



Tabled To-Follow

Council Meeting

Date: Wednesday, 2 April 2025

Time 7.00 pm,

Venue: Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT*

		Pages
10.	Empowering You in Swale - Community Development Strategy 2024-2027 - to follow	3 - 32

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**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

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Council	
Meeting Date	Wednesday 2 nd April 2025
Report Title	Empowering You in Swale – Community Development Strategy 2024-2027
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing & Community Services
Lead Officer	Sarah-Jane Radley, Community & Partnerships Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. For Council to approve the adoption of the Empowering You in Swale Strategy.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Empowering You in Swale strategy document has been developed to provide Swale with a Community Development Strategy to outline how the council intends to support the community over the next 3 years in line with Swale’s Corporate Plan. We ask Council to adopt the Empowering You in Swale Strategy, following its agreement from Community and Leisure Committee and Policy and Resources Committee.

2 Background

- 2.1 In March 2024 the Health & Housing Committee agreed to the closedown of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy due to the restructure of the community team and the deletion of the Health & Wellbeing post. The committee proposal included the development of a new strategy that encompasses key delivery for community services in line with the existing Corporate Plan and Service Plan.

A cross party member working group took place to discuss ideas and suggestions for the key priorities of the strategy and how members would like the strategy to be set out. The name Empowering You in Swale was agreed as the title for the document and an outline of items that should be included.

In addition to the members working group, the Cost of Living Partnership Group were engaged in a workshop to discuss the key themes and priorities within the strategy and valuable input from our statutory and VCS partners helped to start to shape the document.

Community & Leisure Committee reviewed the draft strategy at the meeting held on the 5th March 2025 and amendments were made accordingly.

The strategy was presented to Policy and Resources Committee on the 26th March 2025, where it was agreed to recommend the Strategy to Council for formal adoption.

2 Proposals

- 3.1 We propose to use the Empowering You in Swale Strategy as the roadmap for delivery of community development led activities. The Community & Partnerships Team will continue to deliver against the priorities set out within the strategy and utilise existing mechanisms to promote innovation and new opportunities for the benefit of Swale residents.
- 3.2 For Council to approve the adoption of the Empowering You in Swale Strategy

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The alternative option of continuing to deliver the Health & Wellbeing Plan was dismissed by the Health & Housing Committee due to a lack of resources. The work of the Community & Partnerships Team has evolved since the development of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy to encompass a wider area of delivery and so this is reflected within the new strategy.
- 4.2 We do not feel that the option to 'do nothing' is the best option as although we have a commitment to community within the Corporate Plan, this strategy enables us to provide a level of detail for how we intend to improve the lives of Swale residents through community development.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 An 8-week public consultation has been carried out to enable public feedback to be collected and used to refine the strategy. A cross-party members working group discussed ideas and proposals for the document and made suggestions for its name. In addition, we have delivered workshops, online, and face to face sessions including presenting at all four Area Committees to enable multiple opportunities to feed into the document.
- 5.2 We received 16 responses to the external consultation. The responses contained some constructive feedback of which we have adjusted some of the strategy details to reflect and some we are able to utilise in the forward planning of the work of the team. We also noted the comments that were made at Area Committees, however some of the overall comments were outside of the scope of the work or were not appropriate to the delivery of the strategy.
- 5.3 In general, the feedback and comments were supportive of the strategy priorities and in favour of our commitment to the strategy.

5.4 Community & Leisure Committee reviewed the draft strategy at the meeting held on the 5th March 2025 and amendments were made accordingly. Policy and Resources Committee also had sight of the strategy at their March meeting.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Empowering You in Swale links to the four key objectives of the Corporate Plan through the delivery activities being proposed within the strategy.
Financial, Resource and Property	Delivery of the work associated to the Empowering You in Swale Strategy will be committed to from the existing delivery resources of the Community & Partnerships Team and wider team input where there is a cross over of service delivery, no additional funding for projects outside of this area of work has been agreed.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage
Crime and Disorder	The Empowering You in Swale Strategy outlines collaborative projects that aim to improve the lives of communities and links to the delivery plan for the Community Safety Executive.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The Empowering You in Swale Strategy outlines collaborative projects that aim to improve the lives of communities through community development, and this includes tackling fuel and water poverty in the borough.
Health and Wellbeing	The Empowering You in Swale Strategy outlines collaborative projects that aim to improve the lives of communities through community development, and this includes tackling health inequalities in the borough.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	The Empowering You in Swale Strategy outlines collaborative projects that aim to improve the lives of communities through community development, and we ensure that all partners we work with comply with safeguarding policies and we are delivering according to our own policies.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage
Equality and Diversity	Equality Impact Assessment
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Empowering You in Swale – Community Development Strategy for Swale 2024-2025

8 Background Papers

Community & Leisure Committee – Agreement to proceed to P&R Committee
5th March 2025

[Agenda for Community and Leisure Committee on Wednesday, 5 March 2025, 7.00 pm](#)

Empowering You in Swale

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Community Development Strategy for Swale

2024-2027

Forward

Welcome to Swale Borough Councils Empowering You in Swale Strategy which sets out our priorities for community development until 2027. The strategy aims to cement the work to improve the lives of residents in the borough and tackle inequalities.

It cannot be denied that it has been a tough few years for communities, dealing with the after effects of the pandemic, Cost of Living, Fuel, and Housing Crises, which are just some of the issues that are being faced. Sadly, we know households in the borough need our help and advice more than ever and are turning to emergency support such as the Household Support Fund, food banks, the voluntary, community and enterprise sectors to deal with the day to day issues that families are facing.

