



A G E N D A

COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

Wednesday 12 July 2023 at 6.30 pm
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS

Members: Councillor Warne (Chair), Councillors Rutland (Vice-Chair), Fairweather, Hill, Lewis, March, Morton, Munday, Ms Palmer, Webster and Wilkinson

Quorum: 3 Members

- 1 Apologies for Absence** (Page 5)
To receive any apologies for absence.
- 2 Declarations of Interests** (Page 6)
To receive any declarations of interest by members of the Council in items on the agenda. For any advice on declarations of interest, please contact the Monitoring Officer before the meeting.
- 3 Notification of Persons Wishing to Speak** (Page 7)
To note any Visiting Members or members of the public wishing to speak, of which due notice has been given in accordance with Council Meeting Procedure Rule 18 and 19, and which items they wish to speak on.
- 4 Minutes of the meeting dated 13 April 2023** (Pages 8 - 9)
To approve the minutes of a previous meeting as a correct record. The only issue relating to the minutes that can be discussed is their accuracy.
- 5 Forward Plan as at 23 June 2023** (Pages 10 - 26)
- 6 Economic Development Strategy** (Pages 27 - 69)
- 7 Tenancy Strategy** (Pages 70 - 87)
- 8 Urgent Business** (Page 88)
To consider any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent, for the reasons to be stated, in accordance with Section

100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

9 Date of the Next Meeting

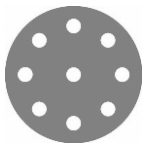
(Page 89)

To note that the date of the next scheduled meeting is 6 September 2023 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Tunbridge Wells.

Democratic Services Team

Tel: (01892) 554413
Email: Committee@TunbridgeWells.gov.uk

**Town Hall
ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS
Kent TN1 1RS**



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Options that the Cabinet Advisory Board Can Consider

The Cabinet Advisory Board is asked to consider each report and in each case come to a consensus and advise the Cabinet which one of the three options identified below it supports:

A. The Cabinet Advisory Board supports the recommendation(s) in the report.

or

B. The Cabinet Advisory Board supports the recommendation(s) subject to the issues it has identified being taken into account by the Cabinet (any issues identified should be stated and recorded).

or

C. The Cabinet Advisory Board does not support the recommendation(s) on at least one of the following grounds

- 3.1 Inadequate consultation with stakeholders; and/or
- 3.2 Inadequate evidence on which to base the decision; and/or
- 3.3 Insufficient consideration of legal and financial information; and/or
- 3.4 Another reason, as decided by the meeting of the Cabinet Advisory Board.

In each case the final Cabinet report will be amended to outline the option selected by the Cabinet Advisory Board and explain why this option was selected.

Attending Meetings

Meetings are held in the town hall and are webcast live online.

Any member of the public may attend to watch/listen in person or online live via our website on the relevant committee's meeting page. A recording of the meeting will also be available shortly after the end of the meeting.

All meetings and agenda are open to the public except where confidential information is being discussed. The agenda of the meeting will identify whether any meeting or part of the meeting is not open to the public and explain why.

Speaking at Meetings

Members of the public are encouraged to participate and may speak to the Council directly on any item on the agenda for up to 3 minutes. Members of the public (and any members of the Council who are not members of the committee) will need to register with Democratic Services in advance. Please see the agenda item titled **Notification of Persons Registered to Speak** for more details.

Coming to the Town Hall

All visitors attending a public meeting at the Town Hall should report to Reception via the side entrance in Monson Way no earlier than 15 minutes before the start of the meeting.

Seating will be allocated on a first-come-first-serve basis. The Council may alter the number and location of available seats if necessary on safety or public health grounds.

The public proceedings of this meeting will be recorded and made available for playback on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website. Any other third party may also record or film meetings, unless exempt or confidential information is being considered, but are requested as a courtesy to others to give notice of this to the Clerk before the meeting. The Council is not liable for any third party recordings.

Further details are available on the website www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/meetings or from Democratic Services.

If you require this information in another format,
please contact us, call 01892 526121 or email
committee@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

Apologies for Absence

For Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board on Wednesday 12
July 2023

Procedural Item

To receive any apologies for absence.

Declarations of Interest

For Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board on Wednesday 12 July 2023

Procedural Item

To receive any declarations of interest by members in items on the agenda in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct. For any advice on declarations of interest, please contact the Monitoring Office before the meeting.

Notification of Persons Registered to Speak

For Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board on Wednesday 12 July 2023

Procedural Item

To note any visiting Members or members of the public wishing to speak, of which due notice has been given in accordance with Council Procedure 18, and which items they wish to speak on.

Information for members of the public wishing to speak.

Members of the public are encouraged to participate and those wishing to comment on an agenda item will need to register with Democratic Services in advance. Registration opens when the agenda is published and closes at 4pm on the last working day before the meeting.

There may be up to 4 speakers per agenda item and a maximum of 3 minutes is permitted per speaker. Places are allocated on a first come first serve basis.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES of the meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS, at 6.30 pm on Thursday, 13 April 2023

**Present: Councillor Wendy Fitzsimmons (Chair)
Councillors Fairweather, Hill, Neville and White**

Officers in Attendance: Jeremy Kimmel (Audience Development Manager) and Caroline Britt (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: None

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

COM57/22

Apologies were received from Councillors, Ellis, Everitt, Funnell, March, Palmer and Pope.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

COM58/22 There were no declarations of interest made.

NOTIFICATION OF PERSONS WISHING TO SPEAK

COM59/22 There were no members of the public, or visiting Members of the Council registered to speak.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 8 MARCH 2023

COM60/22 No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting dated 8 March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

FORWARD PLAN AS AT 29 MARCH 2023

COM61/22 No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan as at 29 March 2023 be noted.

*** CIVIC AWARDS 2023**

COM62/22 The report was taken as read.

To note, the matter was decided taking the exempt information set out in the report as read.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

* CIVIC AWARDS 2023

COM63/22 The report was taken as read.

To note, the matter was decided taking the exempt information set out in the report as read.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations to Cabinet as set out in the report be supported.

URGENT BUSINESS

COM64/22 There was no urgent business for consideration.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

COM65/22 The date of the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 7 June 2023.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 6.40 pm.

FORWARD PLAN



www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/forwardplan

Notice of Key Decisions / Notice of Private Meetings

Pursuant to the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

This Plan gives at least 28 days notice if the Cabinet of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council intends to make a key decision¹ or make a decision in private². Other decisions by the executive are also included on the Plan wherever possible.

Relevant documents can be downloaded from the Council's website or are available on request from: Democratic Services, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS or committee@tunbridgewells.gov.uk. Documents may be submitted to the decision maker via Democratic Services.

If it is necessary to hold a meeting in private, the reasons for this are stated alongside the decision. These reasons are prescribed by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and summarised at the back of this Plan.

Representations against the intention to make a decision in private can be submitted in writing to Democratic Services no less than ten working days before the meeting date.

If the Council is unable to give 28 days notice, it will publish the reasons for this on its website and at its offices.

Councillor Ben Chapelard
Leader of the Council

Publication Date: 23 June 2023
The most recent version of the Plan supersedes all previously issued versions
Guidance notes are provided at the back of this document

Members of the Cabinet and their respective Cabinet Responsibilities

Councillor Ben Chapelard Leader of the Council

- Strategic Policy
- Communications, Consultations & Engagement
- Transparency
- Human Resources (including learning & development)
- Democratic Services
- Devolution/Enhanced two-tier working

Councillor Wendy Fitzsimmons Sport, Leisure and Health

- Sports and Leisure Centres
- Parks
- Grounds Maintenance
- Health

Councillor Justine Rutland Economic Development

- Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre
- Economic Development & Tourism
- Business Engagement
- Supporting the Town Centre
- Culture & the Arts & Customer Service
- Assembly Hall, Ice Rink & The Amelia Scott
- Events
- Transportation
- Parking (on and off street)

Councillor Nancy Warne Deputy Leader and Communities

- Deputy Leader
- Rural/Parished Areas & Parish Chairs
- Community Safety and CCTV
- Community Centres and Hubs
- Community Partnerships
- Assets of Community Value
- Equalities (including younger & older people)
- Equalities and Equal Access
- Community Grants
- Cost of Living Crisis

Councillor Ellen Neville Environmental Services

- Cemetery and crematorium
- Recycling and waste collection
- Street cleansing and littering
- Fly Tipping and Abandoned Vehicles
- Environmental Protection
- Environmental Health
- Licensing
- Food Hygiene & Health & Safety Standards in businesses
- Corporate Health and Safety

Councillor Hugo Pound Housing and Planning

- Planning Policy
- Strategic Sites and Delivery
- Development Management
- Heritage and Conservation
- Planning Enforcement
- Land Charges
- Building Control
- Housing (incl Private Sector and Housing Needs)
- Homelessness Prevention and Reduction

Councillor Jayne Sharratt Sustainability

- Sustainability – Carbon Reduction and promoting biodiversity
- Community Leadership (raising funds for carbon reduction)

Councillor Christopher Hall Finance and Performance

- Finance
- Revenues and Benefits
- Internal Audit and Risk Management
- Property, Estates & Facilities Management
- Performance & Project Management
- ICT, Technology and Digital Transformation
- Legal Services
- FOI/EIR/Complaints/Data Protection
- Procurement Policy and Strategy

Leader of the Council – Councillor Ben Chapelard

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key? ¹	Private? ²
22/06/23 Cabinet			Appointments to Outside Bodies To appoint representatives to the Council's outside bodies. <i>(All Wards)</i>	All Members will have the opportunity to nominate representatives.	Caroline Britt, Senior Democratic Services Officer	No	Open

Finance and Performance - Councillor Christopher Hall

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key? ¹	Private? ²
22/06/23 Cabinet		06/06/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Performance Summary Quarter 4 To consider an outline of the Council's performance against key strategic indicators. Measures prescribed by central government through the Single Data List (SDL) and the progress against each of the strategic projects as at end of March 2023. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Pamela Grover-Morgan, Performance and Governance Manager	No	Open
22/06/23 Cabinet		06/06/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Complaints Summary Quarters 3 and 4 A review of the complaints received under the Council's complaints procedure between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Pamela Grover-Morgan, Performance and Governance Manager	No	Open
22/06/23 Cabinet		06/06/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Revenue Management Quarter 4 To receive the financial position as at the end of March 2023. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Jane Fineman, Head of Finance and Procurement	No	Open
22/06/23 Cabinet		06/06/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Capital Management Report Quarter 4 To receive the financial position as at the end of March 2023. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Jane Fineman, Head of Finance and Procurement	No	Open
22/06/23 Cabinet		06/06/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Treasury and Prudential Indicator Management Report Quarter 4 To receive the financial position as at the end of March 2023. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Jane Fineman, Head of Finance and Procurement	No	Open
27/07/23 Cabinet		11/07/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Strategic Risk Register To approve the annual review of the Council's Strategic Risk Register. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development (Section 151 Officer)	No	Open

Finance and Performance - Councillor Christopher Hall

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key? ¹	Private? ²
27/07/23 Cabinet		12/07/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Property Transaction Report January to June 2023 This report informs Cabinet of the property transactions completed under delegated authority between 1 January and 30 June 2023. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	David Candlin, Head of Economic Development and Property	No	Part
27/07/23 Cabinet		11/07/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Budget Projection and Strategy 2024/25 To consider proposals for the draft budget. (Stage 1 of 4 in setting the forthcoming year's budget). <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development (Section 151 Officer)	No	Open
21/09/23 Cabinet		05/09/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Annual Corporate Health and Safety Report To note the contents of the report, along with the work undertaken to secure a safe and healthy working environment. <i>(All Wards)</i>		Mike Catling, Corporate Health and Safety Advisor	No	
21/09/23 Cabinet		05/09/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Performance Summary Quarter 1 To consider an outline of the Council's performance against key strategic indicators. Measures prescribed by Central Government through the Single Data List (SDL) and the progress against each of the strategic projects as at end of June 2023. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Pamela Grover-Morgan, Performance and Governance Manager	No	Open
21/09/23 Cabinet		05/09/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Revenue Management Report - Quarter 1 To receive the financial position as at the end of June 2023. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board will be consulted.	Jane Fineman, Head of Finance and Procurement	No	Open

Finance and Performance - Councillor Christopher Hall

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key? ¹	Private? ²
21/09/23 Cabinet		05/09/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Capital Management Report - Quarter 1 To receive the financial position as at the end of June 2023. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Jane Fineman, Head of Finance and Procurement	No	Open
21/09/23 Cabinet		05/09/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Treasury and Prudential Indicator Management Report - Quarter 1 To receive the financial position as at the end of June 2023. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Jane Fineman, Head of Finance and Procurement	No	Open
19/10/23 Cabinet		10/10/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Budget Update Report 2024/25 To consider an update on the Budget and the current financial position of the Council (Stage 2 of 4 in setting the forthcoming year's budget). <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development (Section 151 Officer)	No	Open
26/10/23 Cabinet		10/10/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Consideration of a new lease or freehold disposal of land at Tunbridge Wells Rugby Club Tunbridge Wells Rugby Club have requested that the Council grant them a new longer lease or land or consider a freehold disposal of land at the Rugby Club. <i>(Pantiles & St Mark's)</i>	The Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board will be consulted.	David Candlin, Head of Economic Development and Property	No	Full
26/10/23 Cabinet	Full Council 13/12/23	10/10/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	*Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25 To recommend to Full Council potential changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 204/25 following public consultation. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Zoe Kent, Interim Head of Revenues and Benefits	No	Open

Finance and Performance - Councillor Christopher Hall

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key? ¹	Private? ²
23/11/23 Cabinet		14/11/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Fees and Charges Setting 2024/25 To consider and agree the fees and charges set by the Council. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Jane Fineman, Head of Finance and Procurement	Yes	Open

Communities (And Deputy Leader) - Councillor Nancy Warne

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key? ¹	Private? ²
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There are no items within the designated timeframe

Economic Development – Councillor Justine Rutland

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key? ¹	Private? ²
27/07/23 Cabinet		12/07/23 Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board	Economic Development Strategy An updated Economic Development Strategy is being prepared and will be consulted on before adoption. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Communities and Economic Development CAB will be consulted prior to public consultation being undertaken.	Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager	No	Open
27/07/23 Cabinet		11/07/23 Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board	Dunorlan Parking Consultation Response To consider the responses to the Consultation and whether or not to introduce car parking charges. <i>(All Wards)</i>	Formal consultation 17 July to 6 August 2023. The Finance and Governance CAB will be consulted.	Jane Fineman, Head of Finance and Procurement	Yes	Open

