



# Draft Strategic Plan

2008 – 2011

# Contents

- 1 Foreword by the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council**
- 2 Our Vision**
- 3 What is the Strategic Plan?**
- 4 Broader Context**
- 5 Tunbridge Wells – The Place, People and Council**
- 6 Our Four Corporate Priorities**
- 7 Our Three Customer Service Commitments**
- 8 Prioritisation**
- 9 Delivery**
- 10 Our Performance Management Framework**

# 1 Foreword by the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council

**The Borough of Tunbridge Wells is an attractive and vibrant part of Kent. Residents and visitors benefit from a range of good services and facilities, award-winning parks and open spaces, excellent education, low rates of crime and one of the highest life expectancies in the county. However, the Council is in no way complacent. The Borough faces considerable challenges including a high cost of living, unmet demand for housing, increasing competition from other town centres, traffic congestion and pockets of very real (but often hidden) deprivation. These are long term challenges and we have set out a Vision for 2020 which seeks to set out how the Council in its community leadership role, will work to ensure the borough of Tunbridge Wells is well positioned to address the challenges but also ensure continual improvement for the benefit of all who live, work, visit and learn here.**

As a Council, we are committed to enhancing the attractiveness of the Borough, whilst recognising the need to accommodate new development to ensure economic growth. The Council has recently been through a period of profound, but necessary change. We have appointed a new senior management team, we are broadening our planning horizons and we are ensuring that we have the finances and capacity in place to deliver on our ambitions.

Local government in general and, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council in particular, will face further change in future years. Government sees local councils, as democratically accountable bodies, having key roles in leading and shaping their local communities. There is a very simple reason for this: listening to local people and businesses, their concerns are not always things that we can deal with in isolation. Tackling issues such as health, crime and economic prosperity requires a joined-up approach from the public sector. With their democratic mandate, local councils are ideally placed to lead on this. Over the course of the next three years, I want Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to continue to lead on partnership: both within the borough and within Kent as a whole. The Council is already working closely with partners in delivering its Sustainable Community Plan – ‘Enhancing the Quality of Life for All’ – which was put together with key partners and founded on extensive consultation. We are now establishing a Local Strategic Partnership, with representatives, from the public, private, community, faith and voluntary sectors to ensure we all collectively deliver the ambitions set out in the Sustainable Community Plan.

We are also working actively with other local councils in Kent and, in February 2006, we signed up to ‘The Kent Commitment’ – a statement of intent from all local government leaders to improve customer service, engage local communities, reduce costs, shape economic growth and work more closely together. I hope that this initiative will deliver real and tangible benefits for the future.

Looking back over the past 12 months, a number of key achievements stand out:

Economic development is a key priority for the Council. Under our priority of **promoting and maintaining a thriving and diverse local economy**, we will be appointing a private sector development partner to help us develop masterplans to regenerate our four main towns, we have adopted for consultation our Core Strategy for our Local Development Scheme and we have also appointed a Head of Economic Development and Regeneration.

Under our priority of **caring for our environment**, we have continued to increase our efforts to improve recycling and, with a rate of forty three per cent, have now achieved one of the highest rates in the country. We are leading on work in Kent through the Kent Waste Partnership to ensure that the waste and recycling collection and disposal services work better together. We are also working more actively to enforce ‘enviro-crime’ such as litter and fly tipping through the use of fixed penalty notices and have increased our resources to remove graffiti, fly posting and chewing gum on pavements. We have also been proactive in tackling a number of ‘grot spots’ in and around the Borough

Under our priority of having housing suitable for local people, we have adopted a five-year Affordable Housing programme, which will see 500 new affordable homes provided in the borough over the next five years. We are already ahead of target with 122 having been delivered in 2006/07.

In terms of **developing safer and stronger communities**, we have jointly funded and supported the development of a new community centre in Sherwood – one of our priority neighbourhoods and established a resident led board to manage it.

We provided over £300,000 in grants to community and voluntary organisations over the last year and are proactively looking at how the community and voluntary sector can provide services through the Gateway.

We have applied to draw down £206,700 from the Big Lottery Fund for three new play areas across the borough.

We have also successfully piloted a new method of community engagement called Ward Walks in Sandhurst and Paddock Wood that gave us an opportunity to hear direct from residents about the issues that matter them. These will be rolled out across the rest of the borough to ensure that all residents have an opportunity to systematically inform the Council's decision-making processes.

The Council has also made a number of **customer service commitments** in respect of the way in which it delivers its services, customer care and value for money. In broad-picture terms, the Council has continued its very high performance in all three of these areas: borough council tax levels remain the second lowest in Kent and one of the lowest in the country, performance levels have improved and, according to the latest information from the Audit Commission, our national performance indicators (these are the ways that we are measured against other councils for how we deliver a range of services) are outstripping the average 'excellent' authority; on top of all this, our customer satisfaction levels remain top quartile. However, we are not complacent. The past 12 months have seen the Council commit to deliver a 'Gateway' in partnership with Kent County Council in Royal Tunbridge Wells and to explore the possibility of a further 'Rural Gateway' in the east of the borough. The Gateways will see a range of public, private and voluntary sector services being delivered from one conveniently located town-centre location. The Council has also committed itself to a stretching 'Customer First' programme further to improve the way in which it delivers its services.

The Council continues to drive down the cost of service delivery. By March 2008, the Council will have saved over £2.3 million in efficiency savings

– well above our government target of £1.4 million. The pressure of cost savings and rising public and government expectations is relentless. The Council has already identified savings of £900k for 2008/09. This means we can continue delivering our services whilst maintaining one of the lowest district Council Tax rates in Kent: just 11.5 per cent of overall Council Tax comes to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) which means that we deliver our full range of services for just 35p per day; in addition, each one per cent increase brings in just £36,000.

This Strategic Plan is a crucial document to build on these achievements and ensure the Council works in partnership and consultation to improve the quality of life for everyone who lives, works and visits the Borough and I ask for your support to deliver its outcomes.



**Cllr Roy Bullock**  
Leader of the Council

**The Strategic Plan is a key milestone for this Council reflecting our plans for the future. It is forward looking and externally focused and as promised, this annual refresh updates and reflects the changes that have taken place since it was first endorsed. After a period of considerable change, this Council is now poised to deliver. It has clear priorities (founded on extensive community consultation), a new management team in place and a clear commitment to work with partners to deliver for our community.**

We have come a long way over the past few years and the Council now ranks amongst the best in many key areas of service delivery including recycling, housing benefits and planning. Surveys tell us that people find the Borough a great place in which to live, work and enjoy themselves. We have high levels of satisfaction with our services and our overall performance as a council has improved significantly in recent years. We want to ensure that this improvement is sustained and embedded. We believe that we are now well on our way to realising our ambition of achieving at least a 'Good' CPA rating.

From my perspective, the future for local authorities, particularly district councils, is both complex and uncertain. In recent years we are being challenged to deliver ever more with less and public aspirations continue to rise. Government is emphasising our role as a community leader and "place-shaper". Value for Money has been, and will continue to be a watchword for us all. Our challenge will be to continue to improve performance, whilst at the same time, reducing cost. The recent Comprehensive Spending Review has set a challenge for us to continue to secure efficiencies and places increasing emphasis on delivering in partnership.

The next couple of years will be demanding. We will continue to develop partnership working, where it delivers benefits for our local communities and ensure that we continue to deliver value for money services to all our communities. Our plans and policies will continue to be informed by what you tell us and we will strive to shape our services around what you tell us you want and need. The whole Council (Cabinet, Councillors, Management Team and staff) is ready for this challenge and we are looking forward to building on the real and tangible improvements that have been made over the past few years with a renewed focus on delivering excellent services to the community.



**Sheila Wheeler**  
Chief Executive

## 2 Our Vision



### Enhancing Quality of Life for All

**Our vision is simple. We seek to enhance the quality of life for all. This is a key message we have received from a wide range of consultation exercises – not least those that accompanied the development of our Sustainable Community Plan. For the Council, this means that we will continue to celebrate the past and shape the future so that, by 2026, we will have healthy confident communities within a prosperous, accessible and attractive borough.**

By 2026 the borough of Tunbridge Wells 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. Everyone will benefit from a range of cultural and leisure offers, in an attractive environment.

We recognise that we will need to work with all our communities and a range of partners to ensure we can deliver this vision for 2020. The Council will lead in delivering, shaping and lobbying partners and Government to ensure we maximise benefits for our current and future communities.

# 3 What is the Strategic Plan?



**Tunbridge Wells Borough Council exists to serve the people of the borough. This Strategic Plan is the key strategic document for the Council over the next three years, and builds on the Strategic Plan 2007–2010. This plan sets out local issues, national concerns and our commitments to achieving improvements for all those who visit, live, work and learn in our borough.**

The Strategic Plan will also help ensure that the Council takes a planned and consistent approach to:

- the design and delivery of our services
- the prioritisation and allocation of our resources
- excellence in customer service
- the achievement of real value for money

The Strategic Plan sets out our corporate priorities and key targets, which will measure our success over the next three years. The Strategic Plan sits alongside a portfolio of strategies and plans that take into account national, regional, sub-regional and local priorities, which together, contribute to how we deliver services and manage our performance. Every other plan and strategy we have will feed from and into the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan contains:

- the Council's key corporate priorities and associated themes for delivering them
- how we will measure our progress against our priorities (through Key Performance Indicators)
- our underlying cross-cutting commitments to our communities

The Strategic Plan is grounded in the results of a wide range of consultation exercises including:

- Sustainable Community Strategy consultation
- Housing Strategy consultation
- Development Plan preparation
- regular, ongoing dialogue with parish councils, the Town Forum and other key stakeholders
- a 'Simultaneous Multiple Attribute Trade-Off' modelling (SIMALTO) exercise as part of the budget consultation process
- the results of the triennial BVPI Customer Satisfaction survey
- articles in the Borough Magazine – iLocal and on the Council's website
- the results of the initial Ward Walks pilot programme

## 4 Broader Context

**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 three years.**

Key drivers include:

- the introduction of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act
- 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 performance indicators)
- The second-generation Kent Local Area Agreement which is likely to commence from April 2008
- rising customer expectations and a general pressure towards 24/7 customer access
- the emerging South-East Plan preparation for development in the region
- 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 and
- enhancing our commitments to equality and diversity

For Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, key issues include:

- continuing to improve service quality and performance across the board and embedding recent changes arising from in-depth reviews into the Planning and Leisure and Culture functions and a Council wide Peer Review
- 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

- 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

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.

### National, County and Local Priorities

#### Central – Local Concordat

In November 2007, following the introduction of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, an agreement between central and local Government has been agreed which sets out how we will work together to serve the public. Key shared objectives include:

- creating and sustaining thriving communities
- tackling anti social behaviour
- improving outcomes for children, young people and families
- anticipating the needs and aspirations of an ageing society
- nurturing business and enterprise
- protecting and enhancing the environment
- supporting a thriving third sector
- promoting a pluralist, healthy democracy with tolerance, decency and respects at the heart
- promoting high standards of conduct in public life.

Tunbridge Wells Council is committed to working with Kent County Council, regional and central government in achieving these shared objectives.

## 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 and the Council is currently working with KCC and district partners to explore how this can be delivered.

## 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

The Kent Agreement (LAA) is an agreement between central government and partners in Kent (including Kent County Council, district councils, health and police), which sets out key areas for improvement across four themes: safer and stronger communities, children and young people, healthier communities and older people, and economic development and environment and will come to an end in April 2008.

We are currently in the process of developing Kent Agreement 2 which will cover the period from 2008-2011 and will set out the County and its partners' (including Districts) overarching outcomes for improving service and outcomes for the people of Kent. These will be 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 will work 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. As we move into the new Kent Area Agreement, we will ensure that the Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Community plan take into account the new Agreement.

## Sustainable Community Plan

The new 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.

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

The Community Plan Partnership (CPP) has been responsible for the delivery of the plan and consists of representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community organisations at a local level. The Council has recently undertaken monitoring of the plan on behalf of the CPP and progress has been strong.

