

Corporate Plan: 2023-27

Leader of the Executive: An Introduction

Gravesham is a fantastic place. But today, we face significant challenges.

From the shadow of global climate change and a cost-of-living crisis to the council's own challenge of significant reductions to our funding when there is ever-increasing demand for more support, more homes, more jobs, and more investment in the borough – I cannot remember a time when so many issues present so many threats to our community.

If there is one thing I do know however, it is that Gravesham is a remarkable borough, with a truly resilient population.

These challenges, difficult as they are, can be overcome. The genuine potential that exists in our borough can be fully realised and a better, sustainable future for Gravesham can be created. But only if we harness the energy, ability, and spirit within our community by working together.

This Corporate Plan therefore has a clear ambition: to create a positive sense of belonging in a community where we are Together - Proud to be Gravesham:

- One Borough: a safe, clean, and attractive living environment, enhanced by a sustainable and increasingly energised local economy.
- One Community: an active, engaged and culturally enriched population, built on the foundations of an affordable and quality local housing offer.
- One Council: a well-run and innovative authority, defined by its skilled and valued workforce, committed to developing its local social impact.

Given the challenges ahead, this is an ambitious Corporate Plan. To deliver on this administration's manifesto and the express wishes of the local community, our role is clear: provide quality, efficient and properly enforced frontline services that meet immediate community needs and expectation, whilst delivering the scale of positive regeneration Gravesham needs to ensure a sustainable future for all.

But real and lasting change cannot come from us alone. It comes when residents and businesses - the backbone of our community - are inspired and mobilised, actively empowered to work with us as one community to create a stronger Gravesham. It requires all of us to make a difference.

We will therefore adopt a 'partnership first' approach to develop our borough: with business groups to improve our economic profile; with government and its agencies in lobbying for a better deal for Gravesham; and we will tap into the knowledge and skills within our outstanding local voluntary sector, all the while ensuring residents have their voice heard in shaping a better future.

Together we are stronger.

Together, we really can be proud to be Gravesham.

Councillor John Burden

Chapter 1: Our Community

Gravesham Profile: understanding our community

To deliver quality and efficient services we need to understand our borough. In sourcing information about the scale of need and inequality in Gravesham, we can more effectively plan our services, targeting resources and designing interventions with the greatest impact for the local community at the best possible value.

The Gravesham Community Profile forms a key part of the evidence base on which this Corporate Plan and our corporate objectives were developed and includes the following headlines:

- 106,900: smallest population in Kent.
- 10.8 per hectare: 3rd highest population density in Kent.
- 31.7%: residents from an ethnic minority group - 2nd highest in Kent.
- 20.4%: children living in relative low-income families - 4th highest in Kent.
- 6%: highest rate of housing over-occupancy in Kent.
- 227: five-year average net housing builds - lowest in Kent.
- 9.1 years: inequality of average male life expectancy between most and least deprived areas.
- 4.6 years: inequality of average female life expectancy between most and least deprived wards.
- 62.6%: businesses surviving three years or more - 5th highest rate in Kent.
- 61.5%: lowest rate of physically active adults in Kent.
- 7.2%: lowest density of knowledge economy jobs in Kent.
- 4.3%: 2nd highest rate of unemployment in Kent.
- 58.1%: residents holding NVQ 3+ qualification - below Kent average.
- 101: incidents of crime per 1,000 residents - 3rd highest rate in Kent.

[Read the full Community Profile online.](#)

Gravesham Consultation: listening to our community

As a listening council, working closely with our local community through our consultative activities helps us to better understand expectations, which in turn leads to more effective collaborative service design.

Effective consultation helps build trust and public confidence and is an essential part of our plans when developing services.

More than 1,600 Gravesham residents, businesses, and community groups took part in our Corporate Plan consultation. Feedback provided more than 6,400 pieces of information and intelligence relating to council provision and service intervention. Leading themes from the consultative process include:

- **Safe environment:** whether a more secure town centre, tackling anti-social behaviour, or an expectation of enhanced enforcement of living standards, a safe, protected environment was a key finding.
- **Economic leadership:** a clear call for the authority to refocus its energies and resources on economic leadership, overseeing a more balanced, sustainable economy that supports local opportunity.

- Housing offer: from affordability through to effective provision for our most vulnerable residents, the local 'housing challenge' and the council's role in addressing it was a central theme.
- Community development: providing a broader platform of meaningful consultation that enables local residents to have a stake in council policies and decisions was a core outcome.
- Best value: a consistent message was for the council to be delivering quality, high performing services, positively impacting the lives of local residents with a strong social value offer.

The exercise provides us with a tangible understanding of which services and opportunities are of greatest importance: a clear, community-driven platform.

It is our responsibility to now make the required choices and decisions that protect, prioritise, and promote those most valued frontline services and development initiatives, as we work towards creating a borough where we are Together - Proud to be Gravesham.

Gravesham Vision: shaping our community

In support of the strategic direction established through this Corporate Plan, Gravesham 2040 presents a holistic programme of community and place-led regeneration, essential to our plans for transformational social impact in the borough.

In capturing the borough's unique historical character, Gravesham 2040 presents the strategic vision for our comprehensive and ambitious regeneration programme.

