

Hastings Borough Council  
**CORPORATE  
PLAN**

2025-2030



# Intro from leader/vision

Our aim is to make a Hastings where residents are proud of their town and feel safe, valued and heard; where secure housing is available, affordable and energy efficient, and people can live healthy, fulfilling lives with the right skills and education to access good well-paid jobs.

In December 2024, the government announced the biggest shake up in local government for a decade. They want to see all county 'two tier' structures replaced by a single unitary council covering areas of 500,000 people. If these plans go ahead, by 2028 at the latest, the Hastings council, which has been in place since medieval times, will cease to exist, and the whole of East Sussex could be served by a single council.

The government claims this reorganisation will save money, but it isn't clear how the combining of two layers of cash-strapped councils could provide savings or a better service to residents without further reform of local government finances. As a council we already share services with other councils to save costs. The government's intention is to give more powers to regional bodies in areas such as transport, spatial planning, skills and economic growth. We will work to ensure these new powers are focussed on tackling the huge inequalities in Hastings and that residents can influence the way these powers are used.

We will continue to focus on tackling the housing crisis we have in our town and becoming financially stable as well as taking the lead on working with our partners across Sussex to get the best deal for our residents within this major shake-up for local government.

The single biggest challenge facing our community in Hastings is homelessness and insecure, low-quality housing. We will deliver a credible five-year plan that will increase housing supply, particularly social rent homes and housing co-ops, identifying, and developing opportunity sites as well as bringing empty homes, where viable, back into use that enables all residents to have a secure, warm, energy efficient home and brings our

temporary accommodation numbers down to low double figures. We will agree and commit to one- and two-year interim targets that are realistic and achievable and at least one town centre housing scheme in the pipeline.

To achieve our aim, we need our council to be ready to face the challenges of both devolution and meet the local need. To do this we need to be financially secure and stable, with a focus on performance, responsiveness, and engagement with residents across all areas of the council's work. This will mean we need to become an entrepreneurial council, one that is cooperative and empathetic.

Tackling the huge health inequalities in our town must be at the heart of everything we do. These ambitions go hand in hand with tackling the climate and nature crisis and working with our businesses, partners and communities to become a thriving and sustainable net zero carbon town.

We will work in partnership across the public, private and community sectors so that together we co-create the solutions that tackle both the climate and public health crisis.

Hastings has many assets and opportunities, yet many have yet to be fully developed for the benefit of our community. The council will embrace a community wealth building approach to its work. This is about ensuring that local people and the local economy are placed at the centre of how the council operates, and how we work with our partners.

We will develop a strong regeneration team able to respond to opportunities that build on Hastings' strengths and assets both physical and social, across heritage, culture, leisure and sport and turns the vision of Hastings as a garden town into reality. We will ensure we are working to ensure access to jobs, skills fairly/ equally across the borough for the benefit of all residents, improving health outcomes and raising aspirations.

Hastings' residents and visitors tell us they deserve and want cleaner, less graffiti marked streets. Our priority will be



to increase civic pride in our town for residents and visitors through setting targets for cleaner streets and beaches, reducing fly tipping and graffiti, ensuring well maintained parks and green spaces with increased space for nature.

We will continue to work with our local MP and lobby for fairer local government funding which will help us towards being financially stable and able to focus on our other priorities.

Before we can do anything else we have to secure our financial stability so that we can deliver the high quality and responsive services that our residents need.

*Julia Hilton*



The new corporate plan 2025-2030 is built around five principles with associated themes and ambitions.

These are to ensure that Hastings:

- 1** Has a financially stable council that delivers high quality, responsive services in cooperation with local people;
- 2** Is tackling homelessness and ensuring good quality housing;
- 3** Takes action to tackle the climate and nature crisis;
- 4** Is somewhere that people have a greater pride in place;
- 5** Is tackling poverty and inequality.

The government's plans for devolution place a greater emphasis on us working in partnership with others to deliver services for our residents. We will work with others in the public, private and voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors to:

- ★ create thriving, healthy and safe communities who are proud of their town with access to secure, affordable, warm low energy and adaptable housing;
- ★ take action to meet the challenges of the climate emergency and making space for nature;
- ★ build an inclusive and prosperous local economy ensuring that local people and the local economy are placed at the centre of how the council operates, and how we work with our partners.

With devolution in mind, we will be looking at how we can share services with others and transforming and redesigning the council. Our first priority is to achieve financial stability and reduce the levels of housing need in Hastings so that we can contribute to the devolution process.



