



**WestKent**

Places to live. Space to grow.

**strategic plan  
beyond 2020**







## Foreword

I am delighted to be appointed as the new Chief Executive to lead West Kent beyond 2020.



West Kent has an outstanding 30-year track-record and an exceptional reputation for providing quality homes and excellent community services across Kent. We are highly successful, deliver on our promises, are committed to Kent and our communities and we want to do even more.

This strategic plan has the challenging ambitions:

- to increase our homes in management
- to continue to invest to support thriving communities
- to both modernise our service offer and ready ourselves to reflect changing needs for an ageing society.

Our vision is to deliver places to live and space to grow for our current and future residents. As we enter our fourth decade there has never been a more important role for us.

At West Kent we are passionate about the role a housing association can play in society and believe the values of an organisation are what makes it special. By working in partnership with like-minded organisations, and being open to learn from others, we believe we can deliver the best for Kent.

Tracy Allison  
Chief Executive

There is a housing crisis, a shortfall of 345,000 homes in the UK every year. There are also growing concerns about the provision of suitable options for an ageing population, and a recognition that the service offer needs to change - people are living longer, want an active 'post retirement' and to stay in their own homes as long as possible.

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## Our Vision

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



## Our Mission

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

Our founding ambition in 1989 remains as relevant today as we move into our fourth decade.

Simply, we want to be the best in Kent. 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, and to nurture their communities.

We invest in our communities and work to understand need, and shape services that increase opportunities, build resilience and promote wellbeing.

## Our Values

West Kent is known for its positive culture of working in partnership with customers and stakeholders to deliver exceptional services in a friendly, solution-focused way.

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:



**Delivering on our promises**  
doing what we say, when we say we'll do it



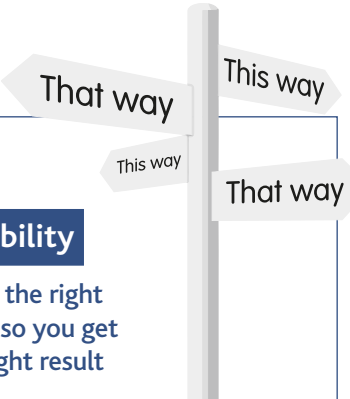
**Self-awareness**  
knowing yourself and the impact you have



**Integrity**  
letting your moral compass keep you on the right track



**Honesty**  
saying and doing the right thing, even when it's hard



**Flexibility**  
doing the right thing so you get the right result



**Learning**  
improving by exploring what's there beyond what you know



**Compassion**  
putting yourself in the other person's place

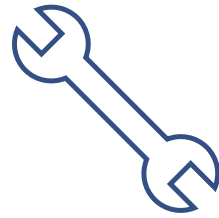


**Working hard and having fun**  
choosing to enjoy the people and the job

# Our objectives

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

## Excellent services



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

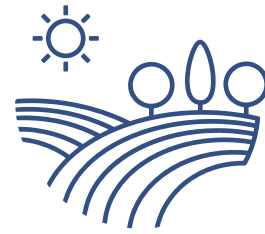
### Measure

- Customer satisfaction:
- service
  - ease of contact
  - new homes and re-lets
  - engagement opportunities
- Arrears <3% and no one with >8 weeks

### By 2025 we will:

- Achieve upper quartile customer satisfaction
- Improve the customer experience by providing easy to use services with greater access and choice, investing in digital channels.
- Know who we house: customer insight drives our service strategy that will offer choice and flexibility as our customer life-needs change over time.
- Create an older persons' 'hub' in urban areas of Sevenoaks district – Swanley, Edenbridge and Sevenoaks town. Seek to replicate partnership approach across Kent.
- Investigate and develop tenure options for our older persons' accommodation such as housing for sale, shared ownership and market rent where there is a clear demand.
- Develop an approach for Dementia Friends or other accreditation for staff and contractors.

