



Our Council Plan 2025-2029

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Rother District Council's new Council Plan, our strategy that sets out to enhance the wellbeing of our community and drive sustainable growth. In this document, we outline our vision, themes, priorities, and key actions for the next 4 years and beyond, reflecting our ongoing commitment to fostering a vibrant and resilient district.

Rother is a unique district that is rich in cultural heritage, rural beauty, and coastal charm. Our distinctive characteristics offer both opportunities and challenges that need to be recognised. Since our last Plan was adopted in 2020, we have supported the district during its recovery from the pandemic, developed a Climate Strategy to work towards becoming a carbon-neutral district by 2030, and are now facing a cost-of-living crisis. These changes, combined with the increasing demand on our services, mean it is more important than ever that we work with our residents, businesses, partners, and stakeholders to help shape the services we provide so that we can look forward to a brighter, more resilient future.

The Council Plan includes a vision to 2040 for the district, which reflects our longer term aims and aligns with our Local Plan. To deliver our 2040 vision, we have three supporting themes against which medium term priorities and progress to 2029 can be identified:

- **A Thriving Local Economy**
- **Live Well Locally**
- **Green to the Core**

These themes are underpinned by our **Fit for the Future** programme, which ensures that we can deliver the priorities and actions outlined in this document through effective and efficient services.

We will deliver some of the actions ourselves or take a lead to co-ordinate with our partners. Other actions where we are not best placed to lead, we will continue to work collaboratively with our communities and partners to achieve for the benefit of our residents and businesses, taking an enabling role.

To navigate our challenges effectively, we will monitor and report annually on our progress against each of our themes and actions.

This document aims to build on our work over the last four years and as a council we have exciting plans, with over £120 million of innovative [projects](#) planned to deliver better facilities and services for residents, including:

- [Barnhorn Green GP surgery and business spaces development](#)
- [Blackfriars, Battle – 200 new homes](#)
- [Camber Welcome Centre](#)
- [De La Warr Pavilion regeneration project](#)
- [Heart of Sidley Community Hub](#)
- [King Offa housing and leisure centre](#)

We recognise the district's potential and want to support these positive changes to enhance community wellbeing while promoting sustainability, economic growth, and improved public services. We are excited for the vision we have created for our district and hope that you share it as we move along our path forward together.



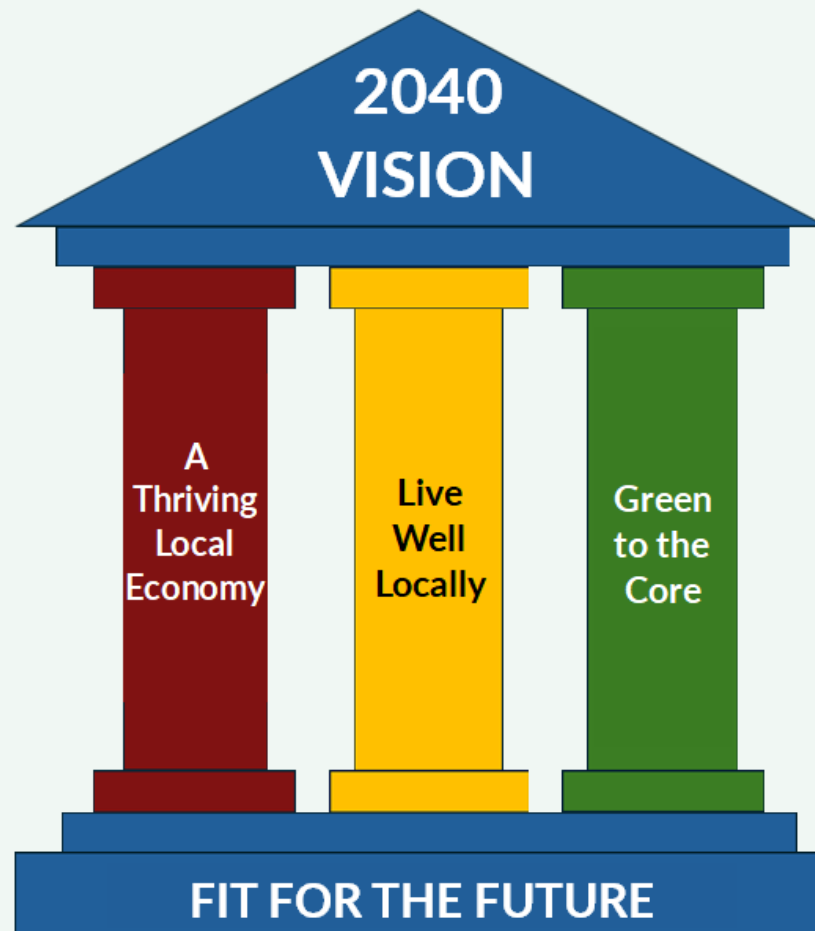
Councillor Doug Oliver
Leader of the Council



