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THE LOCAL WELFARE SYSTEM IN DOVER, UNITED KINGDOM: CORE IDEAS

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
2. GENERAL VALUES.....	3
3. SECTORIAL VALUES	10
3.1. Regeneration (linking housing and unemployment).....	10
3.2. Child care	15
CONCLUSION	18
BIBLIOGRAPHY	20

INTRODUCTION

Dover District Council (DDC) is a local authority and one of twelve districts that make up the county of Kent, South East England. The town of Dover is its administrative centre, but there are two other towns within the district: Deal and Sandwich. The district also encompasses a large rural area made up of dozens of villages and hamlets. People living in the urban areas of the Dover district make up nearly 65% of the population but occupy only approximately 20% of the total land area. The remaining 35% of the population live in rural areas but occupy 80% of the land. Within this document the term ‘Dover’ refers to the whole area administered by DDC, not just Dover town centre. The total population of Dover was 80,786 in 2011, of which 54,478 residents were ‘economically active’.¹

The district has a coastline of 20 miles. Dover itself faces France across the narrowest part of the English Channel. The town is home of the Dover-Calais ferry through the Port of Dover and is the UK’s “Gateway to Europe”. Around 10,000 vehicles flow through the port daily.² The surrounding chalk cliffs are famously known as the “White Cliffs of Dover,” and the narrow sea passage nearby - the busiest shipping lane in the world - as the Straits of Dover. It is 320 km² in area. About 70 km² of the district are designated as part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The district is steeped in history and draws visitors from across the world to attractions such as Dover Castle.

This document presents a text analysis of the core values and orientations towards local welfare systems of the main political parties and key actors in Dover over the last ten years, especially with respect to housing and unemployment policies, often linked in Dover under the heading of ‘regeneration’. There is some analysis of childcare policies, but it is small because the Council does not have direct involvement in this policy field.

The official documents identified and then analysed concerned discussions held within the Council and by committees of the local council. Local press coverage of the three policy fields was also analysed, and information given by respondents who gave interviews is included. In analysing the texts the research team recognised that opposition politicians and individuals in the community may express exaggerated opinions in the knowledge that they will never be in a position to implement them. This report presents a preliminary interim analysis, which will be supplemented in the coming weeks with data collected through further individual interviews and focus groups.

Economic development

Unsurprisingly, the Port of Dover and the services associated with the port are major employers. Also within the boundaries of DDC lie three former collieries that all ceased operation by 1989 as a result of the radical restructuring of the UK coal industry, namely, Tilmanstone, Betteshanger and Snowdown. Historically there was little other major industrial investment in east Kent. Large-scale coal mining activities were therefore a unique industrial operation in this part of the southeast and the primary activity of coal extraction did not lead to subsequent investment in related industries such as steel manufacturing. The majority of Kent coal was transported away from the county for use in power stations in east London, the east Midlands and Humberside. On closure these three

¹ ONS (2013). Census 2011 Table QS601EW - Economic activity, Office for National Statistics.

² DDC (2007). Memorandum by Dover District Council (FT 22). House of Commons Select Committee on Transport Written Evidence. Available from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmselect/cmtran/249/249we25.htm>

mines employed approximately 2,500 miners and management staff, although numbers of staff had gradually dwindled from a peak of nearly 15,000 in the 1940s and 1950s.³ The results of these closures have been both physical through degradation of land, as well as social through unemployment, lower educational attainment, and health problems. Many community representatives also pointed out the critical importance of restoring dignity, confidence, aspiration, and a sense of hope to communities which had “had their heart ripped out.”

There was a sudden increase in male unemployment in east Kent in the late 1980s to about 15% unemployment in Dover.⁴ However, other emerging employment opportunities, such as the construction of the Channel Tunnel, meant that with the benefit of local retraining programmes, persistent long-term unemployment in east Kent could be partially addressed. By the mid 1990s unemployment in Dover had fallen to around 10%. Research indicated that former miners who were relatively young and able to secure new employment opportunities had been relatively successful (although often needed to commute outside the local area) but a significant proportion of the older unemployed had been without work for several years.⁵ Further, a broad strategy for social, community and economic renewal has been needed because merely focussing on outputs of “brownfield land recovered” and “new jobs created” could have appeared remote or even irrelevant to the local communities themselves. It was important to create a new sense of local confidence that those individuals in positions of authority and decision-making could be directly influenced to incorporate community views and opinions and were not simply “the establishment.”

There are socio-economic contrasts between neighbourhoods in Dover. The deprivation of local areas known as wards is measured by Kent County Council (KCC) using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Out of 21 wards in Dover, 6 are among the 20 per cent most deprived in Kent and one falls into the 20 per cent least deprived wards in Kent.⁶ Sandwich and Walmer tend to be considered more desirable addresses than the urban centre of

³ South East England Development Agency (2003).Memorandum by The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) (COA 25). House of Commons Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmodpm/1169/1169we26.htm>

⁴ South East England Development Agency (2003).Memorandum by The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) (COA 25). House of Commons Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmodpm/1169/1169we26.htm>

⁵ South East England Development Agency (2003).Memorandum by The South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) (COA 25). House of Commons Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmodpm/1169/1169we26.htm>

⁶ KCC (2010). Indices of Deprivation 2010: Ward level summaries for Kent, Kent County Council Research & Evaluation Statistical Bulletin. Available from:

<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/facts-and-figures/Deprivation/id2010-kent-ward-level.pdf>

Dover town or the former coalmining villages. DDC sees pockets of deprivation as a problem that needs to be addressed.⁷

Local press in Dover

Dover has two paid-for newspapers, the *Dover Express* (published by Kent Regional News and Media) and the *Dover Mercury* (published by the KM Group). The *Dover Express* and the *Deal and Sandwich Express* are weeklies that in July - December 2012 had a joint average total circulation of 6,294 per issue.⁸ The *East Kent Mercury* (Dover and Deal editions) had a total average circulation of 10,425 in the same time period.⁹ Some UK regional papers provide national and international news coverage. However the Dover local papers only report stories with a local angle. Free newspapers for the town include the *Dover and Deal Extra*, part of the KM Group; and *yourdover*, part of KOS Media. Countywide papers include the *Kent Messenger*, *Kent on Saturday*, *Kent on Sunday*, and the *Kent and Sussex Courier*. The websites and digital channels of paid-for and free newspapers are now important news outlets (there are 1,100 local newspapers but as many as 1,600 associated websites in the UK).¹⁰ However these could not be systematically analysed for this study because of the absence of an archive.

