

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



3 September 2021

Our Ref Overview and Scrutiny
Committee/14.09.21
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To: Members of the Committee: Councillors David Levett, Daniel Allen, Kate Aspinwall, Tony Hunter, Nigel Mason, Jim McNally, Ian Moody, Lisa Nash, Sue Ngwala, Carol Stanier, Claire Strong and Terry Tyler

Substitutes: Councillors Clare Billing, Ruth Brown, Morgan Derbyshire, Terry Hone, Gerald Morris, Sam North and Kay Tart

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

to be held in the

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERON
ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY**

On

TUESDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2021 AT 7.30 PM

Yours sincerely,

Jeanette Thompson
Service Director – Legal and Community

****MEMBERS PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU DOWNLOAD ALL AGENDAS AND REPORTS VIA THE MOD.GOV APPLICATION ON YOUR TABLET BEFORE ATTENDING THE MEETING****

Agenda **Part I**

Item		Page
1. WELCOME		
2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE		
	Members are required to notify any substitutions by midday on the day of the meeting.	
	Late substitutions will not be accepted and Members attending as a substitute without having given the due notice will not be able to take part in the meeting.	
3. MINUTES - 22 JUNE 2021 AND 13 JULY 2021		(Pages 5 - 24)
	To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 22 June 2021; and• 13 July 2021.	
4. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS		
	Members should notify the Chair of other business which they wish to be discussed at the end of either Part I or Part II business set out in the agenda. They must state the circumstances which they consider justify the business being considered as a matter of urgency.	
	The Chair will decide whether any item(s) raised will be considered.	
5. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS		
	Members are reminded that any declarations of interest in respect of any business set out in the agenda, should be declared as either a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Declarable Interest and are required to notify the Chair of the nature of any interest declared at the commencement of the relevant item on the agenda. Members declaring a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest must withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item. Members declaring a Declarable Interest, wishing to exercise a 'Councillor Speaking Right', must declare this at the same time as the interest, move to the public area before speaking to the item and then must leave the room before the debate and vote.	
6. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION		
	To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.	

- 7. URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS**
The Chair to report on any urgent or general exception items which required their agreement including:
- Community Lottery New Policies; and
 - Allocation of Homelessness Funding.
- 8. CALLED-IN ITEMS**
To consider any matters referred to the Committee for a decision in relation to a call-in of decision. At the time of printing the agenda, no items of business had been called-in.
- 9. PRESENTATION FROM SETTLE**
To receive a presentation from Settle concerning the provision of rented social housing.
- 10. RESOLUTIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** (Pages 25 - 26)
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE, MEMBER AND SCRUTINY MANAGER
- To consider the outcome of Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolutions.
- 11. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME** (Pages 27 - 42)
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE, MEMBER AND SCRUTINY MANAGER
- To consider the issues that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee plans to review at future meetings and the activities of its sub-groups.
- 12. QUARTER 1 2021/22 PERFORMANCE AGAINST PERFORMANCE INDICATORS** (Pages 43 - 50)
REPORT OF THE CONTROLS, RISK AND PERFORMANCE MANAGER
- To consider the Quarter 1 2021/22 update on performance against PIs.
- 13. 1ST QUARTER MONITORING REPORT ON KEY PROJECTS FOR 2021/22** (Pages 51 - 66)
REPORT OF THE CONTROLS, RISK AND PERFORMANCE MANAGER
- To consider the quarterly update on progress of key projects to support delivery of the Council Plan 2020 – 2024.
- 14. CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY** (Pages 67 - 80)
REPORT OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER
- To consider the Customer Service Strategy and Customer Care Standards prior to consideration by Cabinet.
- 15. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**
To receive and respond to any questions from Members either set out in the agenda or tabled at the meeting.

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Agenda Item 3

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNCIL OFFICES, GERON ROAD,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY
ON TUESDAY, 22ND JUNE, 2021 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: David Levett (Chair), Daniel Allen (Vice-Chair), Tony Hunter, Nigel Mason, Jim McNally, Ian Moody, Sue Ngwala, Carol Stanier and Claire Strong*

In Attendance: *Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg (Leader of the Council), Councillor Sam Collins (Executive Member for Enterprise, the Arts and Transport), Councillor Ian Albert (Executive Member for Finance and IT), Steve Crowley (Service Director – Commercial), Rachel Cooper (Controls, Risk and Performance Manager), Chloe Gray (Commercial Officer), Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) and Anna Gouveia (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

1 WELCOME

Audio recording – 14 seconds

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of the civic year that was being held in the Council Chamber and advised that the meeting was being streamed live on the Council's YouTube channel and some Officers were joining online.

The Chair invited the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer to explain how proceedings would work.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call of those officers joining the meeting online to ensure that they could hear and be heard and gave advice regarding the following:

- Rules of Debate;
- Voting; and
- Covid Risk Assessment Measures.

The Chair, Councillor David Levett, started the meeting proper.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 22 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lisa Nash, Kate Aspinwall and Terry Tyler.

Having given due notice, Councillor Ruth Brown advised that she would be substituting for Councillor Nash.

3 MINUTES - 9 MARCH 2021

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 57 seconds

It was noted that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 March 2021 had not been included in the Agenda Pack and would therefore be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

4 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 47 seconds

There was no other business notified.

5 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 51 seconds

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation and new Members of the Committee;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be audio recorded as well as filmed. The audio recording would be available on the NHDC website and the film recording via the NHDC YouTube channel;
- (3) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question;
- (4) The Chair advised that he would take Item 9 – Leader of the Council Presentation, after Item 11;
- (5) The Chair also advised that there was no longer a Part 2 item on the agenda as it had been decided that the Community Lottery Policies did not need to be restricted.

6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 4 minutes 47 seconds

There were no presentations by members of the public.

7 URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 51 seconds

No urgent or general exception items were received.

8 CALLED-IN ITEMS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 54 seconds

Since the last meeting, no decisions had been called-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

9 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL PRESENTATION

Audio recording – 19 minutes 51 seconds

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, thanked the Chair for the invitation to address the Committee and gave a PowerPoint presentation regarding the following:

- Things that had gone well in the last year;
- Things that could be improved upon;
- Long term strategic priorities for the future; and
- Building on our successes.

She drew attention to the following which had taken place during the pandemic:

- Almost £47 million had been paid out to support the District's businesses, communities, and residents through the pandemic, supported by joint working between the Executive Members for Enterprise & Co-operative Development and Finance;
- The performance of the waste contract had been maintained;
- New ways of engaging with the community had been found during the pandemic, e.g. using virtual platforms for meetings;
- 1,200 trees had been planted across the district, as well as re-wilding and biodiversity initiatives being carried out;
- Stevenage Leisure Limited had been supported to ensure leisure facilities were accessible to all;
- A homeless shelter had been approved;

- There was an aspiration to have greater collaboration and partnership working with other Councils through the Herts Growth Board;
- There was a need to develop a 'place narrative', this was tied to the development of the local plan but would be taken forward in November regardless of local plan progress;
- Lessons had been learned from the experience of Government not extending the remote meeting permissions;

- Strategic priorities were being re-framed under three priorities: putting customers first, delivering environmentally and financially sustainable outputs, and looking towards a brighter future together with all stakeholders;
- Long term strategic policies were being developed such as reinvigorating our town centres, with individual projects sitting below, such as creating a Hitchin Riverside Walk;

- Work was planned to reduce carbon emissions by 32% as identified in the Climate Change Strategy;
- The following initiatives were also planned: website redevelopment and rebrand, 'master planning' approach being embedded; capitalising on enterprise opportunities, e.g. Dell Theatre re-opening; new housing delivery and supporting the recovery of staff including wellbeing and new ways of working.

The Chair thanked the Leader of the Council for her presentation.

10 RESOLUTIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Audio recording – 4 minutes 59 seconds

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager presented the report entitled Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and drew attention to the following:

- The Annual Report of this Committee had not been considered at Annual Council as numbers had been restricted to a quorate due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The report would go to the next meeting of Full Council when all Members would be present;
- The data comparing attendance at meetings in person and meetings streamed online was included in the Annual Report;
- A full two year comparison of attendance figures had been included in the Performance Monitoring Report, also on this agenda, and the data had been included in the Council's submission to the Government's Call for Evidence on Remote Meetings;
- This data would no longer be collected now that meetings were being held in person again.

