

Dover District Council Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027: Building a better and fairer future.

A. Welcome.

Welcome to our new Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027: 'Building a better and fairer future'.

Following the local elections, which saw the Labour Party take majority control over the Council for the first time since 1995, we have prepared a new Corporate Plan setting out our revised priorities for the next four years.

We want to improve the quality of our housing and build new council houses for rent. We want to stimulate investment in the district, with vibrant town centres, enhanced green spaces and an inclusive local economy that delivers jobs and opportunities for everyone. We want to see our communities flourish, with a focus on improving health and well-being, raising skill levels, and supporting our most vulnerable residents. We are also responsible for future generations of the district's residents, so we will reduce our carbon footprint whilst working towards becoming carbon neutral in our operations. We also want to make the Council more open, transparent, and inclusive.

This Corporate Plan will run until 2027 and has four strategic themes, with a fifth ambition for our Council underpinning them. These are:

1. Improving our housing.
2. Growing our economy.
3. Protecting our environment.
4. Supporting our communities.
5. Modernising our Council.

Collectively, these themes add up to building a more environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable district. You can learn more about these themes and the actions supporting them in the following pages.

Our ambitions go beyond what we can deliver on our own, and we will, therefore, collaborate with our partners and communities to bring greater and lasting benefits to the district.

Like many councils across the country, after a decade of underfunding by Central government, we face significant financial constraints and uncertainties from the wider economic climate and the impact of local government finance reforms. In addition, we know that our businesses and communities are also facing pressures, such as the cost-of-living crisis, the local health, social and economic consequences of the pandemic and deep-rooted inequalities across the district.

Notwithstanding the tremendous challenges ahead, we remain committed to our values and to working to ensure the future prosperity of the district. We recognise that we have a crucial community leadership role in enabling our communities' long-term sustainability and resilience.

Your new Labour administration is ambitious for the district's future, and we look forward to delivering the best services we can to our communities and businesses and building a better and fairer future for us all.

Cllr Kevin Mills, Leader of the Council.

B. About our corporate plan.

**Our corporate plan sets the direction for Dover District Council.
It will help us turn ambition into action and work towards our
vision of building a better and fairer future.**

1. Our vision, aims, and priority activities.

- a) The corporate plan sets out our vision for the district and the Council over the next four years. It describes our aims and the priority activities we will focus on delivering.
- b) The corporate plan does not try to capture everything we do – instead, it provides a framework for our decisions – how we prioritise and allocate the resources we have available to achieve these priorities. It is the key strategy from which our budget, service plans, and individual objectives cascade.
- c) We have centred this corporate plan around our vision of ‘building a better and fairer future’. This vision recognises the many and varied strengths of the district but also that we, and our partners, have a role in intervening where particular challenges exist to ensure that individuals, businesses, and communities can reach their full potential.
- d) The strategic themes are interdependent, allowing for alignment across the themes and ensuring that no theme operates in isolation.
- e) By defining a clear set of ambitions and commitments, our corporate plan also helps residents hold us accountable for our performance and challenge us to improve. By aligning our resources and activities to the corporate plan, we can focus on turning public money into results for our communities.
- f) The corporate plan informs other key strategies and plans, whether Council documents or those of our partners. These documents vary widely in purpose, scope, and timescale. The corporate plan does not replace these other documents but should shape them whenever they are updated.
- g) We are committed to ensuring sound governance principles and management practices across all business activities to ensure we do the right things openly, honestly, and transparently.
- h) Although our aims will likely remain constant over the medium term, the rapidly changing environment within which we operate means we will review the plan annually. This review allows us to respond to new emerging issues and take advantage of new funding opportunities with new projects and programmes of work.
- i) Whilst this corporate plan focuses primarily on the next four years, we also look ahead to the longer term, ensuring our vision remains fit for future generations.
- j) You can find details of all our services on our website: www.dover.gov.uk.

2. A sense of place.

- a) In addition to the aims and ambitions you would expect to see in a corporate plan, we are keen to extend our role as a ‘leader of place’.

- b) We aspire to promote the district as a distinct location; a leading destination to live, work, visit, learn, and invest - with excellent services that meet local needs.
- c) We will also advocate on behalf of the district and public service provision generally, using our influence as a Council for the broader good of the district, its residents, visitors, businesses, and communities.
- d) Building a better and fairer future is the focus of our vision – one that is greener and healthier, where people are actively engaged in their communities and can benefit from opportunities that arise.
- e) All of this contributes towards the sense of place that makes the district distinct and gives people the confidence to say they are proud to live here, that we provide good quality services, offer value for money and that they are satisfied with how we run things.

