



Lewes District Council

Community Wealth Building Strategy

Our plan for an economy
centred on local people
and sustainable development





Lewes District Council

Introduction

For the last four years the council has embraced a community wealth building approach to its work. This is about ensuring that local people and the local economy are placed at the centre of how the council operates, and how we work with our partners.

The aim of community wealth building is to use the combined power of institutions, businesses and communities to retain and build more wealth in the local economy, creating new local jobs and new locally owned enterprises.

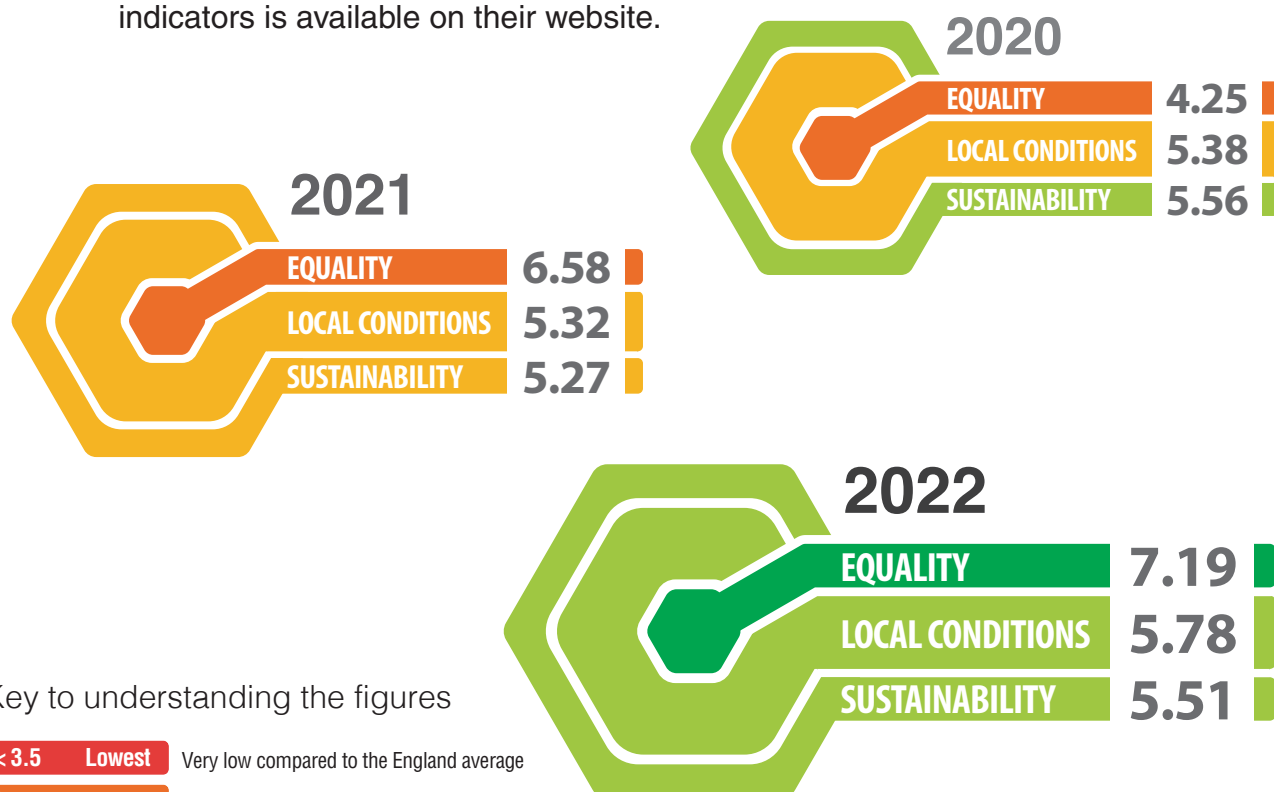
There are six main pillars of our community wealth building strategy:

- Lewes District as a community wealth building council
- Progressive procurement of goods and services
- Fair employment and just labour markets
- Socially productive use of land and property
- Making financial power work for local places
- Plural ownership of the economy.



Progress so far

1. The council has almost doubled its spending with local suppliers from £5.3 million in 2020 to 10.1 million in 2024. This focus on local supply chains contributes to sustainability and retains wealth within our local economy.
2. The council has produced a Sustainable Procurement Policy outlining its approach to spending on goods and services in a way that is environmentally, socially and economically responsible.
3. Our view of the economy is broader than economic growth alone, which is why we use the thriving places index to measure outcomes across a range of measures such as equalities, community participation and the health of local nature. The Thriving Places Index is compiled by the Centre for Thriving Places, a non-profit consultancy and the Centre for Urban Wellbeing, a research centre at the University of Birmingham. The scorecards below are for Lewes District and they show a significant improvement over the last three years of available data, especially for the equality score which has improved largely due to narrowing of the income gap between genders. A full list of indicators is available on their website.



