

DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

2009-2014

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Foreword by Leader and Chief Executive of the Council

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Executive Summary

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Our Borough – The Place, People and Council

Place & People

Tunbridge Wells is uniquely positioned within the Heart of Kent, and benefits from a rich historical legacy and is home to an array of well-established villages and rural communities, as well as the thriving town centres of Royal Tunbridge Wells, Cranbrook, Paddock Wood and Southborough. Fifty five per cent of our population live in Royal Tunbridge Wells and forty five per cent in rural towns and villages.

Covering 33,133 hectares, the borough is home to a population of 104,030 residents, living in 42,695 households (2001 Census) representing 7.7 per cent of the Kent county population. The borough neighbours the East Sussex districts of Rother and Wealden, and the Kent districts of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Maidstone and Ashford and benefits from good transport links to London and the south coast.

Tunbridge Wells is an attractive place, over two thirds of our borough is designated as an Area of Outstanding National Beauty and includes ten Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Our residents enjoy a high quality of life with average life expectancy of 79.4 years and over seventy per cent of our residents live in owner-occupied households.

However, we also face significant challenges:

- the high cost of housing, coupled with a significant gap between housing supply and need means that there is a significant challenge in balancing the housing market
- whilst in overall terms the borough appears to be affluent, there are areas of deprivation. For example, within the borough there are areas ranked among the most deprived twenty per cent in Kent and Medway and in these areas, life expectancy is on average three years less than the borough average
- the high cost of living makes it difficult to attract new people to the borough and adversely affects some of our vulnerable residents. It can also makes it difficult for the Council to recruit and retain employees
- Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre is reliant on the retail economy and in recent years has suffered a relative decline in retail rankings in the face of increasing competition elsewhere. In addition, the impact of the current economic downturn needs to be considered locally
- the geography of the borough increases the need to promote equal access to services in rural and urban areas
- an ageing population: by 2016, over twenty per cent of our total population will be over the age of 65
- engagement with black minority ethnic (BME) and new communities is challenging due to the small numbers within the borough
- ensuring we both reduce our local contribution to climate change and promote adaptation to the consequences of climate change
- reducing traffic congesting and the associated air quality impacts

The Council acknowledges these challenges and has plans in place to address these as part of delivering its priorities and as part of its corporate and service planning process.

The Council

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is a high performing, innovative authority. We are ranked amongst the best performing councils in the country in terms of our performance, customer satisfaction and value for money.

The Council is proactive and works effectively through a range of partnerships to identify and deliver local priorities. Particular examples include the 'Ward Walks' initiative which sees the Council and our partners engaging local neighbourhoods to identify priorities and our 'Love Where you Live' campaign which has raised the profile of environmental issues and pride in the local community.

Other notable achievements over the course of the past year include the establishment of a joint venture company relationship with a private sector partner to oversee the regeneration of our town centres over the next ten years, and the opening of the Tunbridge Wells Gateway which brings together a range of services under one roof in a town centre location. These initiatives have been driven by our vision to enhance the quality of life for all but also to ensure we plan for our future generations.

Our Governance Structures

The Council has 48 Councillors, with overall Conservative control. There are forty four Conservative Councillors and four Liberal Democrat [eC](#)Councillors. The Cabinet consists of six portfolio holders aligned to the Council's corporate priorities. Cabinet is supported in its work by a team of Lead Members and Champions.

The Council has its very own Councillor "watchdog" service in the form of Overview and Scrutiny with three Select Committees. The Select Committees are supported by a dedicated team managed by an Overview and Scrutiny Manager, shared with Maidstone Borough Council. The Select Committees keep an eye on the Cabinet through reviewing policy and decisions, whilst carrying out their own reviews of Council and other public services to develop new policies, plans and practices. The Select Committees have carried out reviews, which have shaped Council policy and improved the lives of residents. For example a review of migrant workers has resulted in the creation of a welcome pack, which will provide useful information to promote integration and ensure migrant workers are able to access services. The review of waste and recycling has led to recommendations to improve the service to residents and will be fulfilled in the new waste and recycling contract. The Select Committees have listened to residents and acted on their behalf to improve the borough: recently land adjoining Woodbury Park Cemetery was reviewed by Scrutiny working with the Friends of Woodbury Park, and the Council is now considering how the land can be acquired for the use by the community. A review of the relationship the Council has with the Kent Highways service, carried out jointly with Maidstone Borough Council, has led to changes in communication and an improved dialogue with the Council. Scrutiny has held the Cabinet to account through using its call-in powers ensuring the public received answers to their concerns, regarding the future use of the Council's Cranbrook Office site and making changes to improve the new Council logo. Scrutiny has also looked at value for money and Council services. An important post within Tourism and Economic Development was extended for an additional year, following a Scrutiny review of the value for money provided by the Tourism section.

The Council employs over 400 people, with fifty per cent living and working within the borough. Following a restructure in 2006, the Council is now organised into three directorates, with Performance and Communication reporting directly to the Chief Executive.

The Directorate of Planning and Development has responsibility for Planning, Building Control, Economic Development and Regeneration, and Corporate and Community Planning. It also has temporary responsibility for Leisure and Well-being activities. The Directorate is focused on achieving physical, social and economic improvements for the borough and its residents, with a focus on priority neighbourhoods, community engagement and town centre regeneration.

The Directorate of Services to the Community includes Housing and Health, and Environment and Street Scene services. The Directorate is leading on embedding the improvements delivered in Housing services, as well as enhancing the borough's public areas and continuing to maintain a very high performing household waste and street cleansing service. The service is also working closely with the Primary Care Trust, to ensure inequalities in health outcomes are addressed.

The Directorate of Change and Business Support provides internal support services to frontline services including HR, Legal, IT, Revenues and Benefits, Finance and Property Services. It has responsibility for the Council's governance arrangements, including Overview and Scrutiny and Internal Audit, and also plays a lead role in embedding a culture of change across all services and functions of the Council, through better use of ICT and improvements to business processes to achieve efficiencies and service improvements. Since 2008, there have been two significant changes to the Directorate: the opening of a Tunbridge Wells Gateway to improve public access to services and the establishment of a Delivery Unit to assist (along with performance, financial and risk management) in the delivery of the Council's key projects and priorities.

The Council is overseen by a Management Board comprising of the Chief Executive, three Directors, and the Council's Head of Finance and Governance (S151 Officer).

The Council's Management Team consists of the Management Board and Heads of Service and meets on a monthly basis to ensure a co-ordinated approach to delivering Council priorities, to address key cross-cutting issues and to spread best practice.

The Management Forum consists of all Heads of Service and their direct report managers' meet twice a year to contribute and inform long-term planning within the Council. Recent work has been focused on the development of Core Values for the Council, supporting the People Strategy and travel planning.

Our Achievements 2004-2009

The Council set four Corporate Priorities in 2006 on the basis of a range of consultation exercises establishing public priorities and priorities for improvement.

Set out below are the key achievements that have been delivered against each of these in 2004-2009:

Promote and maintain a thriving and diverse local economy

Promoting and maintaining a thriving and diverse local economy covers a range of Council activities including supporting and encouraging new businesses, ensuring appropriate planned development, attracting visitors to our leisure and cultural facilities and promoting Tunbridge Wells as an attractive tourist destination. We have also been keen to work with others to improve Tunbridge Wells and we have been pleased with the progress made on the cinema site and the appointment of a development partner to develop our town centres.