In 2006, the Council commissioned a peer review of the Council's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – the West Kent Partnership. The review was undertaken by SOLACE, Warwick Business School and the I&DeA. The review made a number of challenging recommendations and the Council and its partners are currently reviewing our strategic partnerships to meet the challenging agenda ahead.

A new Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) at the District level is being proposed and will seek to ensure we build on the momentum of the CPP and enhance our strategic and delivery mechanism at the local level.

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.

Whilst the Strategic Plan is the Council's medium-term framework, it nevertheless plays an important role in delivering the Council's commitment in the Sustainable Community Plan.

## Vision for Kent Priorities

Learning for all	Economic Success	Keeping Kent Moving	Environment Excellence	High Quality Homes	Enjoying Life	Safer & Stronger Communities	Improved Health, Care & Wellbeing
------------------	------------------	---------------------	------------------------	--------------------	---------------	------------------------------	-----------------------------------

## Sustainable Community Plan Priorities

Learning for everyone	Maintaining a thriving local economy	Transport – getting around the borough	Safeguarding our environment	Meeting the need for housing	Enabling people to take part and enjoy leisure activities	Maintaining community safety and reducing the fear of crime	Encouraging social inclusion by supporting independence	Promoting health and improving wellbeing
-----------------------	--------------------------------------	--	------------------------------	------------------------------	---	---	---	--

## Our Corporate Priorities

Promote and maintain a thriving and diverse local economy	Care for our environment	Have housing suitable for local people	Develop safer and stronger communities
---	--------------------------	--	--

## Local Delivery

Economic Strategy	Environment Strategy	Contaminated Land	Housing Strategy	Leisure Strategy	Community Safety Audit and Strategy 2005–2008
Tourism Strategy	Conserving Built Environment	Carbon Management Plan	Homelessness Strategy	Kent Partners Compact	Social Inclusion Policy
Transport Strategy	Conserving the Natural Environment	Local Plan 2006	Private Sector Renewal Strategy 2006–2011	Draft Youth Strategy	Licensing Policy
West Kent Area Investment Framework	Countryside Management	Supplementary Planning Guidance	Empty Property Strategy 2006–2011	Comprehensive Equalities Policy and Scheme	Child Protection Policy
LDF	Flood Policy Statement	Kent Municipal Waste Management Strategy	Kent Health and Affordable Warmth Strategy 2005–2008	Play Strategy	LDF
	LDF		LDF	Transport Strategy	
				Draft Domestic Abuse Strategy	

## Cross Cutting Commitment

Delivering high quality services to our customers				
Ensuring that we are well managed, proactive and deliver value-for-money services				
Improving customer service and satisfaction				
Draft People Strategy	Improvement Plan 2007–10	Medium Term Financial Strategy	Customer Access Strategy	Draft Communication Plan
Value for Money Strategy	Risk Management Strategy	Procurement Strategy	Asset Management Plan	Draft Engagement Strategy

# 5 Tunbridge Wells: 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 county population. The borough neighbours East Sussex, 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 being designated as an Area of Outstanding National Beauty and including 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 needs 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 percent 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 also makes it difficult for the Council to recruit and retain employees
- 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
- the geography of the borough which can lead to increased costs and 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 district
- ensuring we both reduce our local contribution to climate change and promote adaptation to the consequences of climate change

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

Following the Council's 'Weak' Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating by the Audit Commission in 2004, we have been making profound changes to how we deliver our services and consult with our partners, residents, businesses and customers. We have restructured our senior management team and have undertaken an in-depth review of our under-performing services. We recognise that we must continue to change and improve and the Strategic Plan is a blueprint of how we will take the Council forward over the next three years.

The Council has forty-eight councillors, with overall Conservative control. There are forty-one Conservative councillors and seven Liberal Democrat 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. Following a review of the effectiveness of the scrutiny function in 2006 the Council now has a scrutiny partnership with Maidstone Borough Council. A dedicated team has been put in place to support the Committees in their work and is

managed by the Overview and Scrutiny Manager at 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. For the first time the scrutiny committees have looked at external bodies such as the Health Service rather than focussing on the services provided by the Council. The Select Committees all now have annual work programmes, which include reviews based on requests from the public as well as suggestions from Councillors themselves, based on their understanding of the communities in the Borough. To improve their skills Members have also had questioning skill training.

The Council employs over 400 people, with fifty per cent living and working within the borough. Following a recent restructure, 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. 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, Leisure and Environment and Streetscene services, as well as Revenues and Benefits. The

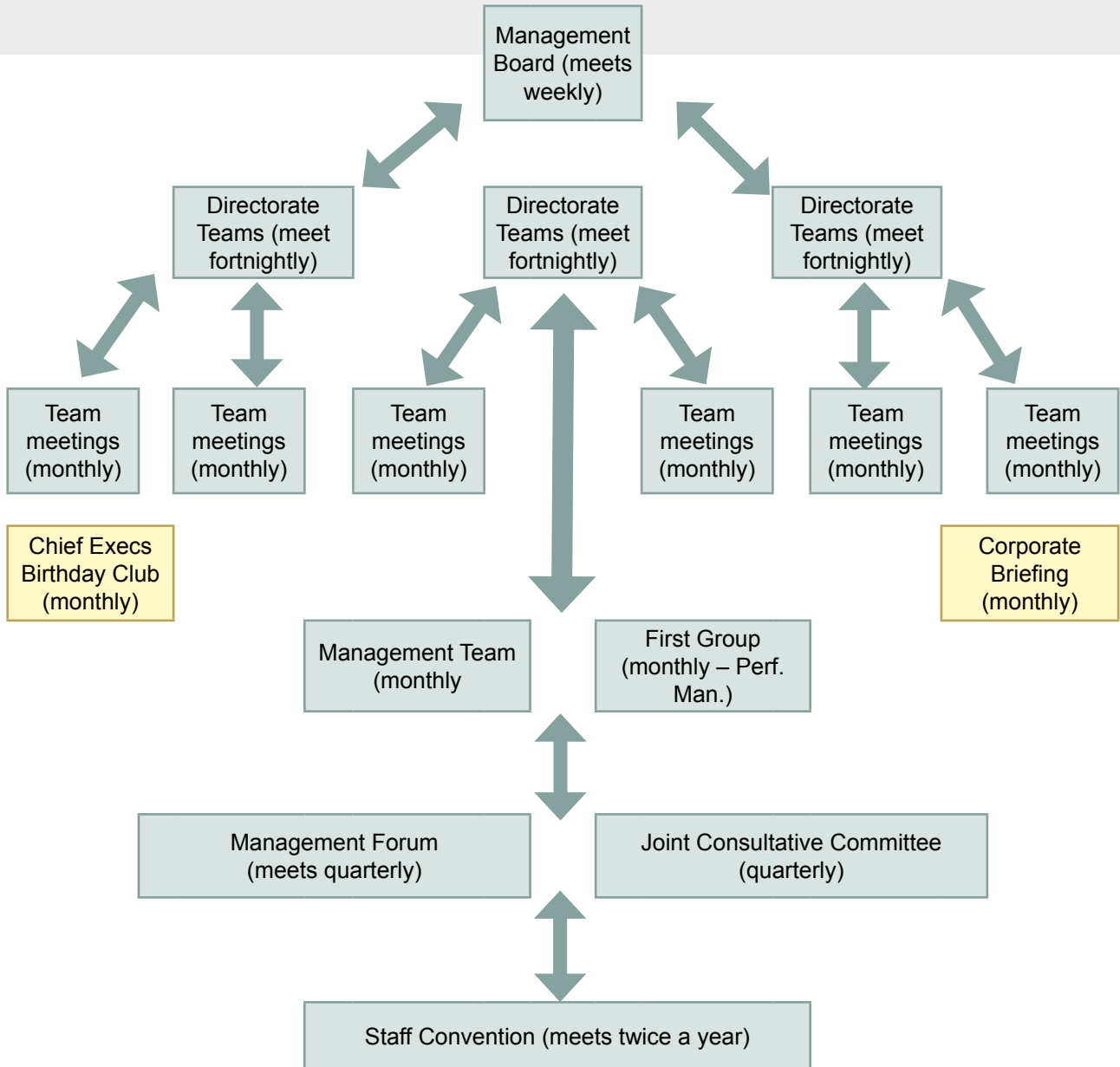
Directorate is leading on embedding the improvements delivered in Housing services, as well as enhancing the borough's public areas and the leisure and cultural offer, and continuing to maintain a very high performing Revenues and Benefits service.

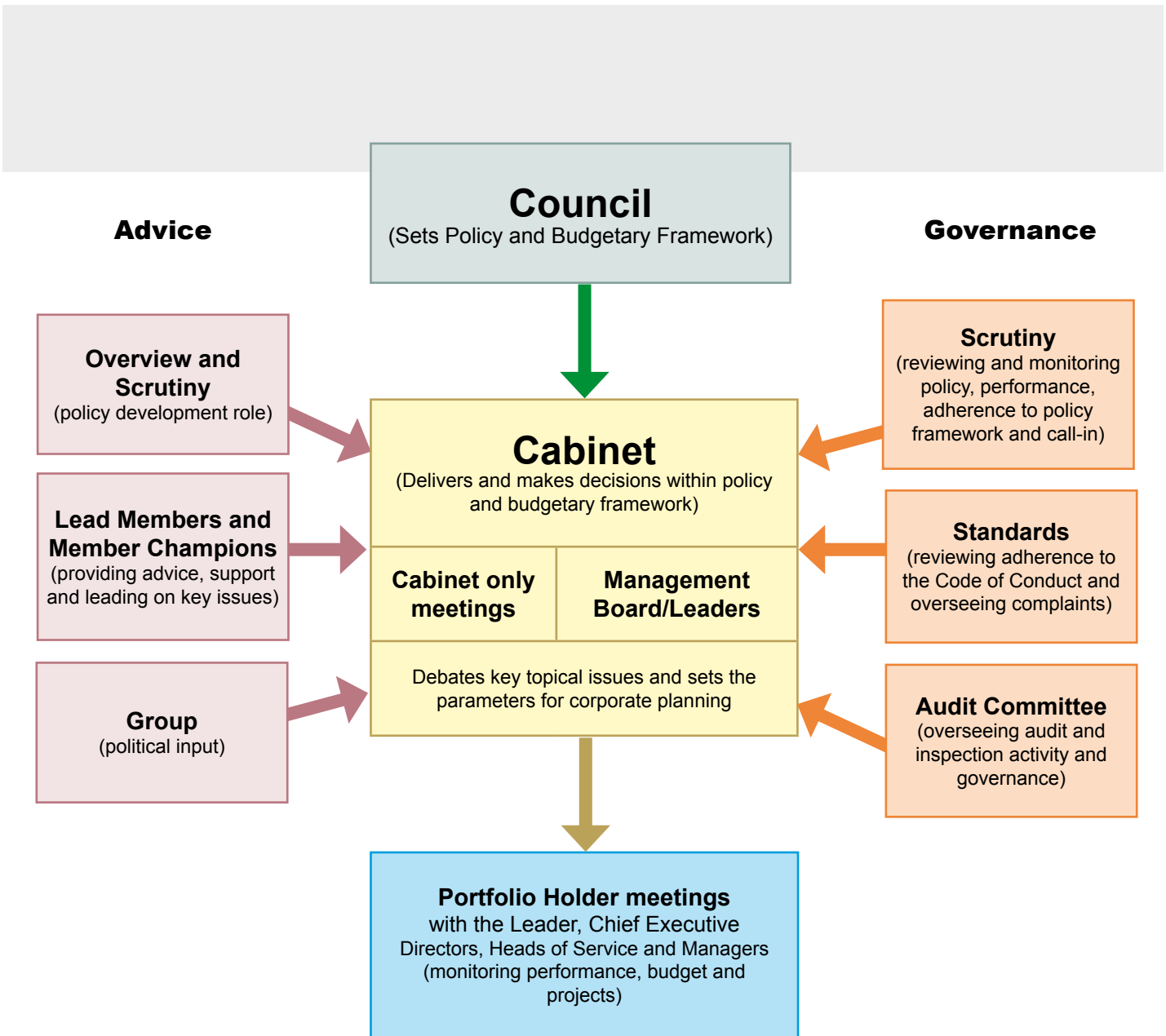
The Directorate of Change and Business Support provides internal support services to frontline services including HR, Legal, IT, Finance and Property Services. It has responsibility for strengthening the Council's governance arrangements, including Overview and Scrutiny and Internal Audit, and also plays 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.