Charged with putting Gravesham firmly on the map and supported by essential tools such as Design for Gravesham, a borough-wide development design code, Gravesham 2040 complements the aims and development needs that underpin the council's Local Plan. Gravesham 2040 will set a standard for decades of catalytic regeneration planned along Gravesham Riverside, with brownfield projects in delivery, development, and the pipeline and, building upon the excellent connectivity in the borough, will retain a focus on delivering further improvements to all modes of transport, including cycling, walking, and use of public transport.

As a place, Gravesham is an incredible and historic borough. But it is an area in much need of Levelling Up, as evidenced through an economic profile of principally low wage, low skill employment, and low levels of industrial productivity, and associated structural social challenges of high deprivation and health inequalities.

To deliver the scale of critical investment needed to make the tangible and long-lasting community impact we are striving for, we recognise we cannot do this alone.

Gravesham 2040 can only be successful with the commitment of public and private sector stakeholders to believe, support, and invest in the borough. Only by working together, in partnership, can we realise the exciting opportunities Gravesham offers for decades of community and place-led regeneration and the transformational social, economic, and environmental outcomes our programme can deliver.

Together, we really can be proud to be Gravesham.

[More information about Gravesham 2040 and the council's regeneration programme.](#)

Gravesham Environment: committing to our community

With the Corporate Plan establishing the strategic direction for the council and its operations over an administrative period, our adopted climate declaration underpins the policy decisions, projects and initiatives involved in its successful delivery.

The council has recognised that climate change remains the defining global challenge of our generation. In response to this threat, in June 2019 we passed a formal motion to declare a climate emergency:

“Gravesham Borough Council with this motion declares we have a climate emergency, and we will begin to take action to prepare for the borough to become carbon net zero by 2030.”

To deliver on our climate pledge, in December 2021 an ambitious Climate Change Strategy was adopted. Developed with assistance from Local Partnerships, the strategy establishes the council's approach to not only taking effective action against our direct emissions but also in supporting the local Gravesham community to reduce their own emissions as, together, we work towards our 2030 carbon net zero target.

In producing the strategy, we completed a detailed carbon baseline assessment. This has enabled an understanding of the current carbon position in terms of the council's operations and the wider borough, and what we must do to meet our ambition.

Supported by a detailed Management Delivery Plan, with an Annual Monitoring Report overseen by the council's Climate Change Advisory Board, the Climate Change Strategy presents three key priority areas that act as a framework in shaping our activity:

- **Gravesham Borough Council: the organisation**
Focus and deliver on options available to the council, and our employees, that reduce the level of produced carbon emissions. The council has put in place a high-level road map to clearly set out the key operational activities that will be undertaken to achieve net zero by 2030.
- **Gravesham Borough Council: the housing provider**
Explore opportunities to improve the energy efficiency standard of our housing stock whilst ensuring new council housing is built to a high level of sustainability, supported by local planning policy, reflecting the need for energy efficiency to be considered in all future developments.
- **Gravesham Borough Council: the community leader**
The council cannot directly affect all of the changes that are needed across the borough. However, in our role as a community leader, we will work with residents, community groups, and partners to educate and support them in making changes that deliver a positive impact on local carbon emissions.

In the global context of long-term climate change, our motion represents a small step. However, through our One Council objective, this Corporate Plan commits us to delivering on our social responsibility to improve the lives of local residents, in a borough where we are all Together - Proud to be Gravesham.

[Read about climate change and the council's efforts to support the borough.](#)

Gravesham Objectives: planning for our community

This Corporate Plan presents a clear ambition for the borough. In working towards this, the plan establishes the strategic direction for the council through a suite of corporate objectives and supporting policy commitments that will guide everything we do.

This Corporate Plan for 2023-27 presents the scale of our plans for the borough and sets the tone and guiding principles on which all our activity will be based.

In designing this Corporate Plan, we have:

- analysed government sources to identify community needs, inequalities, and opportunities.
- listened to and accounted for the aspirations and expectations of residents and businesses.
- built in the manifesto pledges of the authority's elected administration.
- assessed the plan in line with the council's likely future resources and the government's legislative programme.

With the additional consideration of embedding the council's Gravesham 2040 and Climate Change strategies, collectively these sources have enabled us to develop our ambition of creating a borough where *we are Together - Proud to be Gravesham*.

To deliver against that ambition, we have established a framework against which all council strategies, projects, and initiatives will be planned, resourced, and delivered. These three corporate objectives and supporting policy commitments have their own portfolio of activities but, importantly, are designed to work with and support each other for the benefit of our local community:

- One Borough: a safe, clean, and attractive living environment, enhanced by a sustainable and increasingly energised local economy.
- One Community: an active, engaged, and culturally enriched population, built on the foundations of an affordable and quality local housing offer.
- One Council: a well-run and innovative authority, defined by its skilled and valued workforce, committed to developing its local social impact.

Chapter 2: Our Objectives

One Borough

Residents and businesses form the backbone of Gravesham and our One Borough objective pledges to deliver a place where our community can be proud to live, work and enjoy. From stronger neighbourhoods and an attractive living environment to a progressive regeneration package that nurtures sustainable economic growth, as local place shapers we are determined to work together with residents, businesses, and government agencies to address challenging social inequalities and help Gravesham unlock its true potential: enabling our One Borough to become a protected, vibrant, and dynamic place of choice.

