

Re-imagining Lewes District

Corporate Plan 2020 → 2024



PHOTO Martin Sinnock



Introduction



Welcome to our four year plan. This first Co-operative Alliance plan, whilst not covering all our work, should give you a strong sense of our priorities and focus.

Our district is a diverse, beautiful and challenging place to live and work. We have strong Sussex traditions with a history of standing up for each other and for what matters: from the community that bonfire societies create, to the diverse and exciting voluntary sector, or the Sussex sense of “we won’t be druv”. We are also a district of extremes of wealth and inequality. Over the last ten years the differences in our communities have increased not lessened, much as they have nationally.

We are already experiencing the impacts of climate change through flooding and coastal erosion. We know we have to take action to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. Communities, businesses and partners must achieve this too, if not, the impact of climate

break down will be felt most by the vulnerable in our district.

Residents often talk to us about the poor state of our transport networks, the importance of truly affordable sustainable housing and the fragility of our infrastructure.

We have already had ten years of budget cuts. Given that the national financial situation for local government is unlikely to change, our top priority is working with you, and our partners, to deliver services right first time. By using our council resources wisely, we will support employment opportunities. We will also build sustainable homes that people can afford to live in and which provide a foundation both for good health and addressing the climate emergency.

Building our resilience as a community over the next 4 years is vital if we want to weather the storm of potentially deepening inequality, climate breakdown and the uncertainties caused by leaving the EU.

Doing what we can locally with what we have is essential. As your council leaders, we set out here what you can expect of us and how you can help us deliver the best quality services.

Our focus for the next four years in partnership with you is:

- Providing leadership to the district on tackling climate emergency
- Creating sustainable community wealth
- Building homes that you can afford to live in.

This high level plan sets out our goals and ambitions for the coming four years. It will be developed into detailed work programmes, which will help us be transparent in achieving these goals.

**Zoe Nicholson, James MacCleary,
Chris Collier, Ruth O’Keeffe**

Cabinet Group Leaders of the Co-operative Alliance working together for you.

Your services: getting it right first time

Delivering what matters to you

We know how important our services are to you, and getting them right matters. Our areas of focus are:

- Providing the highest quality customer service by focusing on resolving questions and problems first time.
- Meeting “Our Promise To You” by solving your issues and questions by being knowledgeable and accessible by phone and online.
- Continuing to reduce our waste as well as providing excellent recycling and refuse services, improving our recycling rates to the top 25% in the UK.
- Getting our communication and engagement right through regular information sharing and consultation.
- Improving links and partnerships with Town & Parish councils and the South Downs National Park Authority.
- Making our tax fairer and supporting those on the lowest incomes.
- Ensuring an effective and transparent planning service, holding developers accountable for providing affordable housing.
- Working with partners, including Sussex Police and local businesses, to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Improving our public spaces – from play spaces to green spaces to our public toilets.

4 year goals

- Improved quality of customer contact, outcomes and satisfaction
- Reduction in waste, increased reuse and recycling to top quartile performance
- A supported community where we listen and respond
- Fairer council tax for those on lowest incomes



Sustainability and Climate Change

A net zero carbon and climate resilient council and district by 2030

We will lead our community to net zero carbon. Tackling climate change is central to all our activities. We will produce and implement a targeted and costed Sustainability and Climate Plan with the ambition of becoming a net zero carbon and climate-resilient council by 2030.

Our key areas of focus will be to:

- Better understand and measure council carbon emissions as well as reducing our greenhouse gas emissions to net zero.
- Use our influence to lead our district to net carbon zero by 2030.
- Engage the community energy sector and others in shifting to low or zero carbon electricity generation and a net zero carbon district by implementing the Greater Brighton Energy Plan and other plans.
- Improve the energy efficiency of homes including supporting low-carbon heating technologies in our own council houses.
- Encourage more cycling and walking in the district by working with community cycling groups, East Sussex County Council and others to improve infrastructure and reduce barriers to cycling.
- Have the greenest Local Plan and putting sustainability at the heart of our local planning processes.
- Improve air quality, developing an air quality strategy, a local transport strategy and increasing opportunities for public transport and electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- Increase biodiversity, wildflower and pollinator opportunities through cutting pesticide use on council land and have an ambitious programme of tree planting and rewilding.
- Influence and creating the conditions for a reduction in emissions from agriculture and food production.
- Reduce waste and emissions that arise from dealing with waste.
- Prioritise efforts to address flooding and coastal erosion as well as water availability due to the impact of climate change.
- Build and encourage affordable, energy efficient, climate resilient and adaptable locally sourced and provided housing.



4 year goals

- On a clear path to being a net zero carbon council and district by 2030
- Helping our tenants with their energy bills by decarbonising our council housing stock
- Well managed and protected local environment including waterways and coastal areas
- Cleaner air across the district

Building Community Wealth

A sustainable economy that enables a fairer place to live and work

We need a people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of people. We will work with key local institutions, our county council, local businesses, police and NHS partners to provide more local employment. We will change the way we outsource services, supporting more local businesses to deliver council services, and we will bring services in-house or establish social enterprises where additional social value can be demonstrated.