The Council is overseen by a Management Board comprising the Chief Executive, three directors, and the Council's Head of Financial and Property Services (S151 Officer).

Management Team consists of the Management Board and Heads of Services 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.

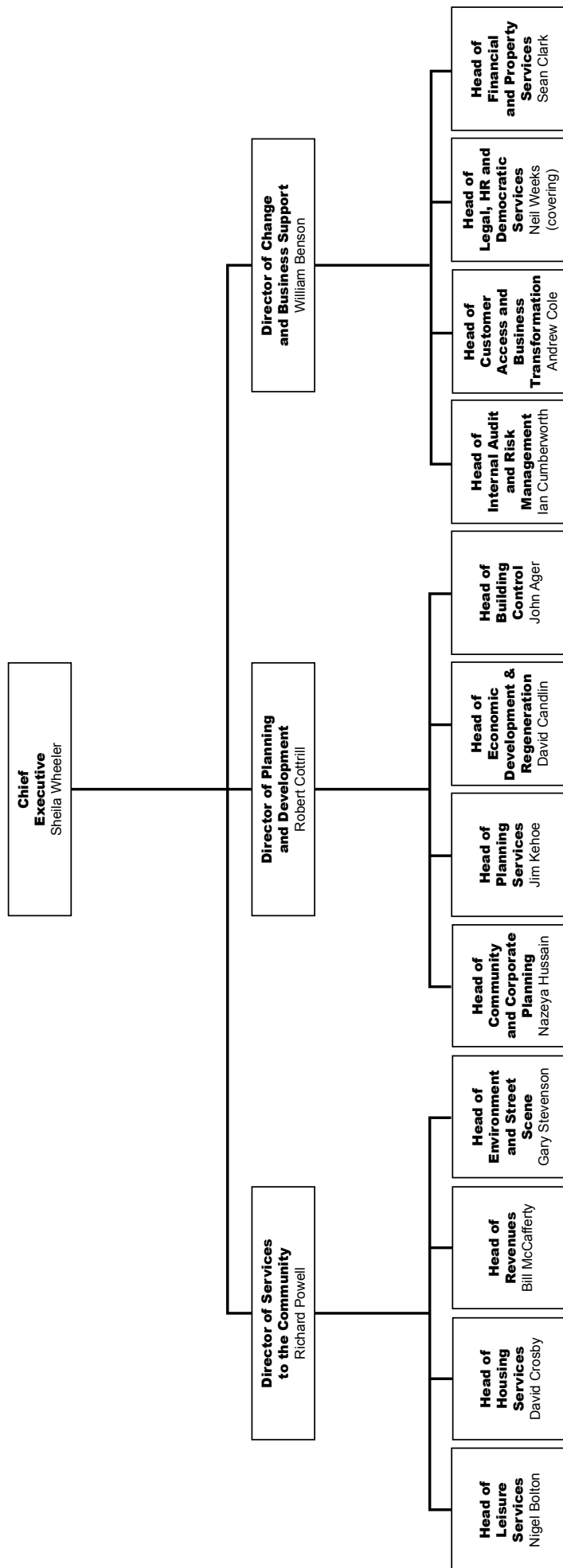
Management Forum consists of all Heads of Service and their direct report managers' meet twice a year to contribute and inform long term planning within the Council. Recent work has been focused on the development of Core Values for the Council and supporting the People Strategy.





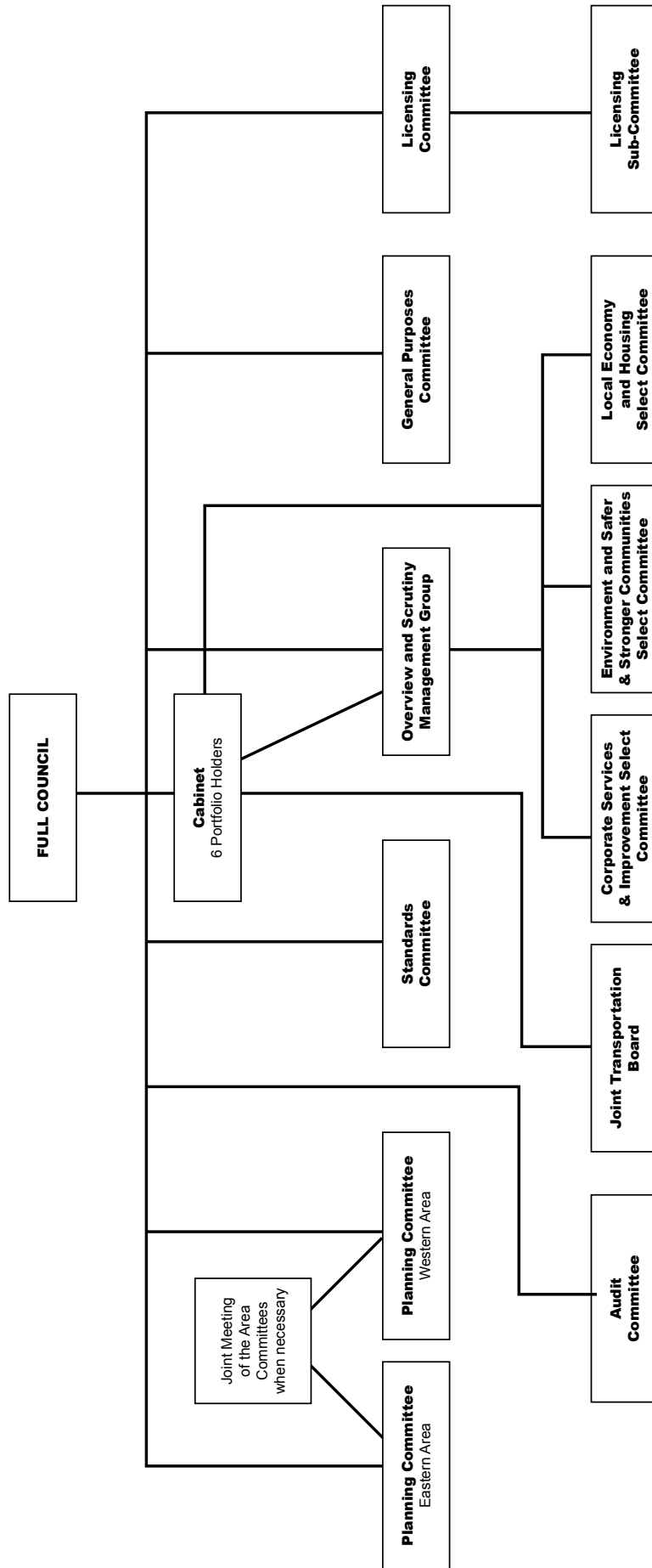
# Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

## Chief Executive, Directors and Service Heads



# Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

## Councillor structure



## 6 Our Four Corporate Priorities



The Council has set itself four corporate priorities:

- 1 Promote and maintain a thriving and diverse local economy.**
- 2 Care for our environment.**
- 3 Have housing suitable for local people.**
- 4 Develop safer and stronger communities.**

The priorities were developed in 2005 on the basis of a range of consultation exercises establishing public priorities and priorities for improvement. The Council continues to re-evaluate the priorities making use of feedback from consultation exercises such as the recent triennial BVPI and SIMALTO surveys. Consultation suggests that the priorities continue to reflect the areas where the public wish to see improvements in services. However, the Council will be undertaking a more fundamental review of the priorities in the course of 2008–9.

Under each priority, the Council has set a number of corporate objectives (COs) and criteria for success. The Council has also agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which will enable the Council to ensure that progress made against key objectives is on track. Any KPIs that are not meeting their target are scrutinised by the relevant Select Committee.

These four corporate priorities also drive the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and are key to the prioritisation of resources.

In previous years, the Council also measured a wide range of nationally set Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) and locally set, Local Performance Indicators (LPIs). The new National Performance Framework has now enabled local authorities to establish indicators that reflect local priorities in a more effective way. From April 2008 the Council will therefore concentrate on its KPIs and a comprehensive suite of LPIs as a measure of performance against its priorities. This will be informed by the LAA and other external drivers.

Underpinning the delivery of our Corporate Priorities are our three internal customer service commitments – further details are set out in Chapter six.

# Priority 1: Promoting and maintaining a thriving and diverse local economy

**Although Tunbridge Wells is a thriving area with high levels of employment, some areas of our borough suffer from relative deprivation. We are committed to transforming these and other areas, which need investment. This means making our town centres more successful and attractive in the face of increasing competition elsewhere, and transforming some of our run-down housing areas. The pressure for new housing and a strong economy set the context for our regeneration programmes. These demands are balanced by the broader quality of life dimensions, including cultural opportunities as an integral aspect of regeneration.**

The Council is therefore taking a proactive approach and seeking to appoint a private sector development partner, with appropriate resources and skills, to enable town centre masterplanning and future redevelopment to be progressed within Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Paddock Wood and Cranbrook.

We recognise new housing can be unpopular. However, as a result of the South East Plan there is likely to be a significant number of new homes planned for Tunbridge Wells over the next 10–15 years. The draft South East Plan puts this figure at 6,000 by 2026

We are determined to ensure that these pressures benefit the borough. We can use new housing to help deliver stronger and thriving communities by addressing inequalities and facilitating new community and sports facilities.

## Attracting new businesses and inward investment

New development and opportunities are also the key to attracting businesses and visitors to our town centres and rural communities. Royal Tunbridge Wells and the other towns may be subject to the most pressure for growth, however regeneration must ensure that these centres continue to support the needs of local residents and businesses alike.

The Council's role is to use its powers as the local planning and housing authority to promote economic development and secure external investment. Our aim is to ensure that residents and businesses benefit from economic prosperity. We can then achieve our aims of improving Royal Tunbridge Wells, and other town centres, to meet changing needs and accommodate planned growth, whilst ensuring that our local villages, historic towns and rural areas retain their character and attractiveness.

## Reducing Traffic Congestion

Average traffic flows in the borough are about twice the national average. Unsurprisingly, traffic and transport-related problems consistently top the list of residents' concerns. The effect of the high volume of traffic on the condition of local roads and ultimately the economy is a matter of concern. The heavy traffic flows also cause environmental impacts with increased noise and air pollution, as well as having an impact on road safety. It is essential that new development does not take place without adequate transport infrastructure, or at the very least a firm commitment to the provision of transport infrastructure. Future economic growth in Royal Tunbridge Wells will require an integrated approach to transport and access arrangements within the centre. Joint working with Kent County Council and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is to be developed and fed into the development partner work.

## Working in Partnership

All of these projects are ambitious and the Council cannot succeed without public and private sector support. We must make sure that we get the proper infrastructure, facilities and services to make our regeneration projects and new developments successful.

We have approached the major businesses and landowners in Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre to bring forward development of key sites. In addition we are establishing a town centre business forum to engage with and consult the local business community. We are also working closely with Kent County Council to secure better facilities, such as a new library in Paddock Wood.

The Heart of Kent Partnership has been in existence since 1988 and is a partnership of the tourism functions and tourism businesses in Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Ashford Council has been hugely successful in joint working and underpins our tourism services.

We will continue to work with all our partners on the West Kent Partnership and through our newly emerging Local Strategic Partnership to ensure that development improves local quality of life for all.

Working with these partnerships we will seek to raise the profile of the area at a sub-regional and regional level to provide for the development and benefit from new opportunities. It is essential that we plan for growth properly, ensuring that all of the services that the Council and our partners provide receive the funding required.

