

Hastings Borough Council  
**CORPORATE  
PLAN**  
2025-2030



# Leader's introduction

Our vision is a Hastings where residents are proud of their town and feel safe, valued and heard; where housing is available, affordable, energy-efficient and secure; where everyone can live healthy, fulfilling lives, no matter who they are or where they've come from; and where people can access the right skills and education they need to get well-paid jobs.

This plan sets out the priorities as we see them to move us towards our vision. As we finalise our plan, the government have announced that Sussex will be fast-tracked for Devolution. This involves creating a Strategic Mayoral Authority across the whole of Sussex, as well as full reorganisation of our local councils within East Sussex. This is without doubt the biggest shake-up of local government we've seen in Hastings for decades and its impact cannot be underestimated. The timetable is ferocious: we must agree a proposal by September 2025.

It is vital that we put our vision and priorities, as set out in this plan, at the heart of these proposals, and that our values of cross-party working and engagement with residents and businesses are upheld as we navigate this new ground. We are committed to getting the best deal possible for Hastings.

The government claims reorganisation will save money, but it isn't clear how combining two layers of cash-strapped councils will do this. We already share services with other councils to save costs, and our budget, which sits alongside this plan, is the most realistic it can be given the continued uncertainty of future government funding. The government's intention is to give more powers to regional bodies in areas such as housing, transport, spatial planning, skills, climate change and economic growth. We will work to ensure these new powers are focussed on tackling the huge inequalities in Hastings and on ensuring that residents can influence the way these powers are used.

Our top priority is financial stability. To achieve this, we must become an entrepreneurial council, one that is co-operative and empathetic, with a focus on performance, responsiveness, and engagement with residents across all service areas. We will take the lead on working with our partners across Sussex to get the best deal for our residents.

Our financial solvency goes hand-in-hand with the single biggest challenge facing our community in Hastings: housing.

Housing is key, and we are setting ambitious targets to tackle homelessness and eliminate damp, draughty, insecure homes. Our five-year plan to increase housing supply will have a strong focus on homes at local housing allowance rates and enabling housing co-ops, bringing empty homes back into use where viable, and include at least one town centre scheme. Our goal is to at least halve our temporary accommodation numbers by 2030. There are huge inequalities in our town and tackling this must be at the heart of all we do. From health to wealth, from jobs to skills, we must strive for equity across the borough, working with and celebrating our diverse communities to improve outcomes and raise aspirations.

We will work in partnership across the public, private and community sectors to co-create the solutions that address both the climate and public health crises.

Our own health goes hand-in-hand with that of the planet's, and we must work closely with our businesses, partners and communities to address the climate and nature crisis and become a thriving, sustainable zero-carbon town.

Hastings has so much to offer with many assets and opportunities, although many have yet to be fully developed for the benefit of our community. Our plan is to embrace a community wealth-building approach: putting local people and the local economy at the heart of how we operate, creating partnerships that can access resources and drive change.

We will develop a strong regeneration team to uncover opportunities for Hastings' numerous assets, physical and social, across heritage, culture, leisure and sport. This team will work to transform Hastings into a garden town and renewed tourist destination that celebrates our past and present and secures our future.

Our residents and visitors alike deserve and want smarter, cleaner streets. Our plan sets out to reignite civic pride in our town, fixing targets for our urban spaces and beaches to dramatically reduce



litter, fly-tipping and graffiti, decrease waste and encourage re-use and recycling across the borough and ensuring well-maintained parks and green spaces with increased space for nature.

We are determined to do everything in our power to bring about our vision for Hastings – and what is not in our power to do, we shall continue to work with our local MP and lobby for change nationally. We will keep on pushing for fairer local government funding to help us unlock our transformation and deliver the high-quality responsive services that all our residents need.

Cllr Julia Hilton, Leader of Hastings Borough Council,  
February 2025

*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 co-operation with local people;
- 2** is tackling homelessness and ensuring good-quality housing;
- 3** is tackling poverty and inequality;
- 4** takes action to tackle the climate and nature crisis; and
- 5** encourages and supports pride of place in our town.