The newspapers in Dover do not report from any particular party political perspective. Most of the media coverage of the policy fields considered in this document reported on the views of local politicians, campaigners and stakeholders, or was clearly based on a press notice from the national government. Therefore this content analysis does not uncover the values and positions of the newspaper editors, but it does shed light on the views of the key actors.

2. GENERAL VALUES

A few years ago the casual observer's image of Dover might have been that, in common with many other coastal and former coalmining areas, it was run down and struggling economically. Back in 2006 the Council also identified that "low morale and negative attitudes are a major issue in Dover."¹¹ Since Dover is a port of entry into the UK there was also a public perception in the past that community relations between settled residents and large numbers of new migrants, especially asylum seekers from Eastern Europe, were tense. The MP for Dover at the time stated in 1999 that:

Problems of social tension have also arisen in the community -- probably the worst problems that we have experienced. They have

⁷ Dover Pride (2006). Memorandum by Dover Pride (CT 29). House of Commons Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmodpm/1023/1023we30.htm>

⁸ ABC (2013). Regional Publications Circulation Certificate. Available from: <http://www.abc.org.uk/Certificates/18317211.pdf>

⁹ ABC (2013). Regional Publications Circulation Certificate. Available from: <http://www.abc.org.uk/Certificates/18348682.pdf>

¹⁰ The Newspaper Society (2013). Available from: <http://www.newspapersoc.org.uk/>

¹¹ Dover Pride (2006). Memorandum by Dover Pride (CT 29). House of Commons Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmodpm/1023/1023we30.htm>

*been caused in part by a small number of extremists --one cannot call them anything other than fascists --from the British National party and the National Front, who have marched in the streets of Dover, held demonstrations, tried, but, thank goodness, not very successfully, to recruit local people and distributed vile literature ... Local people perceive that most of the asylum seekers with whom they have come into contact are not genuinely fleeing oppression and persecution. There are very special reasons for that perception, arising from their recent experience.*¹²

In 2006 the Council identified the general issues facing Dover then as “high levels of deprivation, topographical issues, lack of investment opportunities.”¹³ Their diagnosis at that time was that “the town is suffering from lack of investment that has led to the high levels of deprivation within its urban ward.” Other social concerns have included, and continue to include health, partly because the long-term health problems encountered by former miners are well known and Dover has been no exception to this.

The Council’s response has been to make tackling these “the priority of the Council in terms of major projects, investment and partnership working.”¹⁴ The key orientations and values to note in this statement are *major* and *partnership*. The Council’s regeneration strategy has been extremely successful at improving the economy, the infrastructure and the potential of Dover. Recent high profile events hosted by Dover such as the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay and the Open Golf Championship have also helped to raise aspirations and improve the image of what Dover has to offer to residents, businesses and tourists.

The key word used by officials and politicians in Dover in describing their general values and policy orientation is *regeneration*. A drive for regeneration has been the main focus of the local ‘welfare system’ and is the first strategic priority of the Council’s *Corporate Plan*.¹⁵ The aim is not only to *physically* regenerate the area, but also to ensure all residents access *economic* benefits. In the concept of ‘regeneration’ housing and employment opportunities are intricately linked. Indeed, what characterises the underlying dominant approach in Dover is that plans in both these policy fields need to be addressed together. Housing and employment policy are described in the same section of this document, as it is impossible to separate out the two.

The Council is concerned about deprived individuals. Its *Annual Monitoring Report 2010-2011* showed there had been an almost doubling in the number of areas that are within the 20% most disadvantaged in England. It was felt by the Council that: “The cause and impacts of the increase in the number of most disadvantaged areas in the District needs to

¹² Prosser, Gwyn, Speech to the House of Commons, 16 June 1999, Parliamentary debates, Commons, col. 436.

¹³ Dover Pride (2006). Memorandum by Dover Pride (CT 29). House of Commons Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmodpm/1023/1023we30.htm>

¹⁴ Dover Pride (2006). Memorandum by Dover Pride (CT 29). House of Commons Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmodpm/1023/1023we30.htm>

¹⁵ DDC (2012). Corporate Plan 2012-2016. Available from: <http://www.dover.gov.uk/Corporate-Information/PDF/CorporatePlan2012-2016.pdf>

be investigated further.”¹⁶ However, the overall strategy has been to bring economic growth to Dover, rather than expanding support to individuals with services and financial assistance beyond statutory and national government services. The overall political aim is to attract business, new residents, and tourists to the area. The underlying values have been summed up as follows:

*Everyone (communities, public services, local businesses and individuals) has been affected by the national economic downturn. It is therefore important to focus on economic recovery and growth and continue attracting and enabling inward investment to the district, to support the creation of local jobs, and aim to keep wealth locally to see our district grow and thrive.*¹⁷

Council governance

DDC has a two-tier system of local government. Kent County Council (KCC) is the upper tier local authority covering the DDC area. KCC is responsible for services including waste management, certain schools, libraries, social services and child protection, transport, strategic planning, consumer protection, police and fire services. There are several district councils within Kent and they are responsible for services such as housing, waste collection, council tax collection, local planning, licensing, cemeteries and crematoria. These councils are elected in separate elections.

In terms of political make-up, DDC is Conservative controlled (at the time of writing). The district is divided into 21 electoral wards, and there are 45 serving councillors. 26 are Conservative Party representatives and 18 are Labour Party representatives. It has two Members of Parliament, both Conservatives, and both with solid electoral majorities. However the Dover Parliamentary seat has in the past been a swing (marginal) seat. The Council’s system of government is based on a Leader and Executive model, commonly referred to as a ‘cabinet’ model. The Leader of the Council is elected for a period of four years and has powers to determine who can make decisions. The Cabinet is responsible for the strategic thinking and decisions that steer how the council is run. It meets once a month and consists of seven councillors who are appointed by the Leader and who are currently all drawn from the Conservative Party. Each member of the Cabinet has responsibility for one or more areas of Council work (known as ‘portfolios’), such as environment, transport, etc. The Cabinet’s role is to make decisions on day-to-day matters, consistent with the Council’s overall policies and budget.

