



Sevenoaks District Council

Corporate Plan



01

Introduction

We are determined to ensure Sevenoaks District Council is an organisation each and every one of our residents and businesses can be proud of.

By understanding what is important to you we will ensure the council is focussed on doing the things you need. We will cut down on the things that aren't so important and be a council that you can trust to make improvements in the right areas.

Our ambitions will not be tempered by the heavy handed reductions in funding that we have endured since 2010 as the UK looks to balance its books. Instead we will innovate and seek not only new ways of working but new ways of making the money we do have grow and work better for you.

We will need council tax and business rates to be paid and at times these bills will need to increase to match the demands you place up on us. In return we will remain customer focussed and determined to ensure all of the services we deliver are of the highest quality.

This Corporate Plan tells you about the type of organisation we are and sets out the actions we will take to deliver on our vision and our promises to you over the next two years. It will help us to build on our successes and push us on to break new ground and reach new heights in the quality of the services we deliver to you.



A white handwritten signature of Peter Fleming on a purple background.

Cllr Peter Fleming

Leader of Sevenoaks District Council



A white handwritten signature of Dr. Pav Ramewal on a purple background.

Dr. Pav Ramewal

Chief Executive, Sevenoaks District Council



02

Your Council

Between 2010 and 2015 when this plan reaches its end our reduction in funding from government will have exceeded 50%. This has posed significant challenges, but challenges we have faced head on.

This has only been possible because of strong political leadership and a unique work place culture where staff have embraced change.

To get us to where we are today, as one of the best ranked local authorities in the country with Gold Standard Investors in People and resident satisfaction levels pushing 70% we have tried, tested and trusted plans.

Our plans help us to manage our money, people and other assets to deliver on the promises our Council makes to residents and businesses.



Central to the council's success is its belief in customer service and the empowerment of its staff.

'The customer is anyone who isn't me' is everyday language and known by all of the staff. It drives us to value every interaction with our customers and leads us to challenge the way we deliver our services to ensure the customer is at the heart of everything we do.

Where we get it wrong we have an open and transparent complaints process. And where complaints highlight our shortcomings or errors we work quickly to learn those lessons and improve our approach to customers and the way we deliver that service.

As a service provider the quality of our services is very much dependent on the

quality of the people that deliver them. We seek to employ candidates that understand our culture, that believe in customer service and have a desire to learn and improve. In return we have a keen focus on staff development through empowerment. We trust our staff to take decisions, to take informed risks and to innovate. We don't look to blame, but instead focus on what can be done differently next time.

This approach has allowed us to reduce our budgets and our workforce whilst seeing improvements in productivity, performance and satisfaction with services. (Turn into a graphic)

For more information about the Council's customer standards, plans and strategies visit the Council website at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk



03

Money Matters

Financial management is one of our greatest strengths. We were the very first in local government to introduce a ten year budget framework, a tool that allows us to plan our finances over the long term and removes the need for knee jerk decisions when our government support is reduced or our income levels decline.

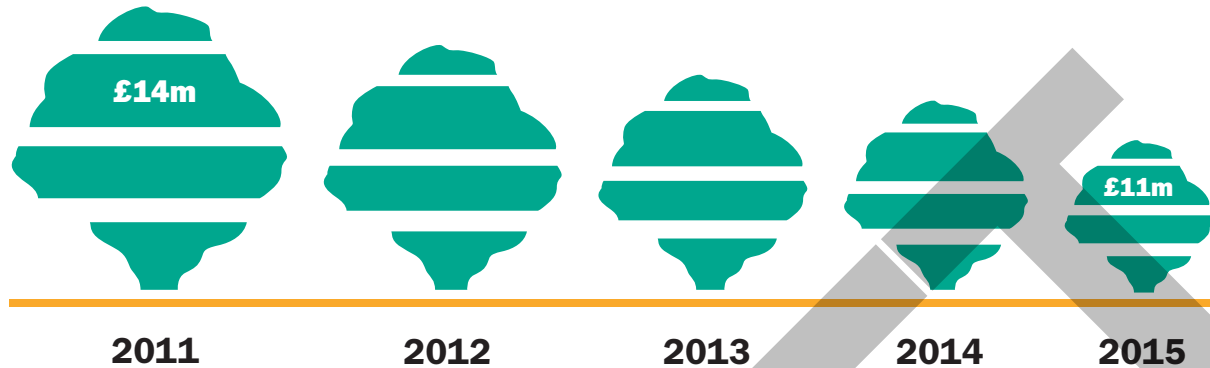
Our budget assumptions are reviewed each year and Cabinet Members take responsibility for ensuring any growth in budgets is identified and counter balanced by sufficient savings. Cabinet is supported by our Advisory Committees who can highlight additional areas of growth and help identify new opportunities for savings. Our Scrutiny Committee is able to call-in Cabinet decisions to help the Council to sustain a balanced 10 year budget.