3. Our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion for all residents.

- a) This corporate plan is inclusive, and we want to help improve the quality of life and life chances for everyone in the district. We are committed to being a fair, compassionate, and inclusive Council that genuinely values difference and makes everyone feel safe and belong.
- b) We will demonstrate this commitment by delivering accessible, fair services as an employer, provider of services and community leader. By showing we value all aspects of the community, we are strengthening it.
- c) We celebrate diversity and the contribution different groups make to the district. This commitment is about everything we do and every decision we make. We do not discriminate against someone because of perceived differences. It also means that we take an active role as a leader in the community and remove barriers to participation and access for all members of the community.
- d) We can do this by implementing robust policies. For example:
 - Taking appropriate action when we identify unlawful discrimination.
 - Countering misinformation and rumours linked to immigration and particular groups that feed negative stereotypes and prejudices and reinforce hostile attitudes.
 - Consulting with community groups, such as disability awareness groups.
 - Supporting and promoting events such as Pride Month.

C. Our strategic priorities.

1. Improving our housing.

Access to a range of decent homes that meet local needs.

Access to affordable housing remains a challenge across this district and the country. We will facilitate quality, choice, and diversity in the housing market, assist in meeting housing needs and demand and deliver high-quality housing-related services.

Providing decent, safe, and affordable homes for local people.

- a) Providing at least an average of 200 additional council homes (new build and acquisitions) each year (800 in total over the term of this plan). We will use these homes for either general needs or temporary accommodation purposes.
- b) Creating a long-term strategy to support the provision of affordable housing and more housing choice that meets the needs of our residents.
- c) Maximising external capital funding opportunities and developer contributions for affordable housing or social rented schemes.
- d) Promoting and enabling the Community-Led Housing Programme.
- e) Working to improve the standards in privately rented accommodation.
- f) Collaborating with partners to reduce the number of empty homes, buildings, and properties in the district, especially within our Town Centres (Dover, Deal and Sandwich).

Supporting our tenants through a high-quality, well-managed service.

- g) Driving continuous improvement of our housing services in line with legislative reform.
- h) Undertaking refurbishments and improving the energy efficiency of our existing Council housing to at least decent home standard, as resources allow.
- i) Carrying out a stock condition survey and developing a new Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan framework for long-term strategic planning, maintenance, maximising rental income, and investment in and increasing our housing stock.
- j) Proactively managing our neighbourhoods and supporting our tenants through community engagement, community safety initiatives, regulation, and enforcement.

Supporting responsible development in the district.

- k) Using brownfield sites, such as council-owned garages and parking sites, to provide strategic housing developments, mixed-use and/or affordable homes.
- l) Identifying opportunities for low-emission and green developments.
- m) Seeking low-cost construction solutions to support the provision of housing and affordable homes.

Preventing homelessness and use of temporary accommodation.

- n) Making the best use of government homelessness and rough sleeper grant funding opportunities.
- o) Increasing our number of homes for temporary accommodation to alleviate homelessness (as part of our overall ambition set out in a) above)
- p) Working collaboratively with other statutory and voluntary sector agencies to support homeless people and those facing homelessness.

2. Growing our economy.

Dover District to be a leading destination to live, work, visit, learn, and invest.

We are passionate about growing an inclusive, sustainable economy that works for all, leaving no one behind. Placing economic opportunity at the centre of the district's renewal and prosperity, we will nurture diverse, distinctive, and vibrant places – especially within our town centres - which widen opportunity and unlock talent.

Building on the district's strengths, we will work to stimulate new development, funding, and investment, bringing better, well-paid jobs and accommodation (employment space, learning space and housing) to the area while also upskilling the local workforce to meet the future needs of employers. Seeking to capitalise on innovation, digital, creative, tourism, maritime, and green growth potential, we will become a place of opportunity where young people can thrive, helping us to retain and attract young talent to the district.

Promoting the district as 'open for business' and encouraging growth, visitors, and inward investment.

