

West Kent Strategic Plan 2018

Who we are

Established in 1989, we were one of the first large scale voluntary transfers of local authority housing. We were the first 'excellent' housing association in the country and the first gold standard Investor in People in Kent. We have an enviable reputation for helping people and communities flourish.

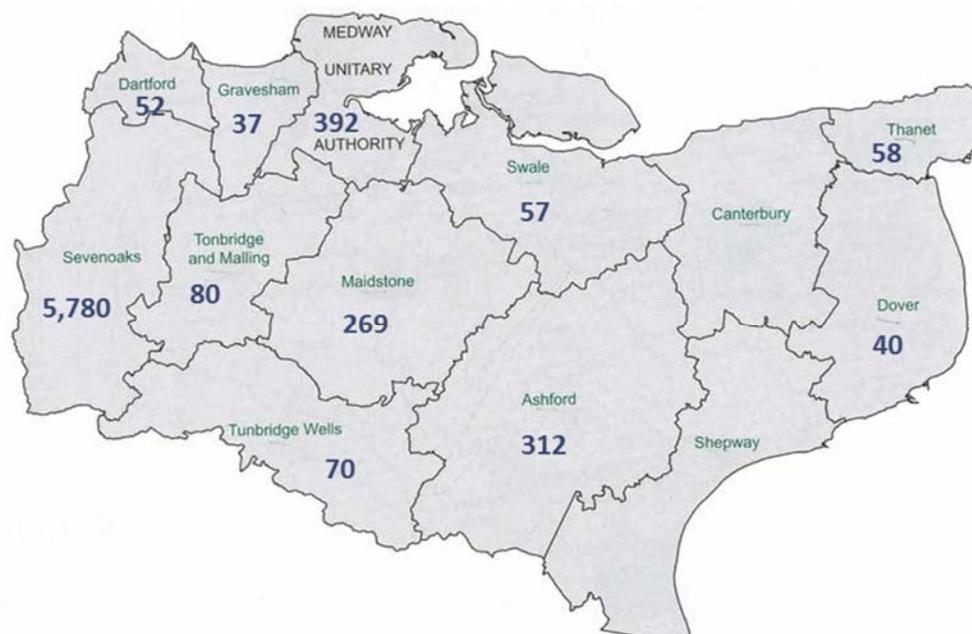
We are an independent organisation with a proud history, valued brand and a great reputation as a committed, agile, and responsive partner. However, none of these attributes is more important than our reason for being – to meet housing need in Kent.

Where we work

We work only in Kent and Medway, where we own and manage over 7,000 homes. We work closely with all the local authorities in the area and many other statutory and voluntary partners.

Kent is not only the Garden of England, but also its oldest and most populous county, with 1.6 million residents. It is a major player in the economy of the South East and of the UK as a whole. Easily accessible from London and the continent, Kent is an attractive place to live, work and invest. However, the population is ageing and housing in Kent remains unaffordable to many, particularly in rural areas. The average home in Kent costs nine times average Kent income. Kent offers the South East's greatest opportunity for housing growth.

For Kent's increasing elderly population, the demand for homes that meet their changing needs is growing. There is a need for high quality smaller accommodation for older people to encourage them to downsize, freeing up larger properties for the family market.



Kent and Medway – number of homes owned by West Kent, December 2017

Mission - what we do

We believe that a good home is a foundation for getting on in life; our core purpose is to help the many people for whom a good home (to rent or buy) is too expensive, and to nurture their communities.

Most of our homes are rented to families on low or moderate incomes, who come to us from local council lists of people who need housing.

Some of our homes are specially designed for older people and we support them to maintain their independence.

We also provide shared ownership homes to people who are taking their first steps into home ownership.

We rent and sell some homes at the going market rate too.

We invest in our communities and believe that strong communities are built from strong and active individuals. We focus on projects that support people to improve their life chances through training and employment.

By operating efficiently, we make a surplus, all of which is then invested back into providing more and better homes and services to residents.

Vision

Our vision is to be the leading community provider of affordable homes in Kent.

We will help to create in Kent a prosperous, strong and sustainable society; a place of opportunity for all; where people can plan for their futures.

Our values and culture - this is how we do it and how we work

West Kent has developed its own positive culture of working in partnership with customers and stakeholders, to deliver exceptional services in a friendly, solution focused way.

We focus on the long term and the needs of future, as well as current, residents.

We ensure our residents and customers have real influence on what we do.

We provide more than just landlord services because we care about the people and places where we work.

We recognise the importance of a local focus and work actively with our local authorities and other local partners to improve and shape places at both a strategic and operational level.