The Council has agreed a Constitution which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.¹⁸ Some of these processes are required by law, while others were chosen by the council. The Council has Overview and Scrutiny Committees which are composed of councillors who are not on the Executive Committee and the committees are required to reflect the respective sizes of the political groups on the Council. Some observers believe that this arrangement lends itself less to this outright opposition confrontation and more to cross-party partnership working.

¹⁶ DDC. Agenda Item No 13. Dover District Annual Monitoring Report. Meeting and Date: Cabinet - 12 February 2012 Report of Mike Dawson, Director of Regeneration and Development.

¹⁷ DDC (2012). Corporate Plan 2012-2016. Available from:
<http://www.dover.gov.uk/Corporate-Information/PDF/CorporatePlan2012-2016.pdf>

¹⁸ DDC (2012). Constitution of the Council. Available from:
<http://www.dover.gov.uk/Corporate-Information/files/Constitution.pdf>

Local political parties in Dover

Tables 1 and 2 summarise the political make-up of Dover, which has swung different ways over the last ten years. Voter turnout is often quite low. For example, it was 45% in the DDC election held on 9 May 2011.¹⁹

Table 1: Political control of Dover District Council, 1995-present

Party in control	Dates
Labour	1995 - 1999
No overall control (hung)	1999 - 2007
Conservative	2007 - present

Table 2: Dover Parliamentary Constituency general election results, 1997-2010

	2010	2005	2001	1997
Conservative %	44.0	35.0	37.2	33
Labour %	33.5	45.3	48.8	54
Liberal Democrat %	15.8	15.9	11.4	8
BNP %	2.1			
UKIP %	3.5	2.6	2.5	
English Democrat %	0.4			
Majority (votes)	5,274	4,941	5,199	11,739

BNP = British National Party; UKIP = United Kingdom Independence Party

The policies of the main political parties in Dover have often mirrored their party's policies at a national level and not had a particularly local flavour. The national picture influences what happens in local elections, unless there are really major local issues. For Dover these local issues have been redundancies by local employer Pfizer, the future of the port and plans for large-scale housing development. Where candidates live in the area for which they are standing, their leaflets highlight their local roots, as well as their personal qualities.

Taking as just one example the manifestos of the local parties in May 2013, the website of the Dover & Deal Labour Party was stating its core values in these terms:

The Labour Party believes in communities. And that means we care about the hundreds of thousands who will loose [sic] their jobs due to catastrophic Tory/Liberal Government cuts. We care about those who will lose their homes dues to increases in rents and cuts in benefits. We care about those, particularly the elderly and children, who will slip into poverty under these plans which are based on unfairness and division.²⁰

This is clearly expressing concerns about developments that are having an impact throughout England. At the same time local issues they were campaigning on were:

¹⁹ UKpolitics.org.uk. Election results - Dover District Council 2011 Available from: <http://www.ukpolitics.org.uk/node/1875>

²⁰ Dover and Deal Labour Party (2013). Working hard for Dover & Deal. Available from: <http://doverdeal-labour.org.uk/>

- Jobs not unemployment for local residents.
- Stop the run-down of Buckland Hospital.
- Keep the Port Public - stop the sell-off.
- St James' development - now 10 years overdue.
- Permanent high-speed train link to Deal.
- Affordable homes for our children, not more executive properties.²¹

The website of the Dover and Deal Conservative Association at the same time illustrated the tendency to campaign on national issues at a local level to an even greater extent. Its website contained no Dover-specific proposals, but posted a speech by the Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron, with a core value of being in support of 'Hardworking People'.

The three issues highlighted were, firstly, that local councils should have real power and the local vote should decide who is running councils and the services all local citizens rely on. This is part of a wider, national, 'localism' agenda. Secondly, that Conservative councils will continue to charge lower levels of council tax (a local property tax) than Labour or Liberal Democrats 'because during these tough times we want to be on the side of hardworking families'. Further, 'they are also cutting costs in the back office so money can be spent on protecting the frontline services local people rely on'. The third strand to their local manifesto according to their website - 'fighting for the future of our country' - is most clearly about national issues. It draws attention to achievements in Parliament on national issues, such as the deficit, migration, income tax and social security.²² When local Conservative politicians have campaigned on mainly local issues it has often been when the party nationally is out of favour and they wish to distance themselves from it somewhat.

In an earlier election in 2011, the local Conservatives did, however, campaign on the local angle to the national agenda of austerity cuts, namely that they had a record of making savings and had frozen the council tax (a local property tax) in 2011/2012, achieved £2.4 million of savings, a 14.8% reduction with no frontline service reductions.²³ They also highlighted the achievement of East Kent Housing, which is one of the innovations discussed further in WP5.

Independent candidates are uncommon because candidates usually need the support of local party activists to mount a campaign. An exception is single-issue parties. An instance of this was Sholden Action Group, which put forward candidates for parish, town and district council elections in May 2011. A central part of the action group's manifesto was aiming to stop 500 new homes being built.²⁴

Once elected, the local Dover politicians have often had constructive cross-party working relationships. Even when Conservative-controlled (such as at the time of writing) there has been quite a strong Labour presence in opposition. In the policy areas that are the subject of this study, by and large local parties have shared common ground in agreeing what the social and economic problems are and have even pulled together in devising and implementing policy solutions, with differences mainly concerning details of the

²¹ Dover and Deal Labour Party (2013). Working hard for Dover & Deal. Available from: <http://doverdeal-labour.org.uk/>

²² Dover and Deal Conservative Association (2013). For Hardworking People. Available from: <http://www.doverconservatives.com/>

²³ Watkins, Paul (2011). Local elections 2011: The battle for Dover. Available from : <http://conservativehome.blogs.com/localgovernment/2011/03/local-elections-2011-the-battle-for-dover.html>

²⁴ East Kent Mercury, March 17, 2011, Action group candidates fight election

appropriate response. Thus, a feature of local politics in Dover has been the *lack of conflict* and relative unimportance of the political affiliation of local politicians to their general values and political tendencies. This may be derived from the lack of power that a small local authority in England, such as Dover, possesses. Much 'local' policy is nationally driven, even if local authorities are responsible for its delivery. Working together is also eased by the 'moderate' orientation of many of the local politicians within their respective party umbrellas.

