

# Council Plan 2016 → 2020



**CUSTOMERS PLACE VALUE FOR MONEY**

**DRAFT**

# Council Plan

## 2016 → 2020



**CUSTOMERS PLACE VALUE FOR MONEY**

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3 Welcome to our draft four year Council  
4 Plan which sets out our priorities and  
5 key projects over the next few years.  
6 This draft plan will be the subject of  
7 consultation both within the Council,  
8 and with relevant stakeholders and  
9 local residents before being adopted. It  
10 will be a living plan that will respond to  
11 changing times whilst keeping a focus  
12 on the key priorities for local people.

We welcome feedback on this Council Plan. Send your comments/questions to the Business Strategy and Performance Team, Southover House, Lewes BN7 1AB by no later than 8 February 2016.

# Introduction from the Leader



**Councillor  
Andy Smith**

Lewes District Council is an innovative, efficient and forward thinking council with a proven track record of delivering good quality services and responding dynamically to the changing needs of its customers and communities. We are committed to providing value for money for our residents, and keeping Council Tax levels as low as possible, despite the challenging financial climate.

Over the past five years we have reduced our costs by modernising, whilst at the same time delivering real improvements around the district, both on our own and in partnership. Local residents have noticed what we are doing. Satisfaction with how the Council runs things has improved from 45% to 63% since 2008.

## Some of our recent achievements

- 68% of people who contacted us during 2015 rated the quality of service as good.
- Recycling rates have improved from 22% in 2012/13 to 26% in 2015; a green waste service is being trialled in Seaford so customers do not have to take garden waste elsewhere for disposal.
- 45 local entrepreneurs were supported with start-up training during 2015; 33 of these have started their own businesses. 118 young people have taken on apprenticeships at 56 local businesses.
- 110 new students started their first year at the University Technical College.
- Denton Island Growth Quarter development project in Newhaven commenced.
- Over £70 million of additional funding and investment has been attracted into our communities to deliver strategic infrastructure project over the next 5-10 years.
- A further £18 million has been secured for flood defences and £10 million for a new port access road in Newhaven.

“ This Plan shows how, over the next four years, we will work to make Lewes District an even better place in which to live, work and visit. There are significant challenges ahead, not least of which is the need to save £3 million by 2020.

*As Leader of the Council, I have made a strong commitment to listen to and work with all political groups on the Council, key partners in the public, private, community and voluntary sectors and Council staff, to deliver some significant projects in the district as well as a major joint transformation programme in partnership with Eastbourne Borough Council.* ”

# The Lewes district

## *Our people and places*



Our residents, businesses and visitors benefit from beautiful landscapes and historic environment. Our diverse and attractive countryside includes chalk cliffs and downlands, shingle beaches, heathland, wetland and areas of ancient woodland. Our County Town, Lewes, is at the heart of the district and is a popular historic tourist destination.

Lewes district has a population of **97,500**

**77%** of residents live within the five urban areas of Lewes, Newhaven, Peacehaven, Seaford and Telscombe Cliffs/East Saltdean. The rest live in our **23** rural parishes.

This diversity of landscapes and communities is a great strength. Community life is a strong and distinctive feature of the district. Residents identify closely with our towns, neighbourhoods and villages. However it inevitably also provides some challenges in terms of connectivity and issues of rural isolation for some of our communities.

Our population of 97,500 is projected to grow by 8% by 2027. During this time the proportion of people living with long term illness or disabilities is likely to rise by 16.5%. It is therefore important that we work with our partners to ensure the needs of our changing communities are met. We want to help support people in maintaining healthy and active lifestyles, and to remain living in their own homes.

We benefit from an entrepreneurial economy with self-employment being a significant feature of our district, representing 18% of the economically active population. Over 36% of residents are employed in managerial or professional roles.

Small companies of between 1 and 10 employees account for 88% of all local businesses. It is critical that we support these businesses to grow and prosper, through advice and guidance as well as suitable, high quality employment premises, so they can provide future employment within the district.

Alongside this, we want to put particular emphasis on supporting our young people to ensure they have the training and skills they need to thrive in the future.