Environmental Services – Councillor Ellen Neville

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key?¹	Private?²
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There are no items within the designated timeframe

Housing and Planning - Councillor Hugo Pound

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key? ¹	Private? ²
Not before 01/02/23 Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning			Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy The report sets out the Draft changes to national planning policy, shown in the tracked change version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and provides a suggested response on behalf of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to the Government consultation on these proposed changes to national planning policy. <i>(All Wards)</i>	Report to be published before decision is made.	Ellen Gilbert, Principal Planning Officer	No	Open
Not before 03/07/23 Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning			TWBC Response to public consultation on the Draft High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 This report is a Portfolio Holder report to sign off TWBC's formal response to the public consultation on the Draft High Weald AONB Management Plan, which is to be consulted upon in September/October 2023. <i>(Benenden & Cranbrook; Brenchley & Horsmonden; Goudhurst & Lamberhurst; Hawkhurst & Sandhurst; Pembury; Speldhurst & Bidborough)</i>	Report to be published before decision is made.	Ellen Gilbert, Principal Planning Officer	No	Open
27/07/23 Cabinet		10/07/23 Planning and Transportation Cabinet Advisory Board	Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Development Plan To recommend that Cabinet progresses the Paddock Wood Neighbourhood Development Plan to referendum. <i>(Paddock Wood (East); Paddock Wood (West))</i>	The Planning and Transportation CAB will be consulted.	Deborah Dixon, Principal Planning Officer	No	Open

Housing and Planning - Councillor Hugo Pound

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key? ¹	Private? ²
27/07/23 Cabinet		10/07/23 Planning and Transportation Cabinet Advisory Board	Pembury Neighbourhood Development Plan (PNDP) Recommendation that the PNDP, that has been successful at examination, proceed to referendum. <i>(Pembury)</i>	The Planning and Transportation CAB will be consulted.	Deborah Dixon, Principal Planning Officer	No	Open
27/07/23 Cabinet		10/07/23 Planning and Transportation Cabinet Advisory Board	Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Neighbourhood Development Plan To recommend that Cabinet progresses the Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Neighbourhood Development Plan to referendum. <i>(Benenden & Cranbrook; Frittenden & Sissinghurst)</i>	The Planning and Transportation CAB will be consulted.	Deborah Dixon, Principal Planning Officer	No	Open
11/09/23 Cabinet	Full Council 4/10/23	06/09/23 Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board	Empty Homes Policy 2023-2028 Review and refresh of current Empty Homes Policy and action plan. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Communities and Economic Development CAB will be consulted.	Sue Oliver, Private Sector Housing Manager	Yes	Open
21/09/23 Cabinet	Full Council - TBA	04/09/23 Planning and Transportation Cabinet Advisory Board	*Main Modifications Consultation of Local Plan 2020-2038, and Sustainability Appraisal To consult on the Main Modifications of the emerging Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Local Plan and Sustainability Appraisal for a 6 week period. <i>(All Wards)</i>	A statutory period of 6 weeks consultation is required. Dates to be confirmed. The Planning and Transportation CAB will be consulted.	Carlos Hone, Head of Planning	Yes	Open

Housing and Planning - Councillor Hugo Pound

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key? ¹	Private? ²
27/07/23 Cabinet		12/07/23 Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board	<p>Tenancy Strategy The 2011 Localism Act introduced a duty on local authorities to prepare and publish a Tenancy Strategy. Under the terms of the Localism Act, Councils in England must prepare and publish a strategy (a “tenancy strategy”) setting out the matters to which the registered providers of social housing for its area are to have regard in formulating policies. The tenancy Strategy is an overarching strategy, meant to give guidance and information to Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPSH). <i>(All Wards)</i></p>	The Communities and Economic Development CAB will be consulted.	Tobi Phillips, Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer	Yes	Open
11/09/23 Cabinet		06/09/23 Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board	<p>Nomination Agreement The nomination agreement details the nomination arrangements for the allocation of social and affordable rental housing ensuring that the Council’s statutory duties are met by the housing providers operating within the Borough. <i>(All Wards)</i></p>	The Communities and Economic Development CAB will be consulted.	Tobi Phillips, Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer	No	Open
21/09/23 Cabinet		06/09/23 Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board	<p>Affordable Housing Commuted Sum Position Statement This statement aims to provide guidance to developers, including Housing Associations and other Registered Providers on the Council’s approach to how and when commuted payments in lieu of on-site affordable housing will be considered. <i>(All Wards)</i></p>	The Communities and Economic Development CAB will be consulted.	Tobi Phillips, Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer	Yes	Open

Housing and Planning - Councillor Hugo Pound

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key? ¹	Private? ²
21/09/23 Cabinet		06/09/23 Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board	Affordable Housing Commuted Sums Spending Policy This report presents the document Policy and Procedure to spend commuted sums designated for affordable housing. <i>(All Wards)</i>	The Communities and Economic Development CAB will be consulted.	Tobi Phillips, Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer	Yes	Open
26/10/23 Cabinet	Full Council TBA	09/10/23 Planning and Transportation Cabinet Advisory Board	High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024- 2029 This report relates to the formal approval of the High Weald AONB Management Plan, 2024 - 2029, which would become a material planning consideration in planning decisions. <i>(Benenden & Cranbrook; Brenchley & Horsmonden; Goudhurst & Lamberhurst; Hawkhurst & Sandhurst; Pembury; Speldhurst & Bidborough)</i>	The Planning and Transportation CAB will be consulted.	Ellen Gilbert, Principal Planning Officer	No	Open

Sports, Leisure and Health - Councillor Wendy Fitzsimmons

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key? ¹	Private? ²
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There are no items within the designated timeframe

Sustainability - Councillor Jayne Sharratt

Date of decision/ Decision maker	Full Council	Advisory Board	Report Title, Summary and Ward	Consultation Details	Relevant Officer	Key?¹	Private?²
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There are no items within the designated timeframe

Note 1: KEY DECISIONS

A “key decision” means a decision which is to be taken by the executive of the Council which is likely to:

- (a) result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are over £250,000 as well as otherwise being significant having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (b) be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the Borough of Tunbridge Wells.

Note 2: REASONS A MEETING MAY BE HELD IN PRIVATE

In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public may be excluded from a meeting on the grounds that it may involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Act. The exemption must be by virtue of one or more specified paragraphs which are shown on the meeting agenda (giving 5 days notice) and, in the case of the Cabinet, on the Forward Plan (giving 28 days notice). The exemptions are summarised as follows:

Paragraph (1) - Information relating to any individual.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Paragraph (2) - Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

(8) Information falling within paragraph (3) above is not exempt information by virtue of that paragraph if it is required to be registered under –

Paragraph (3) - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

- (a) the Companies Act 1985;
- (b) the Friendly Societies Act 1974;
- (c) the Friendly Societies Act 1992;
- (d) the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1965 to 1978;
- (e) the Building Societies Act 1986; or
- (f) the Charities Act 1993.

Paragraph (4) - Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office-holders under, the authority.

(9) Information is not exempt information if it relates to proposed development for which the local planning authority may grant itself planning permission pursuant to regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992.

Paragraph (5) - Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

Paragraph (6) - Information which reveals that the authority proposes –

- (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
- (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.

(10) Information which –

- (a) falls within any of paragraphs 1 to 7 above; and
- (b) is not prevented from being exempt by virtue of paragraph 8 or 9 above,

Paragraph (7) - Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

is exempt information if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.



Draft Economic Development Strategy 2023 - 2026

For Communities & Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board

Summary

Lead Member: Councillor Justine Rutland, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development

Lead Director: Lee Colyer

Head of Service: David Candlin, Head of Economic Development and Property

Report Author: Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager

Classification: Public document (non-exempt)

Wards Affected: All

Approval Timetable	Date
Management Board	19 June 2023
Portfolio Holder	27 June 2023
Communities & Economic Development	12 July 2023
Cabinet	27 July 2023

Recommendations

1. Agree publication of the Draft Economic Development Strategy for the period 2023 –2026, for a 6-week consultation period from the beginning of September 2023.
2. Following consultation, a final version of the Strategy will be brought back to Cabinet for consideration and approval.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 This report seeks agreement for the publication of the Draft Borough Economic Development Strategy & Action Plan for the period 2023 - 2026, for a 6-week consultation period from the beginning of September 2023.
- 1.2 The previous Economic Development Strategy was published in 2018. There have been significant changes to the national and local economy since then and therefore a review of the previous Strategy and preparation of an update was required.

2. Draft Economic Development Strategy

- 2.1 The previous Economic Development Strategy was prepared in 2017/18 and is now out of date. A review of the previous strategy was carried out and research commissioned to support the preparation of a new Strategy and Action Plan.
- 2.2 The draft ED Strategy is aligned with other Council documents including the Borough Plan, the Submitted Local Plan and the emerging Climate Change Strategy.
- 2.3 The aims set out in the Strategy are as follows:
- Develop a sustainable, and inclusive local economy - that delivers for local businesses and communities, respecting the natural and built heritage in the borough.
 - Work with partners to create a business support offer that provides the best opportunities to start, grow, and invest in businesses and destinations across the borough.
 - Work with partners including Town & Parish Councils to create safe and vibrant towns and villages in the borough, where businesses and communities will thrive.
- 2.4 The headline objectives in the plan are as follows:
- Aiming for Net Zero
 - Creating Destinations
 - Encouraging enterprise and employment

- Supporting Rural Communities
 - Improving sustainable access and connectivity
- 2.5 An Action Plan is included within the Draft document with actions (under each of the objectives above), timescales, partner organisations and measures of success set out.
- 2.6 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed to consider the Strategy's impact on those with protected characteristics. This will be updated with further data collected in the proposed consultation.

3. Options Considered

- 3.1 The only alternative option considered was not to prepare a borough Economic Development Strategy but instead to be guided by existing policy documents prepared at county, regional or national level, to plan the work of the Economic Development Team.

4. Preferred Option and Reason

- 4.1 A decision was taken to prepare a Strategy for the borough including an Action Plan to ensure that the key issues relating to economic development in Tunbridge Wells are recognised and addressed where possible.
- 4.2 The Strategy will encourage engagement with local businesses through the consultation process and the document will be a basis for bidding for project funding in the future, as opportunities arise. The Action Plan will guide the work programme for the Economic Development Team from 2023 - 2026.

5. Consultation on Options

- 5.1 There has been no consultation on options to date. However, a comprehensive engagement programme will be undertaken on the draft Strategy including the following elements:
- Use of the Council's Engagement platform: Talking Point
 - Engagement with local businesses through the Council's Business Newsletter and social media channels
 - Engagement with local business representative organisations for example Royal Tunbridge Wells Together BID and the Paddock Wood Business Association (with meetings where appropriate)

- Wider community engagement through the Council's Resident's Newsletter, Town and Parish Councils and TWBC's main social media channels
- Engagement with all partner organisations as listed in Appendix B of the Strategy including meetings as required

Recommendation from Cabinet Advisory Board

To be added after 12 July Communities and Economic Development CAB.

6. Implementation

- 6.1 Following the engagement programme to gain feedback on the Strategy, amendments will be made to the document as appropriate, and a final version of the Strategy will be brought to Cabinet for agreement and adoption.

7. Appendices and Background Documents

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Draft Economic Development Strategy

8. Cross Cutting Issues

A. Legal (including the Human Rights Act)

No implications

Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, 08.06.23

B. Finance and Other Resources

The Strategy will be delivered within the existing budgets of the Economic Development Team.

Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, 08.06.23

C. Staffing

No Implications

Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, 08.06.23

D. Risk Management

Risks for the Strategy relate to ability to deliver actions set out in the Action Plan. These are reliant on work with partner organisations and other external factors at both the local and national level. The Action Plan will be reviewed every 6 months.

Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, 08.06.23

E. Environment (inc. Biodiversity) and Sustainability

The ED Strategy is aligned with the Council's emerging Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan.

Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, 08.06.23

F. Community Safety

No implications for the Strategy but further assessments will be undertaken on a project basis.

Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, 08.06.23

G. Equalities

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the Economic Development Strategy, in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (s149 of the Equality Act 2010). This requires decision makers to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups.

The Economic Development Team will include those with protected characteristics in the consultation process for this Strategy, to ensure that further consideration is given to the outlined policies and initiatives that could impact upon them.

The findings of the consultation will be presented following its completion.

Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, 04.07.23

H. Data Protection

There are no data protection issues for this Strategy but further assessment will be made on a project basis.

Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, 08.06.23

I. Health and Safety

No implications for the overall Strategy. Risk assessments will be undertaken on a project basis.

Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, 08.06.23

J. Health and Wellbeing

No implications for overall Strategy but further assessment will be undertaken on a project basis.

Hilary Smith, Economic Development Manager, 08.06.23

Economic Development Strategy 2023–2026

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council



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Appendix A

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Appendix A

Foreword

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's aim is to support sustainable economic development and create an environment in which existing businesses can flourish and new investment is attracted.

The health of the local economy is key to our communities in Tunbridge Wells, providing jobs and wages, as well as the services that support everyday life. The protection and enhancement of the borough's heritage is also important, in order to preserve the quality of life and reputation of Tunbridge Wells as an excellent place in which to live, work and visit.

We know our residents value living in communities that are active and flourishing. In TWBC's budget consultation of 2022-23, residents were asked to weight the Council's five priorities, and 'Vibrant and safer towns and villages' was the most popular choice.

Over the past few years, the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and the cost-of-living crisis have collectively had a significant impact on the local economy. As a result, some businesses have closed; some have opened; and some have had to change the way they operate. In addition, many businesses are making adaptations to achieve net zero targets. And all the while, the traditional High Street is in flux.

Working with a wide range of partner organisations, the Council is seeking to focus its available resources to support local businesses - existing and new - as they recover from recent events and build their resilience for the future.

This Strategy will communicate the myriad ways in which the Economic Development team is doing this.

CLlr Justine Rutland
Cabinet Member for Economic Development
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council



1. National & Local Context for Strategy

National Picture

Since the last Economic Development Strategy was adopted in 2018, there have been considerable changes within the UK economy. The section below briefly highlights some of these, both those that are temporary and others that are longer term in their nature.

Net Zero

In June 2019, the UK government passed legislation committing it to achieving 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Achieving net zero will require changes that are unprecedented in their scale and scope, including the way electricity is generated, how people travel, how land is used and how buildings are heated. Businesses will need to play their part in addressing this challenge and many are already leading the way in making changes.

Covid

The Covid-19 restrictions, put in place to protect public health, seriously disrupted trading during 2020 and 2021. Post-pandemic, a number of businesses were left weaker, carrying more debt, smaller reserves, and having to adapt to a markedly different business environment. This was especially the case for retailers, leisure and hospitality venues and their suppliers. Some did not survive but many are now on the road to recovery.

