



WestKent
Places to live. Space to grow.

Strategic Plan

2025/26 to 2029/30



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Foreword

We want our customers to have a positive experience regardless of who they are, where they live or how and when they choose to interact with us.

In April 2020 we approved our ‘Beyond 2020’ strategic plan setting out our ambitions: to increase our homes in management, continue to invest to support thriving communities, to modernise our service offer and get ready to reflect the changing needs of an ageing society.

Looking back through our annual reports for the last five years you can see how well we have adapted in light of an uncertain economic and volatile operating environment, and successfully delivered against our plans:

- We now have 8,516 homes in management (7,583 in 2019) with the capacity and ambition to create 900 new homes over the next five years.
- Our revised communities offer delivered in 2024 4,809 support interventions and £458k directly benefiting our residents (compared to 709 support interventions in 2019).
- We now have in place monthly customer feedback and an active group of involved residents who are helping us shape our service improvement plans.
- We now have the ability to use our data and customer insight, which is informing our asset management strategy priorities, with how we proactively tackle risks from damp and mould, fuel poverty and supporting customers to move to more suitable homes.

We remain in good shape, and this has provided a firm foundation for considering what our priorities should be looking ahead to 2030. This document sets out in detail the opportunities and challenges we face, what our strategic priorities will be and measures of success.

Simply put, our ambition is that by 2030 our customers:

- Will have a positive experience regardless of who they are, where they live or how and when they choose to interact with us.
- Will feel we listen and act on their views.
- Will feel proud of the homes they live in.

We look forward to continuing to work with our like-minded partners to deliver together the best for our current and future residents.

Tracy Allison

Chief Executive,
West Kent

Piers White, MBE

Chair,
West Kent

Our vision

We provide great places to live and space for people to grow.

Our purpose

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

West Kent is a vibrant, community-based organisation providing much needed affordable homes and services to people living in the towns and villages throughout Kent.

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.

We understand the positive impact of investing in our communities and work alongside residents and

partners to tackle inequalities, increase opportunities and promote wellbeing.

Our founding ambition from 1989 has arguably never been so important as we see widespread coverage of the national housing crisis, and how the new Labour Government begins to shape policies to deliver their aspiration of 1.5 million homes and reverse the decline in social and affordable housing and rise in homelessness.

Our culture

We want our customers to have a positive experience regardless of who they are, where they live or how and when they choose to interact with us.

Everyone at West Kent needs to have ownership and responsibility of this, from the language we use to the way we work with and deliver services to our customers.

To achieve this, we will have a culture of inclusivity and curiosity that values difference, where people feel respected, included and heard and where prejudice and discrimination are recognised and addressed.

Our values guide our employees to make sound decisions for the business and be responsive to all our stakeholders.

It's important that we		
Deliver on our promises doing what we say, when we say we'll do it	Show flexibility doing the right thing so you get the right result	
We are helped by our		
Honesty saying and doing the right thing, even when it's hard	Integrity letting your moral compass keep you on the right track	Self-awareness knowing yourself and the impact you have
We can improve through		
Learning improving by exploring what's there beyond what you know	Compassion putting yourself in the other person's place	Working hard and having fun choosing to enjoy the people and the job

Operating context

West Kent delivered well against its Strategic Plan April 2020 to March 2025, which provided the impetus and framework for delivering significant programmes of work.

This included the introduction of customer feedback, which is shaping service improvements and our updated communities investment offer, new asset management plans to meet emerging energy efficiency standards, and the implementation of new systems to support the continuing modernisation of our service delivery. Despite the challenging operating environment of recent years arising from the Covid pandemic, the war in Ukraine, UK political upheaval and inflationary pressures, we have maintained healthy operating margins and achieved good customer satisfaction levels whilst delivering well on growth plans.

In preparing this strategic plan to 2030 we have considered the ongoing pressures:

National influences

World events continue to create volatility in financial markets, in energy prices and inflation.

Following a period of rapidly increasing inflation (reaching up to 10% in January 2023) many households continue to be 'squeezed', with many 'one unexpected bill away from hardship' (Age UK).

