

**Overview & Scrutiny Committee
6th December 2011**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

TITLE OF REPORT : HALF YEAR MONITORING REPORT ON THE KEY PROJECTS IN THE PRIORITIES FOR THE DISTRICT 2011/12

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT..

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This monitoring report provides an update on the delivery of the key projects identified in the Priorities for the District 2011/12.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report provides details on the status of the various projects identified in the Priorities for the District 2011/12. A full copy of this document is available via the following internet link. http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/priorities_for_the_district_2011-12.pdf
- 3.2 The Priorities for the District 2011/12 was approved at the Council meeting on 7th April 2011. This contained a number of high level actions against each Priority. There is no separate action plan but it was noted that progress would be reported at six months and at the end of the year.
- 3.3 This report summarises the status of each of the high level actions in the Priorities for the District 2011/12. Overall, steady progress has been made despite the reduction in available resources.

4. TOWN CENTRES

- 4.1 There were 7 key actions noted against the Town Centres Priority. Progress against each of these is provided in this section of the report.
- 4.2 **Delivery of improvements to the Churchgate Shopping Centre.** The Churchgate Project Team have continued to work with our selected development partner, Simons Development and the Churchgate Liaison Forum in progressing the project. This has included reporting on progress to the Churchgate Project Board and Hitchin Committee as well as dealing with numerous concerns and queries raised by the local community through written correspondence, the media and by updating

the Frequently Asked Questions section on the Churchgate webpages on the Council's website. The team are also having to deal with a number of Freedom of Information Act (FOI) requests relating to the project. Simons are undertaking on-going discussions with potential retailers, landowners, the HTCI, Hitchin Markets Ltd and also with the key organisations including the local schools. The Project Team is responsible for assisting where necessary with such meetings and reporting on outcomes to the Project Board.

- 4.3 **The Wynd, Letchworth Garden City.** We have supported Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation in their delivery of short-term improvements to The Wynd. These have included the addition of a children's play area, sensory garden and public conveniences.
- 4.4 **North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility.** Work has continued with the Hitchin Town Hall Ltd. to deliver this new facility. We submitted our application for external funding for "fit out" costs. We undertook a rigorous procurement process to procure a supervising architect in November
- 4.5 **Renovation of Howard Park and Gardens.** Work is ongoing go deliver this project before the end of March 2012 within budget. The works to the Southern end (Howard Gardens) were completed and they were opened to the public in October.
- 4.6 **Enhancement to Fish Hill Square, Royston.** The enhancement work commenced in July 2011 and has now been concluded (subject to the contractual defects liability period) with the official opening in November.
- 4.7 **Civic Centre Site, Royston.** Options were discussed with the various landowners on an individual basis. Subsequent to this a Forum was held in October. It was agreed that the various landowners would consider their building requirements for discussion at a further meeting of the Forum in November. Despite the additional landowner discussions it is still anticipated that a draft Design Brief will be submitted to the January 2012 Royston & District Committee and that public consultation will conclude on 31st March.
- 4.8 **Refurbishment of multi-storey car parks.** The refurbishment works to Letchworth multi-storey car park have started but completion has been slightly delayed due to the discovery of unforeseen corrosion within the car park decks that emerged once the surface had been removed by the contractor. Property Services resources originally scheduled to undertake the work on the Lairage scheme have been diverted to the Hitchin Town Hall museum project, and this, coupled with the additional work created by the discovery of the corrosion at the Letchworth Multi storey car park has meant a delay to the start of that project. Works to the car park ramp will however be completed by the end of the financial year and works to the lighting in both car parks will follow on.
- 4.9 **GREEN ISSUES**
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 examples of where we are reducing the Council's impact on the environment and improving facilities for all.
- 4.10 **Office recycling.** The Council's efforts to adapt and make itself more green is exemplified by the successful introduction of recycling in its office accommodation. From 21 March to 30 September, we have recycled 24 tonnes and land-filled 2.7 tonnes of the total waste generated – an excellent recycling rate.