## Successful communities



**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.**

### Measure

- 98% starter tenancy success
- £1.5m external funding that benefits residents and communities

### By 2025 we will:

- Be a leading 'anchor' organisation in Kent with a focus on: wellbeing and preventing crisis; building active resilient communities; strengthening employability, skills and enterprise.
- Be able to measure the impact of our work as tangible benefits.
- Deliver a financially viable mixed contract portfolio in support of the areas we operate.
- Expand tenancy sustainment services to include 'age positive' support – signposting to care and benefits, options for downsizing.

## Grow and re-shape



**We want to increase our homes in management to 10,000 by 2025 and begin to re-shape our property portfolio to better meet the current and future local needs across Kent and Medway.**

### Measure

- Occupancy 100%
- Building safety 100%
- 3.5% new homes
- Increase to 1,300 homes designated for older people

### By 2025 we will:

- Improve the quality of our homes when residents move in and the support at 'sign up' to give them the best start.
- Ensure building safety and maintain the condition of our stock. Update our asset management strategy to respond to the new Homes Standard, zero carbon targets and improve energy efficiency for our homes. In delivering plans to 2030 for investment, retro-fit, remodelling or disposal to meet local demand we will take advantage of all grant initiatives available and procurement framework initiatives.
- Deliver a growth programme of 40% social rent, 10% affordable rent and 50% shared ownership through a mix of S106, land-led deals and acquisition. Aim for no more than 75% delivered by S106 by delivering:
  - Partnership that gives access to larger site land-led development by 2021.
  - Established smaller sites partnership approach in 2020 and deliver up to 40 homes on behalf others by 2025.
- Identify partnership opportunities with local authority for site for regeneration
- Deliver one pilot modular scheme by 2021.
- Deliver one pilot zero carbon re-fit by 2025.

## Best in Kent



**We want to be known as Kent's housing provider of choice.**

### Measure

- Social housing operations margin > 35%
- G1 V1
- IIP Gold
- Employee engagement 87%+
- Stakeholder perception survey

### By 2025 we will:

- Ensure the long- term financial viability of West Kent with a well- run business delivering to plans and within budget.
- Our organisation is designed so data, customer insight and resident involvement informs decision making and priorities.
- We will be an attractive and respected employer, maintaining Investors in People Gold rating and upper quartile staff satisfaction levels.

**We set out our priorities for every year in our annual plan.**

Further information on how we will deliver our ambitions are included in our supporting customer, communities, asset management, growth and people strategies. We report progress quarterly to our Board and publish performance on our website.



# Challenges

In making our plans we need to consider the current operating environment:

- Changing expectations, changing needs of our current and future residents and implications for how they access our services, and the service we can offer.
- Uncertainty in government policy for rent setting, supported housing and development grant together with evolving policy for 'Right to Buy'.
- Changing standards for Decent Homes, building safety and the Climate Change Act.
- Increasing expectations of consumer regulation and meaningful resident involvement.
- Opportunities with local authorities being able to invest in new homes and larger developing housing associations encouraged to form partnerships as a condition of Homes England grant funding.
- Risks of developing for sale in current market conditions.
- Opportunities to adopt digital solutions to improve our customer access to services and simplify how we deliver our services.



# Risks and risk appetite

West Kent is committed to maintaining the long-term health of the association in terms of its governance and financial viability, the quality of service provision and managing growth in a sustainable way. We accept that our activities will carry risks and that no approach to risk management can eliminate all risk. West Kent has proactive management of key external and internal risks. The Board has considered those risks that could damage the long-term health of West Kent or prevent it meeting the objectives in its strategic plan.



# Value for Money

Value for Money looks at the 'efficiency, economy and effectiveness' of how you do things. Put simply, it's a way to challenge ourselves to do things differently so we can achieve more for the same money or effort, achieve something better for the same money or effort, or even achieve the same benefit for less money, less effort.

At West Kent we deliver value for money by achieving the following:

- Having a well-run business with our homes safe, fully occupied, collecting all income due, managing our business to plans and within budget.
- Generating a surplus for purpose enabling us to invest in communities and new homes.
- Delivering on targets for supporting tenants in successful tenancies and our work to build thriving communities, set out in our strategic plan.

