



# **Our district Our world**

Enhancing prosperity  
and well-being for all

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**Corporate Plan  
2025-2030**

# Our district, our world

Enhancing prosperity and well-being for all

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# Welcome to our corporate plan

## ‘Our district, our world’ Enhancing prosperity and well-being for all



It is important that the work of the council reflects the needs of our residents both now and in the future.

Welcome to the council’s new corporate plan for 2025-2030. We’ve called it ‘Our district, our world’ because we recognise that what we do has an impact not only locally but also on the world around us. The subtitle ‘Enhancing prosperity and well-being for all’ summarises our ambition for the district.

The plan sets out a blueprint for our towns, villages and communities for the next five years. We will work with our communities, schools, businesses and partners to deliver a better future for our residents, grow our economy and provide a better experience for our visitors. Our aspiration is to improve the services we are required to deliver and make them more efficient and easier to access. We will also be working with our communities to improve people’s well-being and the health of the environment.

To get to this point, we undertook a wide-ranging consultation exercise (outlined on page 4) and we have taken on board your comments and ambitions for the district in shaping this plan.

This plan has sustainability at its heart. A healthy environment is the greatest gift that we can offer to young people. We all acknowledge that we must live within our means. The well-being of our communities, the strength of the local economy and enhancing the environment are central to our ambitions and the needs of all our residents. The plan shows how we will reflect this in our work.

We are lucky to live and work in this amazing district, benefiting from a spectacular coastline, wonderful rural locations and thriving towns where businesses flourish. We will invest across the district to build on this, including delivering ‘Folkestone: A Brighter Future’, our transformative project for the town and the Coast Drive destination project in the Romney Marsh.

Our residents and communities are central to our ambitions, and we will support them through delivering new affordable and sustainable homes. Alongside this we will deliver Otterpool Park, our highly ambitious new garden town.

We also recognise the important role we have working in partnership to improve services - including transport, water quality and roads - and through this plan we will strengthen our approach to this, advocating strongly on your behalf for the benefit of our district.

**Councillor Jim Martin, Leader**



**Susan Priest, Chief Executive**



## What is a corporate plan ?

A corporate plan sets the direction for the council; how it works to shape the future of the district for its residents and businesses.

Although we published our last plan in 2021, much has changed since then. This new corporate plan has been developed to take account of new challenges, and it reflects the comments we received from residents, businesses and community groups during public consultation.

Most of the services we deliver we must provide by law. These include waste collection, determining planning applications, distributing housing benefit and helping people find housing. We will continue to focus on these services. But where we have flexibility in delivering services, and where we can work with other organisations to improve services and residents' quality of life, we will do so.

This plan is intended to guide our work and make sure we're focussing on the right priorities over the coming years. Specific actions to deliver the plan's ambitions are set out in an accompanying action plan.



## About Folkestone & Hythe district

Folkestone & Hythe is a coastal district, covering around 140 square miles, with many historic towns and villages - the largest town is Folkestone in the north of the district. Largely rural in character, the district enjoys unique landscapes and habitats. To the south there are the wide-open skies, marshland landscape and sheep-grazing fields of the Romney Marsh. To the north there is the escarpment and hills of the Kent Downs, a nationally protected landscape.

This unique landscape of chalk hills, cliffs and the Channel is central to a bid to UNESCO for Global Geopark status for the Kent Downs and neighbouring protected landscapes in France.

We have fast connections to London, through the HS1 railway line, and to continental Europe, through Eurotunnel, and the UK's busiest ferry port is a short distance away at Dover. The district is recognised as a centre for the creative economy, culture, leisure and tourism. Folkestone town centre and seafront have seen significant investment in recent years, and there is more to come, through the 'Folkestone – A Brighter Future' project. In the Romney Marsh, we have developed a new business hub at New Romney, and we work in the Romney Marsh Partnership to secure a strong economic future for the area.

While some neighbourhoods suffer from high deprivation, the community hubs, set up during the Covid pandemic, show what we can achieve as a district when we come together to improve the lives of local people.

