

Sevenoaks District Annual Report 2009



Our vision

To lead the whole community in meeting its needs; and to work in partnership to improve the quality of life within the District

Strategic priorities

Balanced communities Tackling the need for a range of housing within the District and building community cohesion

The Sustainable Community Plan Allowing the community priorities to be at the heart of the District Council

The Local Development Framework The Sustainable Community Plan objectives in a spatial form

A Sustainable budget Understanding the burden of Council Tax and providing top quality services that the public want at a price they can afford

We are always interested in ways to improve our Annual Report and welcome your suggestions

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Publication details

Purpose of the Annual Report

To inform the community of Sevenoaks District and our partners of the Council's latest performance and plans

Publication date

December 2009

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Leader and Chief Executive's foreword



Cllr Peter Fleming
Leader of the Council



Robin Hales
Chief Executive

“This Annual Report looks back at Sevenoaks District Council’s achievements over the past year – and our plans to meet future challenges and opportunities”

We are pleased to introduce **Sevenoaks District Council’s Annual Report 2009** which brings together information about all Sevenoaks District Council’s activities into a single document.

It sets out:

- our vision and priorities
- how we performed in 2008/09
- our objectives and targets for 2009/10 and beyond and
- how we are transforming and managing our resources.

The Council faces tough challenges. We need to improve our performance and customer satisfaction and provide new services whilst reducing expenditure and increasing efficiency and the value for money we provide for tax payers across the District.

The District Council listens to what our community wants, invests in a quality workforce and works hard to deliver more with less.

And like our community, we are feeling the effects of the recession – we have seen an increase in demand for welfare advice and benefit applications, and a drop in income and a tighter financial settlement.

We acknowledge we are facing tough economic times ahead with pressure on budgets and the drive to release efficiencies alongside the need to sustain performance and introduce improvements. We also face the challenge of being assessed on not just how we perform, but how well we are working with other public services to improve lives.

Keep up to date with our news at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk

Highlights of the last year

We have achieved a lot in the last year. We have selected some things we are particularly pleased we have achieved for our residents.

April 2008

Excellent

Council continues to be assessed by Audit Commission as excellent

May 2008



Cllr Felicity Broomby - new Council Chairman

June 2008



District's first ever Cold Calling Zone set up

July 2008



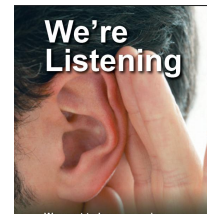
Shortlisted for prestigious risk management award

August 2008

More than 2,000 children attend our free fun activities



September 2008



Listening Days in Knockholt, Westerham and Sevenoaks

October 2008



Residents asked to help decide financial priorities

November 2008



Transfer of the Stag arts complex

December 2008



E-billing introduced for our customers

January 2009

£50,000 available to cut waste



February 2009



Council sets budget for coming year

March 2009

Council receives top marks for efficient management and use of taxpayers money



About Sevenoaks District

Sevenoaks District is located in West Kent, with the edge of Greater London to the north, Surrey to the west and East Sussex to the south. The District covers almost 142 square miles; 93% is designated Green Belt.

There are 30 parishes, including three town councils. The **main towns** are Sevenoaks, Swanley and Edenbridge, where, together with the north eastern parishes, a significant proportion of the 114,700 residents in the District live. There are over 30 villages and smaller settlements.

Much of the area is **rural** in character. Over 60% of the District is covered by the High Weald and Kent Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). There are also 61 sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), 17 Sites of Nature Conservation Interest and significant areas of ancient woodland.

Major **transport** links are provided by motorways, major roads and rail.

The area is served by 44 Local **Education** Authority (LEA) primary schools, three LEA special schools, four LEA secondary schools and a variety of independent schools, two community hospitals and three police stations.

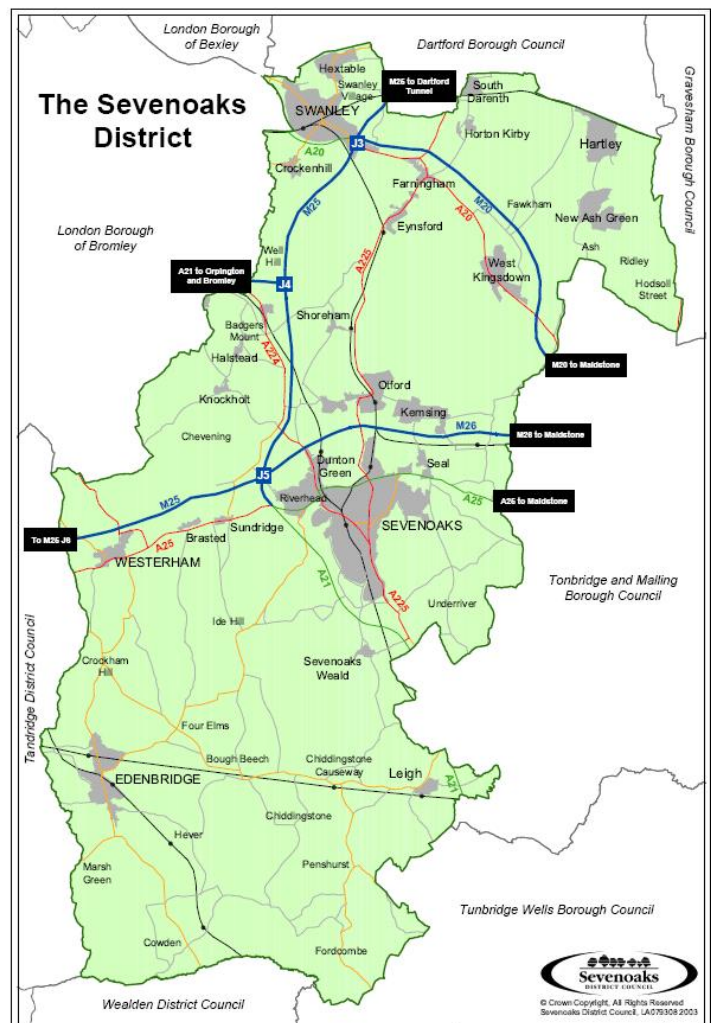
There is a wide variety of **leisure** facilities, including leisure centres, indoor and outdoor bowls centres, golf courses, sports grounds, recreation areas and scenic country walks. The area is also rich in **historical** sites.

An overall impression of affluence masks some pockets of urban and rural **deprivation**. Some wards in the District suffer from higher than national average unemployment rates, higher levels of poverty, poor health, low educational and skill levels and higher than average rates of crime. Inequalities within the District are highlighted by a lack of affordable housing and by the fact that house prices are on

average 1½ times greater than the South East average.

Because of its **rural nature**, the District has one of the most sparse populations in the county and this is a challenge for local agencies and other service providers.

Sevenoaks District has a static but ageing **population**. The ethnic make-up of Sevenoaks District is: White British 95.2%, Other White 2.3%, Irish 1%, Asian/Asian British 0.5%, Mixed 0.4%, Black/Black British 0.2%, Chinese 0.2% and Other 0.2%. In the Swanley area it is recognised that those who are of first, second and third generation Gypsy/Traveller origins, and mixed Gypsy/Traveller and other origins, have for a long time been housed in the area.



Council services in the District

Local government in England is structured in two contrasting ways. In parts of England, a single tier "all purpose council" is responsible for all local authority functions (Unitary, Metropolitan or London Borough). The remainder of England has a two-tier system, in which two separate councils divide responsibilities between district and county councils.

In Kent, the county council, district and borough councils, and town and parish councils work closely together to provide the best services possible for residents, people working in the area and visitors.

Each tier of local government has specific responsibilities, but some are shared.



Sevenoaks District Council's leisure services were transferred to Sencio Community Leisure, a leisure trust in 2004. The Council still owns and maintains the leisure sites.

Although the Council transferred its housing stock to the West Kent Housing Association in 1989, it retains a responsibility for strategic housing matters and has an important role in ensuring the provision of rented accommodation within the District.

A number of other public sector organisations also provide services in Sevenoaks District.

The District is policed by West Kent Police. A number of housing associations provide a range of housing in Sevenoaks District including Moat Housing, West Kent Housing Association and Bailey Housing Association. Sevenoaks District is covered by West Kent Primary Care Trust.

Sevenoaks District Council is committed to working with these and other partners to ensure the priorities of local services match those of the local community.