Lorna Ford
Chief Executive

OUR 2040 VISION AND STRATEGIC OUTCOMES TO 2029

By 2040 Rother District will be an attractive and affordable place to live, work and visit. The district will have a **Thriving Local Economy** with diverse, flexible, well-paid local employment and skills opportunities. People will be enabled to **Live Well Locally** within safe and fairer communities, where they can access the facilities, services, and housing they need. Rother will be recognised for being **Green to the Core**, leading the response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies, protecting the historic and natural environment.



OUR DISTRICT PROFILE

A thorough understanding of the district's key information enables us to prioritise and plan, ensuring we can deliver effective and resilient services. The latest [State of the District](#) report reflects issues and opportunities across the district...



Residents

93,100 (2.8% increase between 2011 to 2021)



Working age population

51%, with over 65s representing 33% of the population



Average age

53 (highest in the South East)



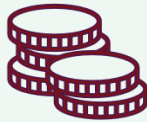
Ethnicity

Non-white minorities represent **4.4%** of residents



Business size

88% are microbusinesses and employ less than 9 people



Average annual salary

£31k (17.5% lower than the national average)



Largest industries

Wholesale and retail trade make up **14%** of businesses



Annual visitor spend

In 2022, the tourism industry contributed over **£245 million** to Rother's economy



Deprivation

Rother is in the **40%** most deprived authorities in England, with pockets of deprived areas throughout the district



Ratio of house prices to income

12.19 (higher than regional (10.75) and national (8.28) averages)



Owner occupiers

72.7% of households in the district



Disability

21.6% of residents are classed as disabled (4.3% higher than national average)



Land

83% of Rother is within the **High Weald National Landscape**, a further **7%** has **protected status**



Carbon footprint

472.6 ktCO₂e was generated in 2021



Emissions

81% of emissions in 2021 were generated by transport, domestic, and industrial usage



Waste

0.11% of waste in Rother is sent to landfill

OUR KEY PROJECTS

Our development programme is key to achieving our vision for the district and improving infrastructure, enhancing the quality of services and boosting economic development. Over the lifetime of this Plan we will support, enable and deliver many projects across Rother, including:

The [Blackfriars, Battle](#) scheme focuses on the delivery of infrastructure to unlock the site for the development of 200 homes.

The [King Offa housing and leisure centre](#) schemes enable the delivery of new housing units and the provision of a new leisure centre.

The [De La Warr Pavilion regeneration project](#) will redevelop facilities to improve accessibility and sustainability. The scheme aims to facilitate creative engagement, attract new visitors and support the delivery of skills training.

[Barnhorn Green GP Surgery and business spaces development](#) aims to relocate two GP surgeries to a co-located site and involves potential provision of business spaces.

The [Heart of Sidley Community Hub](#) will connect Sidley with the De La Warr Pavilion and the town centre, providing increased opportunities for residents to develop skills and access education and employment.