- As a result of our business advice and support, there were 125 new business start-ups in 2007/08.
- 52,271 m² of industrial/commercial floor space has been completed in the last three years, equating to approximately 1,700 jobs.
- A 3% rise in the value of tourism to the local economy to £199.7 million per year since 2004.
- An extra 223 jobs were created and supported via the Tourism Industry between 2004 and 2008.
- Our Local Economy and Housing Select Committee has reviewed the value for money provided by our tourism service and extended an important economic development post in the eastern part of the borough, to ensure that the Council continued economic development activities.
- We have established the Tunbridge Wells Regeneration Company to lead the economic development of the borough's towns. This represents a multi-million pound investment stretching over a decade.
- In 2008 we secured £1.8 million across West Kent to support the rural economy between 2008-2013.
- We have achieved top quartile satisfaction rates for the Assembly Hall Theatre, museum and sports and leisure facilities. According to the Council's Borough-wide Survey 2008, 92 per cent of users are satisfied with the Assembly Hall Theatre and 85 per cent are satisfied with the Museum.
- We have used developer contributions to improve the quality of life for residents. Over £142,500 of contributions part-funded the popular new play and teenage facilities at St John's Recreation Ground, completed in 2007, and a further £20,000 funded the cycle route through the Oak Road Doorstep Green. The new play and teenage area coming to Rusthall will be funded in part by developer contributions of nearly £185,000, alongside £50,000 in Big Lottery Fund grant funding from the Play Programme.

- 'Quality Partner' status was awarded to the Tourist Information Centre by VisitBritain in 2007. This status is reserved for a small group of top level TICs in the country based on levels of customer service.

Care for our environment

Under the priority of caring for our environment we have worked hard over the past three years to improve the borough for our residents. We have increased our recycling rates, improved the quality of our parks and open spaces, and ensured that the borough's overall cleanliness is maintained at a high level. Since 2004 we have seen increased satisfaction rates for street cleanliness and with the quality of our parks and open spaces.

- Household recycling and composting rates have almost doubled from 25 per cent in 2003/04 to 46 per cent in 2007/08.
- Our household waste and recycling collection service ranks seventh out of 238 District Councils for value for money (using cost, performance and satisfaction comparisons).
- The rate at which household garden and food waste is diverted away from landfill by composting is performing in the top quartile. Currently at a rate of nearly 23 per cent of household waste; this compares to just five per cent in 2003/04.
- In 2005 the Council was producing 400 kilos of waste per week at its Town Hall and Calverley Terrace locations. We are now recycling 200 kilos of waste per week. We have more than trebled our recycling at the Town Hall.
- Tunbridge Wells has top quartile satisfaction with cleanliness of streets. This figure is currently 77 per cent – up from 72 per cent in 2003/04, bucking downward national trends.
- Improved cleanliness has been a result of initiatives such as graffiti removal teams, street cleaning activities, Street Scene Enforcement Officers issuing fixed penalty notices against those who drop litter following a high profile campaign to warn that the powers were to be used and the speedy removal of fly tipping.
- The Council has extended and improved the cleansing regime in the multi-storey and surface car parks that it operates across the borough, including deep cleaning to enhance their appearance and create a better impression for visitors.
- Love Where We Live Campaign to promote and enhance community pride
- Tackling Grot Spots
- Improving the appearance of our street furniture to enhance the street scene
- Accredited our Street Scene and Civil Enforcement Officers so that they can also issue penalty charge notices for environmental offences

- The Environment, Safer and Stronger Select Committee investigated a triangle of land adjoining at Woodbury Park Cemetery, following concerns from residents and Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery over its misuse. The Committee undertook a tour of the land and met with Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery. The land has been identified as a local “grot spot” but is privately owned. The Committee see the Cemetery and adjacent land as an important green space for the community. The site is also a site of nature conservation interest and the Committee is pursuing acquiring this land for community use.
- We are well into the top quartile performance for customer satisfaction with parks and open spaces at 85 per cent. Well-managed open space contributes to the overall quality of life for individuals. The Council has developed a volunteering scheme for Dunorlan Park and is working with a volunteer team of pupils from Oakley Special School.

The Head of the Post 16 Unit at Oakley Special School says of the project:

***“Volunteering at Dunorlan has given these young men the opportunity to work within the local community. It’s increased their independence, their confidence and enabled them to feel valued members of the community.*”**

“They have developed skills which have helped them to gain entry to their horticulture courses at Hadlow and move on to the next stage of their lives”

Have Housing Suitable for Local People

Providing affordable and decent housing is a key priority for the Council. We have delivered a significant number of new homes and the number of affordable homes provided has also increased. We have also worked hard to tackle and reduce homelessness and to provide grants for disabled people, all of which has made a significant difference to the quality of life of local people.

- 352 dwellings completed per annum from 2001-2006, achieving the Structure Plan target of at least 290 dwellings per annum.
- The number of affordable homes provided per annum has increased from 41 in 2005/06 to 122 in 2006/07 and a further 54 in 2007/08. A further 80 affordable homes are due to be provided in 2008/09. This is meeting a key demand from local people and transforming the lives of local families.
- Continued prevention of homelessness through pro-active housing options advice and initiatives to help people access private rented accommodation has helped to achieve a 67 per cent reduction in homeless acceptances between 2003/04 and 2007/08 (from 257 in 2006/07 to 85 in 2007/08).
- 82 empty properties have been brought back into use or demolished since 2004/05 against a target of 62.

- A total of 103 applications for Disabled Facilities Grants were processed in 2007/08, making a significant contribution to the quality of life of individuals and families.
- The Local Economy and Housing Select Committee created a small working group to review the Council's home improvement grants to see if they provided value for money. The group made a number of recommendations, which helped to develop and shape the Council's new Housing Renewal Assistance Policy. All recommendations were incorporated including that the repayment period stipulated in the Policy be changed from five years to "repayable on transference of ownership of the property to people other than a spouse".
- In 2007 the Council submitted a joint bid with seven other West and North Kent local authorities for Regional Housing Board funding for private sector renewal for 2008-2011, and the partnership has been allocated a total of £9.768 million of capital grant funding for the period 2008-2011, of which the Council's allocation is £1.552 million. This will support our work in bringing all homes up to the decent homes standard.

Safer and Stronger Communities

We have worked with our partners to address crime and disorder issues in the Borough. We have worked with partners through our well established Community Safety Partnership (CSP) on a number of initiatives to achieve a reduction in crime. In 2007/08, when compared with 2006/07, all crime was down 12.3 per cent, violent crime was down 11.8 per cent, criminal damage was reduced by 17.8 per cent, vehicle crime was down 17 per cent, and burglary from dwelling was down 36.2 per cent.

- In our role as community leader, we have engaged over 801 local residents in Sandhurst, Paddock Wood, Sherwood, Frittenden, Pembury and Goudhurst through our innovative Ward Walks programme, and successfully responded to over 250 queries from residents.

'This is the first council area that I've lived in that has arranged a Ward Walks scheme, and it's fantastic to have such an open and 'customer-focused' council' (resident in Frittenden, 2008)

- By March 2008 over 90 young people had received support from the Power Project and only three have gone on to re-offend (96.2 per cent have not). Referrals have come from a range of different agencies including schools, police and voluntary groups. First time entrants to the Youth Justice System reduced from 96 in 2005/06 to 82 in 2007/08.
- Through our annual community grants programme we have supported 45 community organisations over the past three years; outcomes include a programme of youth activities for 9-16 year olds, to promote the concept of 'ownership through commitment' for young people in Rusthall village and providing counselling and support to clients who otherwise could not afford the service – such as those on low income and/or benefits, the elderly, homeless and young people.

- 633 young people took part in the 2007 summer programme of sports and arts activities in priority neighbourhoods and rural areas. 2,500 attended the 2008 Summer Slam partnership event with Charlton Athletic Football Club. Summer 2008 has seen the start of a three year programme of August 'Fun in the Sun' play days in rural areas of the borough with either a mobile skate park or climbing wall, multi-sports and arts and dance workshops. There were over 800 attendances at the play days.
- Over the last three years the Assembly Hall Theatre has worked in partnership with Fidelity Investment and Kent County Council to bring 2,550 school children from deprived schools to see productions by the Birmingham Stage Company. Without this opportunity, it's unlikely these children would visit a theatre. A programme of associated workshops reaches up to 100 children at each session.
- Through our tea-time clubs at Sherwood, we provide after-school activities for children aged 5 to 14, which seek to encourage good behaviour through interaction with positive role models. As a result, the children's attention spans have increased and one regular attendee previously adamant he wanted to be a bank robber, now wants to join the army.
- The Council has worked in partnership with Kent County Council and Town & Country Housing Group to develop a modern new community facility for Sherwood (TN2), one of the most deprived areas in the borough. The number of users has almost quadrupled since it re-opened and has made a significant, positive, impact on the lives of those living in the area.