Brexit

The United Kingdom officially left the European Union on 31 January 2020. This has required businesses that trade with Europe to adapt their operations and has also led to difficulties with recruitment of staff. There is some evidence that suggests that there may

have been a negative impact on the visitor economy, at least in the short term (although to date the effect is difficult to separate from the Covid impact).

Inflation and the Cost of Living Crisis

Since late 2021 the UK has experienced a period of high inflation, peaking at 11.1% in October 2022. This has primarily focused on energy prices (as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine) and essential household items including food, but has also increased costs for businesses, especially in relation to services and supply chains.

Levelling Up Agenda

In March 2021, the Government published its Levelling Up White Paper, setting out a series of missions and targeted support to parts of the UK that have historically suffered from under-investment. As part of the Levelling Up agenda, the Government announced the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund to provide devolved funding to local authorities across the country for a three year period. TWBC submitted an Investment Plan for both funds, which have subsequently been approved, and local projects are now underway. A table of these projects is included in Appendix A.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

There have been exponential developments in Digital and AI infrastructure and use in the economy since the last Strategy was released. The UK Government has sought to address the opportunities and threats posed by these rapid developments in a number of recent strategies and work on this is ongoing.



Tunbridge Wells Local Economy

The borough of Tunbridge Wells is located in West Kent and borders the local authorities of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Maidstone and Ashford in Kent as well as Rother and Wealden in East Sussex. The borough is part of a distinctive West Kent economic area (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, and Tunbridge Wells) with close links between the main settlements.

West Kent has the highest proportion of business start-ups in Kent, a stronger representation of higher value, knowledge-based industries than anywhere else in the county and also boasts the strongest business survival rates. The area provides significant employment to both local residents and those living elsewhere in Kent and further afield, including many high-skilled, well-paid jobs.

Tunbridge Wells is an attractive business location. The local economy is largely characterised by micro and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). However, there are a number of larger employers that contribute significantly to the economic health and prosperity of the borough. There is strong sectoral representation in: finance and insurance; scientific and technical; wholesale and retail; human health and social work; hospitality (visitor economy); creative; and education. In addition, there is a small, well-skilled manufacturing and agricultural sector.

Royal Tunbridge Wells is the primary urban centre of the borough and a significant employment, retail, education, service and transport hub. It is a historic and vibrant town drawing trade, business connections and visitors from London, the wider South East and further afield.

The landscape of Tunbridge Wells is dominated by the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which covers almost two thirds of the borough. This rural area includes a number of towns and villages with distinct independent high streets and local services, including Cranbrook, Hawkhurst and Paddock Wood.

Tunbridge Wells first became a destination for leisure, culture and tourism in the 1600s and it continues to be a high-quality visitor destination today, with attractions including historic National Trust properties, outdoor activities, theatres and museums. The borough is home to an increasing number of hospitality businesses including accommodation and food and beverage outlets.



Figure 2: Tunbridge Wells Local Economy Indicators

115,300 residents in Tunbridge Wells borough	6,300 PAYE enterprises in Tunbridge Wells	Highest first year survival rate (91.9%) for businesses in Kent
90% of businesses are micro (1-9 employees), 8% small (10-49), 1% medium (50-249) and 0.2% large (250+)	Largest Sectors: Professional, Scientific & Technical (23.3%) Construction (11.8%) ICT (9.9%)	Fastest Growing Sectors: Real Estate Activities (£208m GVA increase) Professional, Scientific & Technical (£194m)
FTE earnings for residents: £38,730 p/a FTE earnings for those working in the borough: £29,180	50% of residents out commute for work, including: 20% in Kent 19% in London 11% elsewhere	3.6 million visitors to the borough each year
Tunbridge Wells 64th out of 360 national locations on the UK Competitiveness Index	GVA (Gross Value Added) of £3.580bn for the borough	GVA of £59,333 per worker
Unemployment rate is at 2.3% , down from 4.6% in March 2021.	24.5% of employees are employed in the Knowledge Economy (technical & scientific innovation) – the highest level in Kent	63.1% of residents 16–64 are at National Vocational Qualification Level 4+

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, TWBC commissioned work to support the preparation of this Strategy and Action Plan. This included a survey of 200 local businesses to identify both the barriers to growth and the sort of support that would be welcomed. Using the findings from the business survey and other available evidence, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis) has been undertaken to provide an overview of the local economy and present areas for intervention by the Council and its partners. This SWOT is set out in Figure 3 below:

Sources: ONS, KCC, HJA Evidence Base, LGA, University of Nottingham.

Figure 3: SWOT Analysis of the Tunbridge Wells Economy

Strengths

- Highly skilled resident workforce
- High resident earnings
- High quality of life (natural environment and built environment, local schools and other facilities)
- Proximity to London, motorway network channel ports and international airports
- High level of business start-ups and resilience
- Business networking opportunities
- Visitor economy offer – high quality rural landscape

Weaknesses

- Low GVA growth
- Low population growth
- Low growth among business start-ups
- High house prices
- Pockets of deprivation
- Out-commuting for higher wages
- Limited local Higher Education opportunities
- Transport congestion in urban areas
- Small number of large employers

Opportunities

- Proactive approach by Council and its partners
- New networking connections between local businesses
- Employment sites included in the new Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (Submission Local Plan 2021)
- Royal Tunbridge Wells Together Business Improvement District
- Growing creative and cultural economy – investment in Amelia Scott Cultural Hub
- Potential for visitor economy growth
- Borough UKSPF/REPF funding

Threats

- Rising costs for businesses
- Recruitment and retention challenges
- Ageing population
- Changes in customer behaviour
- Climate change impacts
- Competition for government funding
- Competition from other destinations in the South East
- Pressure for residential development over employment and conversion of office space to residential

Key Partnerships

The Council is engaged in a number of important economic partnerships as set out below:

Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP)

KMEP is a federated body and a sub-group of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). KMEP and SELEP coordinate economic strategy with key public and private sector bodies in the region. Recently, the Government has urged LEPs to work more closely with local authorities to support local growth but the future of the LEPs is uncertain at present.

Kent County Council

TWBC works with Kent County Council (KCC) on issues including transport, employment and skills, the cultural and creative economy, and the environment. KCC has prepared a Council Strategy (2022) detailing its priorities for 2022-26. The priorities are focused around levelling up the county, building infrastructure for communities and protecting the environment. The Strategy sets out a clear pathway to net zero by 2050, which includes the development of a carbon footprint calculator for Kent and Medway, green infrastructure and large-scale retrofitting initiatives.

KCC's levelling up agenda is focused on addressing the issues that are barriers to economic growth and prosperity in Kent. This includes developing skills in line with evolving business needs, supporting schools to deliver accessible high-quality education, improving outcomes in deprived communities and reducing health inequalities across the county.

This Council Strategy is supplemented by a Kent and Medway Economic Strategy, which aims to develop a Kent economy by 2030 that is productive, sustainable and inclusive. Partners in business,

learning institutions and government have a crucial role to play in making this happen, and KCC is well-placed to convene and lead this activity, creating the conditions for prosperity across the county.

Invest West Kent

Formerly known as the West Kent Partnership, TWBC works particularly closely with the neighbouring authorities of Sevenoaks District Council and Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council as Invest West Kent (IWK). The three authorities share many local economic characteristics and pool resources to add value to initiatives across the three districts, promoting business growth and building resilience.

Visit Kent

TWBC has an ongoing partnership with Visit Kent, the Destination Management Organisation for the County. The partnership helps support visitor economy businesses in the borough by extending the reach of marketing activities to national and international audiences and commissioning research to help shape our messaging.

Royal Tunbridge Wells Together (RTWT)

RTWT is the Business Improvement District (BID) established following a successful ballot of local businesses in 2019. Since then, the Council has worked in partnership with the BID on projects to support the town centre through a challenging period (see Section 3).

In addition, the Council works with the Town and Parish Councils across the borough, many of which have prepared a Neighbourhood Plans for their area. It is recognised that there are many businesses located in the rural areas of the borough and in the smaller town centres.

Appendix B sets out a full list of the partners that the Council works with to deliver initiatives to support Economic Development.



Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Plans & Strategies

This Strategy aligns with other plans and strategies that have been or are being prepared by TWBC and other partners and that support economic development.

The Building a Better Borough: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Plan 2022-24 sets out the priorities for the Council for 2022-24. It is formulated around a single objective: doing the best for our residents, our businesses and our Borough. Creating Safe and Vibrant town and village centres is a key priority in the Plan.

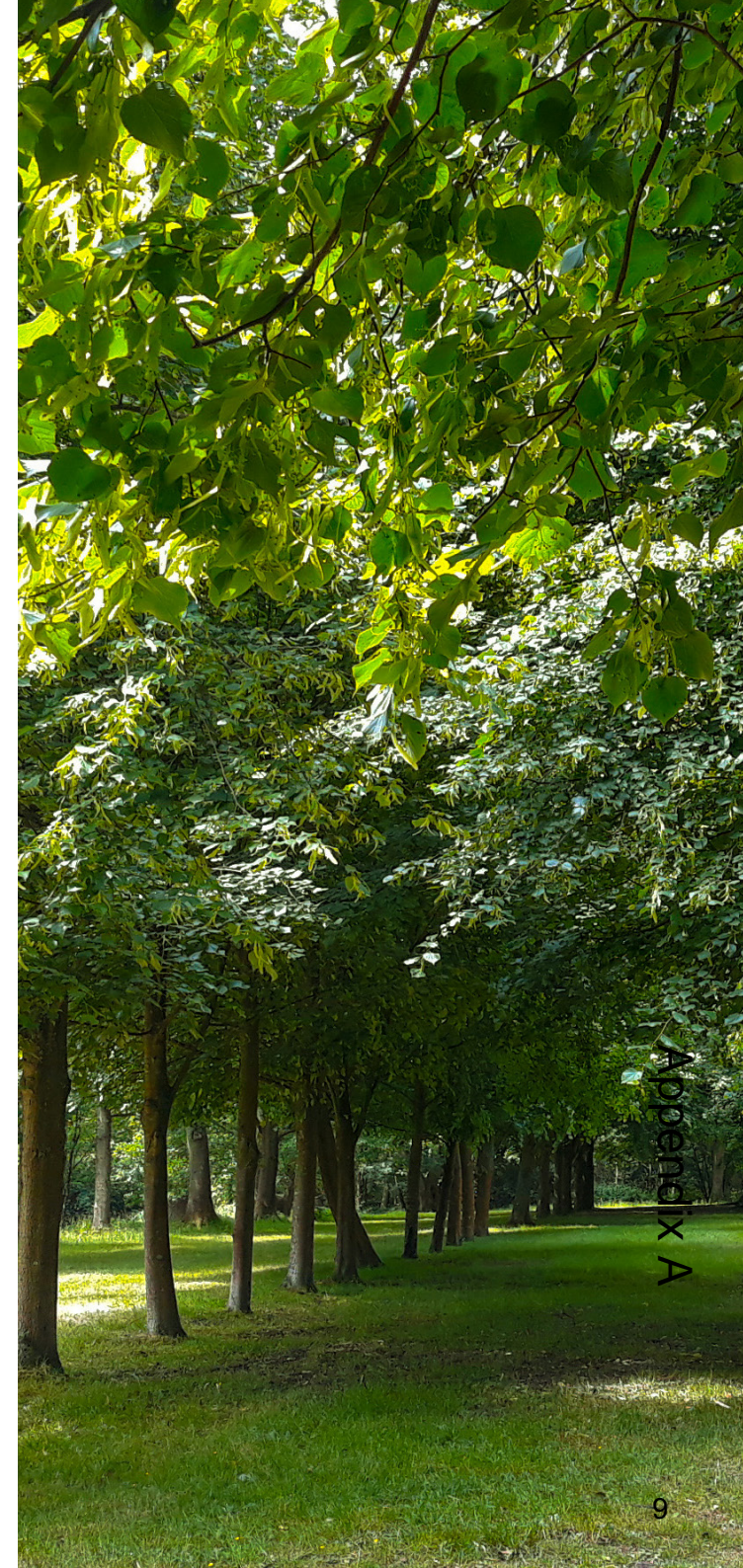
TWBC is also preparing a number of other relevant plans and strategies as follows:

- **Climate Strategy and Action Plan for Tunbridge Wells.**
- **The new Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (Submission Local Plan 2021):** The Council is producing a new Local Plan which is in its final stages of preparation and currently subject to Examination. It sets out a vision, objectives and strategic policies for future growth in the borough and identified sites for housing, employment and other uses. The Submission Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Inspector in November 2021 and was then subject to a number of Examination in Public

hearings which took place between 1 March and 15 July 2022. The Council then received a letter setting out the Inspector's findings following these hearing sessions, in early November 2022. The work to consider and respond to the initial findings of the Inspector is currently in progress.

- **A Town Centre Plan for Royal Tunbridge Wells:** The Council is currently working on the preparation of the Town Centre Plan which will provide a long-term strategy up to 2040 to help create and sustain a more prosperous town centre. The plan will provide a vision, objectives and a planning framework for the future of the town centre.
- **Neighbourhood Development Plans:** Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) were introduced under the Localism Act 2011, to allow planning and decision making to be carried out a more local level. NDPs need to conform with national policy, local adopted plans and other legal requirements. These plans can be used to develop a shared vision. TWBC has been working with the Parish and Town Councils to progress their NDPs. A number of these NDPs contain economic policies relating to employment and retail/local services.

Appendix C provides a list of relevant plans and strategies, prepared by the Council and other partners.



2. Current Activity and Key Issues

This section provides an overview of current activity that is being undertaken by the Council and its partners and the key issues that are shaping the local economy which this Strategy aims to address.

Net Zero Target

In 2019, a borough-wide recognition of climate change and its impacts resulted in the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency. To act on this commitment, an ambition has been set to reach carbon neutrality for the Council's own activities by 2030 and also to support carbon neutrality for the wider borough by the same date. In order to reach these ambitions, a Climate Strategy and Action Plan is being prepared with the following aims:

- To support borough-wide mitigation efforts to reduce emissions and reach net-zero by 2030
- To collaborate with stakeholders to facilitate climate action across sectors and service areas outside of TWBC's control
- Ensure the actions in this strategy complement other council-led strategies, such as the Borough-partnership Strategy and the new Tunbridge Wells Local Plan
- To raise awareness of, and engagement in, climate action and the need for a just transition to net zero across the borough.
- Ensure actions facilitate climate justice across all demographics in the community
- Recognise the needs of the community, and ensure that stakeholders are consulted to allow for inclusive decision-making.