Protected environment

All residents want to feel safe in their own home, living in neighbourhoods where the most vulnerable are supported and safeguarded from harm, and where life can be enjoyed in open and appealing public spaces that give a collective pride of place. As a core finding of our community consultation, a key measure to the success of our One Borough objective therefore is the need to cultivate a protected living environment, one that puts the health, safety, and happiness of Gravesham residents first.

In recognition of the role a safe, clean, and attractive borough also plays in enticing inward investment, to meet our community's expectations, we are putting in place a strong environmental offer; the development of a set of well-regulated, positively enforced, and readily accessible frontline

services, delivered together in partnership with key public agencies, and in direct consultation with the local community: a protected environment.

Commitment:

- Safer Gravesham: deliver stronger neighbourhoods and a more secure living environment through a portfolio of initiatives, delivered with Kent Police and key partner agencies.
- Regulatory compliance: put Gravesham residents first by driving improved levels of regulatory standards across commercial businesses and licence holders.
- Cleaner environment: create a greener Gravesham by encouraging household recycling and actively addressing contaminated land and noise, flood, and oil pollution.
- Attractive borough: boost local civic pride through a comprehensive programme of street cleansing and environmental enhancements, underpinned by active enforcement of environmental crime.
- Parking pledge: support the local living environment with competitive car parking options, backed by a proactive enforcement regime.

Performance:

- PI 1: Total GBC-reported Anti-Social Behaviour incidents
- PI 2: Total safeguarding referrals made by GBC
- PI 3: % of compliant food establishments
- PI 4: % of valid taxi and private hire licence applications issued within 10 working days
- PI 5: Total Environmental Protection cases completed
- PI 6: % of household waste recycled
- PI 7: Volume of residual waste per household (kg)
- PI 8: % of cleanliness reports completed within 5 working days
- PI 9: Total environmental enforcement actions taken
- PI 10: Total number of car park uses
- PI 11: Total EV charging devices per 100,000 population

Progressive place

As local place shapers, we recognise Gravesham's deep-rooted socio-economic challenges. In line with a key request from our consultation process, we are committed to influencing positive, community-led regeneration to deliver a progressive place; securing better opportunities, greater prosperity and improving overall quality of life for local people. Central to that aim is our responsibility to create the conditions for a strong, productive, and inclusive local economy that benefits all through skilled and valued employment. We will therefore implement measures that raise Gravesham's profile and, crucially, provide the ingredients needed for sustainable economic growth: securing the right investment from the right industries to rebalance our economy; providing essential accommodation and critical infrastructure for the natural development of new and existing businesses; and maximising the skills and employability of our local labour market.

A progressive place is not solely economic in focus. We will deliver the projects needed for tangible environmental well-being and social impact. From regenerating our town and urban centres into attractive, mixed-use community hubs, with an improved public realm, through to the housing and public health benefits available by unlocking brownfield sites and promoting upgraded walking, cycling, and public transport networks in key areas such as Northfleet and across the borough, our programme, sensitively designed in line with our riverside heritage, will see us work together with government, public agencies, and the private sector to transform our One Borough into a place where we are all Together - Proud to be Gravesham.

Commitment:

- Vibrant Gravesham: with partners, secure a holistic programme of strategic regeneration and critical infrastructure that enhances quality of life, promotes civic pride, and acts as a

- catalyst for economic development.
- Energised economy: attract new investment to deliver a more balanced local economy and provide a platform for sustainable growth, supporting existing companies and inspiring new business start-ups.
- Skills offer: upgrade Gravesham's employment profile by championing a one stop service, proactively connecting industry with key partner agencies, schools, colleges, and training providers.
- Revitalised towns: as the heartbeat of our borough, deliver a suite of innovative initiatives to create attractive and resilient town centres, supported by an efficient and valued town centre team.
- Sustainable development: deliver positive development management, framed by a sound Local Plan that enhances our unique natural and built environment.

Performance:

- PI 12: Total rateable value of all commercial properties (£)
- PI 13: % of employees in the Knowledge Economy
- PI 14: 3-year survival rate of Gravesham businesses (%)
- PI 15: % of residents with NVQ Level 3+ qualification
- PI 16: % rate of resident unemployment
- PI 17: Average weekly town centre footfall
- PI 18: Town centre retail vacancy rate (%)
- PI 19: % of 'major' planning applications processed on time
- PI 20: % of 'minor' planning applications processed on time
- PI 21: % of 'other' planning applications processed on time
- PI 22: Total planning enforcement actions taken

One Community

Our One Community objective is designed around the borough's most important asset – people. Gravesham faces significant social inequalities, ranging from average life expectancy to housing affordability – issues further heightened by the national economic position. To nurture a fair, cohesive, and resilient community, we must, and we will address these historic issues. From an innovative, proactive, and supportive approach to local housing, to a package of social well-being measures that promote healthy living in a culturally rich borough, we will develop One Community into a place people are proud to call home.

Sustainable housing

We are committed to creating the right environment for a healthy and vibrant community to thrive and a sustainable housing sector – one that puts local Gravesham residents first – has a crucial part to play. Sustainable housing provides a platform to help address climate change, tackle public health inequalities, increase social mobility, and deal with some of the acute challenges faced by our most vulnerable residents. We are therefore determined to play our part for local people in meeting demand for quality, efficient, and affordable housing, with the right mix of tenure, at the right volume, in the right places, critical if we are to realise our One Community objective.