"The change in me personally has been amazing as it now gives me a reason to get up in the mornings. I have made lots of new friends in the community and it's nice to know the work I am doing is appreciated and really does make a difference.

I know I have made a difference to people's lives, as I am constantly being thanked for the work that I do."

Warren Light, TN2 Volunteer

- The CSP acknowledges the importance of not only continuing to reduce crime and disorder, as demonstrated by crime statistics, but also seeking to reassure individuals and communities and thereby reduce fear of crime. In 07/08, the percentage of people who felt safe or very safe at night was 81%, the highest in Kent. Feelings of safety overall were 92%, 2nd highest in Kent. In terms of fear of crime, the percentage of people who were fairly or very worried about four specific crimes was 32%, the lowest in Kent. 17% of people considered Antisocial behaviour to be a problem, the 2nd lowest in Kent.
- Domestic Abuse is a key priority for the CSP. In 07/08 three Freedom Programmes were run in the borough and a number of former attendees were supported in setting up their own self-help group – Freedom Plus. There was a 30% increase in the number of referrals received for the Freedom Programme. The partnership now has a DA Services Co-ordinator, who has already made contact with a wide range of agencies and individuals.

- Tunbridge Wells is performing similar to, or significantly better, than the England average in 30 out of 31 health indicators. However, health inequalities within wards are still apparent and need to be addressed.
- The gap between the electoral wards with the highest and lowest life expectancy is the lowest of all local authorities in Kent. The Kent Public Health Information Team concludes that there isn't a relative inequality in life expectancy in Tunbridge Wells.
- We have provided Exercise Referral Programmes for patients with certain conditions who would see real health benefits from exercise. Patients are referred to our sports centres and offered 1-2-1 and group support in becoming more physically active. This involves significant partnership work and mutual communication.
- We have achieved Green Heritage and Green Flag awards for Dunorlan Park and Green Flags for the Grove and Woodbury Park Cemetery. We have also gained the Sandford Award for Heritage Education at the museum. This means that not only is the borough a place where the natural environment, sustainability and links with the area's heritage are at the heart of the community, but future generations of residents will also benefit.
- With the support of local business we (will) have extended the coverage of the Council's CCTV system to Knights Park and North Farm retail sites in Tunbridge Wells.

Customer Service Commitments

Underpinning our four Corporate Priorities are three Customer Service commitments, which reflect our core principles in service development and delivery to our customers.

We recognise that we must deliver appropriate, high quality services that meet the needs of our residents and businesses, whilst being prudent about public money and providing value for money.

High Quality Services

The Council has continued to improve the quality and standards of services it delivers to the public. Performance has improved across the board. Whilst performance indicators (PIs) do not tell a complete story, they do reflect the fact that residents are having their benefits and planning applications processed quickly and accurately; levels of crime and fear of crime are low; graffiti, abandoned vehicles and fly tipped rubbish is being addressed quickly; restaurants are being inspected regularly to ensure high standards of food hygiene; streets are clean; and affordable homes are being made available for residents.

- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is ranked 43 out of 388 for the percentage of PIs improved in the last three years. 68 per cent of PIs have improved compared to 56 per cent for the average district authority.

- 57 per cent of PIs are in the top quartile, significantly above the 33 per cent average for district councils.
- The Audit Commission ranked our housing and sustainable communities outcomes first out of 354 local authorities in England for three-year improvement.
- The speed of processing Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims has reduced from 24 days in 2004 to less than 19 days in 2008 – well into the top quartile
- The accuracy of processing benefit claims within 14 days has improved from 87 per cent in 2005 to 96.5 per cent in 2008.

Improving Customer Service and Satisfaction

Performance statistics count for very little unless the public recognise improvements and are satisfied with the services that are being delivered. The Council has taken a number of steps to improve the way in which it listens to customers and seeks and responds to feedback. These include Ward Walks, regular liaison meetings with key partners and a dynamic complaints system. Over the past few years, satisfaction has increased in a number of priority areas and remains in the top quartile. Improvements in satisfaction have been particularly marked in areas where the Council has invested effort or resources. One particularly notable achievement has been the opening of a Tunbridge Wells Gateway in November 2008. This, for the first time, brings together a wide range of public and voluntary sector services in one convenient town-centre location.

- There has been a significant improvement in service perception. For example, the proportion of residents who were happy with cleanliness rose from 66 per cent in 2006 to 87 per cent in 2008 – a 21 per cent improvement in just two years.
- There have been no findings of maladministration by the Local Government Ombudsman over the past four years, and satisfaction with complaints handling has increased. The Council actively learns lessons from complaints.
- 92 per cent of the public are happy with Tunbridge Wells as a place to live, significantly higher than most authorities.
- Tunbridge Wells recorded higher or the same rate of overall satisfaction (65 per cent) for its services as 25 'excellent'-rated district councils, and is comfortably in the top quartile nationally.
- Satisfaction with Council services from BME communities has improved from 55 per cent in 2005/06 to 65 per cent in 2007/08. This has closed the inequalities gap in satisfaction rates that existed previously (where there was a 13 per cent difference between overall satisfaction and satisfaction from BME communities). The gap is now just three per cent.
- We have achieved top quartile satisfaction rates for street cleanliness, sports and leisure facilities, the museum, the Assembly Hall Theatre and parks and open spaces.

- 100 per cent of enquiries received out of hours are answered within target times, providing excellent customer service.

Well Managed, Proactive and Value for Money

Value for money is a key issue for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. It has historically maintained very low levels of Council Tax whilst, at the same time, providing a wide range of high quality services which are well regarded by residents.

- Since 2005/6, the Council has reduced its reliance on interest from reserves by £1.5 million pounds, meaning that the Council is now in a position where it can invest one-off sums in priority issues.
- The Council has sought to increase capacity and reduce cost by working in partnership with other local authorities and the voluntary and community sector. It has entered into a 'Mid Kent Improvement Partnership', reviewed its grants processes for the voluntary and community sector and participates actively in the Kent Local Area Agreement. which is an agreement to achieve certain outcomes in our communities over the next three years.
- The Council has significantly improved its corporate governance arrangements over the past few years. This has been particularly noticeable in the areas of risk management, financial and performance management, overview and scrutiny and its codes of conduct.
- We provide excellent value for money to our residents and have the second lowest Council Tax levels in Kent and 58th lowest level out of 238 District Councils in England – top quartile performance at £134.79 (for a Band D property).
- In 2006/07, we achieved a Level 3 for Value for Money as part of the Use of Resources assessment. This was an improvement from Level 2 in the previous year. In 2007/08, this score increased further to a Level 4 – one of just a small number of Councils to achieve that level in the entire country

Broader Context – National Pressures, and Kent-wide Priorities

The Strategic Plan has been written during a dynamic and changing period for local government and is based on the challenges and opportunities that will impact on the way we work over the next five years. The recent economic downturn in particular will have an impact on certain services such as housing and revenue and benefits, whilst wider social implications of higher unemployment may increase the fear of crime and a rise in anti-social behaviour. Our ability to respond to the changing dynamics will be crucial to ensure we continue to deliver high quality services to all our communities.