We will:

- Prioritise investment into local economies, including the rural economy, across our district as well as working with partners such as the Greater Brighton Economic Board and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership in the Newhaven Enterprise Zone. Encourage local use of our financial resources, as much as possible.
- Increase local employment opportunities by directly promoting recruitment from lower income areas, committing ourselves and our partners to paying the real living wage where possible.
- Support business start-ups through our LEAP programme, as well as supporting

our existing businesses to create new employment opportunities for local people through supporting innovation and technological advances, including in clean technology and in the creative sector. Introduce new initiatives to maximise local benefits from development.

- Use our power as a public sector body to buy and procure locally, and create local supply chains and ecosystems of enterprises, focussing on decarbonising our housing stock, through use of circular economy principles.
- Develop local skills, supply chains and employment through partnership working with East Sussex College group, public sector organisations, social enterprises, cooperative businesses, as well as other forms of business, particularly focussing on clean, green technologies.
- Encourage stewardship of our public land and assets, through working with our public sector partners, to help create good local economies.
- Work with partners to develop market leading network services across the district, delivering high speed fibre connections to local business, and improving broadband connectivity to our rural communities.

4 year goals

- **More of the district's money staying within the district, directly benefitting residents and local companies.**
- **A supported vibrant local voluntary sector with empowered community groups.**
- **Developing job opportunities in renewable and clean green technologies.**
- **Reduce employment inequality so that no wards are in the lowest 20 wards in East Sussex.**



Delivering Homes

Build warmer, better homes that people can afford to live in

The home in which we live has a huge influence on the quality of all our lives and health. Access to safe, secure and affordable housing really is fundamental to supporting wellbeing and creating sustainable communities where people can live and work.

Our vision is to deliver and maintain affordable, high quality homes in partnership with TOLD (Tenants of Lewes District), including council housing. We will promote access to housing for home owners, residents of social housing and private renters. By working with partners, including community land trusts, to identify housing needs, deliver new homes and stabilise local housing markets, we will help sustain our communities and tackle the inequalities faced by many of our residents, including those at risk of homelessness.

We will:

- Support the provision of social, affordable, sustainable, energy and resource efficient, climate resilient housing, delivering for our tenants and residents more effectively.
- Build more rented council homes in the district, including in our villages, and provide homes which support independent living.
- Use our planning system to support affordable, housing delivery.
- Increase housing in the district through innovation including modular housing and developing infill sites.
- Reduce the reliance on temporary and emergency accommodation.
- Support communities in maintaining up to date Neighbourhood Plans.

4 year goals

- **200 new additional council houses.**
- **And an additional 300 new affordable homes using national definitions, moving towards truly affordable.**
- **More sustainable and energy efficient homes across the district.**
- **Opening up access to quality housing options for low and middle income residents**
- **Accessible housing for those with physical and additional support needs**



Be open and transparent

Be an open and transparent council that works for you

Throughout our work we will act responsibly and transparently. This means reporting how our services are performing; making our financial information available and ensuring that we embed responsible sustainable practices throughout.

We will:

- 1 Respect and follow principles of open governance** – Explore future governance arrangements that enable transparent, proportional and open decision-making.
- 2 Respect and promote principles of equality** – Ensure that this is clear throughout all our work.
- 3 Respect our communities** – Engage meaningfully with residents and foster closer relations.

4 Respect and follow principles of open data – Review our approach to open data including making finance information more accessible. Making sure we keep your data safe and abide by the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

5 Respect and follow principles of a responsible employer – Ensure staff wellbeing by following work practices that protect the physical and mental health of staff. Champion health and safety across all service areas, continually looking for new ways to reduce risk. Have a workforce and culture that reflect the diversity of the local community and provide diversity training for our recruitment and selection practices.

4 year goals

- **Principles of equality, respect and fairness are evident in all areas of the council's work.**
- **Embed a culture of continuous improvement, where we constantly reevaluate our quality of service.**
- **Lewes District Council staff are serving the community's needs and are well supported.**



Customer Service Charter

Our promise to you

As a valued customer you can expect us to:

Be fair

- treat you as an individual
- deliver a professional service
- be honest about what we can and can't do
- provide services that do not unfairly discriminate against or disadvantage anyone in the community

Be respectful

- listen to you
- be courteous, polite and helpful at all times
- maintain your privacy and confidentiality
- do what we say we will do

Be accessible

- provide modern, efficient online services 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- communicate clearly
- publish clear, concise and up to date information on our website
- respond to customer enquiries received through all channels including the phone and social media profiles
- offer reasonable adjustments to those needing help accessing our information or services

Be accountable

- give our name so you know who you are dealing with
- focus on delivering our core responsibilities
- clearly signpost how you can provide feedback on our services

Be efficient

- be knowledgeable, giving accurate information
- provide online channels that enable you to access our services at your convenience
- communicate with you electronically, wherever appropriate, but offering other methods if needed
- make the best use of council resources to ensure we are providing value for money

Learn

- aim to get things right first time and learn from experience
- take complaints seriously and seek to resolve any issues at the earliest opportunity

In return, we ask that you:

- treat our staff with respect
- give us the correct information at the right time
- tell us when something changes
- share your views with us on council matters that are important to you
- tell us about anything we can do to overcome barriers to accessing our services