From an economic development perspective, the borough's path to net zero will require a rapid decarbonisation of the local economy. To support

this, the Council will look to provide signposting to resources that will assist businesses in decarbonising their premises, supply chains, deliveries and business travel.

Employment sites and premises

The limited number of appropriate employment sites and premises has been a constraint to enterprise in the borough over recent years, acting as a barrier to inward investment and wider development. This shortage has been exacerbated due to the conversion of floorspace from office to residential use under Permitted Development Rights (PDR) legislation, particularly in Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre. The town centre has an ageing stock of employment floorspace, which will require renovation or redevelopment to ensure that it is fit for modern ways of working.

Key Employment Areas - The new Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (Submission Local Plan 2021) identifies a number of Key Employment Areas (KEAs) and provides land allocations for the development of new employment space, based on evidence from an Economic Needs Assessment. The KEAs are set out below:

- Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre
- Royal Tunbridge Wells North Farm/Longfield Road area
- Southborough High Brooms Industrial Area
- Paddock Wood Eldon Way and West of Maidstone Road
- Paddock Wood Transfesa Road East and West
- Gill's Green Business Park
- Capel Brook Farm



The new Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (Submission Local Plan 2021) also sets out criteria-based protection policies requiring robust evidence that an existing employment site or premise is no longer viable for employment with a minimum of 18 months marketing activity before alternative development can be explored.

Article 4 Directions - In response to concerns about the extent of conversions from office space to residential under Permitted Development Rights, a detailed Town Centre Office Study (Durlings, 2018) was commissioned for Royal Tunbridge Wells, and then updated in 2021 (Retail, Commercial Leisure and Town Centre Uses Study). The study recommended the use of Article 4 Directions to be placed on key remaining office spaces in the town centre. Although an Article 4 Direction does not prevent planning applications for change of use, it does allow a full consideration of the impact of such applications by the Council (as the Local Planning Authority).

Co-working Space - The Council is also taking proactive steps to deliver employment workspace itself. A partnership with Town Square Ltd has been agreed to provide 20,000 square feet of flexible coworking space for local businesses at the refurbished Town Hall in Royal Tunbridge Wells. Previously, the Council has worked with private and public sector partners to open The House in Monson Road, which provides flexible space for the creative sector. There are now a number of other flexible workspaces in Royal Tunbridge Wells and the wider borough including: Office Tribe, Regus and the Hive (in Cranbrook and Royal Tunbridge Wells).

Enterprise & Employment

Enterprise – Tunbridge Wells is a highly entrepreneurial borough, with an average of over 600 new businesses established each year. The local economy is dominated by small and micro-businesses (90% employing less



than 10 people), with high levels of self-employment (13%) as well as many home-based businesses.

The borough economy is sustained by the relationships between its diverse array of entrepreneurs and small enterprises, where individuals and micro enterprises work together to provide services that would otherwise be provided in house (financial, HR, property, legal etc.). This model has proved successful, and Tunbridge Wells has risen to 64th out of 360 national locations on the UK Competitiveness Index.

However, there is a limit to the growth potential of this model, as viable enterprises with high growth potential can struggle to 'lift-off' and transition into medium or large firms that would generate further investment and development opportunities in the borough. As already indicated, the new Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (Submission Local Plan 2021) seeks to address development constraints, but there is also a need for targeted support to help business grow as well as to attract inward investment into the borough.

The Tunbridge Wells Business Survey (2020) prepared as part of the evidence for this Strategy identified a number of the key barriers limiting the growth of business and also a list of support needs as shown in Figures 4 and 5 below.

The Council already offers a number of support services to local businesses. This includes the provision of information and resources via a new Business Portal, a monthly business newsletter, social media platforms, as well as a calendar of business networking events at locations across the borough.

Business Portal - The online Business Portal is a one-stop shop linking businesses to relevant Council services including Rates, Planning, Environmental Health, and Licensing. A Welcome Pack for new businesses in the area has been prepared and both online and paper versions will

What are the main barriers limiting the growth of your business?

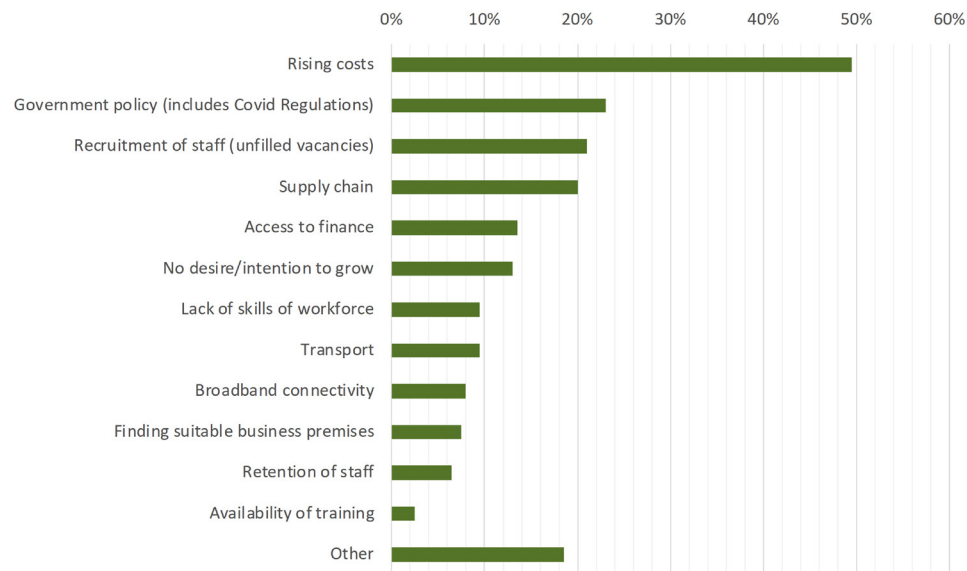


Figure 4: Barriers to business growth

Which of these support services would you be interested in if they were readily accessible to you?

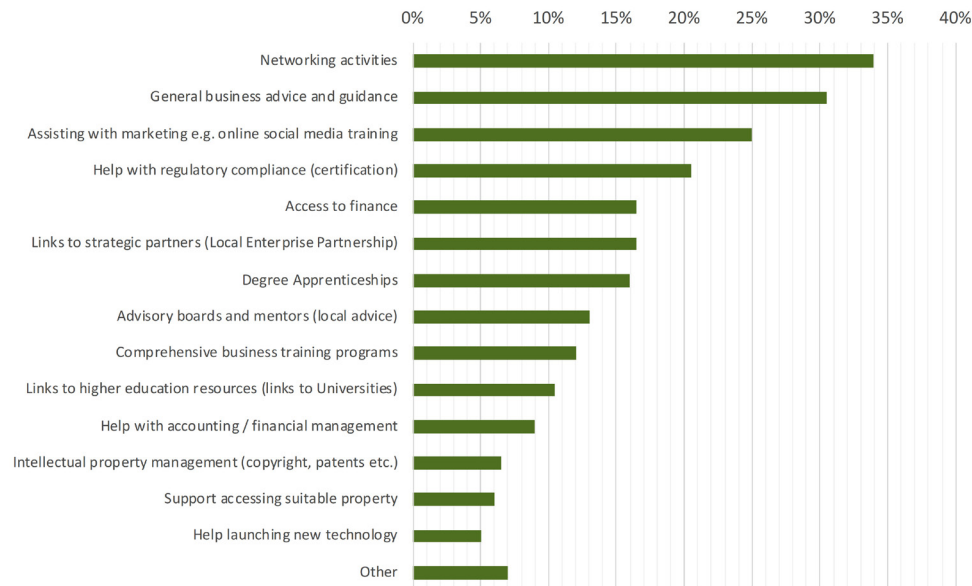


Figure 5: Business Support Needs

be available. The Business Portal also provides signposting to programmes of business support provided by government agencies and other partner organisations. There is a wide range of support offered at a county level, which has been brought together within the Kent and Medway Growth Hub website. This includes details of grants, loans and support initiatives offered by the Government, South East Local Enterprise Partnership, Kent County Council, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and other support organisations.

Invest West Kent – (Formerly known as the West Kent Partnership and comprising Tonbridge & Malling, Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells Councils) is well placed to deliver larger-scale business support programmes, through pooling its resources (staff and funding). The latest programme, West Kent Business, was launched in March 2023 and is funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This programme will deliver a package of business support, including the West Kent Business website which provides access to training webinars, networking opportunities and a business support advisor. SMEs can also access advice, mentoring and micro-grants.

Networking - Within the borough there are a number of active networking groups, providing online and in-person events, where local businesses can seek advice and meet new clients and partners. The health of these groups is important to the development of micro and small businesses and the Council will seek to support their activities where possible.



Education & Training – Tunbridge Wells has a strong employment and skills base. Unemployment currently sits at 2.3%, higher than it was before Covid, but a considerable decrease from 2020-21 levels. As was the case pre-Covid, unemployment is much lower than that of Kent as a whole (3.4%) and the UK (3.8%).

National Vocational Qualification levels remain high with 49.4% of 16 – 64-year-old residents holding qualifications at level 4 (degree level) and above. This is higher than the rest of Kent (38.5%) and the UK (43.6%).

Figure 4 above shows that difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff is often cited as a key barrier to business growth in the borough, especially in sectors such as Health and Social Care, Hospitality, Logistics and Retail. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council along with its West Kent neighbours has been working with Jobcentre Plus (DWP) and other organisations to develop employability initiatives across the area. These have included annual jobs and training events in Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells. In Tunbridge Wells events have also been held to target specific areas of the borough and groups of residents that have found accessing the jobs market more difficult.

The borough is well served with primary and secondary schools. Further Education (FE) is available at the North Kent College Campus in Tonbridge town centre (which also offers some Higher Education (HE) courses). In addition, Canterbury Christ Church University has a facility in Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre, although the course provision is currently limited to the Clinical Psychology Faculty. The Council is seeking to engage with both FE and HE providers to bring greater provision and more opportunities to the borough. The Council recognises the need to support careers education and local opportunities for school leavers in Tunbridge Wells and therefore



seeks to support the Kent & Medway Careers Hub and Enterprise Advisor Network that have been established to build connections between local schools and the business community.

To identify demand for skills within a regional context, the Government has recently commissioned Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs). LSIPs aims to bring employers and key stakeholders together to set out priorities to ensure that local provision is reflective of emerging skills demand. The Kent and Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is being delivered by Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, who will work with local authorities, employers and employer representative groups, to identify the local needs and solutions to address them in our key sectors. It is hoped that the LSIP will provide evidence for the formulation of solutions that colleges, universities and independent providers can implement to address gaps in current provision.

The Council recognises the role that apprenticeships can play in boosting skills meeting the requirements of local businesses. However, it is recognised that SMEs find it more difficult to take on apprentices. The Council will continue to work with partners to promote apprenticeships as a way to recruit and train employees.

Targeting support from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Council is developing proposals for employment and skills initiatives in Tunbridge Wells for delivery in the financial year 2024/25. Gaps in current provision are being identified and detailed plans will be presented to local stakeholders later in 2023.

Town centres and local high streets

Town centres and local high streets are experiencing a period of rapid change. An evolution in usage, demand and identity is underway that has been exacerbated by the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic. These trends mean that centres and high streets previously dominated by retail, will need to diversify away from traditional models towards a mix of uses, with an emphasis on creating destinations to visit, live and work in.

There are a number of town centres and village high streets across the borough, including: Royal Tunbridge Wells, Cranbrook, Hawkhurst, Paddock Wood, Rusthall and Southborough; each with their own identifiable character. The recently prepared Retail, Commercial, Leisure and Town Centre Study (updated in 2021) was commissioned in support of the new Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (Submission Local Plan 2021) and has provided recommendations to guide development within these areas.

The Study recognises the importance of Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre as a regional centre serving a wide catchment area (489,762 people), well beyond the borough boundary. The town has a varied retail offer with well-known brands in the northern part of the town (in and around the Royal Victoria Place shopping centre) and a high concentration of independent retailers in the High Street, the Pantiles and also Camden Road. The Study recommends a flexible approach to changes of use to enliven the town with leisure, culture and community uses, as well as retail. New planning rules, including changes to permitted development rights and the creation of a new Class E – Commercial Uses Order of use is already accelerating change, providing both opportunities and threats to our urban centres.



Town Centre Plan – In the light of the above, the Council is now preparing a Town Centre Plan for Royal Tunbridge Wells to set out a vision and masterplan for the period up to 2040 and to allocate sites for future development. A series of early engagement events took place in October and November 2022 to discuss the future of the town centre with local people, businesses and other stakeholders and a Town Centre Study was subsequently prepared to support the preparation of the final Plan. While the Town Centre Plan is a longer-term, strategic document, the Town Centre Study recognises that it is essential to also deliver shorter-term visible changes in the town centre to keep momentum going and to maintain support for the overall vision. The Study states that ‘quick win’ projects can help to generate a sense of progress and interest in the town centre, and can be implemented by a variety of stakeholders to revitalise the area and create a more vibrant, active environment. Examples of these quick wins could include:

- Meanwhile uses/pop-up shops
- Markets
- Art installations
- Events & festivals

The first draft of the Town Centre Plan will be in the form of an Issues and Options consultation document that will be published later in 2023. for a minimum period of six weeks. A Call for Sites is currently underway (June – July 2023).

Royal Tunbridge Wells Together BID - Following the initial formation of a Town Centre Partnership for Royal Tunbridge Wells in 2016, a ballot was held in 2018 on a proposed Business Improvement District. This led to the establishment of Royal Tunbridge Wells Together Business Improvement District (BID) and since then, businesses have paid a levy based on the rateable value of their premises to the BID to be used for projects and initiatives to grow footfall and

support businesses. RTWT has a voluntary Board of Directors from across the town that represents the various sectors located in Royal Tunbridge Wells. The BID’s office is currently located in a former retail unit on the High Street.

Recent projects have delivered by RTWT BID include:

- Promotion and marketing programmes (at London termini and on bus backs) in collaboration with Visit Tunbridge Wells
- Installation of footfall counters across the town
- Improvements to the streetscene
- Provision of Christmas lighting
- Creation of new events to increase footfall including Art Week and Coronation
- Grants for town centre events and cultural venues
- Free training (e.g. first aid and social media) portal for levy-paying businesses
- Engagement with/lobbying the Council on town centre issues of concern to businesses

The BID is now approaching the end of its first five-year term and a renewal ballot will be held in early 2024. RTWT is preparing a new business plan for the proposed second term and will be consulting with levy-payers on this plan in Autumn 2023, prior to the ballot. The Council is represented on the BID Board and works closely in partnership with the BID on the many projects of common interest. The BID is also a key stakeholder in the preparation of the Town Centre Plan as described above.



