

# The Future of Swale

Performance Plan Summary 2003-04

STRONG ECONOMY  
A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT  
A THRIVING COMMUNITY



Swale Borough Council - Making a Difference

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### A message from the Leader of the Council

This is our fourth Annual Performance Plan. It sets out what we believe were our best achievements last year and our priorities for the year ahead. Our purpose is to improve the quality of life for local people and to support local communities. We will continue to seek improvements in Council services wherever we can, subject to budgetary and other limitations. In doing so we will pay particular attention to those priorities highlighted by you, the Electors and Council Tax payers, in the recent public consultation exercise.

The past year has been a year of tremendous challenge and change, not all immediately obvious outside the Council. We are well on the way to putting in place the building blocks to enable us to take the Council forward in a more focussed, proactive yet responsive manner

Great opportunities are opening up for the Borough of Swale as well as further challenges. We look forward to meeting them.

**Cllr. Andrew Bowles**

## Introduction by the Chief Executive



The performance plan is to tell you what we have done, how we compare with other Councils and what we will be doing next. Like most public bodies there is always more to do than there are resources to achieve it and we have been working with the new administration who will decide what those priorities are.

We can achieve more, in respect of our priorities, by working with other agencies and attracting external funding. This has been a successful year, with the development of two Healthy Living Centres at Faversham and Sheerness and the Gymnastics Centre in Faversham. We have also worked closely with National agencies such as the Children's Fund, Sure Start and the Countryside Agency, which have produced additional resources for the community.

We have been playing our part in developing an Area Investment Framework for the Government's Thames Gateway incentive and this will provide more resources in the years to come, to raise the quality of life in our community.

In a previous consultation document we asked you about the way our services are provided, and most said that they preferred to use the telephone. We want to improve the quality of the services we can provide by dealing quickly with your enquiries at the first point of contact. We made a successful bid for government money and can now deal with up to seventy different types of enquiry at the first point of contact. You can now pay by credit card or debit card over the telephone and of the people that have used the service 98% say that they are satisfied.

We hope to make more services available in the next few months. Every time we review a service we try and make it more focussed on meeting your needs and we fully expect you to tell us if we are not.

**Chris Edwards**

Chief Executive

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# The Council's Achievements for 2002

(Here are just a few things that we have done to improve the quality of life for the residents of Swale)







## HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT - In 2002...

-  Completed first and second stages in the development of Cavell Way Home Zone, Sittingbourne that is part of a National pilot scheme.
-  We are progressing major new initiatives including contaminated land assessment. We have also supported 'Operation Cubit' which was a multi-agency project that has removed large numbers of untaxed vehicles from local roads.
-  Assisted in making 66 unfit homes fit for habitation.
-  Stay Put service have secured funding from Health Authority to run a Handy Person service that has had 311 enquires for a health and safety check.
-  Invested in excess of £1M in essential repairs and improvements for Swale residents in need.
-  Provided advice and assistance for around 400 housing grant enquiries.
-  Secured £13,000 from London Electricity for loft/cavity wall insulation scheme.
-  Arranged big red EAGA bus to visit Faversham to promote grants for heating and insulation, which resulted in over 350 properties being improved in Swale.
-  Arranged Energy Efficiency Week with events in Faversham, Sheerness and Sittingbourne (in conjunction with Living in Safety)
-  Opened the National Cycle Route through Swale (22km) from Graveney to Upchurch.
-  Improved links with the community on traffic calming and transportation issues by working in partnership with Parish Councils and Community Groups.
-  Streamlined the procedure for dropped kerb applications.
-  Won a Tidy Britain Group Green Apple Award for the Cleaner Swale Weekend Freighter Scheme.
-  The Swale Organic Waste Collection scheme was short listed for The Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC) local authority recycling initiative of the year.
-  Successfully introduced a variation of the Swale Organic Waste Collection Scheme (SOCS) and provided the clear bag recycling scheme to additional residents in Northwood Drive. A recycling rate of over 50% has been achieved.
-  Substantially increased the numbers of bring-sites. Total bottle bank sites now 70, and over 20 new







-  paper bank sites have been added this year, increasing the "convenience" factor for residents.
-  Worked in partnership with Coca-Cola to organise a 15-week schools football tournament, Coca-Cola provided a £2,000 grant for this project.
-  Swale was chosen for one of Kent's 'County Excellence Centres' for Girls Football.
-  The Sports Development Team have hosted a very successful 'Disability in Sport Discovery Day.' Seventy disabled people attended and it is hoped that three clubs will be established within the Borough.
-  Have installed new play areas with disabled play facilities and continued the playground improvement programme throughout the Borough.
-  Achieved Blue Flag award for Sheerness Beach and Seaside Awards for Minster and Leysdown Beaches.



-  Opened a new £130,000 Water Play Area on the site of the previous paddling pool in Sheerness.
-  Developed and opened a new Youth Area at Beachfields Park.
-  Work undertaken to bring another car park into the Secure Car Park Scheme bringing the total in the Swale area to 8.
-  Building work commenced on the new Faversham Community and Gymnastics Activity Centre
-  Produced Heritage publication on Beachfields Park Sheerness and Sheppey & Town Guide
-  Delivered 85,600 Organ Donor Forms for NHS, at no cost, resulting in 10,500 returns

## STRONG ECONOMY - In 2002...

-  Achieved inclusion of much of rural Swale in a European funded rural regeneration programme worth £4M.
-  Continue progress of web-based system to provide access to information regarding events and attractions.
-  Co-ordinated, supported and supplied leadership for Faversham Attraction Forum which promotes the attractions of Faversham including website.
-  Produced via public consultation, and in conjunction with partners, a new vision for Sittingbourne town centre.