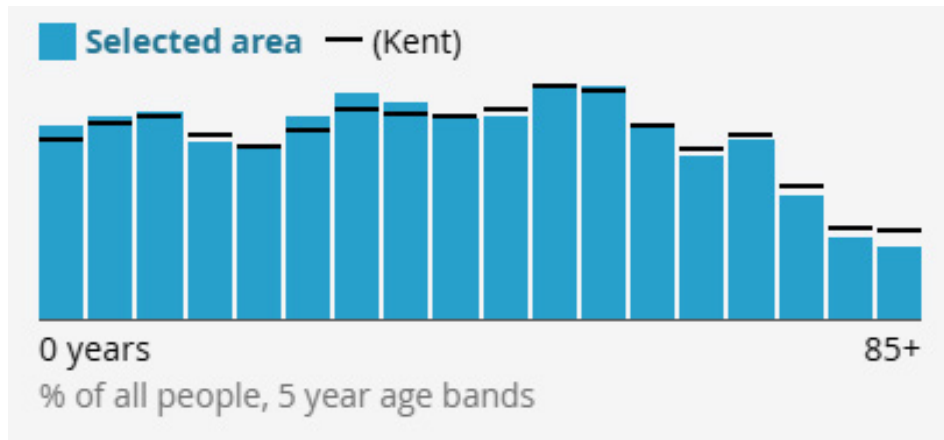
The strategy outlines our continued commitment to help families where we can through a partnership approach, engaging with residents and services through well-established groups and networks to ensure that we are properly informed and well positioned to be able to create innovative community projects that are sustainable for the future.

We believe the priorities in this strategy, on skills, health, sustainability and partnership are the right ones on which to focus our efforts, to be effective and improve the lives of our residents.

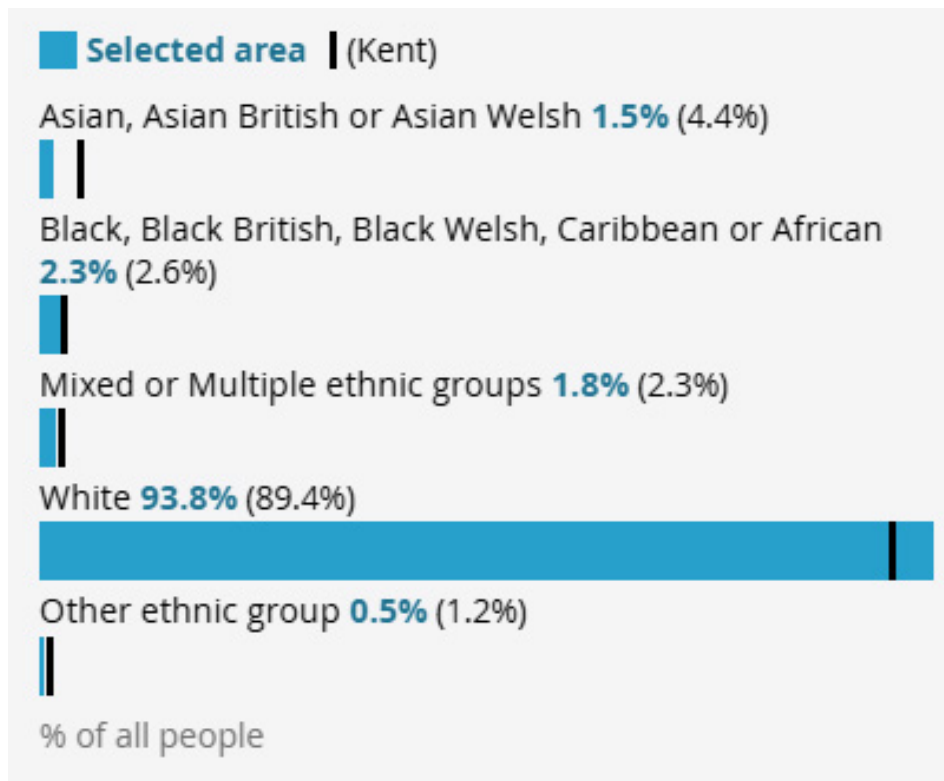
Cllr Tim Gibson *Leader of Swale Borough Council*