The Creative Economy

Tunbridge Wells has very strong representation in the cultural and creative sector and the Council is keen to see the sector grow further. Work commissioned by TWBC and KCC in 2012 (and updated in 2019) provided a number of recommendations as to how the sector should be supported. As a result of this work, in 2016, The House opened with flexible workspace for creative businesses. More recently the redevelopment of the existing Museum, Art Gallery, Tourist Information Centre, Library and Adult Education facilities into the Amelia Scott Cultural Centre has added a significant cultural venue and attraction to the borough. As a consequence of these initiatives, in 2019 the Council secured funding from Arts Council England to set up a strategic partnership for the creative economy (known as a Cultural Compact). Creative Tunbridge Wells has recently been established and will be working with partners (including RTWT BID and the Amelia Scott Team) to seek to increase the social and economic benefits of the creative economy for the borough. Further funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will support the development of this partnership.

The Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Study recognises the benefits of a strong creative economy for the town (and wider borough) and sets out the following aim: Royal Tunbridge Wells is well known as a creative place in which to live, work and visit. Culture and creativity is embedded in the town, contributing to both social and economic well-being. Events across the year bring footfall to the town supporting the day and evening economy.

Visitor Economy

Tunbridge Wells is a beautiful borough, with a rich natural and built heritage, including many tourist attractions and hospitality businesses. The Visitor Economy continues to be integral to the overall vitality of the borough, both within our town centres and across our rural areas.

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in serious harm to hospitality and leisure businesses, as trade almost ceased entirely. Without government Covid grants, it is likely that many of these businesses would have faced permanent closure. However, recent research has signalled a recovery in the visitor economy since the end of the pandemic. The 2021 Economic Impact of Tourism Report (derived from the Cambridge Model) calculated that the value of the visitor economy in the borough was £191m, supporting 4,505 local jobs. There were 3.6m visitors to the borough in 2021, which was a 44.4% increase on 2020.

INSERT PICTURE FROM PUB IN THE PARK

The value of the local visitor economy, local job opportunities and overall visitor numbers is set to increase towards and beyond pre-Covid levels. This is supported by projections and analysis from Visit Britain and Kent County Council, which both anticipate annual increases over the timeframe of this Strategy.

Visit Tunbridge Wells - A new Visit Tunbridge Wells Marketing Plan (2023) has been prepared and sets out six key objectives in order to promote the borough and attract new and repeat visitors:

- Market Royal Tunbridge Wells as a unique shopping and foodie destination and as a base for exploration of the whole borough
- Attract a younger audience of travellers, increasing footfall to leisure and hospitality businesses around the borough as well as cultural venues and events/festivals



- Uphold our Garden of England reputation, promoting our green spaces and encouraging walking and cycling
- Put Tunbridge Wells on the map to international travellers as a high-quality destination
- Cherish and promote our architectural heritage, including the many historic homes and gardens in the area

In order to achieve these objectives, the Council is supporting a range of initiatives in the borough. These include: a refresh of the Visit Tunbridge Wells website, the printing and distribution of information leaflets and additional tourist information at key locations, support for events at locations across the borough and sector-specific business support through the new West Kent Business hub.

Partnership working will be key to the recovery of the visitor economy and in realising our objectives. In this respect, real progress has been made since the preparation of the last strategy and the Council is part of a number of partnerships to drive visitor numbers to the borough. This includes an increase in both internal and external connections and provision, with the opening of the new Amelia Scott cultural centre, deepened ties with Visit Kent, Visit England, Invest West Kent, RTWT BID, the National Trust and attractions and destinations across the borough.

Rural Economy

Tunbridge Wells is a largely rural borough, with a significant proportion of agricultural and forestry land. Much of the rural area is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which is home to a diverse array of agricultural, horticultural, artisanal, manufacturing and tourism (including accommodation and hospitality) businesses.

Some rural enterprises in the borough have faced severe disruption as a result of the Covid pandemic

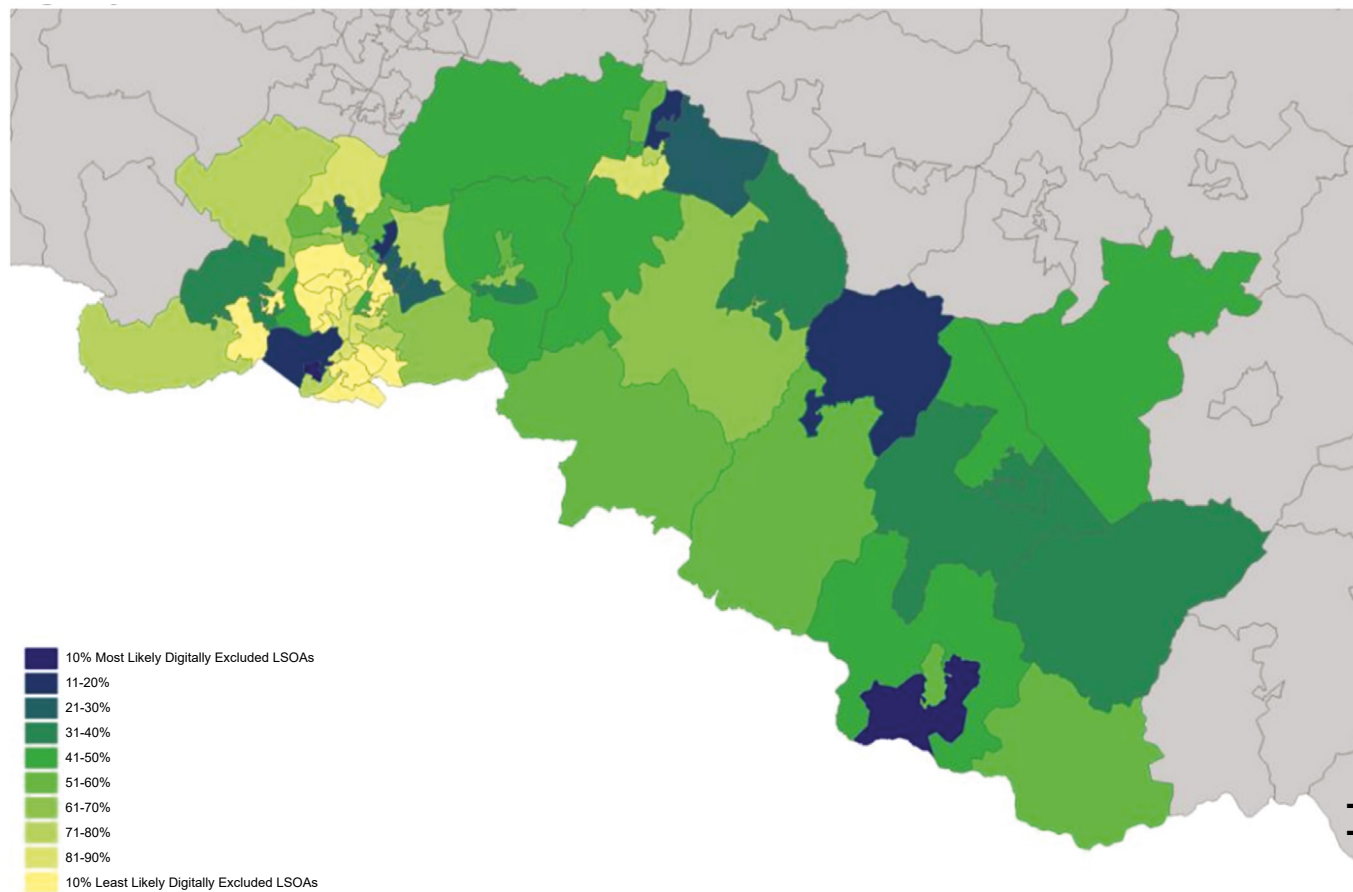


and there have also been changes as a result of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. Challenges facing rural businesses identified in the Tunbridge Wells Business Survey include increased costs, access to finance and labour shortages.

The Council recognises the importance of rural businesses to the borough and seeks to ensure that businesses outside the main urban areas have equal access to the support services available (as set out above).

Rural Grants - The Council is seeking to support businesses in rural areas of the borough to increase productivity and diversify where appropriate. Between 2006 and 2020, the Council worked with neighbouring councils Sevenoaks and Tonbridge & Malling to deliver the successful West Kent LEADER programmes, with funding of over £1m awarded to rural businesses in the borough. LEADER funding is no longer available so now the Council is working with West Kent partners to deliver a Rural Grants Programme with its Rural England Prosperity Fund allocation. Building on the success of LEADER, this new Programme will deliver £332,703 to rural businesses and communities in Tunbridge Wells (in the financial year 2024-25), with capital grants of up to £25,000.

Broadband - The 'Digital Exclusion in Tunbridge Wells' report (2021) analysed the state of digital connectivity across the borough. The report identified a number of challenges facing communities across the borough. There is a clear urban/rural divide between Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), with urban LSOAs receiving an average broadband speed of 70.66Mbps and rural LSOAs receiving an average broadband speed of 40.10Mbps (the average broadband speed in the UK at the time of the report was 64 Mbps) as shown in Figure 6 below. These speeds are considerably lower than in the other West Kent districts. This has a considerable negative impact



Source: Kent Analytics and other data sources^{3,6,8,9,10} (see 4.3)

Figure 6: Broadband connectivity across the borough

on rural businesses, with 50% reporting that they are having to use unsuitable and unreliable broadband according to a recent Federation of Small Businesses Study (2022).

To address these issues, Kent County Council is delivering the Government's Project Gigabit scheme, which aims to deliver superfast and 5G coverage to the whole of the County. Works are due to start in 2023 and will take place alongside free skills training and outreach from Digital Kent and the Government's Digital Skills Hub.

Transport & Access

The following are the key concerns that businesses raise about transport and access in the borough: transport congestion, reductions in public transport services (particularly infrequent in rural areas), the lack of safe cycling and walking infrastructure, and the provision of appropriate parking provision for businesses and customers. The need to decarbonise the transport network is a key priority in the Council's emerging Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan.

Highways – Kent County Council (KCC) is the local highway authority for Tunbridge Wells borough, including the Town Centre. Therefore, all projects that have an impact on the highway (including footways) are either led by or delivered in agreement with Kent County Council. TWBC works in partnership with KCC at both a strategic level (e.g. in the preparation of the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan) and also on local schemes, for example the High Street parklets and planters schemes in Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre. KCC (with the support of TWBC) has also recently implemented a number of 20mph schemes in the town centre and surrounding residential areas, which have been widely supported by local residents.

Buses - Bus services in the borough are provided by a mix of large national companies and some much



smaller local bus operators. Most bus services operate on a commercial basis with the remainder requiring local authority support (from Kent County Council). Commercial services tend to operate six or seven days a week, whilst supported services mostly operate on weekdays only. The largest local bus provider in the borough is Arriva Kent & Surrey. Vehicles used on the local network now include minibuses, full sized single-deck and double-deck vehicles.

Kent County Council's Public Transport Team works closely with local bus operators to seek to provide a good level of service for those living and working in the borough and in 2021 submitted its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to the Department for Transport, bidding for funding to deliver better services across the county. Whilst an award of funding was made, it is at a level that may assist in stabilising the current network but will not lead to a step-change in service improvements. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is represented at the West Kent Enhanced Partnership Group and the borough also organises the more focused Tunbridge Wells Local Bus Partnership Group as well as the Tunbridge Wells Public Transport Forum (attended by rail and bus operators). A key issue identified at the Local Bus Partnership Group is the lack of layover (waiting) space for buses in Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre.

Rail – The borough has a number of railway stations that are critical for the local economy. These are at Royal Tunbridge Wells and High Brooms on the London-Hastings line, Paddock Wood on the London-Ashford-Folkestone/Dover line and the Medway Valley Line and Ashurst on the London-Uckfield line. Key issues that the Council works with the rail operators on include improved access to stations on foot or bike and improved bus-rail interchange, as well as improve station facilities. At present services on the lines through the borough remain high frequency

despite a fall in daily patronage since the Covid-19 pandemic.

Walking and Cycling In 2018 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council commissioned the preparation of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), that was subsequently published as part of the evidence base for the new Tunbridge Wells Local Plan. The LCWIP sets out a network of priority routes for pedestrians and cyclists into and around Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre (as well as in the wider borough). The Council works with KCC to bid for funding from Active Travel England's Capability Fund and Active Travel Fund to design and deliver improved infrastructure. Developer contributions are also negotiated to provide new infrastructure where appropriate.

Parking – Tunbridge Wells Borough Council owns 13 car parks in the town centre and manages the operations. Work is underway to install electric vehicle charging in many of these car parks. TWBC also undertakes on-street parking enforcement in the town centre. TWBC has partnered with Co-Wheels to establish a very successful car club in the town centre, with a recent expansion to 8 vehicles across Royal Tunbridge Wells. A new Parking Strategy is being prepared at present.

Transport Projects - The table in Appendix D sets out a number of projects that are either being explored or are planned (depending on availability of funding) over the next 10 years. Immediate priorities are investigating cycle route links between Rusthall and Royal Tunbridge Wells and consulting on local street improvements in the St Johns/St James area of Tunbridge Wells.



Appendix A

3. Economic Development Aims and Objectives

The aims of this Economic Development Strategy are to:

- Support the development of a sustainable and inclusive local economy - that delivers for local businesses and communities, respecting the natural environment and the architectural heritage in the borough.
- Work with partners to create a business support offer that provides the best opportunities to start, grow, and invest in businesses and destinations across the borough.
- Work with partners including Town & Parish Councils to create safe and vibrant towns and villages in the borough, where businesses and communities will thrive.

The themes below are a response to the issues set out in the previous section:

Aiming for Net Zero

Help businesses to decarbonise their operations and undertake adaptation and mitigation measures to become resilient to climate change.

Creating Destinations

Work with partners to create town centres and high streets that are mixed use destinations for employment leisure, culture, retail and community use.

Encouraging Enterprise & Employment

Support enterprise and business growth in the borough to provide employment opportunities to enable residents to live well in the borough.

Supporting Rural Businesses & Communities

Develop and diversify our rural economy and build strong communities across the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Improving Sustainable Access & Connectivity

Develop sustainable transport & digital networks to support the vitality and competitiveness of the local economy, recognising the need to meet net-zero ambitions and targets.

The Action Plan below sets out projects and initiatives under these themes.



