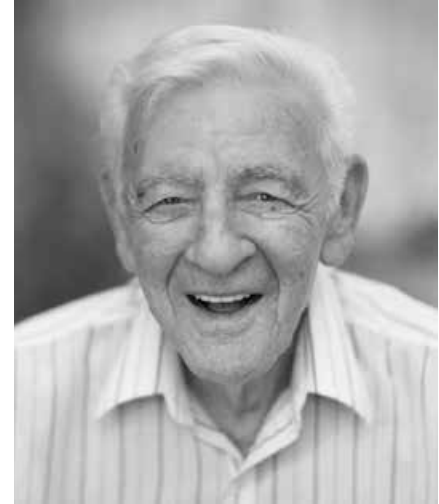


Age: a positive experience 2012-2017

When *Age: a positive experience* was first drawn up in 2008, we knew it was a long term challenge. The 2008 strategy's aim was to promote and support active ageing, giving a full expression of citizenship for the people we serve, which enable them to play a strong role in their communities.

A fundamental shift was needed in the way we looked at our homes and the services we provided. Our overall aim was to ensure tailored services met the needs and aspirations of the people based on their lifestyle and level of independence. This still remains valid. Therefore, this strategy does not intend to completely rewrite the original, but instead merely refresh our vision and outcomes, to reflect what we have achieved and be able to focus our energy on the next five years.



In 2008 we identified six aims we sought to achieve, and was extremely successful in meeting them. For example, we achieved great progress in increasing diversity and quality of homes, highlights consisting of obtaining the funding to demolish Bonney Way (to be redeveloped during 2013), and the development an affordable Handy Persons Service for our older tenants. Furthermore, we achieved our aim of supporting active and full citizenship for residents through our Emerald Residents Group (Emerald Forum) and by organising Healthy Lifestyles events and programmes.

As the economic environment since 2008 has remained unchanged, this long and arduous period of economic austerity means funding for services and homes has decreased. Against this financial backdrop, we continue to see an increase in life expectancy, as an improvement in the treatment of disease, housing, sanitation and education have contributed to the doubling of lifespans in much of the world over the last 150 years. Due to these changes, the number of older adults over 65 in Kent is set to grow significantly over the next 20 years. West Kent currently has 41% of its 5,818

rented homes housing at least one person over the age of 55. Our census shows us that we have 3,061 people over the age of 55 live in our homes, which translates to 25% of our total population. In addition, we have 15% (1915) who are aged 40-54 years who could be potential customers.



However, the increase in life expectancy is not the only main strategic issue we consider. For example, the Alzheimer's Society estimate there are over 800,000 current sufferers of dementia in the UK- a statistic set to grow. It is estimated that for those

over the age of 95, a third would have the condition. The prevalence of disability rises with age, for instance, one in twenty children are disabled, compared to almost one in two people over state person age in Britain. West Kent's census data reveals 11% stating a disability or life limiting illness. Of this percentage, 64% are aged 55 and over.

Continued



Clearly the demographics support this Strategy and the time and resource invested by West Kent to help people age positively. Despite the external environment we are still committed to efficient management of our homes to create opportunities for investment in both the redevelopment of homes and cost of services, so the aims of this strategy can be delivered. We will continue to show innovation and enterprise to achieve the changes we seek.

West Kent's vision is to celebrate age by creating thriving and sustainable communities to promote and support active ageing and freedom of choice through four key areas of activity. These are; Quality Homes, Services to support independence, Choice through information and advice and Active ageing through engagement. Through these four activities we will achieve the following outcomes:

- We will be providing quality homes fit for people of all ages to live in and enjoy; offering choice of size, location and design to suit different lifestyle options.
- We will provide professional quality services to meet the different demands and needs of residents to support independent living and active ageing. The services will be flexible, modern and regularly reviewed to ensure they are relevant and appropriate.
- We will provide first class information and advice services in partnership with others to ensure those of all ages are supported and able to make informed choices regarding their housing and service needs.
- We will celebrate age and support active and full citizenship by all residents through opportunities for learning, volunteering and sharing of experiences that promote the many positive aspects of age. We will work with people to create self supported vibrant multi-generational communities by working with residents to deliver services that empower people to find solutions to their different lifestyle requirements as they age.

A detailed and challenging action plan will be developed and reviewed annually. We will be flexible in the delivery of these plans so we can update them in the light of any legislative changes, relevant research or local frameworks that transpire over the lifetime of this strategy. The Emerald Steering Group will monitor the progress regularly while the action plan will be annually reviewed by the Board.