As a social housing landlord, we are equally committed to providing a quality and valued local offer; one that puts tenants at the centre of our decision-making, delivered by a high-performing service providing optimum value. Central to our offer, we will deliver progressive and energy-efficient enhancements to our housing stock and creatively work to meet local housing needs, particularly for the most vulnerable residents.

Commitment:

- Ambitious building: tackle the housing challenge by developing a diverse build programme that increases the supply of high-standard and energy-efficient market and affordable housing.

- Enforced standards: actively enforce quality private housing, and positively work with landlords to tackle empty homes and manage houses in multiple occupation.
- Progressive landlord: an effective housing service, providing comprehensive tenant choice and protection, defined by positive, efficient, and supportive management and engagement.
- Safeguarded residents: provide for our most vulnerable residents with a package of timely housing measures and supportive safeguarding interventions that deliver healthy, independent living.
- Quality living: through a skilled building management team, improve the safety, efficiency, and condition of social housing to create a valued living environment.

Performance:

- PI 23: Total net additional homes added to the Council Tax valuation list
- PI 24: Total affordable homes delivered
- PI 25: Total long-term empty homes brought back into use
- PI 26: Total notices served on private sector homes due to identified safety hazards
- PI 27: Total licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation
- PI 28: Overall housing tenant survey satisfaction score (%)
- PI 29: Average time taken to re-let council housing (days)
- PI 30: % of Disabled Facility Grant applications processed within 20 days
- PI 31: Total households in temporary accommodation
- PI 32: Total households prevented or relieved of homelessness
- PI 33: Average verified rough sleepers in the borough
- PI 34: % of emergency repair jobs completed on time
- PI 35: % of council homes with valid electrical safety certification
- PI 36: % of council homes with valid gas safety certification
- PI 37: % of council homes with energy efficiency EPC C+ rating
- PI 38: % of council homes meeting the Decent Homes Standard

Strong community

Our One Community objective sets out our ambition to build a healthy, resilient, and celebrated local community. To be successful, it is critical we address the borough's significant polarising challenges - none more evident than public health inequality. Directly complementing our local housing pledge, we will work to deliver an enhanced level of community well-being: new, high-quality, and accessible leisure facilities - a key finding of our consultation; attractive and engaging parks and green spaces; and, working together with partner agencies, a programme of targeted physical and mental health support interventions.

Community strength extends beyond public health. In understanding the importance of a healthy cultural ecosystem as a social and economic driver, we will build on our natural assets to develop Gravesham's brand as a regional cultural hub, actively promoting the borough's unique physical riverside heritage and supporting a dynamic music, arts, and public entertainment offer. Crucially, at the heart of our community activities are local people. Gravesham is a young and diverse borough, and fundamental to One Community is the idea of cohesion; where local residents and groups are positively consulted and engaged in civic life, and the rich tapestry of our local cultures is actively showcased. A strong and empowered community will provide everyone the opportunity to shape our future, one where we are all Together - Proud to be Gravesham.

Commitment:

- Healthy living: advance local health outcomes through modern, affordable, and accessible leisure provision, underpinned by a targeted programme of activities and a strong local sporting infrastructure.
- Supported lives: safeguard residents and enable healthier life choices with a tailored programme of interventions, delivered together in partnership with key local agencies.

- Improved well-being: nurture positive healthy lives through a suite of high-quality play areas and increased pride of place in open, attractive parks and green spaces accessible to all.
- Community capital: strengthen Gravesham's social fabric with a targeted programme of events and consultative opportunities, delivered alongside a healthy and empowered community partnership network.
- Cultural hub: realise the potential within Gravesham's visitor economy through the promotion and development of our creative arts, cultural, and heritage offer.

Performance:

- PI 39: Total leisure centre attendees
- PI 40: % of adults who are physically active
- PI 41: Total individuals supported through a public health programme
- PI 42: % of public health programme participants from a minority ethnic group
- PI 43: Total council parks meeting Green Flag criteria
- PI 44: % of time council play parks available for use
- PI 45: Total community engagement activities delivered by GBC and our partners
- PI 46: Total Gravesham's Big Conversation participants
- PI 47: Total art and culture activity participants
- PI 48: Total visitors attending Gravesham heritage sites

One Council

Our community has spoken with one voice; they want an authority that puts local residents first, developing the best possible services that provide the best possible outcomes at the best possible value. At its core, this Corporate Plan therefore has the ambition to deliver tangible social value, where we use our financial and policy levers to design services for optimum local impact: economic, environmental, and social. Success will be determined by our values. We will nurture creative innovation, operate robust standards of governance, and deliver through a diverse, empowered, and celebrated workforce: One Council.

Enterprising authority

The council faces unprecedented challenges. The global impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and scale of threat presented by the cost-of-living crisis, compounded by a sustained period of government cuts to our funding, have created a perfect storm for this authority. This, at a time we operate in an environment of increasingly complex customer needs and demand for our services, and ever-growing expectations of the value we deliver.

To fully realise the community-focussed commitments within this plan, we will therefore adopt an entrepreneurial approach to service delivery. From the financial benefits offered by a diverse commercial property portfolio and innovative trading activities to the opportunities presented by our pledge of continuous improvement as we design best value accessible services powered by transformational digital practices, we will develop a quality frontline offer that puts Gravesham customers first. Our work will be defined by our social impact. We recognise the existential threat presented by climate change and are committed to leading by example, supporting the borough towards carbon net zero and, in doing so, ensuring a true socio-economic return on investment

Commitment:

- Climate action: as a socially responsible and carbon literate council, deliver on our corporate climate pledge for net zero by 2030.
- Financial innovation: design a commercial programme that supports our services, whilst meeting our ethical commitment to providing a local social and environmental impact.

