

## Welcome to our annual performance report

### THE BIG PICTURE – ONE DISTRICT, ONE COUNCIL

This booklet is about reporting to councillors, staff and local residents on the work of the Council over the past year – setting out what we have done and what remains to be done.

As well as focussing on the major outcomes of the past 12 months, it gives an overview of the Council's decisions, key services and new developments. It also links with our financial and business plans and sets out some of our priorities for the year ahead.

It has been an incredibly busy year and we continue to move forward through a period of significant change. There is much to be proud of and much to celebrate. But there remain further challenges ahead.

Over the last couple of years the Council has brought its vision and plans together under the banner One District, One Council. This is our way of saying that we want to get closer to the communities we serve and will work together to achieve real benefits for all our residents and businesses. We have made a commitment in three key areas:

**Customers** – to have an unswerving commitment to customer service

**Partnership** – to work with staff and partners to inspire exceptional contribution

**Money** – to save money and wherever we can put it back into the pocket of residents and businesses

Read on to see where we are making a real difference on the ground.

Councillor Rob Blackman  
Leader of Lewes District Council



## THE STORY SO FAR....

Although this report looks mainly at the Council's performance and achievements in the last financial year (2013/14), it is important to see the bigger picture. There is a longer term strategy to ensure the Council responds positively and proactively to both challenges and opportunities.

In 2011, Lewes District Council changed both politically and through the appointment of a new Chief Executive. These changes, against a backdrop of economic austerity and cuts in Government funding for local councils, saw a new strategic direction emerge for the Council – our Nexus Programme.

Over the last three years the Council has kept focussed on achieving real benefits for the people of Lewes District despite ever-challenging financial constraints and has worked closely with staff and partners in all sectors to deliver sustainable organisational change which will stand it in good stead for the future. In the main we have achieved this through cross-party working and collaboration, setting aside our political differences to focus our energy on what matters to our communities – economic regeneration, job creation, affordable housing, sustainable environments and value for money local services.

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
<p><b>CUSTOMERS</b></p> <p>Our promise</p> <p><i>An unswerving commitment to customer service</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Put in place a programme of equality assessments covering all service areas under new Equality Act duties</li> <li>* New food hygiene rating scheme launched in the District</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Annual Tenants Conference attracted a record turnout. The event focussed on the effects of the Government's welfare reforms</li> <li>* Creative workshops involving residents took place to generate ideas for saving money and seeing how communities can work together better</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* New food waste service launched which created 7 new jobs</li> <li>* New improved customer reception service opened at Southover House</li> <li>* Major organisational restructure gets underway aimed at improving strategic planning, customer service and efficiency</li> <li>* Locally Sorted initiative developed aimed at working with residents, businesses and community groups to develop an online platform to identify local solutions to local problems</li> <li>* Prompt response to flooding issues during winter storms</li> </ul>

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
<p><b>PARTNERSHIP</b></p> <p>Our promise</p> <p><i>Connect with our workforce and partners to inspire exceptional contribution</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Embracing neighbourhood planning sees Ringmer as the national 'best practice' front runner for the District</li> <li>* Joined the Coast to Capital and South Coast Local Economic Partnerships</li> <li>* Our Legal team awarded the Law Society's Lexcel accreditation, demonstrating high management and quality standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The Crest housing development in Newhaven was purchased to provide accommodation for homeless families</li> <li>* Agreement signed with Newhaven Football Club to help improve club facilities</li> <li>* All middle managers put through leadership development programme</li> <li>* District hosts part of the Olympic Torch Relay working in partnership with staff and a range of agencies and organisations</li> <li>* E.ON announced that Newhaven Port will be the operations and maintenance base for the Rampion Offshore wind farm</li> <li>* LEAP (Local Enterprise and Apprenticeship Platform) launched to help create job opportunities for young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Partnership working with Eastbourne Borough Council and iESE to investigate options for improving procurement and sharing staff and other resources</li> <li>* The Gentlemen of the Road Stopover event in Lewes brought together the community, Council and businesses to bring social and economic benefits to the town</li> <li>* A major investment and partnership project to deliver a University Technical College in Newhaven got underway, funded by the Department of Education and a significant grant from LDC.</li> </ul>

2011/12

2012/13

2013/14

# MONEY

## Our promise

*Save money and,  
where we can, put it  
back in our residents'  
and businesses pockets*

\* Funding bid submitted to Government to secure new food waste collection service

\* Nexus transformation programme gets under way with start of our Agile Working Project aimed at generating cost and efficiency savings across the Council

\* Just under £2.1m funding secured to introduce food waste service and community engagement campaign to encourage composting

\* £2.5m made available to invest in the Council's housing stock

\* £1.9m savings made since April 2011

\* Council homes in Rodmell and Barcombe fitted with energy efficient heating system

\* Over 1,000 households received free home insulation, saving energy and money

\* £1.2m funding secured to rejuvenate parts of Lewes town

\* Refurbished office accommodation and new ways of working reduces overheads and offers more cost efficient service delivery.