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# Our commitments



## CUSTOMERS

Our population has a higher percentage of residents over 65 years of age compared to the national average and this is expected to increase by around 45% between 2010 and 2030. These changes will need to be taken into account as we develop our services over the coming years.

Although not an area experiencing high levels of deprivation, there are some parts of our district which require more support than others, due to factors such as low incomes or social isolation. We will work to ensure that these needs are understood and reflected in the way our services are planned in the future.

*We will deliver improvements for customers and communities.*

## PLACE

The Lewes district is a vibrant and diverse place. Balancing the need for growth with the desire to protect and enhance the environment is important to local people.

A recent survey showed that local people viewed provision of affordable housing, economic regeneration, supporting business and campaigning for improved road/rail infrastructure to be important roles for the Council. These views have been reflected in this Plan.

*We will work with key partners to achieve investment in our towns and villages.*

## VALUE FOR MONEY

Financially the future is challenging throughout local government. The funding we receive from central Government is likely to reduce significantly over the next few years, and ending completely from 2020. We need to find £2.7 million each year if we are to keep a balanced budget.

At the same time, our 2015 survey indicated that residents would like the Council to keep Council Tax at or below the target rate of inflation. This Plan sets out how we will balance residents priorities within our diminishing resources.

*We will keep close control of our budgets and make the best use of our resources.*

# Communities

## *Resilient, healthy and engaged communities*



The Council will continue to work with its partners to enable local communities to become stronger and more able to support themselves, and for individuals to retain their independence. Key to this is the provision of good, relevant information and on-going two way engagement with these communities.

Through our Community Safety Partnership we will work to address environmental crime and antisocial behaviour and aim to reduce the fear of crime. 69% of residents feel we are working to make the area safer, a 6% improvement compared to 2008.

With our partners Wave Leisure, we will work to promote healthy lifestyles and support people to maintain their health and wellbeing.

We will also continue to fund key voluntary organisations in the area to support the most vulnerable, with a particular emphasis on dementia awareness, given the ageing population of the district.

### **We will achieve this by**

- Working with Wave Leisure and other health partners to provide activities and services that meet the needs of rural areas and an ageing population.
- Working with our voluntary sector partner 3VA to promote dementia awareness across the district.
- Improved engagement with local communities, particularly focusing on how we connect with young people, through the delivery of a new social media strategy
- Further develop our relationships with Town and Parish Councils to ensure we work collaboratively on local issues, such as housing, infrastructure and rural isolation.
- Working closely with our voluntary sector partners (3VA, Sompriti, Citizens' Advice Bureau, AiRS and East Sussex Credit Union) to deliver key advice services and make effective use of grant funding.

### **Measuring our success**

- Residents feel we are working to make the area safer.
- Increased participation in leisure activities amongst older people and in rural areas.
- More visitors to our leisure facilities.
- Mystery visit satisfaction score of 80% or more at our leisure centres.
- Reduction in levels of environmental crime.
- Increased sign up to the Council's social media channels, particularly by young people.

**82%** of people who receive the Council's magazine *District News* think it provides useful information.

Around **45%** of residents would like to get more involved in decisions which affect them.

**58%** of people aged 18 to 34 would like to get more engaged with us through social media.

# Customers

## *Improved customer service*



The Council provides a wide range of quality services that are valued by local residents. We have a strong record of high quality customer service, placing much importance on ensuring we put the customers' needs first.

This part of the plan focuses on how we can make best use of new technology to improve our customer service further. By joining up our computer systems, we will be able to provide instant access to our customers' records, enabling us to deliver a faster, better service.

In addition we will offer more services on-line, so they can be accessed by customers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We hope that this will provide more choice and convenience for our residents.

### **We will achieve this by**

- Improving our customer service team to ensure more of our enquiries can be dealt with by just speaking to one person.
- Delivering high quality services for our customers including options to self-serve on our website and increasing use of social media and email alerts.
- Investing in new technology to speed up and improve the service people receive when they contact the Council.

### **Measuring our success**

- Increasing the proportion of phone calls answered within 30 seconds.
- Monitoring, acting on and learning from the customer complaints and compliments we receive.
- Increasing the number of people registering for our email alert service. We aim to sign up 1,500 new users each year.