Cllr Elliott Jayes *Community & Leisure Committee Chair*

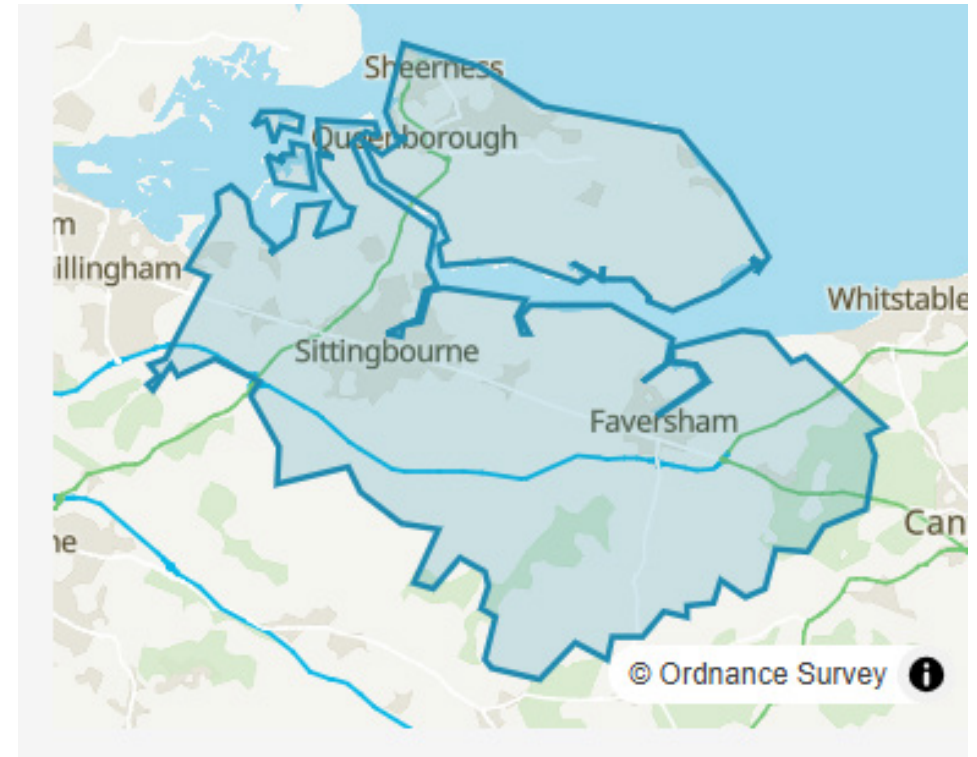
Age profile



Ethnic group



Area map



Population

151,700 people

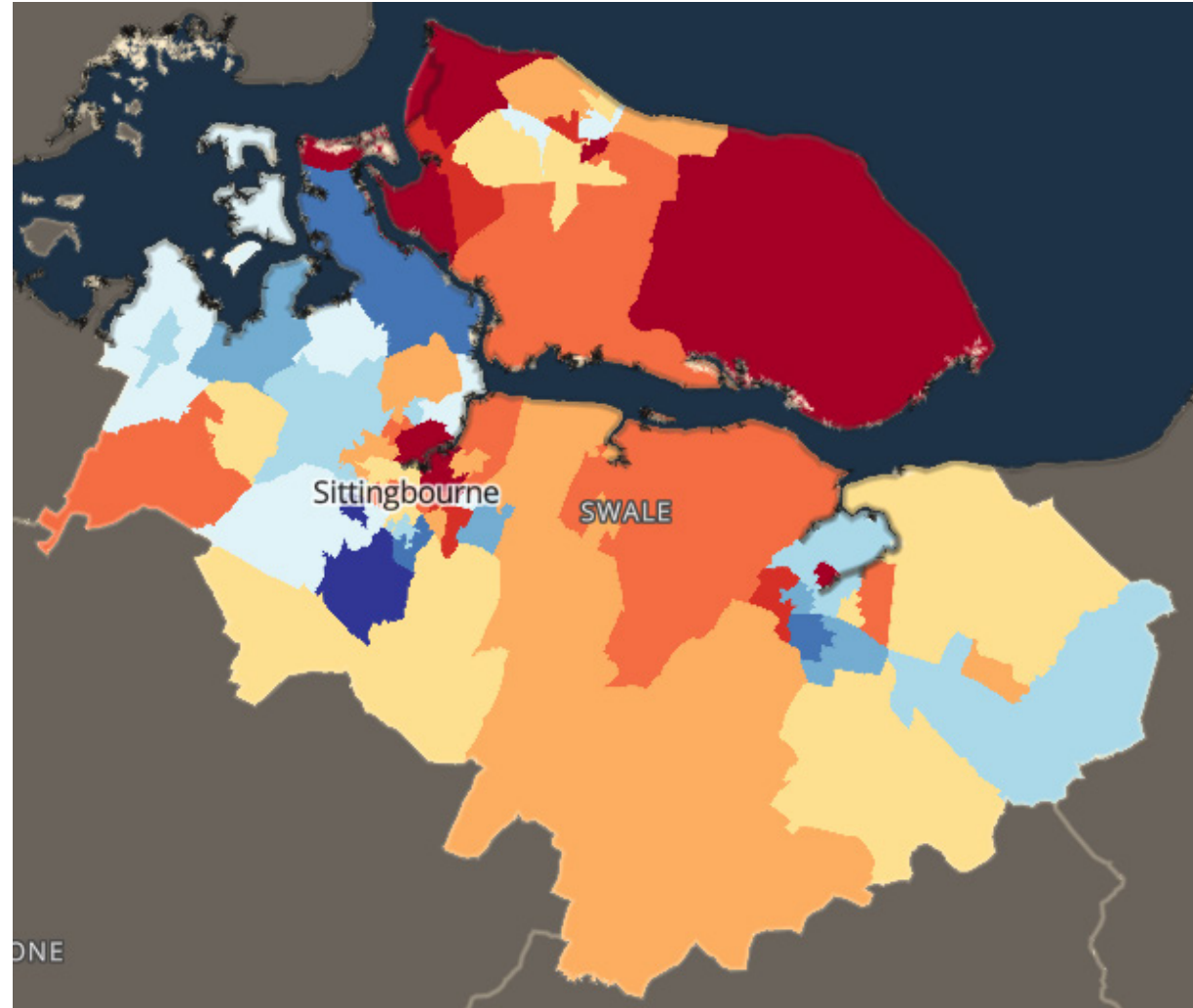
1,576,100 people in Kent

Rounded up to the nearest 100 people

Overview of the borough

Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) datasets are small area measures of relative deprivation across each of the constituent nations of the United Kingdom. This information is used to measure the level of poverty, and it is also used to target resources to help those who need it the most.

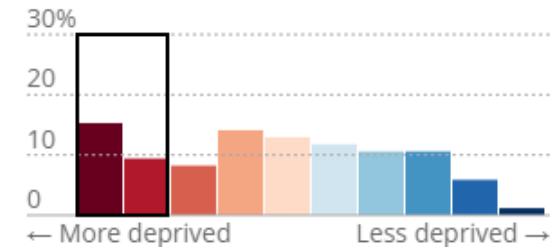


CDRC Harmonised 2019 IMD



Swale

Neighbourhoods by income deprivation



A decile is a value that divides a data set into 10 equal parts.

Introduction

Introduction

The Empowering You in Swale Strategy has been developed with the aim of contributing towards Swales Corporate Plan and to bring together a set of priorities that guide us in our aims to reduce inequalities and support Swales communities to thrive and be more sustainable for the future.

The priorities have been selected through engagement with communities and our partners to identify the key issues and develop projects that will look to address these by working together over the next three years. You will read throughout this strategy how we will work closely through community development projects and partnerships to find new ways to improve the lives of Swale residents. We know that lasting change cannot be achieved by the Council on its own, and we hope this strategy shows what can be achieved when we work collectively.

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What do we mean by Community Development?

Community development brings people together to take collective action and work on solutions for common problems. It is an important part of the work we do with communities to improve people's quality of life and bring about positive change.

What have we been doing?

Back in 2021, in the aftermath of COVID 19 pandemic, communities in Swale were struggling with a number of serious issues and with poverty hitting hard there didn't seem to be a light at the end of the tunnel for many. We saw how the voluntary, community and enterprise sector rallied together throughout the pandemic. We worked together to provide an emergency response that would change the way the

council works with the voluntary sector and develop new ways of delivering support to residents.

The Cost of Living Crisis that followed hit families hard and we knew that we had to be smart with the resources available to help residents who had reached crisis point, unable to feed their families, heat their homes or pay the mounting bills. We used the process of community development to bring everyone along on a journey with us to create a new way of working that would make sure that our communities are at the heart of what we do.

