

Vision for Kent



2012-2022





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1. Foreword

The Kent Forum is proud to present this Vision for Kent - Kent's Sustainable Community Strategy. As the Leaders of Kent's 14 Local Authorities¹ we came together as the Kent Forum in early 2011. This is our statement on the challenges facing Kent and the priorities for the county. It sets out three Countywide Ambitions that will guide the direction of public services in Kent for the next ten years. This is not a comprehensive statement of policy, but draws upon and links to existing strategies and delivery plans that are referred to throughout this statement.

Between June and August 2011 we consulted on a draft version of the Vision for Kent. We were delighted to receive nearly 800 responses and these have been influential in determining what is in this revised document.

This is a period of unprecedented reform and budget reductions. There are significant changes in education and schools, policing and community safety, health and social care, economic regeneration and more. These will bring great challenges for the people of Kent and for the public, private and voluntary and community sectors that serve them. To make our contribution as a strategic authority to help get the nation's economy back on track and ensure that Kent is advantaged during that period, we have to look very carefully at what services are provided and find different and more innovative ways to deliver them. However, the changes also bring great opportunities. We believe that nowhere is better placed than Kent to seize the moment, and to come through stronger and more resilient than before. Kent has a great deal of strength to draw on, including an enterprising private sector, a strong voluntary sector, vibrant

communities, excellent and innovative public services and its location as the gateway between the UK and Europe.

The three countywide ambitions that form the Vision for Kent have been developed over a long period of consultation with contributors across Kent, and we are committed to these:

to grow the economy - for Kent to be 'open for business' with a growing and successful economy and jobs for all.

to tackle disadvantage - for Kent to be a county of opportunity, where aspiration rather than dependency is supported and quality of life is high for everyone.

to put citizens in control - for power and influence to be in the hands of local people so

¹ The 14 Local Authorities are: Kent County Council, Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority (KFRS), Ashford Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, Dartford Borough Council, Dover District Council, Gravesham Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council, Shepway District Council, Swale Borough Council, Thanet District Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council





they are able to take responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities.

Our three countywide ambitions work together and cannot be seen in isolation as they interact with each other in fundamental ways. Contributing to all three ambitions are important cross-cutting themes, including environmental sustainability, community safety and improved health.

Over the coming years, the three Countywide Ambitions will be at the forefront of what we do to make Kent a better place in which to live and work. Using our collective strengths we will work together with relentless focus on those areas where we can make a difference. We would be delighted if partners and agencies that work with us and deliver services to the people of Kent are able to support the Vision for Kent and for it to shape their delivery plans.

In Kent we want to create a prosperous, strong and sustainable society where people can plan for their futures. We will work with partners and with our communities and residents of Kent to develop opportunities and to break through barriers that hold people back. Kent will be a place where people have confidence that they, their families and communities can have a good quality of life.

We will refresh the Vision for Kent during its ten year lifespan to ensure that we continue to focus on the priorities for Kent.

Paul Carter, Chairman of Kent Forum and Leader of Kent County Council on behalf of Kent County Council and the Kent Forum.

And John Gilbey, Vice Chairman of Kent Forum and Leader of Canterbury City Council on behalf of Kent's 12 District Councils and KFRS

2. Our three countywide ambitions for Kent

Ambition 1: To grow the economy

For Kent to be open for business with a growing and successful economy and jobs for all.

Vision:

Kent will be known as a place where business is thriving, generating wealth and providing high-value jobs, taking advantage of the county's strong small business sector and geographical position as the gateway between the UK and Europe. Kent's excellent infrastructure and attractive environment will support its existing business to grow and encourage new businesses to locate. Kent's business and education sectors will together provide continual learning opportunities for everyone of

working age. This will offer confident, adaptable and ambitious employees the ability to acquire new skills and thrive. Kent's economy will be balanced and provide more jobs overall. With the success of Kent's businesses, employees will be rewarded with good pay and excellent prospects that will lead to a high quality of life for themselves and their families.

Growing the economy is vital to Kent

Kent's future prosperity is dependent upon a thriving business sector that generates wealth. A strong, diverse and resilient economy is the glue that holds our communities together, giving individuals opportunities and putting money in families' pockets. A successful economy is fundamental to the second of our ambitions - to tackle disadvantage.