## Promote and maintain a thriving and diverse local economy

Since 2006/07 we have achieved the following to contribute to our Strategic Priority:

- Marketed the Saturday and Sunday produce and craft markets on the Pantiles.
- Marketed the one-price 'Shopper Hopper' bus service around the town centre.
- Delivered business start-up training for local residents.
- Supplied new stalls for the town centre farmers market.
- Developed retail Associations in St Johns & the High Street with continued support for Pantiles Retailers Association.
- Provided funding to develop Market Town Health check reports and action plans for Paddock Wood & Hawkhurst.
- Supported and delivered the second Tunbridge Wells Business Awards 2007.
- Developed a bid for Rural Development funding with West Kent Authorities.
- Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery has had over 56,000 visitors – second only to Chatham Historic Dockyard in Kent and the museum's 'Learning Links' website project has been used by 29,000 children in its first year.
- Supported 25 free business energy checks on the North Farm Industrial estate.
- Developed and delivered a new Business Guide & Directory for Tunbridge Wells.
- Organised and delivered regular free one to one business support surgeries for local businesses.
- Supported business groups across the Borough.
- Updated and improved the website dedicated to Business and Economy across Tunbridge Wells.
- Provided support and advice for local village shops and post offices at risk.
- Marketed free vocational training and careers advice opportunities for local employee.
- Achieved VisitBritain Quality Partner Status for the Tourist Information Centre in Tunbridge Wells – the only one in West Kent.
- Developed the Heart of Kent tourism website to offer live online accommodation booking to visitors.
- Introduced a new software system to the Tourist Information Centre which enables information to be shared across five districts and to be feature marketed by the national tourist board VisitBritain.
- Launched a new information terminal for residents and visitors in Cranbrook.
- Developed a 3–Year Business Plan for the Tourist Information Centre.
- Developed and successfully ran the first Cranbrook & Tenterden Food & Drink Festival in November 2007.
- Along with Chichester, Guildford and Arundel Councils and local businesses, established a new tourism marketing partnership to target visitors from the USA to the area.
- Welcomed over 150,000 visitors to the Tourist Information Centre and supported local tourism businesses with over £113,000 worth of accommodation bookings since 2006.
- TIC placed 3rd in South East (15th nationally) for customer service.

Objectives	This year we will:	By March 2009 we aim to have:	By 2010 we aim to have:	We will have met this priority if by 2011 we have:
Promote a revival of our town centres as places to live, shop, work, operate and visit.	Choose a Development Partner for Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre, to consolidate its economic position.	Worked with our Development Partner, and landowners to put forward the redevelopment of key town centre sites for public consultation..  Published Options for the future of Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Paddock Wood and Cranbrook via the Local Development Framework Town Centres Area Action Plan, with public consultation.	Submitted a draft 'Town Centres Area Action Plan' to the Secretary of State and invited public representations on it.	Improved the relative ranking of Royal Tunbridge Wells compared with the top 250 town centres.  Adopted the Town Centres 'Area Action Plan'; for the town centres of Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Paddock Wood and Cranbrook.  Brought forward development in all our town centres with public support.
Work with our partners to find innovative solutions to improve access to the town centre and across the borough.	Commence a study of the travel options to meet the needs of the whole community.	Completed a study of the travel options to inform choice in travel modes to promote the economic viability, including a review of car parking systems, private vehicular access and re evaluation of Park & Ride options and operation of the Quality Bus Partnership.	Used the evidence from the Travel Study in the preparation of the Local Development Framework.  Offered alternatives to choosing the car as a method of visiting Royal Tunbridge Wells by considering plans for a new park & ride development.  Used quality bus partnership to improve rural bus service and widen town centre bus ticket sales.  Increased the percentage of local residents who agree that Royal Tunbridge Wells is easy to get around.	Car Parking systems have been improved to continue to attract more visitors to the town centres.  Town Centre bus route has increased usage and higher shopper hopper ticket sales.  Congestion has decreased in access routes into Royal Tunbridge Wells.  Kept running the rural bus services.
Take practical steps to promote a more entrepreneurial and balanced local economy.	Work with Kent County Council to start development of starter units at North Farm site.  Work with partners such as Locate in Kent to promote the borough as a good place to do business.	Agreed planning permission & proposals for the development of the North Farm site for small business units.  Drafted and developed an inward investment pack outlining business development opportunities and premises across the borough for businesses to locate.	Submitted a draft Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework that prioritises employment site development, to the Secretary of State and completed the Public Examinations.  Started development of the North Farm site to provide flexible starter units for small businesses.  Printed and distributed copies of the new inward investment pack to our investment partners.	Allocated sites for employment uses in the Local Development Framework.  Completed a number of new and modern business premises at North Farm.  Had feedback and investment enquiries about the new business development sites and business premises in the town centres, which have emanated from inward investment information.

## Priority 2: Care for our Environment

**We are determined to protect and enhance our local environment and to play our part in the sustainable use of resources, reducing waste, using energy efficiently and improving air quality. We live in an attractive area. We want to keep it that way by protecting the countryside, preserving and enhancing local character, and making sure that our streets and public places are kept clean.**

### Reduce, Re-use, Recycle

The emphasis both nationally and regionally is on reducing the growth of waste. Our aim is to encourage communities to use the facilities that the Council provides to recycle and compost more of their waste and to encourage them to take steps to minimise that quantity of material they throw away. We are working through the Kent Waste Partnership to implement the Joint Kent Municipal Waste Strategy, the key aims of which are to adopt an approach which views waste as a resource and targets waste minimisation as well as recycling. Considerable progress is being made with composting and recycling, with around 43% of household waste being diverted from final disposal.

A new household waste and recycling collection contract will start in March 2009. The Council is currently developing a number of service options, informed by a range of research, which will be the subject of tender evaluation in 2008, to enable the provision of a cost effective high performing service.

### Air Pollution

Good air quality is vital for the health of our residents and is a key indicator for quality of life. The borough has few major industrial processes to generate air pollutants, but the effect of road traffic emissions has necessitated the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area for the A26 in Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough and the development of an action plan to tackle the issue.

### A Tidy Borough

Residents expect a clean and well-maintained borough. This is one of our highest priorities, and alongside the clearance of litter we aim to keep our borough free of graffiti, fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles. When these nuisances appear, we seek to remove them promptly. Our built environment is attractive. Apart from the main towns, we have over 30 villages and local shopping areas. We recognise that some of these areas could be made more attractive, and we have a programme to address this.

### Protection and Enhancement of Local Character

The borough is subject to enormous pressures for development and from the impact of traffic, aircraft and everyday life in this busy part of the country. Retaining the quality of open spaces, countryside, pleasant residential areas and the borough's considerable heritage is important to residents and visitors alike. A balance between development and preservation is struck in the Council's Local Plan. The borough contains part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, local nature reserves, as well as some 25 Conservation Areas covering 783ha, and 3,000 Listed Buildings.

The Council is responsible for a wide network of recreational and open spaces including a range of historical parks in Royal Tunbridge Wells, and will ensure these assets continue to be effectively managed.

### Energy Conservation & Renewable Energy

Climate change and the pressure on our environment are driving the need to use energy more efficiently and identify sustainable energy sources. The Council will examine its impact and actions through its Carbon Management Programme in terms of incorporating sustainable energy solutions in all Council services. We will also encourage sustainable development through our Sustainable Energy SPD.

### Working in Partnership

Household waste is an issue of national concern. We seek to tackle it by working in partnership through the Kent Waste Forum, with neighbouring District Councils and with the private sector. We work closely with the Police, DVLA and Environment Agency in tackling abandoned cars, graffiti and fly-tipping.

As we seek to progress energy initiatives, we will promote government schemes and work with partners in the private sector. We will also work with Kent County Council to improve the condition of our highways and footpaths, and will take a coordinated approach to the improvement of the whole street-scene, particularly in our village centres and local shopping parades.

## Care for our Environment

Since 2006/07 we have achieved the following to contribute to our Strategic Priority:

- Over forty two per cent of household waste has been recycled and composted, diverting 21,261 tonnes of material from landfill.
- Participated in the national waste minimisation campaign – Love Food Hate Waste.
- Carried out a scrutiny review of household waste issues.
- Enhanced the public realm by replacing benches and bus shelters in Royal Tunbridge Wells.
- Ten recycling sites now have banks for recycling plastic bottles.
- We have dedicated Graffiti and Cleaner Borough Hit Squads to improve the cleanliness of our streets and open spaces.
- Targeted action against grot spots using a multi-disciplinary officer group.
- We have targeted the removal of abandoned cars in partnership with the police.
- Signed up to the Nottingham Declaration on climate change,
- Made commitments to become a 'Fair Trade Council'.
- Produced a Supplementary Planning Document on Renewable Energy.
- Enhanced the Victoria Cross Grove in Dunorlan Park.
- Refurbished St John's Recreation Ground and installed new play and ball games areas.
- Cleanliness levels in the town's parks have reached record levels on our monitoring scale.
- Core Strategy Issues and Options Document – Published and Public Consultation Consultations Completed.
- Undertaken further Conservation Area Appraisals.

Objectives	This year we will:	By March 2009 we aim to have:	By 2010 we aim to have	We will have met this priority if by 2011 we have:
Deliver a high quality household waste collection and recycling service that has the emphasis on waste reduction, recycling and diversion of material from final disposal.	<p>Continue our pilot scheme for the collection of plastic bottles for recycling at ten bring sites across the borough.</p> <p>Continue our programme to improve the appearance of our recycling sites.</p> <p>Continue to work with the Kent Waste Partnership to deliver the Kent Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.</p>	Put in place a new household waste and recycling collection service to increase recycling and composting rates and reduce the growth in the amount of waste going to final disposal		<p>Provided a service that is supported by residents to enable them to recycle and compost over 50% of the household waste they produce through a door step collection and bring site service.</p> <p>Reduced the growth in household waste to 1.5 per cent.</p>
Promote sustainable energy across the Council and borough.	<p>Implement the adopted Sustainable Energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).</p> <p>Continue to support the Warmfront Assistance Grants Programme.</p>	Assessed how the rural economy can contribute to bio-mass production.	Completed new developments that include Renewable Energy sources in accordance with the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).	<p>Incorporated sustainable energy solutions in all Council services.</p> <p>Ensured all new major developments aim for 'Excellent' eco-homes standard (or equivalent).</p>

Objectives	This year we will:	By March 2009 we aim to have:	By 2010 we aim to have	We will have met this priority if by 2011 we have:
Improve the appearance of the street scene.	<p>Continue review our street cleansing regimes.</p> <p>Continue the proactive removal graffiti and flyposting using our dedicated Hit Squads.</p> <p>Continue to improve the appearance and maintenance of Borough Council street furniture.</p> <p>Continue to discourage littering through the use of fixed penalty notices served by Street Scene Enforcement Officers and Parking Attendants.</p> <p>Continue to work to clean up/encourage the redevelopment of grot spots taking formal action where appropriate.</p>	<p>Commence a new street cleansing contract that continues to improve the appearance of the street scene.</p> <p>Continue to target the maintenance and improvement of a high quality environment including the development of detailed protocols for partnership working with Kent County Council as the Highways Authority.</p> <p>Continue to discourage littering through the use of fixed penalty notices served by Street Scene Enforcement Officers and Parking Attendants.</p> <p>Continue to work to clean up/encourage the redevelopment of grot spots taking formal action where appropriate.</p>	<p>Modernised and high quality street scene.</p> <p>Achieved the delivery of revised and updated street lighting and other street furniture.</p> <p>Continue to discourage littering through the use of fixed penalty notices served by Street Scene Enforcement Officers and Parking Attendants.</p> <p>Continue to work to clean up/encourage the redevelopment of grot spots taking formal action where appropriate.</p>	<p>A visibly cleaner and better maintained street scene that contributes to an increase in residents' satisfaction with their local area.</p>
Protect local character through the Town Planning process	<p>Consult on a brand new Local Development Framework to guide future development, whilst implementing the current Local Plan (2006).</p>	<p>Implemented existing policies and produced new policies and submitted them to Government for approval.</p>	<p>Consulted the public on the LDF:- Core Strategy, Development Control Policies and Site Allocations.</p>	<p>Adopted planning policies, through the Local Development Framework, that enable the Borough's strategic needs for housing, employment, retail and infrastructure development to be met whilst conserving, and seeking to enhance, the high-quality built and natural environment which defines its character. Listed buildings and conservation areas will be protected; local centres will remain distinctive; new development will be well designed; and landscape character will be retained.</p>
Maximise the quality of existing TWBC parks	<p>Apply for two Green Flag awards for our parks.</p>	<p>At least two parks which meet the Green Flag quality standard.</p>	<p>At least three parks and open spaces meeting the Green Flag quality standard.</p>	<p>Achieved nationally recognised Green Flag awards for at least three parks and open spaces demonstrating high standards of cleanliness, safety and community involvement.</p>

## Priority 3: Have housing suitable for local people

**Tunbridge Wells is an area of intense housing pressure, primarily due to its location and the quality of the environment. This leads to high house prices and land values and the lack of affordable housing. The average resale house price recorded by the Land Registry in the period April-June 2006 was £286,986 (an increase of 9.4 per cent compared to the period April-June 2005). This has resulted in significant levels of housing need as recorded in the Housing Needs Surveys undertaken by the Council, and high numbers of households registered on the Joint Housing Register for the borough in need of housing/ support.**

There are continuing questions about future funding streams for new affordable housing, and pressure to reduce the use of bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation for homeless households.

