

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



CORPORATE PLAN 2016/21

Introduction and foreword

North Hertfordshire District Council's former Corporate Plan covered the period 2005-2015, and in the final year of the plan's lifecycle, it is important that we review the Council's objectives and delivery to ensure they are still fit for purpose. Local Government faces a period of significant and at times quite rapid change brought about by changes in legislation, changes in funding and for North Hertfordshire, a number of changes within the district, its people and how we work together to maintain the environment so many of us evidently enjoy.

We maintain a clear vision for the District, 'Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place for people to live, work and prosper' but we cannot deliver the vision alone; it is clear that we must work with our partners, our businesses, our communities in order to achieve this.

There have been some significant changes in terms of legislation, some of which have introduced additional 'duties' (things we must do) whilst others have increased the rights of local groups, individuals, businesses etc. to become more involved in how their local area is run or improved. The Localism Act of 2011 set out a series of measures with the potential to shift some powers away from central government and towards local people. They included: new freedoms and flexibilities for local government; new rights and powers for communities and individuals; reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective, and reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally. The advent of the Health and Social Care Act in 2012 re-emphasised the important role local government can play in maintaining the health of its residents, through both existing services and a range of partnership projects intended to prevent ill health first arising.

During this time of greater opportunity and flexibility being afforded to Local Government, North Hertfordshire District Council has also continued to deliver high quality, efficient services to residents against a backdrop of reducing budgets, and continued reduction in central government grant. NHDC will need to continue to significantly increase the level of savings made – this is not unique to North Hertfordshire. Strong leadership from both elected members and officers will be paramount in continuing to challenge, monitor and support the Council to deliver the on-going efficiency and productivity improvements required, especially against changing needs and at times, ever increasing demands for services.

In order to inform our objectives and ensure we are reflecting the wishes of our residents in both the short and longer term, we will use the information gathered in our recent Citizens Panel Survey 2014, and population estimates not only in regard to those people we already have living or working in the district, but also for their children, their grandchildren and future generations through the development and delivery of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

Cllr Lynda Needham

Leader

KNOWING OUR COMMUNITIES

In any review of services delivered by the Council, either alone or in partnership, it is important to take account of what we know about how our residents live now, and what changes may need to be taken into account in the short, medium and longer term.

The District of North Hertfordshire has a population of 131,000 (mid term estimate 2014). The area is made up of 23 wards. The population density across North Hertfordshire is 3.40 persons per hectare, well below the 6.94 average for Hertfordshire, but which also demonstrates the contrast of a district with large rural areas surrounding its four main urban settlements.

Official statistics indicate that the population is likely to increase over the next 15 years by just over 24,000 residents (population estimate at 2031 – 153,400). This is due to a combination of factors, including people living longer, changes in social patterns, and the attractiveness of the District as a place to live. This will put considerable pressure not just on our housing numbers but social support mechanisms such as schools and GP surgeries as well as our transport infrastructure.

The mean age of the population is 40 years. This compares with a mean age of 40 years for the East of England region, and 39 years for England. The life expectancy at birth for people living in North Hertfordshire is 79.8 years for males, and 82.5 years for females. This compares with the England life expectancy at birth for males at 78.3 years and 82.3 years for females for the same period (2006-10). Within North Hertfordshire, Letchworth Wilbury has the lowest life expectancy at birth for males at 76.4 years. Weston and Sandon has the highest life expectancy at birth for females at 88.0 years.

It is estimated that 16.7% of adults in North Hertfordshire District smoke. The proportion of adults smoking has decreased between 2009-2013.

26.0% of children measured in Year 6 were overweight or obese (324 pupils).

67.52% of North Hertfordshire adults are physically active. Between 2011-13, cardiovascular death for under 75s was 74.09 people per 100,000, slightly above the Hertfordshire average. Long term poor health or disability affects 3.9% of population, although this is measured by response to questionnaire so much may lie in the perception of what is a long term health condition or degree to which any disability affects day to day life.

In North Hertfordshire District at the time of the 2011 Census:

- 19.45% of people were aged under 16,
- 63.47% of people were of working age (16 to 64),
- 17.08% of people were aged 65 and over

Projected population changes for North Hertfordshire from 2012-2037 shows the impact that higher life expectancy has in regard to the age of the general population, with a higher proportion of our residents living into the following age bands;

70-74 years	81.63% rise
75-95 years	65.91% rise
80-84 years	72.73% rise
85-90 years	123.91% rise
90+ years	246.16 % rise

In real terms, each of these bands represents 2000-3500 residents by 2037, but with such growth also come differing degrees of need for support, not only from the District Council, but also health, social care and colleagues from the voluntary sector.

Although North Hertfordshire District is generally affluent, we know we also have communities which experience differing degrees of deprivation, informed by national and local data; in recent years the position or 'ranking' of a number of these areas has changed significantly. Hertfordshire is split into 153 'Indices of Multiple Deprivation' areas, of which North Hertfordshire has two in the top twenty (the higher ranking denoting increased need).

