

This is our Corporate Plan

“A radical and hugely impressive organisation”. (Council of the Year Judges)

Our new Corporate Strategy takes this statement further: we’re a Seriously Different Council. This means going beyond the traditional remit of a district council by putting the wellbeing of our residents and businesses at the heart of everything we do, while still providing high quality services at a price people can afford.

The Council's work will be built on excellence, innovation and value for money.

We know that a great deal of what we already do as a district council makes a significant contribution to our residents’ quality of life and sense of wellbeing. But we are ambitious for our communities and we want to do more.

Wellbeing isn’t just about access to health services, it’s also about doing all we can to provide suitable homes for people to live in, a safe, healthy and protected environment and a strong local economy that provides the jobs and services we need. It’s about our lifestyle choices and opportunities to plan our future, and services that keep people living independently for longer. We also understand that even small changes can result in a significant impact, and that we can play our part in supporting, promoting and delivering these.

We have looked at how we can work better across our council teams and with our partners to make this happen using five themes: the environment, our economy, community safety, housing and health. And we’ve underpinned these with three pillars that will support everything we do: excellent services, innovation and quality, and always making sure we deliver the very best value.

What we've done...a look back

“Sevenoaks has blazed a trail for all of English local government. What it has achieved has taken vision, initiative and nerves of steel at a time of unprecedented uncertainty for town halls.” – The Guardian Public Sector Award Chief Judge

Sevenoaks District Council is the first council in the country to become self-sufficient of central government funding, fulfilling a promise we made to residents.

We have gone from a grant of over £5 million just a few years ago, to no grant funding at all in 2018.

We have made big savings in bureaucracy, and reduced our costs. We have increased income to make up the shortfall by investing in property and projects that the whole District benefits from. Through innovation and tough choices we have protected our services for all residents.

These achievements have been widely recognised by our colleagues in local government and beyond.

A look forward....

Although we are proud of our achievements and how we have met the challenges of the past 6 years, we know there are more challenges to come.

Sevenoaks District Council is ambitious for the community it serves. We will continue to deliver excellent services, to the highest quality, always ensuring the very best value. Wellbeing will be the focus of everything we do.

This means that we want our residents to lead long, happy and healthy lives, and our businesses to thrive and prosper.

It means working to ensure our communities have suitable homes to live in, within a safe, healthy and protected environment, and supporting a strong local economy that provides the jobs and services we need.

Our five themes:

1. The high quality **environment** of the district plays a pivotal role in the wellbeing of our residents. Our focus remains on protecting the very special environment of the district. The number of homes we should be building to meet future demands is a huge challenge in an area predominantly Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Yet we know there are many families and young people in particular who need a home of their own or more space to grow. Failure to provide this puts our economy and our communities at risk.

2. The district's **economy** will always be hugely influenced by our proximity to London. As the economy changes new jobs will be created and skills required. We will support businesses and residents through the transition ahead, with our tailored support for businesses and focus on our towns and rural economies and new opportunities for training.

3. The availability of affordable **housing** is the single biggest issue facing the future of the district. With the link between housing and health well known the need to provide the right homes for the future of the district has never been greater. To achieve this the district council will start to build homes for the first time in 30 years.

4. We are fortunate to live in one of the **safest places** in the country, but we understand we will need to continue to work with our communities and partners to maintain this. Supporting our outstanding voluntary and community groups in their work with the most isolated and vulnerable residents in the district will continue to be a priority.

5. We will deliver first class **health** prevention in our district. This means residents will have access to the most appropriate support when they need it. We will do this by linking our leisure facilities, housing, open spaces, planning and environmental health work together.

So we need to increase our resilience, and look at long term, sustainable solutions with our residents, alongside those changes we can make straight away. This means nurturing our self-sufficiency, growing our partnerships and providing even better service to our customers, residents and businesses. .