- Continuous improvement: develop a best practice authority, where a programme of corporate improvement designs innovative services, delivering the best possible community outcomes at the best value.
- Digital transformation: through dynamic IT platforms that provide intelligent customer insight, overhaul working processes and support service efficiencies whilst delivering a quality digital experience for all.
- Customer excellence: put Gravesham residents first by implementing a suite of quality, high performing and valued frontline services.

Performance:

- PI 49: Total co2 emissions in the borough (kt)
- PI 50: Total co2 emissions from council assets (kt)
- PI 51: % of council investment properties occupied
- PI 52: Average yield generated by property investment activity (%)
- PI 53: % of valid and undisputed invoices paid within 30 days
- PI 54: % of Corporate Improvement Programme savings target delivered
- PI 55: Corporate website accessibility compliance score (%)
- PI 56: Total enquiries received through the digital online platform
- PI 57: Digital customer self-service platform satisfaction score (%)
- PI 58: % of Contact Centre calls transferred to the back office
- PI 59: Total reported corporate complaints
- PI 60: Average processing time for new Housing Benefit claims (days)
- PI 61: Average processing time for Housing Benefit changes of circumstance (days)
- PI 62: Average processing time for new CTRS claims (days)
- PI 63: Average processing time for CTRS changes of circumstance (days)

Ethical governance

Our workforce is the lifeblood of our organisation. Their passion, resilience, and dedication to the local community is paramount to the delivery of excellent services, high quality support, and the scale of change and improvement required of us to achieve our ambition for the borough. To meet the challenges ahead, it is essential we help nurture an innovative, inclusive, and ethical working environment, something only achievable by positively investing in our people. For this reason, we are committed to being an IIP platinum employer; one that delivers a fully agile, skilled, trusted, and supported workforce. From modern and progressive employment policies and practices to the continuous professional development of staff within a framework of creative leadership, we recognise that only by truly engaging, empowering, and investing in our most valuable asset can we hope to develop the spirit of One Council.

But success can only be realised from a platform of strong leadership and good governance. In delivering our ambition for the borough, our robust standards of financial, risk, and performance management, and continuous commitment to legislative compliance and transparent community engagement will ensure we direct the right resources to the right services at the right time, crucial to enable us to deliver a borough where we are, Together - Proud to be Gravesham.

Commitment:

- Platinum employer: advance our Investors in People standard by nurturing a progressive organisational culture, underpinned by a fully engaged, high performing, and truly valued workforce.
- Trusted authority: enhance the council's reputation by advancing its corporate brand and identity, supported with open and transparent stakeholder engagement.
- Financial responsibility: a financially sustainable authority, driven by a strong Medium Term Financial Strategy, enforced by a suite of effective financial monitoring controls.

- Robust standards: a comprehensive, timely and benchmarked framework of performance management, delivered by services built on corporate principles and sound internal controls.
- Corporate compliance: a responsible organisation, ensuring all constitutional, policy and legislative demands are met, and pro-active risk management practices adopted.

Performance:

- PI 64: % gender pay gap within council workforce (mean & median)
- PI 65: % of apprentices securing future employment by end of apprenticeship
- PI 66: Overall resident survey satisfaction score
- PI 67: % of MTFs financial savings target delivered
- PI 68: % of agreed internal audit actions implemented
- PI 69: % of information requests completed within statutory deadline
- PI 70: % meeting attendance rate of councillors

Chapter 3: Our Delivery

Who will deliver: meet the Cabinet

The council's Cabinet consists of the Leader of the Executive and five other elected councillors. Each councillor has their own specific portfolio and is responsible for ensuring officers work to deliver the council's corporate objectives at the community's expected level of service.

Councillor John Burden - Leader of the Executive

Responsible for: Finance, Legal Services, Communications, IT and Digital Services, Property Services, Human Resources, Car Parking, Customer Services, Emergency Planning, Special Projects, Commercial Activities, Property Investment, Climate Change, and Community Safety.

"This administration has established a clear ambition – to create a borough where we are, together, proud to be Gravesham. As council Leader, I am determined to use every lever available to deliver a better future for residents; tackling deep-rooted structural inequalities and, in doing so, providing a community-led platform of strategic regeneration that unlocks the borough's fullest potential as a place to live, work and enjoy.

"Success requires us to be bold. Committed to operating on a partnership first basis, my portfolio will secure new, innovative approaches to service delivery, whilst creating a commercially confident authority - one that secures a better deal for the borough, and one that delivers the sustainable future our community needs, expects, and deserves."

Councillor Shane Mochrie-Cox - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Environment

Responsible for: Development Management, Building Control, Environmental Management, Conservation, and Planning Policy

"As a listening council my portfolio will focus on establishing a community-first Local Plan that, alongside other planning policies and strategies, will provide the foundations on which the future of the Borough will be delivered. Within the government's planning and legislative framework, we will work to secure the right supply and balance of land and development for Gravesham's economic, transport, leisure, and housing needs, whilst ensuring development protects, supports, and enhances our community infrastructure, our conservation areas, the Borough's rich history and heritage, and the environment, such as our river and natural spaces.