The following Councillors made comments and took part in debate:

- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Claire Strong.

Comments from Members included:

- Four items on the list of Resolutions had been proposed to be removed as they had been completed;
- Things had moved on since the Task and Finish Groups had been proposed (the earliest in 2018);
- The issues with the Waste Contract were now historic and irrelevant therefore the Task and Finish Group on this subject could be removed;
- The Task and Finish Group on the overall review of communications and engagement could usefully remain on the list.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager advised that:

- The Task and Finish Groups had been put on hold due to the need to hold remote meetings.

Councillor David Levett proposed, Councillor Claire Strong seconded and upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report entitled Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted;
- (2) That the Task and Finish Group on the Waste Contract be removed from the list of Resolutions as it was no longer relevant;
- (3) That the Items marked as 'complete' be removed from the list of Resolutions.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and comment on actions and feedback received regarding resolutions previously made.

11 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Audio recording – 10 minutes 43 seconds

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager presented the report entitled Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A - Work Programme;
- Appendix B - Forward Plan - 24 May 2021;
- Appendix C - Corporate Peer Challenge Extracts from Action Plan.

She drew attention to the following:

- Appendix A contained a list of reports expected to be considered by the Committee over the next Civic Year;
- settle had been invited to attend the next meeting;
- Appendix B contained a list of items which the Committee might wish to discuss at a future meeting.

The following Members commented and took part in debate:

- Councillor David Levett;

Comments from Members included:

- A Commercial Update was not scheduled in until December 2021, so it was suggested that this could be brought forward to September 2021;
- Town Centre Recovery in the District was an important area of focus coming out of lockdown and the BID Managers could be invited to a future meeting to discuss this or submit a report for consideration;
- This would give the Council the opportunity to lead the recovery in partnership with the BIDs to see what issues they were facing, how the Council could help, and next steps; especially going into winter with uncertainty around the pandemic – it was crucial for the District to know how the Towns were doing;
- BID Managers currently attended Letchworth and Hitchin Area Committees but not Royston or Baldock (which did not currently have BID Managers);
- September would see the re-introduction of business rates which could have quite a profound impact on some retail businesses;
- The paper on Developer Contributions may be delayed but would come to the Committee when ready;
- Many of the actions on the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan had been limited by lockdown restrictions, so this would be considered further at future meetings.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report entitled Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021/22 be noted;
- (2) That the following items be added to the Forward Work Programme to be considered at a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
 - Housing Delivery Test Action Plan (13 July 2021);
 - Developer Contributions SPD (13 July 2021);
 - Customer Service Strategy (13 July 2021);
 - Community Revenue Grants Criteria Review (13 July 2021);

- Discussion on the Recovery of the Town Centres following the Pandemic (14 September 2021);
- Commercial Update (14 September 2021)

(3) That the recommendations of the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To allow the Committee to set a work programme which provides focussed Member oversight, encourages open debate and seeks to achieve service improvement through effective policy development and meaningful policy and service change.

12 PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR 2020/21 - YEAR END

Audio recording 30 minutes 38 seconds

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager presented the report entitled 2020/21 Quarter 4 Performance Indicators and drew attention to the following:

Status Summary

- There were five green, two amber and two red indicators.
- The rest of the indicators were for information only, with no targets set.

MI P&R 001 and BV10

- The collection rates for sales ledger and NNDR were unable to meet their targets as a result of the pandemic;
- It was likely that this trend would continue into the new year as businesses continued with the recovery process.

BV9

- The Council Tax collection rates had improved and the target had been achieved for the year end.

REG 1, REG 2 and LI 035a

- North Hertfordshire was performing well with regard to rates of homelessness prevention and relief with an improvement on last year and also when benchmarked against other Hertfordshire authorities;
- The Government policy of 'Everyone In' had meant that there was an increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation.

REG 3

- The percentage of environmental health inspections completed had now been confirmed as 17.1% at year end;
- The low figure was due to a number of businesses being closed as a result of the pandemic, and also the advice of the Food Standards Agency that inspections were not to be carried out by staff.

MI LI 015

- The number of visits to leisure facilities had exceeded the target set out in the recovery plan which was positive news.

NI 191

- Overall tonnage of waste was showing as a red indicator against the target, predominantly due to lockdown increased tonnages;
- The latest composition analysis showed that food waste was still being placed in with the residual waste so officers would be concentrating on improving this area.

PLA 01 and 02

- Missed bin statistics had been provided for information.

Councillor Levett thanked the Controls, Risk and Performance Manager for the year end report.

RESOLVED: That the 4th Quarter Update on Performance against Performance Indicators be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To update the Committee on the performance indicators as well as other indicators that officers have updated and activated on Pentana Risk.

13 KEY PROJECTS FOR THE DISTRICT 2020/21 - YEAR END

Audio recording 34 minutes 41 seconds

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager presented the report entitled 4th Quarter Monitoring Report on Key Projects for 2020-21 together with the following appendix:

- Appendix A – 4th Quarter Monitoring against Key Projects for 2020/21.

She drew attention to the following:

- The Status Report showed 4 projects with green status, 7 with amber;
- The Councillor Portal had now gone live so this project would be moved to completed status;
- The renovation of Howard Park Play Area had moved to amber due to delays in the delivery of playground equipment. The project would now commence in September after the school holidays;
- The Crematorium hearing had taken place on 22 February 2021 and the appeal was dismissed. Officers were now considering the reasons for the decision and would be submitting a report to Cabinet in due course;
- The development of a long-term museum storage solution had moved to amber. The overall project costs appeared to be in excess of the identified budget. The Commercial Team was exploring all the potential options for the site and once completed a procurement process could be undertaken;
- This would be the last report showing the number of YouTube views of meetings, as meetings were starting to be held in person again, although the data could be produced on request if required.

The following Members commented and asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Sam Collins.

Comments from Members included:

- The museum storage project had been ongoing for a significant amount of time and it would be good to see some progress regarding
- somewhere to store the District's many artefacts;
- The Appeal Decision appeared to exclude the development of a crematorium on that site;
- Cabinet would need to give a clear steer on the direction of the crematorium project when next considering it.

The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager confirmed that:

- The Key Projects report would continue to be considered by the Committee at future meetings.

In response to questions from Members, the Service Director – Commercial advised that:

- Costs had been sought from a contractor for the museum storage solution but this had come in significantly over-budget. Alternative options were actively being explored and the Committee would be updated on any progress;
- An options appraisal was being undertaken for the crematorium either on the current site or another location and the aim was for this to go to Cabinet in September.

RESOLVED: That delivery against the key projects for 20/21 be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable achievements against the key projects for 2020/21 to be considered.

14 NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY LOTTERY - NEW POLICIES

Audio recording 44 minutes 24 seconds

The Executive Member for Enterprise, the Arts and Transport introduced the report entitled North Hertfordshire Community Lottery – New Policies together with the following appendix:

- Appendix 1 – Gatherwell Policies

He drew attention to the following:

- The policies went some way to addressing concerns that a Community Lottery would encourage gambling;
- This initiative was an opportunity to raise revenue for the Council at a time when local authority funding was being cut;
- The policies presented in Appendix 1 were mandatory to enable the project to go ahead.

The Service Director - Commercial drew attention to the following:

- The required Gambling Licence would take 16 weeks to obtain and once this was in place the lottery could launch;
- There was a typographical error on page 19 of the Appendix: 'Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames' should read 'North Hertfordshire District Council';
- The lottery was a 'Super Six' lottery, based on the Australian National Lottery – Section 9.1 (page 24) set out how the lottery would work;
- NHDC would be ensuring that the policies made clear that credit cards would not be allowed to be used to play the lottery, to ensure people have the funds prior to buying a ticket;

The following Members asked questions and took part in debate:

- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Daniel Allen;
- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor Carol Stanier;
- Councillor Ruth Brown;
- Councillor Tony Hunter;
- Councillor Sue Ngwala.