The new [Camber Sands Welcome Centre](#) will expand and enrich operations at Camber Sands through the delivery of a new kiosk, increased first aid facilities, and improved sustainability features.

Opportunities will continue to be explored to maximise the value from the [Town Hall](#) site, taking account of our new Strategic Asset Management Plan and People Strategy.



Heart of Sidley Community Hub (top) and Camber Sands Welcome Centre

A Thriving Local Economy



We will continue to make the most of the significant investment in our district, creating the right conditions to grow our economy, boost skills, and deliver well paid jobs. The district will be recognised as a world class visitor destination.

What we want to achieve	How we will achieve this
<p>1. Encourage inward investment by creating the right conditions for sectors that support well paid jobs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maximise the potential of our assets to provide flexible, affordable workspaces and ‘move-on’ spaces for smaller businesses. 2. Continue to develop our cultural infrastructure to support creative industries and practitioners across the district. 3. Support the delivery of a medical centre at Barnhorn Green in Bexhill. 4. Identify sustainable land supply pipeline for business development, including across high streets, business parks and retail parks.
<p>2. Improve business resilience in the district.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with Chambers of Commerce and education providers to understand to the changing landscape in key areas. 2. Support the growth and expansion of existing local businesses to promote a circular economy and enable the wider Economic Prosperity Strategy objectives for the county. 3. Establish a closer working relationship with local stakeholders through enabling regular business networking events. 4. Support the delivery of Bexhill Town Board’s 3-year investment plan for Bexhill (the Long Term Plan for Towns).
<p>3. Grow the rural economy.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the agricultural sector to understand their needs, support growth, and lobby to ensure our voice is heard. 2. Support sectors that create local produce, including those across the wine, hops, agriculture, soft fruit, and fishing industries. 3. Support the delivery of rural infrastructure, including animal processing provision, for Rother. 4. Enable business diversification as appropriate across our rural, land based industries.
<p>4. Support skills and training opportunities.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Host a quarterly Employment and Skills Forum with local Rother partners as part of our emerging Economic Development Strategy. 2. Increase the number of businesses completing ‘green audits’ to support the Council’s net zero targets. 3. Work in partnership with education providers to align training with the skills required by local businesses and encourage young people to develop careers in Rother. 4. Continue to provide work experience and apprenticeship opportunities within the council. 5. Encourage volunteering in the community and Council as a way of learning new skills.
<p>5. Attract more visitors to the area for longer stays.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support our established destination management organisation, 1066 Country Marketing, to review and deliver its business plan. 2. Work with Sussex Modern to promote culture and the Sussex Winelands region and explore opportunities to promote other local producers. 3. Work in partnership to enable the delivery of a new hotel for Bexhill. 4. Complete a Tourism Accommodation Study in support of our Local Plan. 5. Work to enable an enhanced tourism offer in Camber that benefits the local economy and community, including through the delivery of a new welcome centre. 6. Support events to encourage greater visitor footfall and local spend. 7. Develop the green tourism offer with the High Weald. 8. Continue to work as a key partner within the Sussex-wide Local Visitor Economic Partnership and ensure local tourism activity supports the development of the wider visitor economy.



De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea

A Thriving Local Economy – Success Measures



Success Measure
<p>Business survival rates Drawn from business rates records</p>
<p>Empty unit rates in Bexhill, Rye, and Battle town centres</p>
<p>Average weekly salary Median gross weekly pay of employees in Rother</p>
<p>Average annual salary Median gross annual pay of full-time employees</p>
<p>Average annual visitor spend</p>
<p>Average visitor stay Average length of visitor stay annually</p>
<p>Value of grants awarded via community grant fund</p>



We will be recognised as an inclusive and fair district, planning the delivery of affordable homes and working with partners to support the wellbeing of our residents. We will enhance the quality of our residents' lives by enabling the provision of good quality leisure facilities and access to open spaces.