Key to understanding the figures

- < 3.5 Lowest** Very low compared to the England average
- 3.5 – 4.5 Lower** Below the England average
- 4.5 – 5.5 Medium** Close to the England average
- 5.5 – 6.5 Higher** Above the England average
- > 6.5 Highest** Very high compared to the England average



Case Study

The council moves from Southover House to Marine Workshops

An important pillar of community wealth building is productive use of land and assets. The council has moved its offices from Lewes to the vacant Marine Workshops in Newhaven, a former technical college, which was acquired by the council in June 2022 in order to support the regeneration of Newhaven town. The building is being developed into a mixed space supporting marine ecology and education, commercial space and new public space.

The council has maintained a presence in Lewes by repurposing a vacant shop in the town centre to provide a customer contact centre. Meanwhile, the former council office building in Lewes has been leased to Charleston Trust, an arts and heritage organisation who are using the building as a gallery and exhibition space which will contribute to community wealth by further developing the strong visitor and cultural economy of the town. Since opening its exhibition space in September 2023 Charleston in Lewes has welcomed more than 30,000 visitors and said early research indicates that three quarters of them have gone on to visit shops and other town attractions.



Southover House, Lewes

Marine Workshops, Newhaven



Case Study

Re-imagining Newhaven Programme

Lewes District Council has secured a place on a national pilot scheme that allows the council a more flexible approach to how it uses £37 million in government funding allocations.

Lewes District Council is one of only 10 local authorities nationally that has been invited onto the pilot. It consolidates the Future High Streets Fund, Town Deal and Levelling Up Fund capital funding programmes being delivered in Newhaven.

Part of the funding will be used for the 'capturing the value of the catch project' aiming to stimulate Newhaven's fishing industry by providing a new fish landing stage to accommodate eight small vessels from the Newhaven fishing fleet, building a new seafood processing plant in the town and creating a new restaurant and community destination by the promenade at West Beach. The purpose of this project is to retain spending in Newhaven for longer and stimulate a local market for fish, creating jobs and wealth locally.

In July, the planning committee at Lewes District Council has approved the redevelopment of the promenade above West Beach in Newhaven. The far-reaching plans will turn the venue into a magnet for residents and visitors, with a new restaurant, outdoor gym, children's play area and improved pedestrian links all in the pipeline.

West Beach, Newhaven



What we will do next?

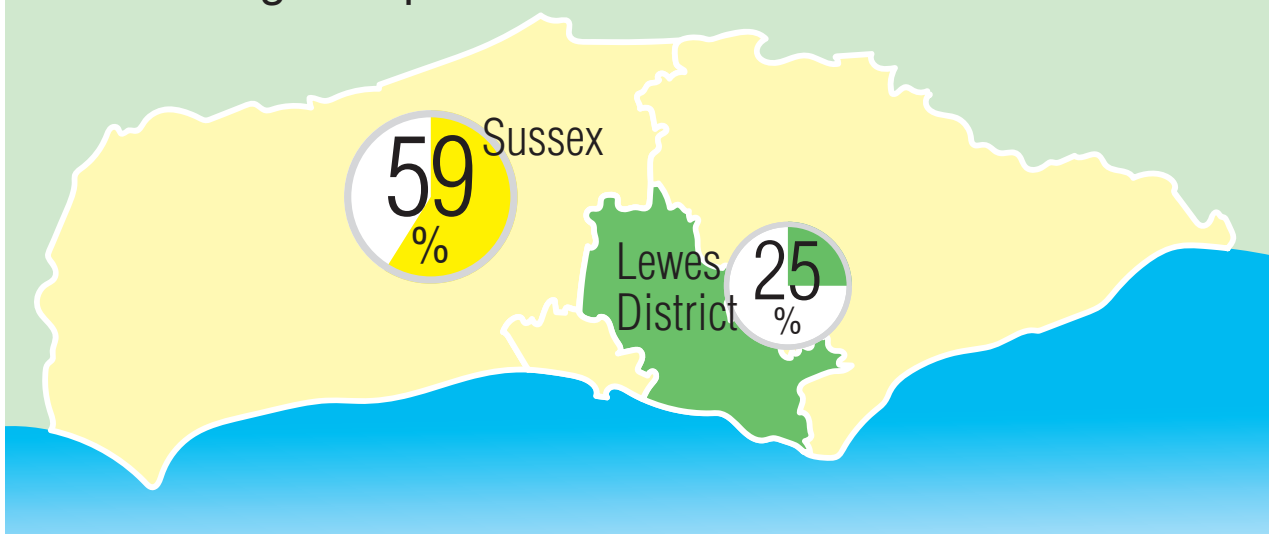
Lewes District Council as a Community Wealth Building Council