Sevenoaks District Council provides

- **Central services** – Council Tax and business rates collection, elections, democracy, land charges and corporate management
- **Cultural services** – Sports, leisure and open spaces
- **Environmental services** – Refuse collection, street cleaning, recycling, CCTV, dog wardens, licensing, environmental health, fly tipping removal and community safety
- **Highways and transport** – Minibuses for older people, parking and parking enforcement and concessionary fares
- **Planning services** – Local Development Framework and sustainable development, development control, building control, planning appeals, planning enforcement and conservation
- **Housing** – Housing benefit and Council Tax benefit, housing policy, dealing with homelessness, energy conservation and adaptation to homes for people with disabilities

It's your money

Council finance can, at the best of times, be extremely complex. To help keep local people informed about how the Council raises income and where it spends your money, this section includes an overview of the Council's accounts from last year.

The period covered runs from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009.

If this whets your appetite, you can get a copy of the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts which sets out its annual finances in more detail.

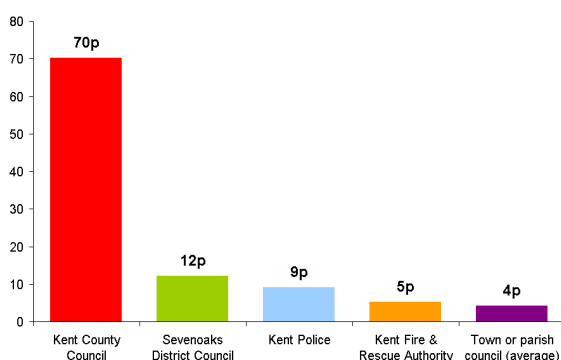
To view a copy, visit the Council's website www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/finance or to be sent a copy e-mail finance@sevenoaks.gov.uk or call 01732 227000.

Your Council tax bill

You may be surprised to learn that Sevenoaks District Council does not keep all the Council Tax it collects! In fact it keeps only a fraction of the money – 12 pence in the pound.

Sevenoaks District Council has a duty to collect the Council Tax not only for itself, but for four other authorities – Kent County Council, Kent Police, Kent Fire & Rescue Authority and your local town or parish council. Each authority independently sets its own charge.

How your Council Tax is shared out for every pound collected by Sevenoaks District Council



In total, Sevenoaks District Council collected 98.6% of the Council Tax payable during the year. The Council continues to seek payment of the outstanding Council Tax and it expects to collect the vast majority of the balance.

Where the money came from

Last year, Sevenoaks District Council's services were funded from six areas. The chart below summarises where this money came from.



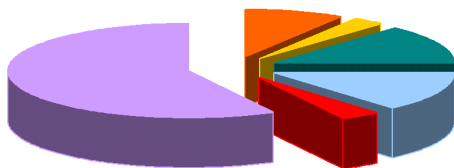
■ Fees and charges*	£5.7m
■ Government support	£6.6m
■ Other Government grants (for benefit payments, benefit administration and one-off projects)	£27.3m
■ Council Tax	£8.4m
■ Interest on the Council's savings	£1.5m
■ Money taken from the Council's savings	£0.7m
Total	£50.2m

* Fees and charges includes planning application and building control fees, car parking charges, local land searches, garden waste collection and other environmental services.

Reserves

Last year the Council had about £19 million in the bank. Fifteen million pounds of the funds were earmarked for specific purposes including maintaining the Council's buildings, vehicles and computer systems and for a projected shortfall in the pension fund.

How the money was spent



Central services	£4.4m
Cultural services	£1.5m
Environmental services	£6.7m
Planning services	£6.8m
Highways and transport	£1.8m
Housing (including benefit payments)	£29.0m
Total	£50.2m

Your Council's services



Central services – Council Tax and business rates collection, elections, democracy, land charges and corporate management.



Planning services – Local Development Framework and sustainable development, development control, building control, planning appeals, planning enforcement and conservation.

Cultural services – Sports, leisure, open spaces, tourism, arts and youth support.



Highways and transport – Minibuses for older people, parking and parking enforcement and concessionary fares.



Environmental services – Refuse collection, street cleaning, recycling, CCTV, dog wardens, licensing, environmental health, fly tipping removal and community safety.



Housing – Housing benefit and Council Tax benefit, housing policy, dealing with homelessness, energy conservation and adaptation to homes for people with disabilities.

Facts about finance

Last year, the average Council Tax charge, at band D, was £1,422.70. Sevenoaks District Council's part of the charge was £168.39, equivalent to 12% of the total amount collected.





Of all the 12 district councils in Kent, Sevenoaks District Council received the lowest grant from the Government per head of population at £55.80 and one of the lowest in the country. The Kent average was £78.31 and the district with the highest grant received £99.15 per head of population.

In March 2009, Sevenoaks District Council was named as one of the county's most efficient district councils by the Central Government agency the Audit Commission. As part of its annual Use of Resources submission, the Council achieved an overall top score of four out of a possible four points, equating to performing strongly. Sevenoaks was one of only 17 district councils out of 238 nationally to achieve the top score.

Our **vision** sets out the Council's focus over the coming years,

To lead the whole community in meeting its needs; and to work in partnership to improve the quality of life within the District

Our priorities are set, and our achievements are measured, against **four themes**:

-  Safe and Caring Communities
-  Green and Healthy Environment
-  Dynamic and Sustainable Economy
-  Effective Management of Council Resources

Three of the themes were developed through consultation with our residents, service users, customers and partners for the District's Sustainable Community Plan. The fourth is borne out of our management arrangements and community governance role.

Our **priorities** are:

Balanced communities

Working with our partners to improve the range of housing, health and education facilities, improving the environment and transport options

Delivering the Sevenoaks District Community Plan

The Community Plan sets out a vision not just of the Council but the entire District to improve the life of our residents over a 10 year period. It was drawn up following widespread consultation with local people, voluntary organisations and other public sector organisations

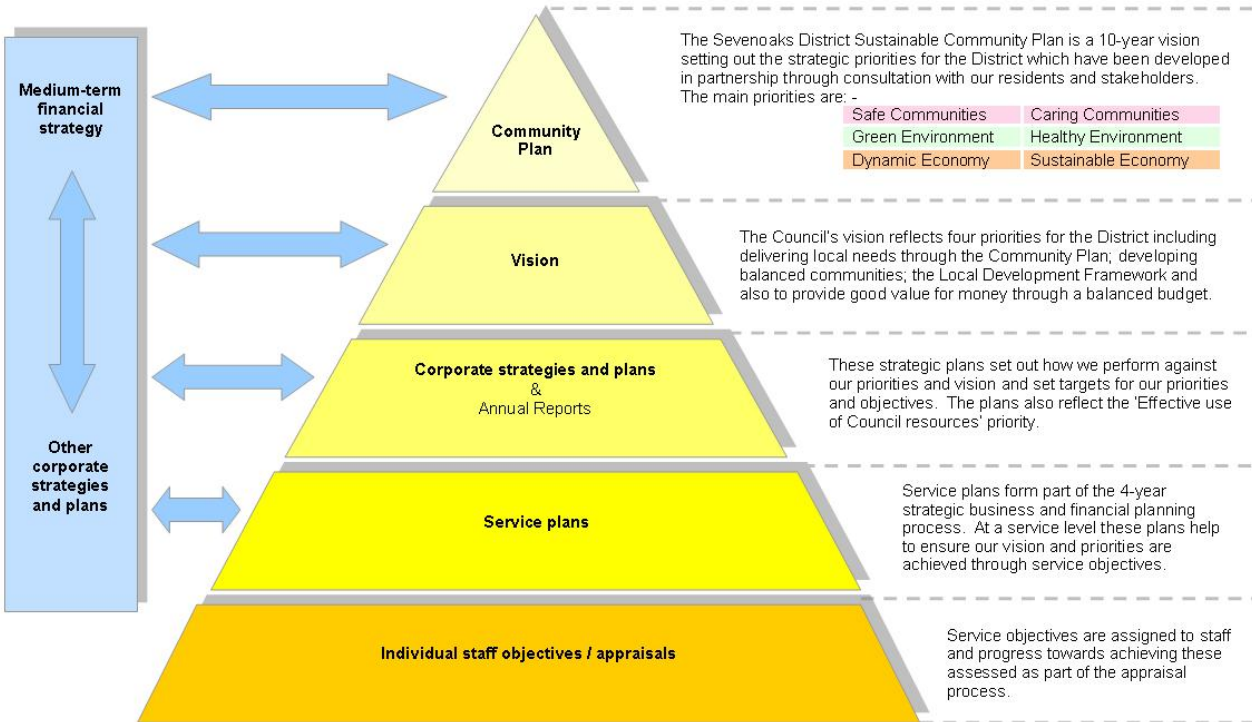
Developing the District's Local Development Framework

This important planning document sets out in detail how the District will be developed in the coming years. It will address future housing, employment and transport needs whilst protecting the Green Belt. The Framework is under development and will gradually replace the current Local Plan

Achieving a balanced and sustainable budget

Greater links will be forged between the Council's budgets and its key priorities together with new more effective ways of setting and monitoring the annual budget. We aim to offer good value for money for our local tax payers

How our plans work together



The District's first **Community Plan** was produced by the Sevenoaks District Community Planning Partnership (formed between Sevenoaks District Council, Kent Police, Kent County Council, health and housing providers, voluntary, business and community organisations) and was published in April 2004. It sets out a vision, reflecting priorities identified by local people, for the District for a 10-year period. The Plan is reviewed every three years to ensure that actions are updated and the plan remains relevant to the changing needs of the District.