\* Greater Brighton City Deal received Ministerial approval which will bring around £9m investment in the area including new flood defences in Newhaven

## A YEAR OF DELIVERY AND SERVICE - 2013/14

Here is a month by month overview of some of the highlights from the last financial year.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>April</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Celebration at Newhaven Fort to recognise the important role of community volunteering</li> <li>* LDC signs LGA Climate Local Commitment to develop actions to reduce greenhouse gases</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>July</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Changes to off-street car parking introduced to make it cheaper and easier to park</li> <li>* Highly acclaimed Gentlemen of the Road Tour hosted in Lewes supporting the local economy</li> <li>* £10,000 bursary awarded to set up a social and IT network for older people living in our sheltered housing schemes</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>October</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* New 'One Stop Shop' reception area opened at Southover House offices in Lewes</li> <li>* The first Council sponsored Entrepreneur of the Year award was presented as part of the LEAP initiative</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>January</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Community 'Lab' event in partnership with Eastbourne Borough Council and FutureGov to find innovative ways to help families save money</li> <li>* Prompt and effective response to flooding issues across the District (from October onwards)</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>May</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* LEAP Entrepreneur Awards launched to support and mentor new entrepreneurs in the District</li> <li>* Impact Seaford vision is unveiled which seeks to rejuvenate the town</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>August</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Lewes and Newhaven local nature reserves received the prestigious Green Flag award for the 5<sup>th</sup> year running</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>November</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Impact Seaford Partnership recognised as a model for effective partnership working helping to unlock the town's potential</li> <li>* Big Parks Project awarded £70,000 towards a new skate park</li> <li>* The roll out of cardboard recycling across the District is completed</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>February</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Free creative workshop held in Seaford to bring together residents and organisations to develop a new online space to solve local issues</li> <li>* Council sets another 0% Council Tax increase for 2014/15</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>June</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* New Food Waste collection service launched for District as part of Zero Heroes waste campaign</li> <li>* Nearly £20,000 funding awarded to East Sussex Credit Union to provide money management service for vulnerable people.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>September</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Joint working initiative with Eastbourne Borough Council announced to share best practice and improve efficiency and customer service</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>December</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Lewes House opened up for community and commercial use, starting with an art exhibition</li> <li>* 190 new homes for Eastside Newhaven received planning permission</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>March</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* £1.9m Big Lottery Fund grant awarded to Newhaven Growth Quarter Partnership to help create jobs and enhance skills in the town</li> <li>* Council joins Greater Brighton City Deal aimed at attracting investment, creating local jobs and increasing productivity in the local area</li> </ul>

## UNSWERVING COMMITMENT TO CUSTOMER SERVICE

- 📌 We aim to collect 99.9% of household and trade waste bins first time. We dropped to 99.8% in the summer last year while the service adjusted to the new food waste service.
- 📌 We collected 297Kg of household waste per head of population last year (exceeding our target) and recycled, re-used or composted 24.6% of this. We have set a challenging target to recycle 30% of household waste in 2014/15.
- 📌 We have high standards of cleanliness for public areas and highways. In 2013/14 we hit all of our targets for maintaining minimum levels of litter, graffiti and other environmental nuisance.
- 📌 We aim to remove abandoned vehicles within 24 hours. We removed 10 abandoned cars in 2013/14. 99% were removed within our target time.
- 📌 There were 277 reported fly-tips in 2013/14. We have targeted local hot spots, carry out regular patrols and aim to remove fly-tips within 2 working days. We fell just short of this in 2013/14.
- 📌 Last year, performance on deciding major and minor planning applications within the statutory timescale has improved significantly compared to the previous year and is above national and local targets. Performance for deciding other planning applications has slipped during 2013/14.
- 📌 We aim to inspect 90% of complaints of unauthorised development within 5 working days. In 2013/14 we reached 89%, a significant improvement on the previous year.
- 📌 We have a budget of £600,000 to enable adaptations to be made to support disabled people to live independently in their homes. We aim to spend all of this money. In 2013/14 we spent 73% of this with a further sum committed.
- 📌 We have been surveying customers following the opening of our new customer reception at Southover House, Lewes. Over 97% of customers said they were happy overall with the service they received.
- 📌 We handled over 99,000 customer enquiries at our two Tourist Information Centres last year, slightly down on the previous year. This is likely to be as a result of access to a wide range of online and mobile information.
- 📌 We aim to avoid placing homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation but if we do we will find suitable alternative accommodation as quickly as possible. In 2013/14, one family needed to be placed in bed and breakfast. They were there for 17 days, just within our target time.
- 📌 In 2013/14 we had 237 Council properties to re-let, compared to 181 in the previous year. This was due to the need to move some tenants into smaller accommodation following introduction of Government changes. We aim to re-let Council homes within 26 days. Last year we took between 27 and 32 days as we had a large number requiring extra work to bring them up to standard.
- 📌 We completed 99% of urgent Council house repairs within 24 hours, exceeding our target. Around 97% of tenants said their repair service was good or satisfactory.
- 📌 We aim to process new benefits claims within 20 days. Last year our average was 18.8 days. Change of circumstances applications took 5.8 days.



