



Our Council Plan 2025-2029

INTRODUCTION

In 2024 we set out a four-year plan to enhance the wellbeing of our community and drive sustainable growth. This refresh is an opportunity to ensure the plan continues to reflect Rother's priorities and the changing environment within which the council operates.

Since our plan was adopted, the government has confirmed that local services will be restructured, in a process known as Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). This will lead to significant changes, including the creation of a unitary council that will replace Rother District Council by April 2028.

While this creates uncertainty, it also reinforces the importance of having a clear and focussed plan to guide our work. We remain committed to fostering a vibrant and resilient future through our vision to 2040 and our three themes:

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

These themes continue to be underpinned by our **Fit for the Future** programme, which is critical in ensuring that we can fulfil our statutory duties and provide other vital services that our communities value and support.

Whatever the structure of local government in Rother, we are confident that by working collaboratively with our partners and communities we can continue to support positive changes and enhance wellbeing, while promoting sustainability, economic growth, and improved public services.



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. Our [State of the District](#) report (2024) 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

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	What we need to do
<p>1. The right conditions for businesses to invest, innovate and grow in Rother</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support innovation and cluster development in opportunity sectors, including the land-based and creative industries, leisure and tourism. 2. Support high growth businesses, microbusinesses and strengthen local supply chains and networks. 3. Identify and develop strategic sites and provide accessible, flexible and affordable workspaces. 4. Embed circular economy principles and support community wealth building. 5. Support businesses to transition to a low carbon economy.
<p>2. People of all ages have the opportunity to reach their potential</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build a culture of entrepreneurship, including support for freelancers. 2. Increase opportunities to improve the skills and qualifications levels of local residents. 3. Create a flexible and responsive skills system.
<p>3. Sustainable places and communities that attract people, visitors and businesses</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain and enhance the vibrancy of the district's main commercial centres - Bexhill, Rye, Rye Harbour and Battle and their surrounding villages. 2. Ensure that the district's rural centres have the facilities they need to thrive. 3. Make best economic and social use of the district's seafront, heritage and cultural assets. 4. Develop and promote Rother as a sustainable visitor destination.
<p>4. Improved infrastructure with reliable digital and transport connectivity across the district</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve public and sustainable transport options in key parts of the district. 2. Improve strategic rail and road transport connections with key commercial centres. 3. Improve digital infrastructure throughout the district. 4. Encourage more walking and cycling.



De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea

A Thriving Local Economy – Success Measures



Success Measure
Business survival rates Drawn from business rates records
Average weekly salary Median gross weekly pay of employees in Rother
Average annual salary Median gross annual pay of full-time employees
Average annual visitor spend
Average visitor stay Average length of visitor stay annually



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	What we need to do
1. Sustainable, inclusive housing growth that improves housing quality, meets local needs and supports homelessness prevention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the supply of affordable homes across the district. 2. Enhance housing options to meet local needs. 3. Prevent homelessness and support residents into housing. 4. Strengthen strategic partnerships to accelerate development.
2. Foundations for fairer access to good health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Target support to residents and communities with the greatest needs. 2. Improve access to health facilities through partnership working. 3. Promote healthy ageing and independent living through programmes. 4. Strengthen environmental protections to safeguard residents' wellbeing.
3. More people have access to and enjoy active lifestyles	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote active and healthy lifestyles through programmes. 2. Improve indoor and outdoor leisure facilities. 3. Support the delivery of community spaces and hubs for sports and recreational activities.
4. Reduced levels of deprivation where help is most needed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen our understanding of community needs and support vulnerable residents. 2. Promote fairness and equality across the district. 3. Maximise the impact of community grant funding. 4. Improve access to support and services for residents.
5. Communities that are safe and attractive places to live, work and visit	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work in partnership to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. 2. Maintain the attractiveness of Rother's public spaces. 3. Support the delivery of Bexhill Neighbourhood Board's 10-year vision for Bexhill.
6. Strong collaboration and engagement with residents and local partners	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the council's engagement mechanisms with residents, VCSE organisations and the business community. 2. Support local partners with the transition to a new local authority. 3. Co-produce a working together agreement with the VCSE sector.