The creation of the Cost of Living Partnership Group and a number of other smaller working groups has enabled the council to develop a partnership that uses data and evidence to deliver support to our most vulnerable families in collaboration with frontline organisations that residents trust and know.

Cost of Living Community Development

The last 3 years has laid the foundations for the development of partnerships and a more collaborative approach to delivering community projects that look to improve the lives of Swale families and build more sustainable communities.

- ↓ Cost of Living Crisis affecting families, working in partnership to identify community needs
- ↓ Work with individuals and organisations within the partnership to develop solutions that can be delivered effectively
- ↓ Implement community led projects collaboratively
- ↓ Monitor and evaluate projects ensuring all voices are heard

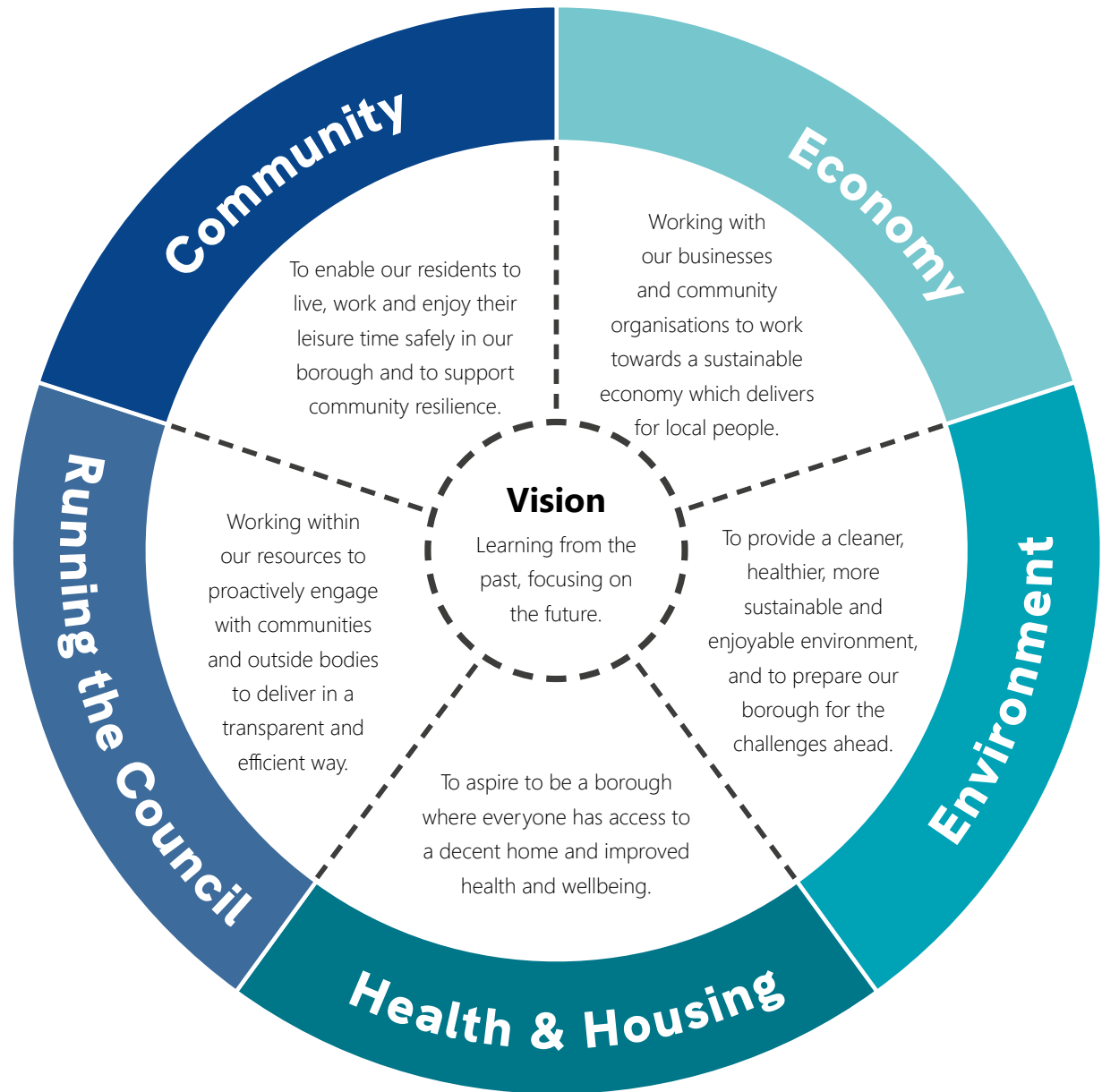
This strategy outlines the work we are developing collaboratively and informs our approach to continued community development and building new opportunities.

Corporate plan 2023-2027

Swale – Learning from the past, focusing on the future

[Council - Corporate Plan \(swale.gov.uk\)](https://www.swale.gov.uk/council-corporate-plan)

The Corporate Plan sets out the council's ambitions and priorities up to 2027. Empowering You in Swale is intended to link in with the overarching priorities of the Corporate Plan to ensure that we are delivering the best for our communities and consistently linking service delivery to overall priorities.



Engagement

We have worked collaboratively with residents, Councillors, representatives from Swale's Voluntary, Community and Enterprise Sector, and our statutory partners to ensure that local voices are heard in the creation of this strategy, as well as holding an eight week public consultation process and discussed at the four Area Committees to capture feedback and comments.

We will continue to engage throughout the life of the plan to ensure we have a clear understanding of the local landscape and remain engaged with our communities and partners.

“

Comments

'Strong partnerships and good communication is the key to providing a more cohesive approach'

'As a local resident these I would agree are key priorities for Swale'

'Based on health inequalities data, the priorities will enable greater community cohesion'

'You will need a KPI method for assessment along with regular updates to guide future public opinion surveys.'

”

Priority 1:

**Creating skilled, educated
and working communities**

Supporting improved access to education and training through continued development of engagement pathways that encourage increased confidence and promotion of activities through a partnership approach.