The role of the **Local Development Framework (LDF)** is to set out the spatial vision for the District. Its policies and proposals guide development until 2026, taking into account the South East Plan, the Sevenoaks District Community Plan and the views of the local community. The LDF Core Strategy – Preferred Options is the current stage and adoption is due in 2010.

The medium term **Financial Strategy 2009-13** enables the Council to deliver its corporate objectives by setting out the financial framework within which the Council's vision is delivered. Its key financial objectives provide the Council with the financial stability required to develop long-term plans with its partners. The **Financial Plan** within this Strategy takes into account the financial implications of actions agreed by the Council to deliver its vision.

The Council's **IT Strategy** sets out how we will use information technology to support the achievement of the Council's priorities. The financial implications included in that Strategy are reflected in the Financial Plan.

Similarly, the **Workforce Development Plan** sets out how the Council will make sure its workforce is able to deliver the services the local community wants, both now and in the future. The financial implications of that Plan, such as employee terms and conditions and the Recruitment & Retention Policy, are also taken into account in the Financial Plan.



The District Council is made up of 54 councillors (or Members) who are elected every four years, following elections in May 2007.

Currently, the controlling political group is Conservative, led by Cllr Peter Fleming – the Leader of the Council.

The next round of elections for Sevenoaks District Council and all the parishes within Sevenoaks District will be held in May 2011.

Sevenoaks District Council operates a Leader and Cabinet system. This structure works in a similar way to the structure of national Government where cabinet members have specific responsibilities ('portfolios') and focus on the services / functions within their own portfolio area.

The Leader of the Council chairs an eight-member **Cabinet** made up of the controlling political group. Meeting regularly, the Cabinet deals with major issues and makes decisions which assist the Council as a whole to adapt and respond to changing service needs.

All Councillors meet together at **Council** meetings which are nearly always open to the public. Most Cabinet meetings are also open to the public. The Council sets the budget and policy framework and remains the ultimate decision making body.

The District Council has three Select Committees (providing the **overview and scrutiny** function) and a Performance & Governance Committee (the **audit committee**).

The three Select Committees are responsible for reviewing all areas of the Council's activities, advising on policy and investigating any other matter affecting the District and its residents. The Performance & Governance Committee has, amongst its responsibilities, the duty to consider the performance, regulatory framework, audit and accounts of the District Council.

The District Council's **Standards Committee** is responsible for monitoring the ethics of the District Council and the town and parish councils within the District. The Committee includes four independent (non-Councillor) members and three members representing town and parish councils in the District. More information is available from the Standards Committee Annual Report.

There are a number of other functions (such as development control, licensing and other quasi-judicial functions) which cannot be the responsibility of Cabinet. These functions are delegated by the Council to other committees, boards and panels or Officers of the District Council.

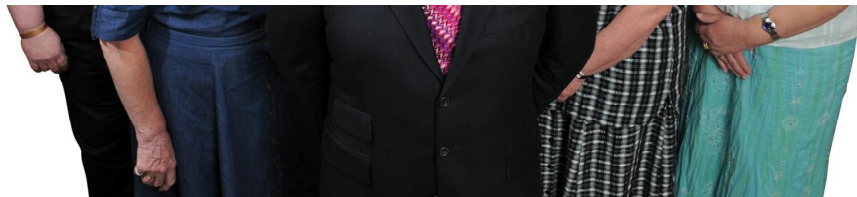
Sevenoaks District Council is made up of:

41	Conservatives
7	Liberal Democrats
4	Labour
1	British National Party
1	Independent

Meet the Cabinet for 2009/10



<Updated photograph to be supplied (Daniel Whitmarsh) - order (below) will be changed as necessary>



- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

1	<p>Cllr Gary Williamson Cabinet Member for Built Environment Elected: 6 May 1999 For: Halstead, Knockholt and Badgers Mount</p>	5	<p>Cllr Pat Bosley Cabinet Member for Community Well-being Elected: 3 May 2007 For: Fawkham and West Kingsdown</p>
2	<p>Cllr Jill Davison Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Continuous Improvement and Strategic Planning Elected: 5 May 1983 For: Edenbridge North and East</p>	6	<p>Cllr Avril Hunter Cabinet Member for The Cleaner and Greener Environment Elected: 4 May 1995 For: Sevenoaks Kippington</p>
3	<p>Cllr Brian Ramsay Cabinet Member for Finance and Value for Money Elected: 1 May 2003 For: Hartley and Hodsoll Street</p>	7	<p>Cllr Elaine Bracken Cabinet Member for Safe Community Elected: 3 May 2007 For: Westerham and Crockham Hill</p>
4	<p>Cllr Peter Fleming Leader Elected: 6 May 1999 For: Sevenoaks Town and St John's</p>	8	<p>Cllr Carol Clark Cabinet Member for Housing and Balanced Communities Elected: 6 May 1999 For: Ash</p>

Your district councillors

Ash

- Clive Bruce
- Carol Clark
- Alan Pett

Brasted, Chevening & Sundridge

- Nick Dean
- James London
- Robert Piper

Cowden & Hever

- Gerry Ryan

Crockenhill & Well Hill

- Colin Dibsdall

Dunton Green & Riverhead

- Cameron Brown
- John Lankester

Edenbridge North & East

- Jill Davison
- John Scholey

Edenbridge South & West

- Richard Davison
- Bob Orridge

Eynsford

- Hugh Darrington

Farningham, Horton Kirby & South Darenth

- Stephen Arnold
- Philip McGarvey

Fawkham & West Kingsdown

- Ian Bosley
- Pat Bosley
- Faye Parkin

Halstead, Knockholt & Badgers Mount

- John Grint
- Gary Williamson

Hartley & Hodsoil Street

- Larry Abraham
- James Gaywood
- Brian Ramsay

Hextable

- Roger McInnes
- Dee Morris

Kemsing

- Emma Moore
- Lorraine Stack

Leigh & Chiddingstone Causeway

- Alison Cook

Otford & Shoreham

- George Fodor
- Michelle Lowe

Penshurst, Fordcombe & Chiddingstone

- Paddy Cooke

Seal & Weald

- Rachel Allen
- Peter Coates

Sevenoaks Eastern

- Elizabeth Purves
- Roger Walshe

Sevenoaks Kippington

- Felicity Broomby
- Avril Hunter

Sevenoaks Northern

- John Brigden
- John Gilbert

Sevenoaks Town & St. John's

- Ann Dawson
- Peter Fleming
- Keith Loney

Swanley Christchurch & Swanley Village

- Robert Brookbank
- David Cole
- Anthony Waller

Swanley St. Mary's

- Paul Golding
- John Underwood

Swanley White Oak

- Bryan Harrod
- Janet Sargeant
- Barrie Wigg

Westerham & Crockham Hill

- Elaine Bracken
- Kevin Maskell

- | | | | | |
|----------------|----------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| ■ Conservative | ■ Labour | ■ Liberal Democrat | □ British National Party | ■ Independent |
|----------------|----------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------|

For more information, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk or call 01732 227000

Corporate governance

Governance is about how local government bodies ensure that they are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

Sevenoaks District Council is committed to the principles of good corporate governance and confirms its ongoing commitment and intentions through a **Local Code of Corporate Governance**. The Code is supported by our **Annual Governance Statement**.

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/governance



The Council's Section 151 Officer
Dr Pav Ramewal –
Deputy Chief
Executive and
Corporate Resources
Director

Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires the Council to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and requires one officer to be nominated to take responsibility for the administration of those affairs.



The Council's
Monitoring Officer
Christine Nuttall –
Head of Legal &
Committee Services

The Monitoring Officer has a broad role in ensuring the lawfulness and fairness of Council decision making, ensuring

compliance with codes and protocols, promoting good governance and high ethical standards.