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 preventions 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>Value of grants awarded via community grant fund</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	What we need to do
1. A built environment that 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. Empower our communities and build local green skills.
2. Less waste and a thriving local circular economy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enable high quality waste and recycling services. 2. Support community-led waste reduction initiatives. 3. Optimise our own resource use through sustainable water management. 4. Advance the circular-economy transition by supporting national reforms, including the Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme (pEPR).
3. A council that is climate conscious	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Embed a culture of climate-consciousness across the organisation 2. Influence sustainable travel choices 3. Lead by example and encourage behavioural change concerning the environment through our Communications.
4. Protected and resilient natural and historical environments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt a Local Plan that ensures developments conserve and enhance the landscape, with at risk and historic 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. Strengthened support for the recovery and protection of nature	<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. Renewable energy produced locally	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand the council's renewable energy capacity by installing renewable energy systems on existing and future assets. 2. Support wider energy-system decarbonisation by exploring the impact of smart energy solutions where viable, including solar and geothermal systems.



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



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.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR)

Implement LGR in a way that ensures stability, continuity of services and clear governance.

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. 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



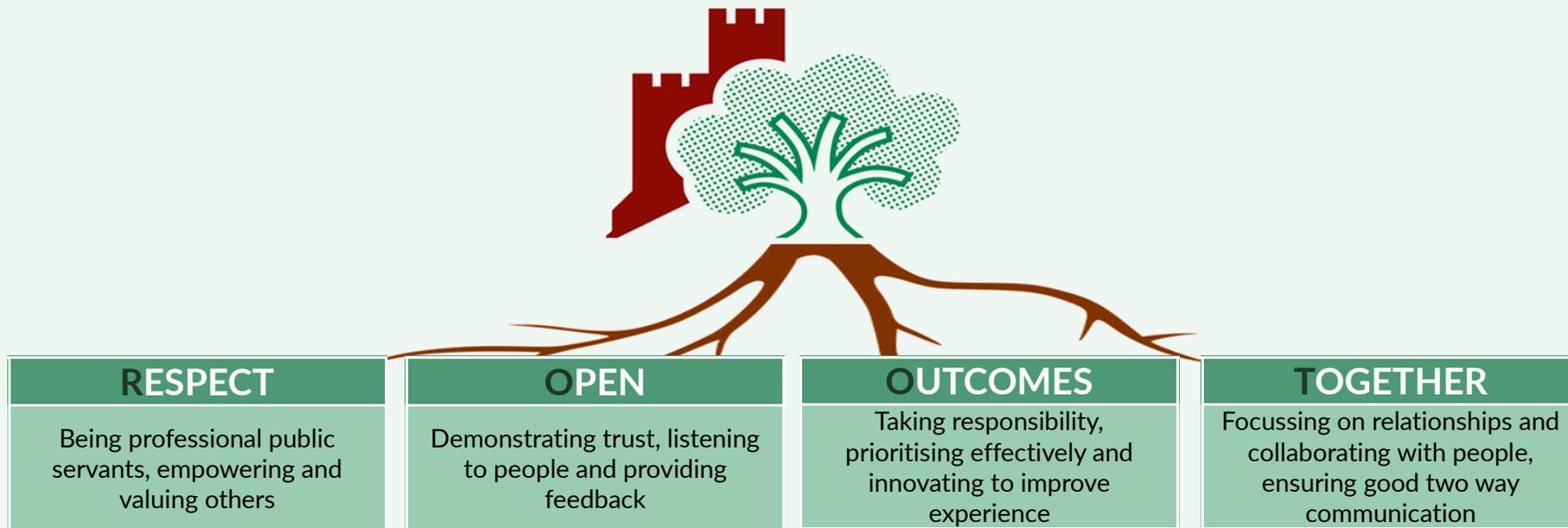
Success Measure	
% of Council Tax owed for the year that has been collected	% of business rates owed for the year that have been collected
% of customers satisfied with the service they have received	Channel shift to digital % of customer contact through traditional channels vs. digital channels
Net income on assets	Enquiries resolved on first contact
% of permanent staff compared to fixed term staff	Average time from recruitment to onboarding
Job offer acceptance rate	Staff turnover rates

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)

Bexhill Neighbourhood Board – Government funding to support the implementation of a regeneration type programme of development, coordinated through a Town Board for Bexhill on Sea.

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 skills – Workers who possess the skills and knowledge to support the transition to a more sustainable environment.

Medium Term Financial Strategy – A plan that shows how the council will manage its money over the next few years so it can pay for services and stay financially resilient.

Statutory services – Services that are legally required to keep people safe and supported.

Target Operating Model – A plan that shows how the council will work in the future to deliver services.