Since 2011 we have delivered savings in excess of £4 million. The savings plan took the bold decision to deliver significant up front savings. By making on going savings from our budget in the first year of our savings plan we prevented the need for an additional £2.5 million in savings had those early decisions not been made.

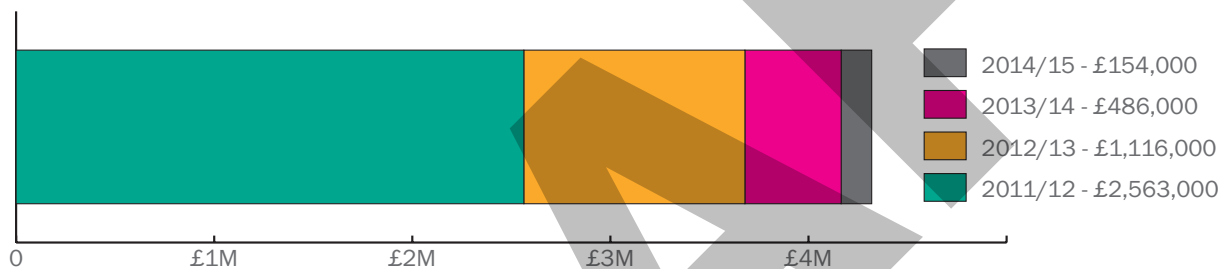
Our Financial Management practices support our promise to deliver value for money and have been recognised by peers and external auditors as some of the best in local government.

Budgets

Budget Chart 2010 - 2015



Savings – £4.3m between 2011 and 2014



Average Council Tax - 2011/12 to 2013/14

2011/12 - £181.89 (£3.50 per week)

2012/13 - £181.89 (£3.50 per week)

2013/14 - £185.49 (£3.57 per week)

We have worked extensively to deliver savings in excess of £4m in the last three years but we have also been investing and protecting the most valued services.

We have...

- Bought a successful Torch Really and Paralympic Cycling events to the District in 2012
- Continued the Community Grant Scheme which awards £250k annually to voluntary and community groups
- Continued to collect all of your rubbish and recycling each and every week

- Worked hard with partners to keep levels of crime amongst the very lowest in the County
- Strengthened our approach to supporting business and bringing new businesses in to the District
- Secured £1.8m of funding to support rural businesses through the West Kent Partnership
- Pioneered a unique HERO Service, supporting 100's of residents with their housing and work needs

04

Vision & Promises

Our vision for Sevenoaks District is **'to sustain and develop a fair, safe and thriving local economy'**.

We want to ensure that Sevenoaks District remains a great place to live, work and visit and to help us achieve this we have made five promises to the District, these are:



To provide value for money



To work in partnership to keep the district of Sevenoaks safe



To collect rubbish efficiently and effectively



To protect the Green Belt



To support and develop the local economy

The following pages set out what these promises mean, what we have done so far to meet them and what we will be doing next.



Promise 4: Protecting the Green Belt

Our Promise 1



Providing value for money



Cllr Brian Ramsay
Portfolio Holder for
Finance & Resources

What does it mean?

