

...working in partnership to enhance the quality of life for all...  
COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH THOMAS

# Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Statement

2009-12

Cllr Elizabeth Thomas



TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL



## 1. What is the portfolio responsible for?

My portfolio is central to delivering the Council's vision of celebrating the past and building for the future. Covering the services of planning, economic development and regeneration, my role is to lead on balancing the enhancement of the Borough's natural and built assets whilst ensuring that the economy develops in a sustainable way.

I am responsible for the Council's 'Prosperous' priority but my work also makes a substantial contribution to the Green, Healthy and Confident priorities. This is mainly due to the Local Development Framework, which will shape the future of the Borough for several decades, as will our programme of town centre revitalisation.

Decisions on planning applications affect everybody who lives, works and visits the Borough and the service is one of the highest performing in the Country. Our award winning Tourist Information Service attracts thousands of visitors and the contribution to our economy that they bring. Our Farmers' Market is one of a few which has FARMA accreditation. Our Building Control Service is overseeing the construction of the flagship Pembury Hospital, having beaten private sector competition to get the contract. Through consultation and partnership I want these excellent services and high profile projects to make Tunbridge Wells the best place to live, work and visit.

## 2. Functions and Services

As Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development I am largely responsible for all services relating to planning, building control and promoting the local economy, namely:

- Planning Policy and the Local Development Framework
- Development Management
- Planning Enforcement
- Heritage & Design
- Building Control
- Dangerous Structures
- Economic Development
- Regeneration
- Tourist Information and Marketing
- Farmers Market
- Land Charges
- Transport (from a strategic/planning perspective)

I am also the Lead Cabinet Member with regard to a range of partners and partnerships, namely:

- West Kent Partnership
- Heart of Kent
- RDA
- JTB
- KEB

Finally, I have responsibility for a range of key issues and projects including the Town Centre Master Planning.

## 3. Key Plans and Strategies

As Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development I am responsible

for, arguably, the Council's key statutory plan, the Local Development Framework. This provides the basis on which the priorities in the Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy, Council's Strategic Plan and other policies can be delivered in land use planning.

I also lead on the Economic Strategy

I also take an active interest in the service plans relating to those services for which I have overall responsibility.

## 4. What are the opportunities for this portfolio?

Following the lead provided by the Local Development Framework The programme of Town Centre Master Planning is central to the future success of our four town centres. Undertaking this through Tunbridge Wells Regeneration Company Limited with our Strategic Development Partner, John Laing is a once in a lifetime opportunity to transform our town centres but also retain their individual character.

By also linking this up with our property portfolio we can improve access to our services and establish long term funding to deliver services that our residents want.

The Local Development Framework is a huge opportunity to plan and manage future development in a way that enhances the Borough's environment and character while enabling new homes to be built, and

making the Borough prosperous in the long term.

The 'Leader' project, in partnership with other councils could provide investment and new ideas to improve our rural economy.

The transport planning work we are carrying out in partnership with Kent County Council is an opportunity to improve public transport and help tackle congestion.

## 5. What are main areas for improvement?

The Services for which I am responsible are excellent. We have nearly completed the actions for Planning recommended by Trevor Roberts Associates and the Audit Commission (2007). The result is Top Quartile performance on planning applications. However, they must improve all the time to ensure that they deliver what our residents expect.

- We are improving customer service and VFM in planning.
- Ensure business sector engagement is continued and where appropriate responding, in partnership with other key agencies, to their concerns
- Improved website offer

## 6. What are our priorities for 2009-12?

My key priorities for each of the service sections for which I have overall responsibility are set out below

### **Planning**

- Ensuring that we meet our Local Development Framework milestones and that our policies enhance the Borough
- The standards of new development are of the highest quality and improve the areas in which they are located
- Ensure that an award winning development is completed on the key sites in Royal Tunbridge Wells e.g. Cinema Site

### **Building Control**

- Ensure that the new Pembury Hospital is built safely
- Win more business by offering a better quality service than our competitors
- Enter into partnership with other providers to improve customer service, resilience and value for money

### **Economic Development**

- Delivery through the Tunbridge Wells Regeneration Company with John Laing our private sector partner
- To complete master plans for our four town centres
- Develop a 3-year Destination Marketing Strategy for the borough on inward investment
- Implement projects as part of our successful Leader programme
- Start to take measures to tackle congestion
- Tunbridge Wells Park and Ride
- Revised Economic Development Strategy

### **Tourism**

- Raise the profile of the borough as a visitor destination and thus increase visitor numbers and spend
- Retain Visit Britain Partner Status
- Review delivery of Tourism Services with Heart of Kent partners

### **Farmers Market**

- Maintain and improve the offer on the Farmers Market
- Improve the appearance of the Farmers Market

These priorities are underpinned by a need to recognise that the Council is operating and is likely to continue to be operating in changing times. The Council is heavily reliant on income and has suffered from the impacts of the recession. Looking forward, it is likely that we will have to manage with considerable reductions in central government grants. This is something that we will manage but all priorities must be seen against this backdrop and may be subject to changes.

## 7. Delivery and performance management

This Plan draws on and elaborates on a number of key issues set out in the Council's Strategic Plan. I have also discussed these corporate priorities and my portfolio priorities with the relevant service managers and these have been incorporated into their Service Plans. Key Performance Indicators and Local Performance Indicators that are relevant to my portfolio are set out as an appendix to this Statement. Along with Cabinet, I will be

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receiving quarterly reports on these indicators. In addition, I will be discussing them on a more regular basis at my monthly meetings with the relevant service managers.

## 8. Contact

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## Key Performance Indicators – 2009-12

PI Code	Short Name	Responsible Officer
LP ED&R 17	(KPI) Position of Royal Tunbridge Wells in the VenueScore UK's 2000+ retail & town centres rankings	Rob Cottrill
LP ED&R 19	(KPI) Conversion of new ED business enquiries	Rob Cottrill
LP ED&R 20	(KPI) Footfall in town centre	Rob Cottrill
NI 154	(KPI) Net additional homes provided	Rob Cottrill
NI 155	(KPI) Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	Rob Cottrill
NI 157a	Processing of planning applications: Major applications (BV109a)	Rob Cottrill
NI 157b	Processing of planning applications: Minor applications (BV109b)	Rob Cottrill
NI 157c	Processing of planning applications: Other applications (BV109c)	Rob Cottrill
NI 163	Working age population qualified to at least level 2 or higher	Rob Cottrill
NI 170	(KPI) Previously developed land that has been vacant or derelict for more than 5 years	Rob Cottrill
NI 171	(KPI) New business registration rate	Rob Cottrill
NI 188	Planning to Adapt to Climate Change	Rob Cottrill
NI 197	Improved Local Biodiversity – proportion of Local Sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented	Rob Cottrill