"Fundamental to this is a proactive and transparent planning system. My aim will be to design a service that works with the community for the community; in the timely processing of applications,

ensuring any contributions from developments are spent on the priorities of Gravesham residents, using our full powers in positively and proactively enforcing against unauthorised activity, delivering excellent building control, and feeding back on issues that matter. I will place the needs of residents at the heart of my portfolio.”

Councillor Emma Morley - Cabinet Member for Operational Services

Responsible for: Waste and Horticulture, Street Cleaning, Cemeteries, Environmental Health, Health and Safety, and Licensing.

“If we want to create a sense of Gravesham pride, a safe, clean, attractive borough is essential. My portfolio will therefore build on the progress made under the previous administration; using our legal powers to positively enforce the local living environment, promote and evolve our street cleaning and Street Champions initiatives, and oversee open, accessible, and inviting local parks. Wherever possible, we will look to innovate and adopt new service options that work to improve the health of the local environment.

“Our manifesto commits us to putting local people first and this is something I will take seriously through the work of my portfolio. I will ensure we put in place the highest possible offer to safeguard residents from businesses putting the health and safety of residents at risk.”

Councillor Lauren Sullivan Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure

Responsible for: Sport Development, GCLL, The Woodville, Community Engagement, The Gr@nd, Arts, Heritage and Tourism, Market, Town Twinning, and Economic Development.

“Our community consultation made clear that our priority must be to nurture a strong, healthy, and resilient community. My brief is therefore twofold; do everything in my power to tackle Gravesham’s entrenched economic and public health inequalities, whilst designing an attractive and inclusive platform that showcases the very best of the borough.

“From a sustainable economy that provides growth and opportunity for all, attractive leisure and sporting facilities that are truly affordable and accessible, through to the celebration of a cohesive, vibrant, and engaged community and the promotion of our creative arts, culture, and heritage offer, I will work tirelessly to develop an empowered local community in a borough where we are, together, proud to be Gravesham.”

Councillor Narinderjit Singh Thandi, Cabinet Member for Performance and Administration

Responsible for: Revenue and Benefits, Corporate Performance, Audit and Counter Fraud, Corporate Change, Information Governance, and Corporate Governance.

“In delivering our ambition for the borough, the community have made clear the need for value, both in what we provide and how we provide it. My brief is to therefore implement a quality, high performing frontline offer and, in doing so, commit to securing continuous improvement, whereby our services are designed to the absolute benefit of the local community.

“Success can only be achieved however on a platform of strong ethical governance; one where we adopt the standards, controls, and monitoring arrangements expected of a best value council. Collectively, these will provide the foundations of my Performance and Administration portfolio.”

Councillor Jenny Wallace - Cabinet Member for Housing Services

Responsible for: Social Housing, Repairs, Housing Strategy and Development, Housing Provision,

Private Sector Housing, Rented Sector Housing, and Affordable Homes.

“Tackling social inequalities runs through the heart of our new Corporate Plan, and housing plays a crucial role in that aim. My brief will therefore be defined by the pledges of our election manifesto to support the diverse housing needs of local Gravesham residents.

“Whether in accelerating delivery of new affordable housing opportunities, securing the much-needed expansion and improvement of our own social housing stock, positively addressing poor, unsuitable housing standards, or transforming our approach to support the lives of vulnerable residents, including rough sleepers, the provision of quality, efficient and affordable housing that puts local people first will be the focus of my Housing Services portfolio.”

How we deliver: the Golden Thread

To successfully realise our ambition for the borough, we have implemented a Golden Thread; a continuous cycle connecting the corporate aims, policy framework and delivery plans of the council, with the actions of Members, officers, and partners at all levels.

The Corporate Plan presents the scale of the council’s ambition and the core objectives and commitments required to deliver a borough where we are Together - Proud to be Gravesham.

To be successful, it is vital that all corporate policies, strategies, and business plans are fully informed, designed, and resourced to support the delivery of our corporate objectives. For our council, this is not a single top-down exercise. We have instead adopted an ongoing method of engaging staff, Members, partners, and residents in order to inform, plan, review, and ultimately deliver continuous improvement in council services; the ‘Golden Thread’.

With our policy framework at its heart, the Golden Thread involves the following steps:

- Inform: community intelligence relating to resident need and aspiration, pooled alongside external factors such as government legislation, to establish the scale of corporate ambition and the intent of our policy framework.
- Plan: business plans and strategies that design the projects, initiatives and processes required to deliver our corporate objectives and the aims of the wider policy framework. These fully resourced plans commit to how we will achieve, who will be responsible, and how we will measure our performance.
- Review: the council’s performance and our impact in the community is regularly reviewed. The Cabinet and Corporate Management Team are provided with regular intelligence relating to achievement against our established objectives. The council’s corporate aims also provide the framework for the setting of personal objectives and measuring the effectiveness of officers through our appraisal process. This in turn is reintroduced to the cycle to shape future service strategies and consideration of the scale of council aims and ambition at a corporate level.

Helping us deliver: our partners

In designing this Corporate Plan on a community-driven platform, we will adopt a partnership first approach to its delivery. Working alongside our community, we will explore all opportunities to work with partners in the public, private, and voluntary sectors to achieve the best possible results for the borough.

