

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**  
**12 June 2012**

<b>*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No.</b>
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**TITLE OF REPORT : CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, POLICY AND GOVERNANCE  
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR MRS C.P.A. STRONG

**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the year end position on the key projects identified in the Priorities for the District 2011/12 and recommends the three high level priorities to guide the 2013/14 Corporate Business Planning Process.

**2. FORWARD PLAN**

- 2.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012.

**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](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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 A monitoring report on progress in the year was considered by Cabinet on 13 December 2011.
- 3.4 Cabinet are reminded that the Priorities for 2011/12 remained as Town Centres, Green Issues and Sustainable Development and that these then changed for the current year.
- 3.5 The report also recommends that the priorities to guide the Corporate Business Planning process for 2013/14 should remain unchanged from the three priorities for the current year ie
- Living within our means to deliver cost-effective services
  - Working with local communities
  - Protecting our environment for our communities

## 4. YEAR END REPORT ON PRIORITIES FOR THE DISTRICT 2011/12

### 4.1 TOWN CENTRES

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 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 supported Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (LGCHF) in their delivery of short-term improvements to The Wynd. LGCHF are currently consulting on the longer term development of the area as "The Wynd Village". This proposal is around the introduction of a garden centre themed visitor attraction.
- 4.4 **North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility.** Work has continued with the Hitchin Town Hall Ltd. to develop details for the delivery of this new facility. We were successful in obtaining just over £123,000 of Stage 1 development funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the new North Hertfordshire Museum, if successful at Stage 2 this will fund the appointment of a specialist designer to ensure the new museum is fit-for-purpose. Subject to agreement on final terms with Hitchin Town Hall Ltd and their funders, Council approved the project at its meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012. On 22<sup>nd</sup> May, Cabinet Sub-Committee (Gymnasium & Workmans Hall Trust) agreed to enter into a Management Agreement with the Council to allow the project to proceed
- 4.5 **Renovation of Howard Park and Gardens** Works were completed to Howard Park and Gardens in Letchworth to both restore important historical features and bring the facilities up to date. Works to integrate Birdshill car park were bought forward allowing the regeneration to be completed in one phase. The refurbished park and gardens were fully opened to the public prior to the Easter holiday and is already attracting an increased number of visitors and is receiving positive feedback from the local community. The official opening event will be held on 26 May and Olympic celebration event on 8<sup>th</sup> July.
- 4.6 **Enhancement to Fish Hill Square, Royston.** An event was held on 19 November 2011 to mark the opening of the new square. It is currently within the 12 month defect period. It is anticipated that the new square will contribute to the vitality of the town centre and provide opportunities for different events to take place to encourage visitors to the town. The new scheme has been well received by the local community
- 4.7 **Civic Centre (Town Hall) Site, Royston** Discussions with the various landowners continued through 2011/12. Work has commenced on a preparing a Planning Brief which should be presented at the July meetings of the Royston and District Committee and Cabinet for public consultation.

- 4.8 **Refurbishment of multi-storey car parks.** The refurbishment works to the decks in the Letchworth multi-storey car park were concluded in April 2012. Refurbishment of the lifts and lighting in this car park will continue in 2012/13. Priority has been given to completing the works at the Letchworth car park prior to considering works at the Lairage. These works will ensure the structural integrity of the building is maintained, and therefore protect the multi-storey car park for future years. The Lift enhancements will not only provide a safely operating facility but also increase the energy efficiency of the installation. The lighting scheme has been designed and will significantly improve light levels throughout the car park.
- 4.9 **GREEN ISSUES**  
The following are examples of key projects where we reduced 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. In the first complete year of the scheme we recycled 53 tonnes rather than send this to landfill. The costs of the introduction of the scheme have been recouped within 10 months. Recycling food and card instead of sending it to land fill has saved the equivalent of approximately 1.8 tonnes of CO2 emissions.
- 4.11 **Hertfordshire Waste Partnership (HWP).** Work has continued with the HWP including the submission of a bid to government to introduce weekly food waste collections.
- 4.12 **Further innovative waste minimisation work** Food waste reduction has been a key theme with the completion of a 'food waste family challenge' and live cookery demonstrations. Recycling bins have been introduced in Letchworth Town Centre and a recycling trade waste service has been provided to all schools. Additionally, a trial recycling service has been introduced for some trade waste customers.
- 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 commenced in November.
- 4.14 **Re-roofing of North Herts Leisure Centre.** Phase 2 of this work is now scheduled to commence in 2012. The phase 1 roof insulation works over the swimming pool have significantly increased heat retention within the pool area. The phase 2 works, over the canteen, sports hall and gym areas will increase heat retention and also prevent over heating in these areas caused by solar gain from the roof areas.
- 4.15 **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**  
Three key areas were identified under this Priority.
- 4.16 **Proposals for development around Luton.** The Council continued to resist inappropriate and unsustainable housing development by preparing evidence to present to the Public Examination on the Luton and Central Bedfordshire Joint Strategy. The Core Strategy was withdrawn by those authorities and fresh plans are being prepared. The Council will work with our neighbouring authority on the development of these plans.

