

05 December 2023 at 7.00 pm

Council Chamber, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks

Published: 27.11.23



This meeting will be livestreamed to YouTube [here](#):

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIT1f\\_F5OfvTzjZk6Zqn6g](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIT1f_F5OfvTzjZk6Zqn6g)

# Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee

## Membership:

Chairman, Cllr. Bayley; Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Thornton

Cllrs. Abraham, Clayton, G. Darrington, Hogarth, Malone, Manamperi, James Morgan, Varley, Waterton and White

## Agenda

There are no fire drills planned. If the fire alarm is activated, which is a continuous siren with a flashing red light, please leave the building immediately, following the fire exit signs.

	Pages	Contact
Apologies for Absence		
1. <b>Minutes</b> To agree minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee held on 26 September 2023, as a correct record.	(Pages 1 - 4)	
2. <b>Declarations of interest</b> Any declarations not already registered.		
3. <b>Actions form previous meeting (if any)</b>		
4. <b>Update from Portfolio Holder</b>		
5. <b>Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)</b>		
6. <b>Budget 2024/25: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)</b>	(Pages 5 - 40)	Alan Mitchell Tel: 01732 227483
7. <b>Rural England Prosperity Fund Update</b>	(Pages 41 - 54)	Detlev Munster Tel: 01732 227099
8. <b>Economic Development Strategy</b>	(Pages 55 - 70)	Detlev Munster Tel: 01732 227099

9. **Work plan**

(Pages 71 - 72)

**EXEMPT INFORMATION**

At the time of preparing this agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public.

If you wish to obtain further factual information on any of the agenda items listed above, please contact the named officer prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you need this agenda or any of the reports in a different format, or have any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact Democratic Services on 01732 227000 or [democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk).

Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Bayley (Chairman)

Cllr. Thornton (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Clayton, G. Darrington, Malone, Manamperi,  
James Morgan, Varley, Waterton and White

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Hogarth

Cllr. P. Darrington was also present.

12. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held 27 June 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to Cllr Varley's apologies being included.

13. Declarations of interest

There were none.

14. Actions form previous meeting

There were none.

15. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder gave an update on the services within their portfolio. They gave a presentation on the West Kent Rural Grants scheme, funded by the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). These were administered by the Council on behalf of the West Kent Partnership. The Council were among the first local authorities in the country to allocate their REPF funding, and were used as an example of best practice by the Kent Rural Partnership. 16 out of the 23 applications received by the Council had been approved, with £227,000 allocated out of the £501,000 available for the two years. The Committee heard a breakdown of the demographics of the applicant businesses.

The Council had established a free AI-powered telephone service to help people that have received a penalty charge notice from the Council understand whether they should appeal.

## Agenda Item 1 Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 26 September 2023

There was an ongoing consultation regarding two cycling routes – one from Otford to Sevenoaks directly, and the other from Otford to Sevenoaks via Seal. A drop-in session for the direct route would be held at Bat & Ball Train Station on Friday 13 October. The drop-in session for the route via Seal would take place on 27 September. The route could include significant improvements along the A25.

The Community Grants Scheme was open until 2 November. Grants of up to £5000 could be given to local community organisations. Members were encouraged to direct any interested groups to the Council's website for further information.

The Council had been shortlisted for the invite-only Investors In People UK Platinum Employer of the Year award, placing the Council in the top 10 employers within its category. The Economic Development Team had been shortlisted for the Institute of Economic Development's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) award. The finalists would be announced in November.

In response to a request from the Committee, officers would investigate the possibility of adding EDI training to the Member Training programme.

### 16. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

### 17. Digital Tourism update

The Strategic Head for Commercial & Property presented the report, which updated the committee on the performance of the Council's digital tourism schemes. The Visit Sevenoaks website received 4100 users from 28 April to 28 July, and their engagement time with the site was above average. A majority of users found the site organically, indicating that its search engine optimisation was performing well. The Visit Sevenoaks Instagram account supplemented the website, providing information on tourism activity across the district, and continued to grow. The site would be updated to reflect the Sevenoaks So Much More branding.

The Sevenoaks: So Much More brand was supported by its own website and three social media accounts, which were performing above-average in engagement. These platforms highlighted the Council's presence at business events, advertised competitions, and promoted the four pillars of the So Much More campaign.

The Council also worked in partnership with Visit Kent to promote the district on their website, blogs, and social media channels. These platforms had a significant following on both a local and international level. Analytics data would be continually monitored to inform future development opportunities and keep pace with trends.

In response to questions, the officer explained that the Economic Development Team worked in partnership with marketing consultants Pillory Barn to manage the Sevenoaks: So Much More brand. The consultants were contracted to host and

provide content for the first year of the campaign, and the possibility of extending the contract was under review. The Visit Sevenoaks website was updated frequently, to ensure information remained contemporary, and Visit Kent were informed whenever changes occurred, though their site was not managed by the Council. The Council did not profit from the digital tourism campaigns; the aim was to promote the district to bring income and opportunities for local businesses.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

18. Draft Council Plan

The Assistant Chief Executive presented the report, which outlined the proposed Council Plan, which set out the council's priorities and targets for residents, businesses, and communities. The Plan has been developed by the Leader of the Council and Cabinet.. It was noted that the Plan would be presented to Cabinet on 9 November and Council on 14 November 2023.

In response to questions, the Leader explained that the priorities were broken down into portfolios, and that the council's financial aims were contained under the Finance & Investment portfolio. These portfolios held specific services, which would work under the portfolio's promises. These portfolio sections had been broken down into past successes and future goals to provide a holistic overview for residents.

The plan was a framework to demonstrate the council's intentions and aims to the public and form a standard to work to. Formal deliverables were better addressed in other schemes, which would work to the framework this plan would create. Specificity in this regard would be avoided to allow for flexibility in implementation. In response to a question the Leader explained that weekly waste collections are a priority and would be maintained for as long as possible.

Values from previous plans had been incorporated in places, as they were felt to be still relevant. The Plan, if approved, would be available to stakeholders across the district, would be included in the InShape magazine, and would be displayed on the Council's website, to effectively communicate the council's updated promises across the district.

Resolved: That

- a) The Advisory Committee's comments on the draft Council Plan be noted.
- b) That the draft Council Plan be considered by Cabinet.

19. Work plan

The Work Plan was noted. Members discussed ideas for the Budget 2024/25: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) item at the next meeting, including moving committee meetings to the daytime, and assessing the overall IT spend.

Agenda Item 1  
Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 26 September 2023

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.03 pm

CHAIRMAN

**BUDGET 2024/25: REVIEW OF SERVICE DASHBOARDS AND SERVICE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS (SCIAs)**

**Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee – 5 December 2023**

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Finance and Trading

**Status:** For Comment

**Also considered by:**

- Development and Conservation Advisory Committee – 31 October 2023
- Finance and Investment Advisory Committee – 2 November 2023
- Housing and Health Advisory Committee – 7 November 2023
- Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee – 23 November 2023
- People and Places Advisory Committee – 30 November 2023

**Key Decision:** No

**Executive Summary:**

This report sets out updates to the 2024/25 budget within the existing framework of the 10-year budget and savings plan. The report presents growth and savings/additional income proposals that have been identified which need to be considered (if applicable to this Committee), and requests further suggestions from the Advisory Committees, before finalising the budget for 2024/25.

Informed by the latest information from Government and discussions with Cabinet, it is proposed that the Council continues to set a revenue budget that assumes no direct funding from Government through additional Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus. This will result in the Council continuing to aim to be financially self-sufficient.

To achieve this aim and to ensure a balanced budget position over the next 10-year period will be challenging partly due to the uncertainties and ongoing financial impacts of national and international events.

Some changes have been made to future assumptions and they will continue to be reviewed during the budget process, as usual. However, the key cost driver continues to be inflation with pressure coming through on service demand, the pay award and the cost of goods and services. The items listed in Appendix E report a current annual budget gap of £1.368m.

Many of the reasons for the budget gap were raised with Members as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process and they continue to impact the finances of this council. There is also the impact of the leisure provider, Sencio ceasing to operate.

Inflationary and resulting service pressures are largely unavoidable. It is worthwhile making Members aware that they are likely to have to make more difficult decisions during the 2024/25 budget setting process than they have had to make for many years.

The Advisory Committees will comment on the growth and savings/additional income proposals included in the reports, and their recommendations will be considered by Cabinet as part of the process to remove this gap.

By addressing these issues, this Council will once again be in a strong financial position that other councils would aspire to.

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Kevin Maskell

**Contact Officer(s):** Adrian Rowbotham, Ext. 7153

Alan Mitchell, Ext. 7483

**Recommendation to each Advisory Committee:**

- (a) Advise Cabinet with views on the growth and savings/additional income proposals identified in Appendix G applicable to this Advisory Committee.
- (b) Advise Cabinet with further suggestions for growth and savings/additional income applicable to this Advisory Committee.

**Reason for recommendation:** It is important that the views of the Advisory Committees are taken into account in the budget process to ensure that the Council's resources are used in the most suitable manner.

### Introduction and Background

#### Financial Strategy

- 1 The Council's financial strategy continues to aim for long-term financial health and continues to work towards improving financial sustainability. It has been successful through the use of a number of actions including:
  - implementing efficiency initiatives.
  - significantly reducing the back-office function.



- improved value for money.
  - maximising external income.
  - the movement of resources away from low priority services.
  - an emphasis on statutory rather than non-statutory services.
- 2 A summary of the Financial Strategy can be found at **Appendix J**.
- 3 Over this period, the Council has focused on delivering high quality services based on Members' priorities and consultation with residents and stakeholders.
- 4 Using the data sources available to the Council, this report sets out a budget over the 10-year period but recognises that it is likely that more accurate data will become available and current assumptions may need to be updated.

#### 10-year Budget

- 5 In setting its budget for 2011/12 onwards, the Council recognised the need to address both the immediate reduction in Government funding as well as the longer-term need to reduce its reliance on reserves. The outcome was a 10-year budget, together with a four-year savings plan, which ensured the Council's finances were placed on a stable footing but that also allowed for flexibility between budget years.
- 6 It should not be forgotten that £8.8m of savings have been made since 2011/12.

#### Financial Self-Sufficiency

- 7 With the Revenue Support Grant provided by Government having ceased from 2017/18 it is important that the council remains financially self-sufficient by having a financial strategy that is focused on local solutions. These solutions include:
- continuing to deliver financial savings and service efficiencies.
  - growing the council tax and business rate base.
  - generating more income.
- 8 This Council's approach to budgeting has been recognised by the sector as being exceptional which resulted in it being the winner of the CIPFA Public Finance Innovator of the Year Award in 2017.
- 9 The Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge in December 2021 also commented that 'Sevenoaks District Council takes a long-term view of financial planning with a focus on self-sufficiency. The council's 10-year budget is innovative, an example for the sector and supports long-term decision making.

## Agenda Item 6

### Current Budget Gap

- 10 It was mentioned in reports presented as part of the 2023/24 Budget Setting Process that it was highly likely that additional savings/income would be required as part of the next budget process. An 'Early Indications' report was presented to FIAC and Cabinet earlier in the summer which identified the areas that could have a significant financial impact on the Council. These remain the major contributors to the budget gap of £1.368m included in this report.
- 11 The growth/additional expenditure items total £1.827m per annum. Many of these items were raised with Members as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process and they continue to impact the finances of this council. The largest items are:
- Pay Awards above previous assumptions. The Council is on national terms and conditions. The National Employers and unions have not yet agreed on the 2023 pay award but the current offer which is an average increase of 5.7% is significantly higher than the budget assumption of 2%.
  - Direct Services – the cost of delivering the full range of services as well as the continuing higher quantities of waste and recycling. Quantities remain much higher than before the pandemic which result in increased staff costs, fuel and vehicle repairs and maintenance.
  - The change in leisure provider as agreed by Council on 4 April 2023.
- 12 Other threats to the financial position, which are managed through the budget process, include energy cost volatility and uncertainty; ongoing demands for homelessness services and temporary accommodation; and the higher costs of goods and services as a result of higher inflation.
- 13 The savings/additional income items total £0.459m per annum. The largest items are:
- Additional income anticipated from a fees and charges review.
  - Government funding streams expected to continue in 2024/25 only.
  - Council Tax premium changes.