Key areas of work:

- Supporting the development and promotion of good skills, training and apprenticeships in the borough
- Improved access to education and training, including supporting projects regarding the ongoing issue of transport
- Working collaboratively to improve school attendance figures and related issues
- Supporting young people Not in education, employment or training 'NEET'

Kent District Unemployment - December 2024

Area	Number	Rate	Number change since last month	Percentage change since last month	Number change since last year	Percentage change since last year
Ashford	2,685	3.30%	65	2.50%	225	9.10%
Canterbury	3,320	3.40%	10	0.30%	95	2.90%
Dartford	2,425	3.20%	50	2.10%	205	9.20%
Dover	2,520	3.70%	-10	-0.40%	-190	-7.00%
Folkestone & Hythe	2,700	4.20%	60	2.30%	105	4.00%
Gravesham	3,025	4.60%	40	1.30%	220	7.80%
Maidstone	3,610	3.30%	40	1.10%	345	10.60%
Sevenoaks	1,520	2.10%	5	0.30%	50	3.40%
Swale	3,480	3.70%	0	0.00%	15	0.40%
Thanet	4,655	5.70%	110	2.40%	125	2.80%
Tonbridge & Malling	1,870	2.30%	25	1.40%	95	5.40%
Tunbridge Wells	1,850	2.60%	-30	-1.60%	220	13.50%
Kent	33,655	3.50%	360	1.10%	1,505	4.70%
Medway	7,540	4.30%	130	1.80%	770	11.40%

Area	Number	Rate	Number change since last month	Percentage change since last month	Number change since last year	Percentage change since last year
Kent	33,655	3.50%	360	1.10%	1,505	4.70%
Great Britain	1,690,595	4.10%	4,885	0.30%	182,620	12.10%

Pupils Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

NEET is an acronym meaning 'not in employment, education or training'. The category usually represents people in the age group from 16 to 24 years old.

CYPE - MI Report

County NEET and Not Known (NK) Breakdown

MI Reporting Month: Select District: Select Academic Age:

38,787 Overall Cohort **4.0%** NEET **1,539** NEET Cohort **3.9%** Not Known **1,518** Not Known Cohort **7.9%** NEET and Not Known **3,057** NEET and Not Known Cohort

District	Total Cohort Y12&Y13	No. of NEET Y12&Y13	% of NEET Y12&Y13	NEET Target Y12 & Y13 (Sep 2022)	No. of NEET Y12	% of NEET Y12	No. of NEET Y13	% of NEET Y13	No. of NK Y12&Y13	% of NK Y12&Y13	No. of NK Y12	% of NK Y12	No. of NK Y13	% of NK Y13	NEET and Not Known %	NEET & NK Ranking
Ashford	3,504	122	3.5%	3.2%	47	2.6%	75	4.5%	118	3.4%	50	2.7%	68	4.1%	6.8%	4
Canterbury	3,439	161	4.7%	2.4%	70	4.2%	91	5.2%	97	2.8%	30	1.8%	67	3.8%	7.5%	7
Dartford	3,284	93	2.8%	2.3%	28	1.7%	65	3.9%	149	4.5%	51	3.1%	98	5.9%	7.4%	6
Dover	2,681	134	5.0%	2.7%	51	3.8%	83	6.2%	131	4.9%	39	2.9%	92	6.9%	9.9%	13
Folkestone and Hythe	2,470	89	3.6%	3.4%	35	2.8%	54	4.5%	127	5.1%	48	3.8%	79	6.6%	8.7%	10
Gravesham	2,967	120	4.0%	2.3%	38	2.6%	82	5.5%	107	3.6%	40	2.7%	67	4.5%	7.7%	8
Maidstone	4,313	185	4.3%	3.0%	83	3.8%	102	4.8%	202	4.7%	68	3.1%	134	6.3%	9.0%	11
Sevenoaks	2,595	82	3.2%	1.7%	30	2.3%	52	4.1%	104	4.0%	43	3.2%	61	4.8%	7.2%	5
Swale	3,808	196	5.1%	3.6%	90	4.7%	106	5.6%	165	4.3%	74	3.9%	91	4.8%	9.5%	12
Thanet	3,507	173	4.9%	4.0%	79	4.4%	94	5.5%	61	1.7%	23	1.3%	38	2.2%	6.7%	3
Tonbridge and Malling	3,272	111	3.4%	2.7%	47	2.9%	64	3.9%	160	4.9%	71	4.4%	89	5.4%	8.3%	9
Tunbridge Wells	2,947	73	2.5%	1.9%	29	2.0%	44	3.0%	97	3.3%	45	3.1%	52	3.5%	5.8%	2
Kent	38,787	1539	4.0%	2.8%	627	3.2%	912	4.7%	1,518	3.9%	582	3.0%	936	4.9%	7.9%	

NEET Length of Time

MI Reporting Month: Select District: Select Academic Age:

NEET Length of Time by District

District	0-6 Weeks	7-13 Weeks	14-26 Weeks	27-52 Weeks	52+ Weeks	Total
Swale	21	32	92	27	24	196
Kent	21	32	92	27	24	196

NEET Length of Time by District

District	0-6 Weeks	7-13 Weeks	14-26 Weeks	27-52 Weeks	52+ Weeks
Swale	10.7%	16.3%	46.9%	13.8%	12.2%
Kent	10.7%	16.3%	46.9%	13.8%	12.2%

Pupil Premium – Free school meals data

District	% of Pupils Eligible for Free School Meals				% of Pupils whose First Language is not English/Believed to be not English			
	Primary	Secondary	Special	Overall	Primary	Secondary	Special	Overall
National	24.3	24.1	47.4	24.6	22.8	18.6	14.5	20.8
Kent	26.6	23.1	46.2	25.5	15.2	12.2	5.9	13.6
Ashford	25.1	24.8	43.0	25.4	14.6	16.6	6.4	15.3
Canterbury	27.7	24.0	53.6	26.6	15.0	10.9	7.2	12.8
Dartford	21.7	20.1	61.6	21.2	27.8	19.1	0.0	23.3
Dover	36.5	30.0	75.4	34.1	9.3	8.1	1.5	8.6
Folkestone and Hythe	30.9	29.6	55.4	31.0	10.0	8.6	5.7	9.3
Gravesham	28.7	23.6	46.3	26.6	27.3	20.4	19.9	24.0
Maidstone	22.8	18.0	44.2	21.6	18.4	14.1	5.1	15.8
Sevenoaks	18.8	22.7	35.6	20.3	9.3	6.1	9.3	8.6
Swale	31.5	28.0	45.5	30.4	8.9	6.2	3.6	7.7
Thanet	41.3	34.5	45.4	38.5	12.6	10.1	4.9	11.2
Tonbridge and Malling	19.3	16.5	39.9	18.4	8.7	6.4	5.2	7.5
Tunbridge Wells	17.9	12.2	37.2	15.6	17.8	11.9	4.6	14.3

30.4% of children were eligible for free school meals across Swale

Where are we now?