The current Labour Government aims to deliver 1.5m homes in this Parliament with proposed legislative changes impacting landlord responsibilities regarding repairs (Awaab's Law), tenancy rights (particularly the ending of starter and fixed term tenancies) and enhanced employment rights.

Sector influences

2024 saw the launch of the new regulatory consumer standards and increasing powers for both the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman..

Across the sector we are seeing:

- Increased levels of complaints and those which are then referred to the Housing Ombudsman.
- Increased levels of damp and mould cases and disrepair claims leading to increased property maintenance costs and a need for moving households that are overcrowded.
- Increased reports of anti-social behaviour of the most serious kind and violence towards housing association staff.
- Reduced levels of private rented homes alongside increased levels of homelessness continuing to place pressure on local authorities for temporary accommodation, resulting in budget pressures leading to the scaling back or closure of other services.
- Increasing levels of hardship for residents, combined with a freeze on benefit levels and local housing allowance caps.
- Increased numbers of house builders failing with development only partly built.

The Grenfell Tower report published in September 2024 came with implications for landlord decision making and accountability, together with calls for the professionalisation of the sector.

Customer feedback

We regularly ask customers for feedback on our services and this together with the insight from complaints we receive drives our service improvement plans. We continuously review our priorities and seek to deliver our services in the simplest, most effective way, ensuring value for money. Speaking to those customers who give us low scores, looking at the Tenant Satisfaction Measures feedback and our annual complaints report, we know that we can do better with:

- The length of time it takes to complete a repair.
- How we keep customers informed of what is happening next.
- How well we manage complaints and give updates on our actions.
- The timeliness and quality of information we provide for our service charge billing.

In addition, our survey of tenants on estate services in 2024 resulted in 670 responses and an improvement plan is underway with 55 resident inspectors being trained to scrutinise local grounds maintenance delivery.

Tenants Satisfaction Measures and trends for West Kent rented homes

We saw an improvement across measures once we began capturing feedback in 2022, but this has not been maintained across all areas measured. Our benchmarking published here is based on the Regulator’s feedback. The national results published by the Regulator confirm our comparative performance.

LCRA – Low-cost rental accommodation	2024/25	2023/24	Regulator benchmark
TP01 Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by West Kent?	74.5%	77.1%	Median (UQ 78.4%)
TP02 If you’ve had a repair in the past 12 months, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall repairs service from your landlord over the last 12 months?	75.9%	76.1%	Median (UQ 78.7%)
TP03 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the time taken to complete your most recent repair after you reported it?	74.6%	74.6%	Median (UQ 75.3%)
TP04 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that West Kent provides a home that is well maintained?	76%	75.6%	Median (UQ 77.6%)
TTP05 Thinking about the condition of the property or building you live in, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that West Kent provides a home that is safe?	80%	85.1%	Median (UQ 82.5%)
TP06 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that West Kent listens to your views and acts upon them?	63.2%	66.3%	Median (UQ 67.9%)
TP07 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that West Kent keeps you informed about things that matter to you?	75.6%	79.1%	Median (UQ 75.9%)
TP08 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following ‘West Kent treats me fairly and with respect’?	80.3%	80.9%	Median (UQ 82.8%)
TP09 If you’ve made a complaint in the past 12 months, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with West Kent’s approach to complaints handling?	37%	44.4%	Median (UQ 41.1%)
TP10 If you live in a building with communal areas, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that West Kent keeps these communal areas clean and well maintained?	60.6%	64.4%	Lower (Median 65.1%)
TP11 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that West Kent makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood?	64.6%	67.7%	Median (UQ 70.4%)
TP12 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with West Kent’s approach to handling anti-social behaviour?	58.2%	62.9%	Median (UQ 64.8%)

* LQ = lower quartile, UQ = upper quartile.