The lack of good quality housing/a decent home can affect a household's health and wellbeing, including their prospects of employment and educational attainment of children, and it can contribute to crime and disorder.

Whilst the Council no longer directly owns council housing stock as it was transferred, in 1992, to High Weald Housing Association (now Town and Country Housing Group), the Council retains statutory responsibilities in respect of a range of housing issues, including:

- Assessing housing needs and house conditions.
- Homelessness.
- Enforcement action on properties where their condition affects the health and safety of occupants, as well as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and empty properties.
- Promoting improvements in the energy-efficiency of homes.

In addition, the Council plays an important role through its planning powers and its partnership working with housing associations and other agencies to enable the provision of new affordable housing.

### Working in Partnership

The Housing Partnership was developed in July 2005 to enable housing partners to work strategically to address key housing issues within the borough. The Partnership consists of representatives from a number of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), private sector landlords, the Borough Council, and other related services such as the Youth Offending Team, Kent County Council Social Services, the Probation Service, the Primary Care Trust, Parish Councils, residents associations and voluntary agencies/advice groups.

The Housing Partnership is a sub-group of the Community Plan Partnership and has assisted in developing the Council's new Housing Strategy 2006-2011 and now reviews, assesses and evaluates the Council's performance in meeting the targets set out in the Housing Strategy.

The Council also works in partnership with Parish/Town Councils and Action with Communities in Rural Kent to identify and meet affordable housing needs in rural areas.

Other partnerships include a close working relationship with private landlords, including holding a regular West Kent Landlords Forum in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council the National Landlords Association and the National Federation of Residential Landlords. The Council provides landlords with a six-monthly Landlord Bulletin.

Twenty-eight RSLs operate within the Tunbridge Wells borough and the Council currently has eight RSL Preferred Partners for the development of new affordable housing. The Preferred Partner arrangements were reviewed in 2007, and the eight RSL Preferred Partners were selected jointly with Sevenoaks District Council.

## Have housing suitable for local people

Since 2006/07 we have achieved the following to contribute to our Strategic Priority:

- A percentage reduction in the number of households accepted as homeless through our homelessness prevention work and housing advice service (compared to the previous year 2006/07).
- Produced a Homelessness Strategy for 2007-2010 in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council to tackle and help further prevent homelessness in West Kent.
- Completed an equality impact assessment of our Housing Needs Service and identified actions which will form the basis of our 2008/09 Housing Service Plan.
- Produced a draft Minority Ethnic Strategy to be adopted in 2008 following community and stakeholder consultation to identify the specific housing needs of minority ethnic households in the borough.
- Introduced customer satisfaction surveys of our Housing Needs Service as a way of monitoring and improving customer satisfaction.
- Benchmarked our performance against key Housing Performance Indicators with other councils including other Kent councils and ‘peer group’ councils to highlight areas for improvement.
- Promoted our Rural Exceptions Site Policy – known as the Rural HeLP project (Rural Homes for Local People) – to provide new affordable homes in partnership with parish/town councils, Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) and housing associations. We carried out three Rural Housing Needs Surveys in 2007/08.
- Introduced a Council Tax discount scheme in partnership with British Gas to encourage households to carry out energy efficiency improvements to their homes.
- Developed an annual inspection programme for park homes and caravan sites to monitor and improve conditions and fire safety.
- Organised further joint West Kent Private Landlords’ Forum meetings in partnership with Sevenoaks District Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, the National Landlords Association and the National Federation of Residential Landlords to promote best practice amongst private landlords.
- Written, consulted on and adopted the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to increase our ability to deliver affordable homes through the Planning system.

Objectives	This year we will:	By March 2009 we aim to have:	By 2010 we aim to have	We will have met this priority if by 2011 we have:
To provide greater focus on achieving a balanced housing market and increasing the supply of affordable homes.	Ensure, in partnership with developers, landowners and housing associations, at least 30% of new homes on developments of 15 units or more are affordable  Help provide 82 new affordable homes.	Reviewed our affordable housing policies in the Local Development Framework to contribute effectively to meeting housing need.  Implemented planning guidelines to maximise the amount of affordable housing achieved through new development.	Consulted the public on the number of new homes to be provided in the Borough and their location.  Published draft Local Development Framework policies on Affordable housing so as to increase the overall numbers to be provided.	Adopted new policies to ensure that new developments meet local housing need, currently 6,000 additional homes, consistent with the South East Plan.  Helped provide at least 300 new affordable homes to meet the needs of local people who cannot afford to rent or buy a home on the open market.
To support more people, including vulnerable groups, to live in their own homes for longer by providing disabled adaptations.	Work with Town & Country Housing Group to improve value-for-money in the funding of adaptations for their tenants.	Reached agreement with other housing associations which manage housing in the borough regarding the funding of adaptations for their tenants.	Ensured that our set Disabled Facilities Grant budget is spent each year (2008–2011).	Helped more people stay in their homes in a more cost-effective manner by having provided disabled adaptations, worked in partnership with housing associations and achieved value-for-money in the way we spend our DFG budget.

Objectives	This year we will:	By March 2009 we aim to have:	By 2010 we aim to have	We will have met this priority if by 2011 we have:
To reduce homelessness in the borough and minimise the number of people at risk from homelessness.	<p>Implement actions arising from the Homelessness Strategy.</p> <p>Introduce joint working with secondary schools and youth groups to raise awareness of housing options and homelessness prevention amongst young people.</p> <p>Further develop out housing advice and homelessness prevention services.</p>	<p>Achieved a further 15% year-on-year reduction in homeless acceptances.</p> <p>Held at least two sessions with secondary schools and youth groups.</p> <p>Reduced the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation.</p>	<p>Achieved a further 15% year-on-year reduction in homeless acceptances.</p> <p>Held at least two sessions with secondary schools and youth groups</p> <p>Reduced the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation by half compared to December 2004 levels</p>	<p>Improved the housing situation of people in the borough by having reduced the number of homeless acceptances year-on-year, and reduced the level of homelessness amongst young people.</p> <p>Improved the housing situation of people in the borough by having reduced the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation by half compared to December 2004 levels</p>
Tackle fuel poverty and enable practical assistance for those who need help in heating their homes.	Increase awareness of the Warmfront Grant Assistance Programme.	Assisted 160 households to improve the thermal insulation/energy efficiency of their homes through Warmfront Grants/ the KASH discount scheme.	Assisted a further 160 households to improve the thermal insulation/energy efficiency of their homes through Warmfront Grants/ the KASH discount scheme.	Improved the circumstances of people living in the borough by having improved thermal insulation/energy efficiency of homes and reduced fuel poverty amongst householders.
Improve the condition of private sector housing.	<p>Implement a policy for non-licensable Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) to tackle worst conditions as a priority.</p> <p>Implement a Private Sector Landlords' Accreditation Scheme.</p>	<p>Inspected 20 HMOs and brought ten up to the required standard.</p> <p>Accredited at least 20 privately-rented properties.</p>	<p>Inspected a further 20 HMOs and brought a further ten up to the required standard.</p> <p>Accredited at least 20 privately-rented properties.</p>	Improved the housing conditions of people living in private sector housing by having inspected 60 HMOs and bringing 30 up to the required standard, and accrediting at least 60 privately-rented properties.

## Priority 4: Develop Safer & Stronger Communities

**Safer and stronger communities are those, which are prosperous, and have local people who are willing and able to work together to help themselves and their area. They are characterised by low crime levels, services focused on community needs, and have available access to a range of leisure, cultural and sporting facilities. In developing our plans to foster self-reliant and thriving communities, we will have regard to the needs of all groups, including older people, young people, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.**

Whilst the Council wants to see a wide range of facilities for local people, it recognises that it is not necessarily the best provider in all circumstances. The private and voluntary sectors may be better able to deliver some services. The recent report by DCLG 'Community Assets – the benefits and costs of community management and ownership' sets out a strong case for empowering communities to manage their own local facilities. The Council will review whether other forms of ownership and management can release resources to meet priority objectives.

### Reducing Crime & Disorder and Anti-Social Behaviour

West Kent has the lowest crime area in the county and Tunbridge Wells is consistently one of the three lowest districts. In 2006/07 there were 73.6 recorded crimes per 1,000 population in the borough. We will continue to play an active role in the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and particularly through our youth, sports and arts development programmes, to divert young people from involvement in anti-social and criminal activities. We will target our resources at identified 'hotspots' and seek to address key issues including violent crime and crimes linked to the nighttime economy.

### Healthy Living

Our residents have relatively good health, but there are profound differences between the affluent and deprived communities in the borough. Social deprivation is associated with poor health. Up to thirty six per cent of households in some of our most deprived areas have at least one person with a long-term illness – far higher than the borough average of twenty six per cent. The Government has recently published its White Paper: 'Choosing Health – Making healthy choices easier', which recognises the role of local authorities in promoting healthy lifestyles.

Culture and leisure activities are acknowledged to be important tools in encouraging healthy lifestyles and improving health and wellbeing. West Kent PCT has allocated Tunbridge Wells £78,020 per annum/pro rata from Choosing Health monies. This will be used to increase physical activity and healthy lifestyle activities in the priority neighbourhoods, expand and revitalise the GP exercise referral scheme and to employ a full time post of Healthy Lifestyles Coordinator.

A bid to Chances4Change, Big Lottery funding to provide Detached play in the Supporting Independence Programme areas is in the late stages. It is anticipated approval will be given during December 2007 and the programme will be implemented for three years commencing in early 2008.

### Community Engagement and Development

In order to provide the best services to our citizens, we must understand their needs and wishes. Through effective community engagement we can ensure that we listen to the diverse needs of those in the borough, and respond to them through our decision-making. We will be developing an Engagement Strategy to set out how we will do this.

Furthermore, by empowering local communities through community development we can help them to be more involved in decision-making, to participate more actively in democracy, and to contribute positively to their local communities. Through community development initiatives we can help to address wider issues such as employment, health inequalities, and levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. In particular, we will focus community development in our priority neighbourhoods, Sherwood and Showfields, where there is evidence of multiple deprivation.

## Helping the most vulnerable including the young and elderly

Not all of our residents are able to make the safe, healthy or informed choices that others take for granted. The Council currently provides a range of services to support young people and older people and, in particular, is working with its partners to tackle deprivation and promote self-reliance.

It is expected that Tunbridge Wells Borough will have two Local Children's Trusts, one for Urban Tunbridge Wells and one for the rural areas. Each Trust will be producing a Local Children and Young People Plan (LCYPP) to link in with the overarching Kent Children and Young People Plan; based around the Every Child Matters Outcomes.