What we want to achieve	How we will achieve this
1. Increase housing supply, improve housing quality, and manage the increase of homelessness through prevention.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to plan the delivery of homes across the district, including 200 homes at Blackfriars, Battle (including 130 affordable homes). 2. Increase our portfolio of Temporary Accommodation. 3. Adopt a Local Plan to support the delivery of housing that meets the needs of the district. 4. Promote our Tenant Finder service to private sector landlords. 5. Work in partnership to develop and deliver the East Sussex Housing Partnership Strategy. 6. Adopt a new Housing Development Strategy and deliver its aims and objectives to increase housing supply. 7. Host annual Housing Conferences to promote Rother as a locality for development. 8. Adopt a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy.
2. Tackle health inequalities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work within the Integrated Care System to harness available information and target support to those that need it. 2. Enable new health facilities with our partners, including the opening of a new GP surgery and mental health hospital across two sites in Bexhill. 3. Deliver a partnership-based Age Friendly Action Plan. 4. Utilise Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to support eligible residents with home adaptations. 5. Carry out regular housing inspections through our Environmental Health team.
3. Encourage people to keep active, including participation in sports and recreational activities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to deliver our Health and Wellbeing: Leisure Facilities Strategy. 2. Improve indoor and outdoor leisure facilities, including by enabling the delivery of a new leisure centre in Bexhill. 3. Support the delivery of a new community hub in Sidley. 4. Continue to support Active Rother.
4. Reduce levels of deprivation where help is most needed.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure we understand the needs of our community and work with partners to support vulnerable residents through the delivery of the Anti-Poverty Strategy. 2. Develop a new Equality Strategy. 3. Make the best use of community grant funding to ensure better outcomes for residents. 4. Support the implementation of a new community hub, led by Rother Voluntary Action (RVA), and a rural mobile hub, led by Sussex Outreach Services (SOS).
5. Keep Rother a safe and attractive place to live, work, and visit.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the Safer Rother Partnership to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. 2. Support Bexhill Town Board's 3-year investment plan for Bexhill (the Long Term Plan for Towns). 3. Work with local partners including our town and parish councils to keep Rother's public spaces attractive.
6. Develop strategies for Council partnership working.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a Council-wide Community Engagement Strategy and practice guide. 2. Co-produce a 'working together' agreement with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector. 3. Identify a range of ways to develop closer links with local businesses.



Egerton Park, Bexhill-on-Sea



Live Well Locally – Success Measures

Success Measure	
<p>Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) spend Annual spend of DFGs (grants available to disabled people that fund adaptations to their home)</p>	<p>Health profile indicators for physical activity and obesity</p>
<p>Major development planning appeals allowed by the Planning Inspector Planning applications for sites that consist of 10 or more dwellings or floorspace of over 1,000 square metres</p>	<p>Minor development planning appeals allowed by the Planning Inspector Planning applications for listed building consents and developments up to 9 units or up to 1,000 square metres of commercial floorspace</p>
<p>Indices of multiple deprivation score</p>	<p>Proportion of households in fuel poverty</p>
<p>Homelessness presentations Number of households prevented or relieved from homelessness</p>	<p>Ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings</p>
<p>Delivery of a Local Plan for the district</p>	<p>% of service requests completed in required timescale</p>
<p>Missed bins per 100,000 collections</p>	<p>% of scheduled Food Inspections Carried Out</p>
<p>VCSE organisations report improved partnership working Number of organisations within the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector who report improved partnership working</p>	



By taking bold action to tackle climate change and protect the environment in all that we do, we will make the district climate-resilient and reduce council emissions to net zero by 2030.