### The Way Forward

- 14 The intention of this report is to provide Members of each Advisory Committee an opportunity to give their views on potential growth and savings/additional income items that could be included in the updated 10-year budget that will be presented to Council on 20 February 2024.
- 15 The 'Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2024/25 and Beyond' report has been presented to FIAC and Cabinet to start the budget setting process for 2024/25.

### **Review of the 10-year Budget Process**

- 16 An audit of the 10-year budget process was completed by Mazars (working for Internal Audit) in 2021 and their findings were that the Council has adequate, effective and reliable controls in place over budget setting and long-term financial planning.

### **Financial Self-Sufficiency**

- 17 The Council's Corporate Plan 2013-2018 set out an ambition for the Council to become financially self-sufficient which was achieved in 2016/17. The current Council Plan aims to continue with this approach. This means that the Council does not rely on direct funding from Government, through Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus, to deliver its services.
- 18 This approach was adopted in response to the financial challenges the Country was faced with in bringing its public spending down to ensure it was able to live within its means. In practice this has seen Government funding to local authorities dramatically reduced since 2010/11 with Sevenoaks District Council receiving no Revenue Support Grant from 2017/18.
- 19 The decision to become financially self-sufficient is intended to give the Council greater control over its services, reducing the potential for decision making to be influenced by the level of funding provided by government to local authorities.
- 20 The Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge in December 2021 commented that 'Sevenoaks District Council takes a long-term view of financial planning with a focus on self-sufficiency. The council's 10-year budget is innovative, an example for the sector and supports long-term decision making. This extended financial framework provides an excellent platform which has supported effective budget management and planned, long-term, decision making.'
- 21 With the Council receiving no Revenue Support Grant from 2017/18 and New Homes Bonus reducing from 2018/19, this approach remains appropriate. The attached 10-year budget assumes no additional Revenue Support Grant or New Homes Bonus. Any funding received from these sources will be put into the Financial Plan Reserve which can be used to support the 10-year budget.
- 22 In 2023/24 the government rolled two grants into the Revenue Support Grant which are shown as 'Govt Support: Rolled in grants' on the attached 10-year budget. This Council continues to receive no Revenue Support Grant through the Government formula.
- 23 Cabinet are keen to remain financially self-sufficient which has served the Council well and ensured it is one of the most financially stable local authorities in the country. This will allow this Council to move ahead in the

## Agenda Item 6

knowledge that this council has the financial resources to provide the services that the district's residents need into the future.

### Service Dashboards

- 24 The intention of service dashboards is to provide Members with improved information during the budget setting process to provide context and inform any growth and savings/additional income ideas that Members may put forward.
- 25 The Service Dashboards cover a summary of the services provided, objectives, achievements and opportunities, challenges and risks and performance.
- 26 **Appendix A** contains the Service Dashboard for this Advisory Committee. **Appendix A1** contains the Performance Indicators and **Appendix B** contains the budget for those services.

### Savings Plan

- 27 **Appendix C** to this report sets out a summary of the savings/additional income and growth items previously approved by Council since the 10-year budget strategy was first used in 2011/12, which have allowed the Council to deliver a 10-year balanced budget.
- 28 The savings plan requires a total of over £8.8 million to be saved between 2011/12 and 2023/23 which is an average saving of £676,000 per annum.

### Current 10-year Budget Position

- 29 The 10-year budget set out in **Appendix D** has been updated from the version agreed by Council on 21 February 2023 by rolling it forward one year.
- 30 Changes have been made to the following assumptions:
  - Business Rates Retention – additional income from the Business Rates Pool of £250,000 included in 2024/25 only.
  - Pay award – increased from 2% to 3% for 2024/25.
  - Interest receipts – increased from £288,000 to £332,000 for 2024/25 to 2026/27 and from £188,000 to £232,000 from 2027/28.
  - Property Investment Strategy – decreased from £1.618m to £1.478m for 2024/25 to 2025/26, from £1.715m to £1.575m from 2026/27 to 2028/29 and from £1.756m to £1.616m from 2029/30.
- 31 The current budget gap is £1.368m which is detailed in **Appendix E**.

- 32 The major reasons for this gap are pay awards (explained below), the cost of providing the full range of Direct Services operations and the change in leisure provider.
- 33 The National Employers for local government services final pay award offer for 2023/24 was £1,925 per full time employee up to a certain pay point and 3.88% on higher pay points. This equates to an average increase of 5.7% in the Council's staff costs against a figure of 2% in the 10-year budget. In cash terms this is £750,000 above the budgeted assumption. It should be recognised that the current cost of living crisis has had a severe effect on colleagues on lower salary grades. However, the unions have rejected this offer and further news is awaited.
- 34 Negotiations regarding the 2024/25 pay award have not yet commenced. The assumption in the attached 10-year budget has been increased from 2% to 3% in 2024/25 and remaining at a 2% increase in all future years.
- 35 Officers have been working on proposals to reduce the gap which are included in this round of reports to the Advisory Committees.
- 36 Due to the size of the budget gap this year it is more important than ever that Members fully participate in the process by making suggestions and recognising that some tough decisions may need to be made.
- 37 As previously reported, the options are likely to cover a number of areas including:
- Service efficiencies.
  - Additional income.
  - Re-prioritisation of reserves including use of the Budget Stabilisation Reserve.
  - Service reductions.
- 38 When looking at prospects for year 11 onwards, there is still likely to be a need to take further actions as these years come into the rolling 10-year period.

### **Proposed Growth and Savings/Additional Income Items**

- 39 Growth items are items that would result in additional expenditure or reduced income. Savings items would result in reduced expenditure or additional income. These are in addition to the items highlighted in the 'Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2024/25 and Beyond' report considered by Cabinet on 19 September 2023.
- 40 A number of growth and savings/additional income items will be proposed at the Advisory Committees with the aim of helping to achieve the savings/additional income required to bridge the budget gap.

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- 41 Managers have agreed a range of savings that do not require Member approval. These are listed in **Appendix F** (if applicable).
- 42 The proposed growth and savings/additional income items relating to this Advisory Committee are listed in **Appendix G** (if applicable).
- 43 Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) contain further details for all proposed growth and savings/additional income items. SCIAs applicable to this Advisory Committee can be found in **Appendix H** (if applicable).

### **Role of the Advisory Committees**

- 44 Training sessions on the budget process were provided to Members in October. If Members require any further training or require any additional details on the content of this report and appendices, please contact Adrian Rowbotham or Alan Mitchell prior to the meeting.
- 45 Views of the Advisory Committees on the growth and savings/additional income items proposed together with any additional suggestions the committees put forward will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 14 December 2023.

### **Process and Timetable**

- 46 This report is the second stage of the budget process as shown in the Budget Setting Timetable (**Appendix K**).
- 47 The next stage will be a Budget Update report to Cabinet on 14 December 2023 to provide details of progress made.

### **Key Implications**

#### Financial

All financial implications are covered elsewhere in this report.

#### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal implications.

For the effective management of our resources and in order to achieve a sustainable budget it is essential that all service cost changes and risks are identified and considered.

Challenges and risks are included in the Service Dashboards and each Service Change Impact Assessment (SCIA) includes the likely impacts including a risk analysis.

A separate Risks and Assumptions report will be presented to the Finance and Investment Advisory Committee and Cabinet.

### Equality Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups.

Individual equality impact assessments have been completed for all Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs) to ensure the decision-making process is fair and transparent.

### Net Zero Implications

Members are reminded of the Council's stated ambition to be Net Zero with regards to carbon emissions by 2030.

Individual net zero implication assessments have been completed for all Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs).

### **Conclusions**

The Financial Strategy and 10-year budget process have ensured that the Council follows a logical and well considered process and approach in dealing with the many difficult challenges that it has faced. They have also helped to ensure that the Council is well placed in dealing with more immediate and longer-term challenges.

By becoming financially self-sufficient at an early stage, this Council has become much more in control of its own destiny.

The attached 10-year budget shows that this Council is aiming to continue to be financially stable going into the future with a level of assurance that any council would aspire to. However, with a range of issues impacting the council's finances, this is the most challenging budget process this Council has faced for many years.

The Council aims to continue to provide value for money services to a high standard ensuring that the decisions made lead to an achievable 10-year budget. Members will need to consider the impact on service quality, staff and well-being.

Members' consideration and scrutiny of the relevant services is an essential and key element in the budget process. If the net total of growth and savings/additional income proposals identified by the Advisory Committees and approved by Cabinet

## Agenda Item 6

does not reach the £1.368m budget gap currently identified, additional savings will be required that may result in service changes, to ensure a balanced budget position.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Service Dashboards relating to this Advisory Committee

Appendix Ai – Performance Indicators

Appendix B – 2023/24 Budget by Service relating to this Advisory Committee

Appendix C – Summary of the Council’s previously agreed savings plan and growth items

Appendix D – 10-year budget

Appendix E – Changes to the 10-year budget

Appendix F – New growth and savings/additional income items agreed by managers (if applicable)

Appendix G – New growth and savings/additional income items proposed relating to this Advisory Committee (if applicable)

Appendix H – Service Change Impact Assessment forms (SCIAs) for the new growth and savings/additional income items relating to this Advisory Committee (if applicable)

Appendix J - Financial Strategy

Appendix K – Budget Setting Timetable

### **Background Papers**

Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2024/25 and Beyond – Cabinet 19  
September 2023

**Adrian Rowbotham**

**Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Finance & Trading**



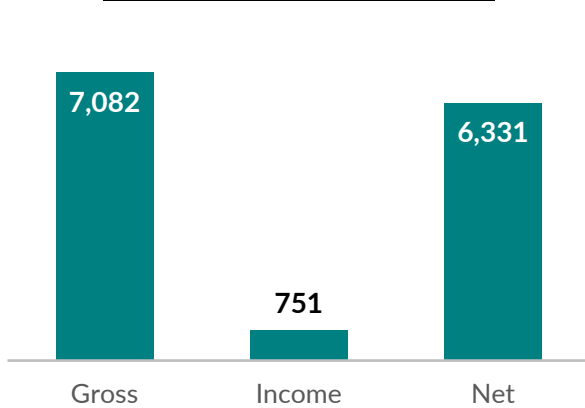
# Service Dashboard

## Portfolio for Improvement & Innovation

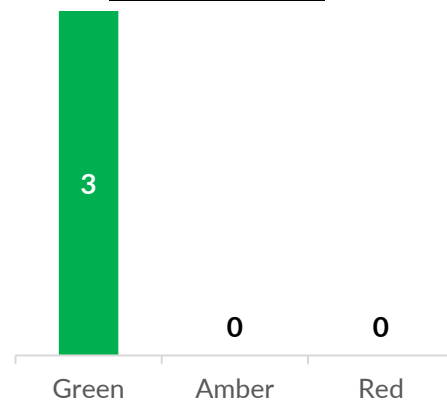
### The services we provide

Policy, performance, communications, customer service, business transformation, special projects, digital, workforce, economic development & regeneration, equalities, members, wellbeing

#### Revenue Budget (£000)



#### Performance



#### Service contribution

Statutory service



Income generating



Working in partnership



#### Council Plan

Wellbeing ✓

Environment ✗

Economy ✓

Housing ✓

Community Safety ✗

Health ✗

#### Achievements & Opportunities

- Securing Investors in People Platinum status for a third successive time and shortlisted as Platinum Employer of Year.
- Delivering service improvements across the Council through the Customer Insights team
- White Oak Leisure Centre opened and outperforming its membership targets
- Re-development of 11-13 High Street, and opening the meeting point Business Hub
- Secured £1.5m funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund.


#### Challenges & Risks


- Recruitment and retention of staff.
- Continued high demand for Council services as resources reduce
- To continue to develop the use of technology to improve the customer experience
- The impact of Government borrowing rules and economic conditions on the Council's Property Investment strategy.
- Viability concerns for construction projects in light of the impact of high inflation and economic & labour market conditions on workforce and materials.