Due to the end in European Social Funding we have seen a huge reduction in the number of providers supporting those at risk of becoming NEET or are already in the NEET category across Swale. Funding is an issue for providers to be able to deliver meaningful and sustainable work within the borough and it is becoming increasingly more difficult for NEETs who are experiencing a lot of mental health issues preventing them from actively engaging. However, we have been working closely with partners on a number of projects that look at tackling this issue and improving the employment and education prospects of young people in the borough.

Schools now have to adhere to a set of benchmarks when it comes to positive interactions and engagements with employers right the way from Year 7 to years 12/13, these are known as the [Gatsby Benchmarks](#). This is to enable greater career guidance and understanding from an earlier age and better local labour market information. It's about directing individuals with a particular sector interest to the correct information so they are aware of what's involved.

It is known that the VCSE are well engaged to our communities and can interact with residents through exciting and different ways. Using UK Shared Prosperity Funds, we have been able to link skills projects to residents who need support building confidence and to enable them to access training and skills to build a brighter future.

Looking forward

In the last academic year, we have seen significant changes to the school provision on the Isle of Sheppey, two new providers have taken over secondary school education and are at the start of their journey. We will continue to work alongside them by utilising the VCSE sector and others, to assist them to embed into the community.

To understand fully the local landscape, we intend to continue to engage with existing groups, such as the Local Childrens Partnership Meetings, Vulnerability Panel, Family Hubs and Youth Services meetings as part of the Community Safety Partnership to ensure that we can work together to find solutions to the issues our children and young people are facing.

We will champion apprenticeships and skills offers through existing council departments as well as utilising our relationship with local businesses and other agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions to raise awareness and promote new opportunities.

Through our partnership approach, we will continue to seek opportunities for funding to enable activities that will support communities to access skills and employment and continue to engage in conversations that support new ideas.

We know that transport has been a long standing issue for residents living in rural areas. We will lobby for change, exploring all options, including tapping into new initiatives, to remove this barrier to work and training opportunities.

Priority 2:

Growing healthy communities

Working collectively to reduce health inequalities in the borough by supporting place based solutions that fit outside of the statutory health profession and making the most of our voluntary, community and enterprise sector to deliver localised projects.

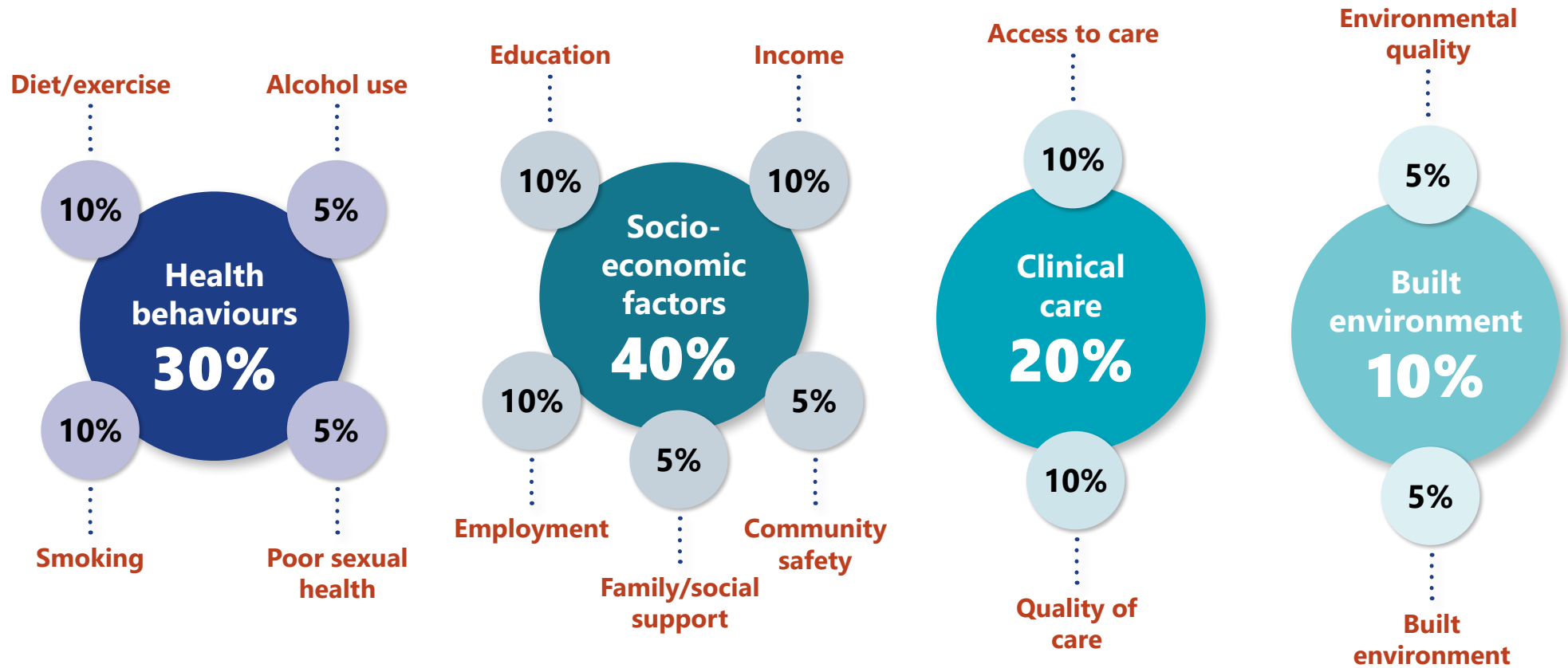
Suggested key areas of work:

- Working collaboratively to reduce health inequalities in the borough and reduce loneliness
- Improved access to health care, including transport to appointments
- Promoting access to leisure facilities, as well as parks and open spaces within the borough
- Promoting better living conditions in the borough with an aim of reducing damp and mould in people's homes



Indicator	Period	Swale			Kent	England	England		
		Recent Trend	Count	Value	Value	Value	Worst	Range	Best
A01b - Life expectancy at birth (Male, 3 year range)	2020 - 22	-	-	78.1	79.0	78.9	73.4		83.7
A01b - Life expectancy at birth (Female, 3 year range)	2020 - 22	-	-	82.0	83.0	82.8	79.0		86.3
A01b - Life expectancy at birth (Male, 1 year range)	2022	-	-	78.8	79.5	79.3	73.8		83.8
A01b - Life expectancy at birth (Female, 1 year range)	2022	-	-	82.0	83.3	83.2	79.2		87.0
A02a - Inequality in life expectancy at birth (Male)	2018 - 20	-	-	7.3	7.8	9.7	17.0		0.7
A02a - Inequality in life expectancy at birth (Female)	2018 - 20	-	-	4.4	5.6	7.9	13.9		-1.8
Overarching indicators at age 65									
A01b - Life expectancy at 65 (Male, 3 year range)	2020 - 22	-	-	17.8	18.4	18.4	15.8		21.2
A01b - Life expectancy at 65 (Female, 3 year range)	2020 - 22	-	-	20.4	21.0	20.9	18.2		23.3
A01b - Life expectancy at 65 (Male, 1 year range)	2022	-	-	18.4	18.8	18.7	16.1		21.5
A01b - Life expectancy at 65 (Female, 1 year range)	2022	-	-	20.7	21.3	21.2	18.7		23.7
A02a - Inequality in life expectancy at 65 (Male)	2018 - 20	-	-	3.1	4.0	5.2	12.7		-0.9
A02a - Inequality in life expectancy at 65 (Female)	2018 - 20	-	-	2.5	3.1	4.8	9.5		-1.1

There are a wide range of things that determine someone's health and wellbeing, with clinical care only accounting for 20 per cent of the impact. We call the factors that affect health, the wider determinants of health.



Based on: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, US County health rankings model 2014
www.countyhealthrankings.org/sites/default/files/media/document/CHRR_2014_Key_Findings.paf

Health inequalities are a result of a number of different causes, such as:

- The long term effects of a deprivation
- Differences in access to information, services and resources
- Differences in exposure to risk
- Lack of choices over your own life circumstances
- A health system that may reinforce inequalities

These factors all contribute to a variety of ill health triggers and that can affect communities and increase reliance on health and other services.

Where are we now?

We are not formally responsible for public health as this sits with the County Council under the Social Care Act 2012, however we have a huge role to play in promoting better health outcomes within the community and we have been working hard with our partners in the NHS and many others to ensure that we are collectively working together to tackle health inequalities.

The new Sheppey Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) is a community hub delivering the provision of imaging, physiological measurement, and pathology tests and scans it will deliver a significant increase in access for residents of Swale. The centre will be part of the existing community hospital and provide improved access for those locally who struggle to attend appointments at places like Medway Hospital. We will continue to work alongside our colleagues at the Health & Care Partnership to ensure that opportunities such as this are developed and where needed lobbied for.

Improving health in the early years of life contributes considerably to better health outcomes in later life, with reduced levels of diabetes, coronary heart disease and hypertension, all of which have a significant impact on the NHS as well as wider society, children and their families. We have been working closely with Kent County Council to feed into the development of the Kent Family Hub model, of which Swale has 6 centres, all of which play a pivotal role with supporting families in Swale. We will continue to develop opportunities for young and families to ensure there is appropriate provision in Swale going forwards.

Shaping the physical environment of the community so that it can better promote healthier lifestyles is central to borough's 'regulatory health improvement role. The new National Planning Policy Framework highlights the role of the planning system in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. This includes measures aimed at reducing health inequalities, improving access to healthy food and reducing obesity, encouraging physical activity, improving mental health and wellbeing, and improving air quality to reduce the incidence of respiratory diseases.

Looking forward

Tackling health inequalities in the borough is a priority thread that runs through all 4 priorities. We will continue to encourage new initiatives to the borough, linking closely with our partners in health settings, we will continue to drive change and increase opportunities for families to access services more easily and frequently.

We will work with our partners to improve loneliness in the borough, which is experienced throughout the full lifespan from young right the way through to elderly. By improving loneliness and linking this to things such as transport to hospital appointments, we can start to make a difference to the lives of our residents.

Working with council departments such as Leisure and Planning, we will promote the use of facilities in the borough such as our parks and open spaces, and leisure centres to increase activity and promote healthier lifestyles.

Working with Swales Private Sector Housing Team we will promote the Healthy Homes project which is addressing health issues associated with damp and mould in the home, as well as raising awareness with landlords and using enforcement activities where necessary.

Medway & Swale Health & Care Partnership are driving forward change through place-based solutions that fit outside of the statutory health and care profession and in the wider determinants of health. We will continue to play a role in ensuring a joined-up approach to transforming the health and wellbeing of our communities through Social Regeneration.

Continuing our drive to influence and empower change within the borough we are similarly linked to Kent County Councils [Integrated Care Strategy](#), of which we are committed to integrating key themes of the strategy through our Corporate Plan and in localised Service Plans to collaborate on key themes such as Supporting families and communities so children thrive and tackling the wider determinants of health making the most of our VCSE and community links.

Priority 3:

**Empowering stronger,
more sustainable
communities**

We will continue to develop innovative solutions to the difficulties faced by our communities, including the aftereffects of the COVID 19 pandemic, Cost of Living, Fuel Crisis, and day to day hardship. We will continue to work with the voluntary, community and enterprise sector to improve resilience and enable organisations to grow and thrive in the borough.