The government's plans for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation increases the need for us to work in partnership 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 which ensures that local people and the local economy are placed at the centre of the way the council operates, and the way we work with our partners;**
- ★ **utilising our unique arts, music, historic assets, and natural beauty to showcase our town as a destination.**

With Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation in mind, we will be looking at how we can share services with others in transforming and redesigning the how the council works to the benefit of all its citizens. Our priority is to achieve financial stability and reduce the levels of housing need in Hastings so that we can contribute to the Local Government Reorganisation process.





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

Financial stability is our top priority; without this we cannot 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. Stabilising our finances will allow us to contribute to and work with others on Local Government Reorganisation 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 Investment Fund;
- look at a structural reorganisation of the council, with transformation and shared services as a focus. This will include training and supporting our staff, 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; and
- maximise the earning potential of the council through our assets. This will include establishing a cross-party working group to review our buildings and other assets that could be used as community spaces.



# 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.



*CGI of the new homes at the rear of 419-447 Bexhill Road*



The council tries to prevent and end the homelessness of any household in the borough; however, the council has only a statutory duty to provide ongoing temporary accommodation to households who meet all three of the following criteria:

- a. They have a priority need, which is to say they include children or someone with significant health issues.
- b. They have not acted in such a way as to cause their own homelessness.
- c. They have a connection to Hastings through previous residency or work, or because they have arrived here after fleeing violence from another area.

To help us tackle the housing crisis we will continue our housing purchase 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 our work to deliver new affordable homes with our partners. We are on track to achieve more than 160 homes in 2023/24 and 2024/25 and are targeting a further 500 homes between 2025/26 and 2029/30;
- seek imaginative solutions for additional sites which may become available through any Local Government Reorganisation opportunities;
- employ an enabling officer to work on bringing empty homes back into use. We will look to bring back five to ten properties in the first year, then 30 homes a year in year 2 of the creation of the post;
- maximise the use of our Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) 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; and
- hold housing associations to account to provide better quality homes and properly maintain existing stock as well as engage better with residents.

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 both the housing crisis and also the following priorities.

# Tackle poverty and inequality

This is a cross-cutting priority and the actions we take will fall under each of the other four priorities. We want all our residents to have the best opportunities in life. We know that without a secure roof over their heads and with the challenge of living in poverty, that many of our children and young people have limited education and job opportunities. Working with our partners on an anti-poverty strategy is key to addressing this, alongside our work to address the housing crisis.



## To achieve this, we will:

- encourage and advocate for fair employment and just labour markets that increase prosperity and reduce income inequality;
- reduce inequality and promote wellbeing by working more closely with the NHS, including appointing a healthy-ageing officer in partnership with Public Health;
- update our equality and diversity policies as workable documents that guide us with decision making and implementation across the council;
- use our new council champions to support work for migrants, and on age-friendly and anti-poverty strategies;
- work with other stakeholders including the NHS, East Sussex County Council, 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 to those who need it;
- continue administering government funding to support vulnerable households;
- ensure opportunities to engage in, enjoy, and shape the rich cultural opportunities of the town is accessible to all our communities;



*Active Hastings runs fitness classes for all ages across the borough*

*One of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund projects - Broomgrove moths*