# A financially stable council that delivers high quality, responsive services in cooperation with local people

Working towards being financially stable is our top priority; without this we can't deliver on our wider ambitions for the town. We believe this is a short-term crisis and we have a long-term vision for the future when we have addressed our financial situation.



Having stable finances will allow us to contribute and work with others on devolution deals and agreements in the future.

To achieve this, we will:

- balance the budget;
- continue to offer our council tax reduction scheme supporting our most vulnerable residents;
- maintain the green levy;
- look at a structural reorganisation of the council, with transformation and shared services as a focus, ensuring that we have the right people in the right places to deliver on our priorities for the coming years so that we have a council fit for the future;
- maximise the earning potential of the council through our assets.



# Tackling homelessness and ensuring good quality housing.

With more than 600 households in temporary accommodation, the housing crisis is not only the biggest financial risk to the council, but it also disrupts the lives of our residents. To help us tackle the crisis, we will continue our acquisitions programme and work on bringing empty homes back into use.





## To achieve this, we will:

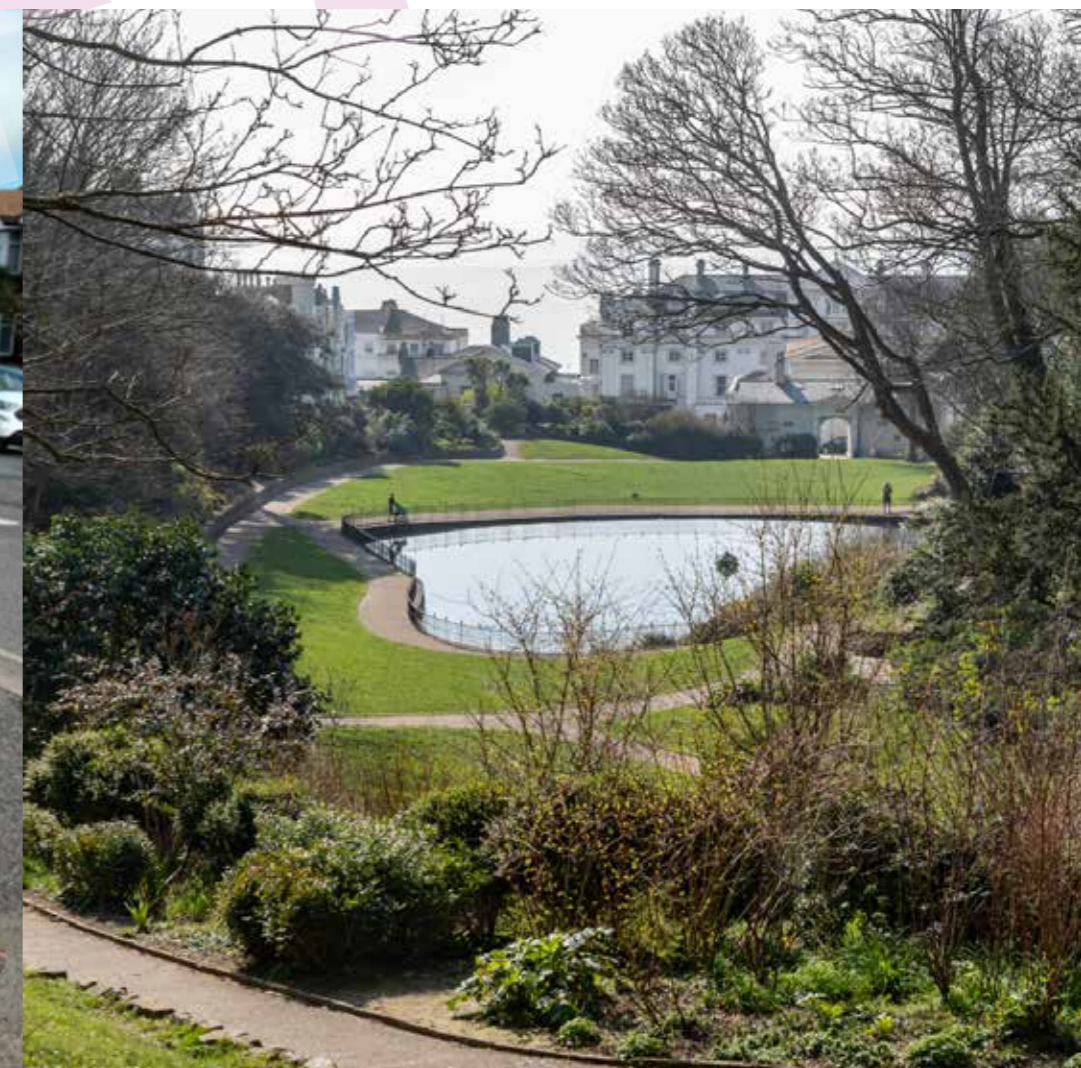
- set aside £10m to spend on our acquisition programme for 2025-26, with further spend reliant on external grant funding;
- complete our new Housing strategy which will inform our long-term plans for providing more homes;
- continue to build out Bexhill Road and other housing site targets plus one town centre development;
- continue to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation lobbying government through our own actions and in partnership with others with the ambition of halving these numbers in the next five years;
- introduce a licensing scheme for the private rented sector to improve housing standards for our residents;
- continue work to delivering 500 new homes;
- employ an enabling officer to work on bringing back empty homes into use. We will look to bring back five to ten properties in the first year, then 30 homes a year from year 2 of the post;
- maximise the use of our Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to help more residents stay in their homes for longer without the need to move;
- build new homes for the first time in more than 25 years.

