

**TITLE OF REPORT: YEAR END MONITORING REPORT ON PROJECTS IN THE PRIORITIES FOR THE DISTRICT 2012/13**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT  
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR DAVID LEVETT

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This monitoring report provides an update on the delivery of the projects identified in the Priorities for the District 2012/13.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That delivery against the key projects stated in the Priorities for the District 2012/13 be noted and commented on by Cabinet.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 To enable achievements against the Priorities for the District 2012/13 to be considered.

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 There are no alternative options as this is a monitoring report.

**5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS**

- 5.1 No external consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this report. Members will, however, be aware that reports were taken to Overview & Scrutiny (13 March 2012), Cabinet (20 March 2012) and Council (12 April 2012) on the Priorities for the District 2012/13.

**6. FORWARD PLAN**

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 8 March 2013.

**7. BACKGROUND**

- 7.1 This report provides details on the status of the various projects identified in the Priorities for the District 2012/13. It does not include any projects initiated after the document was agreed and is not a full report on all of the projects that the Council undertook. A full copy of this document is available via the following internet link.  
[http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/priorities\\_for\\_the\\_district\\_2012-15.pdf](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/priorities_for_the_district_2012-15.pdf)

- 7.2 The Priorities for the District 2012/13 was approved at the Council meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2012. This contained a number of high level actions against each Priority. Progress against the key projects was considered by Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet in December 2012.

7.3 This report summarises the status of each of the high level actions in the Priorities for the District 2012/13. Overall, good progress has been made.

## **8. LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS TO DELIVER COST EFFECTIVE SERVICES**

8.1 The Council continues to seek opportunities for delivering our services in different ways to ensure we deliver economic and efficient services that continue to support the delivery of our priorities. Three specific projects were identified in the Priorities for the District.

8.2 **North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility.** We anticipate applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a second-round application for funding of £831,000 for “fit out” costs in November 2013. This bid has been delayed due to the inclusion of 15 Brand Street in the project. This project will result in long term revenue savings for the Council. The signing of the Development Agreement enables Hitchin Town Hall Ltd to secure a £850,000 grant and loan from the Adventure Capital Fund. (See also 8.6)

8.3 **Shared Support Services.** The Council did consider shared services with neighbouring authorities. Although no business case was proven, the work did enable potential savings that can be made from 2013/14 totalling approximately £900,000 over 5 years.

8.4 **Value for Money Service Reviews.** Three formal reviews were undertaken in the year for Careline, the Management Support Unit (MSU) and the Customer Service Centre (CSC). The recommendations arising from these was reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting in March 2013. These resulted in reductions in staffing levels and savings in the region of £88,000 for the MSU and CSC and agreement to an invest to save proposal for Careline of £40,000.

## **8.5 WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

The Council continues to work with local communities. Our team of Community Development officers work with many groups and organisations across the District to promote community participation.

### **8.6 North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility**

The signing of the Development Agreement has enabled further progress to be made with this project and finalisation of detailed designs and the procurement of a building contractor to deliver the works has now commenced. The project timetable has been slightly delayed by the inclusion of 15 Brand Street to provide a more imposing and spacious reception area. This was agreed by Council in April 2013. As well as providing the Council with savings in revenue (mentioned in section 4.2 of this report), through partnership working with Hitchin Town Hall Ltd, this project will deliver a refurbished community facility and museum.

### **8.7 Great Ashby Community Centre.**

By working with the Great Ashby Community Association, the extension to the Great Ashby Community Centre was finished in October, providing improved local community facilities including an additional meeting space and a small kitchen, funded by a Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd (WREN) award. (WREN is a company limited by guarantee and a non-profit making Environmental Body (EB) registered to fund projects which are eligible under the Landfill Communities Fund.) A Community Café has recently opened at the centre.

8.8 **Civic Centre (Town Hall) Site, Royston.** Officers are currently waiting on the outcome from landowner discussions with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) on viability assessment options. Further discussions with landowners will then be required prior to a draft brief being prepared for consultation. The progress of this project is reliant on HCC (the biggest landowner) and as such, the anticipated

project milestone due dates have changed. This has been agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport & Enterprise.

- 8.9 **Churchgate.** Following the decision taken by the Council not to give Simons an extension of the first cut off date in the Development Agreement (DA), a report will be taken to Council on 18 July 2013 on all potential options on the way forward to allow Members to consider the future of the Churchgate area.
- 8.10 **Olympic, Paralympics and Jubilee celebration events.** The Council successfully hosted both the Royal visit to Hitchin as part of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations and the Olympic Torch Relay in Letchworth. Both of these events were enjoyed by thousands of local people.
- 8.11 **Letchworth Town Hall.** The Council agreed a lease with North Herts College, that has enabled the Town Hall to be refurbished. This has reduced our liabilities and will bring the facility back into use.
- 8.12 **PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR COMMUNITIES**  
The Council delivers a number of services that impact on the environment and our policies and approach to planning, affordable housing, environmental management, etc all reflect the wider aims of our Climate Change Strategy. The following are projects through which we are reducing the Council's impact on the environment and improving facilities for all.
- 8.13 **Exploring the introduction of sensor lighting and heating controls in the Council offices.** Low cost sensor lighting trials is being carried out in some meeting rooms and offices. Further improvements will be made if a decision is taken to remain long term in the District Council Offices and refurbishment plans are agreed.
- 8.14 **Improvement to energy efficiency at the Great Ashby Community Centre** The extension to the Great Ashby Community Centre included the use of sun tubes to make the best use of natural light, LED lighting, and solar thermal panels to supplement the hot water heating in the centre. The new extension achieved an air tightness test result which significantly exceeded the minimum requirements. This ensures that heat is not lost through draughts.
- 8.15 **Further innovative food waste minimisation work** The Council successfully participated in the bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government and obtained a grant of £850,000 for the introduction of a weekly food waste collection service from flats in the autumn of 2013. Further significant changes to the waste and recycling service were agreed have been introduced in 2013/14.
- 8.16 **Trial recycling service for trade waste customers.** A free recycling collection service is now offered to existing trade waste customers. In addition, a free card collection service has been offered to any business in Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock, whilst the recycling of glass, paper and cans in addition to that of card is available to existing / new trade customers of NHDC.
- 8.17 **Implementation of Green Space Strategy.** There were a number of projects linked to this strategy that are to be delivered in 2012/13. These included:
- Provision of a water splash feature at Avenue Park in Baldock –the feature is now installed and open for use. The water from this will be used to irrigate the bowls and cricket greens and potentially the adjacent flower beds.
  - Work is proceeding with a Parks For People Lottery application for the refurbishment of Bancroft Gardens, Hitchin, based on the Master Plan submitted to Cabinet in September 2012.