The judges who awarded us Council of the Year told us we were a “radical and hugely impressive organisation”. We want to take this further, and to be seen as a Seriously Different Council. Still providing all the high quality services we should do at a price people can afford, but going beyond the traditional remit of a district council, running wellbeing through everything we do.

We will regularly review progress against the actions we have set out and we will report back each year on the progress we make

Theme: Environment

The Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are the hallmarks of our District. Protecting these, and developing a Local Plan that truly reflects our district's needs as well as our residents' wishes, will help us to sustain Sevenoaks District into the future. This is a key focus for the council.

We have the busiest Planning Team in the county of Kent. This reflects the dynamic nature of the district and the pressures on it too. We will continue to give the highest care and consideration to planning decisions to make sure we get it right.

We are committed to maintaining a clean and tidy district. We continue to be the only council in Kent to collect rubbish and recycling on a weekly basis; this allow us to send less than 2% of waste to landfill. By employing our own staff to do this we can continue to be responsive to our residents' needs and to seek ways to keep costs within our budget levels.

Links to: Local Plan/Community Plan/The 3 Pillars

Influence and collaboration: KCC Transport and Highways; Kent Wildlife Trust

Actions/promises/priorities

Protect our high quality natural environment, including the Green Belt, areas of outstanding natural beauty and biodiversity that form our unique character. This can only be achieved with a robust local plan.

Take action to reduce waste, and maintain our weekly rubbish and recycling collection

Support high standards for the new development, including design, safety, connectivity to services and transport and neighbourhood links; open up our countryside so people enjoy our footpaths and bridle paths more. Health will be a major consideration in our next Local Plan.

Theme: Economy

We know the Sevenoaks District is a great place in which to live and work, and for businesses to invest in and grow. We want to create a district that remains productive, and attractive to others who are looking for somewhere to start or expand their business.

We can't always influence global factors but we can play to our district's strengths. Clearly London remains a strong pull for employment and businesses but this puts us in a strong position. The backbone to our home grown economy, like much of the West of Kent, is our small and micro businesses. "Our Team Around the Business" approach, where businesses can get advice on a range of council services in one place, will support them. Our rural businesses form a significant part of our district's character; our farmers and landowners in particular are already adept at diversification and we support them in their campaign for faster and more accessible broadband.

Access to high quality jobs has a significant impact on wellbeing: jobs that are secure, have good social connections, provide us with the ability to use and develop our skills, have clear responsibilities and opportunities to have say in a supportive workplace. We will use our influence to attract inward investment that provides these jobs and skills, and work with our partners to support those furthest from the labour market to access them.

Links to:

Economic Development Strategy/Community Plan/The 3 Pillars

Influence and Collaboration: West Kent Partnership; West Kent LEADER Local Strategic Partnership Supported Employment Group

Actions/Promises/Priorities

Build on the district's thriving economy through the regeneration of our market towns, and enhancing both the visitor and rural economies.

Protect the economy of the district by preserving and making better use of existing employment sites, and by redeveloping previously used land

Support new and existing district businesses through our Team Around the Business approach excellent customer service and supporting local employers to promote mental and physical wellbeing at work.

Theme: Housing

Wellbeing starts at home. The biggest determinant of your health is where you live and we want all residents to have the chance to live in a home that meets their needs. Our bold and innovative housing strategy builds on extensive research about housing need in the district. House prices in the district are beyond the reach of many – this presents clear challenges when living in their own home, in the area they grew up in, is still the preferred option for most people. More thought, more options, more supply and better design are needed if we are to make right-sizing more popular for older people in the district, and free up homes for families.

Building homes for the next generation is a clear necessity. We are also committed to supporting those who can to remain in their own homes, using our HERO service to combat homelessness at an early stage, and putting in place the repairs and adaptations needed that will prevent falls and help residents maintain their independence. We also have an innovative emphasis on tackling the shorter life expectancies associated with poor quality housing, and developing suitable housing options for an ageing population whatever their circumstances.

Our Handy HERO service is already making a difference to residents' lives by adapting their homes while they are still in hospital, so they can return home the moment they are ready, getting them safely home needs to be a priority for everyone.