What are Kent's challenges?

Kent's economy, as with others throughout the UK, is taking a long time to recover from the downturn that started in 2008. The Kent economy needs to rebalance by growing the wealth generating private sector.



Kent's Gross Value Added, Households Gross Disposable Household Income and average skills levels are below the regional average. Overall, Kent has overdependence on low skilled, low-value jobs, and too many of its residents are dependent upon out-of-work benefits.

The pace of technological change is challenging and Kent needs to be at the forefront of this.

Kent's economy is diverse and particularly based around small and medium-sized enterprises. The economy has proved more resilient in some sectors and parts of Kent than others. It is important to build on our strengths and to take advantage of new opportunities for growth.

What we are already doing

We are doing everything we can to create the conditions for growth by investing in Kent's infrastructure. Our plans are set out in a suite of far-reaching delivery plans called 21st Century Kent: Unlocking Kent's Potential.



The eight delivery plans are listed below. Web links to these plans are on page 15:

- Growth without gridlock
- Kent Environment Strategy
- Kent Forum Housing Strategy
- Connected Kent
- Business sector conversations and strategies
- 14-24 Skills and Employment Strategy
- Strategy for Later Life
- Kent Cultural Strategy

Through these delivery plans we are:

- ⇒ Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship by investing in developing skills needed for today's and tomorrow's world, so businesses have a skilled and adaptable workforce.
- ⇒ Developing Kent's infrastructure to support the economy, including improving high-speed broadband access and delivering key transport projects.
- ⇒ Supporting the private sector by

discussing the challenges they face through a series of specific business sector conversations.

- ⇒ Lobbying Government to support Kent's economy. For example, the new designation of Sandwich as an Enterprise Zone will provide business rate discounts and other support for new businesses in the area. We will continue to promote Kent's interests, using Regional Growth Funding and seeking investment to support the economy.
- ⇒ Marketing Kent, promoting its gateway location, cultural, sporting and leisure opportunities, environmental assets and excellent schools and lifelong learning.
- ⇒ Drawing out the particular strengths and opportunities of our districts and boroughs, focussing our efforts where they derive maximum leverage.

Our top 3 commitments for Ambition 1 - To grow the economy

I. To deliver the critical infrastructure that will create the conditions for economic growth across Kent.

This means:

- Providing access to **high speed broadband** that encourages economic growth in our rural areas,
- improving the **strategic road networks** within the county, and also those linking Kent to the rest of the UK,
- maximising the opportunities of **high speed rail** and **Kent's airports and ports** that will reduce journey times to London and improve Kent's connectivity with London, UK and Europe,
- improvements in **integrated public transport** that gives access to employment and improve workforce mobility without burdening our road networks.

2. To raise the career aspirations of Kent's residents, from early years through to adulthood, and to meet those increased aspirations with a range of learning opportunities, apprenticeships and internships that meet future business need.

3. To be business friendly and the county of choice for inward investment and expansion by:

- providing **sector-specific support** for business, particularly in areas of potential growth,
- sell Kent as the **place to do business**, emphasising and enhancing its gateway location and natural assets,
- **offer inducements** (financial and other) for inward investment and expansion,
- maximise the amount that public sector partners **procure from Kent companies** and that use Kent workforce,
- **minimising the bureaucracy** placed on business and champion the removal of unnecessary regulation.





Ambition 2: To tackle disadvantage

For Kent to be a county of opportunity, where aspiration rather than dependency is supported and quality of life is high for everyone.

Vision:

Everyone in Kent has the potential to lead a happy and fulfilled life. All Kent residents, regardless of where they live or their personal circumstances, will have the aspiration and opportunities they need to create a positive life for themselves, their families and their communities. We will work to understand and break down the barriers that stop this from happening. People in Kent will feel optimistic and secure about their futures, and work towards achieving their goals, with minimal dependence on support from services.

We must tackle disadvantage

Disadvantage has economic and personal costs. When people fail to achieve their potential, this has an impact on the individual, their family, their community, the economy and the county. At a time of reductions in public spending we must prevent people from becoming more disadvantaged and strengthen the resilience of individuals to deal with life's challenges.

What are Kent's challenges?

