



A BRIEF GUIDE TO DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL



GUIDE TO DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

National policies are set by central Government, but local councils have a wide range of powers and duties, with responsibility for local matters and delivering day-to-day services. The main link between local authorities and central Government in England is the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities which is responsible for developing national policy on how local government operates and is funded. Other government departments deal with national policy on local services e.g. the Department for Education and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

Across England, local governmental bodies are arranged into a mixture of one and two-tier systems, with two levels in most of the country but only one level in some areas which is responsible for the provision of all local services; these are known as unitary authorities. In Kent, there is Kent County Council plus 12 district councils and 1 unitary authority (Medway). In London, each borough is a unitary authority, but the Greater London Authority (i.e. the Mayor and Assembly) is responsible for certain services like police and transport.

Town and Parish Councils

In some parts of England, there are also town and parish councils, which are sometimes described as the third tier of local government. Parish councils are currently responsible for a limited number of services such as bus shelters, footpaths, recreation facilities, public toilets, drainage, etc. Parish councillors are elected for a period of four years.

Funding for parish councils comes partially from district councils and is taken from the area's Council Tax in the form of an annual precept. An amount based on the income and expenditure forecast for the next financial year is added to the local Council Tax and then returned to parishes.

Save for some councillor conduct and elections issues, town and parish councils are sovereign bodies and are not accountable to the district or county councils. Further information about town and parish councils may be found at the websites of the National Association of Local Councils (www.nalc.gov.uk) and the Kent Association of Local Councils (www.kentalc.gov.uk) or at www.dover.gov.uk.

FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES

Local authorities work within powers laid down under various acts of Parliament.

In the Local Government Act 1972, the Government delegated specific duties to local government, together with the necessary powers to raise some of the money needed to pay for them. These duties are called **statutory** duties. In addition, there are **regulatory** services – such as planning applications, alcohol, gambling and taxi licensing – that councils must provide. Councils also carry out some other duties which are discretionary and therefore **non-statutory**.

HOW THIS COUNCIL WAS CREATED

The Local Government Act 1972 reformed the structure of local government in England and Wales, dividing England into county and district councils. A total of 47 county and 333 district councils were created, as well as 36 metropolitan districts and 32 London boroughs.

Dover Rural District Council, Dover Borough Council, Deal Borough Council, Sandwich Town Council and Eastry Rural District Council merged to become Dover District Council. The Council offices were purpose-built at Whitfield during the 1980s.

In the early 1990s, the Review of Local Government set out to simplify the system by creating unitary councils. However, the changes were not as far-reaching as anticipated, with only one unitary authority created in Kent for example.

The Local Government Act 2000 reformed local government in England and Wales, principally providing for:

- local authorities to promote economic, social and environmental well-being within their areas;
- local authorities to move away from a committee-based system of decision-making to an executive model;
- backbench councillors to fulfil an overview and scrutiny role;
- the introduction of a revised ethical framework for local authorities, including the adoption of codes of conduct for elected members and the establishment of standards committees.

Dover District Council adopted a new decision-making structure in May 2002 (see Decision-Making).

The present structure of local government in England is:

- Greater London Authority (created May 2000)
- 32 London Boroughs and the City of London Corporation
- 36 Metropolitan District Councils in urban towns/cities
- 55 Unitary Authorities
- 27 County Councils
- 201 District Councils
- 9,000 (approx) town and parish councils

ELECTIONS

In England and Wales, over 19,000 people represent their communities by serving as councillors on a local authority. Councillors are elected to represent an individual geographical unit of the council known as a Ward (District) or Division (County).

In Dover District, all councillors are elected once every 4 years. However, in some district councils a third of councillors are elected each year (although elections are not held when there are county council elections). Elections are held on the first Thursday in May, with the next elections due on 4 May 2023.

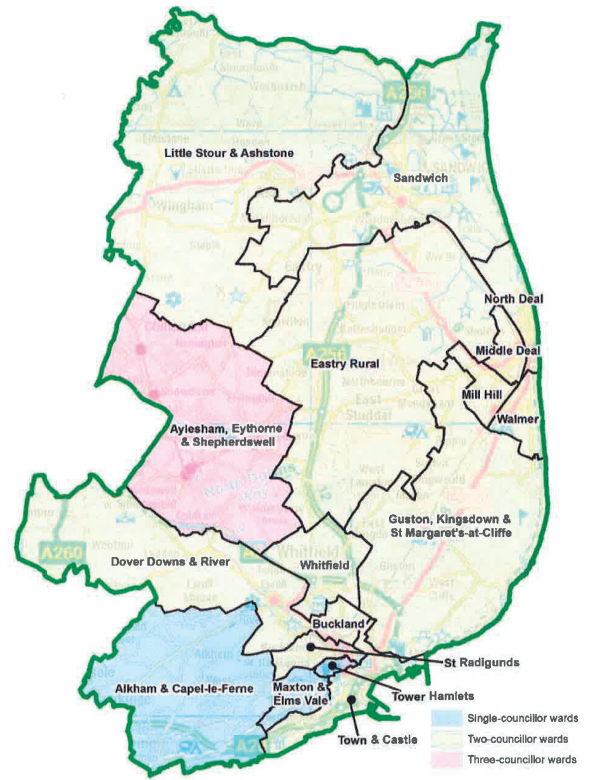
If a councillor resigns or dies whilst in office, a by-election is held to elect another person to represent that Ward. Councillors elected at a by-election serve the remaining period of the 4-year term. However, where a vacancy occurs within 6 months of the date of the next ordinary election, the seat is left vacant until the next election.