Comments raised by Members included:

- Several members had concerns about gambling and the need to have necessary safeguards in place, such as having a policy which limited the amount of tickets any individual could buy;
- Section 9.4 of the Gatherwell Policies stated that, on average, Councils generated £40,000 per annum through their Community Lotteries – this would require a significant number of tickets to be sold;
- The Council needed to be aware of its duty to protect children in the advertising and promotion of the lottery, particularly if the beneficiaries were youth-based charities such as sports clubs;
- The player age could be raised to 18 or 21 to protect children;
- An opportunity to review progress after one year and leave the contract if required would be beneficial;
- There may be an impact on existing charity lotteries around the district who may lose players to the NHDC lottery;
- The Council would need to ensure the policies protected children and young people, for example asking people to tick a box on line to confirm they were over 16 did not seem like a strong enough safeguard for online ticket purchases;
- People could set up multiple accounts online to override the ticket limit per individual;
- Prominent signposting to gambling support agencies should be provided on the ticket website and a message confirming total spend before paying could be included as a further safeguard;
- There was a concern that the Council would be encouraging gambling, albeit in support of good causes, and the end did not justify the means - evidence showed that the people who played lotteries were those who could least likely afford to do so;
- If the break clause was invoked after one year, this could put the Council at risk of losing money;
- When the concept of a lottery was previously discussed, it had been suggested that revenues would be given to the Area Committees to distribute as grants, but this now appeared not to be the case;
- North Herts could look at the safeguards which other Councils had put in place, particularly regarding the safeguarding of children and safeguards over messaging and marketing;
- The Committee did not endorse the recommendations of the Cabinet report at present and encouraged Cabinet to consider if the cost of the lottery was worth the benefit;
- Although some money had been invested in this project, it was not too late to withdraw from it if Cabinet considered this appropriate.

The Service Director - Commercial responded to questions and comments including:

- Further detail regarding how to play the lottery (specifically number matching) could be circulated if required;
- It was anticipated that most people would play the lottery to support local organisations rather than with the objective of winning;
- The project would be reviewed after one year and there was a break clause at one year included in the contract which could be used if necessary;
- The prize fund was maintained by Gatherwell and linked to the 80+ other Councils, so the risk of having to pay out the top prize of £25,000 was with Gatherwell;
- The report which went to Cabinet in December 2020, set out the money anticipated to be generated for good causes and the Council each year. The projection over 6 years was that just under £70,000 would go directly to good causes and just under £13,000 directly to the Council;

- The Commercial Team would speak to contacts in other Councils regarding the safeguarding of children, but this had not been identified as an issue to date and positive feedback had been received from other Councils on Gatherwell's management of the lotteries;
- The key message was that the lottery was being run to support good causes and not as a gamble. The potential return on £1 was small in comparison with other forms of gambling such as sports betting, therefore it was seen as low risk, but these issues would be looked into;

The Executive Member for Enterprise, the Arts and Transport advised:

- There were no guarantees on how much revenue could be raised through the lottery but it represented an extraordinarily low economic risk to the Council and was forecast to generate income from Year 2;
- Careful and sensitive marketing would be required to ensure the Council was advertising the lottery in an appropriate way and not seen to be promoting gambling to people under 18 – this would be looked into further and discussed with the Committee again as required;
- There were existing lottery-funded projects in North Hertfordshire that were used by children;
- It was acknowledged that strong safeguards should be put in place to protect children, young people and the vulnerable;
- Safeguarding of marketing messages would be taken into account and further consideration would be given to how this could be done, as well as looking at the most cost-effective ways of marketing the lottery to reduce any financial risk.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That the age limit for playing the North Hertfordshire Community Lottery should be raised from 16 to 18, should legislation allow;
- (2) That consideration be given to putting a policy in place which would limit any one person to buying no more than £10 worth of tickets per week;
- (3) That the concerns and issues raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as detailed in the minutes of the Committee held on 22 June 2021, be taken into account when making its final decision on adopting these policies and the lottery.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on the report entitled North Hertfordshire Community Lottery – New Policies prior to consideration by Cabinet.

15 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

This item was no longer required as there were no Part 2 papers.

16 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Audio recording – 1 hour 24 minutes 5 seconds

No questions had been submitted.

17 NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY LOTTERY - NEW POLICIES - APPENDICES

It was noted that the Appendices had been included in Part 1 so the Part 2 (restricted) item was no longer required.

The meeting closed at 8.56 pm

Chair

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERONON ROAD, LETCHWORTH
ON TUESDAY, 13TH JULY, 2021 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: David Levett (Chair), Kate Aspinwall, Tony Hunter, Ian Moody, Lisa Nash, Sue Ngwala, Carol Stanier, Claire Strong, Clare Billing (In place of Nigel Mason) and Terry Hone (In place of Jim McNally)*

In Attendance: *Jeanette Thompson (Service Director - Legal and Community), Helen Rae (Community Health and Wellbeing Team Leader), Reuben Ayavoo (Policy and Community Engagement Manager), Chris Jeffery (Interim Customer Service Manager), Hilary Dineen (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager) and Anna Gouveia (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer)*

18 WELCOME

Audio recording – 20 seconds

The Chair welcomed everyone to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting that was being held in the Council Chamber and advised that the meeting was being streamed live on the Council's YouTube channel and some Officers were joining online.

The Chair invited the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer to explain how proceedings would work.

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer undertook a roll call of those officers joining the meeting online to ensure that they could hear and be heard and gave advice regarding the following:

- Rules of Debate;
- Voting; and
- Covid Risk Assessment Measures.

The Chair, Councillor David Levett, started the meeting proper.

19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 2 minutes 9 seconds

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Nigel Mason, Jim McNally, Daniel Allen and Terry Tyler.

Having given due notice, Councillor Clare Billing advised that she would be substituting for Councillor Nigel Mason and Councillor Terry Hone advised that he would be substituting for Councillor Jim McNally.

20 MINUTES - 9 MARCH 2021

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 34 seconds

It was proposed by Councillor David Levett, seconded by Councillor Terry Hone and upon being put to the vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 9 March 2021 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

21 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 23 seconds

There was no other business notified.

22 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 3 minutes 27 seconds

- (1) The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting, especially those who had attended to give a presentation;
- (2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting was being audio recorded as well as filmed. The audio recording would be available on the Council's website and the film recording via the NHDC YouTube channel;
- (3) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question;
- (4) The Chair noted that this would be Hilary Dineen's last meeting as she was retiring in August and he thanked her again for all her hard work for the Committee.

23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 4 minutes 14 seconds

There were no presentations by members of the public.

24 URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 16 seconds

No urgent or general exception items had been received.

25 CALLED-IN ITEMS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 21 seconds.

Since the last meeting, no decisions had been called-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

26 RESOLUTIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Audio recording – 4 minutes 24 seconds

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager presented the report entitled Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and advised of one update as follows:

- Cabinet had considered the Community Lottery – New Policies item on 29 June and decided to postpone its decision on the recommendation to its next meeting on 20 July 2021, following which an update would be provided to the Committee.

Councillor David Levett proposed, Councillor Claire Strong seconded and upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That the report entitled Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and comment on actions and feedback received regarding resolutions previously made.

27 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Audio recording – 5 minutes 37 seconds

The Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager presented the report entitled Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A - Work Programme;
- Appendix B - Forward Plan - 22 June 2021;
- Appendix C - Corporate Peer Challenge Extracts from Action Plan.

She drew attention to the following:

- settle had been invited to attend the next meeting but no response had yet been received, so she undertook to make enquiries to check the appropriate contact;
- In relation to the discussion on the recovery of Town Centres, Members were requested to email Committee Services with anyone they would like to attend this meeting;
- The Annual Review of Safeguarding was listed on the work programme for December but was coming to this meeting;
- The Crime and Disorder meeting was taking place in January 2022, and Members were requested to consider what they would like to discuss so that invitations to the Police and relevant parties could be sent out;
- The Forward Plan was attached at Appendix B and the only item which could be considered by the Committee was the Customer Service Strategy which was already on the Work Programme.

Councillor David Levett proposed, Councillor Ian Moody seconded and it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report entitled Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021/22 be noted;
- (2) That the recommendations of the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To allow the Committee to set a work programme which provides focussed Member oversight, encourages open debate and seeks to achieve service improvement through effective policy development and meaningful policy and service change.

28 ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT 20/2021

Audio recording 8 minutes 19 seconds

The Executive Member for Community Engagement introduced the report entitled Annual Safeguarding Report 20/2021.