4. Economic Development Action Plan

Project/Service	Timescale	Delivery Partners	How we measure success
Aiming for Net Zero			
Create and share resources with local businesses via the TWBC Climate website and business communication channels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrofitting energy efficiencies for business premises • Renewable energy for business operations • Business travel planning • Supporting customers to adopt sustainable practices • Circular economy ideas 	Commenced and ongoing 2023 – 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTW Sustainability Forum • RTW BID • Invest West Kent • Kent County Council 	Visits to Climate Website Number of businesses accessing guidance Number of businesses accessing green grants/undertaking decarbonisation actions
Signposting to green grants and/or retrofit programmes to support SMEs	Commenced and ongoing 2023 – 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth Hub • Kent County Council • Central government 	Number of grants awarded or participation in programmes
Support Amplifi (network to promote sustainability and community objectives within businesses)	Commenced and ongoing 2023 – 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough businesses • RTWT BID 	Number of businesses engaged
Trial options for last-mile delivery for goods in Royal Tunbridge Wells (E-bike deliveries)	2024 – 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTWT BID • Town Centre businesses • UKSPF 	Delivery of trial scheme and report on outcomes
Creating Destinations			
New Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (Submission Local Plan 2021) and supporting documents prepared including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Needs Study • Town Centre Office Market Review • Town Centre Retail & Leisure Study (and update including Office Study) • Settlement Role & Function Study 	Commenced and ongoing to 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunbridge Wells Borough Council • Town & Parish Councils • Royal Tunbridge Wells Together • Local businesses 	Adoption of Local Plan

Project/Service	Timescale	Delivery Partners	How we measure success
Prepare Town Centre Plan for RTW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with stakeholders Preparation of Town Centre Study Call for Sites Preparation of Town Centre Plan 	Commenced and ongoing to 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RTWT BID RTW Town Forum Town centre businesses KCC Creative Tunbridge Wells 	Adoption of Town Centre Plan
Inward Investment Marketing Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission Invest West Kent portal Develop Invest West Kent Marketing Plan Ongoing work with Locate in Kent Contribute to annual Kent Property Market Review 	Commenced and ongoing to 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tunbridge Wells Borough Council West Kent Partners (TMBC and SDC) Locate in Kent Developers Local Commercial Agents One Media 	Number of new businesses locating in the Borough
Town Centre redevelopment/regeneration projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Royal Victoria Place redevelopment Former Cinema site development Bring BHS unit back into use Farmers Market in town centre 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Kent County Council Private developers 	Delivery of major projects
ESI issues considered in planning applications submitted to the Council	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Private Developers Parish & Town Councils 	ED responses to DM Team on applications
Visit Tunbridge Wells Marketing Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for tourism information at Amelia Scott Promotion and marketing partnership with Visit Tunbridge Wells (see Marketing Strategy under Rural Economy) Set up Tourist Information Points across the borough including training Promoting events programme in RTW 	Commenced and ongoing to 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tunbridge Wells Borough Council RTWT BID Visit Kent Visit Britain Local tourism businesses 	Website visits Social media followers Increased engagement Attendees at networking events

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Appendix A

Project/Service	Timescale	Delivery Partners	How we measure success
Royal Tunbridge Wells Together Business Improvement District (RTWT BID) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support preparation for renewal ballot in 2024 Deliver Streetscene projects (e.g. High Street improvements) Creative Tunbridge Wells initiatives 	Commenced and ongoing to 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RTWT Board RTWT Levy Payers Other partners Creative Tunbridge Wells 	Successful renewal ballot in 2024 Delivery of initiatives in Business Plan Increased footfall in RTW
Support for the Creative Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up Creative Tunbridge Wells Partnership Set up Festivals Group Increase usage of Southborough Civic Centre facility for cultural uses Submit bid for ACE Place-Partnership Funding in 2024 	Commenced and ongoing to 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Kent County Council Applause Rural Touring NPO Tunbridge Wells Cultural Consortium Amelia Scott Local creative businesses The House 	Establishment of Creative Tunbridge Wells Steering Group Recruitment of Project Manager Establishment of Working Groups Submission of Place Partnership Funding bid
Enterprise & Employment			
Council Business Portal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Signposting to TWBC Services Signposting to Growth Hub Events Newsletter sign up Digital and paper Welcome Pack 	Launched 2022, ongoing updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Business support organisations (e.g. FSB, Growth Hub) 	Feedback from local businesses on Council services Number of visits to Portal
Business Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly business e-newsletter Social media comms – Twitter and Instagram Resident's newsletter items Local Magazine items 	Commenced 2022 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Local businesses Other partners 	Number of businesses receiving newsletter Number of social media followers Number of employer visits Attendees at business events
Develop Business Welcome Pack <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare information Collate partner information 	Launched in 2023 and ongoing updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RTWT BID Other TWBC Departments Amelia Scott 	Number of packs distributed and visits to website for information?

Project/Service	Timescale	Delivery Partners	How we measure success
West Kent Business Support Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hub portal • Business advice/mentoring • Small grants • Training/networking events 	Launched in 2023, ongoing to 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunbridge Wells Borough Council • West Kent Partners Smarter Societies (Contractors)	Number of businesses supported Number of businesses increasing revenue
Develop People and Skills projects funded by Year 3 UKSPF	2024 – 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobcentre Plus • BEAM • The Education People 	To be confirmed
Annual Jobs & Training Fairs across West Kent Local Jobs Fairs in borough	Commenced and ongoing annual events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP • West Kent Partners (TMBC and SDC) 	Number of events Job seekers attending Businesses attending Jobs/training secured
Making links between businesses and schools Partnership with Kent & Medway Careers Hub/ Enterprise Adviser network - Promoting apprenticeships etc.	Commenced and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Kent Partnership (TWBC, TMBC, SDC) 	
Working with Further Education and Higher Education providers to improve offer for borough residents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canterbury Christ Church University • North Kent College (Tonbridge/Hadlow Campus) 	Commenced and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunbridge Wells Borough Council • North Kent College • Canterbury Christ Church University • University of Kent 	FE and HE courses being offered within the Borough/West Kent
Rural Economy			
Visit Tunbridge Wells Marketing Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop Tourist Information Points across Borough - Miniguide distribution to accommodation and pubs - Review and improve VTW website with additional info for rural areas - VE Networking Events outside RTW - Social media promotion for rural businesses - Commission map of borough for website and other use 	Commenced 2022, ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunbridge Wells Borough Council • Visit Kent • Local attractions • Local accommodation providers • Kent High Weald Partnership • High Weald AONB • Parish & Town Councils • Explore Kent 	Visitors to the borough (Cambridge Model) Visits to the Visit Tunbridge Wells website

Project/Service	Timescale	Delivery Partners	How we measure success
Rural Heritage Place-making UKSPF project focused on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hawkhurst - Sandhurst 	2023 – 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amelia Scott • Parish Councils 	Number of community-based heritage programmes delivered
Delivery of Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) Grants	2024 – 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Kent Partnership (TWBC, TMBC, SDC) • Parish & Town Councils • Local Partnership Group (formerly ELAG) 	Number of local businesses experiencing growth and increased turnover Number of community-led programmes as a result of support Increased visitor numbers and footfall Number of community energy projects funded
Delivery of UKSPF Community Grants Fund	Commenced in 2022, ongoing to 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish & Town Councils 	Number of Parish/Town Councils projects delivered through grants
Neighbourhood Plans in place	Commenced and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish & Town Councils 	Number of adopted Neighbourhood Plans
Delivery of high-speed broadband	Commenced and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent County Council • Broadband suppliers • Parish & Town Councils 	Improved speeds across borough
Assets of Community Value List (Community Right to Bid)	Commenced in 2012 and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish & Town Councils • Community groups • Local residents (on electoral role) 	Meeting targets for Community Right to bid legislation
Improving Sustainable Access & Connectivity			
Support work on the new Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (Submission Local Plan 2021) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport evidence base prepared to support the plan including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan - Tunbridge Wells Bus Study • Ongoing partnership work with KCC on Local Transport Plan 5 • Engage with Transport for the South East on regional Strategy 	Commenced and ongoing to 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent County Council • National Highways • Transport for the South East • Active Travel England 	New Tunbridge Wells Local Plan adopted Infrastructure Delivery Plan prepared Bids for funding submitted

Project/Service	Timescale	Delivery Partners	How we measure success
Active Travel Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liveable Streets pilot • Design work for cycle route from Rusthall – RTW Town Centre across Commons • Promote A26 active travel corridor • Promote A264 active travel corridor • Partnership with RTWT BID and KCC to upgrade the High Street scheme • RTWT Streetscene projects 	2022 – 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunbridge Wells Borough Council • Kent County Council • Active Travel England • National Highways • Bus operators • Southeastern • Network Rail • RTW Town Forum • RTWT BID 	Delivery of projects via Capability Fund and Active Travel Fund Tranche 4 Improved streetscene in RTWT and other high streets
Develop sustainable transport project pipeline in readiness for bid opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify pipeline of schemes • Commission survey/design work • Prepare and submit bids 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunbridge Wells Borough Council • Kent County Council • KMEP • Active Travel England • Tonbrige & Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group 	Successful bids to DfT/Active Travel England and others
Work with public transport operators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of Public Transport Forum • Continuing involvement in Bus Service Improvement Plan Groups including West Kent Enhanced Partnership and Local Bus Focus Group • Joint working with Southeastern and Network Rail on improving stations, including Access for All scheme at High Brooms • Respond to consultations by transport operators to lobby for improvements 	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunbridge Wells Borough Council • Arriva/Other Bus Operators • Network Rail • Southeastern • Kent County Council • Borough Public Transport Forum • JC Decaux 	Improvements to and retention of existing bus services in the borough Negotiation of s106 funding for public transport as appropriate
Parking facilities and services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of Borough Parking Strategy • Improve signage in RTW to car and coach parking • Explore options for bus layover/waiting spaces in RTW 	Commenced and ongoing to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunbridge Wells Borough Council • Kent County Council • Royal Tunbridge Wells Together BID 	Town centre performance – vacant retail units etc. Provision of information about parking

5. Role of the Council

This Strategy is set in the context of limited local authority resources and therefore the Council will work closely with its many partners to deliver the actions set out above and maximise opportunities for continued sustainable economic development.

The role of the Council includes:

- Acting as a key information point for borough businesses
- Engaging with local businesses to understand their issues and concerns
- Championing and promoting local businesses
- Developing economic development projects as resources permit (for example with UK Shared Prosperity Funding)
- Building effective economic development Partnerships
- Commissioning evidence base studies as required
- Preparing and submitting funding bids when opportunities arise
- Reviewing and updating the Action Plan and reporting on success

A full list of partner organisations is set out in Appendix B.



Appendix A: Tunbridge Wells UKSPF Projects

UKSPF Interventions	Project Name	Allocated Budget	Match Funding	UKSPF Outputs	UKSPF Outcomes
E1: Improvements to town centres & high streets	Royal Tunbridge Wells Streetscene Improvements Project Lead: TWBC	Total: £100,000 (Y1) £15,000 (Y2) £35,000 (Y3) £50,000	Total £15,000 – RTWT BID (Y1) £15,000 (Y2) Possible BID match (Y3) Possible BID match	Amount of public realm created or improved = 3853 (m2)	Increased footfall = 5%
E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces	Sherwood Lakes Improvement Scheme Project Lead: Kent High Weald Partnership	Total: £20,000 (Y1) £20,000	No Match Funding	Amount of green or blue space created or improved = 9000 (m2)	Increased users of facilities/amenities = 10%
E6: Local arts, cultural, heritage & creative activities	Creative Tunbridge Wells Project Lead: TWBC	Total: £85,000 (Y1) £15,000 (Y2) £35,000 (Y3) £35,000	Total £23,800 from Art Council England (Y1) £9000 (Y2) £14,800	Number of organisations receiving non-financial support = 20 Number of local events or activities supported = 25	Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support = 2
	Rural Heritage Placemaking Project Lead: The Amelia Scott	Total: £70,000 (Y2) £35,000 (Y3) £35,000	TBC		
E9: Impactful volunteering and/or social action projects	Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Community Kitchen Project Lead: Cranbrook & Sissinghurst PC	Total: £17,000 (Y1) £17,000	Total £3600 (Y1) £3600	Number of volunteering opportunities supported = 10 Number of projects = 1	Volunteering numbers as a result of support 10

Appendix A

UKSPF Interventions	Project Name	Allocated Budget	Match Funding	UKSPF Outputs	UKSPF Outcomes
E10: Local sports facilities, tournaments, teams & leagues	Southborough Football Pitch Drainage Project Lead: Southborough Town Council	Total: £70,000 (Y3) £70,000	TBC	Number of facilities supported/created = 1	Increased users of facilities/amenities = 5%
E11: Capacity building & infrastructure support local groups	Community Grants Programme Project Lead: TWBC	Total: £58,500 (Y1) £19,420 (Y2) £23,000 (Y3) £16,080	Total – not known but project contributions likely from Parish & Town Councils	Number of organisations receiving grants = 10 Number of facilities supported/created = 3	Number of new or improved community facilities as a result of support = 3
E16: Open markets & town centre retail & service sector	Royal Tunbridge Wells Farmers Market Project Lead: TWBC	Total: £10,000 (Y2) £10,000	No match funding	Number of local markets supported = 1	Increased footfall = 10%
E17: Development & promotion of visitor economy	Visit Tunbridge Wells Marketing Programme Project Lead: TWBC	Total: £35,000 (Y1) £5,000 (Y2) £15,000 (Y3) £15,000	Total £33,000 from TWBC Economic Development (Y1) £11,000 (Y2) £11,000 (Y3) £11,000	Number of businesses receiving non-financial support = 525 Number of people reached = 325,000	Increased visitor numbers = 15%
E22: Enterprise infrastructure & employment / innovation sites	Vacant Commercial/Retail Unit Support Project Lead: TWBC	Total: £260,000 (Y3) £260,000	TBC	Number of commercial buildings developed or improved = 1 M2 of commercial buildings developed or improved = 4000m2	Jobs created = 20