Partnership working is an essential vehicle for planning and delivering council services. Effective partnerships can help tackle complex and cross-cutting issues, coordinate interventions on a sound

and shared intelligence base, increase resilience, improve customer satisfaction, and secure vital value for money.

Gravesham is a borough with deep-rooted structural inequalities which require council intervention. However, in light of the continued reduction in government funding to local councils, and the wider post-Covid operating environment, we understand we cannot achieve our ambition in isolation. We will therefore implement a partnership first approach, exploring all collaborative opportunities to secure the best outcomes for our community.

Whether securing best value from multi-agency partnerships and integrated shared services, collaborating with business leaders to attract economic investment, commissioning activities through the skilled local voluntary sector, or representing the borough to ensure Gravesham receives the best possible deal it can from government, we will work with partners to deliver the local impact needed at the service levels expected.

Our approach will not be limited to formal partnerships. We know the vital role local residents play and have already established successful community-led groups, such as the Gravesham Street Champions, and our efforts will not end there.

Through this Corporate Plan we are committed to nurturing a strong local community; from our new Gravesham's Big Conversation consultation programme that empowers residents in shaping future service policy decisions, to grants awarded to groups that deliver genuine social value in the community, we will work in partnership to put local residents first.

Working together, we can be proud to be Gravesham.

[Read about our approach and details of our working arrangements.](#)

Measuring delivery: performance management

We recognise the importance of an effective, transparent, and intelligence-led performance management culture informed by officers, Members, and the local community. This is essential to realise our corporate objectives and, ultimately, deliver a borough where we are Together – Proud to be Gravesham.

A comprehensive and robust Performance Management Framework (PMF) is key to any successful organisation. Our adopted PMF allows us to critically evaluate progress against our objectives, provides industry intelligence to drive service transformation, and allows residents to understand how effectively we are administering resources.

Management

In order to realise our ambition for the borough, everyone is responsible for managing and delivering expected levels of performance:

- Cabinet: establishes the council's ambition and policy commitments, as set out in this Corporate Plan, and works with and holds officers to account in its successful delivery. Cabinet is also responsible for proposing the council's associated Annual Budget.
- Corporate Management Team (CMT): providing strategic oversight of performance management, CMT reviews operational progress identifying relevant areas for improvement and establishing appropriate service intervention.
- Wider Management Team (WMT): take the lead in setting stretching objectives that support and respond to the delivery of the council's policy commitments. WMT establish resourced business plans setting appropriate planning, monitoring, and review processes with officers.
- Gravesham Borough Council officers: responsible for their own performance in achieving personal targets directly linked to corporate objectives. Personal milestones are established in the annual appraisal process and continuously reviewed in-year.

Monitoring

The effective management of the council relies upon having good quality information with which to monitor and deliver evidence-based decisions. The council's PMF involves a range of information, including corporate performance indicators and a suite of internal management indicators that, collectively, provide insight into the progressive impact of council services.

Reporting

To ensure fully informed and transparent decision-making, formal performance reporting takes place at different times and to different audiences including:

- Quarterly: performance reports of corporate indicators to CMT and subsequently to Cabinet for consideration and scrutiny. This is supported by tailored qualitative reports to Cabinet Committees detailing the scale of work delivered by the authority. All material is published via the council's digital platform and Your Borough magazine.
- Yearly: audited annual report covering all performance indicators contributing to the council's corporate objectives, providing an effective and transparent position statement.

To further embed a performance-related culture within the council, the PMF is also analysed against other local authorities. This approach enables us to better understand our comparative levels of service performance and, equally, to identify opportunities for continuous improvement in the quality of council services. Covering both core service performance and expenditure, benchmarking analysis is regularly reported to the CMT to inform executive decision-making.

[Read about the council's system of performance management.](#)

Financing delivery: funding our services

The local community has prioritised key areas of our business. In response, we have designed financial planning infrastructure to deliver against these objectives and realise our corporate ambition for the borough, whilst meeting the significant future financial challenge.

Financial planning

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets the framework within which the council plans and manages its finances, ensuring that these fit with and support the achievement of our corporate objectives. Good financial management is driven by our Medium-Term Financial Plan for the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for our landlord responsibilities, both of which provide effective tools for in-year budget monitoring and longer-term financial forecasting.

Since the start of the government's austerity programme in 2010, local government funding has been significantly reduced. In 2010-11 some 60% of council funding was received through Central Government Grant. In 2022-23, due to changes in central government policy on funding of local authorities, this position had shifted to around 96% of funding now being generated through council tax and retained business rates receipts.