The Urban trust has been one of three pathfinder trusts within Kent and has recently launched its LCYPP and has a well established board, the Stronger Healthier Communities Coordinator represents TWBC on the board. The rural cluster is currently engaged in a series of scoping meetings around setting up the trust like arrangements and LCYPP, TWBC are represented within the scoping by the Stronger Healthier Communities Coordinator.

## Valuing Diversity, Promoting Equality

By promoting equality, valuing diversity and combating unfair treatment of people based on their race, disability, gender, age, religion/belief or sexual orientation, we aim to improve the quality of life for all who live, work, learn and enjoy leisure time in the borough. The Council's first 'Equality Scheme' will start the process of integrating equality issues into all our policies, service planning arrangements and performance management frameworks. Over the coming years, we will test all our services, policies, strategies and initiatives against the principles set out in the Equality Scheme. Appropriate action as a result of these tests will be taken where necessary.

As the Scheme continues to develop, the public, voluntary, community and faith organisations and Council employees will be invited to contribute. We will assess ourselves to see if we are achieving our aims and meeting the needs of local communities and results of our progress will be made available annually to the public for scrutiny.

## Working in Partnership

We recognise that we need to work with a wide range of partners to achieve our ambitious targets in relation to safer and stronger communities. Therefore the most appropriate organisation will take the lead for each project and where appropriate we will continue to seek alternative ways of providing services more effectively. For many activities, the Council's role will be one of issue identification, co-ordination, support and enabling.

## Develop safer and stronger communities

**Since 2006 /07 we have achieved the following to contribute to our Strategic Priority:**

- Opened a new community facility in Sherwood (TN2) to enable local people to access new services and activities within a priority neighbourhood. A new resident led Trust has begun to develop its capacity through supported training and acts as an access point into the wider community by managing the community facility.
- Enabled local residents who may not have traditionally engaged with the Council to inform us of their views through community engagement programme (Ward Walks) with frontline Councillors, key partners and Council staff.
- Developed and monitored a new Sustainable Community Plan which sets out a partnership approach based on public consultation.
- Supported frontline councillors, by providing them with a new tool called Councillor Call for Action which will allow Councillors to further develop their community leadership role and support local community issues.
- Identified the multiple needs and barriers faced by some families in accessing services (and wider support mechanism) by working in partnership with Kent County Council.
- Began to examine the need to map new emerging communities within the borough and signed up to take part in a national study on migration and the impact on public service with Kent County Council.
- Commissioned a review of LSP and began to examine strategic partnerships in the borough.
- Increased health and well being activities in the priority neighbourhoods, including enhancing the GP referral scheme by securing £78,020 from Choosing Health money from the PCT to deliver physical activities in the priority neighbourhoods.
- Supported the development of Children Trust arrangements in the borough.
- Improved the Youth Council arrangements (based on views of young people) and developed a draft Youth Strategy jointly with Kent County Council.
- Reduced anti social behaviour in the town's parks through partnership working with the local community and Police.
- Enhanced the public realm by securing a new Green Flag award for the Grove.
- Implemented a new business plan in the Assembly Hall Theatre resulting in improved activity and reduced cost.

- Increased the Council's capacity to undertake outreach work by securing 13,000 Chances for Change funding for a detached Play Worker project.
- Targeted young vulnerable people in the priority neighbourhoods through a number of sports related activities including Charlton Athletic football training; a second Summer Slam as well as providing free arts and museum activities for vulnerable people.
- Increased the partnership approach to tackling current crime and disorder issues by setting up a Partnership Tasking and Co-ordination Group which meet monthly and takes action based on current data available across all agencies.
- Worked with the business community to draw up plans to extend the CCTV and radio scheme to North Farm Industrial Estate.
- Worked with partners to fund and manage a Domestic Abuse Services Co-ordinator to review service provision for victims of domestic abuse and draw up a strategy to address gaps and increase provision.
- In order to increase feelings of safety, publicised the fact that as of the end of September all crime is down 10.8% and crime in the night-time economy is down 17.5% (when compared with April – Sept 2007).
- Commenced delivery of our 'Equality Scheme'.

Objectives	This year we will:	By March 2009 we aim to have:	By 2010 we aim to have	We will have met this priority if by 2011 we have:
As a partner in the Tunbridge Wells Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership, tackle anti-social behaviour and reduce crime and the fear of crime.	<p>Work with partners to prepare a scheme to extend the coverage of the Council's CCTV system to the North Farm business area Tunbridge Wells.</p> <p>Review how frontline Council services can be proactive in the communities they serve.</p> <p>Provide diversionary activities and support for young people through a variety of ways including leisure services.</p>	<p>Implemented the extension of the Council's CCTV system to North Farm and continued to deploy mobile to address short-term issues.</p> <p>Looked to identify areas where crime and disorder data identifies a need to extend CCTV coverage.</p> <p>Developed high visibility in tackling local issues and reduced fear of crime.</p> <p>Targeted young people at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour and engaged them in sports, arts and museum activities and to have received appropriate additional support services.</p>	<p>Increased the number of people who feel safe during the day and night in the borough.</p> <p>Upgraded the Council's CCTV control room to use digital technology.</p> <p>Maintained high visibility in tackling local issues and reduced fear of crime.</p> <p>Targeted young people at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour and engaged them in sports, arts and museum activities and to have received appropriate additional support services.</p>	<p>Further Increased the number of people who feel safe during the day and night in the borough.</p> <p>Reduced the number of recorded incidents in our town centres.</p> <p>Maintained high visibility in tackling local issues and reduced fear of crime.</p> <p>Improved the self esteem and social skills of targeted young people.</p>
Work with and consult the community to identify the improvements which will most benefit local residents.	Roll out the Ward Walks programme to four areas with key partners.	Continue to undertake four Ward Walks with key partners.	Continue to undertake four Ward Walks with key partners.	<p>Evidence that local satisfaction with the Council's consultation process has risen.</p> <p>Evidence that our priority groups are involved and support the process.</p>

Objectives	This year we will:	By March 2009 we aim to have:	By 2010 we aim to have	We will have met this priority if by 2011 we have:
Enable the most effective organisation to deliver local services.	<p>Work with voluntary groups across West Kent to assess different ways of providing services.</p> <p>Support local residents in managing TN2, the new community centre in Sherwood.</p> <p>Devolve elements of management of Woodbury Park Cemetery to the Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery.</p>	<p>Enabled voluntary groups and local residents to take an active part in service delivery.</p> <p>Management Plan in place and have sought Green Flag accreditation.</p>	<p>Achieved a Green Flag award for Woodbury Park Cemetery.</p>	<p>Assessed all of our services and assets in the context of shared services and different forms of provision.</p> <p>Maintained the Green Flag award.</p>
Improve the physical environment of priority neighbourhoods and address social problems.	<p>Complete a new community centre in Sherwood.</p> <p>Work with partners to take forward estate-based regeneration plans.</p>	<p>Supported the introduction of new services to the community centre funded in a sustainable manner.</p> <p>Identified regeneration plans and helped fund community development work in both areas.</p> <p>Programme and development of underused and derelict sites.</p>	<p>Achieved a sustainable development of community centres.</p> <p>Supported the development of new regeneration activity.</p>	<p>Delivered new community facilities and built new private and affordable homes.</p> <p>A measured increase in residents' satisfaction.</p>
To encourage the physical environment of priority neighbourhoods and address social problems	<p>Work in partnership with public and private partners to maintain and improve healthcare facilities and to promote Tunbridge Wells as a centre of excellence.</p> <p>Target our community sports, arts and museum programmes to those most in need.</p>	<p>Completed the necessary planning condition approvals for Pembury Hospital.</p> <p>Improved marketing to Priority Neighbourhoods by the sports centres.</p> <p>Trinity to have expanded its youth programme.</p> <p>Implemented the Leisure Strategy Action Plan to target those in most need.</p>	<p>Pembury Hospital under construction.</p> <p>Increased the number of people taking part in targeted sports, arts and museum activities.</p> <p>An increased number of residents in our priority neighbourhoods engaged in physical activity and healthy lifestyle activities.</p>	<p>First phase of Pembury Hospital open.</p> <p>Included policies in the LDF that ensure adequate open space provision is made.</p> <p>Contributed to improving the health of those taking part in targeted activities.</p> <p>Increased engagement with sexual health services leading to a reduction in STIs and teenage pregnancy.</p>
To provide opportunities to young people throughout the borough to participate in physical activity and healthy lifestyle activities	<p>In partnership with West Kent PCT, we will have recruited to the post of 'Healthy Lifestyle Coordinator'.</p>	<p>An increased number of young residents in our priority neighbourhoods engaged in physical activity and healthy lifestyle activities.</p>	<p>An increased number of young residents in all wards engaged in physical activity and healthy lifestyle activities.</p>	<p>All young residents in the borough have increased opportunities to access physical activities and healthy lifestyle choices.</p>

Objectives	This year we will:	By March 2009 we aim to have:	By 2010 we aim to have	We will have met this priority if by 2011 we have:
To develop a strong partnership approach to delivering health and well being across the borough	Worked with a similar district to examine how we can collectively take forward a new approach to health and well being in our priority neighbourhoods.	Have an agreed approach to supporting an increased focus on promoting health and well being across key partnerships.  Have established health and well being delivery board.	Supported a range of new initiatives which targets need and support people to have healthy lifestyle.	A variety of support and facilities available for local people to access a health lifestyles.
Deliver the commitments set out in the Council's Comprehensive Equality Scheme 2007–2010.	Start implementation of the actions supporting the Council's Equality Scheme and make progress towards achieving outcomes.	Delivered outcomes based on the Council's equality action plans.	Delivered all actions supporting the Council's Equality Scheme.	Ensured that Equalities is mainstreamed across all functions and services.

# 7 Our Three Customer Service Commitments



**Underpinning our priorities are three cross-cutting commitments, which reflect our core principles in service development and delivery to our customers:**

- delivering high quality services to our customers
- improving customer service and satisfaction
- ensuring that we are well managed, proactive and deliver value for money services

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

## High Quality Services

The Council has considerably improved its performance over the past few years. The Council continues to outperform the vast majority of local authorities whilst maintaining top quartile customer satisfaction ratings with one of the lowest council taxes in the country. However, we are not complacent and continue to monitor and manage our performance closely. Whilst the Council has committed itself to deliver high quality services to our customers, there clearly needs to be a balance struck between the quality of service provision and available resources. The Council has made active use of a number of tools to assess the appropriate trade-off between cost and quality – these include the SIMALTO budget

consultation exercise and the Kent-wide 'price book'. As a Council, we need to be clear about what customers can expect from us. As part of our corporate 'Customer First' programme each frontline service will produce quality standards to ensure all our customers are aware of the level of service that they can expect from the Council.

The Council has already delivered a range of improvements to the way in which it delivers service. Further details are provided in the 'Delivery' section below (Section 9). Details of some of our future improvement priorities are set out in our 'Corporate Improvement Plan' – a 'sister document' to the Strategic Plan. We recognise that performance indicators only tell part of the story: a key issue for us is the delivery of real and tangible improvements – outcomes for people who visit or who live or work in the borough. Key achievements include:

- the fact that the Council is now amongst the top ten per cent of councils in the country for recycling rates – a key issue of concern for residents and, in response to what local people are telling us, we have extended recycling to plastics
- the crime rate in Tunbridge Wells is one of the lowest in the county
- proactive steps are taken to remove graffiti, fly-tipped waste and abandoned vehicles as soon as they are reported
- Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery is actively involved in educational initiatives for young people – recently recognised with the Sandford Award for heritage education
- the Council's pro-active work in housing has contributed to a drop of nearly fifty three per cent in the number of households who applied to the Council as homeless between 2004 and 2007
- the Council is providing more information than ever before to visitors and tourists including a new information terminal for residents and visitors in a pub in Cranbrook, increases in counter enquiries and TIC accommodation bookings and recognition of our TIC in a national award scheme

## Improving Customer Service and Satisfaction

The Council is committed to delivering excellent customer service. As part of this commitment, it has developed a Customer Service Charter and a customer service handbook for all staff and it has fundamentally reviewed its complaints procedure. We monitor our performance with regular mystery shopping exercises and consultation exercises. Since the Council introduced its Complaints Procedure, the Council has had no findings of maladministration by the Local Government Ombudsman. Public satisfaction remains relatively high and satisfaction has particularly improved in areas where the Council has invested money. The Council is not complacent and has recently committed itself to obtaining the 'Customer First' standard. It has also produced a customer access strategy to map out how the Council intends to enable customers to access its services.