UKSPF Interventions	Project Name	Allocated Budget	Match Funding	UKSPF Outputs	UKSPF Outcomes
E24: Training hubs, business support offers, incubators & accelerators	West Kent Business Support Scheme Project Lead: West Kent Partnership	Total: £54,500 (Y1) £4,500 (Y2) £25,000 (Y3) £25,000	Total £109,000 from SDC and TMBC (West Kent Partnership) (Y1) £9000 (Y2) £50,000 (Y3) £50,000	Number of businesses receiving non-financial support = 20 Number of businesses receiving grants = 20	Number of early-stage firms which increase their revenue following support = 10
E29: Supporting decarbonisation & improving natural environment	Commercial E-Bike/E-Cargo Bike Scheme Project Lead: TWBC	Total: 25,000 (Y3) £25,000	TBC	Number of businesses receiving non-financial support = 10	Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes = 10
E33: Employment support for economically inactive people	TBC	Total: £80,000 (Y3) £80,000	TBC	Number of socially excluded people accessing support = 25	Number of people engaged in job-searching following support = 200
E35: Enrichment & volunteering activities	TBC	Total: £75,000 (Y3) £75,000	TBC	Number of volunteering opportunities supported = 10	Number of people experiencing reduced structural barriers into employment and into skills provision = 50

Appendix B: List of partner organisations

Active Travel England	Kent and Medway Growth Hub	Seven Wonders of the Weald
Amplifi	Kent Apprenticeships	Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce
Arts Council England	Kent County Council (KCC)	Southeastern Rail
Assembly Hall Theatre	Kent High Weald Partnership (KHWP)	The Amelia Scott Cultural Centre
Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU)	Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce	The Education People
Cultural Consortium	Kent District/Borough Councils	The Forum (cultural venue)
Creative Tunbridge Wells	Local Bus Operators	Town and Country Housing (TCH)
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)	Local Businesses	Town and Parish Councils
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)	Local Schools	Transport for the South East
Explore Kent	Locate in Kent (LIK)	Trinity Theatre
Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)	National Highways	Tonbridge & Tunbridge Wells Bicycle Users Group (TWBUG)
High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit	Network Rail	Tunbridge Wells in Bloom
IMAGO	North Kent College (Tonbridge/Hadlow)	University of Kent
JC Decaux	Private Sector Developers	Visit England
Jobcentre Plus (DWP)	Produced in Kent	Visit Kent
Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP)	Royal Tunbridge Wells Together (RTWT) Business Improvement District	West Kent Partnership (WKP) / Invest West Kent (IWK)
	Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum (residents)	West Kent Mind
	Safe Town Partnership (STP)	

Appendix C: Relevant Plans and Strategies

There are a number of plans and strategies emerging or already published that establish the context for this new Strategy. We are not seeking to duplicate these, but to make sure that there is alignment with the issues and actions set out in this Strategy.

- Building a Better Borough: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Plan 2022-24 - TWBC
- Borough Climate Strategy 2023 – 2028 - TWBC
- Borough Cultural Strategy 2014 - 2024 – TWBC
- Borough Parking Strategy 2015 - 2026 – TWBC
- Borough Transport Strategy 2015 - 2026 – TWBC
- New Local Plan Submission/Site Allocations Development Plan Document: including
 - Settlement Role and Function Study 2017 and update in 2021
 - Economic Development Topic Paper 2021
 - Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells Economic Needs Study 2016
 - Tunbridge Wells Retail and Leisure Study (updated in 2022)
- Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Office Study (updated in 2022)
- Hotel Capacity Study 2017
- Retail, Commercial Leisure and Town Centre Use Study (updated in 2021)
- Tunbridge Wells Cultural and Creative Framework (2012 and 2019)
- HJA Evidence Base for TWBC Recovery Strategy (2022)
- Case for West Kent (2022) - IWK
- West Kent Priorities for Growth (2022) - IWK
- Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy (2021) - SELEP
- Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy (2021) - KMEP
- Council Strategy 2022-26 - KCC
- Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth Without Gridlock 2016-2031 – KCC
- KCC Business Intelligence Reports
- Active Travel Strategy (2018 refresh) – KCC
- Economic Impact of Tourism, Tunbridge Wells 2021 – Visit Kent
- Local Skills Improvement Plan (2022) – KICC
- Transport Strategy for South East (2022) – TfSE
- Levelling Up White Paper (2021) – Government
- Skills for Jobs (2021) – Government
- Build Back Greener (2021) – Government
- Powering Up Britain: The Net Zero Growth Plan (2023) - Government
- UK Innovation Strategy (2021) -Government
- UK Digital Strategy (2022) - Government
- National AI Strategy (2021) - Government
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2023) - Government
- National Disability Strategy (2021) – Government
- Alison Rose Review (2023) – NatWest
- Build Back Better (2021) – Government
- Spring Budget (2023) – Government
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund Prospectus (2022) – Government
- Rural England Prosperity Fund Prospectus (2022) – Government

Appendix D: Transport Projects

Project Summary	Timescale	Delivery
New cycle route between Langton Green/Rusthall and RTW town centre via the Commons (LCWIP Phase 1)	Design 2023 Delivery 2024-25	Funding for design work received as part of Capability Fund.
Improved A26 Cycle Route between RTW and Tonbridge Town Centre (LCWIP Phase 2)	Not known	Future Active Travel Fund Tranche S106 funding
A264 Pembury Road Cycle Route (LCWIP Phase 1)	Not known	Future Active Travel Fund Tranche s106 funding
Walking Route improvements into RTW town centre (LCWIP Phase 1)	Ongoing	KCC Maintenance Budget Future Active Travel Fund Tranche
Hawkenbury to Town Centre Cycle Route (LCWIP Phase 1)	Not known	Future Active Travel Fund Tranche s106 Funding
Expansion of Co-Wheels Car Club – increased number of vehicles	2023	s106 Funding
Increased number of EV Charging Points in Town Centre Car Parks	2023 – 2024	TWBC
Explore options for additional bus layover spaces in town centre	2023	TWBC KCC
Trial cargo bike scheme for business deliveries in town centre	2024 – 2025	UKSPF
Other Bus Service Improvement Plan Projects including: Exploration of options to provide Demand Responsive Transport services Lower fares and more flexible ticketing, electronic and smart card ticketing Better integration with other modes of transport including rail and active travel Modern comfortable vehicles with a move to zerocarbon vehicles Traffic management measures that will aid reliability of buses on the network Improvements to bus stop facilities including passenger information Improved information for passengers planning journeys	From 2023 – 2040	KCC Bus Service Improvement Plan
Improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure on Mount Ephraim between Royal Chase and Grosvenor Road/A26 mini-roundabout	2023 – 2025	S106 Funding
Explore options for e-bike and/or e-scooter rental schemes in town centre	2023 – 2025	To be confirmed

Appendix E: Employment and Land Allocations

Defined Key Employment Area	Mix of Uses Appropriate
Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre	<p>Class E – including retail, financial, professional services and other business uses, food and drink, non-residential institutions, assembly and leisure, education and health</p> <p>Class F – appropriate leisure uses Class C – hotels, dwelling houses and residential institutions and other sui generis uses of an appropriate type and scale, including drinking establishments and hot food takeaways</p>
Royal Tunbridge Wells North Farm/ Longfield Road area	<p>Class B – general industry and storage and distribution</p> <p>Class E – financial, professional and other business uses, retail, food and drink, and leisure</p> <p>Class F – appropriate leisure uses and other sui generis uses of an appropriate type and scale</p>
Southborough High Brooms Industrial Area	<p>Class E – financial, professional and other business uses, and appropriate leisure uses</p> <p>Class F – appropriate leisure uses</p> <p>Class B8 - storage and distribution and other sui generis uses of an appropriate type and scale</p>
Paddock Wood Eldon Way and West of Maidstone Road	<p>Class E – financial, professional and other business uses</p> <p>Class B2 – general industry</p> <p>Class B8 - storage and distribution</p>
Paddock Wood Transfesa Road East and West	<p>Class E – financial, professional and other business uses</p> <p>Class B2 – general industry</p> <p>Class B8 - storage and distribution</p>
Gill's Green Business Park	<p>Class E – financial, professional and other business uses</p> <p>Class B2 – general industry</p> <p>Class B8 - storage and distribution</p>
Capel Brook Farm	<p>Class E – financial, professional and other business uses</p> <p>Class B2 – general industry</p> <p>Class B8 - storage and distribution</p>

Table: Land allocations in the new Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (Submission Local Plan 2021)

Site	Settlement/ Parish	Policy Number	Net developable area (ha)
Land adjacent to Longfield Road	Royal Tunbridge Wells	AL/RTW 17	13.4
Land east of Maidstone Road	Paddock Wood	STR/SS 1	6.6
Land east of Transfesa Road	Paddock Wood	STR/SS 1	4.6
Hawkhurst Station Business Park	Gill's Green	AL/HA 7	1.2

Photographic credit, with thanks to: David Hodgkinson, Jonathan Buss, John McFarlane, Steve Fuller, Sarah Mott, Bewl Water and Salomons Estate.

Adoption of new Tenancy Strategy 2023

For Cabinet on 27/07/2023

Summary

Lead Member: Cllr Hugo Pound – Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning

Lead Director: Paul Taylor- Director of Change and Communities

Head of Service: Gary Stevenson – Head of Housing, Health and Environment

Report Author: Tobi Phillips – Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer

Classification: Public document (non-exempt)

Wards Affected: All

Approval Timetable	Date
Management Board	22/05/2023
Portfolio Holder	02/09/2022
Housing Advisory Panel	13/12/2022
Cabinet	27/07/2023

Recommendations

Officer recommendations as supported by the Portfolio Holder:

1. That Cabinet approve the adoption of the Tenancy Strategy 2023 as Appendix A. This report recommends the adoption of the updated the new tenancy strategy to align with the policies set out in the new local plan & allocation and homelessness schemes

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The 2011 Localism Act introduced a duty on local authorities to prepare and publish a Tenancy Strategy. Under the terms of the Localism Act, councils in England must prepare and publish a strategy (a “tenancy strategy”) setting out the matters to which the registered providers of social housing for its area are to have regard in formulating policies.
- 1.2 The Tenancy Strategy is an overarching strategy, which gives guidance and information to Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPSH)
- 1.3 The strategy must set out matters which all registered providers of social housing that operate within the borough must consider when framing their own tenancy policies.
- 1.4 The Tenancy Strategy is not an isolated document; it is in conformity with the council's Homelessness Strategy and the council's Allocations Policy. It also has regard to the policies for the supply of new affordable housing in the Borough set out in the Local Plan.

2. The purpose of the Tenancy Strategy

- 2.1 The purpose of the Tenancy Strategy is to outline the issues which housing associations must consider when formulating or amending their policies on flexible tenure and affordable housing in the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council area. These policies must relate to:
 - The kinds of tenancies the RRPSH grants
 - The circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular kind
 - Where they grant tenancies for a certain term, the lengths of the terms granted
 - The circumstances in which they will or will not grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of the existing tenancy
- 2.2 The submission Local Plan sets out the Council's objective of providing genuinely affordable housing and emphasizes the Council's general approach to tenure provision and partitions the provision of onsite affordable housing as 60% social rent and 40% intermediary/ Shared ownership.
- 2.3 The Tenancy Strategy also caps affordable rent to the Local Housing Allowance which is rent charged on affordable housing up to 80% of market rent ensuring that properties available to the housing register don't exceed the total housing allowance element of universal credit available to housing need applicants.

- 2.4 The Tenancy Strategy also incorporates & reinforces The Regulator of Social Housing published new Rent Standard which came into effect on 1 April 2020.
- 2.5 The Social Housing White Paper published on 17 November 2020 set out a Charter for Social Housing Residents and affirms the Government's continuing commitment to give social housing tenants a greater voice, the right to safe and secure accommodation and of the importance of good quality homes and neighbourhoods to live in.
- 2.6 The Tenancy Strategy sets out the strategic position of the Council with regards to the use of, review of and ending of fixed term tenancies, affordable rents, mutual exchanges, succession rights.

3. Options Considered

- 3.1 **Option 1** That Cabinet approves the contents of the draft Tenancy Strategy 2023 at Appendix A, updating current strategy.
- 3.2 **Option 2** That Cabinet proposes changes to the draft Strategy at Appendix A.
- 3.3 Tunbridge Wells BC must publish a tenancy strategy in accordance with the localism act 2011, The Council could continue to operate with the ten-year-old Tenancy Strategy of January 2013.

4. Preferred Option and Reason

- 4.1 **Option 1** is the Preferred Option as the Tenancy strategy has not been reviewed since its initial conception in 2012, welfare reform and the new local plan presents an opportunity for the tenancy strategy to be reviewed to ensure tenancies strategies are in line with the council's current policy positions.

5. Consultation on Options

- 5.1 The nominations agreement has been drafted with regard to the guidance and input from Kent Housing Group and Registered Housing providers operating within the borough.

Recommendation from Cabinet Advisory Board

5.2 The Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board were consulted on 12 July 2023 and agreed the following:

5.3 xxxx

6 Implementation

6.2 Once adopted the new tenancy strategy will be available to our housing association partners and our housing applicants for guidance. and will be available online to be accessible, immediate adoption is recommended

7 Appendices and Background Documents

Appendices:

- Appendix A: Draft Tenancy Strategy

8 Cross-Cutting Issues

A. Legal (including the Human Rights Act)

Under section 150 of the Localism Act, local housing authorities must prepare and publish a tenancy strategy setting out the matters to which the registered providers of social housing for its district to have regard in formulating policies relating to:

- a) the kinds of tenancies they grant,
- b) the circumstances in which they will grant a tenancy of a particular kind,
- c) where they grant tenancies for a term certain, the lengths of the terms, and
- d) the circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the coming to an end of an existing tenancy

A local housing authority must have regard for its tenancy strategy in exercising its housing management functions, must keep its tenancy strategy under review, and may modify or replace it from time to time.

Robin Harris Team Leader Contentious & Corporate Governance Mid Kent Legal Officer
04/07/2023

B. Finance and Other Resources

The Tenancy Strategy has no financial implications for the council
Tobi Phillips Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer 20/06/2023

C. Staffing

The Tenancy Strategy has no staffing implications for the council
Tobi Phillips Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer Emailed 20/06/2023

D. Risk Management

As the council isn't a stock holding authority issuing tenancies the tenancy strategy has no tenancy risk implications.

Tobi Phillips Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer email 20/06/2023

E. Environment (inc. Biodiversity) and Sustainability

The Tenancy Strategy has no Environmental implications for the council

Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer 20/06/2023

F. Community Safety

The Tenancy Strategy helps to enforce tenancy strategies and procedures which can help promote affordable housing tenure which could lead to safer communities

Confirmed Tobi Phillips Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer 20/06/2023

G. Equalities

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken.

The aims of the Duty are:

- (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
- (ii) (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and
- (iii) (iii) foster good relations between people who share a

protected characteristic and people who do not share it. Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

Agenda Item 7

- To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of this review and the information gathered and reviewed did not identify any negative impact or difference for people with the legal defined protected characteristics.