Quality of life in Kent is generally high, but this masks significant and unacceptable variations in life outcomes across the county, related to where people live and their individual circumstances.

Skills levels are a big determinant to how successful people are and too many young people leave full-time education without a full complement of basic skills and without ambition.

There is a big gap in educational attainment for children who receive free school meals, or are looked after or have migrated to Kent. There is a gap in the employment rate of people with low basic skills; people with previous custodial sentences; and people with mental health or substance misuse problems.

Unemployment, low skills, low income and poor housing all contribute to inequality in health outcomes, with life expectancy varying by as much as 17 years depending upon which part of Kent you live.

Some areas in the county, including smaller pockets in otherwise better-off parts, are impacted by disadvantage. Disadvantage has different characteristics in different places, such as rural communities or coastal communities.

Disadvantage does not result only from a lack of opportunity. A lack of aspiration and positive role models, as found in some families where there is little or no track record of employment, reduces ambition for the future. While most people are receptive to improving themselves, a minority adopt lifestyles that damage them and those around them.

What we are already doing

The 21st Century Kent delivery plans discussed under Ambition 1 are central to creating the employment opportunities, securing the skills and providing the infrastructure that are fundamental to tackling many of the characteristics of disadvantage, such as low income and poor housing.

We also have a range of plans and initiatives that will reduce the stubborn gaps in outcomes, such as those in health, educational attainment and skills.

These include plans to:

- tackle family poverty,
- reduce health inequalities, including action to tackle smoking and promote responsible drinking, healthy nutrition and encourage physical activity,
- safeguard children and vulnerable adults,
- reduce domestic abuse,
- improve literacy and reading,
- secure employment of socially-excluded adults.

We have targeted projects aimed at tackling particular dimensions of disadvantage at both county and district level. An example at county level is the Kent Apprenticeships programme,

which is supporting employers to recruit apprentices, providing opportunities for young people who might otherwise drop out of education, employment and training. Projects at local level include health prevention work in Kent's districts to promote healthy lifestyles.

The most vulnerable people, and those who struggle to help themselves, will continue to be protected and supported, so they can enjoy the best possible quality of life.

Our top 3 commitments for Ambition 2 - To tackle disadvantage

1. To reduce the number of Kent residents on out-of-work benefits by:

- encouraging a **desire and commitment** from all residents to **work** as part of the productive economy,
- providing people with the **support and basic skills training** to equip them for work.



2. Inspire young people to become engaged in their families, schools and communities, so they take full advantage of all the learning, recreational and development opportunities (including volunteering), that are a foundation for achieving their lifelong potential.

3. To ensure there is choice of high-quality and accessible services that will tackle disadvantage, particularly:

- integrated **health and social care** that will close the inequalities' gap,
- support for **vulnerable children and their families** to give all young people a chance,
- **housing** that supports strong communities, provides a good quality of life and reduces household costs (including tackling fuel poverty).



Ambition 3: To put citizens in control

For power and influence to be in the hands of local people so they are able to take responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities.

Vision:

Individuals, families and communities within Kent will be involved in shaping the services that affect their lives, and will influence decisions about how services are provided. Service providers will work together with individuals and communities to find solutions that suit everyone. Charities, businesses and community groups will provide more targeted support and services for people, families and communities. Kent will be a place where people have a sense of community, purpose and belonging, somewhere they feel safe and secure.

Why we must put citizens in control

Recent decades have seen an expansion of state control. This has shifted responsibility away from people and communities, to a situation where there is a more dependent relationship based upon one-size-fits-all services provided by public agencies. This model stifles innovation, fails to provide tailored solutions to individual or local circumstances and is no longer financially sustainable.

Kent has a vast untapped resource in its own residents, voluntary and community groups and the faith sector. We must pursue alternatives that focus on independence and give choice and control to residents. Responsibility will be passed back to residents, benefiting them, their communities and the county as a whole.

We must also encourage all residents to accept their personal responsibilities and recognise the impact that their actions and behaviour can have on others. The vision is for Kent's people

to be as self-reliant as possible, minimising unnecessary demands upon public services and looking out for each other, particularly more vulnerable members of the community. We will encourage as many people as possible to become actively engaged, and volunteer in the process of designing and delivering services.