Conflict has mainly arisen between certain groups of residents and the Council, especially when the process of communicating policy proposals to local people has not gone smoothly. Nevertheless, because of the influence of the national scene, in this document the values and discourses of the local MPs will be highlighted as well as the politics of the Council.

The Council's Vision

The *Corporate Plan* is the Council's main strategic document, providing a framework for the delivery of services. It provides the context for their other strategies and plans. The current *Corporate Plan* recognises the Council's priorities of delivery, growth and investment working in an environment of on-going financial constraints, the Big Society agenda and the need for potential alternative (to Council) service delivery. The Council's vision is for Dover to be: "A high-speed district of growth, enterprise and opportunity."

The following strategic priorities have been identified by the Council to achieve the vision:

1. Enabling and supporting growth of the economy and opportunity for investment and jobs;
2. Facilitating strong communities with a sense of place and identity;
3. Serving our communities effectively;
4. An effective and efficient Council.²⁵

Whilst regeneration funding through bodies such as SEEDA and English Partnerships has at various times been provided by government, Dover politicians have understood that regeneration is an aspiration that has to be driven forward locally, rather than just at national level. This is because at national level the overall economic prosperity of the South East of England can mean that pockets of deprivation, including East Kent, are lost in the statistics and therefore are not seen as a priority. Consequently the Council's activities have included, taking just one example, membership of The Coalfield Community Campaign to lobby national government and other bodies to bid for funds and other support.

The local mixed economy of welfare

The conclusion of a recent address given by the Leader of the Council Cllr Paul Watkins to members of the Cabinet was that "Decisions about the most effective use of resources, targeting the most needed areas and responding to residents' aspirations continues to be a challenging agenda."²⁶ The Council is facing a changing local government environment with new partnerships and alternative ways of working and a shift from councils directly delivering a multitude of services to an environment of *enabling* others, where appropriate, to deliver services for them. These changes will involve residents,

²⁵ DDC (2012). Corporate Plan 2012-2016. Available from:

<http://www.dover.gov.uk/Corporate-Information/PDF/CorporatePlan2012-2016.pdf>

²⁶ East Kent Mercury, July 12, 2012, No money, so it's over to you...

communities and the council working together to identify suitable and sustainable solutions. Cllr Watkins said:

*The government's spending plans require public sector organisations to consider changes to the way that local services are delivered ... Over the next few years, we are facing a changing local government environment with new partnerships and alternative ways of working and a shift from councils directly delivering a multitude of services.*²⁷

The Council's 2008-2020 *Corporate Plan* stated that role of the Council in respect of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) would seek to deliver services in different ways, including devolving services to the VCS and others.²⁸ It stated: "We have been working closely with partners to support, enable and encourage development and enterprise."²⁹ Examples include the Council's work with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Hadlow College to develop the Betteshanger Colliery and Fowlmead Country Park sites as a 'Sustainable Futures Campus,' a mixed use educational, employment and tourism facility, to secure the long-term future of the area, and also its work with partners to enable and facilitate a centre of excellence for the marine skills sector.³⁰

'Partnership working' has more than one definition in the context of the Council's relationship with the VCS. The nature of the relationship depends on how the Council works with the organisation, such as whether it was the commissioner of a service or providing support and expertise to another group. This way of working raises a number of issues. One potential risk is that of an alternative provider defaulting on service delivery. The Council has had to develop robust governance processes to guard against this risk.

The support the Council offers to the VCS for activities other than funding the provision of services is primarily administrative support to organisations, using the expertise developed by the authority in delivering its own projects. This included assisting in the development of constitutions for voluntary and community groups, assisting in the completion of funding applications and attending meetings. The Council has also taken steps to involve the VCS, as it was a partner in the Dover and District Compact, which represented local groups and public bodies working together to achieve objectives for the local community.³¹ The Compact provided the Council with a greater understanding of how the sector worked and provided a focus for corporate strategic awareness in involving the community and voluntary sector.³²

²⁷ East Kent Mercury, July 12, 2012, No money, so it's over to you...

²⁸ DDC (2010). Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee held on Wednesday 17 November 2010 at the Council Offices, Whitfield at 6.00 pm.

²⁹ DDC (2012). Corporate Plan 2012-2016. Available from:
<http://www.dover.gov.uk/Corporate-Information/PDF/CorporatePlan2012-2016.pdf>

³⁰ DDC (2012). Corporate Plan 2012-2016. Available from:
<http://www.dover.gov.uk/Corporate-Information/PDF/CorporatePlan2012-2016.pdf>

³¹ DDC (2010). Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee held on Wednesday 17 November 2010 at the Council Offices, Whitfield at 6.00 pm.

³² DDC (2010). Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee held on Wednesday 17 November 2010 at the Council Offices, Whitfield on at 6.00 pm.

3. SECTORIAL VALUES

3.1. Regeneration (linking housing and unemployment)

The key word used by officials and politicians in Dover in describing their general values and policy orientation is *regeneration*. Housing and employment opportunities are intricately linked in the concept of regeneration. Indeed, what characterises the underlying values in Dover is that plans in both these policy fields need to be addressed together. For this reason housing and employment policy are described in together the same section of this document.

The *Corporate Plan* sets out a clear commitment to regeneration. Strategic Priority number 1 is focused on:

*Enabling and supporting growth of the economy and opportunity for investment and jobs recognising that it is therefore important to focus on economic recovery and growth and continue attracting and enabling inward investment to the district, to support the creation of local jobs, and aim to keep wealth locally to see our district grow and thrive.*³³

There was hardly any local press coverage of unemployment up until 2008, but following the financial crisis the number of articles published about the subject increased enormously. There was virtually no reporting of policies and plans to assist unemployed people before 2010. The portrayal of unemployed people has been sympathetic, describing them as ‘desperately searching for a job’, ‘fighting to get back to work’ and their situation as a symptom of ‘tough times’, for example, even while some of the national papers have taken a position against ‘skivers’.³⁴

The Council’s approach towards unemployment is to draw new private businesses to the area. They want to see diversification as “reliance on the marine sector has, particularly in the recent past, shown the vulnerability of the local economy e.g. Hoverspeed, P&O, problems in France, particularly with strikes and problems with the closure of berths.”³⁵ This refers to the ending of some passenger ferries operations. The ways they hope to achieve higher numbers of local jobs include: (1) improving transport infrastructure; (2) ensuring there is a ready stock of attractive housing; (3) improving the quality of education and training provision. The first two of these three aims will be discussed below, as there has already been much policy development in these fields.