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## Performance Report – Cleaner & Greener Portfolio


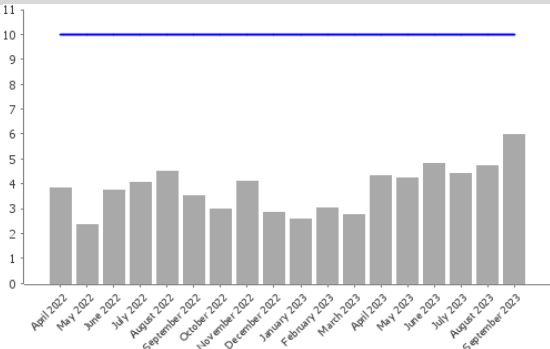

**Key:**

 Green – Performance is at or above target

 Amber – Performance is less than 10% below target

 Red – Performance is 10% or more below target

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Code	Short Name	Current Value	Current Target	Current Status	Performance Chart	Year to date Value	Year to date Target	Year to date Status
LPI_BC LC 001	Average number of days to process a land charge search	5.97	10			4.75	10	

Code	Short Name	Current Value	Current Target	Current Status	Performance Chart	Year to date Value	Year to date Target	Year to date Status																																						
LPI_HR 001	The average number of working days lost to sickness absence per FTE	3.6	4.5	✔	<table border="1"> <caption>Monthly Data for LPI_HR 001</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>April 2022</td><td>0.5</td></tr> <tr><td>May 2022</td><td>1.2</td></tr> <tr><td>June 2022</td><td>1.8</td></tr> <tr><td>July 2022</td><td>2.5</td></tr> <tr><td>August 2022</td><td>3.0</td></tr> <tr><td>September 2022</td><td>3.5</td></tr> <tr><td>October 2022</td><td>4.2</td></tr> <tr><td>November 2022</td><td>5.0</td></tr> <tr><td>December 2022</td><td>5.8</td></tr> <tr><td>January 2023</td><td>6.5</td></tr> <tr><td>February 2023</td><td>7.2</td></tr> <tr><td>March 2023</td><td>8.0</td></tr> <tr><td>April 2023</td><td>0.5</td></tr> <tr><td>May 2023</td><td>1.0</td></tr> <tr><td>June 2023</td><td>1.5</td></tr> <tr><td>July 2023</td><td>2.0</td></tr> <tr><td>August 2023</td><td>2.8</td></tr> <tr><td>September 2023</td><td>3.6</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Month	Value	April 2022	0.5	May 2022	1.2	June 2022	1.8	July 2022	2.5	August 2022	3.0	September 2022	3.5	October 2022	4.2	November 2022	5.0	December 2022	5.8	January 2023	6.5	February 2023	7.2	March 2023	8.0	April 2023	0.5	May 2023	1.0	June 2023	1.5	July 2023	2.0	August 2023	2.8	September 2023	3.6	3.6	4.5	✔
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August 2023	2.8																																													
September 2023	3.6																																													
LPI_HR 002	Number of weeks to recruit from advert to point of offer / acceptance	3.8	12	✔	<table border="1"> <caption>Quarterly Data for LPI_HR 002</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Value</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Q1 2022/23</td><td>4.8</td></tr> <tr><td>Q2 2022/23</td><td>4.2</td></tr> <tr><td>Q3 2022/23</td><td>4.8</td></tr> <tr><td>Q4 2022/23</td><td>4.5</td></tr> <tr><td>Q1 2023/24</td><td>6.5</td></tr> <tr><td>Q2 2023/24</td><td>4.0</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Value	Q1 2022/23	4.8	Q2 2022/23	4.2	Q3 2022/23	4.8	Q4 2022/23	4.5	Q1 2023/24	6.5	Q2 2023/24	4.0	3.8	12	✔																								
Quarter	Value																																													
Q1 2022/23	4.8																																													
Q2 2022/23	4.2																																													
Q3 2022/23	4.8																																													
Q4 2022/23	4.5																																													
Q1 2023/24	6.5																																													
Q2 2023/24	4.0																																													

Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee								Appendix B
Chief Officer	Budget Book Reference	Budget Book Description	2023/24 Exp Budget	2023/24 Inc Budget	2023/24 Approved Net Budget	2023/24 Forecast Outturn	2023/24 Forecast Variance	Statutory Services (*out of 10)
<u>Revenue</u>			£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	
Assistant Chief Executive	ACTDEV	Action and Development	8	0	8	8	0	0
Assistant Chief Executive	CONSURVEY	Consultation and Surveys	4	0	4	0	(4)	0
Assistant Chief Executive	CORPMGT	Corporate Management	1,154	0	1,154	1,118	(36)	0
Assistant Chief Executive	CORPSAVING	Corporate - Other	137	0	137	87	(50)	0
Assistant Chief Executive	ELECTIONS	Elections	136	0	136	136	0	10
Assistant Chief Executive	EXTCOMMS	External Communications	245	(13)	233	242	9	0
Assistant Chief Executive	PERFIMPS	Performance Improvement	7	(7)	0	0	0	0
Assistant Chief Executive	REGELECT	Register of Electors	222	0	222	222	0	10
Assistant Chief Executive	STAFFPERFORM	Administrative Expenses - Transformation	6	0	6	6	0	0
Assistant Chief Executive	SUPPGENADPR	Support - General Admin (Print Shop)	231	(212)	19	54	35	0
Customer & Resources	AMFIT	Asset Maintenance IT	280	0	280	280	0	0
Customer & Resources	CIVIC	Civic Expenses	18	0	18	18	0	10
Customer & Resources	CTTEADMIN	Democratic Services	188	0	188	188	0	
Customer & Resources	LANDCHRG	Land Charges	124	(170)	(46)	(5)	41	10
Customer & Resources	STAFFIT	Administrative Expenses - Corporate Services	22	0	22	22	0	0
Customer & Resources	STAFFLEGAL	Administrative Expenses - Legal and Democratic Services	73	0	73	73	0	0
Customer & Resources	STAFFPERSDEV	Administrative Expenses - Human Resources	12	(4)	8	8	0	0
Customer & Resources	STNAME	Street Naming	20	(24)	(4)	(4)	0	10
Customer & Resources	SUPPCONTACT	Support - Contact Centre	748	0	748	697	(51)	0
Customer & Resources	SUPPCUSTIN	Support - Customer Insights	249	0	249	249	0	0
Customer & Resources	SUPPIT	Support - IT	1,212	(125)	1,087	1,087	0	0
Customer & Resources	SUPPPERSDEV	Support - Human Resources	469	(1)	468	468	0	0
Finance & Trading	MEMBERS	Members	494	0	494	480	(14)	10
Finance & Trading	SUPPGENAD	Support - General Admin	238	0	238	236	(2)	0
Strategic Head Commercial and Property	ECOMDEV	Economic Development	47	0	47	47	0	0
Strategic Head Commercial and Property	ECONHUB	Swanley Meeting Point	60	0	60	81	21	0
Strategic Head Commercial and Property	ECONPRO	Economic Development Property	680	(196)	484	424	(60)	0
			7,082	(751)	6,331	6,220	(111)	
*Whole service = 10, Major part = 7, Minor part = 2, None = 0 (Includes support services)								

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Year	SCIA No.	Description	2011/12 - 2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	Later Years £000	Total £000
		<b>Cleaner and Greener Advisory Committee</b>				
2021/22	-	Car Parking: assumed 25% reduction in 21/22 income improving by 5% per year	617	(206)	(411)	
2023/24	20	Env. Health: Air quality monitoring (reversal of temporary growth item)	22	(22)		
		<b>Development and Conservation Advisory Committee</b>				
2022/23	9	Development Management: additional application fee income (reversal of temporary savings item)	(25)	25		
		<b>Finance and Investment Advisory Committee</b>				
2023/24	21	Various: Utility Costs (reversal of temporary growth item)	180	(180)		
2023/24	22	Prop & Comm: Meeting Point Business Hub (reversal of temporary growth item)	60	(27)	(33)	
		<b>Housing and Health Advisory Committee</b>				
2022/23	1	Housing: Temporary accommodation (reversal of temporary growth item)	300	(300)		
2023/24	1	Housing: Temporary accommodation occupation charge (reversal of temporary growth item)	36	(36)		
		<b>Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee</b>				
2023/24	1	Apprenticeship Levy (reversal of temporary growth item)	55	(55)		
		<b>People and Places Advisory Committee</b>				
2022/23	-	New White Oak Leisure Centre	216	(205)	(11)	
2023/24	11	Health & Communities: Reduction in youth funding associated to removal of van (part reversal of savings item)	(6)	2		
		Minor movements between years			0	
		Other savings/additional income items completed in earlier years	(8,161)			
		Other growth items completed in earlier years	2,218			
		<b>Total Savings/additional income</b>	<b>(8,192)</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(8,165)</b>
		<b>Total Growth</b>	<b>3,704</b>	<b>(1,031)</b>	<b>(455)</b>	<b>2,218</b>
		<b>Net Savings</b>	<b>(4,488)</b>	<b>(1,004)</b>	<b>(455)</b>	<b>(5,947)</b>

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	Budget 2023/24	Plan 2024/25	Plan 2025/26	Plan 2026/27	Plan 2027/28	Plan 2028/29	Plan 2029/30	Plan 2030/31	Plan 2031/32	Plan 2032/33	Plan 2033/34
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Expenditure</b>											
Net Service Expenditure c/f	17,297	18,533	21,712	19,548	19,649	20,189	20,689	21,191	21,879	22,392	23,117
Inflation	1,188	1,505	565	573	582	593	602	613	624	635	647
Superannuation Fund deficit	(270)	0	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net growth/(savings) (approved in previous yrs)	319	(1,115)	(253)	(272)	58	7	0	75	(111)	90	18
<b>New growth</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,988</b>	<b>(2,376)</b>	<b>(150)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>New savings/Income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(200)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>	<b>(100)</b>
<b>Net Service Expenditure b/f</b>	<b>18,533</b>	<b>21,712</b>	<b>19,548</b>	<b>19,649</b>	<b>20,189</b>	<b>20,689</b>	<b>21,191</b>	<b>21,879</b>	<b>22,392</b>	<b>23,117</b>	<b>23,782</b>
<b>Financing Sources</b>											
Govt Support: Rolled in grants	(186)	(186)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
: Funding Guarantee	(912)	(912)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
: Lower Tier Services Grant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
: Services Grant	(90)	(90)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Homes Bonus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Council Tax	(12,229)	(12,858)	(13,356)	(13,807)	(14,271)	(14,748)	(15,238)	(15,744)	(16,262)	(16,794)	(17,269)
Business Rates Retention	(2,868)	(2,920)	(2,723)	(2,409)	(2,457)	(2,506)	(2,556)	(2,607)	(2,659)	(2,712)	(2,766)
Collection Fund Deficit/(Surplus)	(216)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Interest Receipts	(288)	(332)	(332)	(332)	(232)	(232)	(232)	(232)	(232)	(232)	(232)
Property Investment Strategy Income	(1,618)	(1,478)	(1,478)	(1,575)	(1,575)	(1,575)	(1,616)	(1,616)	(1,616)	(1,616)	(1,616)
Contributions to/(from) Reserves	(131)	(2,215)	398	398	398	398	398	398	398	370	331
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>(18,538)</b>	<b>(20,991)</b>	<b>(17,491)</b>	<b>(17,725)</b>	<b>(18,137)</b>	<b>(18,663)</b>	<b>(19,244)</b>	<b>(19,801)</b>	<b>(20,371)</b>	<b>(20,984)</b>	<b>(21,552)</b>
<b>Budget Gap (surplus)/deficit</b>	<b>(5)</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>2,057</b>	<b>1,924</b>	<b>2,052</b>	<b>2,026</b>	<b>1,947</b>	<b>2,078</b>	<b>2,021</b>	<b>2,133</b>	<b>2,230</b>
<b>Contribution to/(from) Stabilisation Reserve</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>(371)</b>	<b>(370)</b>	<b>(580)</b>	<b>(636)</b>	<b>(638)</b>	<b>(751)</b>	<b>(674)</b>	<b>(765)</b>	<b>(841)</b>
<b>Unfunded Budget Gap (surplus)/deficit</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>1,686</b>	<b>1,554</b>	<b>1,472</b>	<b>1,390</b>	<b>1,309</b>	<b>1,327</b>	<b>1,347</b>	<b>1,368</b>	<b>1,389</b>
<b>Cumulative Unfunded Budget Gap (surplus)/deficit</b>											<b>13,677</b>

<b>Assumptions</b>	
Business Rates Retention:	Business Rates Retention safety-net plus 2% per year. Also 'Updated safety net and underindexing compensation' until 25/26 when a Business Rates reset is due to take place. Business Rates Retention Pool income is included for 24/25 only.
Council Tax:	3% in 24/25, 2% in later years
Council Tax Base:	Increase of 730 Band D equivalent properties per annum
Interest Receipts:	£332,000 in 24/25 to 26/27 and £232,000 in later years
Property Investment Strategy:	£1.478m from 24/25, £1.575m from 26/27, £1.616m from 29/30
Pay award:	3% in 24/25, 2% in later years
Other costs:	2.25% in all years
Income:	2.5% in all years.