Risk Management

Sevenoaks District Council recognises that it has a responsibility to manage threats and opportunities and supports a structured and focused approach to managing them through its **Risk Management Strategy**.

Audit and inspection



The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog - sponsored by the Government.

The Audit Commission is charged with responsibility for conducting / arranging the external audit and inspection visits of local authorities; in order to assess their compliance with sound accounting principles including other regulatory requirements and overall performance, and effectiveness.

The Audit Commission currently arranges for Baker Tilly, an independent firm of chartered accountants and business advisers, to conduct the necessary audits and inspections for Sevenoaks District Council.



BAKER TILLY

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/performance



Kristen Paterson –
Deputy Chief Executive
and Community &
Planning Services
Director

“Sevenoaks District Council is committed to providing first-class services and improving our customers’ experience”

We deliver a wide range of high quality services by empowering our employees and monitoring customers’ feedback and service performance data to continually improve our customers’ experience.

Sevenoaks District Council aims to make a difference by providing

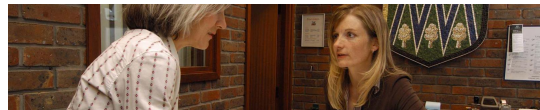
- **Value for money**
We aim to deliver exceptional value to our customers and community
- **High quality services**
We aim to deliver first-class standards consistently
- **Innovation**
We aim to investigate new ideas - both big and little – to improve services
- **Brilliant customer service**
We aim to deliver the highest standard of services to our customers

We would like to continue to build on our achievements and focus on

Trust - We have a background of customer care, staff welfare, and involvement in the community. We want to continue to build this.

Commitment - Our staff are committed to delivering excellent customer service.

Fair treatment - Our customers are respected and valued, by our Members and staff, whoever they are.



Consultation and engagement

Asking for and listening to the views of local people

Consultation is an important part of the way we deliver our services.

The Council carries out regular consultation with residents, local people, customers, service users and partners to establish the needs of our community and current and future priorities. Consultation is an essential element of our service planning and delivery.

The embedding of this culture of engagement and empowerment across the authority's functions reflects the new statutory **duty to involve** which seeks to ensure local people have greater opportunities to have their say.

Services across the Council consult and engage in a variety of ways, including questionnaires, discussion groups, feedback forms, working groups and on-line via our website.

We aim to ensure services are more focused on the outcomes that matter to our service users and community, more accessible and delivered effectively.

Our consultation and engagement includes:

Place Survey

The Place Survey is a compulsory biennial consultation for all local authorities. Fieldwork for the first ever Place Survey began in Autumn 2008. The survey focused more on residents' views about the District and quality of life rather than on the local authority and customer satisfaction.

The results of the survey will be used to ascertain measures for 19 of the new 198 national (performance) indicators that relate to citizen perspectives.

To help us understand these results and the views of our community, we have asked our Residents' Panel to answer some of the questions from the Place Survey.

Sustainable Community Plan

Making it Happen – together is the overarching 10-year strategy for the community and is delivered by the District Council in partnership with other organisations. Continuous feedback, consultation and engagement is essential to shape the strategy.

Local Development Framework (LDF)

Consultation and engagement is vital to the development towards an LDF - the spatial expression of the Sustainable Community Plan. Consultations are ongoing as the documents are being prepared and will be extensive and in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

Listening Days

Councillors and Officers from the District Council hear the views of local people at our annual 'Listening Days'. The Listening Days allow the public to put across their views and suggestions in person to their local District Councillors, Cabinet Members and Council staff.

Budget consultation

Sevenoaks District residents are invited to help the Council decide its budget priorities every year in a variety of ways, including via surveys, Listening Days, public meetings and online surveys.

Sevenoaks District Residents' Panel

Our Panel involves around 1,000 local residents and provides a unique opportunity for the Council (and its partners) to gain the views and opinions of a broad cross-section of the local community on a regular basis. The views gained through the Panel are fed into all aspects of the District Council's decision making.

More information is available at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/residentspanel

Over the next few pages we review our performance for the last year

Our achievements and plans

On pages 16 to 28 we summarise our achievements, outline our challenges and learning, and set out what we will be doing during 2009/10 to support our priorities.

We also provide details of how we are:

- Managing our business
- Managing our money
- Managing our resources

Performance highlights

In 2008/09 ...



We have focussed on strengthening our partnership working both within and outside of the county as well as introducing **new ways of working** to bring improvements to our community



Sevenoaks District has the **lowest levels of recorded crime** in the county. The rate of domestic burglary and vehicle crime was lower than the targets set by our Community Safety Partnership



90% of residents are satisfied with our **refuse collection** service. This is the highest percentage in the county and the sixth highest nationally.

Over 32% of household waste was **recycled or composted**



Following the withdrawal of Government funding, the Council's Housing Services team considered alternative options to maximise funding and opportunities for affordable housing. In 2008/09 this enabled **57 new affordable homes** to be delivered across the District



The Council recorded value for money **savings of £1,134,000** (7% of the net budget) to assist in keeping council tax levels down and reinvest in priority services

Our achievements and plans

Safe and Caring Communities

A District where people feel safe and where people can be supported to lead independent and fulfilling lives.



CCTV



Activities for young people



PACT (Partners Against Crime Together) launch

Achievements in 2008/09

Community safety

Sevenoaks District has the **lowest crime** in the county. However, despite this, surveys demonstrated that people in the District have a higher **fear of crime** than actual crime would indicate.

The Council has worked, as part of the Community Safety Partnership, to improve communication with our residents. We have worked with the local media to **promote awareness** of the projects we have in place to support the community; and encouraged more **balanced reporting** of crime issues.

Consultation told us that older people's fear of crime is often linked to fear of groups of young people. Even where young people are gathering just to socialise, older people can feel intimidated. We have therefore encouraged communities to work with young people to foster **understanding between the generations**.

The Partnership, working with the Local Children's Services Partnership, has developed a **'Safer Cluster' of schools** to help young people feel safer.

The Council has also developed:

- the **Power Project**, which targets young people at risk of offending. This has been a great success and during 2008/09 was introduced throughout Kent.
- nine **PACT** (Partners Against Crime Together) community safety partnerships enabling local residents to become more involved in, and reduce crime in, their communities.

We have made improvements to related issues too such as **anti-social behaviour** and **environmental crime**, including fly tipping.

We have dealt with particular locations that present problems. For example, an area of land that was attracting off-road motorcycling has been secured, a CCTV camera has been installed in an alleyway that was presenting problems to local people, and an area behind a local shop where people were gathering to drink alcohol has been cleared up and made secure. These have all had very **positive effects** on local people.

Young people

To produce the new Sevenoaks District **Young People's Action Plan** (for

2009/12), we consulted with over 3,000 children and young people across the District (representing approximately 21% of the District's population in the 9–18 age group). The Plan was developed with contributions from partners, youth groups, school councils and workshops in local schools. The Plan's 12 key outcomes will be progressed by the Council and its partners over the next three years.

The Council has supported services for young people, including:

- providing a wide range of **activities in school holidays**. In 2008 attendances increased by 40% (to 2,037) at the 'In the Zone' summer activities for children and young people.
- the annual **Youth Conference** includes a Young Volunteer of the Year Award promoting and valuing young peoples' endeavours.
- issues identified through consultation are now being progressed by partners, for example the data showed that 22% of young people would agree to meet up with someone who they had met online. **Internet safety** sessions in schools have now been increased to ensure that young people are aware of potential dangers.
- all Council services for children and young people are regularly evaluated and adapted to take on board service **users' comments**. Information and advice in schools is delivered in line with young people's views.

Licensing

The Council completed the third year of a **Licensing Partnership** with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council which includes management of the Licensing Act, Gambling Act and taxi licensing functions.

The partnership has proved very successful providing **excellent services and increased efficiency**. The partnership is set to expand to include other Kent councils.

CCTV

The Council's CCTV team operate 96 cameras covering Edenbridge, New Ash Green, Sevenoaks, Swanley and Westerham.

All the cameras are linked to the Council's CCTV control room, which operates **24 hours a day seven days a week**. Our fully trained and experienced staff are licensed by the Security Industry Authority.

The control room has a direct radio link to the police. All images from the cameras are recorded digitally and could be used by the police as evidence in the event of a crime.

During 2008/09, the CCTV service instigated, monitored and **assisted with 272 arrests** and dealt with Pubwatch / Safeshop calls as well as out of hours calls to the Council.

Of the arrests the Council assisted the police with:

- 72 related to the theft of property
- 42 were made for assaults
- 18 for criminal damage.