Financial stability and the housing crisis are closely linked and will form our main focus for the first period of this plan. Tackling fuel poverty forms part of our work on the housing crisis and also the following priorities.

# Take action to tackle the climate and nature crisis



We will work towards being a sustainable town, taking action against the climate emergency and how it impacts on every aspect of our work and residents' lives.





## To achieve this, we will:

- take action to meet the challenges of the climate emergency, with a focus on fuel poverty to help our residents with the cost of living and improve the environment. Retrofitting older buildings is vital in this and we will work with partners and look to external funding where possible;
- work with our communities to achieve net zero including appointing a new climate change officer;
- increase the amount of renewable energy produced in the town and decrease our energy use over the next five years. This will help keep our energy bills down and keep homes warmer;
- focus on the implications of extreme weather and increased rainfall on land stability and flooding as well as health impacts;
- work with Southern Water to hold them to account for their compensation and infrastructure plans;
- increase biodiversity and ensure the space for nature is maintained and improved including preparing a business plan for a habitat bank;
- work on creating a local nature reserve around Hastings Castle in tandem with the Town Deal plans;
- work through the changes introduced through the Environment Act which will include introducing kerbside food waste and changes to items that can be recycled;
- switch our waste fleet to use HVO which will help improve air quality;
- continue to work with UK Power Networks on upgrading the infrastructure around electric car charging points;
- update the climate action plan;
- work to improve the green skills across the town.

# Make Hastings somewhere that people have a greater pride in place

We want Hastings to be a great place to live and work, supporting our local economies, by procuring from local suppliers, and encouraging other local partners to do the same.

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## To achieve this, we will:

- ensure that local people and the local economy are placed at the centre of how the council operates and how we work with our partners, for community wealth-building;
- use our land, property and finance and procurement to benefit local communities and encourage residents, businesses and other anchor organisations to do the same, keeping money in the Hastings economy;
- support the development of new skills and improved prospects for our residents within an environmentally sustainable local economy;
- work with partners to hold a green summit to promote existing good practice in local businesses around decarbonisation;
- secure investment and regeneration across our town and encouraging tourism. This includes delivering the Hastings Castle project, the public realm and green connections project and the green construction project with East Sussex College. We will also continue to lead on work on the Long-Term Plan for towns and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund;
- promote business ownership models that empower the local workforce such as cooperatives, social enterprises and community ownership;
- keep our neighbourhoods, beaches, parks and open spaces clean, well maintained, accessible and safe;
- promote active travel, delivering at least one greenway;
- develop a set of clear targets to measure the improvement of street cleanliness, reducing litter, graffiti, fly tipping and dog mess.

# Tackle poverty and inequality

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This is a cross-cutting priority and the actions we will carry out will fall under each of the other four priorities. We want all our residents to have the best opportunities, we know that without a secure roof over their heads and with the challenge of living in poverty, our children and young people are also limited in their education and life opportunities.



Working with our partners on an anti-poverty strategy is key to addressing this, alongside our work to address the housing crisis. We will encourage and advocate for fair employment and just labour markets that increase prosperity and reduce income inequality.

To achieve this, we will:

- reduce inequality and promote wellbeing with closer working with the NHS, other stakeholders and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector on an anti-poverty strategy including food and energy poverty;
- continue to offer council tax reduction;
- continue administering government funding to support vulnerable households.