National Pressures – Local Impact

When considering the local impact of national pressures many of the issues identified in last year's plan are still relevant now including:

- the continued pressure of capping and constrained grant levels following the recent Comprehensive Spending Review announcement
- new inspection arrangements including Comprehensive Area Assessment and a new performance management framework (including a new set of 198 national improvement indicators)
- the second generation Kent Local Area Agreement and the likely introduction of a further LAA from 2011
- rising customer expectations and a general pressure towards 24/7 customer access
- an increased emphasis on partnership working both between and within local government tiers, and the governance of those arrangements
- an increased emphasis on 'localism' and communities

In addition to the above, the economic downturn that has been apparent since late 2007 will clearly continue to have an impact on Council services over the short and medium-term. However, given the fact that the Strategic Plan extends to 2014, we will also need to consider how we prepare ourselves for the economic recovery as and when it occurs.

There are a number of specific national pressures which are likely to have a local impact over the period of this Strategic Plan:

Affordable Housing

The current economic climate will have an impact on delivering our commitment to affordable and suitable housing, and in particular the delivery of new affordable homes, which in recent years has become more dependent on Section 106 agreements as part of market housing developments by housebuilders. As housebuilding is currently stagnating, our ability to deliver new affordable homes via Section 106 agreements is under threat and alternative delivery mechanisms – including the possible provision of capital funding to our housing association partners to buy completed homes and/or development sites – are being explored. In addition, we will work closely with the new Homes and Communities Agency (which replaced the investment arm of the Housing Corporation in December 2008) to maximise opportunities presented by Government initiatives and funding to continue to deliver new affordable homes in the borough. When the economic climate improves in the longer term, the scope for providing Affordable Homes by Section 106 Agreements is also expected to improve.

Economic Development

The Government Sub National Review of Economic Development will place a new statutory duty on local authorities to produce economic assessments, underpinned by statutory guidance. The Council will work closely with the County Council in completing the assessment and consult partners in the preparation of the assessment. The Council will continue to work closely with partners to improve skills levels within the borough working with and through the Kent & Medway Employment and Skills Board, a task group of the Kent Economic Board, which as a result of the Leitch Review will replace the Local Skills and Productivity Alliance.

South East Plan and Local Development Framework

The South-East regional plan sets out the broad amount of development and its location, major infrastructure projects and areas for restraint and conservation. The regional plans set out the number of additional homes to be provided. The Local Development Framework will show how this will happen at the more detailed level, and the programme for this is set out in the Borough's Local Development Scheme.

Financial Settlement

It is highly likely that the Council will continue to face significant financial pressures as national financial settlements from central government are likely to be insufficient to cover additional burdens placed on us and inflationary pressures. The Medium Term Financial Strategy has assumed no additional grant will be received from central government and efforts have been made to project cost pressures over the next seven years. Further details are set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Kent-wide Priorities

Working together in Kent – Kent Commitment

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council sits within the largest two-tier County and District council structure in the country. The Council is committed to working with other districts to address countywide challenges and enhanced two-tier working to share good practice and develop innovative approaches to delivering better services to all communities. In January 2007, the Council, along with all other Kent authorities, signed 'the Kent Commitment'. This contained a number of principles to underpin joint working. In 2008, the Council also entered into an agreement with Ashford, Maidstone and Swale district councils to work more closely together on a range of service areas as part of a 'Mid Kent Improvement Partnership'. As part of this work (funded in part by the Kent and Medway Improvement Partnership), the Council is currently exploring a number of joint working opportunities including Revenues and Benefits, Licensing and Legal Services.

Vision for Kent

The Vision for Kent is the countywide Sustainable Community Plan and sets the overall direction and vision for Kent. The document identifies eight key themes for improving the quality of life for all residents across the county and sets out short, medium and long-term priorities. Our Sustainable Community Plan is set within this wider context and we are committed to contributing to the wider county agenda.

Kent Agreement Two

Following the completion of the first Kent Area Agreement Kent finalised Kent Agreement 2 (KA2) in 2008, which covers the period from 2008-2011 and sets out the County Council and its partners' (including Districts) overarching outcomes for improving service and outcomes for the people of Kent. These have been agreed by a wide range of partners and reflect a new approach to delivering improvements

through a streamlined Government performance framework, allowing Kent to ensure it further enhances delivery across a range of areas.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council has worked through its Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to ensure local priorities are reflected in Kent Agreement Two and will work with its partners, both in delivering our part of the Agreement and in ensuring the borough benefits from any funding attached to it.

The current Kent Agreement underpins the work that the Council does and has informed our local priorities and, in particular, our Sustainable Community Plan. Tunbridge Wells led the way in developing the first Local Action Plan for KA2 for the LSP, and as we move into delivering the new Kent Agreement, we will ensure that this Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Community Plan take into account the new Agreement.

Local Priorities – Stepping up to the mark

As we develop this Strategic Plan, we are aware, as the Borough Council, that there are a number of key issues that we also face:

- Supporting our communities by ensuring our core services respond to the changing economic climate
- Continuing to improve service quality and performance across all of our services in light of current economic circumstances
- Moving away from a reliance on interest from reserves towards a balanced budget within the context of a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- Continuing to improve customer service and other mechanisms for gathering customer intelligence and feedback, and ensuring that the Customer Relationship Management system delivers the intended benefits of improved efficiency and effectiveness of customer service
- Continuing to develop and improve key issues such as performance, financial and risk management, asset management, governance mechanisms and a procurement framework
- Continuing to deliver efficiencies and value for money through a combination of active performance and financial management, technological innovation and business process re-engineering
- Continuing to enhance our approach to engagement and consultation especially in relation to 'hard to reach groups' including newly arrived communities from eastern Europe.

The Council will clearly need to ensure that we have the capacity, resources and plans in place to deliver on our priorities, address key areas for improvement and meet the requirements of the various Government inspections.

Sustainable Community Plan

The Sustainable Community Plan – 'Enhancing the Quality of Life for All' – sets out the community's vision for the borough and a partnership approach to delivering the joint priorities and was developed in 2006.

The Sustainable Community Plan is based on comprehensive public consultation and sets out a ten-year vision under nine local priorities:

- safeguarding our environment
- maintaining a thriving local economy
- enabling people to take part and enjoy leisure activities
- maintaining community safety and reducing fear of crime
- transport - getting around the borough
- meeting the need for housing
- promoting health and improving well-being
- encouraging social inclusion by supporting independence
- learning for all

This Strategic Plan supports the Council's delivery of the overarching Sustainable Community Plan and provides a significant contribution to the targets set out in the Plan.

The SCP has been in delivery phase for two years and over 80% of targets have been achieved over this period. However given the increasing challenging and complex environment as within which the borough operates, it is important that the SCP continues to reflect the priorities of local communities. It is expected that the new LSP will review and refresh the SCP in 2009.

Partnership Working – Central to our Success

Partnership working is central to the working of the Council. We recognise that the value of partnership working is essential to improving the standards and quality of services and to maximising cost effectiveness. We have established a robust approach to partnership working, which seeks to ensure collective action on cross-cutting issues that matter to our communities.

Set out below are our key partnership commitments and structures:

Tunbridge Wells Together – Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

Building on the success of our Community Plan Partnership, in 2007 the Council established Tunbridge Wells Together as the new LSP for the borough which comprises of key partners from the public, private, community and voluntary sector across the borough. A Public Service Board and seven partnership thematic delivery groups, reflecting the priorities set by our Sustainable Community Plan and Kent Agreement Two, support the new partnership.

The key responsibilities of the LSP are:

1. To be the 'partnership of partnerships' and to act together to improve and enhance opportunities for all communities in the borough of Tunbridge Wells
2. To ensure delivery of the Vision as set out in the Sustainable Community Plan (SCP)
3. To ensure delivery of the Local Action Plan underpinning the Sustainable Community Plan and the Kent Agreement Two
4. To provide leadership in achieving the Vision and communicating it widely and simply to all our residents and wider stakeholders
5. To set longer term priorities taking account of external factors and priorities identified by partnership members

6. To influence the deployment of mainstream resources
7. Promote and foster synergy and coherence between the partnership and wider partnerships
8. To have oversight of and aim to co-ordinate community consultation engagement and consultation across partners and where appropriate combine them
9. To encourage innovative thinking to tackle cross-cutting issues between economic, social and environmental objectives
10. To work towards the strategic areas as set out in the SCP

The LSP is leading on the development of a long-term partnership vision for the borough, which reflects the global challenges and opportunities that the borough must consider as it plans for the future. As outlined above, this will underpin the refresh of the Sustainable Community Plan in 2009.