What we want to achieve	How we will achieve this
1. Ensure the built environment is low carbon and climate resilient.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the delivery of our Climate Strategy, which sets out to enable, encourage, and accelerate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions across the district. 2. Continue to invest in our own buildings to improve energy efficiency. 3. Promote and support sustainable forms of transport through our planning system and partnership work. 4. Provide funds for community projects with environmental benefits, through schemes including the CIL-funded Climate Emergency Bonus Fund. 5. Focus on addressing the green skills gap.
2. Produce less waste and support a thriving circular economy.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce weekly food waste collections for households from 2026. 2. Continue to support community groups in reducing their waste through schemes such as the Rother Reduce, Re-use, Recycle Grants. 3. Optimise our own resource use through sustainable water management. 4. Improve Environmental Health monitoring and enforcement to reduce littering and fly-tipping. 5. Support the introduction of the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme (pEPR) and the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) to reduce waste and increase recyclable packaging.
3. Promote and enable behavioural change to reduce the council's carbon footprint.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete annual Commuter surveys of council staff. 2. Support the work of our Green Team. 3. Install Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points in our car parks and encourage other authorities, businesses, and organisations to do the same. 4. Continue to provide Carbon Literacy training to colleagues and Members. 5. Lead by example and encourage behavioural change concerning the environment through our Communications.
4. Protect our natural and historic environment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt a Local Plan that ensures developments conserve and enhance the landscape, with at risk areas protected from inappropriate development. 2. Actively engage with Southern Water to improve services in Rother including bathing water quality. 3. Work in partnership with the Environment Agency and other relevant bodies to manage our coastal and flood defences.
5. Support the recovery of nature across the district.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the development and delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. 2. Seek to maximise the benefits of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) including the use of the Council's own land. 3. Implement a programme to enhance our green and blue assets as sites for nature recovery.
6. Produce renewable energy locally.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to install renewable energy systems on existing and future assets. 2. Support grid decarbonisation by exploring the impact of smart energy solutions where viable, including solar and geothermal systems.



1066 Country Walk



Green to the Core – Success Measures

Success Measure

Council's carbon footprint (Scopes 1 and 2)

Tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent (TCO₂e) arising from fleet vehicles, gas and electricity used by operational buildings

Council's buildings carbon footprint (Scope 3)

TCO₂e arising from gas, electricity and water use by non-operational buildings

Council's transport carbon footprint (Scope 3) / Take up of Sustainable Travel by Council staff

TCO₂e arising from business and commuter travel / Take up of EV lease & cycle to work schemes & no. of journeys made by sustainable modes (from business travel claims and commuter survey)

District's Greenhouse Gas emissions

Greenhouse gas emissions (kT GHG) and removals (data provided by Department for Energy Security and Net Zero - DESNZ)

Volume of household waste collected

Tonnes of household waste collected

Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

Creation of a Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for the District



Our Fit for the Future programme focusses on four themes: People, Assets, Financial Resilience and Digital Transformation. It is the key driver for improving productivity, efficiency and resilience across our services, so that we can achieve our outcome statement:

Rother District Council will be recognised as an exemplar council which delivers Value for Money to residents and maximises the contribution from our colleagues, our assets and our digital approach. We ensure customer centric processes focussed on early intervention, working in partnership across organisational boundaries to deliver effective and efficient services.

PEOPLE

Make the Council an employer of choice—attracting, developing, supporting and retaining great employees who do great work.

1. Invest in our colleagues by training, developing, supporting and engaging colleagues, as outlined in our People Strategy.
2. Implement a Target Operating Model that ensures capacity and capability to deliver services.
3. Modernise our People Policies to deliver our People Strategy priorities.

FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Ensure sustainable finances that enable investment and innovation to improve customer and stakeholder outcomes.

1. Manage our contracts and service delivery arrangements to ensure services are well-run and provide value for money.
2. Consider opportunities to create shared services where appropriate.
3. Continue to explore funding and grant opportunities for our work.
4. Deliver the programme of savings as outlined in our Medium Term Financial Strategy.

DIGITAL AND CUSTOMER PROGRAMME

Improve customer and stakeholder experience to deliver efficient services.