Keeping costs low whilst delivering the services that people want at the best quality

Track Record

We were rated by the Audit Commission as being in the top two per cent of all Council's for delivering value for money.

Our external auditors continue to praise our approach to value for money and have highlighted our 10 year budget, 4 year savings plan and impact assessments for all of our savings as best practice.

Over the last two years we have:

- Saved £400,000 a year by providing our services in partnership with other Councils. This includes audit, anti-fraud, council tax, business rate and benefit services, Environmental Health services and the Licensing service
- Reduced costs by sharing management and staff in services such Building Control, CCTV and Parking
- Shared our office space with partners including the Police and Kent County Council
- Transferred services to community groups to ensure their future, including minibuses, youth services and the ever popular family fun days
- Reduced our workforce, changed staff terms and conditions and reduced the number and cost of senior managers

Future plans

We will continue to make cost reductions and savings in the way we deliver our services. And to protect the services that you tell us are important to you from the impact of on going cuts to our funding we are determined to break new ground, seek new ways of working and find new ways to raise income.

We will...



Improve our website and allow those residents that want to self serve to do so



Continue to investigate working in partnership and sharing our services with others



Move towards a paperless office making us increasingly efficient



Raise income from letting out vacant space in our offices



Invest in land and buildings that can increase our income



Be prepared to borrow at low rates of interest to enable investments that generate good levels of return

Statistics and Comments to be highlighted in design elements of the pages:

Council Tax has increased by just 1.98% since 2011

All of your District Council services for £3.57 per week

Our Promise 2



Keeping the District Safe



Cllr Michelle Lowe

Portfolio Holder for
Housing, Welfare &
Community Safety

What does it mean?

Working with the Police and others to prevent crime, address anti social behaviour and make the District a safe place to live, work and travel.

Track Record

The Community Safety Partnership has been working to reduce crime across Sevenoaks District for the last 10 years, making it one of the safest places to live in the UK.

But we are not complacent. We know a lot about crime that occurs in the District and we work hard with others to try and prevent it.

Over the last two years we have:

- Worked more closely with the Police, including providing a Police Station and dedicated Community Safety Unit within the Council Offices
- Worked with communities through PACT panels to address issues of crime in local areas
- Investigated and addressed more than 350 reports of anti social behaviour across the District
- Supported local people to address speeding vehicles through the Speed Watch scheme
- Improved technology in our CCTV room to reduce costs and ensure more of the people committing crime can be identified

Future plans

We will continue to improve the way we work in partnership to reduce crime across the District. And through our Community Plan and Community Safety Action plan we have set out clear actions to reduce keep the District safe.

We will...



Tackle anti social behaviour, including fly-tipping and graffiti



Deliver a low crime rate across the District



Support vulnerable and repeat victims of crime and anti social behaviour



Tackle speeding vehicles and improve safety for all road users including pedestrians and cyclists



Work with partners Council to assist the 101 "Troubled Families" identified across Sevenoaks District

For more information about Keeping the District Safe please visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/communityplan and www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/communitysafety

Statistics and Comments to be highlighted in design elements of the pages:

Less than 5,000 crimes a year

95.4% of residents feel safe

Our Promise 3



Collecting rubbish efficiently and effectively



Cllr Ian Bosley

Portfolio Holder for
Planning & Environment

What does it mean?

Collecting your rubbish and recycling every week and keeping streets clean

Track Record

You consistently tell us that having a District that is kept clean and tidy is important and we know a vast majority of you like to have both your rubbish and recycling collected every week.

We have prioritised these services through all of our recent funding cuts and managed to do so by seeking more efficient collection routes and making sure street cleaning occurs most regularly where it really needs it.

Over the last two years we have:

- Collected your rubbish and recycling every week (unless deep snow got in the way!)
- Improved our garden waste collection service
- Taken on more business customers for our trade waste service
- Responded within our target times to all fly-tips and abandoned vehicles that are our responsibility to remove
- Saved £100,000 a year by reviewing our refuse collection rounds and making them more efficient

Future plans

We are committed to maintaining a clean and tidy District. By employing our own staff we can continue to be responsive to delivering the services that meet your needs and we can continue to seek ways to keep costs within our budget levels

We will...



