

Wealden District Council

Corporate Plan 2008-11

Contents

Welcome – Leader of the Council	2
Working For Our District	3
Our Objectives	3
Services We Provide	4
Putting People First	5
Pride Of Place	8
Purpose Through Partnership	11
Managing Our Finances	14
Wealden District Council's Spending Plans for 2008/09	15

How you can contact us

Telephone

01892 653311

01323 443322

Minicom

01323 443331

Post

Charles Lant, Chief Executive

Wealden District Council

Council Offices, Vicarage Lane

Hailsham BN27 2AX

Online

Website: www.wealden.gov.uk

Email: performance.management@wealden.gov.uk

If you, or somebody you know, would like the information contained in this document in large print, Braille, tape/CD; or in another language please contact, Wealden District Council on 01323 443322 or info@wealden.gov.uk

We have tried to keep the Corporate Plan as free from jargon and operational details as possible. Detailed targets are contained within our service plans in Appendix A. Appendix C also provides background to some of the things covered in this document. Both are available on our website.

Welcome - Leader of the Council

Elections provide councils with an opportunity to take stock. A new Council for Wealden was elected in May 2007, bringing in 20 new Councillors and new party groups. The last Council achieved a great deal. The new Council has reviewed its approach to the issues facing the district and we have set new objectives and priorities against reducing resources.

Wealden is an attractive, mainly rural district with a high proportion of areas of outstanding natural beauty. Having a relatively low population density for the South East, we continue to be subject to strong development pressures. The proportions of younger and older people are growing within our population. The high demand for, and cost of, housing means that many local people are excluded from the housing market.

The Council is working to meet these changing needs within Wealden's communities alongside meeting government priorities and responding to regional and national challenges. In doing so, we are severely constrained by the Government's 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review and the low grant settlement given to the Council for 2008/09.

In 2006/07, we carried out a survey of Wealden residents to seek their views on what it is like to live in Wealden and their satisfaction with the Council as a whole. We also measured customer satisfaction with some of our services. We have taken the findings into account in setting our priorities and targets for the future.

This Corporate Plan sets out the things that your district council is aiming to do over the next three years, how these will be paid for and, through specific targets, how we and our customers will be able to measure what we have achieved.

Councillor Pam Doodes
Leader of the Council

Working for our District

What the Council does

Wealden District Council is made up of 55 local people, elected as Councillors by their communities. They act as your voice in deciding how the Council is run and the services that it provides. We have to provide some of our services by law; others we can decide locally. Some of the services we provide are listed on the next page.

In October 2007, the Council agreed three new corporate objectives to respond to the key issues for the district and those of greatest concern to local people as expressed in our Community Strategy, such as managing development pressures and planning for changes in our population. This Corporate Plan explains why we have set these objectives and shows what we plan to do in the future. It updates you on some of the most recent things we have achieved for our residents. This Plan also includes some of the targets with which we will measure our progress. More detail on these and other targets is available in the 12 Service Plans covering all the areas of the Council's activity. The Service Plans are available on the Council's website as Appendix A to the Corporate Plan and paper copies are available on request.

Our Objectives

- **Putting People First** by promoting health, prosperity and community safety
- **Pride of Place** by the preservation and enhancement of our environment for us and for future generations
- **Purpose through Partnership** and community leadership

In all our work we aim to:

- Provide services which give value for money
- Conduct our business in the public interest with integrity, being even-handed, open and accountable
- Have the highest ethical standards
- Ensure that services are accessible to all

Services We Provide

The Council provides services:

- because they are needed by the people of Wealden
- to meet our legal duties
- to support national priorities

We also work to promote the interests of the district as a whole and give good leadership to our communities. We are best known for:

- Collecting and recycling household and commercial waste
- Cleaning streets and public areas
- Protecting the local environment
- Looking after public safety, health and well-being
- Licensing to ensure public safety and animal welfare
- Helping local businesses to comply with regulation; protecting consumers, residents and employees
- Providing housing and supporting other providers of social housing
- Managing and improving the Council's housing stock and other property
- Providing housing and council tax benefit
- Regulating development to maintain and enhance Wealden's valued environment, whilst accommodating the need for new homes and businesses
- Encouraging sustainable economic growth
- Controlling building works to ensure public safety
- Providing leisure centres

