
<p>9. Continue to develop and deliver bespoke support programmes for Ukrainian students and the wider ESOL community and increase the number of students studying ESOL by 25%.</p>	<p>Enable adults with little to no English language skills to fulfil their potential and increase their positive participation in their local area.</p> <p>Meets local community and civic needs to provide language and skills-based curriculum to cater for influx of refugees and raise employment attainment.</p>	✓		

## 6. Relevant Supporting Documentation

SELEP Skills Strategy	<a href="https://www.southeastlep.com/">https://www.southeastlep.com/</a>
Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan	<a href="https://kentemployerskillsplan.org/">https://kentemployerskillsplan.org/</a>
Kent & Medway Workforce Skills Evidence Base	<a href="https://kentemployerskillsplan.org/">https://kentemployerskillsplan.org/</a>
Greater North Kent Workforce Skills Evidence Base	<a href="https://swale.gov.uk/">https://swale.gov.uk/</a>
Medway Skills & Employability Plan	<a href="https://www.medway.gov.uk/">https://www.medway.gov.uk/</a>
Kent County Council Post-16 review: Pathways for All	<a href="https://www.kent.gov.uk/">https://www.kent.gov.uk/</a>
MidKent College Strategic Plan	<a href="https://www.midkent.ac.uk/">https://www.midkent.ac.uk/</a>
MidKent College Ofsted Inspection Reports	<a href="https://ofsted.gov.uk/">https://ofsted.gov.uk/</a>
MidKent College Financial Statement	<a href="https://www.midkent.ac.uk/">https://www.midkent.ac.uk/</a>
Office for National Statistics	<a href="https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/">https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/</a>

## 7. Corporation Statement

On behalf of the MidKent College corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation at their meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

The plan will be published on the college's website within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed from the following link:

<https://www.midkent.ac.uk/about-us/strategic-priorities>



Martin Cook  
Chair of Governors



Simon Cook  
Principal & Chief Executive

Dated: 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023