LCHO – Low-cost home ownership	2024/25	2023/24	Regulator benchmark
TP01 Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by West Kent?	58.5%	61.7%	Upper (UQ 58%)
TP05 Thinking about the condition of the property or building you live in, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that West Kent provides a home that is safe?	82.3%	83.1%	Upper (UQ 77.1%)
TP06 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that West Kent listens to your views and acts upon them?	46.3%	49.1%	Upper (UQ 43.6%)
TP07 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that West Kent keeps you informed about things that matter to you?	66.9%	72.4%	Upper (UQ 61.4%)
TP08 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following ‘West Kent treats me fairly and with respect’?	73.6%	69.6%	Upper (UQ 66.5%)
TP09 If you’ve made a complaint in the past 12 months, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with West Kent’s approach to complaints handling?	29.4%	22.1%	Upper (UQ 24.8%)
TP10 If you live in a building with communal areas, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you that West Kent keeps these communal areas clean and well maintained?	35.8%	41.8%	Lower (Median 46.2%)
TP11 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that West Kent makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood?	48.6%	42.7%	Upper (UQ 46.3%)
TP12 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with West Kent’s approach to handling anti-social behaviour?	44.5%	38.5%	Upper (UQ 43.2%)

Our guiding principles

Excellent services

We currently own and rent stock in Kent and Medway. We will continue to provide mixed tenure accommodation with a choice of tenure and affordability levels.

We will continue to provide accommodation for general needs, temporary and care ready housing. Through the Kent Excellent Homes for All (KEHFA) contract (in place with Kent County Council until 2040) we provide supported, care ready and extra care housing. We will not provide care in extra care accommodation but work in partnership with expert providers appointed by the KEFHA contract. We will provide the linked housing management and intensive housing management services. We will offer a range of services and work with trusted partners to support older people to remain in an appropriate home safely and independently.

In the life of this plan, we will begin to use our 25% of nominations to address priority cases of overcrowding and support residents who wish to downsize to more suitable accommodation. We will also seek flexibility over nominations for new build to meet evolving local demand with both our current and future residents.

We want our customers to find us easy to do business with and be easily able to access our services in a way that respects and reflects their individual needs. We will trial ways to improve our local presence in our core communities. We will start to optimise hybrid working to improve the effectiveness of our staff.

We want to provide value for money for our customers, delivering services that reflect local priorities where we can, whilst ensuring that we recover the costs we incur in providing these services. We will continue to ensure residents have the opportunity to shape the design and scrutinise the delivery and impact of our services in ways that recognise and value difference, to ensure their voice is heard.

Successful communities

We will continue to provide tenancy sustainment services across all our homes. We will seek to build strategic partnerships with health, social care and volunteering organisations, advocating for our residents so that together we can provide a tailored response to the different and changing needs of residents and be able to signpost options for our customers to access as they choose.

We will seek to work with residents and partner organisations that share our vision to better understand local needs, avoid duplication and maximise our impact. We will continue not to deliver services that should be delivered by the local authorities or others, and our ultimate aim remains to enable communities to deliver for themselves.

Our community investment work will continue to support our residents through tackling inequalities, increasing opportunity and promoting wellbeing. The scale of our work will reflect our housing and development footprint and will primarily benefit our residents. Our focus remains: supporting our residents to manage and sustain their tenancies well, through direct intervention and partnerships, building active and engaged communities, strengthening financial resilience through employability and skills and maximising income.

Grow and re-shape

We aspire to grow to 10,000 homes in management but in light of continuing economic uncertainties we are not setting a firm timescale, preferring to ensure our new homes are of the right standard and design to best meet the needs of our current and future customers.

We will continue to invest in our current stock, prioritising those that best meet requirements for social housing in the future. We will dispose of or regenerate stock that will be too expensive to retrofit (such as those of non-traditional design build) or not capable of meeting net zero standards but will replace these on a 1 for 1 basis.

We will continue to prioritise growth through building new homes, around our geographic 'hubs' within a 15-mile radius of Sevenoaks district, Maidstone, Ashford (however, as of 2024 we are unlikely to develop in the Ashford region in the short term due to continuing restrictions linked to nutrient neutrality conditions). We will in the life of this plan revisit the strategic options for smaller stock holdings such as in Dover. We have traditionally delivered 100% affordable homes through a mix of social, affordable rent tenure and shared ownership tenure. As we deliver regeneration schemes, we will consider a small element of homes for intermediate rent or outright sale.