# Folkestone & Hythe district in facts and figures

## Population



**111,000** people ► Forecast to increase by **24%**, reaching **135,900** by **2042**, faster than the Kent average

## Location



Folkestone to London in just **53 minutes** via High Speed 1 rail line  
Folkestone to Calais in **35 minutes** via Eurotunnel (Le Shuttle)  
**15 minutes** away from the UK's largest seaport at Dover

## Proportion of businesses in the district economy



**13.4%** in the tourism sector  
**12.3%** in the knowledge economy  
**8.7%** in the creative sector, growing almost **7%** over the last 5 years  
**5.2%** in food and drink production  
**4.8%** in manufacturing



Folkestone & Hythe District



## Visitor economy



**4.7m** visitors = **£269m** spent in the local area  
Supporting **5,045** jobs

## Environment



**68%** agricultural land  
**16%** woodland, open land and water  
Kent Downs National Landscape covering **37%** of the district  
**26 miles** of beaches and cliffs  
Internationally important habitats at Dungeness  
**Potential UNESCO** Global Geopark status for chalk hills, cliffs and the Channel

## Heritage



**913** Listed Buildings  
**65** Scheduled Monuments  
**21** Conservation Areas  
**2** Registered Parks and Gardens  
**1** Protected Wreck Site

**Experience the extraordinary**

## Your consultation comments

In developing this plan, we wanted to have a genuinely open consultation that would enable residents, businesses, young people and partners to influence the council's work. We used a variety of ways to consult, including focus groups, door-to-door research, events with schools and young people, interviews with business owners and online and paper-based surveys. This resulted in rich feedback from a wide variety of people and groups that has informed our final plan.

There was general support for the themes and guiding principles we consulted on, but many comments related to services that we don't deliver, such as public transport, roads, motorways, healthcare and water quality.

It's clear from people's comments that we need to work closely with other organisations to improve the quality of all services. In this plan we're looking to strengthen our community leadership role to achieve better results for our residents and businesses, using our voice to lobby other organisations where we need to.

We've included some of the comments you gave us below.

“ More focus on the environment and sustainability, for example, in how the council conducts its services and operations as well as how we influence local business through licenses, contracts or land use, to ensure a more sustainable district. ”

“ Local groups do great work in our area. The “No mow May” and joint community / council groups work so hard and public ownership of our green spaces and community involvement are a great asset. ”

“ With more and more services etc using IT it is essential that the older generations are kept in the picture. Especially those who have no access to computers etc. ”

“ More needs to be done from end of September to Easter as this town is still a seasonal town. Small shops only survive if they have an earning partner or sell online. ”

“ Holding water companies accountable is really important because people like to swim in the sea and on a nice day, it's a nice day out and it ruins everything. I think also repair and reuse household goods is such a good idea because most things are so expensive to fix so finding someone or a local company that could help would save people a lot of money as well. ”

“ Facilitate bringing a large healthcare centre to Folkestone. Encourage R&D in healthcare with Canterbury university. ”



## The five themes guiding our plan

We've based our plan on the five themes shown in this diagram. **Leadership** is key to delivering change so it's shown at the top.

**Economy**, **home** and **community** are shown in the centre. These are all closely related, for example: people need a place to live to get work; people need a stable and comfortable home to be part of their community; and businesses need a healthy and skilled workforce to prosper.

**Nature** is shown at the bottom because all life ultimately depends on the natural world.

We believe that focussing our resources on these themes will ensure that the district remains a great place to live, as we continue to improve our services.

While we'll focus our resources on the services we deliver directly, we hope to see positive impacts in the wider world too – that's why we've called our plan '**Our district, our world**'.

## Sustainable Development Goals

Under each of the themes on the next five pages you can see square coloured symbols. These are the Sustainable Development Goals developed by the United Nations. These 17 goals have been agreed by countries and organisations around the world to guide their work.

Improving people's health, wellbeing and sense of community  
**Community**

The goals cover a wide range of topics, including people's health, equality, wellbeing, economic growth, good governance and the environment.

Although the goals may change in the future, we think they provide a valuable checklist to see where our actions could have wider benefits. Relevant symbols are shown under each of the five themes to help us identify these benefits.

A well-run, listening council that works closely with its partners  
**Leadership**

Building new homes, improving the quality of existing homes and tackling homelessness  
**Home**

Enhancing our local environment and supporting climate action  
**Nature**

Growing the economy in a sustainable way and creating opportunities for all  
**Economy**



# THEME 1: A well-run, listening council that works closely with its partners

## Overview

We are responsible for a wide range of services, most of which we must provide by law. We aim to provide the highest quality services we can, within our budget - that's why these two commitments are at the top of the list.

Open engagement is vital to our service delivery and the new engagement methods we trialled for this plan will be developed further over the coming years to make us a council that truly listens to its residents.

Many of the comments we received concerned services run by other organisations – that's why we've given such a focus to partnership working and making sure that the voice of residents is heard, lobbying other organisations where we need to.