³³ Urban Renewal - Proposals For The Development Of New Housing On Council Owned Land. Meeting and Date: Special Cabinet - 1 October 2012; Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee - 2 October 2012 Extraordinary Council - 3 October 2012; Report of Roger Walton, Director of Environment and Corporate Assets.

³⁴ Kentish Express, October 20, 2011, East Kent bears brunt of job losses; Dover Express, May 5, 2011, Village that has a jobless generation; Dover Express, February 3, 2011, Fighting to get back to work

³⁵ Dover Pride (2006). Memorandum by Dover Pride (CT 29). House of Commons Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmodpm/1023/1023we30.htm>

Transport infrastructure

One problem identified by the Council was the “remote location of Dover with difficult access impacting on property values and development potential.”³⁶ The Council worked extremely hard to bring a high-speed rail link to central London to Dover. It is hoped that employers might relocate to Dover, which is now less than an hour away from London. At the same time, the high-speed train enables local residents to easily commute for work, whilst spending their income in the local economy. A further plan in the pipeline is to improve the rail station by, for example, providing car parking spaces that commuting station users need. Road links have also been improved. The Dover MP supports this view. In the past he has referred to:

*the disgraceful transport links that we have to put up with. We need to get the fast line put in from Sandwich and Deal through to London, and we need Manston and the A256 corridor to be developed. That would enable us to have more jobs and more money, and would provide more effective business options for the people of Dover, Deal, south and north Thanet, and east Kent as a whole.*³⁷

Kent County Council (KCC) also emphasised the need for the rail service to support economic growth in a part of Kent with some of the highest unemployment levels.³⁸ KCC stated that extra high speed trains “should encourage access to London employment and education opportunities for residents from east Kent, and also the location by businesses in this part of Kent bringing new local employment opportunities.”³⁹ In other words, there would be a two-way effect of enabling locals to travel out of the immediate area for work, but also hopes that businesses would re-locate and commuters would travel into the area. Local business and the group Trains4Deal also supported the plans, in particular how they might draw business to the former Pfizer site.⁴⁰ Public concerns, such as they were, were that commuters would be priced off the railways as ticket prices have seen one above-inflation hike after another.⁴¹

Housing growth

The Council aims to support economic growth and prosperity through carefully managed housing growth. The concept underlying housing development policy is that housing stock for new residents needs to be built first and relocation of employers to the area will follow. This view is based partly on the experience learned when McLaren, a sports car designer and manufacturer, was very interested in moving to a site in Dover but pulled out partly because the housing and other local facilities did not meet the expectations of their employees. As the Council put it: “housing growth could help shift, diversify and balance the character of the town and attract new investment and visitor expenditure.”⁴² Other

³⁶ Dover Pride (2006). Memorandum by Dover Pride (CT 21). House of Commons Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmodpm/1023/1023we22.htm>

³⁷ Elphicke, Charlie, Speech to the House of Commons, 7 March 2011, Parliamentary debates, Commons, col. 749.

³⁸ East Kent Mercury, September 6, 2012, Strong backing for full high speed train services

³⁹ East Kent Mercury, September 6, 2012, Strong backing for full high speed train services

⁴⁰ East Kent Mercury, September 6, 2012, Strong backing for full high speed train services

⁴¹ Dover Express, December 6, 2012, Rail users suffer as season tickets soar

⁴² Dover Pride (2006). Memorandum by Dover Pride (CT 21). House of Commons Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government

partner organisations also believe “housing growth could help to shift, diversify and balance the character of the town and attract new investment and visitor expenditure.”⁴³ The Council’s strategy involves not only overall housing growth, but Strategic Priority number 2 in the *Corporate Plan* is focused on “Facilitating strong communities with a sense of place and identity” and commits the Council that: “Through the Housing Strategy we will enable housing growth and the delivery of more affordable homes, as well as improving the condition of existing homes, addressing inequality, and enabling vulnerable people access to quality housing to live independently.”⁴⁴

Thus, the Council’s strategic plans, “whilst clearly focused on the economic regeneration of the District recognise the requirement to improve the quality and affordability of housing within the District.”⁴⁵ Future housing priorities in the district also include: reducing the number of long term empty homes; increasing the number of decent homes for vulnerable households; and developing a neighbourhood renewal policy to improve areas containing poor housing. The Council recognises that the availability of social housing is limited and that one of the policy aims should be to make best use of the social housing stock, while ensuring that homes are allocated in a fair and transparent way.⁴⁶ The *Housing Strategy 2010 -2015* notes that there are a many housing issues which the Council will need to address over the next five years:

- Delivering overall housing growth to support regeneration and economic development objectives within safe, sustainable and inclusive new communities.
- Meeting the need for affordable housing.
- Delivering good quality market housing and affordable housing at a time when the future direction of the economy, housing market and public investment remains uncertain.
- Responding to the climate change agenda.
- Improving the particularly poor housing conditions in the private sector (especially Dover town) and tackling fuel poverty.
- Making best use of the housing stock including bringing empty homes back into use.
- Addressing the housing needs of a growing population of older households. By 2026, it is expected that those aged 65-84 will increase by 55.7% and those aged over 85 by 54%.

and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmmodpm/1023/1023we22.htm>

⁴³ Dover Pride (2006). Memorandum by Dover Pride (CT 21). House of Commons Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmselect/cmmodpm/1023/1023we22.htm>

⁴⁴ Urban Renewal - Proposals For The Development Of New Housing On Council Owned Land. Meeting and Date: Special Cabinet - 1 October 2012; Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee - 2 October 2012 Extraordinary Council - 3 October 2012; Report of Roger Walton, Director of Environment and Corporate Assets.

⁴⁵ Urban Renewal - Proposals For The Development Of New Housing On Council Owned Land. Meeting and Date: Special Cabinet - 1 October 2012; Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee - 2 October 2012 Extraordinary Council - 3 October 2012; Report of Roger Walton, Director of Environment and Corporate Assets.