Working with the Private Sector

We recognise the contribution that our private sector partners bring to our communities and economy and work to ensure that we support and deliver services in partnership. The business sector is represented on our LSP and in particular the Town Centre Business Forum will be seeking to establish initiatives to ensure we maintain and build our competitive edge.

We have also recently finalised details of a long-term public/private sector partnership, which will support the renewal of our town centres. The Tunbridge Wells Regeneration Company now established (4 December) will lead on regeneration in the four town centres over the next ten years and will contribute to the masterplanning of these centres.

We are equally committed to support our rural economy and have secured external funding (Leader) to support the farming and forestry sectors. The £2million programme for West Kent runs until 2013.

Working with the Community, Voluntary and Faith Sectors

We recognise the increasing role of the community, voluntary and faith sector in supporting our communities and especially those deemed 'hard to reach'. The Council commissions a large range of services from the community and voluntary sector through our annual grants programme and Service Level Agreements. The LSP Stronger Communities thematic group is chaired by the voluntary sector and is working to ensure we continue to develop capacity through all sectors of service delivery.

The Council has also enhanced its involvement with the faith sector, through the establishment of a borough-wide Faith Forum, which seeks to enhance understanding between the public sector and faith sector, as well as promoting inter-faith dialogue.

Investing to Save - Delivering Services Together

The Council is also working with a range of partners to maximise the effectiveness and resilience of its services. Partnerships include:

- A learning and development partnership with Maidstone Borough Council
- A joint Equalities post with Sevenoaks District Council
- A shared Overview and Scrutiny Manager with Maidstone Borough Council
- Head of Planning jointly managing TWBC and Sevenoaks District Councils planning and development control functions
- Joint delivery of the Gateway with Kent County Council
- A jointly funded post supports the West Kent Partnership focusing on economic development and housing issues
- Two community centre posts, in partnership with Town and Country Housing Group, focusing on our priority neighbourhoods
- A domestic abuse services co-ordinator in partnership with Town and Country Housing

All our partnerships are based on the understanding that a coordinated approach is required to address local needs and ensure that we maximise the use of resources to achieve positive outcomes for our communities.

Our Vision 2026

Prosperous, Green, Healthy and Confident Communities

We recognise that the forces that shape local government are constantly changing. The successful local Councils of the future will be those which best understand and anticipate these changes and respond with confidence, flexibility and commitment. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will ensure that is well positioned to be able to respond to challenges and ensure we accrue benefits from the opportunities that arise in this complex changing environment.

In light of this wider strategic context, we recognise that we must plan for the long term and many new projects that we are currently developing outstrip our existing policy and financial frameworks. To ensure a coherent corporate approach, the Council has been working on the development of a long-term vision, which encapsulates the Council's ambitions and priorities as we move into the future.

Vision2026 clearly sets out what the borough will look like in the future:

“It will be characterised by stronger communities, who feel safer, well served, well housed and with access to excellent health services. Our residents will benefit from better education and skills development, leading to a thriving and diverse local economy. Tunbridge Wells will be a regional hub, attracting visitors and new business to the borough – both from elsewhere and from within the borough. Everyone will benefit from a range of cultural and leisure offers, in an attractive environment. Underpinning our ambitions is a key desire to ensure the borough remains sustainable, in terms of our current and future prosperity and ensuring the benefits enhance the quality of life for all.”

This Vision can be captured in four words ‘Prosperous’, ‘Green’, ‘Healthy’ and ‘Confident’, which underpin our Vision and have been developed through consultation with key partners and staff. The Strategic Plan is therefore being aligned to the vision and the key ambitions that we hope to have achieved by 2026, have been identified under each of the four headings:

Prosperous

By 2026:

- Royal Tunbridge Wells will be the best town centre in the South East to live, work and visit, supported by thriving centres of Paddock Wood, Southborough and Cranbrook
- The borough more generally will have enhanced its natural and built assets while planning for and accommodating future growth
- The borough will have capitalised on the new PFI hospital at Pembury by using it as a hub to boost the health-based economy of the wider area.
- The borough will have used its designation as a Regional Hub to increase investment in infrastructure, such as roads and public transport
- We will have increased local employment opportunities for our residents

- We will ensure that people have access to training and educational opportunities to improve their skills whilst seeking employment or to aid their employment. In particular we will work with partners to develop the learning environment and prepare a flexible workforce for future opportunities.

Green

By 2026:

- Tunbridge Wells will remain a beautiful place to live, work and relax
- We will have transformed the vacant, derelict and run-down sites that currently spoil some of the town centres
- The historic built environment that provides a powerful sense of identity will be maintained in good order and enhanced through high quality redevelopment of existing poorly built assets, set within an immaculate and distinctive public domain
- The superb countryside of the borough is managed to protect and enhance its contribution to quality of life for those that live here whilst accommodating a vibrant rural economy
- All residential properties in the borough should conform to the highest standards of sustainable resource conservation to minimise energy use, carbon footprint, fuel poverty and water consumption
- The borough will have locally derived renewable energy sources to reduce CO2 emissions including biomass, ground and air source energy, together with wind and solar sources where compatible with other environmental considerations
- The citizens of the borough will continue to enjoy easy access to open space for recreation, including parks and play areas and the countryside
- The need to travel to work within and outside the borough will be reduced by increased opportunities to work from home, and encouragement of green travel plans amongst business and public sector employers
- The quantity of waste generated by citizens of the borough will significantly decline supported by less packaging, and more recycling and composting activity

Healthy

By 2026:

- Residents of areas of the borough that currently experience poor health will have improved to the level of the best today. Health for the population as a whole will substantially exceed national, regional and county averages
- The community will be active with very high levels of participation in physical and cultural activities
- The housing market in the borough will provide a range of high quality homes meeting the housing needs of all residents with a range of tenures including affordable homes which provide real housing options for local people
- The housing conditions of the borough's most vulnerable residents will have significantly improved through targeted support
- Residents will enjoy improved home energy efficiency, which will positively benefit both them (through reduced fuel costs and improved living conditions) and the environment through reduced carbon emissions
- Our older population will be active and there will be increased opportunities to take part in recreational and physical activities

Confident

By 2026:

- The borough will continue to have some of the lowest levels of crime in the South East and, as a result, communities will feel safe
- Young people will have the opportunity to participate in a range of activities and be able to influence decision-making
- A thriving community pride culture will have developed with high levels of volunteering and public involvement
- Tunbridge Wells will be a cohesive borough – a place borough where people with different backgrounds, faiths and beliefs and where different generations will get on well together
- The borough will be a place of opportunity – with high levels of educational attainment and skills, ease of access to a range of good quality employment and opportunities for independent living
- Families and in particular young people will be supported to achieve their full potential

Building on Vision2026, the Strategic Plan will therefore be aligned to the vision new headings in terms of setting the priorities for the next five years.

Prioritisation

The Council continues to prioritise its services and resources according to residents' needs, stakeholder involvement and Government direction. We recognise that we are not best placed or resourced to deliver all services, and have therefore developed a strategic approach to identifying and focusing our efforts to ensure we achieve maximum benefit for our residents and businesses.

The Council's activities fall into three categories and are based on research and consultation with residents:

- Priority Issues
- Important Issues
- Non-priority Issues

The Council's approach to prioritisation is based on investing resources to improve 'priority services' and continuing to maintain service levels (through improved partnership working, ICT and other innovative ways) in 'important' areas, and being clear about redirecting resources from 'non-priority' services that the public would be prepared to see reduced if resources were insufficient to achieve everything. Set out below are the services that we have identified under the three categories in the last Strategic Plan, and the progress we have made to date on delivering against these areas.