In 2022 there are 32 councillors serving on Dover District Council from the following political parties:

Conservative	20
Labour	10
Labour & Co-operative Party	1
Non-Aligned Members	1

Of these, 7 are female and 25 are male.

Following an electoral review, the Council's size was reduced from 45 to 32 councillors on 2 May 2019 and resulted in changes to the number of wards and their composition.



The present ward structure in the District is:

Ward Name	No. of Councillors
Alkham & Capel-le-Ferne	1
Aylesham, Eythorne & Shepherdswell	3
Buckland	2
Dover Downs & River	2
Eastry Rural	2
Guston, Kingsdown & St Margaret's-at-Cliffe	2
Little Stour and Ashstone	2
Maxton and Elms Vale	1
Middle Deal	2
Mill Hill	2
North Deal	2
Sandwich	2
St Radigunds	2
Tower Hamlets	1
Town and Castle	2
Walmer	2
Whitfield	2
TOTAL COUNCILLORS	32

Electoral ward boundary maps may be viewed at www.election-maps.co.uk.

THE COUNCIL'S SERVICES

Dover District Council is responsible for delivering a wide range of services. Kent County Council is responsible for delivering strategic and, generally speaking, more costly services. The following gives a flavour of the division of services between the two councils:

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- **Waste Collection** (including Recycling) (collection of domestic and commercial waste)
- **Leisure Services and Parks** (provision and maintenance of recreational facilities)
- **Housing** (providing and managing/maintaining rental properties, homelessness support etc)
- **Elections** (administration of Parliamentary and Local elections)
- **Planning** (dealing with applications for construction, alteration, demolition, conservation, developing a Local Development Plan etc)
- **Licensing** (administration of licensing regime for sale of alcohol, taxis, animal boarding establishments etc)
- **Environmental** Crime and protection (fly-tipping, litter, dog fouling, noise, air quality, pest control, pollution problems etc)
- **Port Health & Public Protection** (imported food checks, food safety/hygiene and infectious disease controls etc)
- **Car Parks** (provision of off and on-street parking and enforcement)

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- **Waste Disposal**
- **Social Services**
- **Education**
- **Highways**
- **Traffic**
- **Fire Service**
- **Libraries**
- **Youth Services**

A full list of the services offered by both councils may be found under the A-Z of services at www.dover.gov.uk and on Kent County Council's website.

Not all services are delivered directly by the Council. Civica, a private company, manages customer services and revenues and benefits payments/collections on behalf of Dover and Thanet District Councils and Canterbury City Council. Waste services are delivered in partnership with Kent County Council and Folkestone & Hythe District Council. Dover District Council also hosts the East Kent Audit Partnership which delivers the audit service for Canterbury City, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe and Thanet District Councils.

WHO WORKS FOR THE COUNCIL

Councillors

- Elected every 4 years by the electorate of the District aged 18 or over (and eligible to vote)
- Not salaried employees of the Council but do receive an allowance and expenses to cover cost of public duties
- Represent political parties or can be Independent
- Each councillor represents a part of the District known as a ward
- Some wards are represented by more than one councillor
- Help residents with queries or problems which usually relate to Council services
- Develop links with local community groups and organisations
- Campaign on local issues
- Take decisions as part of full Council and by serving on the Cabinet or by sitting on Council committees
- Councillors come from all walks of life, age groups and backgrounds

Officers

- Salaried employees of the Council – appointed not elected
- Non-political
- Role is to implement Council decisions, provide advice and manage delivery of services

Salaried employees of the Council fulfil various roles including: accountant, building surveyor, caretaker, committee clerk, housing administrator, mechanical engineer, planner, secretary, solicitor, quantity surveyor.

As of May 2022 the Council's Management Team comprises:

- Chief Executive
- Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)
- Strategic Director (Operations and Commercial)

DECISION-MAKING

Councillors are elected by local people to run the Council. In practice, the delivery of services and day-to-day management of the Council is carried out by officers of the Council. Councillors will initiate and develop policies, but officers are responsible for providing advice and implementation.