- a) Developing an economic identity for the district capitalising on our high-speed rail connections to London, proximity to Europe, and gateway location.
- b) Continuing to develop the “Invest in Dover” and “White Cliffs Country” brands/websites/social media as critical tools for highlighting opportunities for businesses and visitors.
- c) Delivering a Local Plan that supports high-quality employment, housing, and tourism sites to secure investment and support infrastructure.
- d) Delivering our adopted Economic Growth Strategy and Tourism and Visitor Economy Strategy to directly support place, tourism, economic development, and inward investment.
- e) Focusing on regenerating Dover Town through delivering the Dover Beacon (Bench Street) catalyst project, a mixed-use development with a further education (digital and creative) campus, business, and creative centres, as well as improvements to the underpass and public realm.
- f) Revitalising our high streets to meet the changing needs of the communities and visitors they serve, including through new cultural, visitor, housing, and leisure opportunities.
- g) Providing safe, clean, well-managed town centres with appropriate facilities and maintenance.
- h) Working with partners to deliver a range of business support initiatives, advice, and funding opportunities.
- i) Maximising the social and economic impact of our procurement and spending to benefit local businesses, local jobs, and community development.
- j) Reviewing car parking assets and policies to enable our regeneration aspirations and be fit for purpose to support residents, businesses, and visitor needs.
- k) Working to secure the success of current employment sites, such as Discovery Park, Port of Dover, and White Cliffs Business Park, ensuring a mixed economic base, including life sciences, pharmaceuticals, manufacturing, digital, maritime, logistics, and green growth.
- l) Collaborating with key partners to align strategic plans to encourage further investment by enabling the district to be an innovation hub, delivering new initiatives and a green agenda.
- m) Supporting the rollout and take-up of new technologies, such as superfast broadband and 5G.
- n) Working with local partners, including EKC Group, to develop skills and training programmes linked to existing and new sectors and investments in the district.

- o) Keep the district moving by lobbying for significant infrastructure improvements and transport links such as the A2/M2/ A258, Lower Thames Crossing and parts of the A256, strategic HGV facilities and last-mile solutions.

3. Protecting our environment.

A cleaner and greener district for everyone to enjoy.

The environment remains a national priority, and our commitment to protecting the space we live in, use, visit, and enjoy has never been greater. Raising awareness and reducing our environmental impact will play an essential role in everything we do in the future. At the latest, the Council aims to become a net zero carbon emitter by 2030.

Recognising the importance of the environment in the decisions we make.

- a) Delivering the targets in our climate emergency action plan.
- b) Ensuring all our policies, including the Local Plan, protect and enhance our heritage and environment.
- c) Having robust policies to tackle environmental crimes and breaches of planning control.
- d) Making our buildings, vehicles, and other assets low-carbon or carbon-neutral and minimising our footprint of pollution and other emissions.
- e) Promoting and supporting the development and adoption of renewable energy sources within the Council and with partners, businesses, and residents.
- f) Supporting the installation of electric vehicle charging points across the district.

Encouraging a clean, green, and safe place to live, work, visit, learn and invest.

- g) Seeking to introduce carbon offset schemes.
- h) Working with communities, visitors, and residents to ensure our parks and open spaces are vibrant, clean, easy to access, safe, and welcoming places to visit for all local people.
- i) Supporting biodiversity in our greenspaces, parkland and wider countryside and protect wildlife and their natural habitats.
- j) Implementing measures to improve air quality across the district, including cleaner transport and planting more trees.
- k) Working with partners, including Kent County Council, to develop walking and cycling infrastructure, secure active travel options and lobby for improvements to public transport.
- l) Working with partners to encourage greater resident and visitor use of public transport, bus and train, and lobby for related promotional support.

Improving and enhancing our waste management services.

- m) Promoting a circular economy by designing out waste in our services.
- n) Encouraging residents to reduce the residual waste they produce, improve recycling rates, and tackle contamination through targeted campaigns.
- o) Reducing incidents of fly-tipping through proactive enforcement and resident education.

Supporting and engaging the community to protect their environment.

- p) Encouraging residents, visitors, and businesses to be energy efficient and minimise pollution and carbon emissions.
- q) Addressing the incidence and effects of environmental crimes and air, land, and water pollution through enforcement and educational activities.
- r) Working to reduce the risks to communities and places from climate change through proactively strengthening flood and other defences and working with businesses and communities to improve resilience and mitigation.

4. Supporting our communities.

Safe and strong communities where residents live happy, healthy, and independent lives.

We want the district to be a place where everyone can play a positive role in their community and be proud to call the district home. We will help our residents lead long, happy, and productive lives by improving their health and economic and social well-being.