Continue to collect your rubbish and recycling each week



Seek ways to increase the amount of rubbish that is recycled



Continue to replace our oldest refuse vehicles with new ones that are more efficient and better for the environment

Continue to ensure that all your waste is either recycled or used to generate electricity

Tonnes of waste collected

32% of waste recycled

None of our waste is land filled

Tonnes of fly tipped waste collected

Number of bin collections each year

% of bin collections missed each year

Number of abandoned vehicles removed

Weekly cost per household rubbish and recycling collection

Our Promise 4

Protecting the Green Belt



Cllr Ian Bosley

Portfolio Holder for
Planning & Environment

What does it mean?

Managing the housing and business development the District needs whilst protecting the beauty and character of the local area.

Sevenoaks District covers 142 square miles, of which 93% is categorised as Green Belt. Much of the District is rural in character with 60% of the landscape within the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

This presents significant challenges to find the land that is required for new development for housing and for businesses that will continue to make for vibrant local communities.

Over the last two years we have:

- Delivered our target and seen more than 165 new homes across the District each year
- Granted sufficient planning permissions that our target for new housing in the District will be delivered in each of the next five years
- Increased the number of Conservation Area Management Plans from 5 to 13
- Prepared the Districts Allocations and Development Management Plan

Future plans

We will continue to review and update the planning policies we have in place in consultation with the. And we will continue to manage development across the District in accordance with the policies we have in place.

We are very fortunate to live and work in a District with such beautiful towns, villages and countryside which we are committed to preserving as far as possible for future generations.

We will...



Review our Planning Service and seek to make the decision process as consistent and transparent as possible



Review our Statement of Community Involvement and clarify how people can get involved in shaping local planning policy



Work with Town and Parish Councils that wish to adopt Neighbourhood Plans

For more information about our local planning policies please visit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/ldf

Statistics and Comments to be highlighted in design elements of the pages:

Number of planning applications decided

% of planning applications granted

% of planning applications processed in target time

Our Promise 5



Supporting and developing the local economy



Cllr Roddy Hogarth
Portfolio Holder for
Economic & Community
Development

What does it mean?

Supporting our local businesses, seeking to enhance infrastructure and attracting new business to the District

Track Record

The need to support businesses across our District has been brought to sharp focus in recent years. It is obvious now more than ever that the Council has a real role to play in supporting businesses that are already here and seeking to bring new businesses to the area to provide job opportunities to the District.

With limited resources we have been seeking out and securing additional Government and European Union funding to enable us to achieve our ambitions for businesses. We are also working hard to review all of our own services to ensure we give businesses the right level of support when they need it.

Over the last two years we have:

- Secured the Marks and Spencer's development in Sevenoaks
- Supported rural businesses with grants through the £1.8m Leader programme
- Hosted business events to ensure we are actively consulting and networking with local businesses to learn more about what matters to them
- Provided funding to Visit Kent to promote the District as a tourist destination for the benefit of our businesses
- Supported apprenticeship schemes and offered young people looking to get in to work the opportunity to gain work experience at the Council
- Campaigned strongly to bring better broadband provision to the District
- Supported Town and Parish Council's in securing Government funding to support business improvements in their local areas

Future plans

We will shortly be concluding work on a new Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan for Sevenoaks District. Consultation with businesses will help us to prioritise our ambitions and help us to provide long term support for our local economy and for people seeking work in the District. Alongside completing our Strategy and Action Plan

We will...