## WORKING WITH STAFF AND PARTNERS TO INSPIRE EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION

- 📌 We work with East Sussex County Council to help disabled people to remain living in their homes. In 2013/14 we approved over 90% of Disabled Facilities Grants within 4 weeks, well above our target and improved our performance compared to the previous year.
- 📌 We work with Brighton and Hove Council to bring empty properties back into use and set a target of 30 for 2013/14. Through a range of activities, 69 homes in the District were brought back into use.
- 📌 There were 23 appeals against the Council's planning decisions during 2013/14. Only 7 of these went against the Council.
- 📌 We aim to encourage developers to build over 200 new homes in the District each year (of which around 60 should be affordable), in order to meet housing demand. In 2013/14, 113 new homes were delivered, 24 of which were affordable. A number of schemes were delayed or affected by market conditions.
- 📌 We aim to answer 84% of letters seeking pre-application planning advice within 20 working days but fell short of this last year. This was mainly due to an increase in the number of letters received as well as a need to focus staff resources on dealing with an increased number of planning applications.
- 📌 Last year we significantly improved our performance in checking Building Regulations Plans, dealing with 86% within 15 days.
- 📌 We gave over £200,000 in 2013/14 to local community and voluntary groups including Lewes and Seaford Citizens Advice Bureau, Action in Rural Sussex, 3VA, Lewes Athletic Club and Sompriti.
- 📌 Last year we worked with our partners to prevent over 600 homelessness cases. There were no cases of repeat homelessness. We work with East Sussex County Council and provide temporary accommodation on their behalf for vulnerable young people and to prevent rough sleeping, while those people are waiting for supported accommodation.
- 📌 Overall in 2013/14, the length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation for all households was 56 days, a significant improvement over the previous year.
- 📌 At the end of March 2014, there were 10 households living in short term temporary accommodation, compared to 61 the year before. This is a significant improvement.



## SAVING MONEY AND PUTTING IT BACK INTO RESIDENTS' and BUSINESS POCKETS

- 🕒 Planning fee income increased expected budgets by £80,000 in 2013/14.
- 🕒 Our Zero Heroes Community Competition gave residents the chance to win a share of £40,000 for their community.
- 🕒 The annual summer Artwave arts festival saw more than 27,000 visitors to the District, a 14% increase on the previous year, which helps support the local economy.
- 🕒 Our planning officers determined 93% of all planning applications in 2013/14. Delegating decisions to officers helps us to offer a speedy and efficient service to customers.
- 🕒 We aim to collect at least 95% of Council House rents each year. In 2013/14 we collected nearly 99%.
- 🕒 Visitors made nearly 3 million day trips to the District in 2012, generating more than £90 million. The Gentlemen of the Road event in Lewes brought around £2million into the local economy.
- 🕒 We planned to collect over 98% of Council Tax and Business Rates last year. We collected 98.4% of Council Tax and 98.1% of Business Rates.
- 🕒 Paying our suppliers and contractors promptly is important to us and we aim to pay 98% of invoices within target. In 2013/14 we achieved just over 96%. We will continue to look at ways to improve performance in this area.
- 🕒 In 2013/14 we lost 11.8 days per full-time member of staff due to sickness. We continue to review our management arrangements to make sure we are doing everything we can to manage sickness absence and ensure staff return to work as soon as they are fit enough.
- 🕒 We take prompt action to deal with benefit fraud. Last year, for every 1000 benefit claims we took action in nearly 6 cases, just below our target but a significant improvement on the previous year.
- 🕒 It is important that we recover any benefit overpayments promptly. We aim to recover 70% of overpayments within the year. In 2013/14 we recovered 71.4% of overpayments.





## **APPENDICES – BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The next few pages explain how we work and give some further background information about the Council and how it works.