Our values guide our staff to give customers a richer experience and staff themselves a greater sense of satisfaction. They guide us to make sound decisions for the business and be responsive to all our stakeholders:

- **Integrity** – letting your moral compass keep you on the right track
- **Compassion** – putting yourself in the other person's place
- **Self-awareness** – knowing yourself and the impact you have
- **Learning** – improving by exploring what's there beyond what you know
- **Flexibility** – doing the right thing so you get the right result
- **Honesty** – saying and doing the right thing, even when it's hard
- **Delivering on our promises** – doing what we say, when we say we'll do it
- **Working hard and having fun** – choosing to enjoy the people and the job.

Where we'll be by 2026 - what will we look like?

By 2026:

- We will own and manage more than 10,000 homes, half of which will be in parts of Kent other than where we originated in the Sevenoaks district.
- We will have provided a range of housing to meet local needs in mixed communities.
- We will be organised to deliver consistent, tailored services across the county.
- 1,300 of our homes will be specifically designed for older people across a mix of tenures.
- Customers will be able to easily deal with us over a range of channels.
- Our homes will be warm, well maintained, affordable, and evoke personal pride and satisfaction.
- We will be a leading agency promoting opportunity and supporting strong, cohesive and inclusive communities across Kent.
- We will be an attractive and respected employer.

To realise this future, everything we do will be focused on **six strategic objectives**:

- **Viability** - ensure West Kent stays a vibrant, sustainable organisation.
- **Customers** - our residents will enjoy exceptional tailored services and choice.
- **Homes** - ensure our homes are warm, well maintained and affordable.
- **Growth** - build new homes to meet housing need in Kent and Medway.
- **Older people** - be a leader in meeting the accommodation needs of older people in Kent.
- **Community** - somewhere to live, something to do and someone to love.

Viability - ensure West Kent stays a vibrant, sustainable organisation

We will increase our efficiency, to respond to pressure on our income, and to build our capacity to do more.

We will remain an attractive employer, with an engaged workforce, who have the tools to deliver our promises to our customers.

We will provide our staff and customers with the means to access relevant, timely information easily.

How we will do this is set out in our Financial Plan, Cost Management Plan, Value for Money Strategy, ICT Strategy, and People Strategy.

Measures

- Operating margin by activity with overall margin of 35%.
- Ability to service our debt and meet all bank covenants with the projected plans to build new homes included.
- Current rent arrears kept within 3%.
- Employee engagement scores benchmark in upper quartile.
- Increase digital systems for staff through introduction of paperless invoicing by 2019.
- Achieve compliance with General Data Protection Regulations by May 2018.
- Complete implementation of human resources, facilities, finance, and governance support reviews to support business needs and cost management programme objectives.

Customers - our residents will enjoy exceptional tailored services and choice

We will develop greater customer insight, so we can tailor service delivery to the circumstances of our residents and we focus on delivering services that residents value and need. This will include developing more relevant metrics to measure and understand what we do and how to better identify what we could do differently to influence the shape of services going forward.

We will make greater use of technology in our services and homes to improve cost effectiveness, so residents can access services at times that are convenient to them and staff can provide a full service even when away from the office.

We will have fully embedded the changes to service delivery and expectations as set out in Your Home Your Responsibility, Home Standard and new repairs service in the way we work and to make sure staff and tenants understand responsibilities and expectations.

We will support tenants to maintain successful tenancies to give them stability and security as a platform for their aspirations.

How we will do this is set out in our Customer Strategy, Resident Engagement and Involvement Strategy, ICT Strategy, and Tenancy Sustainment Strategy.

Measures

- Implement Digital Programme for 2018.
- Residents will book 25% of repair appointments themselves online by 2018, moving to 75% by 2020.
- More than half of resident contact with us will be digital by 2020. Interim target of 15% for 2018.
- Implement Tenancy Sustainment Strategy action plan to “provide positive foundations for tenants to thrive and build stable fulfilling lives”. By 2020 we will have integrated current provisions and shaped interventions based on customer insight.
- Starter tenancy failures less than 2%.
- Implement housing restructure to support changing our relationship with residents.
- Review financial inclusion service to prepare for rollout of welfare reform including Universal Credit and Local Housing Allowance cap.
- Complete six projects on customer insight in 2018.

Homes - ensure our homes are warm, well maintained and affordable

We will ensure our homes are warm, well maintained, affordable, and evoke personal pride.

We will re-procure our maintenance services.

We will review the rents we charge to keep them affordable to our residents.

How we will do this is set out in our Asset Management Strategy, Procurement Project Plan and Rent Policy.