We will continue to consider stock acquisitions of up to 300 homes in any one deal where the mix of stock and tenure fits with our current portfolio and expertise, and where it has a positive impact on our finances. In light of increasing stock disposals coming to the market, we will now consider acquisition opportunities to grow outside of Kent if these are areas within a reasonable travelling distance of existing stock, where it would add value to our operating margin and surplus and not impact our service performance for our existing customers.

Best in Kent

In the life of this plan, we will become organised to provide the best possible customer experience. We aspire to be an employer of choice, a place where colleague are proud to work. We will invest in our employees to support the modernisation of our services, increase the professionalisation of our teams and be ready to meet the changes in legislative standards we operate to.

We now hold core data in our systems, which combined with our use of customer views and insight is increasingly shaping our decisions. Our reporting is increasingly providing 'one view' of a property and of a customer.

We will continue to learn from others in the sector adopting data and technological solutions to improve our management of arrears, asset repairs and servicing and planned maintenance programming and those accessing grants to assist in achieving net zero.

We will continue to actively engage with our strategic partners and collaborate on initiatives to better address the common challenges and opportunities we have.

Our objectives

To deliver on our purpose we will focus on the following objectives and measures for success.

Excellent services

1. We want to continue to deliver excellent services in a friendly, solution focused way

Our measures of success will be

- Arrears below 3%.
- Voids loss below 4% and relet time below 30 days.
- TSM TP01 (rented) overall satisfaction to improve from 74.5% March 25 Median to be at least 82%. Customer satisfaction* of at least 4.5 out of 5.
- TSM TP01 (shared owners) overall satisfaction to improve from 58.5% UQ March 25 to 63% by year 2030. Shared owners customer satisfaction of at least 4.2 out of 5.

Key outcomes will be

1.1 Customers will have a positive experience regardless of who they are, where they live or how and when they choose to interact with us

- By investing in our technology and employee skills to deliver effective mobile working solutions for front line colleagues and an improved 'digital by choice' service offer for customers.
- By improving how we handle complaints, reducing the proportion of stage 1 complaints that escalate to stage 2 and to the Housing Ombudsman.
- By enhancing our use of data and customer insight to predict future service demand and how we might adapt our service offer for customers to reflect specific needs.
- By establishing our service offer for shared owners and how we manage leasehold agreements.

1.2 Customer voice will be at the heart of our decision-making

- By consulting on the services eligible for service charges with customers. This work will help close the annual shortfall of c£1m in recovery of service charge costs as well as increasing satisfaction with services.
- By consulting on modernising our Emerald Homes service offer.

1.3 We will support our customers to live well in an appropriate home that meets their needs

- By introducing tenancy checks to confirm our customers are still able to live well in their home and if struggling, to agree what tenancy sustainment support or other measures are needed.
- By using managed moves to resolve overcrowding concerns or address under occupancy, using void vacancies and some of the new homes we build where we can.
- By consulting with existing customers and local communities on the options for those Emerald schemes that need modernising and factoring into our asset management plans or regeneration pipeline.

* This is measuring overall service, repairs, complaints, we listen to tenants' views and act', customers feel treated fairly and with respect'. Target to improve at least by 1% per annum.

Successful communities



2. We want to provide homes and build communities residents are proud to live in, with better support to sustain a successful tenancy and manage life changes

Our measures of success will be

- TSM TP10 communal areas improve from 60.6% LQ March 25, to be at least 73% Median.
- TSM TP11 positive contribution to neighbourhoods improve from 64.6% March 25, to be at least 73% UQ.
- TSM TP12 handling ASB 58.2% Median March 25, to be at least 59% Median.
- Tenancy sustainment support of > 4,000 interventions and > £500k of additional income through community investment work delivered for residents.

Key outcomes will be

2.1 Customers will be supported to manage their tenancies well

- By providing enhanced tenancy sustainment support for those in need when we first let a tenancy and introduce six-monthly and annual reviews.
- By improving our cross-team response, increase the number of successful early interventions with reported antisocial behaviour ensuring fewer serious cases.
- To address the increase in customer need we are experiencing, build strategic partnerships with health, social care and volunteering organisations to give access to support, and to ensure we are able to signpost options for our customers.