Saw the start of the new Heritage Economic Regeneration Scheme (HERS) for Faversham, which followed a similar very successful 3 year scheme in Sheerness. The Faversham HERS will attract £105,000 of external funding to grant aid the restoration of key buildings in Faversham Town Centre.



With partners supported 7 inward investors, helping to create over 600 new jobs.



Awarded funding for a Market Town Healthcheck by the Countryside Agency, to develop closer links between Sheerness and the rest of the Isle of Sheppey



Applied for £156,000 of Government business grants to support £575,000 of investment



Launched Swale Safe initiative linking business and the CCTV system, using radio networks in town centres to help reduce retail crime



Supervised the construction of the road networks on 50 new housing estates, bringing significant income to the Council.

## THRIVING COMMUNITY - In 2002...



Secured £1.5M Housing Corporation funds for social and supported housing schemes



Secured £700,000 from the Children's Fund for support to young people across Swale through projects that address health, education, recreation and safety concerns.



Allocated £100,000 to Parish and rural community projects through the Area Committees including help to Village Halls, play areas, open spaces and signing. First Parish teenage villages/recreation facilities installed at Warden Bay, Iwade and Lower Halstow.



Awarded £140,000 to Citizens Advice Bureaux and some smaller Voluntary sector services to offer much needed help and advice free of charge to the community. Over 13,000 enquiries dealt with by these Voluntary sector services.



Secured £160,000 from the New Opportunities Fund for 'Out of School Hours' activities and this was awarded to local Project Managers that include the Discovery Club at Doddington, Out of School Activity Club at Syndale Park and Kings Nursery in Sittingbourne.



Agreed the terms and contracts and commenced work on the construction of the Sheppey Healthy Living Centre adjoining Sheppey Leisure Complex.



Launched the large Murston Alleygate scheme, which limits public access to a network of alleyways to the residents only thus reducing the potential for crime and disorder problems.



Launched the Community Safety Plan for Swale for the period 2002 - 2005, which seeks to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and encourage the community to take responsibility for the Borough. The plan includes commitment to special policing initiatives, increased facilities for youth recreation and drug rehabilitation.



Submitted a Lottery bid and secured finances to open the Faversham Resource Centre, Preston Street Faversham. (Faversham's Healthy Living Centre).



Secured funding in partnership with the Police from the Home Office for a new 8 camera mobile Open Circuit Television system monitored from Swale House in conjunction with the static town centre system.



Established the Swale Regeneration Partnership as Swale's Local Strategic Partnership joining up the delivery of services across the Borough.



Agreed a new future for the Murston Community Hall and Kemsley Concert Hall independent from the Council's management and closer to the local communities they serve.



Sure Start programme launched at Sheerness serving 0-4 yr olds and their parents. Staff appointed and delivery plans agreed by National Sure Start Unit.



Began plans and consultations to create a large Neighbourhood Nursery and base for Sure Start staff in Sheerness.



Managed & marketed the Swale festival.



Successful in achieving £106,000 grant from Sport England for an Active Communities Officer for the Isle of Sheppey, particularly focusing on reducing Teenage Pregnancy on the Island.



Successful in gaining £27,000 from the Children's Fund, to facilitate two 'social exclusion' projects, called the 'Sports Bus Club' which focus on providing swimming and sports opportunities for school children within the Borough.



In Bloom awards - Sittingbourne, Faversham and Queenborough all were placed third in their classes. Queenborough also received a Bronze Medal in Britain in Bloom.



In partnership with Sittingbourne Allotment Society, restored "Sittingbourne and Milton Urban District Council Jubilee Warden Cup", first awarded in 1953, and now being used again in the annual presentations by the Allotment Society.

# What the Council hopes to achieve in the next twelve months

- Promote healthy lifestyles through the development of Healthy Living Centres to help reduce the death rate from coronary disease, stroke and related diseases.
- Through the Kent Drug Action Team continue to address drug issues thus reducing the misuse of drugs and alcohol
- Improve the quality of life for older people
- Promote rural tourism
- Work in partnership to promote a 'safer Swale' thereby reducing crime and incidents of public disorder
- Press for an early start and completion of the Second Swale Crossing
- Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Centre (gymnastics and community soft adventure play) in Faversham will open to the public
- The Healthy Living Centre In Sheerness will be opening to the public
- Next (and last) phase of development commences on Church Marshes Country Park
- Byelaw to be introduced to prohibit the parking of cars on grass verges
- To extend the concessionary bus pass scheme to include men aged 60-64
- Establish a 'No Dogs' byelaw in children's play areas.
- Complete the refurbishment of Second Avenue play areas in Rushenden
- Complete the refurbishment of Faversham Recreation Ground play areas
- Complete the adoption of new open spaces and play areas from developers at various sites
- Organise the development of female only sports clubs, which could result in sporting qualifications.
- Develop 50+ activity sessions including kurling /short mat bowls/dance and movement
- Develop sporting activities for the disabled including wheelchair basketball and boccia
- Introduce weekly keep fit rural road show - including circuit sessions
- Maintain the annual Easter and summer children's play programme at the 3 main sites in the Borough.
- Develop greater use of new technology for customer relations
- Undertake further CUBIT operations to remove untaxed vehicles from our roads
- Develop a cycling strategy to reduce dependency on the use of a car
- Planning and marketing of the Swale Festival.
- Organisation of the three town street events.
- Construction of the Sheerness Children and Families Centre
- Secure funding for Community Cinema on Sheppey
- Finalise plans for provision of community sports facilities at Minster College
- Installation of extra 64 camera monitoring capability at the Swale House CCTV Control Room.
- Agree plans and finalise funding for new Healthy Living Centre at Leysdown.
- Secure first funding awards for the Sittingbourne Cultural Centre ('The Exchange')
- Assist and secure funding for the Bridge Centre at Church Marshes Country Park
- Assist and secure funding for the expansion of activities at Brogdale Trust.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of homelessness in Swale and prepare a Homelessness Strategy for the Borough
- Develop further purpose-built accommodation for the temporary housing of homeless people, in partnership with Crowebridge Housing
- Review housing issues in Swale and prepare a revised Housing Strategy for the Borough.