Suggested key areas of work:

- Delivering a collective response to Cost of Living, fuel and other crisis
- Data led targeted interventions such as benefit uptake campaigns and direct mailings to promote opportunities
- Improved awareness and information sharing of available services
- Development of a more resilient and sustainable voluntary, community and enterprise sector in Swale

Where are we now?

Sadly, we know some residents of Swale are still feeling the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic and continue to struggle on a day to day basis with basic needs such as feeding their families and fuelling their homes as Cost of Living continues to have an impact to the boroughs most vulnerable residents, this includes those on a low income, those with disabilities, refugees, as well as pensioners.

Domestic Abuse remains at a high level across the borough, albeit there has been a slight reduction since the peaks seen following the pandemic. Support services, which are largely delivered by the voluntary, community and enterprise sector, these organisations are continuing to see high demand; often increasingly more complex needs; and a reduction in funding available continues to put strain on

services. Overall levels of crime remain steady, with seasonal increases in Anti-Social Behaviour. There are high levels of youth ASB, which does correlate with reductions in diversionary activities due to funding loss.

The voluntary, community and enterprise sector in Swale offer services which are recognised to improve and change the lives of the residents they support. We have been working closely with the sector over the last 2 years to identify areas of specific need to help the organisations within this group become stronger and more sustainable. There has been a number of social and economic factors including the pandemic which has had a huge impact on things such as access to funding and volunteers which has in part seen some of these organisations closing their doors.

We have transformed the way that community services are delivered to ensure that we are providing innovative solutions to difficult and complex issues within our communities. We have learned through the evolution of Household Support Fund the power of two-way conversations and the strength of doing things in partnership. We will continue to value this way of working going forwards recognising the ever-changing landscape in Local Government.

Looking forward...

We will continue to prioritise improving the lives of our residents, whether that be through targeted interventions such as Benefit Uptake Campaigns, through crisis response grants such as Household Support Fund or working with the voluntary, community and enterprise sector and other statutory partners to ensure every resident has awareness of what is available to them in their time of need, through activities such as the One Swale Roadshows.

Through the existing Cost of Living Partnership Group, we will continue to meet with organisations from across the borough to agree how to tackle localised issues, monitor data and trends and provide a platform to enable lobbying for change.

We want to support the voluntary, community and enterprise sector through the delivery of Swale Voluntary Alliance (SVA) to be able to collaborate with not only the Local Authority but with other organisations within the sector. The sector said they wanted change and so we will continue to support them to deliver this through SVA and foster relationships with statutory bodies as well as Swale Borough Council.

Using existing platforms and a collaborative approach we will promote easy access to services for our residents to ensure families can find information easily and quickly, whilst working with our communications teams to promote relevant information through a variety of channels.



Priority 4:

**Developing strong
partnerships that deliver
for our communities**

Strong relationships, not only with our communities but with our partners, are powerful in driving forward change and helping to initiate sustainable, long-lasting transformation. We are committed to continuing to build upon the footings we have made through existing partnerships and look to make meaningful new ones that will support our vision to tackle health inequalities, promote community safety, reduce poverty and create sustainable communities.

Suggested key areas of work:

- Continued development of the relationship with Swale's voluntary, community, and enterprise Sector
- Delivery of the Community Safety Partnership and associated projects
- Develop relationships with Swales Business community to promote corporate social responsibility
- Continued strengthening of partnerships with health partners including Medway & Swale Health & Care Partnership, East Kent Health & Care Partnership and the Kent Integrated Care Board

Where are we now?

We have been building relationships with our partners for many years and a good example of how this can work well is the borough's Community Safety Partnership, consisting of partners such as Police, Probation, NHS, the VCSE and others. This successful partnership has been delivering targeted projects collaboratively to tackle issues such as Crime, antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse for many years.

A powerful relationship has formed between the council and the various organisations across the borough that came together to respond to the issues created by the Cost of Living and Fuel crisis as well as other outside impacts. This group has effected change by collaborating and creating a strong voice for the vulnerable residents who need us to defend and provide for them. In conjunction with this, our work has seen a relationship form with the VCSE in Swale that will enable us to be creative in our outlook and design new and innovative ways of working together for the benefit of Swale residents.

Our partnership with Medway & Swale Health & Care Partnership (NHS) has grown, and we are excited to be working closely with them within the boundaries of our expertise and driving forward projects tackling Obesity, Living Conditions and Self-harm to name a few.

Looking forward...

We will continue to build the partnership with communities in the borough, ensuring that we are engaging through Area Committees, through our frontline service delivery and through engagement opportunities such as the One Swale Roadshows, opening opportunities for residents to have a voice on the things that matter to them.

We know that we can't deliver change within our communities without the support and collaboration of our partners, whether that be statutory bodies such as NHS and Police, or our vibrant voluntary, community and enterprise sector. We must partner and develop our vision together, allowing the voices of our partners to be heard in the development of our services and supporting others to fulfil their own priorities.

Internally within the organisation we seek to ensure that there are improved linkages between departments meaning that we can be sure that when a planning development is underway, or the housing crisis is being tackled, we are collectively acting in the best interests of the communities affected.

We know there is always work to be done to sustain and improve partnership working in the community and we look to continue this important work creating new relationships for the benefit of all.

How will we monitor progress?

We will monitor progress of the intended work being undertaken within this document through key performance targets set out below. Progress will be reported yearly to the Community & Leisure Committee and through the councils KPI monitoring.

- School attendance figures
- NEET stats
- Health inequality stats
- Healthy Homes targets
- Diagnostic centre outcomes
- Data led campaign figures
- Household Support Fund or equivalent emergency support- food/ fuel bank data
- Swale Voluntary Alliance progress reporting
- Update on new/old collaborative projects

How will we resource delivery?

Utilising the One Council approach the Community & Partnerships Team will look for opportunities to link in with internal service delivery to ensure that we are making the most of all available resources and to ensure a joined-up approach to service delivery. We will utilise existing resources within the council to deliver as per agreed Service Plans.

The team will engage and collaborate with external organisations and partners to seek external funding opportunities to develop projects within the boundaries of officer time and the resources available.