Building on our track record...

The 2015-19 Corporate Plan focused on

› Managing growth to meet future needs
› Protecting and enhancing Wealden’s unique rural character and environment
› Supporting our local economy and businesses
› Generating sustainable sources of income to reinvest in local priorities
› Helping to improve connectivity and access to services for all our communities

Change

There have been unprecedented levels of local government change over the life of the 2015-19 Corporate Plan. Wealden has embraced opportunities that have arisen as a result.

Our earlier transformation programme put the Council in a healthy position, and the end of Revenue Support Grant from Central Government has further stimulated the development of alternative sources of revenue and income generation. In this way, Wealden has shown agility and resilience, delivering creative new initiatives for the District whilst working towards greater financial independence.

Achievements

› 2,133 new homes delivered in the District over the four years to March 2018
› 595 affordable homes and 88 new build council homes delivered over the same period
› 1,555 new jobs and 19,490 sq ft employment space created
› Opening of Walshes and Horsted Green parks to mitigate adverse impacts on the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area
› £5.6m development of a Council-owned crematorium to meet local need and realise an anticipated income of around £800k a year
› Sussex Weald Homes Ltd created as a wholly owned housing company, to help meet local needs and generate income
› Vicarage Field Shopping Centre, Hailsham purchased to lead regeneration of the town centre, and raise around £600k a year
› Over 1 million visits to the four District-supported leisure centres in 2017/18 - an average of seven visits per Wealden resident
› Support for our visitor economy which generates over £305 million per annum and supports more than 8,500 jobs
› Low unemployment at under 1% of the Wealden working age population
› Savings through shared services with other councils for building control, environmental health, licensing and legal services
› Consistently unblemished financial record from independent auditors
› 90% of Wealden residents happy with where they live and 76% happy with the way the Council runs things - national figures are 79% and 61% respectively

This plan sets out our key priorities for the District and how we intend to deliver our vision for Wealden

Cover photo shows Bluebell Vineyard Estates, Furners Green, Uckfield. Credit: Justin Hews
Our vision for the future

Shaping Wealden as a District which offers a fulfilling and worthwhile quality of life for our residents, a thriving and prosperous place for businesses where local people and visitors can enjoy the outstanding beauty and heritage of our landscape and environment.

We will continue to chart a course for the District founded on lean, efficient principles, based on sound business management with a considered approach to investment and income generation. In a post-Brexit UK, the Council will play its part in achieving strong, self-reliant and vibrant conditions for the wellbeing of our residents, our businesses and our environment.

We will continue to work with our partners to support Wealden’s communities, environment and economy with

- Engaged, resilient, active communities
- Access to suitable housing, local jobs, services, facilities, leisure and recreational opportunities
- Sustainable economic growth
- Sound business management

We aim to

1. Protect and enhance Wealden’s high quality natural environment and heritage
2. Promote a better quality of life for Wealden people through activities that improve health, resilience and well-being
3. Improve access to essential services for all our communities
4. Ensure development meets future needs, with associated investment in infrastructure
5. Take advantage of opportunities to promote new, cleaner technologies
6. Work with partners to regenerate our diverse market towns, creating jobs and attracting investment
7. Support our local businesses and entrepreneurs to achieve a locally sustainable economy
8. Generate ongoing sources of income to reinvest in local priorities and optimise funding from external sources
Communities

We want people in Wealden’s communities to have the opportunity to enjoy an excellent quality of life through:

› Active, healthy and fulfilling lifestyles
› Access to good health care
› Safe environments for all ages
› Positive democratic engagement
› Strong community leadership
› Skills that match local opportunities and worthwhile jobs
› Thriving community clubs, sport, recreation and leisure
› Good housing local people can afford, in places they want to live
Our plan to achieve this...

1. Meet local needs in our housing market particularly for first time buyers and elder people seeking to downsize

2. Build and maintain more council homes to a high standard, and help people who are, or are likely to become homeless

3. Work in partnership to develop an overall approach for advice and guidance on health, skills, jobs and benefits

4. Support initiatives to address changing health needs across the District, including work on dementia and social isolation

5. Seek opportunities to invest in more modern GP surgeries and local health hubs in Wealden

6. Work with partners to reduce harm from substance misuse, poor mental health and the impact of poverty on diet and exercise

7. Help local people feel safe, creating a secure public realm and reducing anti-social behaviour in partnership with Sussex Police and other agencies

8. Promote digital inclusion and good access to mobile and broadband networks

9. Design new development to protect our communities from environmental contamination, poor air quality and noise

10. Encourage and promote better leisure, sporting and recreational facilities across the District
Environment

We are steadfast in our duty and desire to protect Wealden’s beautiful landscape. We want people in Wealden to be able to access and enjoy the outstanding natural beauty and heritage of our landscape and environment, including conservation areas. Also, for residents to live in good quality housing that integrates harmoniously.