## OUR VISION FOR SWALE OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

- ☆ A strong local economy, shared by all ☆
- ☆ A strong local economy with the infrastructure to keep it moving ☆
- ☆ A thriving community that feels and is safe ☆
- ☆ A thriving community with lots of opportunities to enjoy leisure time ☆
- ☆ A thriving community with access to skills and learning to support the local economy ☆
- ☆ A healthy environment, encouraging healthy lifestyles ☆
- ☆ A healthy environment with modern social and health care services ☆
- ☆ A healthy environment where the needs for growth are balanced with the need to preserve a distinctive identity ☆

(Full details of these themes are held in the full Best Value Performance Plan to be published in June 2003)

## Service Reviews

Following on from the Council's initial Best Value Reviews, that were Inspected by the Audit Commission, it was decided to undertake less "crosscutting" reviews. It is part of Swale's thinking that cross cutting based reviews are the key to operational improvement and it has been shown that this approach is able to identify issues that cross the traditional borders within an Authority. This also offers a joined up approach to reviews.

The first of these reviews was **Community Welfare**, which deals with some of the statutory functions (e.g. Food Safety, Refuse Collection, Pest Control and Cemeteries etc.) this was started in June 2002 and was being finalised at the time this document was going to print. A summary of the Review findings will be available in the full Best Value Performance Plan, which will be published later in the year. The second cross cutting review, **Quality of Life** (mainly covers Housing related services including Housing Benefit, Community Grants and Sustainability etc.) was started in the New Year and will be completed in the autumn.

## Comprehensive Performance Assessment

There has been considerable concern at both a national and local level about the effectiveness of the Best Value process and, in particular, about the scale of service review and the nature of the inspection regime. In recognition of this concern Central Government has acknowledged the need for change. It has now been decided that a new approach will be taken to Best Value. The central theme of this is the introduction of Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPAs) for local authorities. The CPA is conducted by the Audit Commission and is aimed at assessing the health of a local authority at a political and senior management level and will also question its ability to deliver services within the financial and other constraints under which the Borough operates. Initially Counties and Unitary Authorities have undergone the CPA Reviews. These have now been completed and the second phase, Local Authorities, has started. Swale is due to have its CPA in 2004. We will tell you more about the CPA in the Best Value Performance Plan.

## Consultation

Over the last year the Council has undertaken a number of consultation exercises. The Electoral

Reform Society undertook a referendum on the level of Council Tax that residents wished to pay and what were residents priority services for the future.

When asked: - **By how much do you believe that Swale Borough Council should increase or decrease its share of the Council Tax charge to residents next year.**

Ratio	% of residents
No change	41.61%
10% reduction	34.15%
5% reduction	12.10%
5% increase	10.10%
10% increase	2.04%

When asked: - **To which of the following services do you believe that Swale Borough Council should give a greater priority in future.**

Pavements, Footpaths & Streetlights	15.98%
Roads Maintenance	14.27%
Recycling & Waste Minimisation	9.93%
Street Sweeping	8.00%
Parks & Open Spaces	7.52%
Public Conveniences	6.42%
Countryside & Country Parks	6.28%
Leisure & Sports Centres	5.51%
Town Centre Management	5.06%
Refuse Collection	5.05%
Community Centres	4.09%
Home Renovation Grants	3.97%
Industrial Development	3.34%
Tourism	2.38%
Seafront Services	2.20%

## Audit Report

Each year our Local Performance Plan is audited by external auditors PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC). Last year's Plan received an unqualified report from PWC. However, in making their report they did bring out attention to the need to improve our Performance Information systems and the need to take account of Capital charges in our Performance Indicator calculations.

# Swale's Partners

Swale is proud of its partnership with other organisations, as we believe this is the best way to supply a citizen focused service. Here are a few of our partners, but there are many more all working with us to give you the best service possible.

## Northgate

Northgate are the company that was commissioned by Swale Borough Council to install and initialise the phone system in their newly established Customer Service Centre.

Northgate views the partnership with Swale Borough Council as a vital part of its forward strategy for modernising Local Government. The company is totally focused on enabling its customers to deliver a consistently high level of service using the latest technologies available.



Together we have been able to transform the quality of customer service that is now being delivered to the citizens of Swale and do so in a way that has been to the mutual benefit of both organisations.

In terms of the achievements to date, the first was the speed and effectiveness of the initial implementation that only took 10 weeks. At the end of that period calls were being taken and multiple services delivered, a fact that has greatly impressed all subsequent visitors to Swale. Reference visits to Swale now number over 30, from other local authorities and central government, all of whom can testify that this is one of a handful of leading projects in the UK.