Encouraging residents to lead active, healthy, and fulfilling lifestyles.

- a) Working with partners, residents, and other stakeholders to reduce health inequalities by tackling the wider determinants of health (such as built and natural environment, education, income, work, crime, and social capital).
- b) Continue investing in and enhancing the district's leisure, well-being, cultural and visitor facilities, and services, such as local parks, open spaces, museums, information centres and pier.
- c) Increasing participation in sports and physical activity by making it accessible for all.
- d) Maximising green spaces to promote health and well-being, such as installing outdoor gyms.
- e) Supporting healthy living initiatives and programmes that reduce social isolation and help people to stay active and independent.

Supporting, strengthening, and sustaining communities.

- f) Working collaboratively across sectors to develop a district solution to address the rising cost-of-living and reduce poverty, specifically focusing on food, fuel, housing, and digital inclusion.
- g) Continuing to help the voluntary and community sector organisations through the grant process and other support to provide vital services to residents.
- h) Seeking new ways of bringing community funding into the district.
- i) Supporting local groups in delivering a range of events and activities that celebrate the district's diversity, encourage cohesion, and reconnect people with their wider community.
- j) Encouraging and supporting self-help and community action.
- k) Encouraging individual and corporate volunteers to help strengthen communities.
- l) Continuing our best practice model for refugee resettlement in the district, warmly welcoming families and supporting integration and cohesion.
- m) Strategically enhancing the district's public toilet provision, focusing on our town centres and seafronts first.

Keeping the district safe.

- n) Designing out crime as part of all new developments within the district.
- o) Providing a CCTV service 24/7 to reduce the real and perceived levels of crime.
- p) Continuing to drive the Community Safety Partnership with enforcement initiatives to reduce anti-social behaviour, environmental crime, and fly-tipping.
- q) Protecting people, especially the most vulnerable, through initiatives to reduce domestic abuse, exploitation, and misuse of drugs.
- r) Improving the health, safety and welfare of people living, working, and visiting the district through our port health and environmental services and licensing activities.
- s) Responding early and effectively to public health risks from disease, pandemics, and other emergencies.

5. Modernising our Council.

A modern, innovative, and financially sustainable council that delivers efficient and quality services.

Like all councils, we face complex financial challenges when delivering our services. We will be a modern, agile, and proactive council that focuses on meeting the needs of our residents. We will be more open and transparent so residents can hold us accountable for spending their money and making decisions that affect their lives. We will deliver quality services that are accessible and easy to use.

Providing quality customer service.

- a) Developing our self-service options so customers can do business with us 24/7 to enable the most efficient transactions and smoother customer journeys.
- b) Collating and using data analytics to improve our services continually.
- c) Providing support for all residents, focussing on equality, understanding and respect.
- d) Improving communication with residents through all communication channels.
- e) Listening and responding to the needs and experiences of our residents.
- f) Wherever possible, resolve issues/queries the first time a customer contacts us.

Delivering effective and efficient services.

- g) Managing our finances and contracts robustly to ensure the best value for money and social value.
- h) Developing an ongoing approach to self-evaluation and continuous improvement of our services to deliver year-on-year improvements focusing on our residents.
- i) Continuing to invest in technology to support digital working and service for staff, including mobile teams.
- j) Continuing to develop the “Dover District Council” brand, website, and social media to support the provision of information and quality customer service.
- k) Ensuring all our communications and publications are clear and accessible.
- l) Ensuring our decision-making is robust and led by sound data and intelligence.
- m) Improving access to council meetings, ensuring increased transparency, meaningful consultation, and better visibility.

Maintaining financial stability.

- n) Providing a sound financial governance and control system and aligning the medium-term financial plan with our work plans, strategies, and major projects.
- o) Exploring opportunities to work further with stakeholders and partner organisations.

D. Measuring our success.

A 'golden thread' runs through all our policies and strategies, service planning, financial decision-making, programmes and projects, and business-as-usual activity - with the corporate plan as the central thread. Every staff member has a part to play in its successful delivery and will be able to recognise their contribution to the core themes. We have designed our corporate plan to meet the needs of the whole district, and our elected members place the core aims and objectives at the heart of their decision-making.

We are committed to open and transparent monitoring of progress against the delivery of the objectives set, and we will track progress in the following ways:

a) Strategic and operational performance management.