- The replacement of the access bridge to Walsworth Common is currently being procured and the works are programmed to commence this financial year. The access bridge will be replaced with one which is able to support more substantial road vehicles than the existing to enable the Common to be more widely used for community events.
  - Replacement trees for the Broadway in Letchworth were planted in the Spring of 2013.
- 8.18 **Weston Woods, Baldock** A grant of £35,000 from the Forestry Commission, enabled works at Weston Hills in Baldock to be completed in 2012. The work was coordinated by the Countryside Management Service (CMS) and has created a more natural woodland environment and helped improve the habitat for wildlife. The Friends of Baldock Greenspaces group carried out some of the work including coppicing and installing signs and benches.
- 8.19 **Enhancement of Pix Brook Meadows.** The work was completed in May 2012 and has created an all-weather surfaced route through the site for use by cyclists and pedestrians (and linking between the Greenway and the town centre), restoration of the existing orchard and improvement to the woodland and hedgerows on the site.
- 8.20 **Purwell Meadows.** Work with the CMS commenced and will continue through to 2013 to improve the access and maintain and improve the habitat at Purwell Meadows.
- 8.21 **Solar powered car park ticket machines.** Wherever possible, the car park ticket machines were replaced with solar power ones. Just over half ( 29 out of 53) are now solar powered.
- 8.22 **Re-roofing of North Herts Leisure Centre.** The capital works programme for the second stage of the re-roofing contract for the North Herts Leisure Centre has now been completed. This should lead to a reduction in energy consumption.
- 8.23 **Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.** Cabinet, in September 2010 agreed to begin the process of promoting a review of the AONB boundary. The extension to the boundary of this area was placed on hold pending publication of relevant guidance by Natural England. Initial discussions have taken place with the Chilterns Conservation Board who are supportive of the proposal. Officers are now in correspondence with Natural England regarding the process that needs to be followed in terms of processing an application for the boundary review. The progress of this project is reliant on Natural England for their consideration and response on timescales as to when they will be in a position to consider our application.
- 8.24 **Emerging Local Development Framework.** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published at the end of March 2012. The NPPF significantly changed the national context in which local plans are now prepared. This has resulted in the requirements for additional work to be carried out on our Local Plan in terms of housing numbers and other policy implications. In light of the ongoing work it was considered not appropriate to publish the draft land allocations preferred options paper or the Community Levy Infrastructure preliminary draft charging schedule in July pending the outcome of the additional work. A revised timetable/Local Development Scheme for the preparation of the Local Plan was prepared and published with Full Council's agreement in February 2013. We have reviewed and updated our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) following the enactment of the Localism Act 2011 and amendments to the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. A draft SCI was the subject of public consultation in September and was adopted in December 2012. The preferred

option for housing provision was agreed in January 2013 and consultation on land allocations ran from February to March 2013.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this monitoring report.
- 9.2 Cabinet's terms of reference include "to advise the Council in the formulation of those policies within the Council's terms of reference". Full Council's terms of reference include "approving or adopting the policy framework...Priorities for the District".

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The actions identified were resourced through the corporate business planning process cycle for 2012/13 that was undertaken in 2011/12. A number of these projects formed part of the Council's capital programme for 2012/13.
- 10.2 It is clear that the Council will continue to face difficult spending decisions in view of the current economic climate and the likely reduction in government support in future years and that the availability of funding will impact on the projects that can be undertaken.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 As key projects for the Council, where relevant, each project has its own project risk log that is maintained by the Project Manager and reviewed by the Project Board. Some high value/cross cutting projects were considered as Top Risks for the Council and these were monitored throughout 2012/13 by the Finance Audit and Risk Committee

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions, give **due regard** to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 By reporting delivery against the Priorities for the District 2012/13 this provides a means to monitor whether the council are meeting the stated outcomes of the district priorities, its targets or delivering accessible and appropriate services to the community to meet different people's needs. This then fulfils the council's obligations arising from the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at paragraphs 13.
- 13.2 Where the key projects referred to in this report relate to the award of a public service contract, 'social value' will be captured and reported in accordance with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

## **14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 There are no additional human resource implications arising from this monitoring report. The resources needed to deliver projects should be considered through the Corporate Business Planning process.

**15. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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**16. APPENDICES**

None.

**17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 17.1 Projects listed in the Priorities for the District 2012/13 available on the Council's website. This does not include key projects that have been initiated since the document was approved.  
[http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/priorities\\_for\\_the\\_district\\_2012-15.pdf](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/priorities_for_the_district_2012-15.pdf)
- 17.2 Key actions recorded on Covalent, the Council's Performance & Risk software.