One major development in the course of 2007–8 was the Council's commitment to deliver a 'Gateway' in Royal Tunbridge Wells. The Council is also exploring the potential for a 'rural gateway' in the Eastern end of the Borough. Gateways are an exciting new venture being piloted by Kent County Council, district councils and a range of other public and voluntary sector bodies that are seeking to join up the services we collectively provide to the public.

## Well Managed, Proactive and Value for Money

The Council is committed to ensuring that it is well managed, proactive and delivers value for money and our Value for Money Strategy sets out a clear framework for how we continue to achieve this. The Council has an established track record in delivering value for money services. Band D Council Tax is the lowest in Kent and is low compared to other 'near neighbours' (outside of Kent). It has remained in the top quartile despite increasing pressures on services and cuts in central government grants. The Council has also responded positively to the government Gershon agenda and is on track to deliver £2.286m savings by the end of 2008 against a target of £1.386m – an additional £900k.

The Council is working to improve its governance mechanisms. The Council has recently revised its Financial Procedure Rules, Contract Procurement Rules and Scheme of Delegation. As part of a broader review of the Constitution, it has also established an Audit Committee to receive audit reports and assure standards of corporate governance. The Council has also recently reviewed its arrangements for managing

risk, procuring goods and services and managing projects and has strengthened and increased the support provided to its overview and scrutiny function in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council.

With both absolute and real-term reductions in government grants, inflationary pressures, additional services required by government and restrictions on the level of Council Tax increases, the Council will always need to save money just to stand still. With the need to put additional resources into priority areas, Value for Money is effectively a fact of life. At the present time, the Council continues to enjoy relatively high levels of public satisfaction with its services (with very low levels of dissatisfaction) whilst, at the same time, maintaining one of the lowest borough Council Taxes in Kent. The Council has delivered a further £700k savings as part of its 2008/9 budget and has set out a range of ways in which it intends to deliver VFM as part of a VFM Strategy. One particular initiative of note is a proposed partnership approach to 'business process re-engineering' with Ashford and Maidstone borough councils.

The Council is currently in the midst of a considerable programme of change to the way in which it manages and runs its services. To assist in delivering on this ambitious agenda, the Council is investing in its people: it has entered into a learning and development partnership with Maidstone Borough Council and has also developed a 'People Strategy'. This will ensure the Council's human resources are equipped for delivering the corporate priorities now and in the future. In particular, there is a strong focus on ensuring that the right people are in the right jobs, that they have the necessary skills and expertise, and are being well managed in order to achieve best value for money. As part of its work in this area, the Council has developed a suite of Corporate Values, in conjunction with staff. They are as follows:

- **Customer Focus** – We will take responsibility and do our very best to deliver the services that the customer needs.
- **Value staff** – We will empower each other to carry out our day-day roles as valued members of the TWBC team.
- **Respect** – We will always show respect for people and the environment
- **Communication** – We will consistently advise and inform and listen to what is being said to us  
Responsibility – We will care for our borough, the environment and the community that we serve.
- **Transparency** – We will always seek to be open and honest.

## Working in partnership

The Council recognises that partnership working is essential to improving the standard and quality of services it provides and to maximising cost-effectiveness. Each of the previous sections addressing the Council's priorities have spelt out how we are working in partnership with others and the same situation holds true with the Council's customer service commitments.

The Council is 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.
- A potential Revenues and Benefits partnership with Maidstone.
- The joint delivery of a Gateway with Kent County Council

In addition, the Council has adopted a joint approach to business process re-engineering with Maidstone and Ashford borough councils. The Council has also commissioned services from the private, voluntary and community sector, for example, the Wessex Partnership were commissioned to review the Council's grants scheme and Voluntary Action West Kent were commissioned to negotiate voluntary sector involvement in the Gateway.

With the Council's pledge to deliver the Kent Commitment, the future is likely to see further examples of partnership working. In particular, the joint approach to business process re-engineering will produce possible models for shared or part-shared services.

## Customer Service Commitments:

Since 2006/07 we have achieved the following to contribute to our Customer Service Commitments:

- Started to roll out a Customer Relationship Management System to improve the service we deliver to customers.
- Committed to deliver a Gateway in partnership with KCC to bring together a range of public, private and voluntary sector services under one town centre location, which we have purchased in the centre of Royal Tunbridge Wells.
- Agreed to explore the feasibility of a Rural Gateway in Cranbrook and to participate in a Mobile Gateway to serve the rural areas with KCC.
- Signed up to a programme of business process re-engineering with Maidstone and Ashford borough councils.
- Committed the Council to achieve the 'Customer First' standard.
- Reviewed and updated our complaints handling policy.
- In 2006/07 we have delivered a further £721,450 efficiency savings according to our annual return to government.
- Improved our performance across the board – some fifty per cent of our performance indicators are now in the top quartile.
- Continued to improve the cost-effectiveness of the services we deliver – we have over-achieved on our efficiency targets and maintain one of the lowest district Council Taxes in Kent.
- Received very positive feedback in a corporate peer review that we commissioned in October 2007.

Objectives	By March 2008 we will:	By March 2009 we aim to have:	By 2010 we aim to have	We will have met this priority if by 2011 we have:
Ensure that the Council strives to improve performance and provides VFM.	Review two key services, Building Control and Revenue and Benefits  Produce a shared services policy.	Improved twenty five per cent of our key processes and integrated them with CRM.	Improved seventy five per cent of our key processes and integrated them with the Customer Relationship Management (CRM).	A rolling programme of business process improvement and embedded a culture of innovation and challenge within the organisation.
Ensure that the Council's services are driven by our customers.	Begin to introduce Customer Relationship Management to our switchboard and Tourist Information Centre  Agree a communication and engagement strategy.	Opened a Gateway in Royal Tunbridge Wells.  Made a further 5% of appropriate services available through multiple channels.  Made a hundred per cent of consultations available on the internet (where possible).	Opened a Rural Gateway in the Eastern end of the Borough.  Ensured that all appropriate customer services are available through multiple channels.  Ensured that the results of consultation are reflected in the delivery and choice of Council services.  Achieved a ten per cent increase in residents' satisfaction with access to Council services.	Have systems in place to 'personalise' customer service delivery by combining information from customer surveys and feedback and outreach initiatives such as 'Ward Walks'.
Ensure that those employed in the Council develop their skills to deliver more effective services	Produce a draft HR strategy.  Complete Leadership and Change courses and consolidate Member development.	Agreed a new People Strategy and embedded a set of values within the organisation.  A training programme reflecting our key priorities.	Achieved a culture of prioritising services to residents.  Achieved a culture of prioritising.  Achieved the Elected Member Development Charter.  Re-achieved liP accreditation.  Ensured that our staff have the necessary skills, training and support to deliver excellent services to residents.	Extended the Council's learning and development partnership with Maidstone Borough Council to include at least two other partners.  Work in place to align terms and conditions between districts and KCC to develop a 'career path' through local government in Kent.
Take a proactive approach to publicising work carried out externally and in partnership with other organisations	Ensure that we capture and publicise achievements through the media, iLocaland partner publications.	Ensure that partnerships arrangements have clear approach to promoting achievements.	Increase in joint publication and promotion materials among partners and other organisations.	Increased satisfaction of public services.

## 8 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 Issues (increase resources)

Priority Issues	2007/08 Update
Economic Regeneration	Head of Service for Economic Development and Regeneration appointed. Private Sector partner appointed to develop master plans for regenerating four towns within the borough.
Transport Improvements	The Council has invested £50,000 in a Park and Ride survey funded from reserves and has allocated a further £50,000 for a parking study of the borough.
Recycling	Additional sums invested in the waste and recycling contract to maintain existing (top quartile) performance levels pending a final decision on retendering.
Housing Services	The Council currently spends in the region of £650,000 annually on Disabled Facility Grants and an additional £200,000 per annum on private sector renewal grants. The Council also agreed to increase the proportion of affordable homes on its Medway depot site to forty per cent
Community Engagement	The Council has appointed an additional officer in this area and has put resources into TN2 and a new 'Ward Walks' initiative.
Partnership Working	The Council continues to pursue partnership working in a variety of areas. Notable examples include the Gateway (in terms of joining up the front of house) – an overall capital investment in excess of £3m. The Council has an agreed framework for a transformational approach to joint business process re-engineering with Maidstone and Ashford borough councils. It is also discussing the potential to broaden the partnership in future years.
Enhancing our governance structure, such as Overview and Scrutiny function.	In 2007, the Council entered into a partnership arrangement with Maidstone Borough Council to deliver its overview and scrutiny function. The partnership coincided with the introduction of three new Select Committees focusing on the Council's priorities and Cabinet portfolios. The Committees have undertaken a wide range of work resulting in a number of positive outcomes for the Council.

## Important Issues (maintain service level)

Important Issues (maintain resources)	2007/08 Update
Sustaining improvements in Planning.	Implement the Action Plan as agreed with the Audit Commission 2007.
Sustaining improvements in Revenue and Benefits services.	Main threat to sustaining improvement is resilience. Looking to enter into Partnership working with Maidstone Borough Council in order to manage this threat.
Enhancing the use of ICT in planning and delivering services.	The council will enhance the use of Customer Relationship Management systems for use in The Gateway and self serve customer access. We will continue to develop our website and integrate GIS and Document Management systems to additional back office applications. The council will increase its use of remote and mobile technology.

## Non-priority Issues (redirect resources)

Non-priority Issues (redirect resources)	2007/08 Update
Providing 'back office' functions in isolation (ie we will be seeking to work more in partnership to reduce cost and improve customer service).	£100k savings identified for efficiencies (including partnership working) in the 2007/08 budget report with further savings in the area of HR and Maintenance where the Council is working with Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council respectively.
Providing leisure services directly where more cost-effective alternatives exist.	£100k savings targeted from leisure.
Responsive repairs to buildings (we will be looking to reduce the cost of responsive repairs by better use of planned maintenance).	£100k targeted from the Council's maintenance budget.
Direct subsidies to the Assembly Hall theatre.	The Assembly Hall business plan was approved in November 2006 and reduces the Council's subsidy by £193k to £158k by 2010.
Making the general Council Tax payer pay for services that are used by only some residents or non-residents (ie we will be looking to rebalance the resources we receive from Council Tax and fees and charges – a principle we tested in our recent budget consultation exercise).	£165k identified in additional fees and charges from parking, licensing and planning income as part of the 2007/08-budget report. £100k savings also identified against direct provision of public conveniences.
Events	£150k identified for savings from grants and events as part of the 2007/08-budget report.
Grants to outside bodies in non-priority areas.	Audit Commission has analysed grants to external organisations. As a result, the Council commissioned Wessex Partnership to support the Council in developing a new grants process which includes improved monitoring framework and a clear links to achieving corporate priorities. Grants are currently being centralised with resources being redirected to support the centralisation process.  £40k reduction in Trinity grant to bring their grant in line with their business plan.