Priority Issue	2008/09 Update
Economic regeneration.	Tunbridge Wells Regeneration Company Ltd established. A ten year Joint Venture Share Company created with John

	Laing.
Working with partners to secure transport improvements.	<p>The Council has lobbied hard to resist a decision to put the dualling of two stretches of the A21 back from 2011/12 to 2016/17. The Leader of the Council and Tunbridge Wells MP Greg Clark established a lobbying group which lobbied to secure the return of the works to their original timetable.</p> <p>The Council has now signed a Quality Bus Partnership with KCC and Arriva. The agreement will last for five years and will lead to improvements to the infrastructure, quality and reliability of local buses. It will also focus on access to buses and a better interchange between buses and other forms of public transport.</p> <p>Resources have also been invested in a borough wide parking study and a public transport study- with Kent County Council which will consider park and ride.</p>
Reducing waste and increasing recycling.	<p>The household waste and recycling service is to be extended in 2009 to include the kerbside collection of plastic bottles and cans in response to residents calls for the service to be improved. The new service will be provided a significant reduction in existing costs due to a competitive procurement process, which included an in-house bid, the careful wording of the specification and contract documentation and allowing companies bidding for the contracts to submit their own proposals to achieve the Council's strategic objectives, leading to optimisation- of bids.</p> <p>Performance to the end of September 2008 shows a 4.4% reduction in the amount of waste collected in the borough compared to 2007/8, a reduction of 1,153 tonnes, with a recycling and composting rate of just over 46%.</p>
Working with the public and private sector to ensure we have housing suitable for local people.	<p>The Council submitted a joint bid with seven other West and North Kent local authorities for Regional Housing Board funding for private sector housing renewal for 2008-2011, and the partnership has been allocated a total of £9.768 million of capital grant funding for the period 2008-2011, of which the Council's allocation is approximately £1.552 million.</p> <p>The Council has also been awarded funding of £200,000 for the period 2009-2011 under the Government's 'Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer' programme in partnership with Rother District Council, Royal British Legion Industries, Citizens Advice Bureau and two registered social landlords. The funding will assist in: reducing homelessness, increasing options for those in housing need, reducing numbers not in education or employment, improving social inclusion and also contributes to a number of broader county-wide targets.</p> <p>The Council has also invested in the Gateway which will improve the way in which customers can access housing advice and improve linkages with other partner agencies.</p>

	<p>The Council has approved £119k to progress a Housing PFI Bid to Government in partnership with Kent County Council and four other Kent district councils. If approved, the project will provide 40 units of Extra Care accommodation for older people in Cranbrook and the surrounding areas.</p> <p>The Council continues to spend large sums on Disabled Facilities Grants and Housing Renewal Grants.</p>
Community engagement.	<p>The Council has continued to invest in community engagement. Specific examples have included the Ward Walks, surveys and regular meetings with key stakeholders.</p> <p>The Council has appointed an additional officer in this area supported by external funding and has developed an overarching Engagement and Consultation Strategy which will frame future investment in this area.</p> <p>An internal Engagement Champions Network has been established.</p>
Partnership working where it adds value.	<p>The Council has built on the Kent Commitment and its work with Maidstone and Ashford Borough Councils in the area of business process, re-engineering to establish a Mid Kent Improvement Partnership'.</p> <p>The Gateway opened on 3 November 2008 delivered jointly with Kent County Council. By the new year, as many as 40 different partner organisations will be working out of the Gateway.</p>
Engaging hard to reach groups.	<p>In addition to the Ward Walks initiative (set out above), the Council has established a faith forum and has commissioned booster surveys and a migration study to help inform work in this area.</p> <p>There are many examples of where the Council has invested in making a difference in this area including: grant funding to community organisations; support for victims of domestic violence; grants to improve access to services and facilities for those with disabilities; the establishment of an area within the cemetery for Muslim burials; the provision of captioned performances at the Assembly Hall Theatre; and targeted projects at Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery.</p>
Enhancing our governance arrangements including financial reporting and asset management.	<p>The Council has continued to invest in improving its governance arrangements. Specific examples include the establishment of an Audit Committee, additional resources to allow for the introduction of the 'local filter' for dealing with complaints about councillors, and investment to improve the management of the Council's assets. The Council has also invested in a new financial management system, to improve managers' access to their financial information, which has proved invaluable in monitoring and addressing the impacts of the economic slowdown on income streams. The improvements have been recognised in the positive changes</p>

	to the Council's 'data quality' and 'use of resources' scores that are received from the Audit Commission.
Customer care – enhancing customer experience through the Gateway initiative.	The Gateway opened as planned on 3 November 2008. Initial feedback has been extremely positive and there are many, many examples of cross-cutting inquiries being dealt with quickly and effectively.

Important Issues	2008/9 Update
Sustaining improvements in Planning and Revenues and Benefits services.	Performance in revenues and benefits and planning services has been sustained. The Council is now providing planning services for Sevenoaks District Council to assist them to improve their performance and the Council is also exploring a joint revenues and benefits service with Maidstone Borough Council. The Gateway has improved the way in which we can deal with customer inquiries and additional investment is now being considered for revenues and benefits to help address the large increase in inquiries, that has stemmed from the economic slowdown.
Consolidate approaches to value for money through business process re-engineering.	The Council continues to invest in business process re-engineering and specific projects which have now been completed include creditors, debtors and insurance and legal services. Further work is underway in the areas of print, contracts monitoring and procurement.
Refocusing ICT to support the Gateway and the way in which we plan and deliver services.	Significant ICT budgets have now been re-directed to support service delivery within the Gateway. The Council has invested in its Customer Relation Management (CRM) system and in other customer service improvements (including a payment kiosk). Over 150 processes have now been integrated into CRM to enable a higher proportion of services to be resolved at the first point of contact. The Council has re-designed a number of services to make them more customer-friendly and is challenging the provision of services to make them more cost-effective.
Improving the well-being of our communities.	The Council has actively supported the provision of a new hospital in the borough which has now led to the construction of a new PFI-funded 512-bed hospital. Innovative features include wholly single occupancy bedrooms for all patients and energy being derived from a wood-fuel boiler. The Council also secured three-year Choosing Health funding of over £600,000 from West Kent PCT for the period 2008-2011 to promote healthy lifestyles and reduce health inequalities, and is actively encouraging the involvement of the PCT in the Gateway

Non Priority Issues	2008/09 Update
Providing back office functions in isolation.	The Council has now formalised a Mid-Kent Improvement Partnership 'cluster' which is seeking to integrate services across a number of authorities. Examples of services which, over the course of 2008/09, have now been developed into a partnership approach including: Benefits Fraud, Insurance (both with Ashford), Licensing and Planning (also both with Sevenoaks). The budget for 2008/9 includes savings of £40k for Benefits Fraud.
Providing services directly where more cost effective alternatives exist.	The Council makes extensive use of the private and voluntary sector in the delivery of its services. Specific examples include grants to Citizens Advice Bureau and Kent High Weald Project for the provision of services, the masterplanning initiative and contracts for waste, recycling and street cleansing which have all been externalised. The Council is also looking to maximise income wherever possible by, for example, the use of advertising on its website and in its magazine Local.
Making the general Council Tax payer pay for services that are used by only some residents or non-residents	In the course of 2008/09, the Council has commenced a fundamental review of fees and charges with a view to determining appropriate levels.
Events and grants to outside bodies in non-priority areas.	A new grants programme has been developed prioritising grants to organisation delivering the council's corporate priorities. Recipients are subject to quarterly monitoring. For 2009/10 all leisure grants will be amalgamated into the new centralised programme.