We measure our achievements through the sector scorecard and compare our performance to peers. We monitor performance for:

- Costs per unit.
- Delivering new supply.

- Measures to compare our cost to delivery and service excellence.
- The affordability of West Kent rents to local earnings.
- The benefit of our tenancy sustainment and community investment and publish this in our annual social impact report.

This strategic plan challenges us to deliver on our ambitions and maintain a 35% operating margin on our social housing operations. We will:

- Identify and implement business improvements so we can meet increasing investment needs to achieve the zero-carbon challenge.
- Invest in our process and systems, so that we can have more homes in management with the same cost base.

# Governance

We are regulated by the Registered Social Housing Regulator. Our most recent annual review in November 2019 confirmed the highest ratings G1 and V1.

Our Board includes independent board members, three of these are residents. Our Board is supported by specialist committees; Housing and Communities, Audit and Finance and Remuneration.

We will continue to develop our resident involvement model in line with emerging good practice.

We will continue to strengthen our risk, performance management and financial planning frameworks with the introduction of in-house specialist staff to oversee and provide assurance.



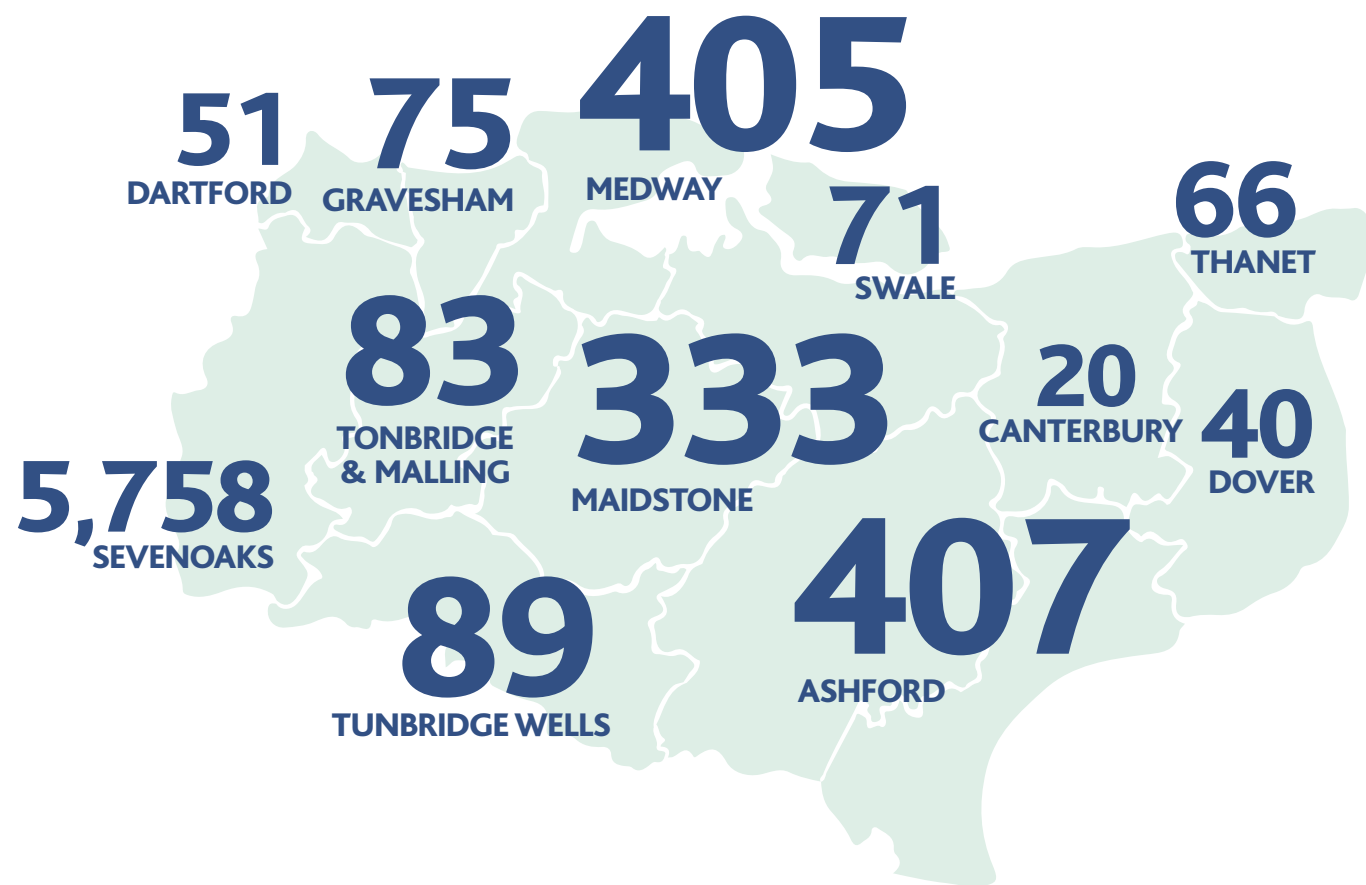


## Facts and figures

We work only in Kent and Medway, where we own and manage over 7,600 homes. We work closely with all the local authorities in the area and many other statutory and voluntary partners. Kent is a two-tier county with Kent County Council, 12 district and borough councils and Medway unitary authority. It boasts a land area of 1,358 square miles and 350 miles of coastline, world heritage sites, numerous conservation areas and areas of outstanding natural beauty along with listed buildings. Over 80% of the county is classed as rural and over 40% of the businesses in Kent are based in rural areas.

Kent is not only the Garden of England, but also its oldest and most populous county, with 1.8 million residents. Easily accessible from London and the continent, Kent is an attractive place to live, work and invest. However, the population is ageing with the number of 65+ year olds estimated to increase by over 50% over the next two decades. Housing in Kent remains unaffordable to many, particularly in rural areas. The average home in Kent costs ten times the 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 or managed by West Kent 2019 (year-end forecast as at November 2019, final version to include actual completions)