What are Kent's challenges?

This is a fast changing landscape and the next few years will see legislative developments. The Locality Act has been passed (November 2011), and there are other proposals in the Open Public Services White Paper. This will give us the legislative framework for us to develop in the future.

Consulting with 1.4 million Kent residents in a helpful and useful way is a huge challenge and one we are determined to meet. We consulted extensively on this document. Residents felt it important to know that their views have been listened to and that we reflect their opinions in subsequent plans.

We recognise that there is an appetite from voluntary and community groups, parish and town councils and the faith sector to become

more involved in public services in a range of ways, up to and including direct delivery. We welcome this ambition and, as the legislative framework takes shape, will work with others to support greater engagement in delivering services that are both localised and sustainable.

What we are already doing

The plans and actions mentioned under ambitions 1 and 2 are being processed in a way that will give more choice, greater diversity of provision and more control to individuals. For example, we are personalising services for social care by putting individuals firmly in the driving seat when it comes to determining the care that meets their unique needs, and when they want it.

Our elected representatives of both County and District Councils have a vital role and are working in their communities, bringing agencies together to address local priorities. There is an ongoing programme of development to support elected representatives, so they can become effective community leaders.

We are working with representatives of the voluntary and community sectors at both

county and district levels to enhance the sector's capacity so that it can become more innovative. We have ambitious plans to encourage the growth of charities and social enterprises that can take on more responsibility for providing services.

We are continuing to make our decision-making processes, performance and spending transparent and open. For example, we are publishing details of senior officer salaries, Member allowances, invoices over £500 and seeking to make our annual budgets more accessible and easy to understand.



Our top 3 commitments for Ambition 3 - To put citizens in control

1. To support individuals to determine the services that they require, encouraging them to accept personal responsibility and to identify and get involved in delivering **innovative solutions that meet their personal needs**. This should deliver better outcomes at lower cost.
2. To encourage a more resilient society, where communities identify local priorities and have more **influence and involvement in the shape and delivery of services**, which overcomes the need for remote and one size fits all solutions from public agencies.
3. To support the **Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)**, to innovate and become more entrepreneurial, so the sector can expand and deliver more value for public sector investment, while retaining their independence.



3. Cross Cutting Themes

The three ambitions are the specific priorities that partners have identified to focus activity on over the next 10 years. However, there are other important issues for Kent, where the challenges and solutions connect across all three ambitions. We must continue to work on them to achieve the ambitions and make Kent a great place in which to live and work. These themes include:

Protecting and enhancing the environment

Everything we do to develop and improve Kent's infrastructure must be sustainable. In growing the economy, we need to support low-carbon technologies and help businesses operate more resource-efficiently. Tackling climate change is everyone's responsibility, and we will support and encourage people and communities to play their parts, including through volunteering. We must make the most of Kent's natural environment for people to enjoy, contributing to their wellbeing, and to attract business and tourism. The Kent Environment Strategy sets out the priorities in this area.

Improving community safety, crime and anti-social behaviour

In order to build a strong economy, improve our lives and take control, the people and communities of Kent need to feel safe, protected from crime, anti-social behaviour, fires and accidents. There is more that we can do to reinforce a sense of community across the county, which can be undermined by issues such as bullying, drug, alcohol and domestic

abuse. Partners will work together and with Kent's communities to find solutions to these problems. The Kent Community Safety Agreement provides more details on this topic.

Improving Health

Seeing improvements in residents' overall health, while, at the same time, tackling the health inequalities' gap is hugely important. Many public agencies have a role to play in tackling the social determinants of ill health, but improvements will only be made with the support of employers, the voluntary and communities sector and residents themselves. Business can support positive physical and mental health measures, and benefit from a healthy workforce. Residents need to accept greater responsibility for their health and by doing so improve life expectancy.

4. Delivering the ambitions

The ambitions for Kent are interrelated

No one ambition can be seen in isolation. Like three legs of a stool, all of them need to be in place. Progress in one can only be achieved with supporting action from the others, each incremental step underpinning success across the full range of ambitions - a circle of increasing benefits. A strong economy will tackle disadvantage, helping people and communities to take greater control of their lives. The economy cannot be strengthened without reducing disadvantage, cutting dependency on benefits, raising aspirations and skill levels, and improving health. To make these improvements, people and communities need to have greater control over the services they receive, and take more responsibility for improving their lives.