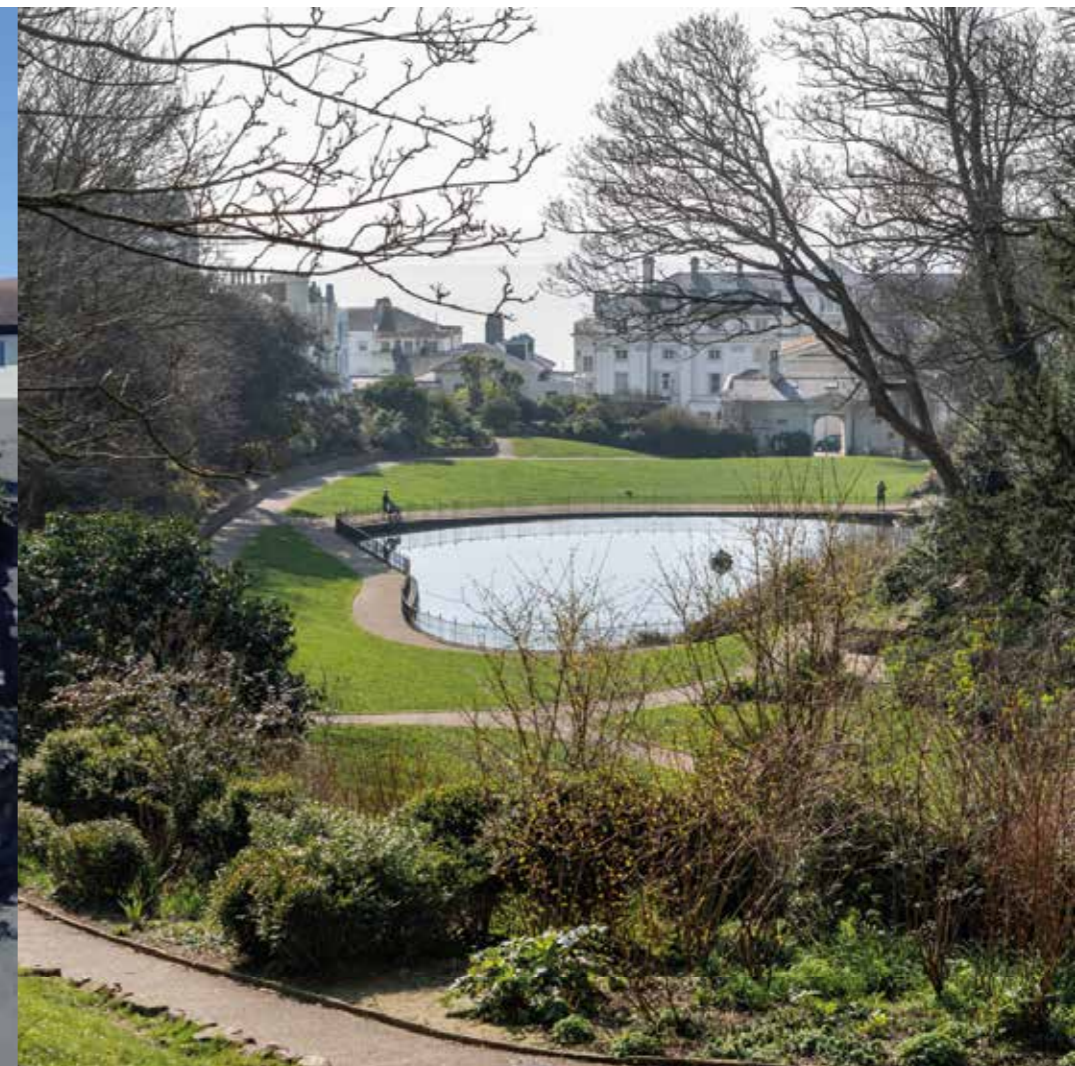


- use the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to focus on delivering skills and job opportunities to the most marginalised groups in Hastings and use the partnership work developed as a template for place-based community empowerment;
- work with the NHS to ensure investment in the Conquest Hospital and no reduction in services there; and under any new unitary or devolved authority, to secure a long-term plan to tackle health inequality across geographic communities and communities of interest who currently have the poorest health in the south of England;
- include addressing health inequalities as an integral outcome to the leisure contract from 2027;
- commit to finding the funding to upgrade our leisure centre so that it is fit for purpose and a key part of our health strategy for at least the next 15 years;
- work with education providers to ensure better education outcomes for all our children and young people including access to higher education opportunities and ensure that any new unitary authority improves the local governance of our education system; and
- ensure any new powers around transport deliver a sustainable, reliable and affordable public transport infrastructure for the town to address high rates of transport related exclusion.