We work with two other levels of councils to serve the people of Wealden

East Sussex County Council	Wealden District Council	Town and parish councils
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult social care • Social care of young people • Education • Highways and transport • Waste disposal • Trading standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing • Environmental health, public safety and animal welfare • Environmental protection • Planning • Development control • Building control • Street cleaning • Waste collection and recycling • Council tax collection • Housing and council tax benefits • Concessionary fares • Local elections • Community safety • Leisure centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks and open spaces • Litter picking • Allotments • Halls and community centres • Town centre management • Street lighting • Cemeteries

Putting People First

is about providing quality services and promoting health, prosperity and community safety

On average, satisfaction with local government in 2006, measured across the country, went down slightly. In Wealden, between 2003 and 2006, satisfaction with a number of our services increased. We have the highest general satisfaction rating in East Sussex and remain above the national average. One thing is clear – the more people know about the services that councils provide, the more they value them. Our challenge is to respond to these rising expectations using our limited resources to achieve the best for Wealden.

Putting People First is, however, more than just letting people know what we are doing on their behalf. It is encouraging people to have their say, involving them in how services are provided by us and others, and understanding their priorities for health and well-being.

Our priorities underpinning Putting People First are:

Providing Quality Services

Health, Prosperity and Community Safety

Providing Quality Services

Good services with equal access for all are important to our communities. We will work to improve the quality of our service provision by achieving the following outcomes:

Outcomes

- Increased focus on customer satisfaction
- Independent assurance of the quality of our services ensuring that these are in line with the highest standards nationally
- Improved value for money based on the opinions of our customers and when our performance is compared to other local authorities

What we plan to do

- By 2011, assist 95% of service users within five minutes of arriving in our reception areas
- Increase service user satisfaction with Council services from 75% to 80% by 2011
- Extend customer care training from 50% to 90% of staff by December 2009
- Investigate the options for creating a strengthened and regularly refreshed panel of Wealden residents, including young people, by autumn 2008
- Secure Charter Mark for all 12 of the Council's services by June 2008

What we have done already

- Successfully collected 99.94% of recycling and refuse bins on the correct day
- Determined 96% of domestic planning applications within eight weeks (up from 76% in 2004/05)
- Provided a wider choice in where they live for people seeking rented accommodation
- Reduced the number of homeless families and people and their need to stay in temporary accommodation
- Recognised that our telephone customers value being able to talk to a person and the importance of this in quickly and efficiently linking customers to the appropriate service
- Established Community Help Points in four of our major towns providing local face-to-face links to our services
- Resolved 87% of enquiries at the first point of contact with the Council
- Implemented our revised Equality Scheme to ensure that all our services and employment opportunities are provided with equity and fairness to everyone

Health, Prosperity & Community Safety

To keep Wealden a desirable and a safe place in which to live we must build our links with our communities to protect and improve their health, prosperity, and safety. We will work to achieve the following outcomes to secure this:

Outcomes

- Raised economic performance across the district
- For Wealden to be acknowledged as an even safer place to live
- A reduction in the differences in residents' health and well-being

What we plan to do

- Complete our shared vision with our partners for the Hailsham-Eastbourne Triangle blueprint to improve infrastructure, technology and skills in the south of the district by June 2008
- Expand the Council's business website to provide a comprehensive 'one stop shop' with support from across the Council's services by March 2009
- Work with partners to reduce British Crime Survey comparator crimes for Wealden by 12.5% from 2003 levels by March 2009
- Continue to improve our response to environmental crime including moving from grade 4 to grade 2 for flytip removal in 2008/09
- Raise food safety standards of the 50 poorest performing businesses improving their compliance score by March 2009
- Repeat health & safety inspections every 12 months for 80% of 'high risk' businesses between 2008-11
- Increase by 3.5% per annum the number of local people taking 30 minutes exercise three times a week compared to the Sport England 2007 baseline
- Increase leisure centre attendance by 6% between 2008-11
- Target homelessness prevention for young people in partnership with the Children's Trust in 2008 through the creation of a county-wide youth homelessness strategy
- Work with a Registered Social Landlord on the provision of 'Extra Care' housing for older people and submit a planning application by March 2009