## Guiding principles

- We will own and rent stock in Kent and Medway. We will provide mixed tenure accommodation with a choice of tenure and affordability levels.
- We will provide accommodation for general needs, temporary, supported, care ready and extra care housing. We will provide the linked housing management and intensive housing management services. We will not provide care in extra care accommodation but work in partnership with expert providers.
- We will invest to ensure the ongoing building safety and that our homes meet decent homes standards.
- We will ensure residents have the opportunity to shape the design and scrutinise the delivery and impact of our services.
- We will increase our homes in management through development and acquisition with a continuing focus on the geographic 'hubs' of Sevenoaks, Medway, Ashford, Maidstone and Canterbury. We will review staff-based 'hubs' to support this Kent wide growth.
- We will seek flexibility over nominations and length of tenure to allow good portfolio management to meet evolving local demand. We will explore being able to offer choice for our residents through offering sub market rent for a percentage of our stock.
- Our community investment will have three themes; (1) promoting wellbeing and preventing crisis, (2) building active resilient communities, (3) strengthening employability, skills and enterprise. The scale of our work will reflect our housing and development footprint and will primarily benefit our residents.
- We will work with residents and partner organisations that share our vision to better understand local needs, avoid duplication and maximise our impact. We will not deliver services that should be delivered by the local authorities or others and our ultimate aim is to enable communities to deliver for themselves.
- We will learn from the sector- CECI, Communities That Work, HACT, CASE, National Housing Federation and Kent Housing Group. We will seek to showcase our success, to be regarded the preferred/ leading provider in Kent.
- We will hold core data in our systems, use insight to shape decisions, ensure our reporting provides 'one view' of a property and of a customer.
- We will 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.



**West Kent Housing Association**

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visit [westkent.org](http://westkent.org)  
or call 01732 749400

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