She drew attention to the following:

- The Covid-19 pandemic had had a tremendous impact on the number of safeguarding cases of concern;
- In some significant areas the number of referrals had doubled, or more than doubled over the last year, e.g. domestic abuse referrals;
- Regular meetings to consider the situation had been held with the Police and Crime Commissioner and counterparts across the County throughout the pandemic.

The following Members asked questions and took part in debate:

- Councillor Clare Billing;
- Councillor Terry Hone;
- Councillor Tony Hunter;
- Councillor Kate Aspinwall;
- Councillor David Levett.

Comments included:

- Lockdown and the pandemic had increased mental health issues amongst many people and this was not likely to get any better in the short term;
- SADA did an outstanding job and it was good to hear NHDC was supporting them;
- Last time the report had been presented in December, lower reporting levels had been seen due to lockdown;
- Thanks were conveyed to officers for managing the changes brought about by the pandemic. The next 6 to 9 months would be pivotal and the level of referrals was uncertain so the Council would need to be ready to act quickly and flex resources as necessary;
- Safeguarding was acknowledged as being important to the community's recovery from Covid.

The Executive Member for Community Engagement responded to questions and comments as follows:

- NHDC has worked closely with and supported Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA).

The Community Health and Wellbeing Team Leader responded to questions and comments as follows:

- There were a variety of mental health services which vulnerable people in the community could be referred to, depending on their level of need, from psychiatric support to GPs and charities such as Mind;

- NHDC had carried out a successful pilot with SADA in 19/20 in which they picked up all the domestic abuse cases which were originating from the housing team and they were now taking domestic abuse cases from across the authority;
- NHDC had provided financial support for welfare packs;
- NHDC was trialling using SADA to support with modern day slavery cases;
- A number of teams across NHDC had become busier with the increase in referrals;
- Putting SADA in place had hugely increased case management and meant that NHDC had dedicated people managing cases, rather than teams such as housing having to manage alongside their other work;
- Reporting levels were still relatively low but these were expected to increase as more face-to-face meetings took place as lockdown was eased.

The Service Director – Legal and Community drew attention to potential funding from MHCLG which might be available for high level intervention pilots, following the Domestic Abuse Act which came into force in April 2021.

Councillor David Levett proposed, Councillor Kate Aspinwall seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the annual report of progress made against the Council's fulfilment of the statutory duty to maintain an effective safeguarding function with regard to children be noted;
- (2) That the annual report of progress made against the Council's fulfilment of the statutory duty to maintain an effective safeguarding function with regard to adults at risk and the Authority's duties in relation to specific areas such as Prevent and counter terrorism, modern slavery and human trafficking and domestic abuse be noted;
- (3) That it be agreed that sufficient and robust processes are in place at NHDC for application and review of safeguarding processes, and that an annual review and presentation to this Committee should continue.

REASON FOR DECISION: To fulfil the statutory and lawful obligations within the approved budget and officer resources, and to ensure that a regular corporate review exists.

29 COMMUNITY GRANTS POLICY REVIEW, NHDC FUNDING CRITERIA HEALTH PROTECTION BOARD COMMUNITY USE, & REVIEW OF CABINET PANELS' TERM OF REFERENCE

Audio recording 27 minutes 40 seconds

The Executive Member for Community Engagement introduced the report entitled Community Grants Policy Review, NHDC Funding Criteria Health Protection Board Community Use, and Review of Cabinet Panels' Terms of Reference, together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A – Community Grants Criteria 2021
- Appendix B – NHDC-HPB Funding Protocol
- Appendix C – Terms of Reference of Community Grants Panel
- Appendix D – Cabinet Panel on Environment Terms of Reference
- Appendix E – Cabinet Panel Community Terms of Reference
- Appendix F – Cabinet Panel on Place Terms of Reference

She drew attention to the following:

- A review of the grants policy had been a priority since May 2019, with the aim of making it user-friendly and accessible while at the same time rigorous;

- The nature of the way grants were distributed had changed during the pandemic as they became necessary for the survival of organisations as well as for community projects;
- Health Protection Board funding of £100,000 had been provided and a protocol for its distribution was proposed in Appendix B to the report;
- It was proposed that the District Wide Community Facilities Capital and Revenue Grants Panel Terms of Reference be updated to enable it to consider the NHDC/HPB funding applications and make recommendations to the Executive Member for Community Engagement;
- Amendments to the Grants Policy were being proposed to ensure that the demonstration of financial need was as rigorous as possible without being unfriendly or inaccessible, and to ensure that organisations were looking at a range of different funding sources in addition to NHDC.

The Service Director – Legal and Community drew attention to the following:

- Changes to the Terms of Reference of the Cabinet Panels were proposed to reflect the new portfolios and simplify the titles to 'Environment', 'Community' and 'Place';

The following Members asked questions and took part in debate:

- Councillor Carol Stanier;
- Councillor Tony Hunter;
- Councillor David Levett;
- Councillor Lisa Nash;
- Councillor Claire Strong.

Comments raised by Members included:

- NHDC had reviewed the grants policy initially to make it easier and clearer to apply for money via the grants system, but the proposed changes seemed to represent a significant tightening of the criteria;
- The wording of the proposed revision at Paragraph F should be re-considered as it appeared to exclude parish and town councils who could raise their precept;
- The comment at 8.2 which stated: 'Some organisations are able to raise funds through precepts, levies or other fund-raising activities', should be removed as it seemed to exclude parish and town councils;
- Cabinet could also be requested to consider removing the condition in the Community Grants Policy (2.1 A) - List of organisations eligible to apply for grants - referring to Parish, Town and Community Councils which stated 'on condition that the funding is for something that provides Additionality', as this could be interpreted as limiting applications from parish and town councils.

The Executive Member for Community Engagement responded to comments and questions as follows:

- During the pandemic, some organisations had been doing similar work, and so the additional benefit criteria was included to ensure grant applications were considered alongside existing provision by other organisations doing similar work, for example food provision;
- Discussions on how grant applications met the criteria would continue to take place between the Community Engagement Team, Members and the Area Committees;
- There was no intention to exclude parish councils.

The Policy and Community Engagement Manager drew attention to the following:

- The revisions were being proposed to make the most of the funding to stretch it further and make a real difference to those communities that had the greatest need;

- The revisions would enable a rigorous assessment of applications before taking them to Area Committees or District Panels but were not intended to be a barrier to accessing funding.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That the revision of the Grant Policy criteria as set out under section Two for eligibility of organisation (Appendix A) be reconsidered, with the view that Cabinet does not take forward the amendment to Paragraph F.
- (2) That the wording of the following revision of the Grant Policy criteria as set out under section Two for eligibility of organisation (Appendix A) for approval be reconsidered so that it is made clear that Parish, Town and Community Councils may continue to apply for grant funding and that the definition of 'Additionality' be made more clear:

Paragraph A Final Bullet Point - Parish, Town and Community Councils (on condition that the funding is for something that provides Additionality)

- That the definition of 'Additionality', as detailed in Paragraph G, be included in this bullet point.

Paragraph G – 'be able to demonstrate the award of the grant provides 'Additionality' to the service provision of the organisation (i.e. is innovative in nature and beyond the normal scope of the organisation's current activities):

- That the definition of 'Additionality' include clarification as to whether the provision of more of a service already provided would be eligible.

- (3) That Cabinet be requested to take into consideration all the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as listed in the Minutes of its meeting of 15 July 2021, before making its final decision on the revisions to the Grant Policy criteria;
- (4) That the Protocol for the NHDC / Health Protection Board Funding (Appendix B) and be requested to approve the amendments to the District Wide Community Facilities Capital & Revenue Grants Panel (Appendix C) be approved, and;
- (5) That the proposed amendments to the Cabinet Panels' Terms of Reference (Appendices D, E & F) be approved.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on the report entitled Community Grants Policy Review, NHDC Funding Criteria Health Protection Board Community Use, and Review of Cabinet Panels' Terms of Reference prior to consideration by Cabinet.