What we have done already

- Worked with the Safer Wealden Partnership to help keep Wealden one of the safest places in which to live
- Established a website specifically to assist our local business community
- Implemented the ban on smoking in Wealden's public places
- Engaged with young people in local democracy week, via the Wealden youth web-site (w4y.co.uk) and a satisfaction survey for young people
- Supported rural post offices and provided rate relief for vital rural shops and businesses

Pride of Place

is about sustainability and place shaping

Pride of Place means making Wealden a place where services are delivered well, satisfying the needs and aspirations of local communities. As a result, people express higher levels of satisfaction, take an active interest in shaping their communities and take pride in maintaining and enhancing their environments for future generations.

Pride of Place also promotes strong community leadership. There are areas in the district, particularly public spaces such as shopping centres and estates, where people can feel unsafe and vulnerable. We need to make these places somewhere that people can enjoy and feel safe in.

Our residents feel strongly about pressures for new development and they are very concerned about the ability of the local infrastructure to cope. We need to draw on their comments and those of our partners serving the district to help us achieve the best design in keeping with our sustainability policies, creating a place that future generations will thank us, rather than blame us for.

Our priorities underpinning Pride of Place are:

Sustainability

Place Shaping

Sustainability

Sustainability and climate change are global issues with local impacts. There are many definitions of sustainability, but the most widely used and recognised is to 'meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. This requires improvements in the economic, social and environmental well-being of Wealden whilst safeguarding the prospects for future generations. It also requires that the goals set within each of these three areas work together in an integrated way.

Wealden District Council is committed to taking the lead by reducing its own impact and encouraging positive action with its partners throughout the district. The Council is also keen to ensure that we build in a more sustainable way in the future to minimise the use of resources, including energy and water, and causing less pollution including the greenhouse gasses carbon dioxide and methane. This also means development meeting some of its own energy needs with renewable energy.

Outcomes

- Leading our communities in reducing the local impact on the environment
- Increased promotion and greater uptake of sustainable transport within the district
- Increased household recycling and significant reductions in landfilled waste

What we plan to do

- Establish the carbon footprint of the Council and investigate the use of ecological footprinting by end of 2008 - our aim is to reduce the Council's carbon emissions by 12.5% from 1990 levels by 2012
- Build sustainability into the goods and services that we buy to meet Procurement Task Force Level 1 in June 2008 and Level 3 by 2010
- With partners, conclude, by summer 2008, the feasibility study into the reinstatement of the Uckfield-Lewes rail link
- Expand the coverage of kerbside recycling to all properties by 2010 whilst seeking to limit additional vehicle journeys
- Strengthen staff and Member awareness of climate change by December 2008 and provide staff training from April 2008 to reduce energy use in council offices and depots with particular focus on office equipment and lighting
- Review the opportunities available to process biodegradable waste by December 2008

What we have done already

- Used a mix of 5% bio-fuel to run our vehicles
- Reduced our business mileage by 5%
- Carried out a trial of rural kerbside recycling at Forest Row and Danehill
- Subsidised composting bins for homes in our pilot kerbside recycling scheme
- Promoted sustainable building to housing developers
- Increased the energy efficiency of our council housing
- Promoted energy efficiency measures to our tenants
- Installed bio-mass heating into the new affordable housing at Piltdown

Place Shaping

Place Shaping goes beyond keeping Wealden 'green and pleasant'. It is about preserving, enhancing and keeping our communities alive. We need to work with partners and developers to shape our vision for the future. In particular, this means managing the supply of land for development to secure well-located, sustainable building that blends with the environment, supported by adequate infrastructure and providing local employment opportunities. Delivering affordable homes is particularly important as part of new housing development. The gap between average local incomes and house prices has widened. We must give priority to delivering affordable housing. Already younger generations are finding it difficult to remain in the district and skilled people essential to the prosperity and viability of our communities, are being forced to live and work elsewhere.