One of the key characteristics of Northgate's partnerships with many of its customers has been the long-term sustainability of those relationships. The early signs for Northgate and Swale are very good and we look forward to continuing to work closely together for many years to come.

Steve Knighton, Sector Manager, Government

## Swale Voluntary & Community Development Centre

Across Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheppey there are over 200 voluntary organisations working within the fields of social care, environment, conservation and education to name but a few. Additional to the

organisations themselves there are thousands of volunteers helping out as well.

Who do these organisations and volunteers help and support? The list is very long and includes those with physical and sensorial impairment, those with learning disabilities, children and families, the mentally ill, the elderly and carers.

The voluntary sector provides advice giving, support, advocacy, counselling, volunteers, equipment, social car scheme, befriending, care services and much, much more.

Did you know that: -

- When last measured 51 % of the population was involved in some voluntary activity.
- Most volunteers got involved because they were asked to help, or because the organisation they join is connected with their own needs and interests.
- Research undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows that 75% of respondents felt volunteering enabled them to offer something to society that could never be provided by the state.

It is hoped that a recently formed Swale Voluntary Sector Forum will enable a much closer relationship and partnership working between all of the Statutory Service providers and the voluntary/community sector, and will give the voluntary/community sector a strong voice in decision-making processes.

Swale Volunteering & Community Development Centre supports and develops the voluntary/community sector within Swale and encourages liaison between voluntary and statutory organisations to help bring about a more active and caring society.



For further information about your voluntary sector in Swale, or to find out about becoming a volunteer, please contact Swale Volunteering & Community Development Centre at Central House, Central Avenue, Sittingbourne, ME10 4NU telephone 01795 473828 or e-mail us on [swalevolcs@fsnet.co.uk](mailto:swalevolcs@fsnet.co.uk)

Contacts:

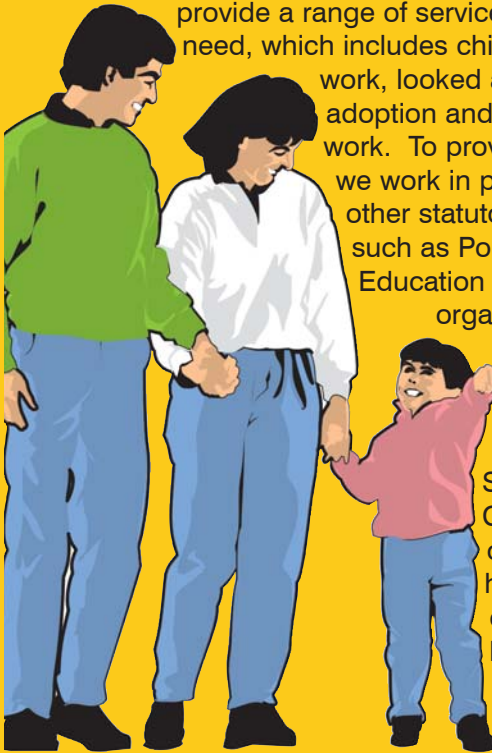
**Manager:** Sandra Thorne

**Deputy Manager:** Christine White

# SOCIAL SERVICES IN SWALE

## What we do in Swale Family Centre

In Swale Social Services we provide a support service to children and their families in the Swale District. We provide a range of services for children in need, which includes child protection work, looked after children, adoption and preventative work. To provide this service we work in partnership with other statutory agencies such as Police, Health and Education and voluntary organisations such as the Family Welfare Association and Homestart. Swale Family Centre co-ordinates in-house and community based family support services.



## How we work together with Swale Borough Council

Swale Social Services provides a representative on various key strategic groups, such as the Swale Regeneration Partnership, Healthy Living Centre, Sure Start Project and Community Safety Partnership, Swale Locality Children and Young Person Locality Group. Swale Borough Council in return attends Social Services working groups and assists in planning for developing preventative services, for example in early years services in Milton and holiday play schemes across Swale.

## What our priorities are in Swale

In Social Services we are aiming to provide a much wider range of community based preventative services in partnership with voluntary organisations. To achieve this goal we are reducing the numbers of children who are looked after and then move this expenditure into preventative services that will help an increased number of children and their families.

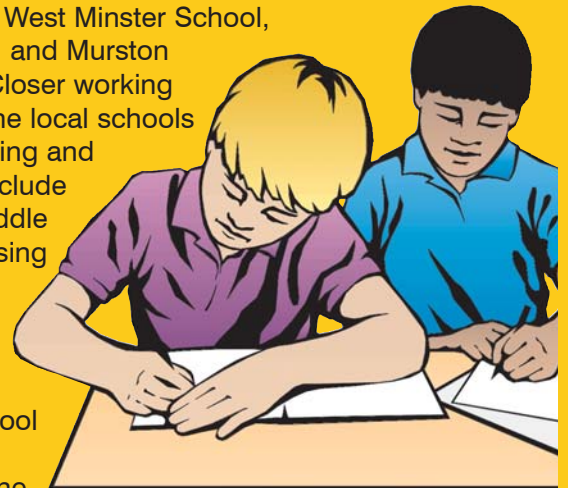
## What will we be doing in Swale during 2003/2004

Social Services have been able to secure almost £500,000 Government funding to create three new Family Centres in Swale. In conjunction with Swale Borough Council, these are to be developed in Faversham, Sheerness and Leysdown and services to be run by a partnership of not for profit organisations lead by the Family Welfare Association. The Sheerness Project will build on the work already undertaken by the FWA at Rose Street and will be in collaboration with the new Sure Start Sheerness Centre now in the planning stage. It is hoped all three projects will be in operation from March 2004 and that the local communities will be involved in developing services offered.