30 FULL YEAR UPDATE ON COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS (3Cs) 2020-2021

Audio recording 48 minutes 55 seconds

The Leader of the Council introduced the Information Note entitled Full Year Update on Compliments, Comments and Complaints (3Cs) 2020-21, together with the following appendices:

- Appendix A – 3Cs Dashboard 2020 – 2021;
- Appendix B – Breakdown by Service Apr – Mar 2021;
- Appendix C.1 – Social Media Report Apr – Mar 2021 Key Points;
- Appendix C.2 – Social Media Report Apr – Mar 2021.

She drew attention to the following:

- There had been an overall decrease in comments and complaints, and an increase in compliments, in comparison to the previous year;
- It was acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on the number of 3Cs received, particularly as some services such as the leisure centre had been closed for a time;
- The percentage of complaints resolved within 10 days had met the target of 80%;
- A total of 8 complaints had been referred to and resolved by the Local Government Ombudsman, with one upheld but no further action had been required.

The following Members took part in discussion:

- Councillor Claire Strong;
- Councillor David Levett.

Comments included:

- The Information Note should record the fact that 3Cs numbers were significantly down on the previous year due to the unusual circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, including the fact that some services had been closed for part of the year.

Councillor David Levett proposed, Councillor Terry Hone seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Information Note entitled Full Year Update on Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3Cs) and appendices be noted.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To update the Committee on the full year (2020/21) performance regarding the Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3Cs) received for the Council and the Contractors that provide services on the Council's behalf.

31 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Audio recording – 53 minutes 55 seconds

No questions had been submitted.

The meeting closed at 8.54 pm

Chair

RESOLUTIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS

REF	RESOLUTION	RESPONSE/OUTCOME	STATUS
	Task and Finish Group on Community Engagement		
June 20 Min 9 (3)	That the scope of the proposed Task and Finish Group on communication in relation to the Waste Contract be widened to encompass Communication and Engagement generally.	This Task and Finish Group will take place once social distancing and other pressures in regard to the Covid Pandemic have eased	In progress
	LOCAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION		
Mar 21 Min 93 (4)	Recommended to Cabinet: That a Member working group be arranged to discuss the Design and Sustainability SPDs prior to consideration of these by Cabinet	This recommendation was agreed by Cabinet The Strategic Planning Team will organise this when appropriate to do so	In Progress
	COMMUNITY LOTTERY – NEW POLICIES		
Jun 21 Min 14 Page 25	Recommended to Cabinet (1) That the age limit for playing the North Hertfordshire Community Lottery should be raised from 16 to 18, should legislation allow; (2) That consideration be given to putting a policy in place which would limit any one person to buying no more than £10 worth of tickets per week; (3) That the concerns and issues raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as detailed in the minutes of the Committee held on 22 June 2021, be taken into account when making its final decision on adopting these policies and the lottery.	Cabinet considered the recommendations from Cabinet and decided to defer the decision in order to allow more time for Members to consider the options. The Committee will be advised of the decision when it is taken by Cabinet	Completed
	COMMUNITY GRANTS POLICY REVIEW		
13 July Min 29	Recommended to Cabinet: (1) That Cabinet be requested to not take forward the following revision of the Grant Policy criteria as set out under section Two for eligibility of organisation (Appendix A): Paragraph F – ‘be able to demonstrate financial need and that other sources and options for funding have been considered and exhausted before application to the district council’.	This recommendation was agreed by Cabinet; the proposed revision of the Grant Policy Criteria was not taken forward, the Protocols for the NHDC / Health Protection Board Funding and the amendments to the District Wide Community Facilities Capital & Revenue Grants Panel were approved, and the Cabinet Panels’ Terms of Reference were amended.	Completed

REF	RESOLUTION	RESPONSE/OUTCOME	STATUS
Page 26	<p>(2) That Cabinet be requested to consider the following revision of the Grant Policy criteria as set out under section Two for eligibility of organisation (Appendix A) for approval: Paragraph G – ‘be able to demonstrate the award of the grant provides ‘Additionality’ to the service provision of the organisation (i.e. is innovative in nature and beyond the normal scope of the organisation’s current activities)’;</p> <p>(3) That Cabinet be requested to take into consideration all the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as listed in the Minutes of its meeting of 15 July 2021, before making its final decision on the revisions to the Grant Policy criteria;</p> <p>(4) That Cabinet be requested to approve the Protocol for the NHDC / Health Protection Board Funding (Appendix B) and be requested to approve the amendments to the District Wide Community Facilities Capital & Revenue Grants Panel (Appendix C), and;</p> <p>(5) That Cabinet be requested to review the Cabinet Panels’ Terms of Reference and approve the proposed amendments (Appendices D, E & F) or such other amendments as are deemed appropriate.</p>		

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 SEPTEMBER 2021**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2021/22

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE, MEMBER AND SCRUTINY MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE COUNCIL / RESPOND TO CHALLENGES TO THE ENVIRONMENT / ENABLE AN ENTERPRISING AND CO-OPERATIVE ECONOMY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report highlights items scheduled in the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme and items that may be considered in 2021/22. It includes details of those items that have yet to be assigned to a specific meeting.
- 1.2 The work programme includes both items previously agreed by the Committee and those that the Committee is required by the Constitution to consider.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee prioritises proposed topics for inclusion in the work programme attached as Appendix A and, where appropriate, determines the high level form and timing of scrutiny input.
- 2.2 That the Committee, having considered the Forward Plan attached as Appendix B, suggests a list of items to be considered at its meeting on 14 December 2021 and beyond.
- 2.3 That the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan Extract as attached as Appendix C be considered.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To allow the Committee to set a work programme which provides focussed Member oversight, encourages open debate and seeks to achieve service improvement through effective policy development and meaningful policy and service change.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Committee has varied its approach to overview and scrutiny activity over recent years. Currently it seeks to enter the process of policy development at an early stage and consequently may consider items associated with service action plans.
- 4.2 The need to observe Constitutional requirements and monitor the Forward Plan for appropriate items to scrutinise remains a key aspect of work programming.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Each Committee meeting includes the opportunity for Members to comment on and input to the Committee's work programme.

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.
- 6.2 The Committee is asked to review the Forward Plan at each regular meeting to identify potential issues for inclusion in the work programme. Identification of a focus for the Committee's future activity should be identified at this stage wherever possible.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 In line with the recommendation of the Corporate Peer Challenge 2020 Executive Members are invited to present reports that fall under their remit and to make presentations on specific issues that the Committee wish to consider.
- 7.2 The Committee now considers a wide range of issues, where appropriate, commencing its reviews early in the policy development process. By doing this it seeks to ensure assumptions are challenged at an early stage, mistakes are avoided and eventual outcomes provide optimal benefit to the community.
- 7.3 The Committee seeks to ensure that consideration of agenda items minimises additional burdens on staff resources. Wherever possible, requests are made for the presentation of documents already in existence rather than the production of new documents specifically for the Committee.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Work Programme

- 8.1 The Committee's work programme for the year requires reviewing at each meeting and direction is sought from the Committee on the items they wish adding. Appendix A contains the work programme for 2021/22
- 8.2 When considering additional topics, their risk assessment and prioritisation will ensure that the most appropriate items are taken forward to the work programme.

Forward Plan

- 8.3 The Forward Plan for 31 August 2021 is attached at Appendix B for consideration.

Corporate Peer Challenge

- 8.4 The Committee agreed at the meeting held on 14 July 2020 that the actions regarding the Overview and Scrutiny Committee included in the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan be appended to all future reports in order to:

- Act as an aide memoire when considering the work programme;
- Consider any actions that need further work;
- Asses the effectiveness of changes made.

- 8.5 The Committee is asked to consider the Action Plan and any updates provided at Appendix C.

- 8.6 In respect of line 56 regarding formal training for Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee training options are being explored for provision in the new Civic Year.

- 8.7 Members are asked to contact the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager if they have any particular suggestions regarding this proposed training.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Under Section 6.2.5 of the Constitution, the Committee is responsible for setting its own work programme. However, it must ensure it retains sufficient capacity within the programme to meet its statutory obligations.

- 9.2 Section 6.2.7 (u) of the Constitution allows the Committee “to appoint time limited task and finish Topic Groups to undertake detailed scrutiny work and report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet.”

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Dependent on how they are applied in practice, the scope of the options presented in Sections 7 and 8 have the potential to be wide reaching. As detailed Section 14, Human Resource Implications, the wider the reach, the more significant the impact on officer time in terms of report writing, data analysis and committee meeting attendance. Given recent funding pressures and the consequent reduction in officer numbers, significant requests to support scrutiny work will limit officer time available to spend on activities such as identifying and delivering cost reductions, income generation and project management.