Links to: Housing and Health Strategy/Community Plan/The 3 Pillars; Kent and Medway Housing Strategy

Influence and Collaboration: West Kent Housing, Moat, Private Sector Landlords

Actions/Promises/Priorities

Deliver our Housing Strategy for Sevenoaks, providing a choice of accommodation to meet the needs of residents including affordable housing and homes for older people

Protect the strong local identities of our neighbourhoods, ensuring residents will be safe and healthy and proud of the area in which they live and work. Build dementia friendly towns and villages across the district so older people can enjoy independent living for as long as possible

Provide advice and support to prevent homelessness and support our residents to build a future for themselves.

Theme: Community Safety

A feeling of belonging to a neighbourhood and a community promotes a sense of wellbeing and safety and can protect residents, especially those who are more vulnerable, from harm. Keeping our district a safe place to live, work and travel strengthens our communities, and our role enables us to bring together the necessary people for this to happen.

We have worked hard with our partners to achieve one of the lowest crime rates in the country. We will continue to work with them to reduce crime further.

Our community and voluntary sector is an essential partner for us to reach vulnerable and isolated residents. We will use our resources to facilitate this, and to make sure that the residents are supported through emergencies such as flooding.

Keeping informed and safe, especially in the online world is a universally held challenge and we will do our part to support this. We are committed to good practice in safeguarding of children and of vulnerable adults, rolling out the “see it, say it” approach through teams including, Licensing, Environmental Health and our award winning CCTV staff.

We are proud of our commitment to creating dementia friendly environments in our towns and villages across the district where vulnerable people will be safer, and will continue to maintain this support.

Links to:

Community Safety Strategy/Action Plan/Community Plan/Local Plan/The 3 Pillars
Influence and collaboration: West Kent Community Safety Partnership

Actions/Promises/Priorities

Build strong and connected neighbourhoods where residents feel proud of where they live and have a sense of belonging.

Support the district's voluntary and community sector to reach the more vulnerable and isolated residents.

Protect our residents by making sure that all of our polices, partnerships and teams are working together to safeguard individuals and communities

Theme: Health

We are committed to playing our part in preventing many of the health issues that often escalate upwards and put pressure on the NHS, and to working with partners to align our services around this goal. We have a unique and ambitious health deal with Kent County Council, created by Sevenoaks District, shared with other West Kent Districts, which forms the basis for our work. We now have front line responsibility for delivering first class health prevention services in the district, directly linking them with our other core services that can impact on health.

Our Licensing and Environmental Teams will work closely together to build an environment that is conducive to health and well-being, preventing the conditions that can lead to ill health.

Our successful HERO service (Housing, Energy and Retraining Options) which has been so successful in keeping levels of homelessness extremely low, has been upgraded to include Super HERO officers providing support and advice on health as well as housing. More recently, these have been joined by Handy HEROes, who are helping our NHS partners reduce bed-blocking by providing the necessary adaptations and repairs needed for an early and safe return home from hospital.

Our One You advisors are starting to tackle the non-medical reasons why people visit the GP such as anxiety caused by debt, asthma caused by damp housing and a range of conditions with loneliness as their root cause, and our innovative use of the Better Care Fund already being recognised as good practice and is enabling us to provide services as diverse as tackling hoarding, and breast feeding support.

Links to:

Housing and Health Strategy/Local Plan/Community Plan/Health Inequalities Action Plan/The 3 Pillars

Influence: Clinical Commissioning Group, West Kent Health Improvement Board

Actions/Promises/Priorities

Adapt residents homes while they are in hospital so they can be discharged as soon as they are clinically ready, giving them a better chance to return to independent living.

Provide support that tackles the non-medical reasons why people visit their GP or hospital, helping them to make and sustain the changes needed to lead healthier lives

Deliver first class health prevention and wellbeing services, linking them directly to our core services such as leisure and housing that can impact on health and wellbeing.