Public safety in New Ash Green was boosted when 13 CCTV cameras in the village centre were upgraded with state-of-the-art technology.

When installed in the mid 1990s, the fixed black and white cameras were adequate, but as time has passed, they became outdated.

The new vandal resistance dome cameras tilt and pan in all directions working in full colour with a powerful zoom. This will drastically improve coverage. The new cameras can easily be relocated in the event of any village centre regeneration.

Environmental Health

The Council has entered into a partnership agreement with Dartford Borough Council

for shared management of environmental health services.

Our Environmental Health team has carried out 99% of scheduled inspections for food safety and 100% for higher risk health and safety inspections.

The **'Scores on the Doors'** scheme was launched in January 2008. Following an inspection of a food business, a hygiene score is converted to a star rating and displayed on a public website. Premises with excellent standards will be given five stars, premises with good standards will get three stars, whilst premises with very poor hygiene standards will receive zero stars. Eventually every relevant business in the District will be given a food hygiene rating.

- By March 2009, over 500 premises in the District have been included on the website with 73% rated at 3 stars (good) or better, and 53 rated as 5 star (or excellent).

Council Officers joined colleagues from Tonbridge & Malling and Maidstone councils to provide specialised training for businesses in the area to improve their understanding and compliance with food legislation. Follow up coaching visits were also carried out for 84 businesses.

Building on this, a training partnership was launched in October 2008 between West Kent College at Tonbridge, Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells councils. This has enabled food business operators within these areas to benefit from a wide range of food safety and health & safety courses in a good choice of locations.

Planning

The Police architectural liaison officer is consulted on development proposals to ensure that community safety is taken into account.

Our plans for 2009/10

Community safety

Progress the safety partnerships action plan, including develop further PACTs throughout the District.

Young people

Following evaluation of the Council's free summer activities for children and young people in 2008 – including an annual co-ordination meeting between partners, the programme has been changed for 2009.

In view of parents' comments and the high number of families with children of all ages attending the programme, it has been re-branded as "Family Fun Days" for Summer 2009 including a wider variety of free or low cost activities for young children as requested by users. This will also provide the opportunity for the Council and its partners to promote services and seek the community's views.

Licensing

From January 2010 we will commence the enlarged Licensing Partnership with Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone councils.

CCTV

From August 2009 the Council's CCTV team will provide an out of hours service on behalf of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Environmental Health

We aim to ensure all statutory duties are carried out, including inspecting all food premises in the District at a frequency determined by central government ratings.

Planning

Emerging Local Development Framework policies will support the Council's community safety objectives, creating safe, inclusive and attractive environments.

Green and Healthy Environment

A District where people can enjoy high quality rural and urban environments, have healthy lifestyles and receive good support when they need it. We aim to work with all our partners to improve the well-being of our communities.



Activities for all



Local countryside



Healthy lifestyles project

Achievements in 2008/09

Community involvement and healthy lifestyles

The Council's Community Development team facilitated and provided a wide range of services, including:

- successful funding applications and partner contributions resulted in **over £400,000 to support community development projects**.
- close partnership working with Sencio Community Leisure to deliver health projects and improve leisure centre usage.
- the Edenbridge Older Lifestyles Project (help with health, community safety, fuel poverty, benefits advice and other issues).
- partnership working with NHS West Kent enabled health projects to achieve **over 19,000 attendances at over 900 sessions**, delivered as part of 38 healthy living programmes across the District. From these programmes, over 59% of participants have increased their physical activity, 61% felt fitter, 44% feel happier and 45% have seen improvements to their health.

- Health Walks linked to sustainability and biodiversity to create a series of popular Wildlife Health Walks.
- grant aided voluntary and community organisations providing 229,085 hours of voluntary activity in the District.

Environment

The Council is committed to manage the impacts of its actions on the environment with the aim of reducing carbon emissions and **promote and increase energy efficiency**.

Residents in the District **recycled and composted** over 32% (or 14,784 tonnes) of their waste.

17 fines (or fixed penalty notices) for littering were issued by Council officers and Kent Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

As part of the Kent Waste Partnership, the Council has worked to maximise the use of existing recycling schemes, increase Reduce/Reuse/Recycle behaviour, and introduce service improvements, with other Kent councils to increase recycling and composting rates, including the 'Love food, hate waste' campaign.

Housing

The District has a high percentage of green belt and areas of outstanding natural beauty which means there is limited opportunity for developing **affordable housing**. However, the Council has worked well with the Housing Corporation (now Home and Communities Agency) to maximise funding and has undertaken innovative solutions to provide sufficient housing.

The Council took the lead and formed a sub-regional group involving the Housing Corporation, Government Office for the South East (GOSE), Kent County Council, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells councils to produce a sub-regional housing strategy executive summary.

The Housing Services team have introduced a number of new projects including:

- Choice Based Lettings scheme – **Kent Homechoice** (introduced in October 2008) which enables people to choose where they live by bidding for appropriate properties. Managing the scheme as a countywide initiative has produced significant savings.
- The Council has made it easier for vulnerable people to get advice and significantly reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation:-
 - through home visits and proactively offering housing advice.
 - by funding the three Citizens Advice Bureaux in the District to provide specialist debt counselling and mortgage advice.
 - funded Shelter to provide a court desk service.
- Set up new ways to work effectively with agencies and other local councils to provide more with less.

The Government's recent Gypsy/Traveller survey indicated the need for 64 plots in Sevenoaks District – the highest need in

Kent - and the Council has the highest number of public plots in the county. Discussions with government, GOSE and the Kent local authorities continue to ascertain the final figure.

The Council successfully applied for Government funding to **upgrade and extend** the Council-owned Gypsy/Traveller site in Edenbridge. We received £1.3 million and were the only council in Kent to be granted funding.

The site will be **significantly modernised** and provide a further four plots and replace the existing amenity blocks. 'Supporting People' funding has been received to provide advice about benefits and appropriate support.

One of the residents from the site has become a site warden, and works alongside the Council's Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer.

For more information, see www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/housing

Sustainability

Teams across the Council working on major developments in Dunton Green, Horton Kirby, New Ash Green and Fort Halstead have ensured sustainability issues are considered and local communities are consulted.

- At Fort Halstead, the Sevenoaks District Local Strategic Partnership (SDLSP) has been **actively engaged** in discussions with planners; and the Council and its partners have met with developers to give their views.
- In Horton Kirby, building works have started on site and the Council and its partners in the SDLSP secured a Section 106 agreement providing for an **extension of the existing village hall**.
- In New Ash Green, facilitated **community consultations** were held during summer 2008 so that local residents had an opportunity to see three options for the redevelopment of

the village centre and talk to the architects.

Community awareness of sustainability issues is being raised through community based projects, including **Walking Buses**, **“Go Wild” Wildlife Gardening events** and **Eco Schools** projects.

Parking

Comprehensive Parking Reviews - aimed to **manage parking issues** for residents, businesses, commuters and visitors - were undertaken and implemented, after consultation with those affected, in Edenbridge and Westerham.

Playgrounds

Using funding from central government, the Council has been able to **improve play facilities** at a number of sites across the District.

In consultation with playground users, we have improved landscaping, provided natural play opportunities and additional play equipment at playgrounds in Edenbridge, Farningham, Sevenoaks and Swanley.

Air quality

The principal cause of poor air quality in the Sevenoaks District is the large volume of road traffic that uses the motorways and major trunk roads.

Whilst the District Council has to rely on national strategies and the Highways Agency to introduce local measures for these roads, we monitor and measure local air quality and actively. We also investigate and encourage decisions to improve local air quality.

We have been **working with Kent Highways Services** to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality in designated management areas throughout the District.

Planning

Key evidence is now available on housing, flood risk and sustainability to guide future development in the District.

New planning guidance on **residential extensions** came into force, giving a clear lead on high quality urban and rural environments.

The Council continues to **protect the District’s environment** and pursues those breaching planning regulations through active investigation work and planning enforcement action.

During 2008/09 over 290 new homes were completed, including 57 **affordable homes** in sustainable locations.

Our plans for 2009/10

Community involvement and healthy lifestyles

Together with partners, the Sevenoaks District Health Action Team is leading a programme of health improvement projects. Following further input from NHS West Kent, an action plan focussing on key health priorities will be delivered, monitored and evaluated.

Environment

We plan to continue to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of recycling and composting. We aim to increase community participation and maximise the use of existing recycling services.

Playgrounds

We will complete the refurbishment of the Council owned playgrounds in Sevenoaks, Farningham, Edenbridge and Swanley.