- 4.17 **Royston Rail Underpass.** The underpass is now installed connecting the two sides of the town promoting cycling and walking and due to open in June 2012.
- 4.18 **Emerging Local Development Framework.** The Council adopted a Design Supplementary Planning Document and a Vehicle Supplementary Planning Document. Consultation has been undertaken on housing growth targets.
- 4.19 **DELIVERING VALUE FOR MONEY SERVICES**  
Although delivering Value for Money was not a Priority for 2011/12, it was referred to in our Priorities for the District. Some projects were mentioned to illustrate how NHDC continually strives to deliver value for money services.
- 4.20 **Shared Internal Audit Services (SIAS).** In 2011, we participated in a Shared Internal Audit Service with Hertfordshire County Council and four other Hertfordshire districts. This will lead to projected savings of almost £50,000 in 2012/13.
- 4.21 **Review of provision of some back office services.** In November 2011, we agreed to develop a detailed business case for a shared service arrangement with East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council for some of our support services. These services include Human Resources, IT, Facilities Management and Printing. A detailed business case will be considered in the summer.
- 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. Service reviews of the Revenues Team and the Environmental Protection Teams were completed as detailed in the December report to Cabinet.

## **5.0 CORPORATE PRIORITIES 2013/14**

- 5.1 Corporate Priorities are considered in June/July each year to provide a background against which subsequent budget decisions can be taken.
- 5.2 In light of the economic position and the many proposed changes to local government, Council agreed to set three new priorities for the current financial year, namely
- Living within our means to deliver cost-effective services
  - Working with local communities
  - Protecting our environment for our communities.
- After further consideration of the priorities and the general economic situation, and the fact that the 2012/13 year has only just commenced, it is proposed that they be retained for 2013/14. This then ensures there is no change of direction that may affect longer term projects underway. The three priorities will guide the subsequent corporate business planning process through to production of a budget in February 2013.
- 5.3 More detailed work on production of the Priorities document for 2013/14 will commence in the Autumn 2012 with the aim of producing the final document for Council in April 2013.

## **6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications from the monitoring report.

- 6.2 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".

## **7. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 Key projects for the Council, have their own project risk log that is maintained by the Project Manager and reviewed by the Project Board.

## **8 HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no additional human resource implications arising from this report.

## **9 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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 relevant obligations arising from the Public Sector Equality Duty.

## **10 CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS**

- 10.1 No external consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this report. Members will, however, be aware that consultation is an integral part of the corporate business planning process, and consultation on the actions to support the Priorities for the District 2013/14 will be carried out in accordance with the outline timetable at Appendix A. This is subject to change as the consultation process I currently being reviewed. As in previous years, Member workshops will be held and this is in addition to seeking the views of the Finance Audit and Risk Committee, the LSP, parish and town councils and business ratepayers as appropriate

## **11. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 That delivery against the key projects stated in the Priorities for the District 2011/12 be noted and commented on by Cabinet.
- 11.2 That Cabinet confirms the high level council priorities for 2013/14 onwards as

- Living within our means to deliver cost-effective services
  - Working with local communities
  - Protecting our environment for our communities
- and recommends these to Council.

## **12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 12.1 The recommendation contained within paragraph 11 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 and to enable Council to consider the priorities which will guide the corporate business planning process for 2013/14.

## **13. APPENDICES**

- 13.1 Appendix A - Outline Corporate Business Planning timetable for 2013/14

## **14 CONTACT OFFICERS**

Report Writer - Fiona Timms  
Performance & Risk Manager  
01462 474251  
[Fiona.timms@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:Fiona.timms@north-herts.gov.uk)

Contributors –

Norma Atlay, Strategic Director of Finance, Policy & Governance Tel 474297; email [norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk)

Liz Green, Head of Policy ' & Community Development, Tel, 474230, email [liz.green@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:liz.green@north-herts.gov.uk)

## **15 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 15.1 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](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/priorities_for_the_district_2011-12.pdf)
- 15.2 Key actions recorded on Covalent, the Council's Performance & Risk software.