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	2024/25 Impact £000	10-year Budget Total Impact £000	10-year Budget Per Annum Impact £000	Comments
<b>Growth: Additional Expenditure or Reduced Income</b>				
Savings target built into budget	100	1,000	100	Annual savings assumption included in the 10-year budget.
April 2023 pay award	760	8,322	832	Current employers offer would cost £750,000 in 2023/24.
April 2024 pay award	188	2,060	206	Unknown but this reflects a 1% increase above the current assumption.
Apprenticeship levy	40	400	40	Current growth SCIA for £55,000 ends after 2023/24 but the Government scheme is expected to continue. Future growth item reduced to £40,000 as assumed £15,000 could be removed from staff training budget.
Utility costs	180	500	50	Current growth SCIA of £180,000 only included for 2023/24. Assume this increase reduces over time.
Property Investment Strategy	150	1,500	150	Not currently achieving the budgeted income levels from properties held. A separate Property Investment Strategy Update report will be included in the budget process.
Direct Services	600	2,500	250	Agency staff required to deliver current service levels noting continuing high levels of refuse and recycling quantities. Vehicle costs and income issues should improve. Initially £600,000 but assumed that actions will be agreed to reduce future costs.
Homelessness	150	150	15	Current growth SCIA of £300,000 ends after 2023/24. A lot of work has been carried out so that the extra cost in 2024/25 is estimated to be reduced to £150,000 with further actions to remove the extra cost completely from 2025/26.
Leisure provider change	183	1,830	183	Initial estimate of 2 year interim provider of £1.83m (as per report to Council). Updates on operator performance will be provided during the budget process to provide a basis for revised figures. The amounts here reflect the reimbursement of the reserve.
Markets: new contracts from 01/04/23	77	5	1	New contracts from April 2024. Assumed that the number of stalls at Swanley Sunday market gradually increases.
<b>Growth Total</b>	<b>2,428</b>	<b>18,267</b>	<b>1,827</b>	
<b>Savings: Reduced Expenditure or Additional Income</b>				
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	
Quercus 7 dividend	- 10	- 100	- 10	Increase from £50,000 to £60,000 from 2024/25. Scope to increase further but Q7 then unable to build funds for further investment.
Council Tax: Premium Unoccupied Properties	- 12	- 132	- 13	Provisionally agreed by Council in February 2023. Starts on 01/04/24.
Council Tax: Second Homes Premium	-	- 591	- 59	Provisionally agreed by Council in February 2023. Start delayed until 01/04/25 due to Government legislation requirements.
Fees and Charges	- 200	- 2,000	- 200	Implementation of review. Assume that this will deliver an additional £200,000 of income per annum after allowing for the inflation assumption.
Interest receipts	- 44	- 440	- 44	This budget was increased by £100,000 for 4 years from 2023/24. Current receipts suggest that it can be increased further but note expected reduction in balances and fluctuations in interest rates.
Govt settlement: Funding Guarantee	- 912	- 912	- 91	Latest suggestion from Government is that this funding will continue in 2024/25 only.
Govt Settlement: Services Grant	- 90	- 90	- 9	Latest suggestion from Government is that this funding will continue in 2024/25 only.
Govt settlement: Rolled in Grants	- 75	- 75	- 8	Latest suggestion from Government is that this funding will continue in 2024/25.
Business Rates Retention Pool	- 250	- 250	- 25	Include the expected extra retained income in 2024/25 only instead of transferring it to the Budget Stabilisation Reserve as has previously been the case.
<b>Savings Total</b>	<b>- 1,593</b>	<b>- 4,590</b>	<b>- 459</b>	
<b>NET TOTAL</b>	<b>835</b>	<b>13,677</b>	<b>1,368</b>	

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**New Growth and Savings/Additional Income Proposals: Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee**

SCIA Year	No.	Description	Year	Ongoing	2024/25 Impact £000	10-year Budget Total Impact	10-year Budget Per Annum Impact £000
Growth	None						
Sub Total					0	0	0
<b>Savings/Additional Income</b>							
24/25	13	Customers Solutions - reduce from 8am-6pm contact hours	24/25	Yes	(30)	(300)	(30)
24/25	14	Property - New fees and charges schedule	24/25	Yes	(20)	(200)	(20)
Sub Total					(50)	(500)	(50)
Net (Savings)/Growth Total					(50)	(500)	(50)

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**Portfolio / Chief Officer : Jim Carrington-West**

**Service: Customer Solutions**

**Activity**

**No. of Staff 23.24 FTE**

Details of proposed change	Cost Centre & Account Code of Budget	2024/25 Growth / (Saving) £000	Later Years Comments (ongoing, one-off, etc.)
Reduction in opening hours from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday to 8.45am to 5pm, Monday to Thursday and 8.45am to 4.45pm on Fridays.	20500 XCAA 8010	(30)	Ongoing

**Box 1. Reasons for and explanation of proposed change in service**

- From September 2021, Members took the decision to extend Customer Solutions opening hours on the telephone from 8.45am to 5pm to 7am to 7pm. This was to provide greater access for customers, by providing a wider period for customers to speak to the Council.
- Following a trial period, in January 2022 the opening hours were reduced to 8am to 6pm, as there was little contact either side of these times.
- Data has been monitored monthly since January 2022 and contact remains low between 8am to 9am and 5pm to 6pm (on average 3% of all telephone contact).
- It is proposed to return to the original opening hours (8.45am to 5pm) with a reduction of 1 FTE.

**Box 2. Key Stakeholders Affected:**

- Internal – Customer Solutions team (change to working pattern).
- External – All callers to SDC (reduction in opening times. However this is mitigated by the very low contact numbers and availability of online services for many common enquiries enabling self-service).

**Box 3. Likely impacts and implications of the change in service  
(include Risk Analysis)**

- It is anticipated this will have little impact on service delivery. Customer Solutions will still be open Monday to Friday during usual opening times. The customer demand for the extended period has proven to be low. Many common enquiries are now available online for customers to self-serve outside of our normal opening times.
- There will no impact to Customer Solutions staff in terms of working hours or terms and conditions. The shift rota will be amended accordingly to provide all staff shifts over the previous time period, which provides greater resilience when then phone lines are busiest.

**Risk to Service Objectives (High / Medium / Low)**

Low

**Cost Centre 2023/24 Budget (£'000)**

Operational Cost	900
Income	-
Net Cost	900

**Service Budget 2023/24 (relating to the area effect by this SCIA)**

Operational Cost	892
Income	-
Net Cost	892

Financial

All Financial implications have been covered within the sections above

**SERVICE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment

Portfolio / Chief Officer : Detlev Munster

Service: Commercial Property

Activity Income

No. of Staff 0 FTE

Details of proposed change	Cost Centre & Account Code of Budget	2024/25 Growth / (Saving) £000	Later Years Comments (ongoing, one-off, etc.)
Increase in income budgets due to new Commercial Property fees and charges schedule	Various	(20)	(20)

**Box 1. Reasons for and explanation of proposed change in service**

A proposed new fees and charges schedule has been created to set out new prices for services offered in Commercial Property.

**Box 2. Key Stakeholders Affected:**

None.

**Box 3. Likely impacts and implications of the change in service (include Risk Analysis)**

None.

**Risk to Service Objectives (High / Medium / Low)**

Low.

**SERVICE CHANGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**Cost Centre 2023/24 Budget (£'000)**

Operational Cost	
Income	
Net Cost	

**Service Budget 2023/24 (£'000) (relating to the area effect by this SCIA)**

Operational Cost	0
Income	(20)
Net Cost	(20)

**Key Implications**

Financial

All Financial implications have been covered within the sections above

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

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# Financial Strategy



## INTRODUCTION

In the years preceding this Strategy Sevenoaks District Council has proven itself to be highly successful in some of the most austere and challenging times faced by local government. This was only possible because of our award winning financial strategy and the achievement of a self-sufficient balanced budget within our unique 10-year budget framework.

With the cost of living crisis and events around the world, it remains important to have clear plans in place that may require difficult but necessary savings proposals.

Our Financial Strategy enables the Council to deliver its services effectively, in accordance with the priorities set out in the Corporate Strategy. At the same time, it ensures that our spending is prioritised to deliver the promises our Members set out in the draft **Council Plan themes**:

-  Environment
-  Economy
-  Housing
-  Communities
-  Wellbeing

## OUR FINANCES

**Our Vision** Long-term financial health to deliver exceptional services and achieve the promises set out in the Council Plan.

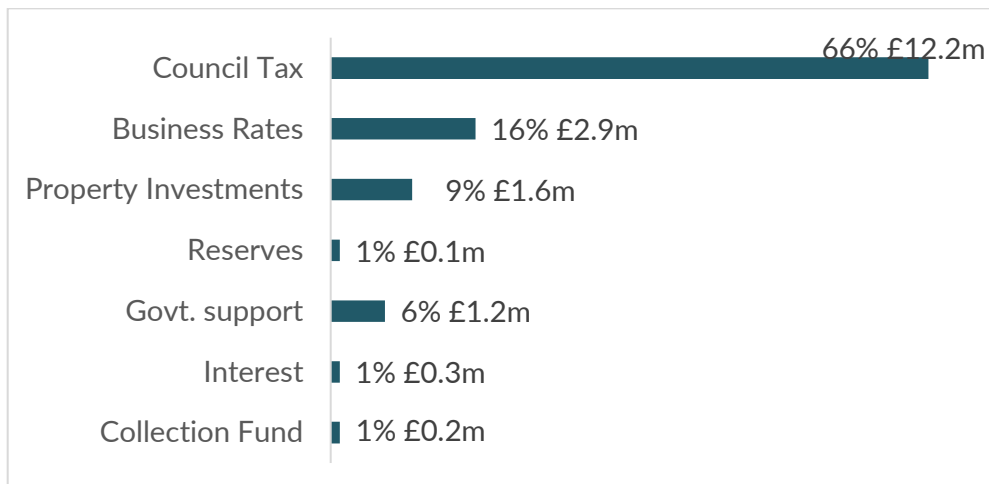
### What's important to us:

- Our budget supports the Council's vision and priorities
- Taxpayers and customers receive quality services and value for money
- Innovation, efficiency and cost-effectiveness
- Maximising income from grants and other funding opportunities
- Taking a commercial approach where it will benefit our budgets and our residents and local businesses
- Good quality, risk managed investments to generate more income for local priorities

### To be successful, we must:

- Remain financially self-sufficient
- Be clear about the Council's future financial prospects, with a ten-year budget as an integral part
- Ensure a strategic approach is taken to the management of the Council's finances, Council Tax, and budget setting
- Make effective use of reserves and capital receipts
- Manage our money carefully, monitor monthly and constantly strive for better value from our spending

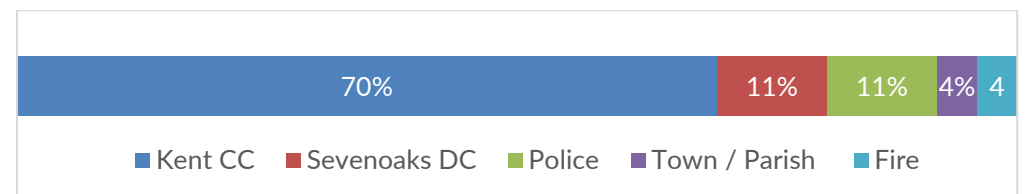
### WHERE OUR MONEY COMES FROM (also income from services is £12.6m)



### COUNCIL TAX



Sevenoaks District Council collects the Council Tax charge for itself but also for Kent County Council, Kent Fire & Rescue Service, Kent Police & Crime Commissioner and all the local town and parish councils. Each authority sets its own charge that contributes to the total.




Sevenoaks District Council's part of the charge at Band D is £236.70, 11% of the total. Council Tax contributes about £12.2million to District Council services.