Air quality

The Council will ensure that air quality monitoring is carried out following DEFRA criteria and work with Kent Highways services to identify traffic congestion reduction schemes, to improve air quality in existing Air Quality Management Area's.

Planning

After further public involvement,

- The Local Development Framework Core Strategy will be submitted to the Secretary of State and a public examination held
- We will monitor development in the District against planning and sustainability criteria and publish the results in the Annual Monitoring Report in December 2009.

Housing

- After an in-depth scrutiny process, to return 20 empty homes into use.
- Following a successful trailblazer/kickstart bid securing government funding, to provide an exemplary HERO (Housing Energy Retraining Options) project. The project aims to empower residents to plan their own housing and careers through an outreach advice service. The aim is to reduce unemployment and dependency on welfare benefits.
- To provide an accreditation scheme for private landlords which aims to provide advice, training and support to landlords to improve the condition and management of privately rented properties and include the information on an accessible database.

Dynamic and Sustainable Economy

A District where people can live, work and have fair and equal access to travel to and from their destination, where businesses can thrive and are able to utilise the skills of local people.



Sevenoaks town centre



Local business



Housing in Edenbridge

Achievements in 2008/09

Economic development and support

In response to changing economic circumstances and the **impact of the recession** on local people and businesses, the Council has focussed on ways to help the local community.

A package of actions and interventions that we believe can have an immediate impact for those most at risk has been put in place.

The package includes:

- establishing a corporate task force
- business rate assistance for local businesses
- prompt payments for small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
- extra resources for financial advice and promoting benefit take-up, e.g. through benefit surgeries
- promoting business rate relief for SMEs
- keeping down charges, e.g. half price minibus travel

For more information, see www.sevenoaks.gov.uk

Planning

The Council has completed a comprehensive review of our Planning services bringing **significant improvements to our customers:**

- more efficient processes
- better website information
- more customer service support
- further training and development for Members and Officers
- providing better service at lower cost

The Council has aligned its Local Development Framework (LDF) – the spatial expression of the District's Community Plan and long-term vision - with other strategies and plans, e.g. Housing Strategy, South East Plan.

Rural economy

Over the last 30 years a major decline in employment in the land-based sector has been a feature of the West Kent rural economy. The local land-based sector is facing intensive pressures. The levels of profitability vary, but for many years farms (especially livestock and horticulture) have been operating at a loss, as well as income generation from existing woodland enterprises being depressed.

The Council recognises that farming plays a significant part in maintaining the quality of life for the people in Sevenoaks District, providing a diverse range of foods and helping to maintain valued open spaces and countryside of high visual and ecological value. Livestock farming, which is particularly suffering in West Kent, has an inextricable link with the quality of the environment and the landscape. Farming is also the backbone of a thriving rural tourism sector.

The Council took steps to develop and lead a strong West Kent partnership to **secure grant funding** for farmers, foresters, rural businesses and communities in the region.

In May the South East of England Development Agency (SEEDA) **approved our bid for £1.8 million** through the Rural Development Programme for England. The programme aims to promote sustainable business growth within the land-based and rural economies in the area and to improve the long-term viability of businesses reducing their reliance on future support funding

So far we have received over 25 expressions of interest and the additional funding has been used to:

- award 2 grants in excess of £43,000
- create 2 new businesses
- support 3 existing micro businesses
- create 1 new job and support 10 existing jobs

Tourism

The Council aims to ensure that opportunities for tourism within the District contribute positively to the local economy in a sustainable manner.

We **promote tourism** across the District by supporting a range of tourism businesses including accommodation providers and attractions.

Our achievements and plans

The Council is an active member of the 'Heart of Kent' partnership and with neighbouring local authorities uses joint resources through a promotional website, printed Heart of Kent Guide and online booking system.

A recent economic study of tourism shows the positive impact tourism has on the local economy, including:

- 3.4 million tourism day trips were recorded, generating £110.7 million trip expenditure. In total, £155.1 million was spent by all visitors on their trips to Sevenoaks District during this period.
- the total value of tourism activity in Sevenoaks District in 2006 is estimated to have been around £199.7 million. This value relates to direct business turnover, supplier and income induced expenditure, additional expenditure spent on second homes and by friends and relatives.
- this income to the local economy is estimated to have supported around 2,944 full-time equivalent jobs and 4,027 actual jobs. Overall, it is estimated that tourism expenditure supported 6% of local employment.

Minibus transport

Over 350 people registered for the Council's minibus service and **over 6,500 passengers journeys** were taken. The minibus service is provided for District residents who cannot readily access public transport due to age and/or disability.

Stag

The Council quickly **secured the future** operation of the Stag Theatre following the sudden withdrawal of the previous commercial operator in July 2008.

We aim to:

- enable cultural activities to flourish for all age groups across the District.
- support the economy of Sevenoaks town by ensuring provision of:

- cinema – attendance is already higher than under the previous operator.
- theatre – bookings and attendance have significantly increased.
- youth arts outreach programme.
- retain a publicly-owned asset (STAG Theatre building) within the public sector.

Working in partnership with Sevenoaks Town Council, the Council is providing improved arts and cultural activities for the community which are attracting visitors to support the town's economy. Improved relationships with local arts organisations, further partnership working, and increased community involvement will help to ensure the viability of this community facility.

For more information, see www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/stag

Our plans for 2009/10

Economic development and support

Introduce actions in response to the impact of the economic climate to support the local community, including:

- Increasing procurement through SMEs
- Recession leadership through LSPs – continue to work with our partners to identify measures to help the local community
- Benefit surgeries and HERO advice service

Planning

We will maintain a five year supply of suitable land for housing and demonstrate this by the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, as well as a supply of land for commercial development.

Tourism

We will continue to work with the Heart of Kent tourism partnership to promote tourism across the District and publicise opportunities provided by the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.

Minibus transport

We aim to increase service income in order to continue to provide services at current levels.

Stag

We will continue to work with Sevenoaks Town Council to secure the future of the Stag Community Arts Centre, by way of a long term lease and support for its youth outreach programme.

Effective Management of Council Resources

A Council that is open and honest in its decision-making, prudent in its financial management and offers value for money in the services it provides.



Street cleaning staff



Our Contact Centre



Listening Day

Achievements in 2008/09

Partnership working

Sevenoaks District Council is committed to finding ways to achieve better results for its community. We work jointly with a number of other councils in Kent to provide services with greater efficiencies.

Partnership working is key to **helping us to achieve the best** for our District.

Additionally, we use external funding to help us provide more.

Member development

The Council has a good track record of effective governance and support for our District Councillors. However we want to develop Members (Councillors) who are not just effective but empowered; to develop an Overview and Scrutiny function that does not just work well but adds substantial value to the decision making process; and to develop a rigorous regulatory and governance framework that allows Members to drive continuous improvement.

Through a series of initiatives to **empower Members** (by providing greater access to information, training and guidance), strengthen the scrutiny role, and reinforce a robust ethical and regulatory framework, our District Councillors:

- influence / control projects at an early stage.
- know about developments as soon as they happen, which enhances their ability to shape decisions and policies.
- have developed skills and knowledge to enhance the ability to fulfil their roles.
- lead the Overview and Scrutiny function:
 - Members made a series of recommendations which led to the development of a new Empty Homes Strategy for the District.
 - Overview and Scrutiny members assisted the Cabinet in identifying significant savings in the Council's budget.
 - Members provide rigorous internal challenge and **help drive continually high performance**.

Benefits service

Action had been taken during 2007/08 to improve the service provided to customers. This made significant improvements but further action was needed to reduce the time taken to process new claims.

An Action Plan was agreed and implemented in April 2008. The plan aimed to **improve performance** and introduce process changes to ensure

better processing times whilst continuing to provide **high quality customer service**.

As part of the Plan staff assessing benefit claims have been assigned alphabetical groups of customers. This provides continuity for customers and greater ownership by staff, as they handle all transactions relating to their customers.

The Action Plan was implemented whilst the team:

- dealt with changes in benefits legislation issued by Government.
- worked to cut the cost of the service, at the same time as improving performance.
- was challenged by an increase in workload – the number of new claims received in 2008/09 was 26% higher than in the previous year.

The time taken to process new claims reduced from 44 days in April 2008 to 25 days or below from July 2008 onwards.

£250,000 per year has been saved through increasing the efficiency of the service, including sharing a Benefits Fraud Officer with a neighbouring council.

Customers have given excellent feedback and the team plan to introduce further improvements to the service.

Elections

Our Electoral Services team **successfully conducted** the elections for the newly created Hextable Parish Council and the revised Swanley Town Council.