Social Services continue to support and work closely with Sure Start Sheerness.

New services are being developed to service Court ordered Parenting Orders and to offer services on a voluntary basis. This will be in addition to Parenting Groups already offered at the Swale Family Centre and in the community, e.g. at Faversham Community Resource Centre and Café, funded by Swale Children Fund.

Social Services are also committed to working in partnership with schools in areas of high need and continue to fund projects like Weenie West Minsters at West Minster School, Rushenden and Murston Projects. Closer working links with the local schools are continuing and currently include Cheyne Middle School, Bysing Wood Primary School, Murston Infants School and Sittingbourne Community College. A Cascade Social Worker continues to be part of the Milton Community Project working in Milton Court and Regis Manor Community School.



## Statistics

Swale currently have 160 children who are looked after in public care and under the Public Service Agreement, this number will need to reduce by 20% over the next year. The final target figure has yet to be agreed. We are also working towards children being placed in adoptive placements more quickly after being identified as an appropriate care plan. There are Government set targets for this also.

# Kent Fire Brigade

Kent Fire Brigade is committed to improving the safety of those who live and work in Swale and Kent as a whole.

As well as maintaining an effective emergency fire service our work increasingly involves activities designed to reduce the occurrence of fires and related injuries and prevent avoidable drains on our resources from unwanted or malicious calls.



In addition to national performance requirements the brigade has set a number of challenging targets intended to focus our activities and draw the very best from our staff and resources. We target our resources at areas where we feel people are at particular risk either as a local community or as vulnerable individuals within the community:

## Home Fire Safety Checks

We offer voluntary, free home fire safety checks to householders. Following the check we may offer advice about how to reduce the risk of fire within the home and escape safely in the event of a fire. If we feel it is necessary, we will also offer to fit a free 10 year smoke detector. The home fire safety check programme is being run throughout Kent following positive results from a pilot scheme in parts of Swale.

To date we have fitted in excess of 150 smoke detectors in 110 Swale homes. We would very much encourage all householders to accept the offer



of a safety check; One Sittingbourne family owe their lives to the smoke detector, which raised the alarm when fire broke out at their home so allowing them to escape safely.

## Young People's Fire Safety Programme.

Our experience shows young people receiving fire safety instruction at school or through local youth and community groups gain valuable knowledge, which they retain for the rest of their lives and pass on to parents and other family members

Specially trained officers have, over the past two years, visited nearly every Swale primary school at key stages in the curriculum to instruct approximately 2700 children, this is augmented by visits to fire stations, talks to youth organisations, attendance at certain community fetes and the Swale Safety in Action event. This is part of a continuing school and community education programme.

## Community Partnerships

Whilst achieving success in its own right, the Brigade has engaged in partnership activities with several local organisations to address some of the broader issues: crime, disorder and social deprivation in particular, which have an underlying effect on fire risks in the local community.



Joining forces with Swale Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, NACRO, Youth and Communities, Swale Borough Council and Kent Police we have been involved in working with young offenders to reduce arson, counselling young fire-setters in the hope of changing their behaviour and running operation CUBIT which, in 2002, saw the number of vehicle fires in Swale drop by 32% over a three week period.

## The Future

We have set new targets to achieve further reductions in:

- Accidental dwelling fires and associated injuries
- Abuse of the 999 emergency telephone system
- Unwanted non-domestic fire alarm calls
- Deliberate fires.

Working with partners, members of the local residential and business communities we feel able to rise to these challenges.

Contact: John Robertson  
01795 423487

# WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP THE HYDE GROUP

## What we do in Swale

Hyde Housing Association is a major RSL (Registered Social Landlord) and a provider of affordable homes throughout London and the South East. From our Regional office in Maidstone and an Area office at Canterbury, we manage over 3,000 homes for rent and shared ownership in Kent. We provide affordable rented homes in partnership with Swale Borough Council and offer people the chance to acquire their own properties through our shared ownership programme, which is marketed by InPlace, a specialist subsidiary of The Hyde Group. In the Swale Borough Council area we currently manage 155 homes for rent and 28 homes for shared ownership. We are in the process of developing 9 homes and a further 22 homes are planned in the near future. We also own six flats, converted from a redundant office block in Sittingbourne, that are managed by Crowebridge Housing Association.

In order to achieve our objectives we need to work with our residents. They are, after all, in the best position to tell us what they want. In Kent, we operate a customer involvement policy and have a staff member whose sole responsibility is to work with the tenants and help form residents associations and keep us abreast of tenants' views.

## How we work together with Swale Borough Council

By working together with Swale Borough Council, we are able to direct our efforts into meeting housing need. As a member of the Joint Commissioning Partnership comprising various RSL's, we work with the Council to help identify which areas in the Borough require our resources. Nominations for our properties are sourced from the housing waiting list held by a member RSL and Swale Borough Council provides much of the funding we require to build our homes directly through its Local Authority Social Housing Grant programme. Swale can also supply us with land in order for us to build homes efficiently and to offer better value for money.

Working with the Council's housing and planning officers we identify suitable sites from the open market. Hyde Housing Association also works with developers and house builders, assisted by various planning agreements imposed by the Council, that require a certain number of houses to be built as affordable homes for local people.

The new shared ownership homes we build are targeted to assist keyworkers in accessing the housing market. Further information can be found at [www.inplace.co.uk](http://www.inplace.co.uk)



# MOAT HOUSING GROUP

We are a leading housing association working in the South East, providing high quality affordable homes and services, including support services to people who need assistance to live independently.