2.2 Our estate standard will shape and invest in our neighbourhoods

- By working with customers to implement a new estate standard and improvements in the ease of reporting a concern and tracking our response.
- By working with local partners to improve the look of estates, including tackling fly tipping, bin stores, car park areas and green spaces.

2.3 We will strengthen our communities across Kent by working alongside residents and partners to tackle inequalities, increase opportunities and promote wellbeing

- By extending our community hub approach encompassing youth work, reducing loneliness and isolation and continuing to support resident-led initiatives from the West Kent Community Chest.
- By further leveraging our tenancy sustainment work, community investment and working with our supply chain to deliver > £500k social value for West Kent.
- By publishing case studies of our work to help reduce the stigma of social housing.

3. We want to increase our homes in management to 10,000 and to re-shape our property portfolio to better meet the current and future local needs across Kent and Medway

Our measures of success will be

- Maintain 100% building safety compliance and decent homes standard.
- Achieve EPC C for the remaining 650 of our homes currently at D or below and dispose of c50 poorest performing properties and progress plans for the re-generation of c400 existing homes.
- Deliver 900 new homes.
- Customer satisfaction moving in > 4.2 out of 5 for re-let.
- Customer satisfaction moving in > 4.5 out of 5 for new build.

Key outcomes will be

3.1 Our investment in current homes will ensure they remain safe, are warm and well maintained

- By using smart technology for buildings to improve efficiency of safety monitoring (for example emergency lighting), enable self-reporting of faults (for example with lifts) and improve mobile working for employees.
- By having a plan to switch from gas boiler replacement to hydrogen and prepare for the 2040 electrification of energy networks. Invest in the skills of our iNHomes engineers.
- By working with our involved residents to improve customer understanding and gain buy-in with our energy efficiency plans.

- By taking a fabric-first approach where possible to our investment and seeking to access grant wherever possible, have in place and see delivered our plan for achieving Net Zero Carbon standards by 2050. Prioritise for disposal when vacant, non-standard build or hard to let properties.

3.2 We will build new homes through a mix of S106, land-led sites and self-funded regeneration of current sites

- By developing a Swanley master plan to support potential for regeneration of c400 existing properties and re-providing on a more than 1 for 1 basis.
- By delivering 900 homes over the life of the plan with the right design reflecting our customers' needs and meeting our Sustainability Strategy objectives.
- By maintaining and increasing partnership working that gives us access to larger site land-led development.
- By maintaining strategic partner status with Homes England and maximising grant available to support provision of social rent and affordable homes.

3.3 Growth by stock acquisition

- We will consider stock acquisition where it has a positive impact and maintains or improves operating margin.

4. We want to be known as one of the best social housing providers in Kent

Our measures of success will be

- Achieve Regulator of Social Housing compliant ratings G1, V2, C1.
- Operating margin including overall sales = 28-30% by 2030.
- EBITD-MRI less Sales >100% by 2030.
- Employee engagement levels increasing from 74% to 80%.
- Maintain our zero Gender Pay Gap.
- Refinancing of c£250m completed.

Key outcomes will be

4.1 Increasing our impact in the communities we operate

- We will develop our Sustainability Strategy* so we understand and measure the impact we have on the people and communities we work with.
- We will establish our ESG reporting and unlock sustainability linked funding and grants.

4.2 Ensuring we remain well run and governed

- By delivering on our budget, asset management and development plans, achieving our KPIs.
- By meeting the new and evolving regulatory standards.
- By delivering treasury and re-financing plans.

4.3 Continuing to be a great place to work

- By retaining Investors in People Gold.
- By having clear career paths for employees and learning support towards professional skills that both improve retention and development of our in-house talent.

4.4 By maintaining our good reputation

- By understanding our common priorities with stakeholders through a survey in 2025/26.
- Through continuing to actively promote our achievements in the sector. Ensure our staff share good practice at industry events locally and at a national level.

* ESG measures are captured across the earlier objectives and included in our Treasury Strategy.

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