

Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026

1. Background

In 2006 Tunbridge Wells implemented its Sustainable Community Plan 2006-11 to “*work in partnership to improve the quality of life for all*”.

This Plan has now been in place for three years and a number of actions have already been met.

Since that time, the Local Strategic Partnership has been reinvigorated (now called *Tunbridge Wells Together*), and has worked on developing a long-term vision for the area.

This vision has been based on a wide range of consultation data, demographics data and future trend projections.

In addition to this, the Kent Partnership is now into the second round of Local Area Agreements called the Kent Agreement 2. The partnership has negotiated a set of indicators and targets with central government for delivery over the next three years.

2. Progress

The Sustainable Community Plan has made good progress in delivering its actions. 80 per cent of indicators from the Sustainable Community Plan are being achieved or have been achieved.

At the *Tunbridge Wells Together* meeting in November 2008, it was agreed to look toward refreshing the Sustainable Community Plan in 2009 to reflect current circumstances and to enable it to concentrate more on strategic issues and less on short-term actions.

3. Current Issues and legislative requirements

The Local Government Act 2000 introduced community strategies, and the power of local authorities to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area.

The White Paper entitled “Strong and Prosperous Communities”, produced in October 2006 took this further with the place-shaping agenda. This refers to the strategic role that local authorities have in bringing together various local agencies and groups in order to build a vision of how to respond to and address a locality’s problems and challenges in a co-ordinated way.

The White Paper also places a duty on the local authority and named partners to co-operate with each other to agree targets in the Local Area Agreement (LAA), and to have regard to relevant targets agreed in the LAA. These named partners include county and district councils, the police, probation, NHS bodies, JobCentre Plus, Learning and Skills Councils, Fire and Rescue Services, the Highways Agency, the Environment Agency and others.

The current economic climate has also affected long-term planning. The situation is affecting all organisations and agencies. Our long-term plans for the borough need to reflect these new circumstances.

Additionally, it is anticipated that a pot of money will be distributed to Tunbridge Wells Together from the Performance Reward Grant (PRG) associated with Kent Agreement 1. This is expected in the next month or so and a clear framework for allocating this to projects

must be in place. To do this, the SCP needs to better reflect the long-term, strategic challenges our communities face. These are quite different from those which existed three years ago and are enough to prompt another look at our strategic direction.

4. Refreshing the plan

Given these circumstances, it is now a good time refresh the Sustainable Community Plan to take account of the following:

- the agreed long-term vision
- the medium to long-term challenges of the current economic circumstances
- new central government obligations
- existing sources of research, consultation and engagement
- Kent Agreement 2 requirements
- the borough's Local Development Framework
- requirements associated with the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

5. Timetable

Tunbridge Wells Together has already considered a huge range of data, research, consultation and results of engagement to inform the long-term vision.

The enhancement of the Sustainable Community Plan is therefore not a complete re-write but rather a refresh of the plan itself and the actions contained within it.

The aim is for it to become more strategic in nature and reflect the terms of the agreed vision. It will be called the **Tunbridge Wells Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026**.

Below is a broad timetable of how *Tunbridge Wells Together* will develop the Sustainable Community Strategy:

Date	Task
February 2009	Task the Thematic Delivery Groups to draft sections of the plan, finalise action plans and develop high level, long-term indicators for the TWT to consider.
April 2009	PSB to consider first draft of refreshed SCS
May 2009	Redrafting of initial version of SCS
June 2009	TWT considers draft SCS
July 2009	Consult on draft SCS
September 2009	Agree final version of SCS
October 2009	Launch refreshed SCS

6. Recommendations

- i. Agree to refresh the Sustainable Community Plan (SCP) to create a *Tunbridge Wells Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026* and take account of the issues described in section 4.
- ii. To task Thematic Delivery Groups to develop draft sections of the SCS, finalise actions plans which contribute to the maximum of 15 indicators.

- iii. Agree to a more strategic approach to target setting in the refreshed strategy with a maximum of around fifteen indicators focusing on achievement for 2026. These will be drafted by the Thematic Delivery Groups for TWT approval.
- iv. PSB to agree a detailed timetable and investigate possible engagement activities for the consultation phase of refreshed SCS.
- v. Develop for the next meeting, with the PSB, a robust framework for applying the PRG funding to projects from the Thematic Delivery Groups to fulfil the SCS. These projects will be part of the action plans being developed by the Thematic Delivery Groups.
- vi. Plan for the launch of the strategy in the Autumn of 2009.