We work in close partnership with Swale Borough Council and nominations for our properties are taken from the Council's Common Housing Register, depending on housing need.

Many of the homes we provide are brand new, purpose built, properties. We also purchase and refurbish older properties (Purchase & Repair), bringing them back into use for family housing and helping to improve existing properties in the borough.

At Moat we aim to provide homes where people want to live and will want to stay, in sustainable neighbourhoods that are safe and pleasant places. We support our residents and encourage them to take active parts in their communities and to address the issues that are important to them. We also recognise that young people don't often participate in formal consultation and we make special efforts to involve them in maintaining and improving their neighbourhoods.

In addition, we offer training, support and funding to help launch new projects and support community events.

In the Swale Borough Council area, we:

- Provide and manage general needs rented properties.
- Provide specialist housing support services to people with physical or learning disabilities and to vulnerable single homeless people
- Assist people to get started on the home ownership ladder by offering homes on a part-rent part-buy shared ownership basis.
- Assist primary and secondary school teachers and employees of Kent Police with home ownership grants towards purchasing a first time property on the open market.

Some of the ways that Moat Housing Group works in partnership with Swale Borough Council

- Providing affordable homes to people nominated to us by the Council.
- In Cavell Way, we are planning a children's art project for summer 2003.
- We have organised a number of "clean up days" where the Cavell Way residents have been involved in picking up litter.
- At Bysingwood Road, Faversham, we are working to develop links with the Youth Service and to set up a young people's group.
- We are working with Swale, in preparation for Supporting People which comes into effect on 1 April 2003.
- We are providing "floating support", primarily in the Faversham area, to private sector leasing tenants and Moat Housing Group tenants.

## Moat Housing Group

Tel: 0845 600 1006  
or e-mail [customer@moat.co.uk](mailto:customer@moat.co.uk)  
Information is also available online at [moat.co.uk](http://moat.co.uk)

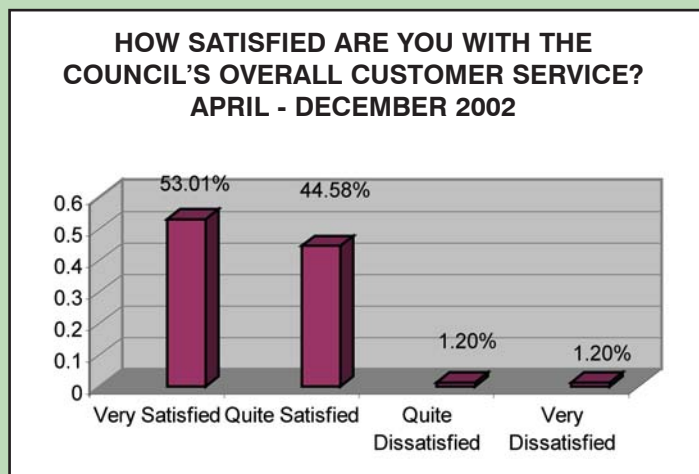
# WHAT DOES THE COUNCIL DO ?

Here are five successful projects that you may not have heard about.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE (CSC)

The CSC is taking in excess of 11,000 calls per month regarding up to 70 different enquiry types.

As well as these incoming calls the CSC also makes outgoing calls to survey customer needs, wants and levels of satisfaction.



Unlike traditional Call Centre practices, the Customer Service Advisors are not targeted on the number of calls they take, but are targeted as a team on the number of abandoned calls and the average waiting time. This has brought a culture of team working and quality to the CSC.

We are able to communicate with our customers using the medium that suits them best - be it telephone, email, letter or face to face. Regardless of the communication channel used, the customer receives the same level of service.

All CSC staff have attended a Customer Service Excellence course which is a "best in class" training course. This has developed their customer relationship skills and provided an opportunity to develop.

## THE STAYING PUT TEAM


This small team ensures elderly residents in Faversham, Sittingbourne and Sheppey enjoy one of the country's best support services. In the 1980s census information showed that an increasing number of elderly people were

unable to stay in their homes because of the need for expensive repairs. Swale's Staying Put scheme was set up during 1991.

We work for the customer - recognising their needs in partnership with other caring agencies, giving clear communication, dealing with all fairly and consistently, taking account of different perspectives and learning all the time. Help is provided in all sorts of ways, through grants or charitable funds. We welcome those who can fund the work themselves but need guidance. We have our own handy person who carries out Health and Safety checks & minor repairs to help elderly and disabled residents on low incomes to remain independent and to live in comfort and safety in their own homes.



**We can also help with: -**

-  Handy Man Scheme Referrals
-  Priority Service Register
-  FACE Referrals
-  Warmfront Grant Referrals

## Sittingbourne Town Centre Vision Shaping the Future

In recent years Sittingbourne has seen



significant commercial and industrial growth. Housing is also increasing with new homes being built at The Meads and Iwade. Now it is the turn of the town centre - it needs to catch up.

Town Centre Management, with the support of Swale Borough Council, has developed a Vision for Sittingbourne. The first stage looked at the problems the town is facing. Then Town Centre Management ran workshops, held meetings with community groups, and visited schools to find out if the public agreed with these broad ideas.

Having established the priorities, drawings and concepts were developed to show how the town could grow and change over the next 5, 10, 20 years. Ideas that reflect the needs of existing residents and businesses, yet at the same time are attractive to potential investors.