2009-2014 Priorities

Whilst a significant number of our activities remain within the same categories, progress has been made and new priorities have emerged due to changes and delivery over the past year. Set out below are issues by category for the coming five-year period:

More Focus

- Reducing the amount of household waste generated in the borough
- Street scene enforcement activity
- Regenerating our town centres
- Implementing health action plans and the Council's Youth Strategy
- Delivering healthy, positive activities for younger and older people
- Promoting economic activity and well-being around the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games
- Promoting partnership working to improve service, increase resilience and reduce cost

- Reducing the carbon footprint of the Council and the borough as a whole including measures to address fuel poverty
- Business process re-engineering and zero-based-budgeting as tools to ensure that services meet the needs of residents and that they are delivered effectively and efficiently
- Looking to deliver affordable housing in more innovative ways with a reduced reliance on S106 Agreements

Maintain Focus

- Strategic planning and the development of the Council's Local Development Framework
- Developing the government's 'localism' agenda
- Supporting Overview and Scrutiny and support to councillors
- Increasing participation in democratic processes
- Ensuring that we have strong financial management arrangements
- Safer and stronger communities

Reduce Focus

- Back office services being provided in isolation
- In-house provision of tourism and events (with more reliance on partnership)
- Private sector housing refurbishment, Disabled Facilities Grants and work on houses in multiple occupation
- Service standards in some areas to allow investment in other, priority areas
- Existing methods of contracts management – we will be seeking to centralise and coordinate this function
- Responsive repairs and property maintenance as the masterplanning process rolls out

Prosperous Action Plan

Key Projects	Timescales	Resource Implications	Key Performance Indicators	Outcome for our communities
Work with Tunbridge Wells Regeneration Company to develop the masterplan for Royal Tunbridge Wells Relocation of Town Hall function	March 2012 meeting the LDS timeframe	Existing 2008/09 staff resources	KPI) Position of Royal Tunbridge Wells in the VenueScore UK's 2000+ retail & town centres rankings (KPI) Footfall in town centre	Increased retail floorspace and employment opportunities. New business floorspace and employment opportunities. Improved quality of town centre environment.
Work with partners to raise to develop the learning environment and to up-skill and prepare a flexible workforce for future opportunities	ongoing	Existing 2008/09 staff resources	NI 163: Proportion of population aged 19-64 for males and 19-59 for females qualified to at least Level 2 or higher	Increased access to employment opportunities. Access to training and educational opportunities for upskilling whilst seeking employment or support while in employment.
Destination Marketing Strategy	2009/2010	Existing 2008/09 staff resources Agreed inward investment marketing budget	(KPI) Conversion of new ED business enquiries (KPI) Previously developed land that has been vacant or derelict for more than 5 years	Better range of retail and businesses in borough
Business Link and other enterprise advisory sessions Enterprise sessions in priority areas. Leader programme	Ongoing 2013	Existing 2008/09 staff resources Increased funding for specific business advice sessions in targeted areas Agreed funding contribution towards Leader programme	(KPI) New business registration rate (KPI) Total new businesses advised	New businesses being established in the borough. New employment opportunities in local businesses. Stronger economic base
Work with Tunbridge Wells Regeneration Company to develop a Cultural Vision	March 2012 meeting the LDS timeframe	Existing 2008/09 staff resources	NI11 – Engagement in the arts	

Green Action Plan

Key Projects	Timescales	Resource Implications	Key Performance Indicators	Outcome for our communities
Continue the programme of Green Flag and Green Heritage applications	2009-14	Within existing resources	(KPI) % of residents who consider cleanliness of the parks and open spaces in RTW to be good or very good	Residents enjoy a network of welcoming
Jim to provide			(KPI) CO2 reduction from local authority operations	
<p>Implementation of the new household waste and recycling collection contract</p> <p>Work with our new service provider, Cory Environmental, to raise awareness and change behaviour of local residents to encourage them to generate less waste</p> <p>Continue to work with Kent Waste Partnership and assist in delivering its action plan for reducing the amount of waste produced by Kent residents</p>		<p>Saving on current budget</p> <p>Within contract price and within existing staff resources</p> <p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>(KPI) Kg of residual household waste per household</p>	<p>A high quality service that is supported by residents to enable them to recycle and compost over 50% of the household waste they produce through a doorstep collection and bring site service</p>
<p>Implementation of the new household waste and recycling collection contract which extends the kerbside recycling collection service to include plastic bottles and cans</p> <p>Continue to work with Kent Waste Partnership and assist in delivering its action plan to increase participation and capture rates of materials from existing recycling and composting services</p> <p>Continue to improve the appearance and availability of bring recycling sites for</p>		<p>Saving on current budget</p> <p>Within existing resources</p> <p>Within existing resources and through inclusion of new facilities on development sites</p>	<p>(KPI) Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting</p>	

Green Action Plan (continued)

Key Projects	Timescales	Resource Implications	Key Performance Indicators	Outcome for our communities
<p>Implementation of the new street cleansing contract</p> <p>Continued Provision of Hit Squads to tackle graffiti and fly tipping</p> <p>Continued used by Street Enforcement and Civil Enforcement Officers of enforcement powers of Fixed penalty Notices for littering and other enviro crime issues</p> <p>Continued participation in the Clean Kent Campaign</p>	<p>30 March 2009 and then on going</p> <p>2009-14</p>	<p>With existing resources</p>	<p>(KPI) Improved street and environmental cleanliness (levels of litter, detritus, graffiti and fly posting): Litter</p>	<p>A visibly cleaner and better maintained street scene that makes the borough and attractive place in which to live work and relax and that contributes to an increase in residents' satisfaction with their local area</p>
			<p>(KPI) Per capita reduction in CO2 emissions in the LA area</p>	

Healthy Action Plan

Key Projects	Timescales	Resource Implications	Key Performance Indicators	Outcome for our communities
Further develop partnership working with partners (including other West Kent district councils, housing associations and voluntary agencies) to provide housing options and prevent homelessness, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welfare benefit/debt advice. Employment/training advice. Mortgage rescue scheme. 	Ongoing	Existing staff resources	(KPI) Preventing Homelessness - number of households where homelessness prevented (former BV213)	Reduced homelessness/housing need/child poverty
Continue to implement the Housing Renewal Assistance Policy to assist older, disabled and other vulnerable households to carry out repairs/improvements (including energy efficiency measures) to their homes	Ongoing	Existing staff resources Continued funding for Housing Renewal Grants/Loans under the Council's Capital Programme to maximise external funding from central Government	(KPI) Number of homes achieving Decent Homes standard as a direct result of Council action	Improved housing conditions Reduced fuel poverty and child poverty
Continue to implement the Mandatory Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Scheme and non-licensable HMO Policy	Ongoing	Existing staff resources	(KPI) Number of HMO properties improved	Improved housing conditions and less risk of house fires
Continue to provide mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants to meet demand	Ongoing	Existing staff resources Continued funding for Disabled Facilities Grants under the Council's Capital Programme to maximise external funding from central Government	(KPI) Number of Disabled Facilities Grants completed	Improved housing conditions for disabled households Disabled households enabled to remain independent in their own homes
[This is a Planning KPI – Jim Kehoe has responsibility for this one as it relates to all dwellings not just affordable housing]			(KPI) Net additional homes provided	
Implement the rolling five-year Affordable Housing Programme and explore alternative delivery mechanisms to reduce reliance on Section 106 Agreements		Existing staff resources Possible use of capital reserves to fund to purchase completed homes and/or development sites by our housing association partners	(KPI) Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	Reduced homelessness/housing need/child poverty Improved housing conditions
Develop and implement Health Action Plan to embed Healthier Communities activity across the Council Fully spend Choosing Health funding received from West Kent PCT to promote healthy lifestyles and reduce health inequalities/secure continuation funding for 2011/12 onwards	2009/10 2009-2011 and beyond	Existing staff resources Possible increased direct funding for Healthier Communities activity	(KPI) Self-reported measure of people's overall health and wellbeing	Improved health and well-being, reduced health inequalities

Healthy Action Plan (continued)

Key Projects	Timescales	Resource Implications	Key Performance Indicators	Outcome for our communities
Increase participation in active recreation by implementing the Leisure Strategy Improvement Plan	2009-2014	Within existing resources	NI 8 – Adult participation in sports and active recreation	Improved health and wellbeing