⁴⁶ DDC. Agenda Item 12. Revised allocations policy for social rented housing - draft for consultation. Meeting and Date: Cabinet - 9 January 2012; Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee - 11 January 2012. Report by Mike Davis, Director of Finance, Housing and Community.

- Addressing housing causes of social and health inequality and ensuring that vulnerable people are able to access good quality housing and housing services.
- Continuing to address the problem of homelessness and especially youth homelessness.⁴⁷

Council relationships with the private sector and the VCS

The Council works in partnership with the private sector to provide support where it can. The Council has been keen to support the private sector, as this is the only way that the national deficit can be reduced and local jobs increased.⁴⁸ For example, the Council worked hard to bring about the Hadlow College campus development and a marine skills training centre. The Council welcomed the proposals by Dover Harbour Board for the development of a Terminal 2. In reference to the coalfields, “The council is committed to working with partner organisations to ensure that these projects are successful and looks to consult with a variety of organisations to remedy outstanding problems in these communities.”⁴⁹ Local civic, community and business leadership interests have come together in groups such as Dover Pride Regeneration Partnership. Moreover community forums and trusts have been set up to provide mechanisms for community consultations for projects in the former coalfields in particular. The aim was to find out more fully what sorts of projects should be run and to keep the communities updated with the progress towards these aims.

Debates, conflicts and coalitions

There has been agreement by all, certainly since 2008, that unemployment a problem, yet the Council is somewhat limited in the financial support it can give. The conflicts, such as they have been, are outlined in what follows.

In the past a discourse dominating debates was objections to house building from those sceptical that employment would follow. For example Cllr Wright from Aylesham Ward objected in 2003 to proposals for that area on the grounds that: “The building of at least 1,000 houses will also lead to a mass daily migration of people, where local employment opportunities are neither sustainable nor capable of producing the wide variety of businesses.”⁵⁰ Another public concern was over proposals for Sholden regarding whether there was a market for the new houses proposed, given the number of 2,000 empty houses in the DDC area.⁵¹ Similarly of a large development planned for Whitfield, a cause for the criticism by Dover's Labour group was that the houses would be difficult to sell because of

⁴⁷ Urban Renewal - Proposals For The Development Of New Housing On Council Owned Land. Meeting and Date: Special Cabinet - 1 October 2012; Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee - 2 October 2012 Extraordinary Council - 3 October 2012; Report of Roger Walton, Director of Environment and Corporate Assets.

⁴⁸ Dover Express, September 16, 2010, Shop vacancy rate is decreasing in centre

⁴⁹ DDC (2007). Memorandum by Dover District Council (COA 39) to Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmodpm/1169/1169we43.htm>

⁵⁰ Knight, Cllr Lawrence (2003). Memorandum by Councillor Lawrence Knight, Aylesham Ward, Dover District Council (COA 48) to Select Committee on Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Written Evidence. Available from:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200203/cmselect/cmodpm/1169/1169we53.htm>

⁵¹ East Kent Mercury, January 19, 2012, Green matters

plummeting property prices.⁵² Sholden Action Group campaigners voiced fears of a lack of jobs for the new home owners and fears the homes would stay empty, as did Charlie Elphicke MP: “Houses should be demand led - create the jobs, get people to want to live here and then build what we need. I cannot see the case for building houses on a speculative basis.”⁵³ This issue has also been raised in relation to other developments by town and parish councillors.⁵⁴

Insofar as housing and more broadly development is a debated policy field and reaches the headlines in the local media these days the issues are firstly the extent to which new developments will include ‘affordable housing’ (particular products outside the main housing market) and secondly how the contribution the developer will make to infrastructure and facilities will be distributed.

First, tension has arisen when local residents want to see a certain proportion of affordable housing on the proposed new development site that they hope would be allocated with priority to people from the immediate vicinity, but the developer argues that the project overall is not economically viable on that basis because of the individual site and market conditions. For example, residents and Whitfield Parish Council raised concerns about the lack of affordable housing at Light Hill.⁵⁵ However the developer stated that the proposed development would not be economically viable should any amount of affordable housing be required to be delivered with the development. The Council has been accused of wanting to press ahead with developments ‘at any price.’

Second, developers provide funds for facilities such as new schools, medical practices, leisure centres and road improvements. There can be conflict and disagreement between local people with regard to how they would like to see that money spent, especially if the improvements are not located in the very immediate vicinity. The amount developers provide for social housing or infrastructure is not always enough to calm local opponents.

Another area of conflict is that public objections to developments are often around ecological and archaeological issues. For example, objectors to development in the village of St. Margarets claimed the plans would destroy green belt (a ring of countryside where urbanisation will be resisted).⁵⁶ The objections of some campaigners, such as environmental group Deal With It, against two housing developments at Sholden revolved around concerns about building on Grade I agricultural land that they argued was needed for crops.⁵⁷ The local MP, Charlie Elphicke, favoured development of brownfield land (abandoned industrial and commercial facilities) first.⁵⁸ He said: “Once our green fields and open spaces are gone, they are gone forever. We need to protect and conserve the best of what we have.”⁵⁹ An example of objection on archaeological grounds was that of the Dover Society, a civic organisation that came out strongly against any housing, retail or industrial development on Dover’s Western Heights, a site designated as an ancient

⁵² Dover Express, April 14, 2011, Development gets a green light despite reservations

⁵³ East Kent Mercury, March 17, 2011, Action group candidates fight election; Dover Express, May 12, 2011, Top priorities for my work in Parliament

⁵⁴ East Kent Mercury December 9, 2010, Former mayor questions why new homes are needed

⁵⁵ Dover Express, August 4, 2011, Plan for 1,400 village homes wins approval

⁵⁶ Dover Express, October 8, 2009, Why seafront revamp is bad idea

⁵⁷ East Kent Mercury, January 19, 2012, Green matters; East Kent Mercury, January 20, 2011, Bundles of protests make our point over new homes; East Kent Mercury, December 16, 2010, Town council objects to hundreds of new homes

⁵⁸ Dover Express, May 12, 2011, Top priorities for my work in Parliament

⁵⁹ Dover Express, May 12, 2011, Top priorities for my work in Parliament

monument.⁶⁰ Sholden Action Group campaigners and the Town Council said that a development of such character and size as proposed would seriously harm the area's character and tranquillity.⁶¹ One channel for protest was letter writing: a petition collected 1,744 signatures from members of the public opposed to it.⁶²

However the obstacles to moving forward with regeneration plans have not, by and large, been political disagreements but delays to property developers, business and other private sector partners in starting construction. This can occur when a developer has problems financing a housing scheme that has been agreed by the Council. Faced with a stagnant market, property developers have chosen to sit on land instead of building houses they may struggle to sell. A Council meeting last year resolved that: "consideration [be] given to what Inward Investment/Regeneration Delivery actions could be taken to help ensure that the most significant development schemes, once permitted, are implemented."⁶³ But a big and long-standing problem is the British planning system. Any landowner wishing to build so much as a particularly high garden fence must apply to the local authority for permission.

