

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
17 JUNE 14**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

12

**TITLE OF REPORT : YEAR END MONITORING REPORT ON PROJECTS IN THE
PRIORITIES FOR THE DISTRICT 2013/14**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR JULIAN CUNNINGHAM

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the delivery of the projects identified in the Priorities for the District 2013/14.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That delivery against the key projects stated in the Priorities for the District 2013/14 is noted.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To enable achievements against the Priorities for the District 2013/14 to be considered.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 There are no alternative options relevant to this 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 (19 March 2013), Cabinet (26 March 2013) and Council (11 April 2013) on the Priorities for the District 2013/14. A mid-year update was provided to this Committee at the December 2013 meeting.

6 FORWARD PLAN

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

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 This report provides details on the status of the various projects identified in the Priorities for the District 2013/14. 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 in 2013/14. A full copy of this document is available via the following internet link. <http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/nhdcprioritiesforthedistrict2013-14.pdf>
- 7.2 The Priorities for the District 2013/14 was approved at the Council meeting on 11th April 2013. This contained a number of high level actions against each Priority.
- 7.3 This report summarises the status of each of the high level actions in the Priorities for the District 2013/14. Overall, good progress was made.

8. REVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST THE PRIORITIES FOR THE DISTRICT 2013/14

- 8.1 The Priorities that applied in 2013/14 were:
- Living Within Our Means to Deliver Cost Effective Services
 - Working with Local Communities
 - Protecting our Environment for our Communities
- 8.2 The following sections of this report (10,11and12) provide an update on the projects identified in the Priorities for the District 13/14. A mid-year update was provided to Overview & Scrutiny Committee in December 2013.

9 LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS TO DELIVER COST EFFECTIVE SERVICES

- 9.1 The Council continued 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. The following specific projects were identified in the Priorities for the District.
- 9.2 **2013/14 Budget Efficiencies.** In setting the 2013/14 budget efficiencies of £850,000 were agreed and subject to completion of the year end accounts it is likely that this figure will be over achieved..
- 9.3 **North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility.** A successful application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a grant of £914,400 for its 'Unlocking the Heritage of North Hertfordshire' project. This project will result in long term revenue savings for the Council.
- 9.4 **Parks for People Lottery Bid for Bancroft Recreation Grounds.** A Landscape Architect for the project was appointed who assisted with a bid for a Parks for People lottery bid in February 2014. The Heritage Lottery Board are meeting on the 24th June to consider the bid.
- 9.5 **Value for Money Service Reviews.** Two formal reviews were concluded on the Accountancy Service and the use of Acolaid (planning, environmental health and land charges database software) by Development Control. The review on the Planning Policy service was been linked to the Senior Management Group review of the Parking Service which commenced in 2013/14 and will conclude in 2104.

- 9.6 **Alternative means of service delivery.** No specific projects were identified in the Priorities for the District. Work has commenced, initially funded by the East of England Local Government, in conjunction with other Hertfordshire authorities on an alternative model for the provision of Building Control.
- 9.7 **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.
- 9.8 **North Hertfordshire Museum and Community Facility.** The building works are now well underway. The project timetable was slightly delayed by the inclusion of 15 Brand Street to provide a more imposing and spacious reception area. In addition to providing the Council with savings in revenue through working with Hitchin Town Hall Ltd, this project will deliver a refurbished community facility and museum.
- 9.9 **Civic Centre (Town Hall) Site, Royston.** The progress of this project is reliant on HCC (the biggest landowner). There has been little interest from the main landowner to drive on with the development of this site and NHDC is unable to take this forward and prepare a planning brief for the site without all parties commitment. It is proposed that this project be taken forward as a development site within the Local Plan and has not been included in the Priorities for the District 2014/15.
- 9.10 **Churchgate.** On 18 July 2013, Council considered all the potential options on the way forward to allow Members to consider the future of the Churchgate area. Council resolved to:
(i) await the publication of the draft Local Plan, whilst at the same time considering the approach to take;
(ii) continue an open dialogue with interested developers on the Churchgate site in the interim; and
(iii) not enter into any form of exclusive discussions with Hammersmatch, based on the limited information currently provided due to the early stage their proposals are at, and that officers continue dialogue with Hammersmatch in accordance with ii) above.
- 9.11 **Hitchin Swim Centre and Archers Fitness Club.** A £1.8 million development project delivered major improvements to Hitchin Swim Centre and Archers. At Archers, three state of the art, brand new fitness studios have been built and include a Low Intensity Studio and a High Intensity Room. There is also a Personal Training Room with the latest equipment. The newly designed 'Changing Village' at the swim centre, which replaced the old, outdated facilities, mean the majority of the male and female-only areas have been replaced by 35 individual changing cubicles, six family cubicles and two group changing areas offer far more flexibility. There were some delays in completing works to the Changing Village due to unexpected issues with the drainage.
- 9.12 **Business Improvement District (BID) for Letchworth.** The Council endorsed the proposals for a BID in Letchworth and a successful ballot was held in October. The BID enables for local businesses to come together to plan and implement activities that will further develop their trade.