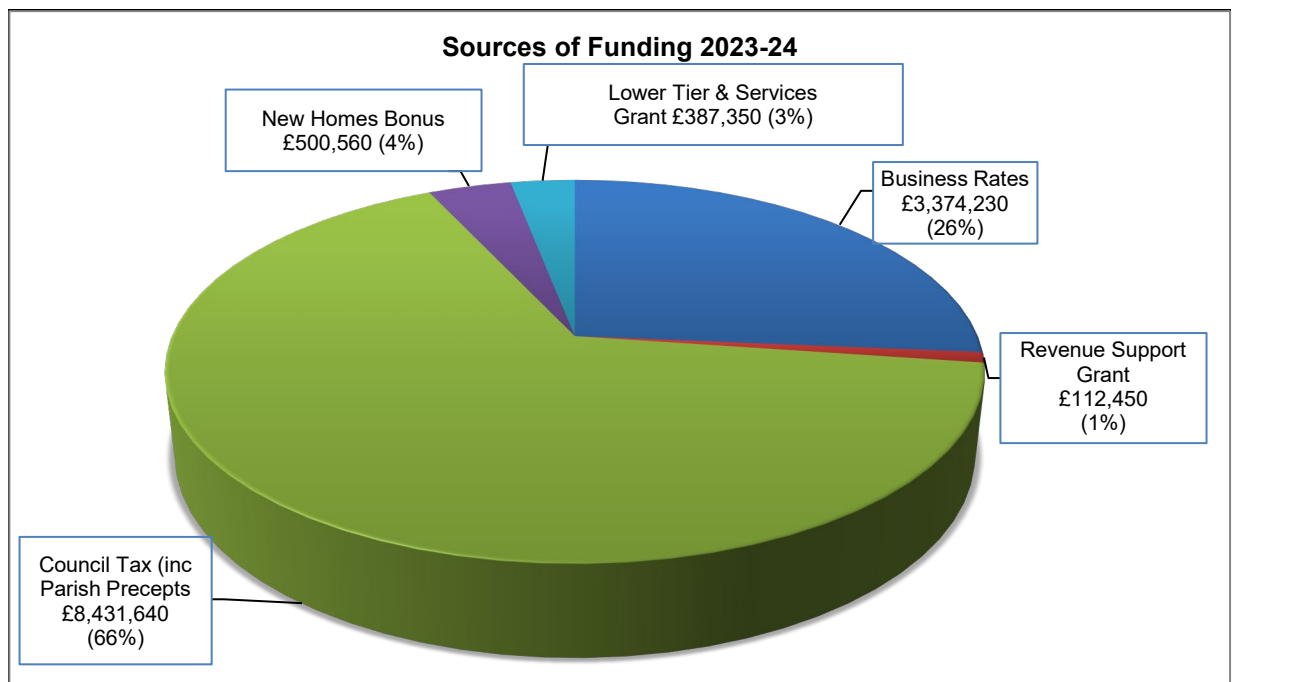
Central Government continues to consider how Local Government should be funded over the longer term; there is no published timetable for implementing the delayed Fair Funding Review and Business Rates Reset - both originally planned for 2019-20. The effectiveness and future of existing incentivised funding streams and implementation of proposed new funding streams therefore remains unclear, presenting real difficulties in the planning and financing of future council services.

During the last year, we have also faced new, emerging, and significant financial challenges as a result of increases in fuel prices, energy costs, raw materials, interest costs, and corresponding increases in demand for homelessness services. This has resulted in a budget gap of c.£4.3m in

2026-27 on the council's General Fund balances.

As a financially responsible authority, we must continue to be proactive in our approach. To that end, we have designed a suite of targeted initiatives to balance this budget gap.

Central to our efforts will also be a commitment to the ongoing analysis and review of the MTFS and, equally, to the principles of sound financial governance.



Financial innovation

Alongside our own financial challenge, the council recognises that local residents have also been under pressure from increasing food costs, fuel and energy price rises, and uncertainty within the economy.

Resident needs are also becoming increasingly complex and the way in which people want to interact with us is evolving. In the same way, the manner in which the council delivers its services and manages its financial sustainability also needs to continuously develop and evolve.

We have a proven history in being agile and innovative in responding to financial challenges and our new five-year MTFS has been designed to be exactly that, presenting the following core initiatives:

- **Budget rationalisation:** With a strong track record in financial management, the council recognises that robust control must be at the heart of managing our financial position over the next four years. To this end, we will be seeking to continue the development and robustness of financial management, monitoring, and planning arrangements.

Specific exercises will also be undertaken to review financial reserves and challenge spend and budgetary provisions, ensuring they remain fit for purpose. This is particularly important given the changing operations and demands upon the organisation.

- **Fees and charges:** Deriving income from fees and charges has become increasingly challenging over the last few years. However, as a key source of revenue income, we will work to ensure that fees and charges continue to meet the principal objectives of our

Charging Strategy, whilst seeking opportunities for new income streams to directly support provision of essential council services.

- Asset optimisation: The council owns and operates a number of assets. We will therefore work to maintain an optimum asset portfolio, securing best value from the assets we hold.
- Trading and commercialisation: The council has successfully established Rosherville Limited as a Local Authority Trading Company. As primary shareholder, we will continue to work with the company to develop its activity as a means of delivering financial returns which can be directed to sustain important council services for local residents.

We will also seek to conclude a Property Acquisition Strategy as a means of supporting economic activity in the borough, and to generate further rental income streams.

- Corporate Improvement Programme: As part of our previous programme of activity, the council developed a Service Review process. The aim was to identify opportunities to reduce net service expenditure, either through delivering services in different ways or at lower cost; increase income generated by our services; or identifying potential to cease some services altogether. Reviews were undertaken for all front-line services and the options developed from these reviews and ratified by Members delivered net expenditure savings of £1.4m over the period to 2019-20.

Covid-19 has changed the way the council operates and delivers certain services. As a consequence, there is a need for us to now reconsider how we allocate resources in an efficient and effective manner, to ensure services are designed and delivered for the best possible outcomes at the best possible value for our local community.