### WHERE OUR MONEY IS SPENT

In 2023/24 the Council will spend about £18.5million on services for local people

	Cleaner & Greener £5.8m
	Development & Conservation £1.0m
	Housing & Health £1.4m
	People & Places £0.8m

	Finance & Investment £3.3m
	Improvement & Innovation £6.4m
	Other £-0.2m

**OUR PRIORITIES** | By keeping a focus on our priorities we will deliver our vision

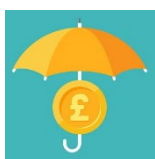
**Financial self-sufficiency**



No longer relying on direct government funding gives greater certainty to our financial planning. It allows for long-term plans to be developed over our 10-year budget period.

- We will produce high quality financial reports and monitor our budgets every month
- We will address growth items and service pressures annually through the budget planning process
- We will manage inflationary pressures and prudent assumptions about future pressures and keep them under regular review

**Savings & reserves**



Creating a culture where there is a continuous drive for better value in our spend helps to create savings to balance our budgets. Alongside flexible and effective use of reserves, it allows for sustainable solutions to financial pressures

- We will seek to deliver a minimum of £100,000 in savings annually
- We will regularly review the use of reserves and maintain a minimum balance of 10% of the Net Service Expenditure budget.
- We will make flexible use of the Budget Stabilisation Reserve to increase resilience in the budget setting process

**Income & investments**



Making best use of the Council's reserves and carefully managed borrowing. Seeking new opportunities for funding from grants and investments is increasingly essential to the Council's financial sustainability.

- We will bid for external funding
- We will adopt a commercial approach where it will be of benefit to our budgets and support the delivery of Council priorities
- We will make investments to bring in income to support the delivery of Council services

**Delivering our Financial Strategy**

Our Financial Strategy is supported by a number of related strategies and an action plan to help us achieve our vision and to deliver the ambitions set out by Members in the Council Plan.

How we work as a team of officers is critical to the success of the organisation and to help us achieve our aims, the Financial Strategy seeks to unite us all behind the same priorities and approach.

The outcomes we hope to achieve and the measures that will help us to determine whether we have been successful are set out below.



**Outcomes and success measures**

Financial self-sufficiency					
	Financial plans ensure there are no unplanned reductions to Council services		Overall proportion of Council budgets funded by income from council tax does not increase		A balanced 10-year budget is delivered annually
Savings & Reserves					
	Annual savings exceed the £100,000 target whilst continuing to protect services		The General Fund reserves retains at least 10% of the Net Service Expenditure budget		Specific savings agreed as part of the annual budget process are achieved as planned.
Income & Investments					
	Successful bids for external funding generate new income and opportunities for the Council		Income from paid for services is in accordance with budget costs, is comparable to neighbouring authorities and is considered to provide value for money		Treasury Management, Property and commercial investments exceed expected yield



## 2024/25 Budget Setting Timetable

### **Stage 1: Financial Prospects and Budget Strategy 2024/25 and Beyond**

5 September – Finance & Investment AC

19 September – Cabinet

### **Stage 2: Review of Service Dashboards and Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs)**

31 October – Development & Conservation AC

2 November – Finance & Investment AC

7 November – Housing & Health AC

23 November – Cleaner & Greener AC

30 November – People & Places AC

5 December – Improvement & Innovation AC

### **Stage 3: Budget Update (incl. Service Change Impact Assessments (SCIAs), feedback from Advisory Committees)**

14 December – Cabinet

### **Stage 4: Budget Update**

18 January - Cabinet

### **Stage 5: Budget and Council Tax Setting Meeting (Recommendations to Council)**

8 February - Cabinet

### **Stage 5: Budget and Council Tax Setting Meeting (incl. Council Tax setting)**

20 February – Council

**Note:** The Scrutiny Committee may 'call in' items concerning the budget setting process.

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**UPDATE ON UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AND RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND**

**Committee – Improvement and Innovation – 5 December 2023**

**Report of:** Detlev Munster – Strategic Head of Property and Commercial

**Status:** For Consideration

**Also considered by:**

Cabinet - 14 December 2023

**Key Decision:** No

**Executive Summary:** The UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity fund are on track and delivering as expected at this stage of the programme. The investment plan, approved by Cabinet in July 2022 and by Government in December 2022, outlined a complex programme of work with more than 15 individual projects to be delivered by a range of project leads. Projects complement the Economic Development Strategy and represent an ambitious yet achievable programme. In July 2022, Cabinet requested that annual monitoring of the investment plan and its implementation be undertaken, and this report is the first such report.

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Julia Thornton

**Contact Officer:** Emily Haswell, Ext. 7261

**Recommendation to Improvement and innovation**

To note the progress with delivery of the UKSPF and REPF programme

**Reason for recommendation:** Good progress has been made with delivery against the UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan and Rural England Prosperity Fund addendum with the programme of projects remaining on track and meeting interventions, outcomes and outputs expected.

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### Introduction and Background

- 1 The UK Shared Prosperity funding was launched in April 2022 to support the Government's commitment to levelling up all parts of the UK aiming to build pride of place and increase life chances. Sevenoaks District Council was allocated £1m over the financial years 2022-25 covering the 3 priorities of Community and Place, Supporting Local Business and People and Skills. This included funding for both Capital and Revenue allocations for each year.
- 2 In order to receive this funding an investment plan was submitted to the Department of Levelling up in July 2022 and was approved in late December 2022. The approved Local investment plan contains detailed financial allocations against projects, interventions and forecast outcomes and outputs and therefore provides the framework for the monitoring of this funding. See table below.

### Allocations Summary

- 3 The following summary table outlines the annual financial allocations across the investment priorities, these include a mixture of Capital and Revenue funding meeting percentages stipulated in scheme guidance.

<b>Funding Period</b>	<b>Communities and place</b>	<b>Local Business support</b>	<b>People and Skills</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
2022/23	£62,169	£28,000		<b>£90,169</b>
2023/24	£89,505	£90,833		<b>£180,338</b>
2024/25	£222,826	£174,167	£332,500	<b>£729,493</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£374,500</b>	<b>£293,000</b>	<b>£332,500</b>	<b>£1,000,000</b>

### Interventions

- 4 The investment plan detailed the interventions alongside projects and financial allocations together with expected outcomes and outputs. The interventions against the investment priorities are summarised in the table below;

<b>Community and Place</b>	<b>Local Business Support</b>	<b>People and Skills</b>
E11 - Capacity building and infrastructure to support local groups	E29 - Supporting decarbonisation & improving natural environment	E33 - Employment support for economically inactive people
E12 - Community engagement and local regeneration	E24 - Training hubs, business support offers, incubators and accelerators	E33 - Employment support for economically inactive people
E12 - Community engagement and local regeneration	E31 - Support relevant feasibility studies	E39 - Green Skills courses
E12 - Community engagement and local regeneration	E16 - Open markets and town centre retail and service sector	E41 - Funding to support local digital skills

E3 - Creation of an improvement to Local Green Spaces	E17 - Development and promotion of visitor economy	
E1- Improvements to Town Centres and High Streets	E31 - support relevant feasibility studies	
E6 Enhancing existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions offer		

- 5 The investment plan submitted and agreed was based on consultation and feedback from local stakeholders and also aligned to activities in the Economic Development Strategy. Thus creating an ambitious programme of activity which whilst challenging to achieve aims to create a legacy to build on in future years. The West Kent Partnership provided a chance to work jointly on some areas of our UKSPF where this could add value. It should be noted that Sevenoaks District funds will only be used to support Sevenoaks District organisations but we can benefit from jointly commissioning work across the area.

**Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)**

- 6 In September 2022 The Rural England Prosperity Fund was announced providing further funding to support the additional challenges associated with Levelling up rural areas. The Sevenoaks District allocation was £501,308 of Capital funding across the financial years 2023-2025. To secure this funding an addendum was submitted and subsequently agreed in April 2023 to be monitored alongside the UKSPF spend.
- 7 The REPF funding has been allocated towards the creation of the West Kent Rural Grants Scheme to support businesses and community organisations across DEFRA defined eligible geographic area. The scheme provides Capital grants only. With no funding for administration permitted, a West Kent Rural Officer was appointed through West Kent Partnership funding.

**Project Delivery**

- 8 The projects within the investment plan and addendum have been based on consultation with end users, businesses and stakeholders and reflect the priorities both in the Better Together Community Plan (2022-2025) and the Economic Development Strategy (2022-27); both reflect the priorities within the Council Plan. The programme of work seeks to maximise impact of funding to meet current gaps whilst matching the prescribed mix of funding producing a wide range of interventions outcomes and outputs to benefit the District. Projects have a mixture of project leads dependent on expertise and where relevant work alongside partners and/ or include work procured externally.
- 9 A programme management office has been established through the creation of a UKSPF project officer role to ensure delivery remains on track, to liaise with project leads providing guidance support and to assist the UKSPF lead to complete monitoring returns, which are critical to release of further funding. To

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date all monitoring rounds have been successfully completed with returns signed off by the Councils S151 officer, which has released funding for financial years 2022/23 and 2023/24. The October/ November 2023 monitoring round is expected to release funding for the final year.

- 10 Recruitment activity was undertaken at the beginning of the year and the UKSPF Project Officer, the Town Centre Project Officer and the Rural Projects Officer commenced their respective posts in April 2023, June 2023, and May 2023 respectively.
- 11 Programme activities are monitored on a fortnightly basis by the Economic Development Team and more widely with our West Kent partners on a monthly basis. A close working relationship exists at officer level amongst the West Kent partners.
- 12 Building on LEADER's legacy, and to support the distribution of REPF grants, the Local Action Group was re-established and reconstituted into the Grants Panel. The panel has mixed representation of local businesses, local community groups etc, and is responsible for approving grant applications. The Grants Panel will meet on a periodic basis.

### Progress

- 13 A summary of progress has been provided in Appendix A in table form, this provides an overview of progress to date against each of the projects and a rating of Red, Blue, Amber or Green. The result is that 50% of programmes are Green meaning project activity and spend has commenced and is either on track or completed. 31% are blue indicating the project was not profiled to commence until financial year 2024/25 as per the investment plan. 19% are Amber indicating the project activity is ongoing but spend is yet to commence or the project is facing minor delays. We are currently reporting no projects with a Red rating (to indicate concern about ability to deliver the project within the timescales)
- 14 Within the agreed Investment Plan some projects are not profiled to commence spend until the financial year 2024/25 and therefore the rating provided indicates that preparation remains on track. This is the case in particular for the People and Skills programmes as these were originally restricted to the final year of the programme.
- 15 The UKSPF guidance indicates the level of flexibility, which can be applied without a formal project change request, at the current time our performance remains as per the agreements in place and no project changes are perceived necessary.
- 16 Key achievements to date include the swift appointment of additional staff to support the schemes, namely the UKSPF project officer, Town Centre project officer and the West Kent Partnership funded – West Kent Rural officer. These posts have brought additional resource to the team to enable delivery of the programme of work.

- 17 Under the Community and Place theme, the key achievements have been around the extensive community mobilisation and grants programme, as well as the liaison with all town and parish councils to identify key small scale public realm projects. See Appendix A for further details.
- 18 Under the Supporting Local Business theme the key achievement has been the procurement and establishment of the West Kent Business support programme together with an initial successful round of the Green Grants scheme for businesses. See appendix A.
- 19 People and Skills projects are profiled for the financial year 2024/25. However, initial scoping work and project outlines are being completed and procurement processes commenced to ensure programmes are ready to launch in the new year.
- 20 The Rural England Prosperity Fund has allocated the whole amount for the current year in approving 12 grants, with an additional 4 applications approved with funding to be disbursed in the next financial year.
- 21 All grant schemes have been advertised through a dedicated business grants page on our council website, social media posts, Local business organisations, flyers and presentations at Local business events, and information being shared through Town and Parish Council's and local stakeholders. Schemes have been well subscribed with applications exceeding available funding in most cases.

### **Economic Development Strategy**

- 22 The Economic Development Strategy 2022-27 was produced following consultation with local businesses and stakeholders, this consultation included discussion on priorities for the UKSPF to ensure that the deliverables within the strategy and the UKSPF programme were aligned. This means that the UKSPF provides the funding to deliver some of the ED strategy objectives and ensures that resources and therefore achievements are maximised.

### **Other options Considered and/or rejected**

- 23 There is no obligation to spend the UK Shared Prosperity Fund / Rural England Prosperity fund allowance, however to not do so would present a missed opportunity. The funding available provides funds for supporting the levelling up agenda, strengthening pride in place, improving life chances in the district and providing additional support to overcome the additional challenges faced in rural areas. It also supports the delivery of the Council's EDS. Failure to use the allocation may have implications in future funding allocations made and would not represent the best interests of the community.
- 24 Whilst different projects could be delivered, the Investment Plan and its proposed activities/projects was extensively consulted and reflects the needs of our District and is now agreed. However, officers are continuously scanning the market to determine if the projects/activities remain valid. If changes are needed, a change request will need to be made to Government.