Outcomes

- Protection and promotion of the rural character/sensitive environment of the district
- Maximum delivery of affordable housing within all new housing developments
- Promotion of sustainable, inclusive, vibrant communities

What we plan to do

- Produce a Preferred Options Statement in autumn 2008 to identify land use options to achieve Community Strategy objectives
- Promote the construction of 1,250 affordable homes to meet local needs by 2011 through the planning consent regime
- Identify three additional sites for rural affordable housing by March 2009
- Influence the delivery of regional development targets during 2008-11 to help sustain the district's communities, through continued support for south east districts' initiatives input to the emerging South East Plan
- Improve design consultation to ensure that the best possible developments are achieved in line with the new Design Guide to be adopted in spring 2008
- Work with partners to develop, by March 2009, a clear vision and strategy for our five towns and rural parishes, progressing the Local Development Framework
- Improve play, sports facilities and green spaces through planning agreements between 2008-11 using targeted funds under the Wealden Play Strategy

What we have done already

- Implemented stages in Wealden's Local Development Framework with consultation on Issues and Options and a District Sustainability Appraisal
- Granted planning consents for 167 affordable housing units in 2007
- Prepared and consulted upon a Design Guide for adoption as a supplementary planning document

Purpose through Partnership

is about improving performance & efficiency and providing strong community leadership

Getting the best for Wealden depends on the Council strengthening its work with its partners. Wealden forms part of a Local Strategic Partnership working alongside the County Council, Sussex Police, East Sussex Fire and Rescue, Primary Care Trusts and various other public, private and voluntary partners. We also work with other councils and agencies on specific projects and to deliver shared outcomes. The Council believes the development of partnership working is the key way to reduce local authority spending and increase capacity. All partnerships will be entered into on the basis of a sound business case with willing partners.

Our priorities underpinning Purpose through Partnership are:

Improving Performance and Efficiency

Strong Community Leadership

Improving Performance and Efficiency

To keep council tax down, the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy requires an even stronger linkage between finance and performance.

Partnership working extends beyond the provision of services. The Local Development Framework plans the future development of the district and takes into account the many strategies and programmes for Wealden such as the Wealden Community Strategy. It is a key example of how the various tiers of local government work together to achieve better outcomes for the district through improved decision making.

Outcomes

- Value for money efficiency savings year on year
- Greater shared vision and priorities for service delivery with key partners
- Working more efficiently, meeting agreed key priorities, and cutting 'red tape' wherever possible

What we plan to do

- Deliver 3% cashable efficiency savings year-on-year including £644,000 operational savings in 2008-11
- Keep council tax increases within a target range of 3½ -5% budget projections for 2008-11
- Prepare an improvement plan for development management and governance by December 2008
- Work with towns and parishes to target resources for street cleaning to improve levels of service compared with 2007/08 resource levels
- Review our fees and charging policy by September 2008 to maximise income
- Realise around £525,000 in procurement savings in 2008-11
- Work with our partners to reduce poverty through a further benefits take up campaign during 2008
- Decide in the summer of 2008 the way we will rationalise our offices

What we have done already

- Worked with East Sussex County Council on the Extra Care and Age Well /Living Well Projects to support older people living in our communities
- Provided accommodation and support with Eastbourne Borough Council for independent living by people with learning disabilities
- Grants to community groups totalling more than £1.5m in the last four years
- £4 million in Corporate Procurement Programme savings 2004-08
- Increased satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities by 10%
- Invested £5 million in local leisure centres
- Streamlined our benefits system to make it more efficient
- Commissioned a range of essential studies jointly with Eastbourne Borough Council, to gather evidence for our Local Development Frameworks

Strong Community Leadership

To improve the quality of life in Wealden we need to get closer to Wealden's communities through better links with towns and parishes. Being confident about what local people want gives us the best chance to secure the best opportunities for the district. Our Councillors, as community leaders, have a critical part to play in transmitting our enthusiasm and ensuring good governance within new arrangements brought about by change affecting Wealden District Council and local government as a whole.