1. Deliver a customer centric organisation that uses digital technology which is secure and responsive to customer needs, as outlined in our Digital Strategy.
2. Increase the efficiency of digital 'self-service' options to empower colleagues and customers and support a shift to digital channels.
3. Implement a Communications Strategy to support stakeholders with clear information and engagement in order to achieve the Council's objectives.
4. Develop a Customer Charter that sets service expectations and improves the consistency of customer and stakeholder experience.
5. Create a Digital Inclusion policy that improves colleague and customer skills, confidence and access to digital services.

MAKING THE MOST OF OUR ASSETS

Optimise our asset portfolio to drive improved service delivery whilst securing good return on investment.

1. Maximise the potential of our assets through a Strategic Asset Management Plan.
2. Ensure our capital projects programme contributes to the delivery of our strategic outcomes.



Town Hall, Bexhill on Sea



Fit for the Future – Success Measures

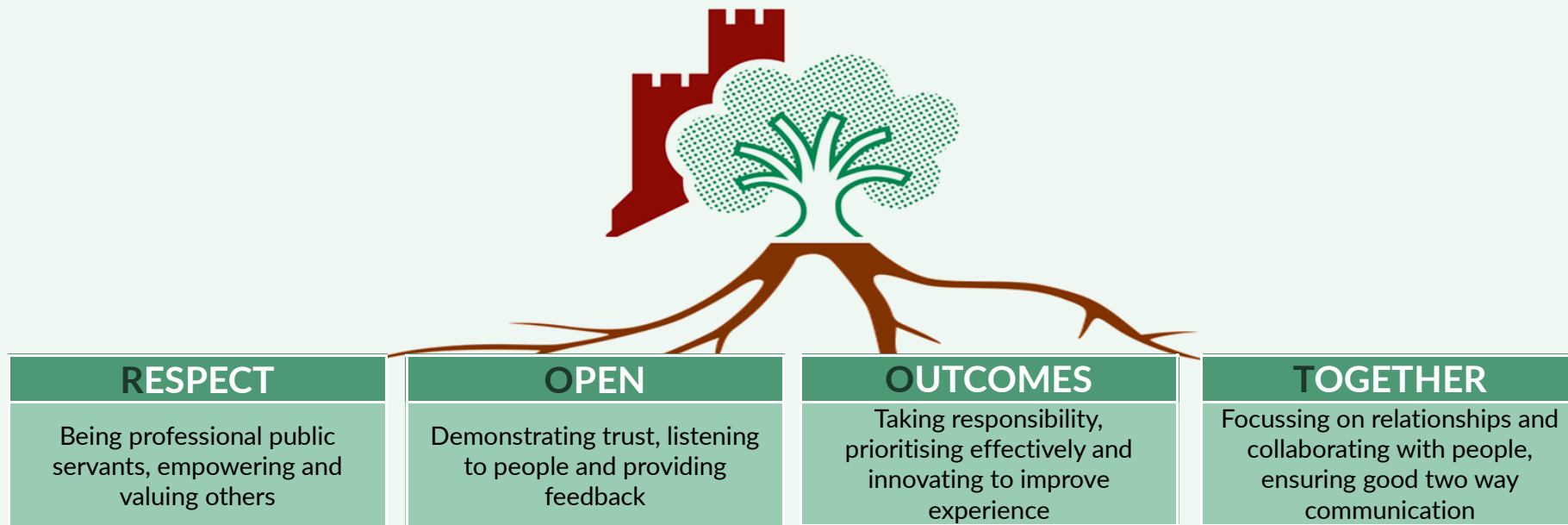
Success Measure	
Staff turnover rates	Money invested in training/qualifications per colleague
Successful recruitment at first time of advertising	Staff satisfaction survey results
Number of appraisals completed	Channel shift to digital % of customer contact through traditional channels vs. digital channels
Enquiries resolved on first contact	% of customers satisfied with the service they have received
% of savings identified in budget actually delivered	% of income generated from fees and charges
% of budget funded by reserves	Net income on assets
Cost per square metre of office accommodation	% of budget spent on reactive/proactive maintenance
% of voids in terms of the lettable estate	Capital receipts realised