Workforce development and planning

We continuously review all our services to introduce improvements for our customers.

In 2008/09 this work included:

- Strengthening the integration of human resources issues into how we plan our work and increasing the availability of human resources data to help our staff

Our achievements and plans

and Members **manage services effectively** in changing circumstances. This helps to identify and plan for staff absence, turnover, capacity and resilience.

- We have increased cross-team working, redeployment and the redesign of jobs and introduced flexible multi-skilled staff to support services with significant increases in customer demand and workload
- Further training and development programmes ensure our staff have the right skills and customer focus to deliver consistent high quality service.

Customer service

We aim to provide high quality services to our community. Often the Council's Contact Centre is the first point of contact customers have with the Council. In 2008/09 Customer service staff increased the range of queries they can answer without transferring a call to another member of staff, improving the service provided to callers.

During 2008/09 our Contact Centre answered **85,000 calls**, with 78% answered within 20 seconds.

Information technology

The Government aims for every local authority in England and Wales to be connected to a secure Government network called the Government Connect Secure Extranet.

This network enables the easy exchange of data in an effective and secure manner, for example between the Department for Work and Pensions and council housing benefits teams.

Officers from the Council worked closely with all councils in Kent to introduce this new way of working. This approach has **increased efficiency, saved time and resources**, approximately £350,000.

Workforce development and planning

We will:

- develop staff skills and abilities to enable the Council to deliver high quality services within its limited resources
- work with other councils to promote local government as an employment choice
- assess how we develop and manage staff through the Investors in People New Choices framework.

Customer service

The Customer service team will:

- work with services across the Council to identify and reduce avoidable contact
- assist in implementing the Community Safety Unit, to enable a faster and more co-ordinated response to anti-social behaviour and other emerging community safety issues.

Information technology

The IT team will:

- assist in reviews of service processes to ensure the most effective use of technology across the Council
- replace the Council's telephony infrastructure in line with the IT Strategy and Plan 2009-12
- deliver the technical solutions to underpin the new Licensing Partnership
- continue to maintain a fit-for-purpose infrastructure (in terms of both software and hardware upgrades and maintenance) and provide a first class customer service to deal with new requests and fault reports.

Sevenoaks District Council is ready to use new central government services including the Department of Work and Pensions 'In and Out' (of work) service, the Criminal Justice Service's 'Tell us once' service and improve data security further through the use of new data transfer services for the Department of Work and Pensions.

Our plans for 2009/10

Partnership working

We will continue the pilot Planning Partnership with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, to the benefit of our customers and improved value for money.

Benefits service

The Benefits team will:

- introduce e-benefits, which should simplify and speed up the process of applying for benefits
- continuously review its processes and resources to ensure that decisions on benefits applications are made promptly, despite a major increase in the number of applications and other queries
- draw up and implement a Take-Up Strategy, to encourage those entitled to benefits to apply for them
- work with the Housing team to deliver the HERO project.

Local elections

The Council's Electoral Services team will:

- monitor legislative changes
- carry out the annual canvass of electors to update the register of electors
- conduct the parliamentary general election and any by-elections.

Challenges and opportunities

Increasingly for local authorities the emphasis is on providing more efficient, customer-focused services against a backdrop of economic uncertainty, increased responsibilities and reduction in Government funding.

This is a major challenge and Sevenoaks District Council has been doing its utmost to provide better services in the most cost-effective way for the whole community of Sevenoaks District.

We can always do better and must continue to improve.

Customer focus



To ensure our service users get the best possible service, our customer standards set out the level of service our customers can expect.

Our customer standards include promises that apply to the whole organisation as well as more detailed ones that apply to specific District Council services.

For more information, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/customerstandards

Our partners

Sevenoaks District Council works with many partner agencies, the voluntary and community, business and private sectors, the faith community and the 30 town and parish councils across the District.

These links are greatly valued by the Council and contribute significantly to the provision of services and community well-being.

The Council has developed a **Partnership Toolkit** which outlines the approaches to be applied when considering both introducing new partnerships and reviewing existing arrangements. It provides a basis for examining the key issues that require consideration, to ensure that any potential problems identified in relation to partnership working are confronted, assessed, overcome and avoided in the future.

Valuing diversity, promoting equality

We aim to ensure all our services are delivered without discrimination and take into account the needs of our local communities.

Our Equalities Scheme aims to promote understanding of equalities issues, build positive attitudes and counter all forms of disadvantage, particularly in relation to race, disability, gender, age, religion / belief and sexual orientation. It supports our corporate priority to develop safe and caring communities.

Work on diversity matters is undertaken jointly with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and a jointly funded post has been established.

Our environmental footprint



We are committed to improving our environmental performance and reducing the environmental impact of our work.

The District Council aims to reduce its carbon emissions in line with Government targets and has developed processes to deliver improvement, and measure and report progress.

Reductions in carbon use will be achieved by reducing travel, increasing the energy efficiency of our buildings and plant, reducing waste and increasing sustainable procurement. The focus will be on direct reductions in carbon emissions, as soon as possible, rather than a reliance on indirect carbon offsetting to achieve carbon neutrality.

Central and local government, as well as public authorities and institutions across England and Wales are now required to show Display Energy Certificates (DECs) for buildings in excess of 1,000m². Sevenoaks District Council's DECs are on show in our reception areas.

Energy and water

The following table shows our energy and water consumption in comparison with national figures for 2008/09.

	National median	Sevenoaks District Council
Energy cost/m ²	£9.21	£12.43
Energy consumption/m ²	201 kWh	237.94 kWh
Water cost/m ²	£1.45	£0.98
Water consumption/m ²	0.729 m ³ /m ²	1.03 m ³ /m ²
CO ₂ emissions/m ²	0.06 tonnes	0.061 tonnes

During 2008/09 the Council experienced sharp increases in energy charges and unit costs. Our energy consumption reflects the opening hours of our buildings which are longer than normal office hours to accommodate evening Council meetings.

We routinely replace plant and equipment with low energy options where applicable and will be reviewing the whole operation of the building during 2009/10 to investigate further areas for improvement.

Waste

Currently, we do not measure the amount of waste we generate at our office and depot. However we do recycle a significant proportion of our waste paper, cardboard, plastic, cans and printer cartridges.

Transport

Our vehicle fleet uses sulphur-free diesel and new vehicles purchased comply with the latest European standards for engine efficiency and reductions in pollution. Fuel use per vehicle is monitored to identify the potential for further efficiencies.

Paper and printing

We have reduced the amount of paper used in the Council by 12%. We are also taking steps to reduce the environmental impact of printing documents and therefore aim to reduce further our paper usage and carbon footprint.

Our Strategy

Our four-year Financial Strategy is reviewed, updated and rolled forward each year. Our Financial Plan coincides with this Strategy and is managed in the same way.

The Strategy for 2009/13 is updated to include the 2009/10 budget and sets out the key financial policies, risks and assumptions for the next four years, and into the future.

For more information, visit:
www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/finance

Financial management

The Council's financial strategy has been successful in increasing financial sustainability and in releasing resources for high priority areas through:

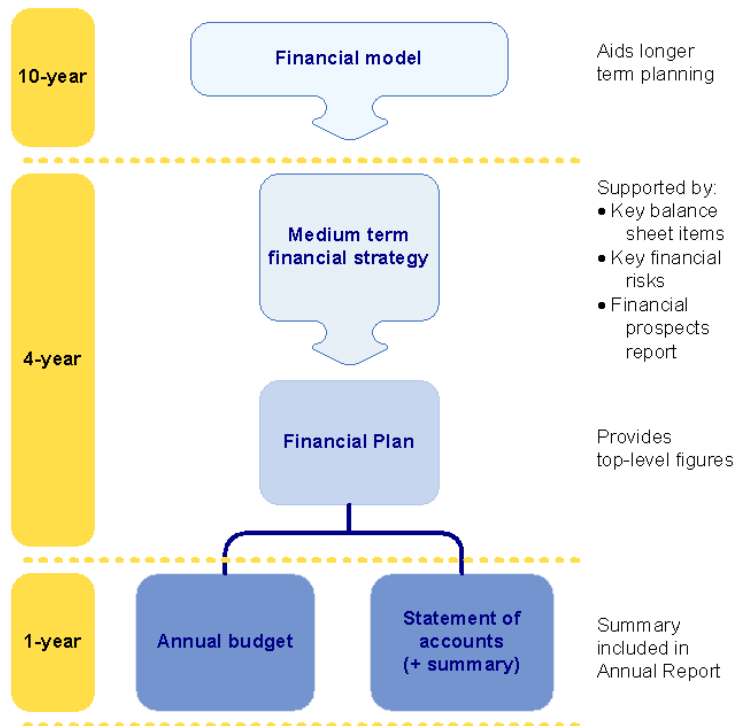
- improved value for money; and
- the movement of resources away from low priority services.