Outcomes

- To put Wealden on the map, regionally and nationally
- More effective three tier working with more empowered parishes and towns
- A stronger community voice in decision making

What we plan to do

- Develop public awareness of what Wealden District Council is and does through our 2008-11 Communication Strategy, expanding the ways in which we communicate
- Communicate the Council's performance and customer service accreditation effectively to improve our reputation and public satisfaction, e.g. through media releases, by August 2008
- Secure inclusion of Wealden's priorities in the East Sussex Local Area Agreement by June 2008
- Improve and renew signage identifying the services we provide by 2010
- Explore the ways of attracting 5% more external funding for the district each year
- Develop information specific to wards and parishes through our Ward Councillors e.g. six-monthly sustainability articles for parish newsletters
- Develop Wealden's local image through rural partnership bodies and benchmarking groups through attendance at East Sussex Rural Partnership

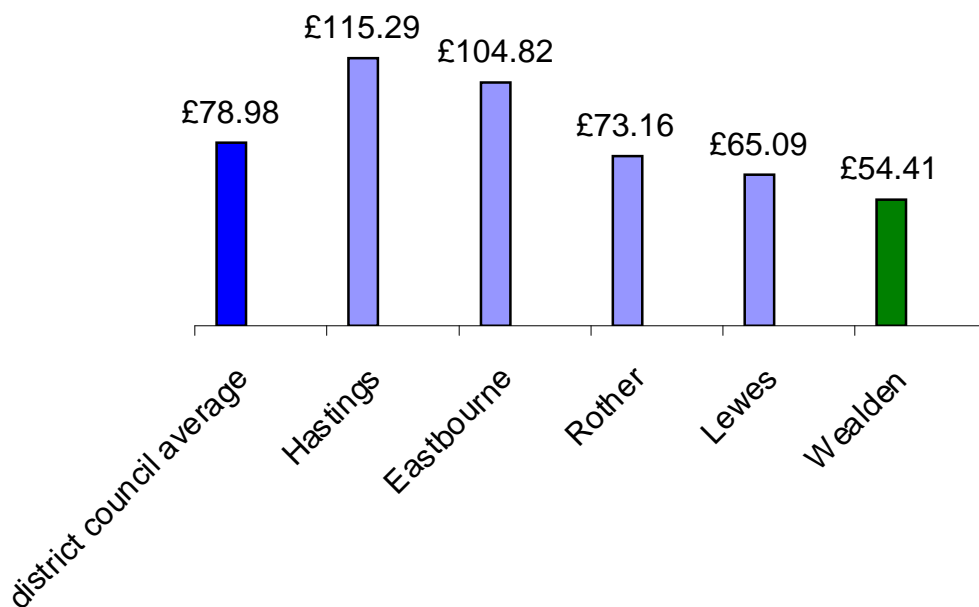
What we have done already

- Agreed a new Communications Strategy
- Produced a new Community Engagement Strategy
- Set up new robust scrutiny structures to best reflect our communities' needs
- Improved partnership working with our parish and town councils
- Undertaken major reviews of our planning committee structures, housing services and standards and ethics
- Supported nine parish councils to be accredited quality status confirming competence and professional management
- Entered into a town centre master planning exercise with Uckfield Town Council, East Sussex County Council and East Sussex Fire & Rescue to ensure a cohesive approach to development

Managing our Finances

We strive to keep council tax rises low. However, out of 238 district councils in England, the Council received the ninth worst grant settlement per head of population from the Government for 2008/09. Wealden's settlement was also the lowest Government allocation to district and borough councils in East Sussex.

The average Council tax for a Band D property for Wealden District Council is £163.63 or £3.15 per week



Grant allocation per head of population

Through our rolling Medium Term Financial Strategy we regularly examine our operations to reduce costs. We have a core of activities for which we have a legal duty to undertake and fund. Additional expenditure is planned to meet additional local needs which our objectives are designed to meet. Our total planned expenditure for the next year is set out in the tables on the next two pages.

The Audit Commission, the independent watchdog, has reviewed Wealden District Council's arrangements to secure value for money. It found that we have reduced costs whilst improving our performance. Our management of public finances remains sound.