# 2008–2011 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. Sets out below are issues by category for the coming three-year period.**

## Priority Issues

- economic regeneration
- working with partners to secure transport improvements
- reducing waste and increasing recycling
- working with the public and private sector to ensure we have housing suitable for local people
- community engagement
- partnership working where it adds value
- engaging hard to reach groups
- enhancing our governance arrangement including financial reporting and asset management
- customer care- enhancing customer experience through the Gateway initiatives

## Important Issues

- sustaining improvements in planning and revenue and benefits services
- consolidate approaches to value for money through Business Process re-engineering
- refocusing ICT to support the Gateway and the way in which we plan and deliver services
- improving the well being of our communities

## Non Priority Issues

- providing 'back office functions in isolation.
- providing services directly where more cost-effective alternatives exist
- making the general Council Tax payer pay for services that are used by only some residents or non-residents (i.e. we will be looking to rebalance the resources we receive from Council Tax and fees and charges – a principle we tested in our recent budget consultation exercise). This includes parking and a range of fees and charges
- events and grants to outside bodies in non-priority areas

# 9 Delivery



## Internal Capacity

**Following its Comprehensive Performance Assessment, the Council has already begun to implement changes to improve its capacity to deliver. The following has already taken place:**

- Complete restructure of senior management, including new Chief Executive, three new directors and seven new heads of service.
- Increased consultative arrangements, such as the Town Forum and Parish Chairman's meetings and use of SIMALTO (simultaneous multiple-attributes trade-off modelling) as part of the 2007/08 budget proposals.
- Increase in staff capacity in Housing following recommendations from the Housing Inspection in Oct/Nov 2005.
- New Sustainable Community Plan in place and being monitored.
- Achieved Investors in People re-accreditation.
- Staff adopting flexible working patterns.
- New CRM system in place integrating processes from Planning, Benefits, Housing and Environmental Services at present.
- Annual Gershon efficiency target exceeded.
- External review of Scrutiny function undertaken by I&DeA, with recommendation being taken forward in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council.
- Recommendations from the Planning review (Trevor Roberts Report) being implemented.

Over the next 12 months, this work will be enhanced by a number of further activities:

- Further work with other districts and KCC to look at opportunities for joint procurement and outsourcing to achieve further efficiencies.
- Production and development of a Medium Term Financial Strategy, setting out principles for investing our reserves.
- Mainstreaming Ward Walks
- Establishment of a Local Strategic Partnership for Tunbridge Wells and a subsequent review of other strategic partnerships to ensure they are suitable for the changing position of the Council and Government policy) being implemented.
- Adopting the Council's People Strategy and Organisational Values and start implementation of the action plan.

## Financial Resources

The financial consequences associated with delivering the Strategic Plan are set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## Partnership

The Council has a long history of working in partnership at the local, sub-regional and county level. We recognise the value and contributions that our partners bring and we continue to strengthen our relationships in delivering services and enhancing opportunities.

We have already spelt out ways in which Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is making active use of partnerships to deliver each of its key priorities. We will also continue to explore ways in which it can work in partnership with Kent County Council, other districts, the public, private, community, voluntary and faith sectors to improve service delivery and value for money.

# 10 Our Performance Management Framework

Performance Management is about ensuring that once we have translated our high-level priorities into defined, measurable, time-specific targets, they are cascaded across and between all levels of the organisation. Performance Management is now embedded process throughout all areas of our work and operations. The Strategic Plan is the key document that guides the performance management framework and sets out the high level objectives that all services aim to achieve.

## Performance Indicators

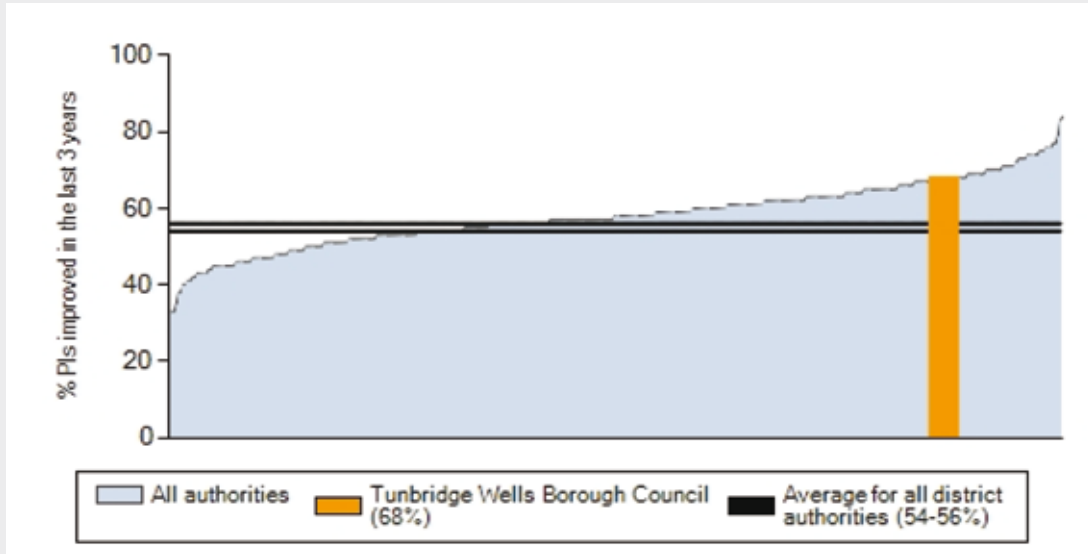
Indicator	Location	Owner	Responsibility	Reporting Arrangements
KPIs	Strategic Plan	Council	Cabinet	quarterly updates
LPIs	Appendix to SP	Cabinet	Portfolio Holders	quarterly by exception to Cabinet
Service Plan action plan targets	Service Plan	Director	Head of Service	Reported via Covalent to Management Board/ Team and Service Team meetings

## Performance Update:

Set out below is the Council's performance over the last three years; it demonstrates that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council continues to perform above the national average of all district authorities.

Customer Satisfaction with services has improved significantly and trends demonstrate that satisfaction is higher than those authorities deemed to be the best performing nationally. The increase in satisfaction and performance continues to improve, whilst we remain one of the lowest Council tax areas in Kent.

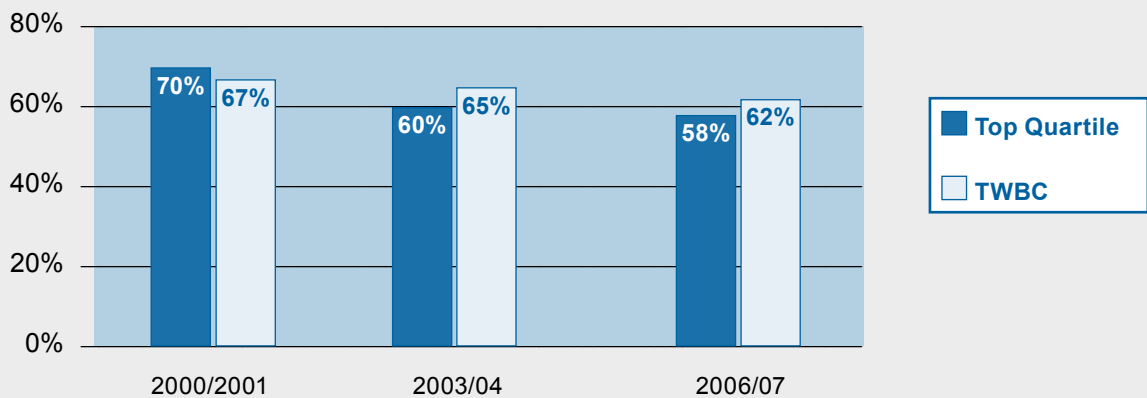
Proportion of performance indicators that have improved in the last three years



Audit Commission Figures: released November 2007

## Customer Satisfaction:

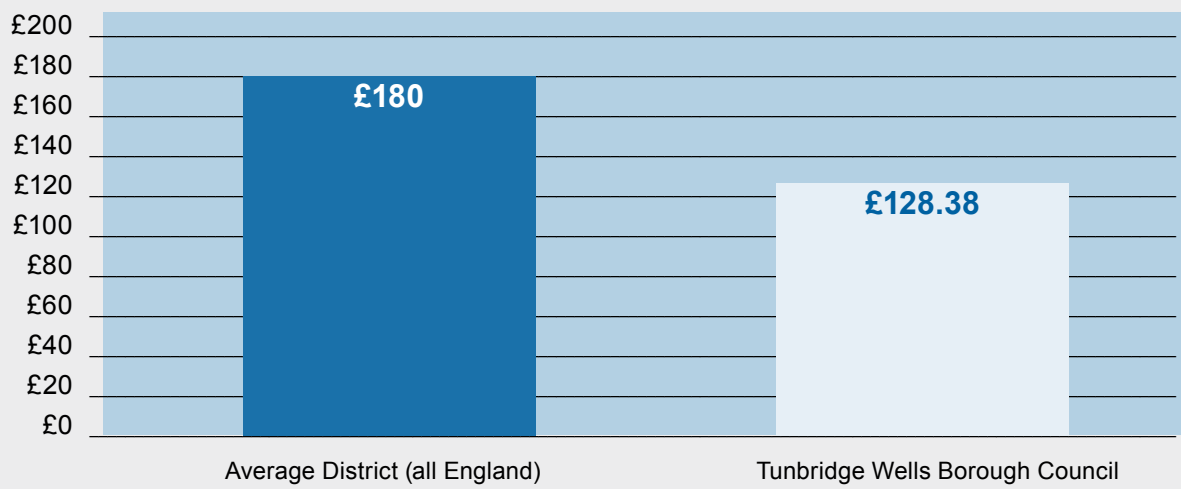
**BVPI3 – Overall Satisfaction with the Council's Services**  
(comparison against all England data – Audit Commission figures)



Figures taken from Audit Commission Satisfaction Survey Data: June 2007

**Costs:**

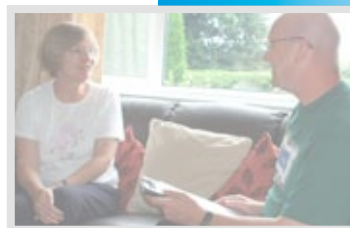
**Band D Council Tax Levels – 2007/08**



Figures taken from DCLG Council Tax report 2007/08

# Appendix 1 – Corporate Objectives

	Corporate Priorities	Corporate Objectives
<b>A1</b>	Promoting and maintaining a thriving and diverse local economy.	Promote a revival of our town centres as places to live, shop, work, operate and visit.
		Work with our partners to find innovative solutions to improve access to the town centre and across the borough.
		Take practical steps to promote a more entrepreneurial and balanced local economy.
<b>A2</b>	Caring for our environment.	Deliver a high quality household waste collection and recycling service that has the emphasis on waste reduction, recycling and diversion of material from final disposal.
		Promote sustainable energy across the Council and borough.
		Improve the appearance of the street scene.
		Protect local character through the Town Planning process.
		Maximise the quality of our existing TWBC parks.
<b>A3</b>	Having housing suitable for local people.	Provide greater focus on achieving a balanced housing market and increasing the supply of affordable homes.
		Support more people, including vulnerable groups, to live in their own homes for longer by providing disabled adaptations.
		Reduce homelessness in the town and minimise the number of people at risk of homelessness.
		Tackle fuel poverty and enable practical assistance to those who need help in heating their homes.
		Improve the condition of private sector housing.
<b>A4</b>	Developing safer and stronger communities.	As a partner in the Tunbridge Wells Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership, tackle anti-social behaviour and reduce crime and the fear of crime.
		Work with and consult the community to identify the improvements which will most benefit local residents.
		Enable the most effective organisation to deliver local services.
		Improve the physical environment of priority neighbourhoods and address social problems.
		Encourage and help the provision of better healthcare and provide opportunities for healthier lifestyles.
		To provide opportunities to young people throughout the Borough to participate in physical activity and healthy lifestyle activities.
		Deliver the commitments set out in the Council's Comprehensive Equality Scheme 2007–2010.
<b>A5</b>	Delivering high quality services to our customers.	Ensure that those employed in the Council develop their skills to deliver more effective services.
<b>A6</b>	Improving customer service and satisfaction.	Ensure that the Council's services are driven by our customers.
<b>A7</b>	Ensuring that we are well managed, proactive and deliver value for money services.	Ensure that the Council strives to improve performance and provides VFM.
		Take a proactive approach to publicising work carried out externally and in partnership with other organisations.



If you require this information in large print, Braille, on audiotape or in any other format, please contact us on 01892 526121