3.2. Child care

There were 6,259 children aged 0-4 in Dover in 2011, according to the Census. There are different kinds of pre-school childcare provisions in Dover and different rationales behind the emergence of these different types of services. In summary, these are:

Child care type	Service setting	Age group	Typical hours	Government registered?
Crèches	Shopping and leisure centres	0-8 years	9am - 3.30pm	Ofsted registered
Parent and toddler groups	Centre based Run by parents	0-5 years	Normally 1-2 hours.	Not Ofsted registered
Pre-schools and playgroups	Church halls or community centres	2-5 years	Mostly term time only. Sessions from 2 1/2 to 4 hours every day or several days a week	Ofsted registered
Day nurseries	Centre based	0-5 years	8am - 6pm	Ofsted registered
Out of school or kids' clubs	School premises or centre based	4 - 14 years, up to 16 if special needs	8am for breakfast clubs; 3.30pm to 6pm for after school clubs; 8.30am to 6pm for holiday clubs	Ofsted registered, if they care for children under 8 years
Childminders	In childminder's own home	Any age group	Flexible, but the majority work between 8am - 6pm	Ofsted registered, if they care for children under 8 years
Nannies	In the family home	Any age group	Flexible. Can live in or work part-time	Not Ofsted registered

In England child care provision is a matter for local government at *county* (not city or district) level. The *Childcare Act 2006* sets out the role county councils should play as

⁶⁰ East Kent Mercury, December 16, 2010, 'No shops or homes on Heights'

⁶¹ East Kent Mercury, March 17, 2011, Action group candidates fight election; East Kent Mercury, December 16, 2010, Town council objects to hundreds of new homes

⁶² East Kent Mercury, January 20, 2011, Bundles of protests make our point over new homes

⁶³ DDC (2012). Minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Wednesday 22 February 2012 at 6.00 pm.

strategic leaders in facilitating the childcare market. It focuses in particular on sufficient, sustainable and flexible childcare that is responsive to parents’ needs. County councils have the duty of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the provision of childcare (whether or not by them) is sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in their area in order to enable them to:

- a) take up, or remain in, work, or
- b) undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.

They also have a duty to secure free early years provision for pre-school children of a prescribed age.

The *Childcare Act* gives county councils a key role in shaping the childcare market in their area working with providers from the private, voluntary, independent and maintained sectors. Where there are gaps in the market and, in consultation with partners, the county council will plan how to support the market to address them. At the time of the 2012 KCC *Childcare Sufficiency Assessment*, there were 2,474 3 and 4 year olds, and 3,578 early education places.⁶⁴ The table below shows the amount of child care/pre-school provision in Dover.

Table 3 Child care supply in Dover

Type of provision	Number of providers	Number of places
After school club	11	484
Breakfast club	10	394
Childminders	71	350
Full day care	27	1,171
Holiday playscheme	10	524
Sessional pre-school	22	615

Source: KCC (2012). Childcare Sufficiency Assessment

The supply of childcare in Dover has been described as ‘relatively sufficient’. The main shortage is for full day care for children aged under 5. In the local private market for childcare there is a very large gap between what parents say they can afford for childcare and the average price charged of £120.58 per week.⁶⁵ Children in Dover benefited from a national programme offering a certain number of hours of free childcare for three and four year olds, later rolled out to two year olds, starting with the most disadvantaged families.

At the time of writing there were eight Kent County Council (KCC) run children’s centres in Dover. Children’s centres not only provide nursery provision, but a range of early childhood services such as social services, health services, training and employment services for parents and prospective parents and information and advice. The activities of the various

⁶⁴ KCC (2012). Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. Available from: <https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/education-and-learning/childcare-and-pre-school/CSA%20Full%20Report%202012.pdf>

⁶⁵ KCC (2012). Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. Available from: <https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/education-and-learning/childcare-and-pre-school/CSA%20Full%20Report%202012.pdf>

Dover centres are given on their websites.⁶⁶ At the time of writing KCC is consulting on a proposal to merge The Buttercup (St. Radigund's) and The Daisy (Tower Hamlets) to and relocate them to an existing building in Dover town centre, and to close the Primrose centre (North Deal). The rationale that has been given is that "in the current economic climate efficiency savings must be made ... This new model will allow us to focus our spending on services to children, while reducing costs for buildings, management, and other overheads." However "KCC will continue to support centres in communities of high need."⁶⁷

Debates, conflicts and coalitions

Very little evidence could be found in the analysis carried out for this report of local debate about local child care initiated either by local interest groups or public, perhaps because the private and voluntary sectors are the main providers and early years education is dealt with at the county (not city or district) level. The policy changes that impacted on childcare were mostly effected at the national level. There were only fourteen mentions of childcare services in the local press over a ten-year period. These were to highlight nurseries and pre-schools rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted inspectors or which had received awards.⁶⁸ Dover MP Charlie Elphicke has a special interest in childcare, which he reviewed as part of his work on Parliament's Welfare Reform bill committee, but this was focussed on the national scene.