The tenancy strategy requires that housing associations provide equality impact assessments for their individual rent and tenancy strategy, the strategy has the potential to promote equality of opportunity as the use of lifetime tenancies for the most vulnerable ensures this.

Confirmed Tobi Phillips Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer 20/06/2023

H. Data Protection

The Tenancy Strategy has no Data Protection implications and doesn't involve the processing of personal information for the council

Tobi Phillips Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer 26/06/2023

I. Health and Safety

The Tenancy Strategy has no health and safety implications for the council

Confirmed Tobi Phillips Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer 20/06/2023

J. Health and Wellbeing

The Tenancy Strategy can help facilitate the provision of affordable housing which can promote the overall wellbeing of the community

Confirmed Tobi Phillips Affordable Housing and Enabling Officer 20/06/2023

Tenancy Strategy 2023

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Tenancy Strategy seeks to ensure that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) and Registered Housing Providers (RP) work effectively in partnerships to meet the council's strategic housing priorities
- 1.2 The purpose of the tenancy strategy is to provide guidance to registered providers operating within the borough
- 1.3 The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to develop a tenancy strategy setting out the matters which registered providers should have regard to when formulating their policies for their own stock, relating to;
- Tenancy Types Granted
 - Circumstances in which tenancy types will be granted
 - length or duration of the term granted of tenancy
 - The circumstances in which they will grant a further tenancy on the expiry of a fixed-term tenancy
- 1.4 Registered Providers of social housing work across multiple local authority areas and this Tenancy Strategy is meant to provide guidance in the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council area only.
- 1.5 The basis of our strategy is the Kent Tenancy Strategy Framework, written by Kent Housing Group on behalf of all 13 local authorities in Kent.
- 1.6 All RPs need to have developed a tenancy policy before they can implement fixed-term tenancies. This Tenancy Strategy will assist them in developing such policies or updating any existing policies. The full regulatory requirements for Registered Providers of Social Housing are available at:
<http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/ourwork/regulation>

2. Tenancy Terms

2.1 Introductory Tenancy

- 2.1.1 This is a probationary Tenancy usually consisting of a one-year trial period whereas long the terms and commitments of tenancy are met, tenants are then either given an assured or an assured shorthold tenancy agreement.

2.1.2 The Council supports the use of introductory or probationary tenancies of one year followed by fixed-term tenancies.

2.2 Assured Tenancies (Life-time Tenancies)

2.2.1 Assured tenancies are granted by registered providers of social housing under the Housing Act 1988 Under the Localism Act, RPs must offer secure or assured tenancies to applicants who were already social tenants before the provisions were enacted and this applies to mutual exchanges, reciprocal moves or moves as a result of major works or regeneration.

2.2.2 The provision of lifetime tenancies will be appropriate for some applicants on the housing register. This includes households where the circumstances which led to them being granted a tenancy are unlikely to change over time, this may include applicants with long term physical or mental health conditions, an elderly applicant living in specially designated housing such as sheltered housing and extra care housing

2.3 Fixed Term Tenancies

2.3.1 This is also known as a flexible or assured short-hold tenancy and is intended to last for a fixed period. Normally five-year fixed-term tenancies are issued, but two-year fixed-term tenancies may be issued in some circumstances. Fixed-term tenancies are different from 'lifetime' tenancies, which have no set end date.

2.3.2 Fixed-term tenancies provide a way of making use of limited stock as well as linking tenancy renewal and length of tenancy to responsibilities.

2.3.3 Housing associations using fixed-term tenancies should publish clear and accessible policies outlining their approach to tenancy management, including an equality impact assessment of the policy. The policies should include:

- The types of tenancies to be granted
- Where tenancies are granted for a fixed term, the length of those terms
- The circumstances under which a particular tenancy will be granted

- The circumstances under which a tenancy may or may not be reissued at the end of the fixed term
 - The way in which a tenant or prospective tenant may appeal or complain against a decision not to grant another tenancy on expiry of the fixed term
 - The advice and assistance that will be given to tenants to find alternative accommodation
- 2.3.4 There is a presumption that the majority of fixed-term tenancies will be for a minimum of five years following which tenants' circumstances will be assessed to establish if a new fixed-term tenancy should be offered.
- 2.3.5 It is expected that the majority of fixed-term tenancies will be renewed, and this expectation should be communicated to tenants at the start and periodically throughout their tenancy.
- 2.3.6 The regulator states that tenancies of less than five years should only be granted in exceptional circumstances. There may be exceptional circumstances which arise in individual cases, which would justify granting a fixed term of tenancy of fewer than five years.
- 2.3.7 Types of exceptional circumstances in which RPs may grant a renewable tenancy of fewer than five years include where an existing five-year tenancy has come to an end, and a further shorter term is more appropriate because, for example, the tenant has a history of not keeping to the terms of their tenancy agreement. This will provide clarity on a tenant's responsibilities and provide an opportunity for any necessary support to be put in place to help sustain the tenancy.
- 2.3.8 Examples of breaches of the tenancy agreement could include; where the tenant has not kept to the terms of a rent arrears agreement for eight weeks, or where there have been complaints of nuisance or anti-social behaviour and warning letters have been issued, but evidence that the nuisance or anti-social behaviour is continuing.

2.4 Tenancy Renewal

- 2.4.1 RPs are expected to review a fixed-term tenancy six months before it is due to end to decide whether it should be renewed and must publish clear guidance on the process criteria to be used in deciding whether a tenancy should be renewed.

- 2.4.2 The Localism act set outs the procedure for RP's in circumstances where the decision is made to not grant another tenancy after a fixed-term tenancy.
- 2.4.3 It is essential that RPs clearly communicate renewal terms to new tenants when they are offered fixed-term tenancies so they understand that in most circumstances tenancies will be renewed. This will help tenants, particularly those that are vulnerable, feel connected and settled and also able to contribute to their local areas and to invest in their homes.
- 2.4.4 To ensure the process is dealt with as sensitively as possible, whilst also ensuring key outcomes are still achieved, TWBC supports the following approach: The tenancy renewal meeting should be issued promptly to give enough time to consider all issues and for appeals to be made.
- 2.4.5 In circumstances where the tenancy is likely to be renewed, but the property is no longer suitable for the tenants' needs, it would be suitable to offer the tenant an alternative and more suitable property under a new fixed term tenancy where, for example
- The property is no longer suitable in size for the tenant due to under or over occupation
 - The property has been extensively adapted for someone with a disability who no longer lives with the tenant, and this would allow the property to be released for someone who will benefit from the adaptation
- 2.4.6 Where a tenancy is not going to be renewed, Registered Housing providers should give their tenants no less than six months' notice in writing. The notice must:
- State that the landlord does not propose to grant another tenancy on the expiry of the flexible tenancy
 - Set out the landlord's reasons for not proposing to grant another tenancy
 - Inform the tenant of their right to request a review of the landlord's proposal and of the time within which such a request must be made

- 2.4.7 Tenancies should generally not be renewed where there has been a serious and persistent breach of the tenancy agreement, such as antisocial behaviour and criminality. RPs should take the following in consideration:
- Consideration should be given to not renewing tenancies where the tenant is not engaging in the review process (any vulnerability issues need to be fully taken into account) Generally tenants felt this approach is fair
 - Income and capital should be taken into account and other appropriate housing options discussed, such as intermediate tenures.
 - RPs should take a consistent, fair and transparent approach to decisions at the point of tenancy review
 - The contribution of the household to the overall vitality of the community and the potential impact on the community if they were to move out of the area
- 2.4.8 In situations where a decision has been taken by a registered housing provider not to renew a tenancy at the end of a fixed-term, the provider should seek to engage with the tenant at the earliest possible opportunity to make them aware of the provider's intentions.
- 2.4.9 Housing associations must inform the local authority of a potential eviction before a two-month notice is served.

2.5 Existing & Transferring tenants

- 2.5.1 Registered housing providers should ensure that any existing tenants that are moving to another property and as a result are being offered a change of terms to their current tenancy understand the changes to their terms and any implications this may have.
- 2.5.2 Registered Providers can determine whether a tenant will keep their current terms but in cases of under-occupation or a tenant moving into a property which has been adapted for their specific needs, TWBC would recommend that if a tenant had a periodic or 'lifetime' tenancy and/or were paying social rent that this should be maintained. In situations where a tenant is forced to leave their property under circumstances

beyond their control, Registered Providers will need to strongly consider if it is appropriate to move these tenants to different terms.

2.6 Succession

- 2.6.1 Right of Succession Under the Housing Act 1985, a range of family members were able to succeed to a tenancy on the death of a Secure Tenant including but not limited to spouses, partners, civil partners, grandparents, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces and adopted children.
- 2.6.2 The Localism Act 2011 introduced changes to the succession framework, whereby there can only be one succession, and when one joint tenant dies, this counts as the one succession. Under the Localism Act, Secure Tenancies that started after 1 April 2012 are limited to the succession of the spouse or civil partners as an automatic right.

2.7 Mutual Exchange

- 2.7.1 The term mutual exchange describes the ability of two (or more) tenants in the public housing sector to move houses by swapping their homes.
- 2.7.2 The Localism Act created a mechanism for mutual exchanges to protect certain lifetime tenants. If an assured lifetime or secure lifetime tenancies granted before the 1st of April 2012 conducts an exchange with a flexible tenant, their existing tenancies are surrendered, and a new tenancy is issued to each party. The previously secure or assured lifetime tenants are granted another secure or assured lifetime tenancy. The fixed-term tenant is granted a new tenancy, but there is no particular provision regarding its status.
- 2.7.3 Mutual exchanges can be refused due to current rent arrears, anti-social behaviour or any other breach of tenancy.
- 2.7.4 A mutual exchange applicant may be able to appeal a decision if a mutual exchange is refused or a response hasn't been received within six weeks.

3. Housing Need

- 3.1 The National Census 2021 identified that Tunbridge Wells has a population of 115300 the Council has a housing register which is used to allocate council and other registered provider accommodation. The housing register also gives an indication of the need for affordable housing in the district.
- 3.2 In Tunbridge Wells, the population size has increased slightly by (0.2%), from around 115,000 in 2011 to 115,300 in 2021. This is lower than the increase for England which 6.6%
- 3.3 There has been an increase of 17.4% in people aged 65 years and over within the borough which coincides national statistics of ageing population.
- 3.4 The supply of affordable housing with the borough is limited and due to the economic climate delivery of new affordable housing remains low and is falling short of need.
- 3.5 As of April 2023, the Council have 827 active households on the housing register. The need is broken down as follows.

1-bed need	2-bed need	3-bed need	4-bed need
298 Households	234 Households	231 Households	63 Households

- 3.6 Data indicates that on a yearly basis more applications are received for households seeking 1 & 2 bed properties than 3 & 4 beds however the average yearly lets of 1 & 2 beds are significantly higher therefore the waiting times for those applicants are significantly less than the waiting times of those applicants seeking 3-4 bedrooms.
- 3.7 On average applicants with a housing need of 3 bedrooms are likely to wait over 3 times longer for a suitably sized property, than those applicants seeking a two bedroom need within the borough
- 3.8 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is committed to preventing homelessness and providing the community with housing options by sustaining tenancies and helping people cope with the effects of welfare reform to reduce poverty and increase life skills and employment.

4. Housing Rent Levels

- 4.1 Rents are set under two rent regimes: Social Rents and Affordable Rents. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) produced a "Policy Statement on rents for social housing" in February 2019, which sets out the government's policy for setting social housing rents from 1 April 2020 onwards.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781746/Policy_Statement.pdf

Affordable Rent	Social Rent
<p>Affordable rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent inclusive of service charges, where applicable</p> <p>Inflation in local market rents and restrictions on the LHA rate means that an affordable rent set at 80% of the market rent exceeds the LHA rate in many areas. To ensure that affordable rents are truly affordable for tenants, Affordable rent will be capped at the Local Housing Allowance, if 80% of open market value exceeds the equivalent LHA rate</p> <p>The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is based on the area in which the claimant lives and the number of people living in their household. It is not based on the rent that they are charged by their landlord. The <u>LHA rate</u> is used to calculate housing benefit entitlement for most customers living in privately rented accommodation. LHA rates are set by the central government.</p>	<p>Social rent is paid to registered providers and local authorities. It is low-cost rent that is set by a government formula. This means it is significantly lower than the rent a tenant would pay in the normal market.</p> <p>TWBC is committed to providing social rent on developments where possible and encourages a mixture of tenures on a development to improve viability.</p>

- 4.2 From the 1st of April 2020, Registered Providers may increase Social Rents or Affordable Rents by no more than the CPI (at September of the previous year) plus 1% per year for five years.
- 4.3 The council expects all Registered Providers to comply with the Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing 2020 and the Rent Standard and any subsequent amendments in legislation, regulation or guidance.
- 4.4 Policy H5 within the new Local plan confirms the council's approach to tenure provision and partitions the provision of onsite affordable housing as 60% social rent and 40% intermediary scheme.

4.5 To further encourage the provision of Social Rent on new developments, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will consider the total number of units of affordable housing on a site to ensure the overall development remains viable.

4.6 Affordable Housing delivered on an affordable rent basis within the borough of Tunbridge Wells will be capped at LHA rate and will only be considered if delivering the provision of affordable housing at social rent on a site isn't viable.

4.7 Local Housing Allowance

High Weald

Bedroom	Rent
Shared Accommodation	£ 100.11
One Bedroom	£ 159.95
Two-Bedroom	£ 207.12
Three Bedroom	£ 260.05
Four Bedroom	£ 345.21

Ashford

Bedroom	Rent
Shared Accommodation	£ 78.00
One Bedroom	£ 143.84
Two-Bedroom	£ 168.00
Three Bedroom	£ 207.12
Four Bedroom	£ 260.05

Taken from: <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk/> October 2022

5. Equality and diversity

5.1 The Council are committed to advancing equality and ensuring that services are accessible, provided fairly and meet the needs of those who require them most.

5.2 In managing the allocation function, the Council and all Registered Providers must ensure that they comply with the Equality Act 2010

5.3 This strategy has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA). We expect all Registered Providers to undertake and publish an EIA of their own tenancy policies

6. Review

6.1 This Tenancy Strategy will be reviewed in accordance with Localism Act 2011 and as changes in legislation, regulation or guidance may dictate.

- 6.2 Significant changes will be taken through the council's committee process for consideration

Urgent Business

For Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board on Wednesday 12 July 2023

Procedural Item

To consider any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent, for the reasons to be stated, in accordance with Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Date of the Next Meeting

For Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board on Wednesday 12 July 2023

Procedural Item

To note that the next scheduled meeting is Wednesday 6 September 2023