- 4.11 **Hertfordshire Waste Partnership (HWP).** The Inter Authority Agreement has recently been finalised and sets out the long-term objectives for HWP including arrangements for service change once the HCC Energy from Waste facility comes on line in c2017.
- 4.12 **Further innovative waste minimisation work** The Waste and Recycling Service have been promoting food waste reduction with the completion of the Food Waste Family Challenge and live cookery demonstrations in November. Recycling bins have been introduced in Letchworth Town Centre and we are on track to provide a recycling trade waste service to all schools by the end of December. The Council's efforts have been nationally recognised by the award of three Green Apple awards for the community clean up event (Spring Clean Letchworth), the electrical and electronic recycling and Community Reassurance events.
- 4.13 **Implementation of Green Space Strategy.** The renovated play area at Temple Gardens Recreation Grounds in Letchworth Gardens City opened in August. This new installation was comprised of urban inspired play equipment and was completed slightly under budget. New play equipment was installed at Avenue Park in Baldock with Phase 2 of the renovation scheme here being due to commence in November.
- 4.13.1 As no external group has come forward with a proposal to rebuild the pavilion on the Jackmans playing field, the provision of grant aid has been moved into the capital programme for 2012/13.
- 4.13.2 At the present time, the provision of portacabin changing rooms for Baldock Road Recreation Ground remain in the programme for 2011/12. However, unless a community group come forward it is unlikely that these facilities will be provided.
- 4.13.3 As reported in the first quarter Capital Monitoring report, work to Bancroft Recreation Ground is now due to be considered in 2012/13.
- 4.14 **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 is still to commence.
- 4.15 **SUSTAINBLE DEVELOPMENT**
There were 3 key areas identified against this priority:-
- 4.16 **Proposals for development around Luton.** If necessary, the Council was prepared to produce evidence and participate in the Public Examination into the Luton/Central Beds Core Strategy. This proposed Strategy was withdrawn in July 2011 meaning that the Public Examination will no longer take place. The situation in/around Luton is being closely monitored with particular regard to Luton Airport development and a Luton LDF.
- 4.17 **Royston Rail Underpass.** NHDC are supporting the development of this underpass with the possession of the rail line and main underpass structure currently scheduled to be completed by the end of December 2011.
- 4.18 **Emerging Local Development Framework.** We are still waiting for further guidance on the proposed National Planning Policy Framework and Localism Bill. We have adopted a Design Supplementary Planning Document and a Vehicle Supplementary Planning Document.

4.19 **DELIVERING VALUE FOR MONEY SERVICES**

4.20 **Shared Internal Audit Services** As of the 1 June 2011, our internal audit service function is provided by the Shared Internal Audit Service which is a partnership between Herts County Council and 5 of the Hertfordshire District Councils. It is anticipated that this will save NHDC approximately £50,000 per annum.

4.21 **Review of provision of some back office services.** Cabinet reviewed the strategic business case for the sharing of ICT, HR/Payroll, Facilities Management, Estates Management (with East Herts only) and printing services with East Herts and Stevenage Borough Councils in November. Following Cabinet approval, work is now continuing to produce a detailed business case for March 2012. The outline business case for a Shared Management Service with Herts County Council and SERCO is also still being discussed with SERCO and officers are considering whether to incur the costs of proceeding to detailed cases for some, or all, of the services.

4.22 **Restructure/review of provision of services.** The restructure was completed in August 2011 and there are continual reviews of sharing or alternative methods of service delivery.

4.23 **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

The Council is continually striving to improve service performance and the delivery of outcomes for local people. To date this year service reviews of the Revenues Team and the Environmental Protection Teams have been completed.

4.24 The Revenues Team Review showed that the service provided good value for money and performed well compared with its CIPFA neighbours and other Hertfordshire Councils. Some recommendations came out of the Review for future potential savings, which have been taken through as recommendations for efficiency savings

4.25 The Environmental Protection Team review provided evidence that the resources and performance is broadly in line with other Districts. Some service improvements were identified that will lead to a more effective service rather than produce cashable savings.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this monitoring report.

6. **FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The actions identified were resourced through the corporate business planning process cycle for 2011/12 that was undertaken in 2010/11. A number of these projects form part of the Council's capital programme for 2011/12.

6.2 As key projects for the Council, each project has its own project risk log that is maintained by the Project Manager and reviewed by the Project Board.

7. **HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no additional human resource implications arising from this monitoring report.

8. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 By reporting delivery against the Priorities for the District 2011/12 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.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That progress against the delivery of the key projects stated in the Priorities for the District 2011/12 be noted.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The recommendation(s) contained within paragraph 8 are made following the Council recommendation that progress against the Priorities for the District 2011/12 in the year and at the end of the year is monitored.

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12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Priorities for the District 2011/12 available on the Council's website.
http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/priorities_for_the_district_2011-12.pdf
- 12.2 Key actions recorded on Covalent, the Council's Performance & Risk software.