The *Kent Health Inequalities Action Plan for 2012- 2015*, which had a foreword from KCC Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Graham Gibbens, highlighted tackling child poverty as a priority. The report said increasing free and affordable childcare places could help alleviate the problem. It stated: "Childcare availability, cost and quality, can be an issue for parents, particularly those of young children ... Cost can make low-paid work financially unviable. Care is also sometimes not flexible enough with parents unable to find care for evenings, weekends, at short notice and in school holidays."⁶⁹ He has been concerned to make childcare easier to access and less expensive on the basis that it would help working families.⁷⁰

Deregulation of nurseries and encouraging people back into child-minding employment were some of the ways which the cycle of deprivation in Dover could be broken by enabling providers to lower their rates, according to the local MP, Charlie Elphicke.⁷¹ He has also pledged: "Doing more to help working couples with children juggle work and childcare ... These are the things that matter to people here in Dover and Deal. So these are the things I focus my time and concentration on."⁷²

⁶⁶ Kent Children's Centres Dover, Deal and Sandwich Children's Centres, http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/chc/chc_dover_all.cfm

⁶⁷ Yourdover.co.uk, July 4, 2013, Threat to dozens of children's centres as KCC sharpens its axe. Available from: http://www.yourdover.co.uk/news/threat_to_dozens_of_children_s_centres_as_kcc_sharpens_its_axe_1_2263420

⁶⁸ E.g. Dover Express, March 31, 2011, Parents and tots celebrate as nursery shows off top award; Dover Express, February 3, 2011, Ofsted inspectors give nursery 'good' rating; East Kent Mercury, July 15, 2010, Pre-school rated as 'outstanding'; Dover Express, February 25, 2010, Nursery lands top award for quality

⁶⁹ Dover Express, August 30, 2012, Poverty figures stoke better childcare calls

⁷⁰ Dover Express, May 5, 2011, MP joins breakfast

⁷¹ Dover Express, August 30, 2012, Poverty figures Stoke better childcare calls

⁷² Dover Express, June 30, 2011, Concentrating on issues that matter most

In summary, discourses of debates in Dover, such as they were, concerned national-level divergent priorities about the purpose of child care services for 0-4 year olds, namely the conflicts between:

- Childcare as a way of helping *all parents* juggle work and having children.
- Childcare as a means to reduce child poverty, by enabling *poorer parents* to work longer hours.
- Childcare as education delivered by child development professionals with equivalent status to teachers and social workers, particularly aiming to improve cognitive and social development of children from less privileged homes.
- Recent cuts to funding for staff qualifications, including continuous professional development, which may restrict providers in terms of which staff they can afford to give on-going training.
- Potential conflict between increasing the quantity of affordable childcare, and raising standards.

CONCLUSION

General values in relation to social innovation

The local welfare system in Dover is characterised by coalitions and partnership working in strategic policy development. There has been a general consensus about the nature of the challenges facing the district with respect to unemployment and unemployment (childcare has had negligible political salience). A level of consensus has also developed over time that a large part of the solution should be 'regeneration'. The Council sums up its vision for Dover as 'A high speed district of growth, enterprise and opportunity'. In other words their strategy is to enable and support the economy, prosperity, business and investment, and with them employment.

Regeneration has been the fundamental concept in the public and political discourse of Dover. This entails providing the conditions for economic growth which, it is hoped, will improve the lives of *all* residents. It involves planning for new housing units in tandem with making the district more attractive to employers. Major investments and infrastructure projects are a central element of this strategy. Whilst there has been some dissatisfaction with the number of new dwellings proposed and whether they will be affordable to local people, and there has also been some scepticism about whether demand exists for the planned new housing units, overall there is consensus concerning the benefits of regeneration as a strategy.

'Facilitating strong communities with a sense of place and identity' is the second of the Council's four priorities identified in its *Corporate Plan 2012-2016*. This involves measures such as giving residents a say in the services provided for them and allocating grant funding and helping local groups to access available funding (although direct funding from the Council itself is limited).

Concepts such as 'reducing inequalities', 'social cohesion' and 'social inclusion' have not been recurrent in the public discourse in the last ten years, except in the field of housing, perhaps because of the Council's limited resources. In housing the Council wants to see delivery of more affordable homes, as well as improving the condition of existing homes, addressing inequality, and enabling vulnerable people access to quality housing to live independently.

However, in view of such statistics as life expectancy, which is 8 years lower for men and 2.3 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Dover compared to the least

deprived areas, and that there is a statistically significant relationship between living in the poorest wards in Dover and the likelihood of having an urgent hospital admission, the Council intends to address health outcomes in the district in future.⁷³ Local government can have a tremendous impact on health - through sports, open space, housing, planning, social care and a range of other services and the Council has been working hard to input into planning the right services for the Dover district and our communities including creating, in partnership, a local Health and Well-Being Board, to identify health and social care needs and improve health outcomes.⁷⁴

The other notable feature of the local welfare system in Dover is the debate about how to deliver the Council's priorities of growth, jobs and investment in an environment of on-going financial constraints, the national government's Big Society agenda and the need for establish alternatives to Council-delivered services. The Council is facing a shift from councils directly delivering a multitude of services to an environment of *enabling* others, where appropriate, to deliver services for them.

However, despite the constraints on direct activities by the Council, it clearly favours social innovations that target 'social cohesion' at the 'local level', although they are not using that vocabulary in discourse. The social innovations with most high profile and proactive Council involvement right now outside of housing policy are in raising aspirations, educational attainment and skills. Thus the Council's position is that "Training and education is linked to economic growth" rather than a social cohesion or social mobility agenda. The approach adopted is one of an "enabling role working with local employers and training providers to identify skills shortages to meet local business needs and improve access to local job opportunities."⁷⁵ These have included working with the Homes and Communities Agency and Hadlow College to develop the Betteshanger Colliery and Fowlmead Country Park sites as a Sustainable Futures Campus (a mixed use educational, employment and tourism facility) to secure the long-term future of the area and working with partners to enable and facilitate a training centre of excellence for the marine skills sector.⁷⁶

⁷³ DDC (2012). State of the District 2012. Available from:
<http://www.dover.gov.uk/Corporate-Information/PDF/StateoftheDistrict2012.pdf>

⁷⁴ DDC (2012). State of the District 2012. Available from:
<http://www.dover.gov.uk/Corporate-Information/PDF/StateoftheDistrict2012.pdf>

⁷⁵ DDC (2012). State of the District 2012. Available from:
<http://www.dover.gov.uk/Corporate-Information/PDF/StateoftheDistrict2012.pdf>

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