- 10.2 Although not significant, a committee attendance allowance of £25.17 per officer per evening meeting is payable to officers in attendance. This is in addition to providing time off in lieu, or overtime as an alternative.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Effective overview and scrutiny of policy, administrative, service delivery and expenditure decisions helps reduce the risk of an inappropriate decision being made. The scope and time frame for scrutiny interventions should be considered in the light of the potential impact of inappropriate scrutiny leading to decisions not being made, inappropriately made or not made at the right time.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their 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 There are no direct equality implications arising from the report. Effective scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that local government remains transparent, accountable and open which ensures that the delivery of public services benefits all aspects of the community, where practical.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 The widening of the reach of scrutiny reviews has the potential to significantly impact on officer time in terms of the reprioritisation of already agreed projects, their scope or timetabling and resources. There is also the potential for additional resource requirements in relation to report writing, information collection and analysis and committee attendance. Delivery of service plans to achieve the Council’s agreed Corporate Plan objectives might, therefore, be potentially negatively impacted.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix A – Work Programme for future Committee meetings
- 15.2 Appendix B – Forward Plan for 31 August 2021
- 15.3 Appendix C – Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan in regard to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

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16.4 Human Resources
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17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

17.1. Previous reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and forward plans.

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PROGRAMME FOR FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2021-22

<p>14 September 2021</p>	<p>Resolutions Report Work Programme Presentation by Settle 1st Quarter Performance against PIs 1st Quarter Key Projects Discussion on the recovery of the Town Centres following the pandemic Customer Service Strategy</p>
<p>14 December 2021</p>	<p>Resolutions Report Work Programme Commercial Update 3Cs Half Year Report</p>
<p>18 January 2022</p>	<p>Crime and Disorder Matters Resolutions Report Work Programme Priorities for the District – Key Projects Half Year Monitoring 2nd Quarter Performance against PIs</p>
<p>15 March 2022</p>	<p>Resolutions Report Work Programme Annual Report Commercial Update New PIs for 2021/22 Priorities For The District – Key Projects 2021/22 3rd Quarter PIs 3rd Quarter Key projects</p>
	<p>To be Scheduled. Invitation to: LEP Devolution & Recovery White Paper Update (Once White Paper is published)</p>

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Forward Plan of Key Decisions - 31 August 2021

The Forward Plan contains brief details of Key Decisions that the Council is likely to take over the next four month period and beyond. You will also find details of contacts who can provide further information and hear your views. **Please note that the dates of some of the decisions may change from month to month, please check with Committee, Member and Scrutiny Services on (01462) 474655 before deciding to attend a meeting.**

Decision required	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Documents to be submitted to Decision Maker	Contact Officer from whom documents can be requested	Confirmation that other documents may be submitted to the Decision Maker	Procedure for requesting details of other documents
SELECTION OF FUNDS TO BE INVESTED IN			Not before 20th Aug 2021		Ian Couper, Service Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
QUARTERLY RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE AND ANNUAL REVIEW OF RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK		Cabinet	21 Sep 2021		Rachel Cooper, Controls, Risk and Performance Manager rachel.cooper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
BUSINESS RATE POOLING		Cabinet	21 Sep 2021		Ian Couper, Service Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
DE-COMMISSION OF LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (LSP)		Cabinet	21 Sep 2021		Reuben Ayavoo, Policy and Community Engagement Manager reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY		Cabinet	21 Sep 2021		Chris Jeffery, Interim Customer Service Manager chris.jeffery@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6

Decision required	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Documents to be submitted to Decision Maker	Contact Officer from whom documents can be requested	Confirmation that other documents may be submitted to the Decision Maker	Procedure for requesting details of other documents
FIRST QUARTER REVENUE MONITORING 2021/22		Cabinet	21 Sep 2021		Antonio Ciampa, Accountancy Manager antonio.ciampa@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
FIRST QUARTER INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) REVIEW 2021/22		Cabinet	21 Sep 2021		Ian Couper, Service Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
PREMATORIUM PROJECT – NEXT STEPS AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE		Cabinet	21 Sep 2021		Chloe Gray, Commercial Officer chloe.gray@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
HERTFORDSHIRE BUILDING CONTROL CONSORTIUM		Cabinet Sub-Committee (Local Authority Trading Companies' Shareholder)	5 Oct 2021		Ian Fullstone, Service Director - Regulatory ian.fullstone@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
SECOND QUARTER REVENUE MONITORING 2021/22		Cabinet	21 Dec 2021		Ian Couper, Service Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
INVESTMENT STRATEGY		Cabinet	21 Dec 2021		Ian Couper, Service Director - Resources	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in

Decision required	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Documents to be submitted to Decision Maker	Contact Officer from whom documents can be requested	Confirmation that other documents may be submitted to the Decision Maker	Procedure for requesting details of other documents
(CAPITAL AND TREASURY) MID-YEAR REVIEW 2021/22					ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk		Column 6
HOUSING DELIVERY TEST ACTION PLAN		Cabinet	21 Dec 2021		Nigel Smith, Strategic Planning Manager nigel.smith@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
FUTURE WASTE INFRASTRUCTURE		Cabinet	21 Dec 2021		Chloe Hipwood, Shared Service Manager – Waste & Recycling chloe.hipwood@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
LOCAL PLAN INSPECTOR'S REPORT		Cabinet	21 Dec 2021		Nigel Smith, Strategic Planning Manager nigel.smith@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6

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EXTRACT OF ITEMS ON THE CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN THAT RELATE TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

		Recommendation	Action	Led by	Timescale	Update
ONGOING ACTIONS						
28	Organisational Leadership and Governance	Peers understand that the full performance report is sent to councillors one month before O&S to provide the opportunity for requesting the appropriate lead executive member and officer to attend O&S to be accountable for questioning. This opportunity has never been requested and should be used in order to strengthen the debate and challenge at O&S.	Agreed. Chair of Overview and Scrutiny to remind committee members of this opportunity	Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Controls, Risk and Performance Manager	Ongoing	Members receive the Performance Indicator report one month before the meeting. Members are reminded to contact the Controls, Risk and Performance Manager at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting date if they wish a particular indicator to be considered in more detail
54	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Future meetings would benefit from taking a longer-term view of the key issues for the district (not just focussing on the next immediate meeting), fewer, more targeted agenda items, and be focused on key areas informed by performance reports and a forward work plan. Fewer agenda items will support more allocated time for meaningful scrutiny and related debate.	Agreed. To be taken forward as part of the training for the committee members	Chair and vice chair of O+S Scrutiny support	Ongoing	The Committee to bear this in mind when considering the work programme

56	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	It is recommended that all O&S members undertake formal training to ensure a robust base of skills and expertise can be deployed in the O&S environment.	Formal scrutiny training has previously been provided to the Committee, but given changes to committee membership agree it makes sense to put in place further training and ensure that any new members receive training in the future	Chair and Vice Chair of O+S Scrutiny support Member training champions	Pending	Various training options are being explored for provision in the new Civic Year.
57	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Use the task and finish programme to support early engagement and involvement with policy making.	Agreed. To be taken forward by the Leader (on behalf of Cabinet) and Chair and vice chair of Overview and Scrutiny, to discuss work programme	Leader Chair and Vice Chair of O+S Scrutiny support	Ongoing	The Chair and Vice-Chair have met with the Leader. The Chair to provide an update
58	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	It is recommended that finish times should be agreed in the constitution and meetings end promptly at those times. There was a concern around individual personal effectiveness, accessibility, external public perception and health & safety / personal welfare of both members and officers from such excessively long and late meetings.	Moving meeting times is not supported politically at the current time due to concerns it may dissuade people with caring responsibilities from standing to be Councillors. Alternative of allowing officers to attend meetings virtually from home to be explored A 'guillotine' provision on committee meetings is not supported politically at the current time due to concerns it might stifle debate. It is proposed that this is considered once the other recommendations have been	Service Director Legal and Community Member training champions	Pending	