## SWALE SAFE

Last year Swale Borough Council, through Town Centre Management, played a key role in setting up Swale Safe, a crime reduction partnership between SBC, Kent Police and Swale retailers.

Some £42,000 was raised from local community partnership groups including Kent Police, Swale



Borough Council and Kent County Council. This enabled the primary investment in the radios and base station equipment to be made. Swale Safe is now self funding through the rental of radios.

Membership of Swale Safe is open to shops and businesses in Faversham, Sittingbourne and Sheerness. For an annual fee of £312, retailers hire a two-way radio from Swale Safe that links directly to the CCTV control centre and the local police.

### Swale Safe' objectives are to:

- ⚡ Reduce retail crime
- ⚡ Catch and convict shoplifters
- ⚡ Reduce car park and street crime
- ⚡ Reduce credit card fraud

The success shops experienced with the Swale Safe radio link has led to a 'Pub Watch' scheme being set up in Sittingbourne. Public Houses have joined Swale Safe and are able to talk to each other, the police and CCTV to reduce crime and anti social behaviour in the evenings, helping to make the town centre a friendly and safer place for everyone. It is hoped that Sheerness and Faversham pubs will soon follow suit.

## SURE START SHEERNESS

Sure Start Sheerness is a Central Government funded regeneration Programme led by Swale Borough Council and administered by its employees. The Council has accepted responsibility for what could be a £6 million program lasting up to 10 years.

We are targeting pregnant mums and families with children under four in Sheerness with a range of high quality services procured from the statutory, voluntary and private sectors e.g. childcare, play, speech and language, book work and a number of health care services.

We work in partnership with representatives of the community, statutory agencies and voluntary sector to ensure that the program meets local requirements in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

A measure of our success has been the enthusiastic and rapid uptake of our services by local people and the positive feedback we consistently receive from those involved in the program.

In the next 18 months we hope to build a £1.5 - £2 million Children and Family Centre in Sheerness.










# SWALE'S PERFORMANCE


## How do we compare with other "like" Authorities?


Achievement	Underachievement
Our electoral turn out	Disabled access
Staff not taking days off sick	Business Rate collection
Not taking early retirement	Senior posts filled by women
Ensuring empty dwellings are returned to occupation	Ill health retirements
Collection of overpaid Housing Benefits	Employing staff with disability
% of house waste recycled	Homeless application decided in 33 days
Score against a Planning checklist	% of Benefits processed correctly
Score against an Environmental Health checklist	Building on brown field sites
	Land searches carried out in 10 days

## In light of the above we plan to.....

-  **Disabled access** - A report has been submitted to Members seeking clarification on their views on the best way forward with all Council buildings, which buildings we will retain and of those buildings we do retain, the priority and Budget to improve the access for the disabled.
-  **Business Rate Collection** - During the year in question the Council had a high number of Revaluations and because of the then accounting procedures this affected our overall percentage Business Rate Collection. We have now introduced a new accounting procedure and with affect from April 2003 a new computer package, which will improve the percentage collection rate.
-  **Senior Posts filled by Women** - We are considering introducing a "Woman into Management" type development programme to encourage women to develop their careers and equip them for promotion opportunities within the Council.
-  **Ill Health Retirements** - We are proposing to undertake a Workplace Survey over the next year. We will use an external organisation to carry out the survey for us. It will include health related issues so that we will be able to use the information to resolve issues, which may result in long term ill health. In addition we hope to be able to introduce a private health care scheme as part of flexible benefits, which we hope, will result in early identification of health problems.
-  **Employing staff with Disability** - We are working on a new Disability Policy with a view to achieving the two ticks symbol. This will help us to ensure that we meet the needs of disabled people in the workplace, which we hope will also contribute to an increase in the number of disabled employees. We monitor the needs of current disabled employees to ensure that they can take advantage of developments in technology in their work.
-  **Homeless applications decided in 33 days** - This was as a result of a shortage of staff in the section combined with a major influx of Homeless people. The section has now been restructured and we have improved our procedures, this has resulted in a reduction in the time taken to process applications.
-  **Percentage of Benefits applications processed correctly** - Over the past year there has been a significant increase in training, given to our new staff, to ensure there is a substantial improvement in the percentage of applications processed correctly.

Cont.

 **Building on Brown Field Sites** - This indicator is proving difficult to improve, mainly because Swale has very limited access to Brown Field Sites and within our Local Plan it is mainly Green Field sites that have been "ear marked" for development. Having said that, it is the Council's intention, long term, to develop Brown Field Sites wherever possible.

 **Land Searches carried out in 10 days** - The system has now been improved by part computerisation, which has resulted in the percentage rising from 50% to nearer 90%. It is intended that the system will become fully computerised under the government's e-government strategy by the end of 2005, which will increase this figure further.