Annual Citizens Advice Bureau reports demonstrate similar patterns of demand for their debt and benefit support services.

The district has significant diversity, with a black and minority ethnic population of 13,359 people. This is 10.5% of the total population, compared with 14.6% for England, and 9.2% for the East of England region.

Overall 15.2% of residents in North Hertfordshire describe themselves as from a non white UK population. This compares with a non white UK population of 14.8% for the East of England region, and 20.3% for England. In North Hertfordshire the non white UK population includes 19,225 people.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE – THE DISTRICT AND ITS OBJECTIVES

OUR VISION:

Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper

North Hertfordshire District Council is committed to working with its local communities, to continue delivering good quality services that reflect the local priorities and the resources we, and our delivery partners have available to us. We use a range of information to identify priorities such as consultation with our residents, local businesses and, population data, which not only helps inform the Council's current work, but its planning for the future population too.

There are three objectives for the Council for 2016/21, which are

- **To work with our partners to provide an attractive and safe environment for our residents, where diversity is welcomed and the disadvantaged are supported**
- **To promote sustainable growth within our district to ensure economic and social opportunities exist for our communities, whilst remaining mindful of our cultural and physical heritage**
- **To ensure that the Council delivers cost effective and necessary services to our residents that are responsive to developing need and financial constraints**

We will also continue to deliver a wide range of services which we refer to as our 'business as usual' – routine waste collection, street cleansing, food inspection, collecting Council Tax and Non-domestic rates, finding temporary and permanent homes for residents, etc. When we deliver these services day to day, we are not complacent about their individual cost to residents and we are constantly looking for more economic, efficient and effective ways of delivery; Services may not always be delivered by North Hertfordshire District Council alone, but increasingly in a partnership or alternative delivery model, but always with the impact on service users foremost in our minds.

None of the objectives above can be addressed in isolation, as each of the three necessarily interact and impact another, as described below.

OBJECTIVE 1: Attractive and Thriving**To work with our partners to provide an attractive and safe environment for our residents, where diversity is welcomed and the disadvantaged are supported**

We aim to ensure North Hertfordshire is an **attractive and thriving** place to live and we will deliver this objective by;

- Delivering identified projects from the adopted Green Space Strategy
- Renewing our waste and street cleansing contracts, continuing to provide an efficient and effective service
- Implementing outcomes from our energy audits of Council assets
- Grant funding organisations sharing in the delivery of our objectives

In the Council's most recent Citizens Panel survey (2014), respondents were asked to rank in order of importance, the three features they most valued about the district; 'low levels of crime' was identified as the most important. We know from working with our community safety partners that North Hertfordshire remains one of the safest places to live in the country.

Our Community Safety Partnership has the fourth lowest crime figures compared to the rest of the county; with 41.9 crimes per 1000 of the population in comparison to 47.3 crimes per 1000 of the population for Hertfordshire. We will continue to work closely with our Community Safety Partnership, local businesses including licensed premises, taxi-providers, BID companies and residents to ensure this position continues.

The district is generally quite prosperous yet deprivation also exists and there are a number of pockets where deprivation is classified as "most deprived". Whilst efforts to tackle all the related causes of poverty and deprivation must be planned in the longer term, the Council provides access to debt and budget management advice, offers apprenticeships and work experience and encourages greater inward investment to provide local jobs.

The demand for housing in the district is high and market cost housing is increasingly out of reach for many households. Those without adequate housing and who cannot afford to buy or rent suitable housing in the open market are said to be in 'housing need'. The Council is committed to meeting this housing need through the provision of affordable housing in the district. We are also committed to working with our health and other partners to identify and address homelessness, recognising the linkages between poor living conditions, rough sleeping and mental and physical health conditions.

North Hertfordshire's already large number of people over the age of seventy as a percentage of overall population is due to rise significantly by 2037. This requires consideration of future services supporting older people to live at home independently; not only the Council's Careline service, but also working with partners to consider how best to support carers and assist in increasing awareness of and support for those living with dementia and other similar conditions.

North Hertfordshire has always had a large number of people who volunteer; this enables a wide range of local projects to progress and being engaged in a worthwhile activity also benefits individuals' long term mental and physical health. In the Citizens Panel survey, 16% of respondents said they would be likely to want to join a community volunteer group which would help maintain and enhance open spaces on the Council's behalf; this would further

enhance the work already underway with charitable groups such as Groundwork enhancing and maintaining the appearance of our parks and open spaces.