- 9.13 **BaldockTown Hall.** The Council agreed a lease with the Baldock Town Hall Group (BTHG) to transfer the building to the local group on a 99 year lease. BTHG plans to ensure that the building will be used for the benefit of people from Baldock and beyond, primarily offering space for the development and performance of the creative and performing arts, and incorporating Baldock Museum; the facility is known as the 'Baldock Arts and Heritage Centre'. The first events were held at the Town Hall in October 2013.
- 9.14 **Bakers Close Pavilion** Work commenced to develop what can actually be achieved at the site, along with assistance from both the Baldock Town & the Baldock Town Youth Football Clubs. The Council is working along the lines of the facility possibly becoming the residential home for both clubs (as they have no formal base in the town at present) and at the same time it may also serve other sporting & non sporting community needs within the town.
However, to move things on, we need buy in from both Football Clubs and for them to detail out how they can find the additional funding / resources required to develop / refurbish the facility and then give assurance that they have the ability to manage / sustain the building in the long term and on the Council's behalf.
All being well and subject to Member approval, it is hoped that the regeneration works could possibly commence later in the year.
- 9.15 **Sports pavilion, Baldock Road, Letchworth** The feasibility study is now completed and the Council produced a detailed design that meets the requirements of the Football Foundation and have secured planning permission for the building.
The Council is now acting in a facilitating role to assist local sporting bodies progress with the scheme.
- 9.16 **Local Plan.** Consultation was undertaken in February 2013 on the level of housing growth for the District to 2031 and proposed land allocations which could be used for building new homes. A further round of consultation on proposed additional sites was undertaken in July 2013. Over 12 000 representations were received to both consultations. There has been a delay in the Local Plan timetable. In light of the lack of certainty over the new level of housing need arising from Luton or the timetable for when such certainty will arise, it is not currently possible to prepare a new timetable for the preparation of a Local Plan. Therefore, NHDC will not be following the approved Local Development Scheme, which it will have to revise accordingly. A new timetable will be prepared as soon as there is sufficient information available.

In the meantime Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Enterprise will continue to engage with other bodies under the duty to co-operate. Officers will continue with the preparation of policies for the Local Plan and their work on sites that may be considered physically suitable, available for development and whether they are likely to be achievable within the plan period

- 9.17 **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.