# Take action to tackle the climate and nature crisis

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We will work towards being a sustainable town, taking action to address the climate emergency and its impact on every aspect of our work and residents' lives.





*Solar panels on the roof of Summerfields Leisure Centre*

## To achieve this, we will:

- focus on tackling fuel poverty to help our residents with the cost of living and improve the environment. Effort retrofitting our many older buildings is vital, and we will work with partners and look to external funding where possible;
- work with our communities to achieve net zero including appointing a climate change officer;
- increase the amount of renewable energy produced in the town and decrease our energy use over the next five years, to help lower our energy bills and keep homes warmer;
- focus on the implications of extreme weather and increased rainfall on land stability and flooding – work which is being led by our land stability and flooding teams;
- continue to push Southern Water for reparations for the reputational damage to our vital visitor economy and ensure they stay on track with their infrastructure investment plans to clean our seas and prevent flooding;
- increase biodiversity and ensure that space for nature is maintained and improved, including preparing a business plan for a habitat bank and identifying land for community growing;
- designate the area in and around Hastings Castle as a Local Nature Reserve, in tandem with the Town Deal plans;

- work through the changes introduced through the Environment Act which will include introducing kerbside food waste collection and changes to items that can be recycled;
- switch our waste fleet to use Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) from certified sustainable sources. This will help improve air quality;
- continue to work with UK Power Networks on upgrading the infrastructure around electric car charging points;
- update the Hastings Climate Action Plan;
- work to improve the green skills across the town;
- prioritise and promote the re-use of existing buildings for new homes through the new Local Plan (currently in draft form, aiming for adoption in 2026); and
- ensure the new Local Plan provides the best framework for tackling the nature and climate crisis with high energy standards for new homes and maximises opportunities for locally owned renewable energy.



# Ensure that Hastings encourages and supports pride in place

We want Hastings to be a town that is seen and felt to be a great place to live and work in, a place that supports the local economy by procuring from local suppliers and encouraging other local partners to do the same.



Hastings has long been a town rich in cultural heritage, with a diverse artistic community and a history that stretches back to the Battle of Hastings and beyond. As part of our commitment to building a thriving, sustainable economy, we aim to work with our partners in strengthening our cultural and destination offering, ensuring that tourism plays a central role in the local economy while also benefiting residents.

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, 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, including the Green Skills Academy and working with the East Sussex College group;
- 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 encourage tourism – which includes delivering the Hastings Castle project, the Public Realm and Green Connections project, and the Green Construction project with East Sussex College, and continuing to lead on work on the Plan for Neighbourhoods and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund;
- enhance Hastings’ reputation as a tourist destination by promoting our unique arts, music, history, heritage, and natural beauty, through building a tourism forum of relevant partners;
- use the partnership opportunities to promote tourism, tackle town centre grot spots and help spruce up our town, subject to the final government guidance;



*The improved Broomgrove Community Centre, funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund*

*Freedom Works  
in the former  
Debenhams building*



- lobby for a tourism tax as part of new Devolution powers to help fund the promotion of our unique cultural and heritage assets and events;
- promote business ownership models that empower the local workforce in areas such as co-operatives, 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 to provide safe mostly off-road wheeling and walking routes. Explore secure cycle storage options for residents;
- develop a set of clear targets to measure the improvement of street cleanliness, reducing litter, graffiti, fly-tipping and dog fouling;
- invest in the appearance of our sea front with more maintenance and increased litter bins;
- join the county council in tackling anti-social parking and campaign for the end of pavement parking;
- commit to finding funding to upgrade and invest in improved playground, leisure and sport facilities across the town, working with other partners where necessary;
- continue the excellent work being done by the Active Hastings team to deliver sports for all across Hastings and St Leonards; and
- work with our many sports clubs who often work in our most deprived wards to access external funding for improvements where possible.