- Encourage local town and parish councils to work actively with us to further develop a community wealth building approach across the area.
- Lobby for improved rail and bus networks to support the local economy (e.g. Lewes to Uckfield rail link), as a sustainable alternative to further road development.
- Supporting our NHS partners to improve delivery through new local health hubs.
- Encourage a thriving visitor economy, based on our natural, cultural and heritage assets, which supports and nurtures our local economy and environment through collaborative initiatives and events.
- Promote community wellbeing by supporting active enjoyment of our countryside and environment as well as valuing and promoting our local sporting and leisure activities and facilities.

Progressive procurement of goods and services

- Support our local economies, including the rural economy, by procuring from local suppliers, and encouraging other local partners to do the same.
- Work with suppliers to maximise what additional social value benefits can be gained when contracts are delivered for the council, in line with the council's Sustainable Procurement Policy

Percentage of spend



Fair employment and just labour markets

- Increase local employment opportunities by actively recruiting locally through a range of media (including social media), and by committing ourselves and encouraging our partners to paying the real living wage where possible.
- Develop green and renewable job training opportunities for local people by working with education and training partners. The new Local Plan will provide a vehicle to promote training and employment opportunities in local labour agreements, when agreeing to new commercial developments.
- Work with East Sussex College Group, Charleston and others, to ensure training opportunities match local skills requirements, in order to enhance local employment opportunities.

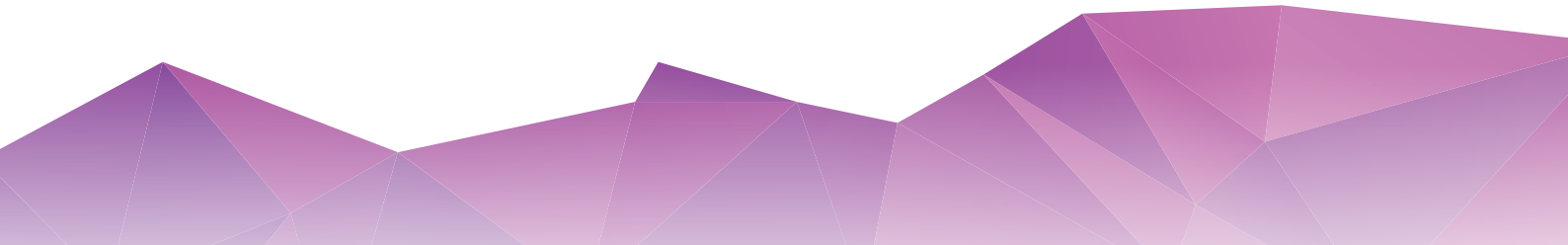
Socially productive use of land and assets

- Regularly review how we use our land and assets, and partners' public land and assets, to benefit the local community and businesses.
- Work with One Public Estate to use the combined asset base of the public sector in our district to increase supply of affordable new homes and other benefits to the local economy and communities.

Making financial power work for local places

- Complete the Pathfinder Pilot regeneration projects in Newhaven, funded with support from central government where a community wealth approach is central.
- Support the local voluntary and community sector to help ensure its ongoing strength and vitality to enable community led groups to further develop and flourish.
- Find ways to enable more of the district's money to stay within the district, directly benefiting residents and local companies.
- Work to reduce deprivation in the district through our regeneration activities, in partnership with other key local institutions.

Plural ownership of the economy

- Embed circular economy principles to enable reuse of materials and sustainable management of resources throughout the council's work.
 - Support and enable plural ownership through worker and consumer cooperatives and social enterprises, looking to achieve joint council and social enterprise ownership where appropriate.
 - Enable local social enterprises to develop and thrive, supported by our Lewes District Start-up Programme
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4 year goals

- Improvement in Thriving Places Index score
- Increase in proportion of procurement spend going to local companies
- Increase in social value achieved through council contracts
- Better cared for and more accessible public spaces
- More local job opportunities in low carbon and sustainable industries