## Guiding principles:

- Being open, democratic and building trust in all we do
- Balancing the council's budget and spending wisely
- Engaging meaningfully with the community
- Delivering services that are easy for everyone to access and support people in need

## Sustainable Development Goals



## We will:

- Deliver high quality services for all, especially the vulnerable, disadvantaged and people who struggle to access support.
- Deliver a balanced budget that protects frontline services.
- Provide strong leadership, building productive relationships with town and parish councils and voluntary organisations, based on local needs and local knowledge.
- Make sure that our residents and businesses are well-placed to benefit from devolution and local government reorganisation.
- Ensure that we have an effective and transparent system for making council decisions.
- Use new ways to engage with people and ensure that everyone has the chance to be heard, particularly young people.
- Making our voice clearly heard to ensure other organisations deliver the best services for our residents, including working with Kent County Council, National Highways and bus companies on our motorway and road network and public transport services.
- Invest council funds ethically, in ways that benefit people and the environment and demonstrate that we operate as a Fair Tax organisation.
- Set a good example as an employer, treating employees fairly and ensuring equality of opportunity.



## THEME 2: Improving people's health, wellbeing and sense of community

### Overview

Many of the comments we received highlighted the importance of reducing anti-social behaviour, providing leisure facilities, public transport and walking and cycling routes, and we have included these as priorities. In conversations about the plan, many people also told us they felt lonely and isolated, so we've also included reducing social isolation as a priority.

Working with partners to encourage people to lead more active lives – whether volunteering or taking up sports – can have many benefits, including improving people's health and reducing loneliness.

### Guiding principles:

- Supporting improvements to people's health, wellbeing and safety
- Supporting walking, cycling and public transport
- Celebrating diversity
- Welcoming everyone and removing barriers to access
- Promoting community engagement, activity and creativity

### We will:

- Improve people's health, wellbeing and safety by working with local health services schools and the police.
- Provide support for communities in reducing anti-social behaviour and social isolation.
- Promote walking and cycling, bus and rail services and other green transport measures to reduce carbon emissions from travel and connect people with work, services and leisure.
- Encourage people to lead more active lives by improving sports grounds and investing in new leisure facilities for the district.
- Work with partners and local groups to provide emergency support for residents, while aiming to end the reliance on food banks to meet people's basic needs.
- Work with voluntary organisations to bring people together, celebrate our diversity and enable residents to play an active role in their communities.
- Engage with local groups to promote the district's artistic, cultural, historic and tourist attractions and celebrate our special character, heritage and creativity.

### Sustainable Development Goals



## THEME 3: Building new homes, improving the quality of existing homes and tackling homelessness

### Overview

We have invested significantly in improving our council homes, since we took the housing service back under our control, and this work will continue. But many people depend on the private rental market for a home, and we will also work with tenants and landlords to improve the quality of these homes.

The government has set high targets for housebuilding that councils must meet. We will use our new local plan to make sure that homes are built in the right places with the right infrastructure, including at the new garden town of Otterpool Park, with sustainable homes that enhance their surroundings.

### Guiding principles:

- Offering frontline support to people who are homeless
- Building more council homes and affordable homes
- Working with tenants to ensure landlords deliver good quality homes for rent
- Improving the energy efficiency and comfort of our council homes

### We will:

- Work actively with our partners to prevent people becoming homeless.
- Provide support throughout the year for people who are homeless, supporting them to find a permanent home wherever we can.
- Build more council homes to meet the needs of our residents, including at the new community of Otterpool Park.
- Seek to secure more affordable homes as part of private-sector developments, with homes that are genuinely affordable for local people.
- Work with tenants to ensure landlords improve the quality of rented homes, using our enforcement powers where necessary.
- Support new community-led and co-operative housing projects and identify plots for self-builders.
- Encourage developers to convert empty buildings into new homes and to provide a broader range of sizes and types of homes that serve local needs.
- Improve the energy efficiency of our council homes, reducing carbon emissions and tenants' energy costs.
- Ensure our council homes are safe, healthy and well-maintained.

### Sustainable Development Goals



## THEME 4: Growing the economy in a sustainable way and creating opportunities for all

### Overview

We will explore further opportunities for innovation, infrastructure and investment to support businesses. We've developed sites for growing businesses at Mountfield Road, New Romney, we've provided grants to make businesses more sustainable and we'll continue to promote Folkestone Works, our investment and business advice website.

Small actions can make a big difference, such as advising local firms how they can bid for council contracts, keeping prosperity in the local economy. While the district has strengths in the cultural and creative sectors, we'll also explore how we can work with partners to promote the district and provide training to take advantage of other growing sectors such as green technology and eco-tourism.