Traditionally, the decision-making structure of the Council has been divided into several tiers. Beneath the full Council, there used to be several committees organised by service or subject. Beneath these were sub-committees and working groups established to deal with specific issues. All councillors, sitting as full Council, would receive recommendations from the various committees which it would accept, reject or amend.

Following the Local Government Act 2000, Dover District Council adopted a new decision-making structure in the form of a Leader and Cabinet system. This was revised in 2011 and became the Strong Leader and Executive (or Cabinet) Model. Cabinet is the part of the Council that is responsible for making most day-to-day decisions. However, although not responsible for day-to-day decision-making, full Council is where all councillors meet to debate, and take decisions on, constitutional issues, the budget, the Council's policies and the appointment of senior officers, amongst other things.

Cabinet does not have responsibility for quasi-judicial and regulatory functions such as planning and licensing, and these are delegated by the Council to separate decision-making committees. There is also an Overview and Scrutiny Committee which allows councillors who are not on the Cabinet to scrutinise Cabinet decisions and influence Council policies in development.

As of May 2022 the decision-making structure of the Council looks like this:

- **Council** - all 32 Members
- **Cabinet (group in control only)**
- **East Kent Services**
- **Electoral Matters**
- **General Purposes**
- **Governance Committee**
- **Licensing Committee**
- **Planning Committee**
- **Regulatory Committee**
- **Overview & Scrutiny Committee**
- **Dover Joint Transportation Advisory Board**
- **Joint Staff Consultative Forum**
- **Joint Health, Safety & Welfare Consultative Forum**

In 2022 **Cabinet** comprises:

- The Leader of the Council
- The Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Community and Corporate Property

and **Portfolio Holders** for:

- Transport, Licensing and Regulatory Services
- Finance, Governance, Digital and Climate Change
- Planning and Environment
- Social Housing, Port Health, Skills and Education

Further information about the role of Cabinet and its members may be found in the separate briefing note entitled 'How Decisions are Made at Dover District Council' at:

www.dover.gov.uk/Council--Democracy/Prospective-Councillor-Event-2022

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

Dover District Council obtains the money it spends on services from four sources:

Council Tax

This tax is the local taxpayer's contribution towards the cost of services provided by various authorities in Kent, and is calculated using a tax-base made up of the values of all domestic homes in the District. All homes are placed in a 'band' that covers a range of property values. Values are decided by the Valuation Office Agency (a separate body from the local authorities), using 1991 price levels. The District Council collects Council Tax on behalf of Kent County Council (KCC), the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent, Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority, town and parish councils, as well as for its own services. For every £100 paid in Council Tax, about £71 is passed on to KCC, about £11 to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Kent, £4 to Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority, and an average of £4 to town and parish councils. The remaining £10 will be used by Dover District Council to pay for the services that it provides.

Government Grants

The Government gives grants to local authorities to subsidise the cost of local services. Allocations to individual councils are intended to allow similar levels of service to be provided throughout the country.

Fees and Charges

These are the charges made to customers using council services such as car parks; licensing (taxis, tattoo premises, etc.); planning (for permission to build new, and change current, properties etc.); environmental health (clearing wasps' nests, inspecting restaurants etc.) etc.

National Non-Domestic Rate (Business Rate)

The Council collects business rates from businesses in Dover District. The rate is set nationally and Dover District Council has no influence over how much is charged. This income is now allocated between central Government, Dover District Council, Kent County Council and Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority in accordance with the Localisation of Business Rates scheme. One aim of the scheme is to encourage growth in districts and this will result in local authorities sharing an element of both loss or growth of business rates income in their area with the other bodies.

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

A further area of finance is in relation to council housing. Council housing is financed differently to other council services and has its own separate account. This account contains income from council house rents which is used for spending on management, repairs, maintenance and to support the development of new affordable housing in the district.

AND WHERE THE MONEY GOES

Council spending is divided between **capital** and **revenue**.

Capital spending is for one-off payments to buy things like buildings and vehicles, and to finance significant projects, such as new coastal protection works, regeneration projects and new equipment.

Revenue spending is the way the Council pays for the services it delivers. Some examples of services provided are:

- Refuse and recycling collection from the District's households;
- Cleaning the streets and public areas of the District;
- Asset and facilities management, including parks and open spaces, cemeteries, beaches and foreshores, Dover Town Hall, Deal Pier, leisure centres and other corporate assets;
- Community engagement;
- Housing services, including housing allocation, homelessness support and private sector housing;
- Planning and regeneration delivery;
- Museums and tourism;
- Regulatory services, including licensing, environmental health, envirocrime (e.g. dog fouling, littering) and port health;
- Housing benefits provision and Council Tax support scheme;
- Car parking services;
- Community safety and CCTV;
- Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates (NNDR).

The Council budget is set in March of each year.

More detailed information on Council finance is available on the Council's website (www.dover.gov.uk).





*This guide has been devised and produced by officers from
Dover District Council's Democratic Services Section*

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