## Key Implications

### Financial

- 25 The Grant funding agreement and Memorandum of Understanding have been signed by the Council and the Government.
- 26 Funding for each financial year will be paid to the local authority in advance. Prior to each year's allocation, a report needs to be submitted on progress against the outputs of the Investment Plan. Lead local authorities may be asked to return any underspends at the end of each financial year, therefore regular financial and performance monitoring will be required.
- 27 Up to a maximum of 4% of the total allocation (UKSPF only) can be used for administration of the plan including commissioning services and monitoring. More administration heavy projects have in-built resources included.

### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

- 28 A signed Memorandum of Understanding and Grant funding agreement is in place following receipt of a grant determination letter, these documents set out detailed fund requirements and obligations and link to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund prospectus which provides comprehensive guidance on project delivery including procurement, publicity and branding and eligibility. These documents have been amended and resigned to incorporate the REPF funding addendum.
- 29 Delivery risks were considered at the outset of the project and mitigations included within the scheme design – key risks are outlined within the table below

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>
Partner organisations do not provide monitoring information required	Funding administered directly by SDC and only released at appropriate time once project complies with scheme requirements – ongoing monitoring requirements detailed in scheme guidance for all grant schemes.	Low /Medium
Project unable to complete	There is some flexibility within scheme guidance to amend projects and adapt to changing circumstances, regular monitoring in place to ensure early indication of challenges	Medium
Non delivery risk	Programme management in place with project leads supported by a Project Officer in terms of monitoring with regular progress meetings in place	Low



Monitoring non compliance resulting in failure to release further funding rounds	Programme management in place Project Officer supported by UKSPF lead and finance team to ensure monitoring returns are completed fully and in line with scheme requirements	Low
Failure to deliver contracts procured externally	Internal governance procedures are followed alongside the required procurement procedures outlined within programme guidance	Low

Equality Assessment

- 30 Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and foster good relations between people from different groups The decisions recommended through the report directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people. (full assessment included as background document)
- 31 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan, REPF addendum and the investment priorities they support, should have a positive impact on all our residents and businesses. Some initiatives, however, are targeted at specific groups that are in particular need in our community such as the unemployed or those experiencing barriers to employment. Such an approach means we are seeking to positively impact levelling up of opportunity across the District.

Net Zero Implications

- 32 The decision recommended through this report has relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. Officers believe that the UKSPF Investment Plan will help in reducing carbon emissions. but in summary:
  - A number of projects notably the green grants scheme and the training of retrofit advisers should positively impact local businesses and potentially emissions from Council owned assets
  - Through community mobilisation we will be seeking to raise awareness of Net Zero issues and solutions
  - We are seeking to deliver green infrastructure in our key centres and boost biodiversity

**Conclusions**

- 33 The early stage delivery for the UKSPF and REPF Programmes have gone well with the extensive range of projects on track to deliver for the current financial

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year. The achievements complement activity within the Economic Development Strategy Delivery plan, and through working in partnership maximum impact from this funding is expected.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – UKSPF and REPF summary report

Background Documents

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**Detlev Munster**

**Strategic Head of Commercial and Property**

**APPENDIX A**

**UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund monitoring**

**From start of delivery of UKSPF April 2023 – 30 Sept 2023**

**KEY**

<b>BLUE</b>	Project not profiled to start activity until 2024/25
<b>GREEN</b>	Project activity and spend commenced and on track or completed
<b>AMBER</b>	Project spend not yet commenced or subject to minor delay
<b>RED</b>	Some concern about ability to deliver project within timescales

**Communities and Place**

No	Project Name/ project lead	Description	Update / next steps	RAG
1	<b>Social Value engine</b>  <b>Communities Team</b>	Tool for showing social value impact and outcomes of community activity	Software purchased and training completed early application of system to identify the best measures for capturing value of community based activity.	<b>GREEN</b>  <b>PROJECT SPEND COMPLETE</b>
2	<b>Community Mobilisation</b>  <b>Communities Team</b>	To support and deliver community mobilisation grants, community hub projects	Two successful rounds of community grant funding have resulted in 24 awards to community organisations. Another round will follow next year.  Since July organised / supported 5 programmes of activity and 3 events, which have reached around 3882 people. This includes the family fun days, access to sport/exercise and outreach to support community groups with limited experience of applying for grants.	<b>GREEN</b>  <b>ON TRACK</b>

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<b>3</b>	<b>Improving Green Spaces</b>  <b>Property Team</b>	Feasibly work around improvement of green spaces and potential to create a pilot project	Strategic plan prepared. Detailed work yet to commence.	<b>AMBER</b>  <b>BEHIND</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Supporting Town Centres</b>  <b>ED Team</b>	Capital project covering small public realm improvements in our town/village centres	<p>Funding application open to all Town and Parish Councils for public realm improvement projects across the current financial year with some spend to take place in 2024/25.</p> <p>Funding committed so far has enabled 11 projects including lighting and mural at Skate Park in Swanley, Seating and paved area on the Green in Westerham and renovation of lamp posts in Sevenoaks town. At least 27 further projects in discussion to be funded prior to end of the programme.</p>	<b>GREEN</b>  <b>ON TRACK</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Cultural Sector support</b>  <b>ED Team</b>	Support organisations delivering community led cultural activity	5 awards approved to distribute full funding for current financial year. Further round expected in 2024/25.	<b>GREEN</b>  <b>ON TRACK</b>

Supporting Local Business

No	Project Name/ project lead	Description	Update / next steps	RAG
6	<b>West Kent Green Business Grant Scheme</b>  ED Team with TMBC	A grant scheme to encourage local businesses to introduce sustainability measures	2 grants awarded from first round, which absorbs funding for initial pilot year. One to provide contribution to larger project providing a solar power and the other a small grant to support new energy efficient freezers to allow larger deliveries and greater range of stock. New grant round to launch in early 2024 to cover allocated spend for 2024/25.	GREEN ON TRACK
7	<b>West Kent business support Programme</b>  ED Team with WKP	A co-ordinated programme of business support across West Kent with events, training and mentoring service as well as seed funding grants.	Following a policy compliant procurement process, Smarter Society was appointed to deliver West Kent Business programme. Website, portal and social media set up with 4 hybrid seminars taken place, micro grants scheme launched. 100 Sevenoaks District businesses engaged with 18 receiving mentoring support. Annual West Kent Business expo event planned for 14th March 2024.	GREEN ON TRACK
8	<b>Sector Skills Research</b>  ED Team	Study to investigate key sectors and skills within the District now and in the future including links to productivity	Procurement exercise underway with expectation that phase 1 completion will take place prior to end of financial year 2023/24.	AMBER ON TRACK
9	<b>Town Centre Activities</b>  ED Team	Events and promotions to support town centre development and to grow offer across all our town centres	Town Centre project officer appointed and regularly visiting the 4 main Town Centre stakeholders to liaise with businesses, providing information and advice. Funding provided to support Easter Town Trail and	GREEN ON TRACK

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			coronation trail in Sevenoaks town as pilot projects.	
10	<b>Promotion of Visitor experience</b>	Supporting the visitor economy by encouraging high profile visits and promotion activity	Early stage activity taking place in planning programme of activity.	AMBER ON TRACK
11	<b>Digital Heritage and Visitor Economy Project</b>	Feasibility study to utilise augmented and virtual reality to promote heritage and visitor economy assets	Initial scoping of project taking place.	BLUE ON TRACK

### People and Skills

Original guidelines precluded spend on people and skills projects until 2024/25. Therefore despite change of approach from funders we retained commitment to deliver as per the investment plan submitted and agreed.

No	Project Name/ project lead	Description	Update / next steps	RAG
12a	<b>Growth Gurus</b>	Pilot project to provide employability support training and signposting to young people	Project being researched and scoped in preparation for procurement process.	BLUE ON TRACK
12b	<b>Support for Economically inactive adults</b>	Interventions for economically inactive adults who face barriers to employment	Proposals for a call for projects approach across the West Kent area.	BLUE ON TRACK
13	<b>Green Retrofit skills</b>	Improved coverage and understanding of retrofit agenda in the District with training provided	Project being researched and scoped.	BLUE ON TRACK
14	<b>Upskilling in Digital Skills</b>	Supporting business growth by delivering digital training to fill skills gaps	Project being researched and scoped.	BLUE ON TRACK

**Rural England Prosperity Fund**

<p>15</p>	<p><b>West Kent Rural Grants Scheme</b></p> <p><b>West Kent Partnership</b></p>	<p>Capital grants to businesses and community organisations within the eligible rural area</p>	<p>West Kent funded project officer in place to deliver scheme.</p> <p>First round of grants completed with total available funding of £125,327.</p> <p>16 grants have been approved to 11 small or micro businesses, 4 charities and 1 Town Council. Approved grants were in excess of available funding therefore 9 will be funded from current years allowance and a further 7 will be prioritised for funding in the next financial year.</p> <p>Grant scheme to reopen later this year to distribute funding for financial year 2024/25.</p>	<p>GREEN</p> <p>ON TRACK</p>
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**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY UPDATE REPORT**

**Committee – Improvement and Innovation – 5 December 2023**

**Report of:** Detlev Munster – Strategic Head of Property and Commercial

**Status:** For Consideration

**Also considered by:**

- Cabinet – 14 December 2023

**Key Decision:**

**Executive Summary:** The report provides an annual review of the Economic Development Strategy following its first year of delivery. Good progress is highlighted in each of the focus areas and overall the strategy has benefited from availability of external funding to boost achievements to date.

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Julia Thornton

**Contact Officer:** Emily Haswell Ext. 7261

**Recommendation to Improvement and Innovation**

To note progress with delivery of the Economic Development Strategy.

**Recommendation to Cabinet**

To note progress with delivery of the Economic Development Strategy.

**Reason for recommendation:**

In approving the Economic Development Strategy in 2022, Cabinet requested that progress updates are submitted annually with its implementation. Good progress has been made with the first year of delivery of the Economic Development Strategy 2022-27 which remains on track to achieve expected outcomes before the end of the strategy's period.

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### Introduction and Background

- 1 The Economic Development Strategy (EDS) 2022-27 was approved by Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022, with delivery commencing in Q3 2022. The strategy provides a framework for delivery of economic development activity and notes the need to have flexibility to adapt to changes in the wider environment and embrace new opportunities and challenges as they arise.
- 2 The EDS reflects the promises within the Council plan at the time of development which were to;
  - Build on the District's thriving economy through the regeneration of our market towns, and by enhancing both the visitor and rural economies
  - Protect the economy of the District by preserving and making better use of existing employment sites and by redeveloping previously used land
  - Support new and existing businesses through our "Team around the Business" approach, combining excellent customer service and supporting local employers to promote mental and physical well-being at work.
- 3 The new Council plan reaffirms the commitment to deliver to the Economic Development Strategy, and also to; continue to support businesses to come to the District and grow, to deliver regeneration and to ensure that Sevenoaks District remains a special place to live, work and enjoy.
- 4 The EDS vision statement is: 'for Sevenoaks District to have a dynamic growing and inclusive economy for our businesses, communities and visitors that is kind to the environment, contributes to the health and well-being of all our residents and supports our commitment to working towards achieving Net Zero carbon emissions by the Council by 2030'
- 5 Since adoption of the EDS there has been much change both in the wider economic environment but also in the availability of funding to support activity. Significantly the announcement of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was made in April 2022 and at the time of adoption of the strategy the investment plan for this funding was being finalised and submitted to Government. Approval of the Council's UKSPF Investment Plan was received in December 2022. A further announcement was then made regarding the Rural England Prosperity Fund, which provided additional funding and the requirement for an addendum to be submitted in November 2022, which was approved by Government in April 2023.
- 6 The approach was therefore taken to design the UKSPF investment plan alongside the EDS to ensure complementarity of much of the activity. This has proved to be a prudent approach providing significant funding to develop new initiatives, however this funding availability has necessitated initial focus on achievement of UKSPF investment plan priorities. The commitment to deliver the EDS within the 5 year period remains, but the initial focus has been on delivery of those objectives and activities which work alongside UKSPF interventions to benefit from the additional resources this brings. As a result some key areas of the strategy have not been progressed during the first year, but this does not mean

that they will not be in future years. The Council has focussed on delivering those activities it has received funding for and which are time critical.