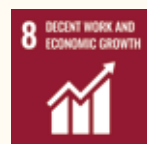
### Guiding principles:

- Supporting innovation and training
- Providing new infrastructure
- Reducing inequality
- Helping to build the green economy
- Investing in towns and villages throughout the district

### We will:

- Promote apprenticeships and training opportunities, particularly in growing industries that will help deliver a sustainable future.
- Support projects that encourage people to spend locally, particularly with the council's own schemes and projects where we partner with other organisations.
- Engage with small local businesses to promote opportunities to benefit from council contracts.
- Work in partnership to promote the district as a location for green technologies, high-tech, creative and tourist enterprises.
- Support clean methods of generating energy (e.g. at Dungeness) that respect our protected landscapes and habitats.
- Support food production and land management initiatives that benefit the natural environment and the local economy.
- Deliver Levelling-up Fund improvements to Folkestone town centre, while encouraging investment in towns and villages throughout the Romney Marsh and North Downs.

### Sustainable Development Goals





## THEME 5: Enhancing our local environment and supporting climate action

### Overview

The environment emerged as a strong theme during engagement on this plan. Local people are naturally concerned at the issues affecting their neighbourhood, and water pollution was highlighted as a key issue – we will continue to press water companies for action to address this on behalf of residents.

We will focus on the services we provide, particularly ensuring that streets and green spaces are clean and welcoming. We will also help local community groups, businesses, schools and town and parish councils take a lead in initiating environmental projects. We believe that by carefully considering our impacts on nature and the climate, we can have a positive impact on the wider world through the services we provide.

### Guiding principles:

- Protecting our waters, rivers and coast
- Protecting our countryside and enhancing the diversity of plant and animal life
- Delivering high-quality developments that respect local character
- Reducing carbon emissions and adapting to our changing climate

### We will:

- Hold water companies to account for the quality of our drinking water, rivers and coastal waters.
- Ensure that our streets and open spaces are clean and welcoming, and our green spaces are accessible and maintained in ways that benefit local people and wildlife.
- Protect and enhance plant and animal life, especially in our downland, river, coastal and marshland habitats.
- Ensure new developments are well designed, enhance heritage and local character, are energy efficient and make maximum use of renewable energy.
- Improve recycling rates and work with voluntary groups to help people repair and reuse their household goods and appliances.
- Reduce the council's carbon emissions and engage with our communities to support reductions in emissions across the district.
- Help minimise the damaging effects of climate change, working with nature and landowners.

### Sustainable Development Goals



## Making it happen

This plan sets out the high-level ambitions and key commitments that will guide our services and investment over the next five years, following the comments you gave us on our draft plan.

But any plan needs actions if it's going to make a difference. To support this plan, we've produced an action plan – this sets out specific, measurable actions to be delivered against a clear time frame.

Progress will be monitored and report to our residents and stakeholders every six months. We recognise that things change and new challenges emerge, so we will keep the action plan under review.

This will ensure that we are transparent and open about what we've achieved and what remains to be done.

We're also very clear that we can't deliver everything in this plan by ourselves. Our aim is to work successfully with partners at every opportunity. This might be at national level, with government and agencies such as Homes England, or more locally with organisations such as town and parish councils, NHS Kent and Medway, Creative Folkestone, Folkestone College and the Romney Marsh Partnership.



## Looking ahead

We published our previous plan in 2021. Back then the country was recovering from the Covid pandemic; energy prices were rising but had not yet reached their peak.

Looking ahead, higher prices will continue to have an impact on local people and businesses, as well as the services we provide. New technologies will offer opportunities to engage with residents in new ways and to change the way we provide our services. Our changing climate will create disruption that will be difficult to plan for. In addition, the government is looking to reform local councils across the country, creating new structures that could fundamentally change the way that services are provided in Kent.

The next five years are likely to be challenging. This makes it even more important that we have an up-to-date plan in place to guide our work, that we monitor progress and keep the plan under review.

As we've said, we can't do this by ourselves. We need to work in partnership to deliver the best services for residents and businesses. Whether you're a local resident, business owner, a town or parish councillor or represent a community group or other organisation, we would welcome your support.



# **Our district Our world**

Enhancing prosperity  
and well-being for all

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## **Corporate Plan 2025-2030**

Folkestone & Hythe District Council, Civic Centre,  
Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2QY

[folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)

Some photographs within the Corporate Plan are supplied by Chris Henry Photography