Measures

- All our homes meet decent homes criteria and provide a positive financial contribution
- 94% delivery of our repairs promise.
- By April 2020 we will have in place new delivery arrangements for our maintenance service for general and electrical works.
- Re-let our voids on average within 20 days.
- New Rent Policy in 2018 to tailor our rents to keep them affordable to our residents.

Growth - build new homes to meet housing need in Kent and Medway

We will complete 1,929 new homes (by 2026) for rent and home ownership.

We will develop and sell homes to help pay for our new affordable homes.

We will acquire stock from others who operate in Kent.

How we will do this is set out in our Development Strategy.

Measures

- Develop and complete 643 new homes by end of 2020
- Review and use feedback from tenants and shared owners moving into new homes
- Implement new home ownership service
- Access new finance to continue meet our growth plans in line with financial forecasts

We will monitor the mix of homes we provide:

	Homes 2017	% of stock	Rent/market	Rent/LA earnings
Social rent	5,545	77%	3%	17%
Affordable/intermediate rent	544	8%	73%	26%
Extra care	384	5%	155%	43%
Supported	70	1%	95%	26%
Shared ownership	462	6%	60%	21%
Leaseholders	173	2%	N/a	N/a
Market rent	0	0%	N/a	N/a
Total	7,178	100%	61%	19%

Older people - be a leader in meeting the accommodation needs of older people in Kent

We will be a leader in meeting the accommodation needs of older people in Kent.

We will celebrate age by creating thriving and sustainable communities to promote and support active ageing and freedom of choice.

We will provide quality homes, services to support independence, choice through information and advice, and support active ageing through engagement.

How we will do this is set out in our Age a Positive Experience Strategy and Emerald Accommodation Strategy.

Measures

- By 2019 complete the Swanley Emerald Community, around White Oak Court community hub.
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- By 2019 move White Oak Court to full extra care model.
- Contract compliance and 94% occupancy for Kent Excellent Homes For All contract.
- By 2018 complete new Northview development.
- By 2021 the focus will move to creating an Emerald Community in Edenbridge.
- Deliver Age a Positive Experience action plan.
- 2020 onwards our attention will be on the urban area of Sevenoaks.
- By 2020 develop a mixed tenure extra care scheme.

Community - somewhere to live, something to do and someone to love

We will work to understand the unmet needs of Kent communities and exceptional services that meet those needs.

We will work in partnership with organisations that share our ethos and approach to lead or support service delivery and to influence for change. We will use our resources wisely and not duplicate the work of others unnecessarily.

We will seek to empower communities and the individuals within them to support themselves in the long term. This will enable us to re-use our resources effectively to support other communities with unmet needs.

We will seek to influence partners, stakeholders and funders to tackle unmet needs across Kent. We believe that we have a strong insight into Kent communities and will share this with partners to support strong communities.

How we will do this is set out in our Communities Strategy, Training and Employment Strategy, and Resident Involvement Strategy.

Measures

- Secure £1.5m of external funding, each year, for Communities work.
- Annual impact report of our work available by February each year.
- Operate at least three projects in every district of Kent.
- Commission academic research into the impact of one areas of our work each year.
- Work with 50,000 beneficiaries per year.

Risks

We will manage the risks we face and the board will pay particular attention to the following:

Key risks – volatile

- **Welfare reform** - Restrictions on benefit entitlement leads to loss of rent, tenant debt and eviction.
- **Sales income** - Sales of properties (shared ownership, existing assets and open market sales) is lower and later than we have budgeted.
- **BREXIT** – Financial markets respond negatively leading to increased cost of capital. Economic situation leads to increased inflation during a period of rent reductions.

Key risks – business as usual

- **Health and safety** - We fail our legal obligations under health and safety legislation.
- **Developing new homes** - New homes not economically and operationally fit for purpose.
- **Data security** and data protection – We fail to comply with General Data Protection Regulations. A breach of data security impacts on our day to day operations.
- **Business operations and continuity** - Inability to deliver our service promises.
- **Business partner failure** - A key partner who we rely on to deliver our services unexpectedly withdraws their services.
- **Pensions** – A termination payment which is either unexpected or poor value for money is triggered on the Kent County Council administered local government pension scheme.
- **Regulation** - We fail to comply with the regulatory regime. Specifically, in the short-term, we fail to implement and comply with the new consents regime.
- **Local Housing Allowance cap** - The capping of housing benefit entitlement at the local housing allowance level leads to a loss of income.
- **Kent Extra Excellent Homes for All** - We fail to fulfil our obligations on the ‘Kent Excellent Homes For All’ contract, or fulfilling our obligations costs more than we planned.

How we will do this is set out in the Risk Management Framework.