

District Councillor Monthly Report

Lawford, Manningtree & Mistley – November/December 2023

New Corporate Plan adopted by Tendring District Council

A new corporate plan has been adopted by Tendring District Council (TDC), setting out the authority's strategic direction for the next four years.

Full council unanimously approved the document, called Our Vision, at its meeting tonight (Tuesday, 28 November).

A key document which lays out the high-level priorities for the authority over the next four years, the current Corporate Plan ends in 2024, with the plan period matching the electoral cycle.

Our Vision has been amended following a public consultation held during the summer – which saw hundreds of residents give their views – and sets out six key themes surrounded by a Community Leadership approach. Each theme is supported by its own inter-linked priorities for action.

The six themes are:

- Pride in our area and services to residents
- Raising aspirations and creating opportunities
- Championing our local environment
- Working with partners to improve quality of life
- Promoting our heritage offer, attracting visitors and encouraging them to stay longer
- Financial sustainability and openness

Changes made from the original version include the addition of a sixth theme (promoting our heritage offer, attracting visitors and encouraging them to stay longer), and some changes to the supporting priorities.

Mark Stephenson, TDC Leader, said the new Our Vision meant the council's work could be focused on community wants and needs.

"I am grateful to everyone who took the time to feed into the development of our new Corporate Plan, including fellow councillors, the public, businesses and third sector

organisations too, and their views have really made a difference to the final document,” Cllr Stephenson said.

“With Our Vision now in place we can shape our work, policies and strategies to make sure we deliver for our residents and communities; whether that be getting the basics right, boosting jobs and tourism, and supporting clean and tidy communities.

“Like all local authorities we face a challenging financial picture, and, while better placed than many, tough decisions will still need to be taken; having Our Vision means we can make better informed choices and be upfront about them too.

“This is a truly ambitious vision, connecting the very major projects we have going on in our district – from the new garden community, to the Levelling Up funded initiatives, and Freeport East too.

“We cannot deliver all of this alone, which is why Community Leadership wraps around the whole of Our Vision and one of the themes is working with partners; together we can improve the lives of those living and working in our community.”

Council approves tax premium on second homes.

Second homes in Tendring face a premium on their council tax bill after councillors approved proposals to introduce the charge.

New legislation allows councils to put a premium on the council tax bill of homes which are occupied “periodically” – often second homes from 1 April 2025.

Tendring District Council (TDC) agreed at full council tonight (Tuesday, 28 November) to introduce the maximum premium of 100% from the 2025/26 financial year – meaning owners of second homes will pay double the council tax on the property.

Councillors also agreed to adopt from next financial year (2024/25) the maximum 100% premium on homes empty for one year – another change introduced by new legislation, which previously meant homes had to be empty for two years before a premium could be applied.

Meanwhile the council agreed to keep the existing council tax discount schemes, including relief for those in hardship, on low income, or care leavers.

Mark Stephenson, TDC Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance, said the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and premiums was an important balance to get right.

“Putting additional charges on empty homes encourages property owners to bring these buildings back into use, helping to tackle the housing need we face in Tendring and prevent sites falling derelict and becoming eyesores,” Cllr Stephenson said.

“Meanwhile premiums on second homes mean those who visit the Essex Sunshine Coast for only part of the year can support our local services year-round – and again encourages owners who do not use them to free up the property for local residents; perhaps particularly young people who may feel forced to leave the district.

“I am pleased we are also continuing to support the most vulnerable by providing relief on their council tax bill; including for those leaving care, which is a relatively recent addition to the policy.

“Council tax is hugely important as an income for us, allowing us to deliver services to our residents – this year at an average cost of just 52p per day for households – but it is important this is tempered with support for those who are struggling financially.”

The Government are looking to introduce some exemptions alongside the above new changes introduced by legislation, a likely example being for properties going through probate.

Empty homes face a 100% premium for the first five years they are vacant, after which the premium doubles until 10 years, and then becomes 300% for longer periods.

Next waste contract plans to keep fortnightly collections and recycle more.

Households will be able to recycle more, and keep fortnightly black bin collections, under plans for Tendring’s next waste service.

Tendring District Council’s (TDC) waste contract, currently held by Veolia, runs until 2026 but due to the size of the service work is already underway looking at the next contract.

In an update to full council tonight (Tuesday, 28 November), TDC Cabinet Member for Environment Mike Bush said the authority was intending to continue with fortnightly collections of residual – black bin – waste.

The council would also be looking to collect a wider range of recyclable material, in line with the government’s Simpler Recycling proposals published earlier this month.

“It is still a long process to design, procure and agree our next waste collection contract, but I wanted to set out our intentions now,” Cllr Bush said.

“Those intentions are to continue with fortnightly collections of black bag waste, and to look to collect more recycling than we currently do. This will be refined over the coming months and years, and particularly around recycling may change as national environmental policy is amended.

“Feedback given to us in the recent Corporate Plan consultation was clear that residents did not want a reduction in waste collections, and wanted us to explore collecting more materials for recycling – we have listened to that, and acted upon it.

“Clearly budgets are a key consideration when developing our new service. It is too early to suggest how much the new services will cost and we will not know that until we have undertaken a tender exercise; but I am committed to getting the best services for Tendring residents at the best price and maximising any government new burdens grants that might be available.”

Cllr Bush also confirmed TDC was looking to continue to outsource its waste collection contract.

Terry Barrett – District Councillor

District Report on Behalf of:

Terry Barrett, Matthew Bensilum & Carlo Guglielmi

12/12/2023