We will measure and monitor our progress in delivering our priorities, flex our resources, and approach accordingly. Our Performance Management Framework drives the what and the how of measuring success. Our performance monitoring is also aligned with our financial reporting and risk management. We will report quarterly strategic performance indicators, aligned to each corporate priority, to our Corporate Management Team, Cabinet, and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Each service also has operational performance indicators managed by the Heads of Service in conjunction with the Corporate Management Team and their Portfolio Holders. All council employees will have performance and development reviews, connecting them to delivering our corporate priorities and service plans.

Strategic reviews of service areas may occasionally lead to changes in key performance indicators during the year. Where this is the case, we will report these as part of the regular quarterly reporting process and reflect them in the next refresh of the performance management framework.

b) Outcome-based approach.

We are committed to improving outcomes for residents, businesses, the environment, as well as the health and state of our district. In addition to strategic performance indicators that we will report progress against through our performance reports, we will seek to design and develop additional outcome measures over the first and second years of the plan. We will also explore how far we can benchmark against nationally produced indicators and data and supplement these with various community engagement techniques to assess community wellbeing.

c) Review.

We will keep our corporate plan under review, particularly when the Council faces new challenges or opportunities, whether nationally, regionally or within the district.

d) The Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Each year, we must produce a medium-term financial plan (MTFP) for approval by elected members. The MTFP sets out our spending plans in support of delivering the Corporate Plan objectives, presenting a balanced budget, and striving for value for money and financial stability and sustainability.

e) Business and Service Plans.

Every year, each service area across the council produces a business plan incorporated into an overall service plan for that area. These plans serve two purposes. Firstly, to set out proposed business activity in support of delivering the Corporate Plan, informed by policy developments, and encompassing short-, medium-, and long-term proposals. Secondly, business plans have an operational purpose, setting out business as usual activity and the resources required to deliver this. This element informs the day-to-day running of our services and informs individual objectives. Our Corporate Management Team is accountable to members for service and business plans, monitored through various aspects of our governance framework.

f) Individual Objectives.

For council staff, the 'golden thread' shows how individual work objectives contribute to the overall delivery of the corporate plan. Whether delivering a large and complex project like the Levelling Up - Dover Beacon Project, ensuring the streets are clean, carrying out our regulatory functions, or processing planning applications – all our staff are valued equally.

g) Dover District Profile.

This profile is our key evidence base and is available on our website. It allows us to monitor the effectiveness of Corporate Plan interventions designed to address issues and challenges identified across the district. The profile also enables us to identify emerging issues and plan appropriate interventions.

E. How we work - our principles.

Ensuring fairness and opportunity for all are at the core of our work.

The principles guiding all our plans and actions are:

- **Customers first:** Putting our customers at the heart of service design and delivery, we will seek regular feedback through consultations and resident surveys.
- **Digital transformation:** We are modernising services and harnessing new digital technology to make it easier for residents to interact with us. We are improving our website, streamlining processes, and making more services available online.
- **Building self-reliance:** We work with others to build the ability of individuals and communities to solve their problems and withstand the shocks that come their way. We will support those who need it – but our priority is always to help people live independently for as long as possible.
- **Getting the best value:** We strive for value for money in everything we do, and we are focused on financial stability and delivering our Medium-Term Financial Plan. However, we acknowledge that the best deal is not always the cheapest – it protects people, jobs, the environment, and the budget. So, we are also evolving our procurement practices to enhance the social value in all we do.
- **Collaborating with others:** We work closely with partners and other bodies within and beyond our district, increasing our collective ability to achieve our vision and improve our residents' quality of life and well-being. We are building on the work done during the pandemic to consolidate partnerships and ensure a more robust network to support the most vulnerable.
- **Respect for democracy and ensuring inclusivity:** Our councillors, elected by local people, understand the needs and expectations of their communities. This understanding informs our actions and helps us make balanced decisions. We will practice genuine engagement with those affected by our work or decisions.
- **Integrity and Good Governance:** As community leaders, honesty, accountability, and transparency are at the core of everything we do. We recognise our responsibility to serve all the communities of our district to the best of our ability. We will treat the people we work with and serve with integrity, respect, and decency. We will use data and research to drive improvement, listening to our residents, communities, and businesses to underpin informed decisions.
- **Valuing our staff:** Our staff are our biggest asset, and through their dedication and expertise, we can deliver the services that people rely on. Therefore, we promote our employees' health, safety, and wellbeing. We support our staff in gaining new skills and qualifications throughout their careers, and empower them to innovate, collaborate and achieve our shared goals.