OUR VALUES AND TARGET OPERATING MODEL

To progress the delivery of our Council Plan, we will use consistent **Target Operating Model** principles to provide the foundations for our work. The Council has developed the to inform our approach to governance, systems, policies, processes and organisational design - setting out how we will operate:

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE	EMPOWERING	FOCUSSED ON CUSTOMER OUTCOMES AND EARLY INTERVENTION	A COMMUNITY LEADER
Demonstrating Value for Money and securing Return on Investment across our systems and resources	Enabling timely decisions at the right level	Ensuring decisions and resource allocation are evidence-led	Influencing stakeholders and driving delivery with partners

Our values are the '**ROOT**' from which we grow and are outlined in our **People Strategy**. They support the delivery of our Council Plan by creating a shared identity, fostering unity, and guiding colleagues in aligning their actions with our vision and goals.



In implementing our Council Plan, we will aim at all times to extend these principles and values to our partnership working. We are committed to taking a pro-active community leadership role, recognising and valuing the contributions also made by our partners. We will endeavour to ensure that our communication is as transparent and timely as we can make it and that we listen and learn from our partners. In doing this, we will play our part in developing a shared sense of collective endeavour between all our partners to improve outcomes across the district.

GLOSSARY

Age Friendly – In 2010 the World Health Organisation set up a Network of Age Friendly Communities. The Network aims to stimulate and enable cities and communities around the world to become increasingly Age Friendly.

About the Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities - Age-Friendly World (who.int)

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) – A legal requirement for developers that holds them accountable for ensuring habitats for wildlife on or near to an area being developed are left in a better state than before their development began.

Carbon – Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) is a standard measure used to compare the emissions from various greenhouse gases based on their global warming potential.

Carbon Literacy – Training for staff and councillors that gives an awareness of the Carbon costs and impacts of actions.

Circular economy – An economic system that aims to support sustainable production through the reuse and regeneration of materials.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – CIL allows local authorities in England and Wales to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects in their area to fund a wide range of infrastructure that is needed to support new development. This includes transport schemes, schools, flood defences, hospitals and other health and social care facilities, parks, green spaces, leisure centres and other community and cultural facilities. As almost all development has some impact on the need for infrastructure, services and amenities, this tariff-based approach is seen as an effective, quicker and fairer framework to fund new infrastructure to support growth.

About CIL – Rother District Council

Creative industries – Refers to nine sub-sectors: Advertising and marketing; Architecture; Crafts design and designer fashion; Film, TV, radio and photography; Museums, galleries and libraries; Music, performing and visual arts; Publishing; and IT, software and computer services (including video games).

Green and blue open spaces – Areas of natural vegetation (green spaces) and bodies of water (blue spaces) that are publicly accessible.

Green audits – Evaluate the environmental impact of a business and identify how businesses can improve their 'green' credentials.

Green skills gap – The shortage of workers who possess the skills and knowledge to support the transition to a more sustainable environment.

Integrated Care System – Statutory partnerships (including local authorities and the NHS) that plan, support, and provide health and care services.

Long Term Plan for Towns (LTPT) – Government funding to support the implementation of a regeneration type programme of development, coordinated through a Town Board for Bexhill on Sea.

Rural diversification – Refers to the creation of additional or alternative sources of incomes for those in the land based sector, outside of traditional industries. The land based sector is referred to by the UK Government as the Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care sector and traditionally relates to farming and industries connected to the land and environment, including horticulture, food production, forestry, conservation, landscaping and equine (horses).

Tenant Finder – A tenant finding service that introduces landlords to prospective tenants and assists them in securing accommodation in the private rented sector.

Rother Tenant Finder Scheme – Incentive – Rother District Council