7 The EDS sets out 5 strategic priorities:

- Environmental Sustainability
- Skills resilience and job opportunities,
- Business resilience and growth,
- Infrastructure first
- Partnership delivery.

These provide a contextual framework. Proposed activities are broken down within the delivery plan into 4 key focus areas against which the monitoring of activity takes place.

### **Economic Overview**

8 The Economic Development Team is reliant on the receipt of data from third party organisation such as ONS, Statista and the Kent Research Unit. Economic and socio-economic data is received and reviewed on a regular basis. This data is not replicated here, but data sets used can be found in the Background Documents section of the report. The Council is currently investigating how best to synthesise this data for future reports. In addition, the Council is also commissioning a Sector Skills Report, which will provide a better understanding of economic trends and sectors that the Council should be supporting, the findings of this research will be shared on completion.

### **EDS Monitoring**

- 9 During the initial phase of delivery of the Economic Development Strategy our focus has been on aligning activity to the UKSPF investment plan, forming partnerships, and procuring/commissioning activities. During this phase we have also recruited additional externally funded staff to deliver the UKSPF and REPF activities. In particular, a UKSPF project officer commenced work in April 2023, the West Kent Rural Officer started in May 2023, and the Town Centres Project Officer commenced in June 2023
- 10 Although Government had set up the programme in 2022, reporting and administrative structures and systems had not yet been finalised, and the team has had to implement interim systems which are still being adapted by Government. This has required staff to continuously learn new systems and procedures.
- 11 A monitoring summary is provided in Appendix B. This indicates that 86% of the actions are rated as Green or Amber, with 9% Blue (not yet started) and 5% Red. Those Blue or Red indicate a mixture of changing external influences or activity which is planned to happen towards the end of the strategy delivery term. As this is reporting on one year's progress towards a five year strategy we would not be expecting all ratings to be green at this stage.

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- 12 Blue and Red activities are reflective of those activities which do not fall within the UKSPF priorities. Consequently, work on these will commence at a later and may depend on funding availability.

### **Key Achievements to date**

- 13 This section provides a summary of key achievements under each of the EDS focus areas.

14 **Focus area 1: Business and Enterprise**

- Local Leadership Partnership in place with the Federation of Small Business indicating commitment to provide support for the small businesses.
- West Kent Business support scheme procured and launched – programme delivered by Smarter Society has engaged over 100 Sevenoaks based businesses and a micro grants scheme was launched.
- Business directory created and populated on More Sevenoaks website with over 150 businesses featuring already.
- West Kent Partnership rebranding to Invest West Kent commenced with re-branding and a renewed focus on inward investment.
- Meeting Point Co-working hub in Swanley opened in July 2023.
- In June 2023, a stand was set-up at the Sevenoaks Business Show and a presentation was delivered to delegates.
- A stand was set up to engage with delegates at the national Completely Retail Show in September 2023.
- Regularly attendance and hosting of Chamber of Commerce and other business networking events to promote business and enterprise activity.

15 **Focus area 2: Visitor Economy and Rural Economy**

- Digital tourism report recently completed to provide detail on the variety of communication channels being used.
- Tourism website (Visit Sevenoaks) and social media channels are updated regularly with fresh content and short articles.
- Marketing activities being undertaken in collaboration with Visit Kent to boost tourism to the District.
- Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership produced a compendium of 17 walking trails within the Darent Valley.
- New Tourism leaflet for the District produced and distributed.
- Several tourism information kiosks refreshed at key locations within the District.
- Promotion of Sevenoaks at the Visit Kent Travel Trade Show in February 2023 and at the West Kent Business Event in March 2023.
- West Kent Rural Grants Scheme was launched in June.

16 **Focus area 3: Town Centres**

- UKSPF capital funding scheme for Public realm improvements was launched in July 2023. Funding has been offered to all Town and Parish Council's to ensure activities meet local needs.
- Attended Completely Retail Expo in Sept 2023 to promote our market towns.

- Town Centre Project Officer regularly visits Town Centres liaising with businesses and Town Councils to collate data and to also provide business support and information.
- A Town Centre Strategy has been developed jointly between planning policy and Economic development to form part of the evidence base for emerging local plan with continued close working on delivery of Town centre regeneration and activity.

### 17 Focus area 4: Skills and

- A regular programme of jobs fairs delivered by West Kent in partnership with DWP continues.
- A programme of activity run by West Kent Housing Association including Job Fairs in Swanley and Jobs Hubs in both Swanley and Sevenoaks was supported.
- The West Kent Partnership, together with the DWP and People+, has delivered an inclusive employment event at which employers were able to engage with a number of support options to enable them to employ people with disabilities.
- Broomhill Bank supported interns started for the 23/24 academic year with three students joining SDC for eight hours per week.
- SDC provided a significant amount of work experience with well-conceived placements.
- Assisted local businesses in shaping new apprenticeship opportunities, an example being Aqualisa Ltd in Westerham.
- Relationship established with Biggin Hill Airport with the objectives of: arranging work experience placements for local schools, generating links with a proposed technical college and associated apprenticeships, providing job boards for local residents.
- Conversations are ongoing with the North Kent College Group to ensure that we communicate with each other around sector skills needs and how to meet them.
- Watching brief being held over TEP activities to ensure they maintain the same quality of service as previously provided by WKP.

### Key Next Steps

- 18 It is important to note that the EDS has no additional budget allocation, other than those activities that can be funded using UKSPF and REPF grant funding. The Council is therefore limited in the activities it can deliver. The Council therefore seeks to be resourceful by investigating funding opportunities and working collaboratively with other organisations. There is therefore a significant emphasis of partnership working and where possible to add value to existing activities. The flexibility within the delivery plan to adapt has allowed for aims to be achieved with limited Council resource, the approach therefore presents an efficient delivery of an ambitious programme.
- 19 The focus for the next year will be on delivering the remaining UKSPF and REPF programme. This includes further rounds of business support, micro grants, green business grants, West Kent Rural grants and cultural development grants as well

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as key research into sector skills and the commencement of the People and Skills themed projects. These activities directly contribute to the achievement of many of the EDS' objectives. Opportunities for partnership working and external funding availability will have a significant influence on how the remainder of the EDS is delivered.

### **Other Options Considered and/or Rejected**

- 20 Given the changing economic development context, changing market conditions and changing government policies, as well as the need to focus on the UKSPF and REPF funding requirements, delivery against the EDS could have been paused whilst focus remained on Government funding. However, this approach would not be appropriate given the commitment made to deliver a 5 year strategy. The additional external funding available has increased ability to deliver and brought forward key areas of activity, and is complementary to the EDS. It should also be noted that UKSPF/REPF funding is available only until March 2025 and therefore the EDS provides the longer-term framework for Economic Development activity required for the future.

### **Key Implications**

#### **Financial**

- 21 The introduction of the UKSPF and the REPF programmes have provided key financial support for key actions within the EDS. Activities within the EDS have therefore been prioritised to reflect funding availability.
- 22 Resources allocated to deliver the EDS have been maximised through externally funded staff who support the core team on delivery.
- 23 It should be noted that delivery of the EDS in future years is subject to external funding being available.

#### **Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.**

- 24 There are no significant legal implications associated with this report, which seeks to provide monitoring of activity to date.
- 25 A key risk to the delivery of the EDS remains the availability of future funding.

#### **Equality Assessment**

- 26 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

#### **Net Zero Implications**

- 27 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district or supporting the resilience of the natural environment. It is important to note that

net zero implications were considered at the point of strategy adoption. Implications are considered as part of project inception criteria for new activities.

## Conclusions

- 28 Good progress has been made in the first year of the Economic Development Strategy's delivery. The strategy remains relevant given our economic landscape and is on track to deliver within the 5-year strategy period but is dependent on future funding availability. The EDS continues to retain relevance to key focus to both the previous and the new Council plan. The principles and objectives in the EDS are both robust and flexible to allow new opportunities to be embraced and to adapt to changing contexts and resource availability. This is evident in the way the UKSPF Investment Plan was aligned to deliver against the EDS' priorities and objectives.

## Appendices

Appendix A – EDS Delivery Plan monitoring year 1

## Background Papers

Economic Development Strategy 2022- 27

[https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/download/2/economic\\_development\\_strategy](https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/download/2/economic_development_strategy)

## Background statistical research

- Kent County Council, Kent and Medway Economic Dashboard
- ONS, UK Business Counts Inter Departmental Business Register
- Kent County Council Analytics Bulletin – UK Business Count (2022)
- Kent County Council District profiles
- Kent Analytics Statistical bulletin, Business Demography
- Kent Analytics Statistical bulletin, Tourism industries in Kent (April 2023)
- Kent Analytics Statistical bulletin, Creative Industries in Kent (March 2023)
- Kent County Council Statistical bulletin, The Knowledge Economy (April 2023)
- Visit Kent Cambridge Economic Model 2021
- ONS area profile – Sevenoaks
- Knight Frank, A Retail Renaissance 2023

Detlev Munster

Strategic Head of Commercial and Property

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**APPENDIX A**

**Economic Development Strategy – Delivery Plan – Year 1 Achievements**

**Key**

<b>GREEN</b>	On track to deliver by the end of the strategy term or already achieved
<b>AMBER</b>	Activity commenced and working towards achievement, project working towards achievement of objective
<b>BLUE</b>	Activity not yet commenced
<b>RED</b>	Some risks or challenges associated with achievement at the current time.

<b>FOCUS AREA 1 – BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE</b>			
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Key Achievements</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<b>Improve awareness and visibility of businesses through business communications strategy at West Kent level</b>	Create and keep up to date the business directory/ business database	Business enquiry form introduced to monitor and record business enquiries received by the team and establish customer database. Business Directory established on More Sevenoaks with 150 businesses signed up with more promotion to follow.	<b>GREEN</b>
	Deliver annual West Kent Business Conference	West Kent event held 22 <sup>nd</sup> March with approx. 40 attendees – included launch of UKSPF business support programme. West Kent business support contract includes annual West Kent expo events. Currently preparing for the West Kent Business Expo in March 2024.	<b>GREEN</b>
	Participate in business awards as part of the West Kent Partnership	West Kent Partnership sponsorship of Kent Business Awards in 2022. Future awards schemes to be considered at West Kent level.	<b>AMBER</b>
	Produce an annual economic Report	Access to statistical data to be reviewed in light of changes to the Local Enterprise Partnership and changing external environment. Data to be captured as part of Sector Skills research to be undertaken as part of UKSPF programme and will provide additional data to contribute to economic profile of the District. Data infographic for Sevenoaks recently produced as a resource for attendance at events and as part of inward investment offer.	<b>AMBER</b>
<b>Encourage businesses to locate within the District and West Kent</b>	Develop Inward Investment proposition collateral as part of the place campaign	More Sevenoaks includes Invest theme, which was used to promote investment at recent Completely Retail Expo. More Sevenoaks website is being regularly refreshed with case studies.	<b>GREEN</b>

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	Launch West Kent inward Investment strategy including attendance at trade and investment events meeting inward delegations and promotion in the business press	West Kent partnership rebrand as Invest West Kent. Logo produced and role and remit being developed alongside working with Locate in Kent to be clear on potential in West Kent.	AMBER
	Create soft landing team for new companies locating in the District / West Kent	Team around your business approach provides soft landing support for Sevenoaks businesses. Further consideration of West Kent approach as part of development of Invest West Kent	GREEN
<b>Sectoral development</b>	Undertake further research on sectors including assessing results of the Economic Needs Study	UKSPF project to undertake this research. Procurement process underway. Brief includes consideration of key sectors, skills and productivity now and predicting future changes and requirements.	AMBER
	Sectors action plan to establish series of interventions	To be considered as part of second stage of Sector Skills study which will include action plan.	AMBER
<b>Facilitate new ways of working</b>	Develop a hub strategy covering the West Kent Partnership area for both public and private sector facilities including feasibility studies for additional sites	A bid to create a hub strategy for West Kent area was unsuccessful. Current focus on Meeting Point site in Swanley as pilot with a view to integrating into a strategic hub network in the future. Initial discussions taken place with authorities outside West Kent area to develop ideas around joint working.	AMBER
	Successful launch and management of the new business hub at Swanley	Meeting Point Swanley launched July 2023 with all 3 individual offices now let with one company having already expanded beyond available space and now located in the local area. Regular group of meeting room users and hot desk users from a variety of sectors and organisations of differing sizes. Events space booking enquiries received and successful networking events hosted at Meeting Point include Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce networking and an event for local neighbouring businesses as well as charity fundraising events. Staff team in place and delivering marketing activities with social media impressions increasing.	GREEN
	Digital / Broadband investment in collaboration with Kent County Council and commercial operators	Changes in county approach to broadband investment necessitate a new approach. Currently broadband coverage for the District is at 97% superfast coverage. Meetings to take place to develop this objective further.	RED