OBJECTIVE 2: Prosper and Protect

To promote sustainable growth within our district to ensure economic and social opportunities exist for our communities, whilst remaining mindful of our cultural and physical heritage

We aim to ensure North Hertfordshire is a place where people can **prosper** and we **protect** our heritage and will deliver this objective by;

- Preparing and submitting a Local Plan which passes inspection and establishes areas in which sustainable development may take place in future
- Implementing an Economic Development Strategy for the district, working closely in partnership to increase inward investment and business development opportunities
- Ensuring that the Council's office accommodation is redeveloped to increase financial and resource efficiency and making best use of green initiatives
- Exploring further the potential for development of a Crematorium in North Hertfordshire
- Working with North Herts Homes to complete the regeneration of John Barker Place in Hitchin to provide new homes, better shops and the new Community Centre
- Progressing development opportunities in our town centres

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) undertaken in the preparation of the district's 'Local Plan' considered the amount of land available for housing development, with particular emphasis on demonstrating that there will be sufficient land available to meet future housing targets. Consultation on a range of potential sites for housing development is being evaluated and will inform the final Local Plan submitted for adoption.

We also need to provide local employment catering for a range of skills. The district has a considerable daily outflow of commuters, to highly skilled employment mainly in central London but also to the high tech and development industries which surround Cambridge. For those who remain within the district each day the retail or hospitality sectors represent our largest employers. We will work with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP), the business sector, Business Improvement Districts (BID) companies to identify opportunities for inward investment to increase our employment base and encourage new enterprise.

North Hertfordshire has four town centres, each with a town centre partnership. Three also have BID companies in place; these have used the additional business rate levy to contribute to a community cinema and tourist information office in Royston, street wardens and trade recycling schemes in Hitchin and food fairs and similar activities in Letchworth. We will continue to support the work of these partnerships to maintain the footfall in our town centres and ensure an adequate supply of parking to maintain their viability.

We recognise that tensions exist in creating opportunity for growth to sustain the local population, the impact on rail and road networks and the green and open spaces so important to our residents. We will continue to promote schemes, including through working

with our partners, to increase energy efficiency of residents' homes and reduce use of water, generate power and increase our sustainability for the longer term.

OBJECTIVE 3: Responsive and Efficient

To ensure that the Council delivers cost effective and necessary services to our residents that are responsive to developing need and financial constraints

We aim to ensure North Hertfordshire is **responsive** and **efficient** and aim to deliver this objective by;

- Exploring alternative options for effective and more efficient options for service delivery wherever possible, including through partnership, joint working or other models
- Redeveloping and improving the North Herts Leisure Centre to ensure it is fit for purpose and offers greater opportunities to meet latent customer demand
- Extending the Council's Careline Service to ensure greater ability to remain living at home independently
- Working with health partners to optimise opportunities for older people to remain living independently but well supported at home, and for children/young people to be offered opportunity to increase activity to prevent longer term ill-health
- Progressing the delivery of competitive Building Control Services with six other Hertfordshire authorities following agreement of the business case,
- Optimising use and management of the Council's assets, including consideration of long term lease 'transfer' or similar to increase community involvement in the provision of community and social opportunities

The results of the Council's 'districtwide survey' published in March 2014 showed that whilst overall satisfaction with the Council runs its services remained high (86%), residents felt that there could be improvements to the way in which the Council reports its performance, how it spends its money and making sure our residents know how to get involved in local decision making; more information is now available on the Council's updated website, and we will continue to review and increase where possible opportunities for engagement with our local communities, both urban and rural. Reductions in available funding mean it is increasingly important that our limited resources are effectively targeted to meet the District's needs.

Changes arising from the Care Act 2014 will affect the long term care of the elderly, and we also have a part to play in supporting our ageing community. Our successful Careline scheme has expanded across and outside Hertfordshire, to enable older people to live at home longer independently. This is one of a range of more 'commercial' activities we can consider following changes brought about by the Localism Act and Deregulation Act; the importance of reviewing all sources of income to ensure they are at optimum levels to provide greater financial resilience for the future remains a high priority.

The Council acts as custodian of local assets maintaining and managing them, either through rental, operation by external groups, or through long term lease agreements. The authority will look toward new ways of managing and gaining best consideration from these assets, including potential transfer to local, viable community organisations. This also reflects the general spirit of the Localism Act 2012, to increase community rights.

The Council's Waste and Street Cleansing contract is due for renewal in 2018, so we are looking at the feasibility of partnering another authority, to bring greater economies of scale and reduce unit costs further.

We will work with our partners in Public Health Hertfordshire to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities, by integrating health into the work of all our services,

continuing to offer opportunities for physical exercise and use of outside space, and monitoring food and air quality.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND REPORTING

All projects will be subject to sound business cases being provided, and specific targets established as they are introduced and the Council's performance against these will be monitored and reported; this will be quarterly through the Council's Senior Management Team, and to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Any exceptions in regard to delivery of a project are reported on to the Council's Cabinet as necessary under their terms of reference. Project risks are reported via the Council's Risk Management Group and onward to the Finance Audit and Risk Committee. Details of dates, times and agenda for meetings are available on the Council's website www.north-herts.gov.uk.