Around **7,500** calls to our switchboard each week

**63%** of customers contact us by phone; **75%** of these calls are about our waste and recycling services

**20%** of customers contact us via email

Over **800** e-forms submitted via our website each month

**83%** of residents use the internet

# Place

## *Delivering sustainable new housing and infrastructure*



Lewes is the second most expensive market town in England in which to buy a home. The average house price is £408,641, making it a challenging place for first time buyers as well as those on lower incomes. As the housing authority we have over 1,700 people on our housing register and in 2013 we estimated this would increase by 549 people per year. We estimate that only 244 new homes will become available each year.

As a Council, we have a clear commitment to deliver affordable housing. We have established a range of public/private arrangements which will see the Council using its assets to stimulate growth in the housing market at a local level. We have an ambitious house building programme, which will see over 5,800 new homes built by 2030.

**Campaigning to improve local road and rail infrastructure is a top priority for local people**

### **We will achieve this by**

- Using our planning powers (including our policy to ensure 40% of new housing is affordable) to encourage and enable developers to deliver further, suitable and sustainable housing in the district.
- Our New Homes project – working with our partners Karis and Southern Housing Group to deliver around 415 new homes on around 30 council owned sites across the district, of which at least 40% will be affordable.
- North Street Regeneration Scheme with Santon – delivering 416 new homes, 40% of them (165) affordable in Lewes.
- The Local Growth Fund project – delivering 30 new affordable homes on 6 Council-owned sites.
- Working with local communities on Neighbourhood Plans, to guide future land use and identify where housing can be built.
- Campaigning for improvements to the A27, rail infrastructure and rail services.

- Installing photovoltaic panels on council homes and buildings and encouraging local renewable energy projects.
- Enabling the delivery of key infrastructure projects in Newhaven, in particular a flood alleviation scheme and the Port Access Road.

### **Measuring our success**

- Delivery of over 1,000 new homes across the district, 40% of these being affordable.
- 10 adopted Neighbourhood Plans in place by 2020.
- Flood Alleviation Scheme delivered to unlock development sites in Newhaven.
- Flood defences in Lewes completed.
- Southern part of Newhaven Port area made accessible for development.
- 550 photovoltaic panels installed by spring 2016, providing reduced energy bills for tenants and the Council.



# Place

## *Growth and prosperity*

The district is an outstanding location for business and enterprise. It has a diverse business community of over 4,700 businesses providing a range of services and products. These employ over 30,000 people drawn from a wide catchment area. Key sectors include public administration, tourism, education and health, retail and manufacturing.

Lewes, Seaford and Newhaven have good rail links to London, Gatwick and the towns along the Sussex coast and beyond. The district benefits from good access to the trunk road network, with the A27/A26 linking Lewes and Newhaven to neighbouring Brighton and Eastbourne and the nearby A23/M23 providing access to London, Gatwick and the M25.

The port of Newhaven provides cross channel passenger and freight services to Dieppe, in Haute Normandie, France, and beyond to northern European. There is great potential to open up a European market in excess of 450 million customers.

We plan to deliver an area attractive to inward investment and supportive to new and developing businesses. We will work in partnership to bring about regeneration in the parts of the district where it is needed.

### **We will achieve this by**

- Developing the Enterprise Zone in Newhaven which has the potential to deliver 2,000 new jobs.
- Working to deliver super fast broadband to businesses across the district.
- Supporting businesses to grow and invest.
- Continue to make the case for Gatwick as the most sustainable location for a second runway in the South East.

### **Measuring our success**

- Increase in the number of businesses assisted through Business Rate Relief Scheme.
- Delivery of an annual business awards scheme with good uptake from local businesses.
- Level of investment into local businesses secured through partners.
- Enterprise Zone established, resulting in increased occupied commercial floor space of 55,000m<sup>2</sup> in Newhaven .
- Increased broadband coverage and speed in the district.
- 700m<sup>2</sup> of new modern floor space for growing businesses on Denton Island.
- 140,000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space in Lewes.
- 300 public car parking spaces in Lewes.
- Delivery of a new 1,864m<sup>2</sup> health centre in Lewes.