What we plan to spend on services in 2008/09

	2007/08	2008/09
	£ (000)	£ (000)
Putting People First		
Quality Service Provision Including customer services, Charter Mark, community help points and buildings providing services to the public.	3,669	3,511
Health, Prosperity and Community Safety Including environmental health and safety, leisure and play, crime reduction, homelessness, housing and council tax benefits, economic development, culture, car parks and the Council's commercial land holdings.	3,319	3,160
Pride of Place		
Sustainability Including recycling and refuse collection, concessionary bus travel, flooding, land drainage, coastal protection and the South Downs Joint Committee.	5,905	6,578
Place Shaping Including planning policy, planning applications, building control, planning enforcement and street naming.	2,189	1,950
Purpose Through Partnership		
Improving Performance and Efficiency Including the costs of corporate services such as finance, local tax collection, performance management and funds to invest in performance and efficiency improvement in future years.	2,719	2,694
Strong Community Leadership Including electoral services, the costs of Councillors, corporate management and the Wealden Local Strategic Partnership.	1,376	1,235
	19,177	19,128
Net Cost of Services		
Interest on investments and capital financing	(408)	(639)
Provision for inflation	485	554
Capital expenditure financed by revenue resources	499	1,172
Recharged to other funds and services	(1,484)	(1,602)
Reserves and Balances		
Money taken from reserves and balances	(716)	(484)
District Council Budget Requirement	17,553	18,129
Add Town & Parish Councils Precept	4,243	4,587
Overall Budget Requirement	21,796	22,716

Where the money comes from

	2007/08 £ (000)	2008/09 £ (000)	2007/08 %	2008/09 %
Government Grant	1,124	974	5.2%	4.3%
Business Rates	6,697	7,000	30.7%	30.8%
Council Tax Payers	13,930	14,742	63.9%	64.9%
Collection Surplus	45	-	0.2%	-
Total Income	21,796	22,716	100%	100%

The Council collects money on behalf of your Town/Parish Council. Included in the income from council tax payers is £4.587 million for Town/Parish Councils

How this translates into the average Band D Council tax

	2007/08 £	2008/09 £	% Increase
Wealden District Council	157.03	163.63	4.2%
Average Town/Parish Council	68.78	73.91	7.5%

Wealden's share of the council tax is the equivalent of £3.15 per week

How the average Band D council tax bill has changed

	Per Year	Per Week
2007/08 Band D council tax	£157.03	£3.02
Pay and Price Increases	+£8.93	+£0.17
Investment in Priorities	+£10.51	+£0.20
Efficiency Savings	-£10.38	-£0.20
Additional Government Grant	-£2.46	-£0.04
2008/09 Band D council tax	£163.63	£3.15

Value For Money

The Council has achieved substantial efficiency savings over and above Government targets and forecasts that it will continue to do so over the life of its Medium Term Financial Strategy. This is summarised in the table below:

Year	Cumulative Target Cashable Savings £	Actual or forecast Cashable Savings £
2005/06	241,000	242,134
2006/07	482,000	855,579
2007/08	722,500	1,134,579
2008/09	1,366,500	1,778,597
2009/10	1,432,500	1,844,597
2010/11	1,581,500	1,993,597

More Information

This Plan provides a summary of Wealden District Council's activity, what it is achieving and what it aims to do. More details are available in the Appendices to the Plan and a number of key documents:

Appendices

Appendix A - Service Plans

Appendix B – Performance Indicators

Appendix C – Background Information

Key Documents

[Wealden Community Strategy](#) - the local partnership vision for making Wealden an even better place to live and work

[Wealden Community Engagement Strategy](#) - involving local people in local decisions and understanding of the views and priorities of Wealden residents

[Wealden Non-Statutory Wealden Local Plan](#) - an interim guide for control of development in the district

[Housing Strategy](#) - how the Council addresses the district's housing needs with its partners

[Wealden Sustainability Strategy](#) - co-coordinating the Council's approach to protect and enhance our environment for future generations

[Wealden Equality Scheme](#) - providing services and employment opportunities with equity and fairness to everyone

[Wealden Communication Strategy](#) - improving communications with the public and assisting the Council to receive due recognition for its services

[East Sussex Community Strategy](#) - a vision for East Sussex providing a strategic framework for dealing with the main issues for the county

[East Sussex Local Area Agreement](#) - a contract between the government and local authorities and their partners to tackle the priorities for the County

[Compact for East Sussex](#) - for effective and productive relationships between statutory organisations, voluntary organisations and community groups