<b>Develop and Grow</b>	Research the specific present and future business needs of SME's particularly for rural businesses	Sector skills study to consider rural economy as key sector, alongside other sectors. West Kent Business support scheme launched which provides range of business support and will improve data on future needs. The REPF funded West Kent rural grants scheme provides Capital funding to support rural based businesses to develop and grow.	AMBER
	Team around your business including new 'welcome pack' providing information on all relevant services in the Council	New business enquiry process adopted and research to understand needs and requirements for business pack ongoing.	AMBER
	Feasibility of launching a training app for businesses	Digital funding in UKSPF investment plan for financial year 2025/25. Training apps for businesses already in existence so requires further consideration.	AMBER
	Effective signposting to external organisations including business start up advice	Smarter Society business support programme launched engaging 100 Sevenoaks District businesses since outset, with 18 organisations currently receiving mentoring and high level of interest in micro grants. A regular programme of training events is established with an annual conference scheduled for 14 <sup>th</sup> March. Team around your business approach delivered through ED team now including delivery from Meeting Point in Swanley. Newly adopted business enquiry form to improve quantitative data in the future	GREEN
<b>Local Procurement Programme</b>	Identify the Council's geographical spend profile for goods and services	Commitment to considering procurement approach within the FSB Local leadership partnership signed in November 22. This area of work not included in UKSPF investment plan – delivery not yet commenced on this objective.	BLUE
	Develop an action plan to improve visibility of procurement pipeline and building capacity for local businesses	Work on this objective to take place in later years of the strategy currently.	BLUE
<b>Net Zero economy</b>	Connect business community with existing advice on energy efficiency and emissions reduction including Low Carbon Kent and the LOCASE programme	UKSPF approved investment plan includes Green Business Grants scheme. Engagement on this scheme included presentation to Chamber of Commerce sustainability forum. First round of green grants completed with further funding for new scheme in financial year 2024/25.	GREEN

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		West Kent Rural business fund also includes objectives around sustainability.	
	Work with landowners in the public and private sector to identify assets that could be utilised for local renewables and power generation	Continue to engage with planning policy team as they build evidence base for emerging Local plan. Currently working on decentralised power opportunities and undertaken pre-feasibility work for a solar farm	GREEN

FOCUS AREA 2 – RURAL AND VISITOR ECONOMY			
Aim	Activity	Key Achievements	Rating
<b>Maximise promotion and exposure of the District</b>	Regular Visitor Economy Forum meetings to share best practice and promotion of activities.	Working in collaboration with Visitor Economy and Rural partners to strengthen the economy through enhanced marketing and strategic guidance. Partners engage directly and respond to requests when required.	GREEN
	Collaborate with key partners including Visit Kent and Visit England on joint initiatives	Regularly collaborate with external partners to access key opportunities. Most recently this includes investing in Visit Kent's latest campaign, 'Its in our nature' and being represented at the Annual Hotel Conference.	GREEN
	Active member of the Gatwick Gateway Group	Sevenoaks regularly attend Gateway Gatwick meetings as a driver to signpost inbound visitors to Sevenoaks.	GREEN
	Continue to establish the Visit Sevenoaks website and social media coverage through the Place Portal	Visit Sevenoaks and More Sevenoaks websites performing well. Visit Sevenoaks website is the leading website for inbound visitors. Visit Sevenoaks website (July 2023): 4.1k users, More Sevenoaks website (July 2023): 1,901 unique website users. More Sevenoaks social media accounts are all performing above average and are regularly updated by responsible marketing agency. Portals are continually refreshed with new information.	GREEN
<b>Encourage visitors to Sevenoaks District and attractions</b>	Develop annual programme of campaigns including familiarisation visits for influencers group	Actively participate in campaigns to drive the visitor economy, most recently this includes Visit Kent's latest campaign, 'Its in our nature'. Influencer visits form part of the campaign with further trips in development. Promotional imagery of the district continues to feature in the arrival terminals at London Gatwick. Furthermore, printed materials provide enhanced promotion of	GREEN

		the district. This includes a revised Sevenoaks visitor leaflet and a Darent Valley Community Rail Partnership leaflet. In addition, a collaboration with Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme resulted in a Rail Trails pack which highlights walks along the Darent Valley.	
	Increase niche offerings for experiential and specific demographic requirements	Social media accounts highlight key audiences, which will inform marketing opportunities and target audiences. Recent Google Analytics stats suggested the American and Chinese markets were classed as two of our top three reviewers of the Visit Sevenoaks website.	AMBER
	Secure additional coach parking capacity	Challenging to find appropriate locations given geographical constraints. Continue to liaise with planning teams to identify potential locations which may arise as part of the Local plan process.	RED
	Develop the sports sector as a tool to drive promotion of the District, but also wellbeing	Economic Development comments provided for planning applications to improve sports facilities within the District e.g., Millwall Football Club. Regular engagement with key sports venues and attractions within the District such as Brands Hatch, London Golf Club. Engagement with a variety of businesses within the sports sector. Currently preparing a Sports and Leisure Strategy for District with consultants having been appointed.	GREEN
	Use innovative social media platforms	More Sevenoaks website, Facebook, Instagram, X (formally Twitter) and Linked In performing well. Visit Sevenoaks website and Instagram gaining following.	GREEN
<b>Increase the Accommodation offer</b>	Identify opportunity to develop 5 star / luxury resort of exhibition / conferencing facility	Feasibility studies are being progressed with the focus on implementation	GREEN
	Work with key partners and planning colleagues to increase/diversify the accommodation offer	Contribution to Local plan evidence base documents to present need for accommodation. Continued promotion of existing accommodation providers and opportunities for diversification of offer through UKSPF and REPF grant funding.	AMBER
<b>Support the diversification of rural areas</b>	Work through a new Rural Economy forum to share best practice in rural land use. Lobbying and securing access to funding through the West Kent Partnership	Rural forum has been established to support the West Kent Rural Grants Scheme which is funded through Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). A Rural Projects Officer, funded by the West Kent Partnership, has been appointed to administer the REPF.	GREEN

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	Where possible support the provision of affordable housing in rural areas and last mile infrastructure projects	Continued close working with planning policy team to ensure that comments are included within evidence base and emerging Local Plan documents.	AMBER
	Promote the sustainable reuse of redundant farm buildings and facilities to support enterprise, economic activity and/or housing	West Kent Rural grant scheme (funded by REPF) provides funding to support businesses with Capital projects. Round one of funding has completed fully allocating funds with further funding to be available in next financial year. Approved applications include both extensions to premises as well as reuse of buildings.	GREEN
<b>Biodiversity and sustainable land management</b>	Work with rural landowners, nature conservation partners and planning policy on nature recovery and biodiversity initiatives	West Kent Rural grant scheme (funded by REPF) approved 4 applications in the first round providing nature recovered and biodiversity projects.	AMBER
<b>Sevenoaks Trademark</b>	Explore the creation of unique Sevenoaks District Trademark for local producer and crafts in collaboration with Made in Kent	The development of the More Sevenoaks place campaign provides an opportunity for use of this branding to create a Trademark if required.	AMBER
	Develop and promote the place campaign brand strategy and book	More Sevenoaks branding in place and regularly promoted through events, social media channels and businesses.	AMBER

<b>FOCUS AREA 3 - TOWN CENTRES</b>			
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Key Achievements</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<b>Encourage Diversification of use in Town Centres</b>	Work with Planning Policy Team in retaining employment space and supporting mixed uses where possible	Contributed to Local plan evidence base documents such as Economic Needs Study, Town Centre Strategy.	GREEN
	Introduce a new Town Centres Steering Group and arts/cultural forum sub-group to co-ordinate events, promotion and the Night Time economy	Liaise with existing Town Centre groups where available. UKSPF provides funding for cultural grants. Working with Town and Parish Councils to identify priorities for UKSPF funded improvements to public realm.	AMBER
<b>Secure investment and regeneration in towns and large villages</b>	Consider the Town Centre Strategy	Worked with Planning Policy Team on producing Town Centre Strategy - softer interventions suggested in this document were included in UKSPF investment plan wherever possible and delivery against this programme is ongoing providing investment.	AMBER

	Agree a pipeline of projects from the final strategy to direct and support future funding bids	Town Centre soft interventions helped to shape UKSPF investment plan priorities for delivery which is taking priority for initial delivery.	AMBER
<b>Improve public realm to support multiple uses and better facilities</b>	Support provision of electric vehicle charging points	Electric charging points are included in new Council developments.  Working with Direct Services on an EVCP strategy for district and also providing additional EVCP in our public car parks.	GREEN
	Improve wayfinding and signage	Wayfinding schemes being considered by Town Centre organisations /Town and Parish Council's. In some areas UKSPF contributions are assisting with this work.	AMBER
	Support the Public Realm Commissioner to improve the public realm and promote the ethos of the Place Campaign	UKSPF funding provides a contribution to public realm commission, plus a capital funding to improve public realm in collaboration with Town and Parish Councils	AMBER
<b>Encourage locals to shop locally</b>	Movement Strategy	ED engagement with the published movement strategy and current consultations on walking and cycling improvements.	GREEN
	Use local campaigns	Place campaign includes information on travelling around the District in a sustainable way. The Visit Sevenoaks, More Sevenoaks website and business directory highlight key businesses available locally.	GREEN
	Redevelop 96 High Street Sevenoaks into a maker space/artisan/artist/farmers market hall	Proposals to develop this area are awaited.	AMBER

<b>FOCUS AREA 4 - SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT</b>			
<b>Aim</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Key Achievements</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<b>Supporting events and initiative to assist job seekers</b>	Jobs and careers fairs	Regular programme of jobs fairs continues across West Kent. The West Kent Partnership has delivered an inclusive employment event along with the DWP and People+, at which employers were able to engage with a number of support options to enable them to employ people with disabilities.	GREEN
	Promoting apprenticeships, traineeships and work experience programmes	Promoting opportunities with key local businesses and helping to place students in work experience	AMBER



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		placements within ED team and local businesses. Currently have an intern working with ED team as part of the Council's internship programme. Further activity under 2024/25 UKSPF people and skills programme.	
<b>Supporting careers advice in schools</b>	Continue to support the enterprise adviser programme through the TEP team	Member of the ED team is an Enterprise Advisor for local school. Continued engagement with the Careers hub team now running this.	AMBER
	Expand enterprise events for young people	ED team work experience and internship programme support.	AMBER
<b>Provide local innovative skills programme</b>	Delivering programme to help disadvantaged groups or those with protected characteristics into employment	UKSPF People and Skills funding available from financial year 2024/25. Procurement on support for employment to commence soon along with a West Kent project call around employability programmes.	BLUE
	Digital inclusiveness programme in conjunction with community wifi pilot	Engagement with KCC digital skills team. Funding available for digital skills project within the UKSPF programme for 2024/25.	BLUE
	Sector Skills programmes including retrofit boot camp and land based skills	UKSPF programmes include retrofit training and support programme with funding being available for this programme from financial year 2024/25.	BLUE
<b>Improving the provision of HE/ FE in the District</b>	Establish an HE/FE offer in the District	Increasing provision is challenging, particularly given the proximity of existing locations, combined with a change in focus towards T-levels and the unknown impact this will have on demand for progression routes. Whilst achievement of an FE / HE offer is unlikely to be delivered within the 5 year ED strategy period, alternative opportunities are actively under consideration and supported by the ED team.	RED

### ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE:

23 ACTIONS GREEN – 42%

24 ACTIONS AMBER – 44%

5 ACTIONS BLUE – 9%

3 ACTIONS RED – 5%



**Improvement and Innovation Advisory Committee Work Plan  
2023/24**

**29 February 2024**

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