# Place

## *Clean and green district*



Our residents rightly value our high quality environment. They believe rubbish and litter is more of a problem now than in 2008. We expect the district to remain a clean and beautiful place to live, work and visit, as a result of continued effort to protect the quality of the local environment.

We know that one of the most important services we provide to our residents is waste collection and recycling. We are currently below the national average recycling rate for district councils in the South East (42.9%). We will invest significantly in our recycling services and aim to encourage much higher rates of recycling.

By 2020, the district will have attracted a greater number of visitors. Residents' quality of life will be enhanced by our beautiful parks and open spaces.

Our natural and historic environments will be preserved and park facilities and community spaces will have been improved, as we work with Towns and Parish Councils to devolve these areas to local communities.

### **We will achieve this by**

- Introducing a waste service that prioritises recycling and ensure these services are easy to use and collected frequently – recyclable waste (including food waste) to be collected every week and the remaining household waste to be collected fortnightly.
- Extending the chargeable fortnightly green waste collection service, currently piloting in Seaford, to the whole of the district.
- Developing a high profile campaign on new recycling services, so residents are well informed.
- Devolving some of our parks and open spaces to Town and Parish Councils.
- Exploring new opportunities to increase income.
- Working with the police and other agencies to tackle environmental crime such as litter and fly tipping.

### **Measuring our success**

- Increased levels of recycling – we aim to recycle 47% of household waste by 2019.
- A new Materials Recovery Facility in Newhaven bringing together our waste operations to one location, thereby reducing costs and providing future commercial opportunities.
- The number of parks and open spaces devolved to local communities.

**88%** of local people are satisfied with our refuse collection service.

Our current recycling rate is around **26%**, better than in 2014/15 but short of our ambitious target.

**74%** of people are satisfied with our recycling service.

# Value for money

## *Delivering sustainable services*



The financial outlook for Local Government continues to be bleak. Having already absorbed cuts of 40%, we anticipate that our Revenue Support Grant will be completely withdrawn by 2020. We are already well on the way to managing this reduction, but recognise that we need to continue to remain agile and flexible in how we manage our services within a tightening financial environment.

We have an ambitious capital investment programme, which will yield new income streams for the Council. But at the same time, we must continue to explore new ways of delivering services.

A significant element of our future savings will be achieved through our Joint Transformation Programme, which will see us integrate all our services with Eastbourne Borough Council by 2020 and deliver savings of £3m per year.

### **We will achieve this by**

Implementing a Joint Transformation Programme with Eastbourne Borough Council, building on the back-office services that are already shared between the two Councils. This Programme will reduce costs for both Councils, whilst at the same protecting, or in many cases improving, the quality of services delivered to local residents and creating two stronger Councils which can operate more strategically within the region.

Integrating the staff and services of both Councils, saving money and making services more sustainable, resilient and flexible. The focus will be on the 'Customer Experience'. We aim to meet communities' and individual customers' expectations to receive high quality, modern services focused on local needs and making best use of modern technology.

Retaining the sovereignty of each council, meaning that Lewes District Councillors will continue to set the priorities for Lewes District, and Eastbourne Councillors will set them for Eastbourne.

### **Measuring our success**

- Council tax precept remains below target rate of inflation.
- Deliver a balanced budget.
- Encourage our residents to self serve, using our website.
- Percentage of invoices paid on time.

**Our total spend reduced by 4% in 2013/14; we were in the lowest third compared to other similar councils.**

**We have reduced spending by 2% since 2012/13 and spend is in the lowest third amongst similar councils.**

**We increased the value of our assets by 6% in 2013/14.**

# Value for money

## *Our budget and spending 2016/17*



### **Our budget and spending 2016/17**

Text text text to come

### **Where does the money come from?**

Pie chart to follow

### **Our capital programme 2016/17**

Pie chart to follow

### **Where does the money go?**

Pie chart to follow

#### **2016/17 Council Tax**

The average level of Council Tax (for Band D properties) in the Lewes district will be £X,xxx.xx for the year from 1 April 2016.