The ambitions apply differently across Kent

The three ambitions are the highest priorities across the whole of Kent. However, Kent is a large and diverse county, and different areas have different needs, challenges and opportunities. This will include differences in skills levels, jobs, benefit dependency, health and the environment. Kent is divided into 12 localities (District/Borough council areas), which are the building blocks for service delivery in Kent. It will be essential for partners working in the localities, including Locality Boards, to identify local priorities and deliver the ambitions in a way that meets them. In Kent, we want to see as much devolution as possible handed to local communities.

Working together on delivery

The three ambitions are complex and far-reaching priorities which no organisation can achieve by working alone. Kent partners need to work together in a flexible way, joining up the services and initiatives that we provide for residents to achieve the best possible outcomes, and operate as efficiently as possible.



Together we will promote and protect Kent's needs and interests, working with the Government and internationally.

To achieve the ambitions, we must work with Kent's people and communities. We will be open, we will listen and we will support people and communities to work with us to solve problems and improve their lives. We have done this by supporting people to design their own care packages and helping communities manage local facilities.

Many organisations and groups contribute to making Kent a better place. We are delighted that so many partners have already shown their support for the three countywide ambitions. We know that many other organisations will make contributions to the three ambitions in their own work. Some of the messages of support received for the ambitions can be found on the Kent Forum website - www.kentforum.org.uk We will work with partners from all sectors in Kent - public, private and voluntary, to achieve Kent's ambitions.



Knowing whether we are making progress

Kent Forum has set the three ambitions for the county. It is our responsibility to ensure that they can be achieved. To do this, we will use existing performance information from across the county to explain the progress being made, and identify areas where we need to see more improvement. This will be included in an annual report to Kent Forum. This report will be proportionate and not bureaucratic, because more detailed and regular performance management will continue to be carried out by the partner authorities and other organisations delivering services that support the ambitions. We will make sure that performance information is open and transparent, so that Kent residents can hold partners to account for performance. More information on performance management is provided on the Kent Forum website at www.kentforum.org.uk

Links to delivery plans

The main partnership delivery plans are listed here:

21st Century Kent

http://www.kent.gov.uk/community_and_living/regeneration_and_economy/21st_century_kent.aspx

Active Lives Now: The future of social care in Kent

http://www.kent.gov.uk/adult_social_services/leaflets_and_brochures/active_lives_leaflet.aspx

Bold Steps for Kent (Kent County Council Medium Term Plan to 2014/15)

http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/bold_steps_for_kent.aspx

Growth Without Gridlock: A Transport Delivery Plan for Kent

<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/News/growth-without-gridlock.pdf>

Involving the Whole Community: The Kent Approach to Literacy and Reading 2011-2021

www.kent.gov.uk/readingandliteracy

Kent and Medway Housing Strategy

<http://www.kentforum.org.uk/reports-and-files/Kent-Forum-Housing-Strategy-FINAL.pdf>

Kent Community Safety Agreement

<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/community-and-living/community-safety/community-safety-unit/Kent%20Community%20Safety%20Agreement%202011-14.pdf>



The Cultural Strategy for Kent 2011-2015

http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/arts_development/cultural_strategy.aspx

Kent Environment Strategy

http://www.kent.gov.uk/environment_and_planning/environment_and_climate_change/environment_strategy.aspx

Kent Partners Compact (public agencies and the voluntary & community sector)

http://www.kent.gov.uk/community_and_living/volunteering/promoting_volunteering/kent_partners_compact.aspx

Kent Public Health Strategy - Living Life to the Full

http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/strategy_for_public_health.aspx

Kent Rural Delivery Framework

<http://www.kentruralnetwork.org.uk/kent-rural-framework/kent-rural-evidence-base/approved%20RKDF%20A4%20format%20I.06.07.pdf>

Living Later Life to the Full - A Policy Framework for Later Life

http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/strategy_for_later_life.aspx

Further delivery plans are available on partner's websites. A list of partners, along with statements of support, is available on www.kentforum.org.uk



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