### **CONTENTS**

A – How we work together – Councillors







B – How we work together – Officers

C – How we work together – Partners

D – Lewes District – Looking Ahead – Our Priorities

## A - HOW WE WORK TOGETHER - Councillors

Lewes District Council is made up of 41 elected councillors representing 21 wards across the District. Key decisions are made by the Full Council and by the Cabinet which comprises 7 Councillors with portfolio responsibility for areas of the Council's work such as housing, regeneration, waste and recycling, finance and environment. There are also various Committees, Panels and Project Boards. The councillors are advised and supported by council officers, led by Jenny Rowlands, Chief Executive.

<p><b>Council</b> Chair: Cllr Tony Nicholson</p> 	<p><b>Cabinet</b> Chair/Leader of Council: Cllr Rob Blackman</p> 	<p><b>Audit and Standards</b> Chair: Cllr Ian Eiloart</p> 	<p><b>Overview and Scrutiny</b> Chair: Cllr Sarah Osborne</p> 
<p><b>Planning</b> Chair: Cllr Sharon Davy</p> 		<p><b>Licensing</b> Chair: Cllr John Stockdale</p> 	<p><b>Employment</b> Chair: Cllr Elayne Merry</p> 

The political make-up of the Council is set out below:

**Liberal Democrat** – 19 seats

**Conservative** - 18 seats

**UKIP** – 2 seats

**Independent** – 2 seats

## B - HOW WE WORK TOGETHER – Staff

Jenny Rowlands, Chief Executive, is Head of the Paid Service. Lewes District Council is structured into three new Directorates.

### Service Delivery

Bringing together all of our frontline services under three new Customer Service Managers. We will work with our staff to design new service teams with a mix of skills and technical and professional expertise.

### Business Strategy and Development

Developing key policies for planning, housing and the environment. Responsible for economic regeneration, inward investment and major projects. This team also has a role in business strategy, performance management, equality and diversity, corporate communications and community engagement. The team also supports overview and scrutiny.

### Corporate Services

Responsible for the Council's main business support services such as finance, IT, HR, legal and democratic services. The Council is working with Eastbourne Borough Council to explore if any or all of these functions can be shared.



Over the coming months the Council will be working with its staff and partners to re-shape how it delivers more efficient and customer-focussed services. It is putting in place a new management structure, joining up services and training and supporting staff to develop their skills. It intends to retain professional and technical expertise as well as learning from others and finding innovative ways of working. This is part of our strategy to be Fit for the Future.

## C - HOW WE WORK TOGETHER - Partners

We recognise that to make a big difference in our communities we need to work in partnership with a range of agencies and organisations. We help fund a number of community and voluntary sector organisations and work in strategic partnerships to deliver larger scale improvement projects. Here are some of our key partners.



## D – LOOKING AHEAD – Our Priorities

## CUSTOMERS

## Our promise

*An unswerving commitment  
to customer service*

**Better Customer Services** – We have made significant changes in the way we work to improve customer service and efficiency. We will continue to work with our staff and partners to reshape frontline service delivery, be more responsive to customers and listen to their feedback. We will invest in new telephony services and will work to provide a seamless ‘end to end’ service to our customers. We will also develop and improve our website enabling more services to be delivered online. We will have a new focus on dealing with complaints and customer feedback to ensure we use this to improve our service quality and performance.

## PARTNERSHIP

## Our promise

*Connect with our workforce  
and partners to inspire  
exceptional contribution*

**Meeting housing demand** – There is potential for 1,300 new homes in the District. We will continue to work with developers to bring forward approved housing schemes for development. We are aiming to encourage over 100 new affordable homes in 2014/15 and seeking funding from Local Enterprise Partnerships to kick-start some planning permissions.

**Regeneration and Investment** – We have begun some ambitious plans for the regeneration of our towns and rural areas, and have a given special focus to Newhaven which has higher levels of social and economic deprivation than the rest of the District. We will continue to work with a range of partners and through the Local Economic Partnerships to encourage investment, business enterprise and job creation.

**Community Engagement** – We have begun to actively engage with a variety of agencies, businesses, organisations and communities around the District. We will continue to look for creative ways of working with them to ensure we continue to deliver efficient and effective services which meet the needs of our local communities.

## MONEY

### Our promise

*Save money and, where we can, put it back in our residents' and businesses pockets*

**Meeting the financial challenge** – So far, we have faced the reduction in Government funding and made substantial savings to our budgets in recent years. This has meant that we have been able to freeze our element of Council Tax for 3 years running. However, this challenge remains and we will continue to find ways to reduce costs, increase efficiency and improve local public services. We need to plan to reduce our budget by around £2.9 million by 2020.

**Organisational Change** – We have begun to change our organisation to be 'fit for the future' and to ensure our staff have the skills and opportunities to work more efficiently and effectively. We will look closely at how we procure and deliver services and explore what opportunities there are to work together with neighbouring councils and other providers. We will look closely at our performance and processes to see where we can improve and be more streamlined.