Bring a share of £6.5m of funding to Sevenoaks District to help current businesses with zero or low interest loans to grow their business



Bring £450,000 of funding to the District to help local businesses improve their energy efficiency and reduce their overheads

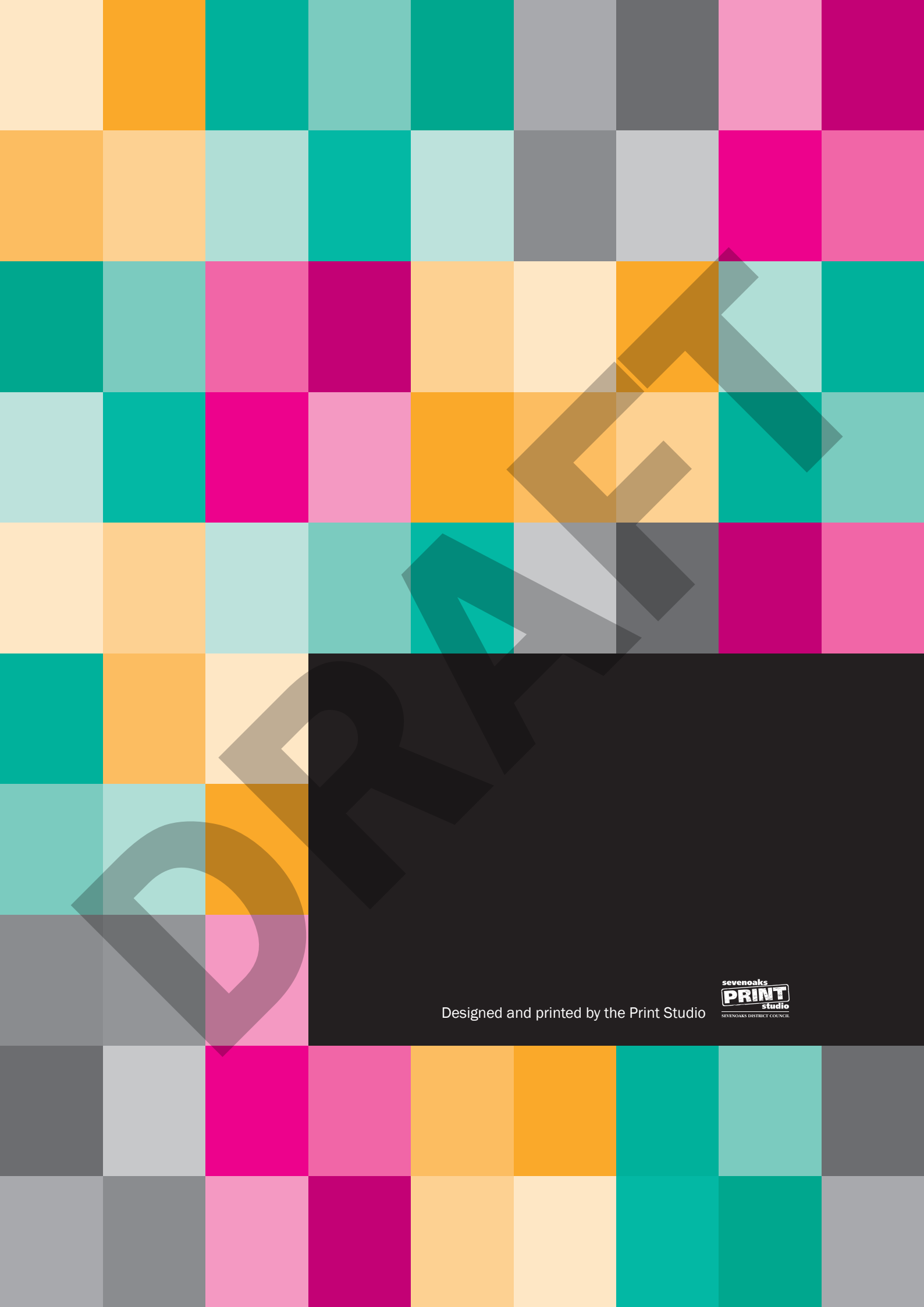


Consider our own initiatives to bring broadband to parts of the District that major suppliers are unable to prioritise

Statistics and Comments to be highlighted in design elements of the pages:

Number of businesses in the District

1.7% of unemployed people in the District



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