Key strands:

› Planned growth that respects our environment
› Ongoing improvements to infrastructure
› Working with partners for more renewable energy use
› Securing sustainable growth in our towns and villages
› Accessible open spaces close to homes and workplaces
Increased action within communities to improve the environment

Harnessing our natural resources for sustainable rural enterprise

Valuing our green spaces and biodiversity assets

Conserving and enhancing the character of our rural areas

Managing the street scene

Our plan to achieve this...

1. Deliver the Wealden Local Plan providing a balanced approach to growth, the environment and our communities

2. Help deliver infrastructure to support growth - schools, medical facilities, care, roads, transport, affordable homes

3. Mitigate the effects of new development on the rare biodiversity in the District

4. Maintain and manage Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces to allow development in the District

5. Make the most of opportunities arising from changes in the energy system to help facilitate cleaner, smarter, more affordable energy for our communities

6. Support and promote campaigns to increase community action to improve the environment

7. Support projects to encourage use of low carbon or renewable energy so Wealden is fit for a sustainable future

8. Facilitate and support initiatives to extend the Electric Vehicle charging network and encourage take-up of ultra-low emission vehicles

9. Reduce pollution, littering, dog fouling and fly-tipping; reduce waste, use of plastics and promote recycling

10. Support the delivery of an improved A27, the Lewes-Uckfield rail link and the continuing development of the A22 corridor
Local Economy

We want Wealden businesses, communities and residents to thrive and prosper in the District. We are committed to planning and promoting opportunities for sustainable growth through:

› Vibrant town centres and villages
› Business innovation in a green environment
› Promoting Wealden as a tourist destination
› Stimulating high quality tourism experiences
› Better broadband, 4G and 5G connectivity
› Appropriate employment spaces
› Leveraging funding into the District
› Working with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership
› Support local businesses, the Chambers of Commerce & the Federation of Small Businesses
› Rebalancing the housing market to reflect local needs
Our plan to achieve this...

1. Create an attractive and supportive business environment to encourage entrepreneurs, start-ups and niche businesses
2. Ensure practical support for local businesses to expand, creating more jobs for local people with the right skills
3. Lead by example in local procurement, and encourage local people to buy more from local producers
4. Take opportunities to increase external funding and inward investment into the District from a range of sources
5. Lead on key local regeneration projects to create busier, more diverse high streets and villages
6. Work with partners on a quality tourism offer, increasing visitor spend but containing numbers in line with capacity
7. Actively support Wealden’s farming, forestry and viticulture enterprises
8. Encourage healthy business practices through strong, consistent regulatory and safety advice, support, training and enforcement
9. Promote apprenticeship opportunities to stimulate local employment for people in Wealden
10. Engender a positive local environment for the cultural, creative and digital sectors, attracting better paid, higher skilled local jobs
Sound Business Management

How resourcing the Council’s services has changed

Wealden will continue to be a well-run Council, well thought of and respected by our residents, peers and partners.

We will

› Provide the range of good quality services that people expect, and offer excellent value for money
› Deliver key projects that enhance quality of life and wellbeing across Wealden, thoughtfully generating reasonable income streams in line with our Commercial Strategy to achieve a financially stable and self-sufficient council
› Maintain our measured, professional approach to managing the Council’s finance and investments, and continue to develop our enterprise culture for the benefit of the District as a whole
› Deliver more by working with partners continue to extend our use of technology, minimise transaction costs and sustain customer satisfaction.
How we plan to achieve this...

1. Pursue income generation opportunities to offset the withdrawal of central government funding and maintain valued services
2. Robust governance for our commercial projects to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities
3. Include community value in our approach to return on investment
4. Optimise access to services online 24/7, reducing the costs of delivery and maintaining support for people who need it most
5. Keep Council Tax as low as possible
6. Insights from the behavioural sciences to improve income collection rates
7. Support local businesses by maximising local procurement and fair business rate relief
8. Continue to enhance the Council’s online services, researching and implementing options like Voice and Artificial Intelligence
9. Ensure efficient, effective service delivery for waste, planning, building control, housing, environmental health, benefits and council tax collection
10. Provide open, transparent and timely performance data to demonstrate our accountability to our stakeholders

Where the Council Tax goes

- Wealden District Council: 10%
- Sussex Police: 8%
- Parish (Average): 5%
- East Sussex Fire Authority: 5%
- East Sussex County Council: 72%