This has enabled the Council to focus on delivering high quality services based on Members' priorities and consultation with our community and partners through the Community Plan. In financial terms it has allowed the Council to move away from its reliance on general fund reserves.

Timing

The Council has detailed budgets for revenue expenditure for 2009/10 and for capital investment for four years to 2012/13. It also has a summary level four-year Financial Plan to 2012/13, together with a linked Key Balance Sheet Items Plan, again to 2013.

A 10-year rolling financial model has been developed to aid longer term planning. This allows for the financial strategy to be tested for sensitivity and for issues and developments with financial impacts to be managed. As with all prediction tools, the level of accuracy and precision reduces in years beyond 2009/10.



Budget strategy and process

The Council's Strategic Service and Budget Planning Process is reviewed and updated each year, taking into account current best practice and lessons learnt from previous years.

Budget monitoring

Comprehensive financial monitoring information is provided to our senior managers, Cabinet Members and the Finance Advisory Group. Strategic summary information is reported to the Performance & Governance Committee.

Investment Strategy

The Council is required to set out its treasury strategy for borrowing and to prepare an annual investment strategy. That strategy sets out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.

Value for Money, gains and efficiencies

Sevenoaks District Council is committed to delivering value for money as an integral part of its corporate strategy. While it has a specific responsibility to achieve value for money (VfM) from its use of public funds, this principle extends to all sources of funding. Similarly, the responsibility for pursuing VfM lies with all staff, and not just those with financial duties.

Government set targets for all councils to find value for money gains from their budgets. Between 2004/05 and 2007/08 we identified gains totalling £2.76 million, twice the target set by Government. These gains have been achieved by seeking ever more efficient ways of working, driving down the costs of procuring the goods required to deliver our services and further developing the work completed with partner organisations.

The Government has set a target for the public sector to achieve cash releasing

efficiency savings of 3% in 2008/09 and 2009/10, increasing to 4% in 2010/11.

To meet the Government's expectations the Council would be required to make savings totalling £1.75 million between 2008/11. In 2008/09 the Council recorded total efficiency savings of £1,111,719 and set a target of achieving savings of £640,000 between 2009/11.

All of the gains identified between 2004 and 2009 have been re-allocated to priority areas of the Council's budget.

Control framework

As part of the annual budget process the Corporate Resources Director (and Section 151 Officer) makes a statutory statement on the robustness of the Council's budget, and the adequacy of the reserves.

The Council's statutory Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom and audited by an external audit company, under the auspices of the Audit Commission.

Financial prospects

The Council is expected to face increasing financial pressures in future years as the current recession, likely reductions in Government funding and downward pressure on Council Tax increases present the Council with fresh challenges. However, the Council has an excellent track record in identifying and addressing its financial challenges and aims for this to continue.

For more information visit:
www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/finance

Managing people

As a major employer, the District Council recognises that our staff are our main asset.

We recognise that working with Members, Officers, our community and partners is integral to achieving our vision and priorities, through working together in an open, honest and co-operative way.

We set ourselves high standards and recognise that we can only achieve these through the skill, motivation and empowerment of our staff and therefore seek to make working for the Council a rewarding experience where everyone's contribution is valued.

The **Workforce Development Plan** is about ensuring that the Council, within its financial framework, has a flexible, developed and motivated workforce, capable of delivering its priorities and continued improvement over the coming years. It is key for the Council to ensure that organisational investment, structures and jobs make optimum use of people's skills, abilities and potential to deliver value for money, high quality services.

We strive to ensure that every person who applies for a job with the District Council is treated fairly in all employment matters, regardless of gender, age, marital status, disability, sexuality, race, colour, ethnic or national origin. For more information, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/jobs

The District Council confirms that it has complied with the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts for all transfers that have taken place and will continue to do so.

Member development

Sevenoaks District Council supports good practice for developing the skills of those who are elected and provides training and development programmes to fill any skills gaps and also for future politicians.

Performance management

Our performance management arrangements, allow us to examine our performance, look for trends over time, compare our performance with other local authorities and produce meaningful reports which can be used as a guide for service improvements. We also monitor targets to ensure they are both achievable and challenging.

Like other local authorities, we have an obligation to report on National Indicators (NI). We have also developed Local Performance Indicators (LPIs) to reflect our local priorities which are used for internal reporting. This enables quick identification of how we are performing and, if necessary, early action can be taken to rectify potential problems.

Our performance 2009

This document sets out how the Council performed against national and local performance indicators in 2008/09 and is available on the Sevenoaks District Council website.

For details of our latest performance, visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/performance

Making IT happen together

Developments in technology continue rapidly. New technologies, offering scope for new ways of working and improving service, can present great opportunities.

Effective partnering between the Technology team and the rest of the Council and our partners is essential to reap the benefits available through the use of technology.

The key objectives of our IT Strategy include:

- To ensure the most comprehensive and appropriate set of access channels to Council services are made available to all citizens
- To ensure that IT is delivering excellent services to all its customers
- To contribute directly towards the Council's Value for Money initiatives

Capital investment

The Council is required to "have regard to" the Prudential Code and to set prudential (performance) indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.

The Council has agreed that any new provision for **capital schemes** must be subject to formal appraisal processes. The Council's base capital programme covers mandatory improvement grants, IT investment and commercial vehicle replacements.

The Council's housing stock was transferred to West Kent Housing Association in 1989 and therefore the **housing investment funding** allocated by the Government is directed, with the Council's agreement, through local Registered Social Landlords.

Asset management

"Strategic Asset Management is the activity that seeks to align the asset base with the organisation's corporate goals and objectives. It ensures that the land and buildings asset base of an organisation is optimately structured in the best corporate interest on the organisation concerned"

RICS Public Sector Asset Management Guidelines 2008

The Council continuously reviews its property holdings with a view to reducing the amount of surplus property, and promotes the transfer of local amenity land to the local town and parish councils if it is considered that that would provide a more effective local management.

The Council works with social housing providers to, wherever possible, provide land to enable all ranges of social housing to be constructed especially in rural areas.

Earmarked funding has been set aside for future **asset maintenance** costs in the medium term. Also a sustainable renewal fund is in place for the Council's commercial vehicle fleet.

The Asset Maintenance Action Plan and the 10-year asset maintenance assessments ensure that asset use and capital investment decisions are in line with key priorities and achieve value for money.

Asset management is a major area of expenditure on the Council's assets. The largest part of this expenditure is made in conjunction with partners, particularly Sencio, and is used in a way that gives service improvements alongside essential maintenance.

Strengthening links with Kent Police

The Council is working towards greater improvements in public safety and tackling anti-social behaviour by working closely with Kent Police. A joint Council and Police Community Safety Unit has been set up based in Sevenoaks District Council's Argyle Road offices.

Sevenoaks District Council, Kent Police and their partners have worked closely together since the early 1990s to reduce crime and the fear of crime. Sevenoaks is now the safest District in Kent.

The Council and Police are keen to build on these successes. The aim of a joint Community Safety Unit is to enable a faster and more co-ordinated response to anti-social behaviour and other emerging community safety issues and to enable the partners to carry out more preventative work.

This innovative approach will bring a number of other Council teams involved in community safety, including licensing and environmental health, in closer contact with the Police.

Leisure services

The Council's leisure centres and services are delivered by Sencio Community Leisure, a not-for-profit leisure trust, working in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council. The Council owns and maintains the leisure sites.

Sencio aims *to provide a focused and cohesive approach to leisure in partnership with the District Council.*

The Trust delivers a programme of innovative and exciting health and fitness opportunities for people of all ages and abilities throughout the District.

Sencio Community Leisure operates:

- Edenbridge Leisure Centre
- Sevenoaks Leisure Centre
- White Oak Leisure Centre (Swanley)
- Wildernesse Sports Centre (Sevenoaks)
- Lullingstone Park Golf Course

Sevenoaks District Council supports local sports development, working closely with Sencio, to develop sporting opportunities across the District in partnership with schools, clubs and other sporting associations such as the Sevenoaks Sports Council and Kent Sports Development Unit to increase participation.

More information is available at www.sencio.co.uk



Sevenoaks District Annual Report 2009

If you have any comments about this document or require further copies, please contact:

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The Annual Report is available on our website:
www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/performance

Other formats:

This publication is available in large print.
For a copy, call 01732 227414.

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