			<p>implemented regarding work programme, training and chairing of meetings to establish whether it remains an issue or has been resolved by other action.</p> <p>Training is provided to Chairs and Vice Chairs, but this could be reviewed to ensure that Chairs and Vice Chairs are able to confidently manage meetings to ensure they proceed in a timely manner</p>			
59	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Peers recommend clarification of the governance arrangements between O&S and cabinet panels.	Proposal to Full Council to clarify relationship	Group Leaders Monitoring Officer	Annual Council (May/June 2020)	
60	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Ensure the O&S forward work plan includes scrutiny of external partners and contractors as a contribution to the leadership of 'place'.	Agreed as recommendation	Chair and Vice Chair of O+S Scrutiny support	Immediate & Ongoing	The Committee have identified two partner organisations. Further work is needed to consider the format and timing.
COMPLETED ACTIONS						
27	Organisational Leadership and Governance	The peer team were surprised that only low / negative PI's were debated at O&S and those reports were shared publicly. Publishing positive performance alongside	Agreed. Reports will reflect this going forwards	Chair and Vice Chair Overview and Scrutiny Committee Controls, Risk and Performance Manager		The Controls, Risk and Performance Manager is now presenting the complete report to the Committee.

		amber and red performance would provide the public with a rounded summary of performance, allowing NHDC to outwardly celebrate what is being delivered to agreed performance levels.				This can now be marked as complete
53	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Executive members should lead at O&S and be visibly accountable for decisions and performance.	Agreed as recommendation	Executive Members	Immediate	Executive Members are now presenting reports under their remit This can now be marked as complete
55	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	The current membership of O&S was considered to be too large and would benefit from reducing from 15 members to 11 or 9.	Proposal to Full Council to reduce Committee size to 12	Group Leaders Monitoring Officer	Annual Council (May/June 2020)	The Committee membership was reduced from 16 to 12 at Annual Council on 4 June 2020 This can now be marked as complete



2021/22 Quarter 1 PI Data

For 2021/22, NHDC will report 21 corporate performance indicators. This report presents these indicators and displays data for the latest period that officers have updated and activated on Pentana.

Performance indicator data is cumulative and represents performance between 1 April 2021 and the latest reporting period. Where available, the commentary for an indicator will include national benchmarking data. When annual targets were set, any relevant national minimum requirements were considered.

Key for the Report







Status	
	Data value has met or exceeded the target figure
	Data value has not achieved the target figure, but it is within the agreed tolerance range
	Data value has not achieved the target figure and it is outside the agreed tolerance range
	Data value is for information only and a traffic light status is not applicable









Direction of Travel	
	Data value has improved compared with the same time last year
	Data value has deteriorated compared with the same time last year
	Data value has not changed compared with the same time last year
N/A	A direction of travel is not applicable, as data for the performance indicator commenced in 2021/22


Summaries







Status Summary – Q1 2021/22		Direction of Travel Summary – Q1 2021/22	
	6		10
	1		8
	2		2
	11	N/A	0

Data collection and reporting for one indicator (REG3) is currently suspended.

Row No.	PI Code	Title	Last Update	Data Value	Target	Status	Direction of Travel	Commentary
Executive Member for Finance and IT								
1	RES 1	Electricity and gas energy consumption (kWh) - 100% of reported energy consumption is from green energy sources	Q1 2021/22	490,941	542,060		 Q1 20/21 417,619	Electricity = 251,143 Gas = 239,798 The target relates to energy usage in the District Council Offices but also covers our entire portfolio of Buildings. The DCO continues to be in partial use due to Covid-19 and the associated increase in the number of staff permanently homeworking, however staff are beginning to return to the office. Air conditioning is running, and ventilation levels have been increased in the Museum. Increased use of the Splashparks and the particularly cold weather in April also contributed to increased usage. Further analysis of energy usage by building is also being undertaken.
2	MI P&R 001	Percentage of raised sales invoices due for payment that have been paid	June 2021	91.46%	97%		 June 20 43.00%	As of 30 June 2021: Total value of invoices raised by NHDC - £1,762,495 Total value of invoices raised by NHDC that were not due for payment yet - £216,867 Total value of payments received for invoices raised by NHDC - £1,413,672 Collection levels continue to be affected by Covid; however, we are showing an improving position from 80.38% in April to 91.46% in June 2021.
3	BV 9	Percentage of council tax collected in year	June 2021	29.1%	25.5%		 June 20 28.72%	£28,574,436.81/£98,191,109.45











4	BV 10	Percentage of NNDR collected in year	June 2021	26.01%	25.5%		 June 20 26.29%	£7,978,632.00/£30,669,900.70
Leader of the Council								
5	BV 12a	Working days lost due to short-term sickness absence per FTE employee	June 2021	0.65	0.78		 June 20 0.40	200.05 FTE short-term sickness days 306.13 average FTEs The LGA Workforce Survey data that has previously been provided for benchmarking purposes has been suspended.
6	BV 12b	Working days lost due to long-term sickness absence per FTE employee	June 2021	0.91	Not Applicable		 June 20 0.54	277.35 FTE long-term sickness days 306.13 average FTEs The LGA Workforce Survey data that has previously been provided for benchmarking purposes has been suspended.
Executive Member for Housing and Environmental Health								
7	REG 1	Rate of homelessness prevention	Q1 2021/22	38.46%	Not Applicable		 Q1 20/21 81.25%	Q1 data shows a significant drop in the rate of prevention compared to this time last year. There are a number of variables/influencing factors and it is challenging to identify (with any certainty) the reasons for the lower number of outcomes (i.e., the number of prevention duty's that ended in the quarter). Further analysis is being undertaken throughout Q2 with the advantage of more data to identify if there is some sort of readjustment and/or to identify any underlying reasons. During Q1 2021/22, there were 39 cases where a Prevention Duty ended. Of these, 15 ended with a positive outcome, i.e., where homelessness was prevented. 12 cases went on to be owed a Relief Duty. Hertfordshire Benchmarking Source: HCLIC

								<p>Percentage of Prevention Duty positive outcomes</p> <p>Rolling average for latest four quarters</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><u>Period</u></th> <th><u>NHDC</u></th> <th><u>Hertfordshire</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2020/21</td> <td>69%</td> <td>44%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Note that the above figures are partly pre-Covid-19 and therefore this needs to be considered when assessing Q1 2021/22 performance levels.</p>	<u>Period</u>	<u>NHDC</u>	<u>Hertfordshire</u>	Q3 2020/21	69%	44%
<u>Period</u>	<u>NHDC</u>	<u>Hertfordshire</u>												
Q3 2020/21	69%	44%												
8	REG 2	Rate of homelessness relief	Q1 2021/22	29.89%	Not Applicable		<p>↑</p> <p>Q1 20/21 26.13%</p>	<p>During Q1 2021/22, there were 87 cases where a Relief Duty ended. Of these, 26 ended with a positive outcome, i.e., where the Relief Duty ended because households were successfully rehoused. A further 24 cases were subsequently owed a main housing duty, under which the Council must provide suitable long-term accommodation.</p> <p>Breakdown of the 61 relief cases that ended in a non-accommodation outcome by reason:</p> <p>56 days elapsed – 46 households Contact lost – 7 Application withdrawn – 8</p> <p>Final outcomes for the 46 cases where the Relief Duty ended because 56 days elapsed:</p> <p>Main housing duty owed – 24 households Found to be not in priority need – 20 Found to be intentionally homeless – 1 Not homeless – 1</p> <p>Hertfordshire Benchmarking</p> <p>Source: HCLIC</p> <p>Percentage of Relief Duty positive outcomes</p> <p>Rolling average for latest four quarters</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th><u>Period</u></th> <th><u>NHDC</u></th> <th><u>Hertfordshire</u></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q3 2020/21</td> <td>33%</td> <td>31%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Note that the above figures are partly pre-Covid-19 and therefore this needs to be</p>	<u>Period</u>	<u>NHDC</u>	<u>Hertfordshire</u>	Q3 2020/21	33%	31%
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Q3 2020/21	33%	31%												

									considered when assessing Q1 2021/22 performance levels.	
9	LI 035a	Number of households living in temporary accommodation	Q1 2021/22	98	Not Applicable		Q1 20/21 93		98 households were in temporary accommodation as of 30 June 2021, of which, 28 were in hotel accommodation. Hertfordshire Benchmarking Source: HCLIC Number of households in temporary accommodation at the end of the period Period NHDC Hertfordshire Average Q3 2020/21 115 105* *Excludes Broxbourne as figures unavailable.	
10	REG 3	Percentage of Environmental Health programmed inspections completed	Data collection and reporting is currently suspended.							Collection and reporting of REG3 data is currently suspended due to resources being diverted to Covid related work and covering long-term sickness absence. Reporting will recommence when resourcing has returned to a "business-as-usual" position.
Executive Member for Planning										
11	DC 001a	Number of planning applications taken to appeal due to 'non-determination' within the statutory time period, which were allowed	Q1 2021/22	0	Not Applicable		Q1 20/21 0		No applications were taken to appeal due to 'non-determination'.	
12	DC 002	Number of planning applications where the fee has been refunded due to the application not being determined within 26 weeks	Q1 2021/22	0	0		Q1 20/21 0		No fees have been refunded.	