- 9.18 **New waste and recycling service.** The introduction of a new recycling service for all households and food waste collections for flats has reduced the amount sent to landfill by 92 kilograms per household as at end of March 2014. The percentage of household waste sent for reuse recycling or composting increased to 57.29 % by the end of March 2014 which compares favourably to the figure of 47.3% attained in the same period in 2012/13.
- 9.19 **Improved lighting and heating controls in the District Council Offices.** Some sensor lighting controls have been installed in the Offices. Now that a decision has been reached for the long term provision of office accommodation, further improvements will be included in future refurbishment works. In the meantime, sun tubes have been introduced during the re-roofing of the Council Chamber and Committee rooms 1 and 2.
- 9.20 **Implementation of Green Space Strategy.** There were a number of projects linked to this strategy that were to be delivered in 2013/14. These included:
- The opening of a water splash feature at Avenue Park in Baldock. The water from this will be used to irrigate the bowls and cricket greens and potentially the adjacent flower beds.
 - As previously mentioned in section 9.4, a Parks for People Heritage Lottery Fund bid was submitted for renovation and restoration works at Bancroft Recreation Grounds in Hitchin.
 - There has been a delay to the replacement of the access bridge to Walsworth Common. It has been agreed that 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. In view of this, additional funding needs to be secured and the Countryside Management Service (CMS) will be assisting with attracting additional grant funding to enable this to be delivered - but this was not completed in 2013/14.
- 9.21 **Purwell Meadows.** Work with the CMS commenced and have progressed well over the spring and early summer of 2013 to improve the access and maintain and improve the habitat at Purwell Meadows. All works are now complete with new leaflets interpretation panels and boundary works. With the exception of a couple of minor elements of scrub clearance that will be left until the autumn after bird nesting everything is now complete.
- 9.22 **Energy audits.** These have been undertaken to a number of Council premises including Leisure Centres. Following these audits, plans are being developed to implement those items with a proven payback and these are included in the Priorities for the District 2014/15 against the revised priority of Living within our Means.
- 9.23 **Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.** Discussions have taken place with The Chilterns Conservation Board and Hertfordshire County Council to seek their support in progressing an application for extending the AONB Boundary. Officers through the Chilterns Conservation Board have submitted a formal application to Natural England for their consideration. The Board is waiting to hear their decision on whether the application has been successful. Officers will continue to track progress and engage positively with the Chilterns Conservation Board and Natural England on how this proposal is progressed. Should the application be successful then work on extending the boundary will commence.

- 9.24 **Responding to the planning application for the proposed extension of Luton Airport.** Following the decision of the Planning Control Committee on 18 April 2013 to raise a number of formal objections to the Luton Airport expansion plans, officers presented these objections in written form, and orally to Luton Borough Council. The Planning Committee of Luton Borough Council resolved to grant planning permission for the expansion of the airport at their meeting in December 2013. Shortly afterwards the Secretary of State for Communities placed a holding order on the application which meant that Luton Borough Council could not determine the application until the Secretary of State had decided whether or not he wanted to 'call in' the application for his own determination. During April 2014 the Secretary of State decided that he did not wish to 'call in' the application and confirmed that Luton Borough Council could determine the application. At the time of writing, the application has not yet been determined, this is likely to be due to ongoing work on the Section 106 agreement between Luton Borough Council and the applicant. Officers continue to track progress and engage positively with Luton Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council on how this important proposal is progressed.
- 9.25 **Town Wide parking reviews – commencement of a Letchworth review** Town wide parking reviews take at least three years, with the first year being spent on investigating issues, undertaking site visits and preparing a scoping report setting out suggested options for consideration and agreement by local Members and the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport & Enterprise. In 2013/14 Site investigations were undertaken and a scoping report covering schemes to be taken forward as part of the Letchworth town wide parking review was agreed by Letchworth Committee. The next phase of the work will be progressed in 2014/15. The Baldock town parking area review was also completed in 2013/14.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising from this monitoring report.
- 10.2 Overview and Scrutiny's terms of reference include "to review performance against the Council's agreed priorities and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or service areas".

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The projects reported on in Section 9 were resourced through the corporate business planning process cycle for 2013/14 that was undertaken in 2012/13. A number of these projects formed part of the Council's capital programme for 2013/14.
- 11.2 It is clear that the Council will continue to face difficult spending decisions in view of the current economic climate and the continuing reduction in government support in future years and that the availability of funding will impact on the projects that can be undertaken.

12. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 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 are considered as Top Risks for the Council and these are monitored by the Finance Audit and Risk Committee

13. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 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.
- 13.2 By reporting delivery against the Priorities for the District 2013/14 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 assists the Council to fulfil a number of it's obligations arising from the Public Sector Equality Duty.

14 SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 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.
- 14.2 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.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

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

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1 Projects listed in the Priorities for the District 2013/14 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/nhdcprioritiesforthedistrict2013-14.pdf>

17.2 Key actions recorded on Covalent, the Council's Performance & Risk software.