Confident Action Plan

Key Projects	Timescales	Resource Implications	Key Performance Indicators	Outcome for our communities
Neighbourhood Watch Cold Calling Control Zones in identified areas. Communication mechanisms, including events, initiatives and press releases, developed and enhanced	2008 - 2011	Continued funding for Partnership Engagement Officer and allocation of TWBC and SSCF funding to support initiatives	(KPI) Percentage Of Residents Who Feel Safe In The Daytime And At Night	Reduction in the perception of crime among vulnerable groups, particularly older people, those in priority neighbourhoods and 'hard to reach' groups resulting in feelings of safety of 90% or more as measured by KCVS
Power Project; diversionary work with young people at risk of offending, including Charlton Athletic programmes; Safe Schools work	2008 - 2011	Continued funding for Power Project worker; financial support for CAFC and Safe Schools work as well as support from officers in partner agencies	(KPI) First time entrants to the Youth Justice System aged 10-17	Support for vulnerable young people: target of over 80% of those on the Power project remaining outside the criminal justice system. Reduction in number of FTEs – maximum of 80 in 08/09.
PTCG meetings held regularly, issues identified and partner actions implemented; monthly ASB meetings held and interventions put in place to reduce anti-social behaviour by identified individuals; PACT meetings held as required, priorities identified and action taken in partnership with communities	2008 - 2011	Officer time from a range of partner agencies to both engage with communities and address issues. TWBC and SSCF funding to enable problems to be resolved. Continued funding for Partnership Engagement Officer	(KPI) Dealing with local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime issues by the local council and police	Reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour and increased feelings of safety, leading to no more than 13% of people being concerned about ASB (as measured by KCVS)
Freedom programme and Freedom Plus; drop-in services for victims of DA; Community DA Perpetrators programme; development of a MARAC in West Kent; DA projects and initiatives developed by DA Services Co-ordinator, in conjunction with the Responding Together Group	2008 - 2011	Continued funding for Domestic Abuse Services Co-ordinator and range of DA initiatives	(LPI) Repeat incidents of domestic violence	Enhanced service provision for victims of domestic abuse contributing to a reduction in repeat victimisation – target 22% in 08/09, future targets to be set once MARAC has been established
			(KPI) Overall/general satisfaction with local area	
To widen involvement in decision-making	Place survey 2008 to establish baseline, and subsequent place survey 2011 to measure success	Cross – Council Engagement Champions group Stronger Communities Sub-Group of the LSP to collaborate on this	NI 3 Civic engagement in the local area	Local people are able to influence and shape service provision in their communities People feel involved in decision-making

Confident Action Plan (continued)

Key Projects	Timescales	Resource Implications	Key Performance Indicators	Outcome for our communities
To increase volunteering	Place survey 2008 to establish baseline, and subsequent place survey 2011 to measure success	<p>Grant has been awarded to Voluntary Action West Kent to lead on this action</p> <p>TWBC will work in partnership with VAWK</p> <p>TWBC Community Grants programme supports voluntary and community organisations</p> <p>Support for TN2 & Number One Community Trusts</p> <p>Stronger Communities Sub-Group of the LSP to collaborate on this</p>	NI 6 Participation in regular volunteering	<p>Increased numbers of people volunteering</p> <p>Improved involvement in local communities leading to increased community cohesion</p> <p>Wider benefits of those receiving services, help and support from volunteers</p>
To increase young people's participation in positive activities	?	?	NI 110 Young people's participation in positive activities	
To promote a thriving third sector	2009/10 Community Grants to be launched in December 2008	Launch and promotion of the scheme, analysis of applications, assessment panels, and monitoring of grants including visits	<p>Applications received</p> <p>Successful applications awarded grants</p> <p>Outcomes of grant</p>	<p>Increased services provided for local people by voluntary and community sector</p> <p>Specific outcomes of each grant is measured</p>

Customer Service Commitments

Delivering high quality services to our customers

Key Projects	Timescales	Resource Implications	Key Performance Indicators	Outcome for our communities
Customer profiling project (Mosaic)	Data available by April 2009	Internal project team – Match funding from Intereg 6 Bid	(KPI) Queries resolved at first enquiry (site enquiries at Town Hall/Gateway)	Improved understanding of customers needs.
Keep under review the partners operating in the Gateway	2008-2011	Existing resources		Redirect resources to meet service demand
Business Process Re-engineering of Back Office functions	Action plan complete Feb 2009 First tranche of services complete by 2010 All Back Office functions reviewed by 2012	Within Existing Budget- Delivery Unit will lead	Queries resolved at first enquiry (site enquiries at WIC)	Residents have a single point of contact for a variety of service requests.
Development of a mobile Gateway				Increased accessibility of council services from all delivery channels
Develop a Customer Service Advisor presence at the WIC				Residents get the benefit they are entitled to quickly enabling them to meet their rent and council tax liabilities. Landlords can have confidence that their tenants will get their benefit quickly. An effective benefits service has a positive impact on the willingness of private sector landlords to let to people on low incomes.
			Processing of planning applications: Major applications (BV109a)	
			Processing of planning applications: Minor applications (BV109b)	
			Processing of planning applications: Other applications (BV109c)	

Delivering high quality services to our customers (continued)

Key Projects	Timescales	Resource Implications	Key Performance Indicators	Outcome for our communities
Potential for a shared Revenues and Benefits service with one or more Kent authorities.	2008 – 2011	Given the effects of the Credit Crunch on the number of benefit applicants (increasing), which will lead to an increase in the number of changes that need processing, there will be a need to constantly monitor the number of staff processing claims.		Benefit customers will be paid the correct amount of benefit quickly after their circumstances change. Will reduce the amount of overpaid benefit customers have to repay.
Access Kent Programme	Phase 1- April 2009 Phase 2 April 2010 Phase 3- April 2011	Within existing budget	Speed of processing - changes of circumstances for HB/CTB claims (BV78b)	Standardised access to public services across all channels in Kent.
Increased use of DiGi TV to address Digital Inclusion	CBL 0July 20090			Availability of CBL scheme through DiGi TV and mobile phone.

Improving customer service and satisfaction

Key Projects	Timescales	Resource Implications	Key Performance Indicators	Outcome for our communities
Gateway	2008 – 2011	Existing staff resources	(KPI) Overall customer satisfaction	Customers have high levels of satisfaction with the services provided.
			(KPI) Level of the Equality Standard for Local Government (score out of 5) (BV2a)	

Ensuring that we are well-managed, proactive and deliver value-for-money services

Key Projects	Timescales	Resource Implications	Key Performance Indicators	Outcome for our communities
			(KPI) Number of online transactions and payments	
			(KPI) Working Days Lost Due to Sickness Absence (BV12)	
Implementing Use of Resources 2009	2009/10	These are to be determined.	(KPI) Value for Money in the Use of Resources score	Further improved management of the Council's resources to deliver value for money services in line with our corporate commitments
			(KPI) % of Council Tax collected (BV9)	

Measuring our Success

Over the past four years, the speed of the Council's improvement has been impressive. Of the Government's key indicators, we are far out-performing any other authority in Kent for the percentage that feature in the top 25 per cent of councils in the country.

One of the key reasons for this impressive performance has been our strong performance management framework. We learn from our customers, take measured risks and adapt our services to meet the needs of all of our population. It is because we do this systematically that we can have confidence in the processes we have in place to keep delivering better services.

Having already piloted joint reporting of governance issues, the Council will fully embrace this more strategic approach to performance management from April 2009. This will enable us to maintain our focus on our medium-term targets (five year), whilst still being able to take decisions and react quickly where we need to. For example, the recent economic circumstances have warranted a joint approach to managing our finances, our human resources, performance of services and mitigating significant risks.

From April 2009, we will monitor and manage our performance in the following way:



Glossary of Terms

To be inserted here