<b>A Sample of Performance Indicators</b>	<b>2001/02</b>			
	Swale's Actual	Kent Average	District Average	District National Top 25%
<b>Corporate</b>				
The percentage turnout for local elections.	58%	35%	34%	38%
The % of authority buildings open to the public and that are accessible to the disabled	16%	32%	29%	53%
The percentage of interactions with the public, by type, which are capable of electronic service delivery and which are being delivered using internet protocols or other paperless methods.	31%	27%	31%	42%
Percentage of Council Tax collected.	96.4%	97%	98%	98%
<b>Housing</b>				
% of homeless decisions within 33 working days	67.80%	84%	92%	97%
<b>Environment</b>				
Number of kilograms of household waste collected per head.	476	403	395	428
Cost of waste collection per household.	£31.19	£25.18	£32.24	£28.05
Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of household waste.	28.67	29	43	19
Percentage of population resident in the authority's areas, which are served by a kerbside collection of recyclables or within 1 kilometre radius of a recycling centre.	98.0%	89%	95%	100%
<b>Planning</b>				
Planning cost per head of population.	£10.13	£12.79	£12.05	£8.96
Percentage of applications determined within 8 weeks.	71.7%	68.58%	68%	74%
Average time taken to determine all applications.	10 weeks	10 weeks	10 weeks	11 weeks
The percentage of standard searches carried out in 10 working days.	50%	64.9%	99%	100%
<b>Culture</b>				
Number of visits to/usage of museums per 1,000 population	39	384	309	677
Spending per head of population on cultural and recreational facilities and activities.	£10.30	£19.16	£22.37	£29.45
Domestic burglaries per 1,000 households	14.2	11.33	10.3	7.3
Vehicle crimes per 1,000 population	14.8	12.91	11.4	8.1

# Council Finance




Where the money comes from.....and where it goes!

From the table right, listing the classifications of Council spending and sources of funding, it can be seen how large a proportion of the Councils Budget is devoted to the payment of Benefits for housing and for council tax. Just over £35m is expected to be paid for benefits during the financial year commencing 1 April 2003. The Council does receive a £32.4m grant from the Government to cover most of these costs. "Other Services" covers a diverse range of services such as car parking, community development and safety, trading services, concessionary fares, corporate management and overheads as well as the costs of council tax collection. The Highways service in particular has been given additional resources for 2003/04 following the public consultation carried out during December 2002.

A Public Consultation was conducted by the independent Electoral Reform Society (see page 6 for full details).

WHAT THE COUNCIL SPENDS	£000	%
Highways	1,600	2.80
Planning & Econ Dev	2,045	3.57
Arts & Leisure	3,935	6.88
Environmental Services	2,489	4.35
Refuse Collection	2,289	4.00
Housing	1,231	2.15
Gov't Benefit Payments	35,054	61.25
Other Services	8,237	14.39
Contribution to Capital Projects	347	0.61
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>57,227</b>	<b>100.00</b>
WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM		
Rents/Fees/Charges	7,100	12.41
Interest	2,043	3.57
Gov't Grants	10,530	18.40
Council Tax	5,002	8.74
Collection Fund Surplus	104	0.18
Reserves	35	0.06
Gov't Benefit Grants	32,413	56.64
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>57,227</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The response to the Public Consultation was 51%, much higher than the average poll at the last local election in May 2002, which was 32% approx. By using a weighted formula the result was for a 3.3% reduction in the Council Tax. The Council's Executive adopted this recommendation and the Council has reduced Swale's element of the Council Tax accordingly. A Band D Council Tax is used as the benchmark for comparisons with all other Councils. The composition of the Council Tax that will be shown on all the Tax Bills that will be sent out during 2003/04 is shown below:

	2002/03 £	2003/04 £	Increase %
	758.07	852.84	12.50
	73.64	94.95	28.94
	119.39	115.45	<b>-3.30</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>951.10</b>	<b>1063.24</b>	<b>11.79</b>

Although for the benchmark Band D property Swale's charge has reduced by £3.94 the overall increase (excluding any parish council tax that may be applicable) is £112.14 caused by the 12.5% increase for Kent County Council and the 28.94% increase for the Kent Police Authority.

# Contacting Swale Borough Council

## MAIN OFFICES SWALE HOUSE

East Street, Sittingbourne,  
Kent ME10 3HT

Tel (01795) 424341

Fax (01795) 417141

Email [info@swale.gov.uk](mailto:info@swale.gov.uk)

Website [www.swale.gov.uk](http://www.swale.gov.uk)

## DISTRICT OFFICES

For Cashiers, Information, Planning,  
Housing & Council Tax Benefits

## COUNCIL OFFICES

Preston Street, Faversham,  
Kent ME13 8NY

Tel (01795) 424341

Fax (01795) 590198

## COUNCIL OFFICES

Trinity Road, Sheerness,  
Kent ME12 2PG

Tel (01795) 424341

Fax (01795) 669097

## OPENING HOURS

(all Council Offices)

9.00am - 5.00pm Mon to Thu

9.00am - 4.30pm Fri

Cashiers/Benefits Offices

close 15 minutes earlier,

except Weds - Benefits Offices

close at 12.30pm

## OUT OF HOURS

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

(01795) 417111

24HR ANTI-FRAUD HOTLINE

(01795) 417714

## Forthcoming Events:

SWALE FESTIVAL including:

12th July Sittingbourne Spectacular

19th July Open Air Concert at Mount Ephraim Gardens

16th Aug. Sheppey Show

30th - 31st Aug. Faversham Hop Festival



# MORE INFORMATION

If you, or someone you know has difficulty reading this document you may request copies in large print format, or on audio cassette by contacting The Best Value Team on (01795) 417107/417380, or by writing to:

**Local Performance Plan - Special Editions**

**Swale Borough Council**

**Swale House**

**East Street**

**Sittingbourne**

**Kent ME10 3HT**

Or send an email to [future@swale.gov.uk](mailto:future@swale.gov.uk)

An on-line version of this document - in Adobe Acrobat - is available on the council's web-site at [www.swale.gov.uk/future](http://www.swale.gov.uk/future)

We are also interested in serving and informing all the varied communities in Swale, especially those people for whom English is not their first language. We would, therefore, be pleased to hear from people who would like to receive information in other languages and who could help us in our aim to reach as many people as possible.