13	LI 032a	Number of allowed planning appeal decisions	Q1 2021/22	2	Not Applicable		Q1 20/21 0	Out of three appeal decisions made, two were allowed. The other appeal was dismissed.																								
Executive Member for Environment and Leisure																																
14	MI LI 015	Number of visits to leisure facilities	June 2021	171,823	80,355		June 20 0	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Facility</th> <th>2021/22</th> <th>2020/21</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>North Herts LC</td> <td>66,835</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fearnhill</td> <td>1,729</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Letchworth OP</td> <td>9,147</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hitchin SC</td> <td>29,632</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Archers</td> <td>19,759</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Royston LC</td> <td>44,721</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>171,823</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Facility	2021/22	2020/21	North Herts LC	66,835	0	Fearnhill	1,729	0	Letchworth OP	9,147	0	Hitchin SC	29,632	0	Archers	19,759	0	Royston LC	44,721	0		171,823	0
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Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management																																
15	NI 191	Kg residual waste per household	Q1 2021/22	93kg	84kg		Q1 20/21 106kg	<p>Still awaiting some tonnage data from HCC and therefore the reported figure may be subject to minor change.</p> <p>Consumer habits continue to be affected by the pandemic, affecting both residual waste and recycling tonnages, and it is unlikely that this target will be met for the foreseeable future. Our communications work will focus on food waste which still makes up the majority of the residual waste bin. However, communication work is still limited to social media.</p> <p>National benchmarking data was suspended due to Covid-19 but is due to re-commence with Q1 2021/22 data.</p>																								
16	NI 192	Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling, and composting	Q1 2021/22	59.34%	60%		Q1 20/21 51.82%	<p>See commentary for NI191</p> <p>National benchmarking data was suspended due to Covid-19 but is due to re-commence with Q1 2021/22 data.</p>																								

2021/22 Quarter 1 PI Data

17	FW 1	Overall tonnage of food waste collected	Q1 2021/22	1,225	Not Applicable		 Q1 20/21 556	
18	GW 1	Overall tonnage of garden waste collected	Q1 2021/22	3,268	Not Applicable		 Q1 20/21 2,285	
19	PLA 01	Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of domestic household waste	June 2021	69	Not Applicable		 June 20 83	
20	PLA 02	Number of missed domestic waste collections (valid complaints)	June 2021	1,314	Not Applicable		 June 20 1,220	April 2021 519 May 2021 368 June 2021 427
21	PLA 03	Total number of domestic waste collections (figures vary according to the number of collection days in the month)	June 2021	1,916,243	Not Applicable		 June 20 1,464,643	April 2021 649,943 May 2021 587,001 June 2021 679,299

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
14 SEPTEMBER 2021**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

**TITLE OF REPORT – 1ST QUARTER MONITORING REPORT ON KEY PROJECTS FOR
2021 - 22**

REPORT OF: THE CONTROLS, RISK AND PERFORMANCE MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT COUNCIL /
BUILD THRIVING AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES / RESPOND TO CHALLENGES TO THE
ENVIRONMENT / ENABLE AN ENTERPRISING AND CO-OPERATIVE ECONOMY /
SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF GOOD QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE HOMES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This monitoring report provides a 1st quarter update on the delivery of the key projects for 21/22, first identified to the Committee in March 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That delivery against the key projects for 21/22 be noted and commented on by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To enable achievements against the key projects for 2021/22 to be considered.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

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

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. No external consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this report as it is a monitoring report. Members will, however, be aware that a report setting out the key projects was brought to this Committee on 16 March 2021.





6. FORWARD PLAN

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

7. BACKGROUND

7.1. This report provides details on the status of the key projects for 21/22. It does not include any projects initiated after the document was agreed and is not a full report on all the projects that the Council is undertaking

7.2. This report summarises the status of each of the key projects. The following symbols have been used to summarise progress.

Status key	
	Project Halted / funding not available/ Extremely Late
	Project behind original due date/ unlikely to hit original due date.
	Project not due for completion in this year or has not reached due date
	Project Completed.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1. The 1st Quarter monitoring report against key projects for 2021/22 is included in Appendix A.

8.2. Appendix A includes the original milestones which were reported to this Committee in March 2021 and progress made against those actions. In addition, updates may have been provided to Executive Members and where relevant through the Members Information Service. Progress against some, will also have been monitored through the Capital monitoring reports to the Finance Audit and Risk Committee and to Cabinet.

8.3. For Q1, 14 projects are being reported, 10 with Green status, 3 with Amber status and 1 with Red Status.

8.4 **Renovate Play area, Howard Park, Letchworth - Amber** – Delivery of the project at Howard Park has been delayed due to supply issues brought about as a consequence of Brexit. The Howard Garden Play Equipment has been received and is now in storage. The plan is to commence works on site mid- September once the paddling pool closes.

8.5 **Development of a Crematorium in North Hertfordshire – Moved from Amber to Red-** The new Inquiry took place on 22/02/2021. A decision was received week commencing 19 April 2021 and our appeal against refusal of outline planning permission was dismissed. A top-level options report is due to be presented to Cabinet on 21 September 2021. Executive Members are being briefed.

- 8.6 **Develop Long Term Museum Storage Solution – Amber** - The indicative cost plan obtained, contrasts with earlier feasibility studies for the development of additional facilities in this location and suggests an overall cost of the development in excess of the identified budget. Officers are currently investigating alternative use for the rest of the plot to see if there is an opportunity to provide a commercial use at the site to help offset some of the additional cost. Once commercial investigations are completed, officers will undertake a procurement to source alternative quotes for the overall scheme and gain a clear picture of the costs involved.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. No direct legal implications arise from this report. Legal implications for the projects listed in Appendix A are considered as part of those projects and will include (but are not limited to) governance, property, planning, and contractual issues. Under the Local Government Act 2000 there is a legal requirement for Councils operating Executive arrangements to appoint an overview and scrutiny committee with remit to review decisions and other actions.
- 9.2. Overview and Scrutiny's terms of reference include at paragraph 6.2.7(s) of the Constitution "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". This report gives the Committee an opportunity to comment on progress made against the projects that have been identified for delivery against the Council's objectives.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are no specific revenue implications.
- 10.2. The actions identified were resourced through the corporate business planning process cycle for 2021/22 that was undertaken in 2020/21. A number of these projects formed part of the Council's capital programme for 2021/22.
- 10.3. The Council continues to face difficult spending decisions in view of the expected reduction in government support in future years and the availability of funding continues to impact on the projects that can be undertaken.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The Lead Officer for each project is responsible for identifying any risks to the successful delivery of the Project
- 11.2. Any major projects are identified as Corporate Risks for the Council and these are monitored by Risk Management Group and the Finance Audit and Risk Committee. These include the Local Plan.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their 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 key projects for 2020/21 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 enables the Council to fulfil a number of obligations arising from the Public Sector Equality Duty.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report. Environmental Impact Assessments will be undertaken where required for individual projects.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 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.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – 1st Quarter Monitoring against Key Projects for 2021/2022

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS





18.1 None.





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Appendix A – 2021/2022 reporting against Projects identified in the Council Plan – as at 17/08/2021

For **Q1 2021/2022** North Hertfordshire District Council is reporting against 14 Projects to support the Council Plan 2021 - 26







Key for the Report



Status key	
	Project Halted / Funding not available / Extremely Late
	Project behind original due date/ unlikely to hit original due date.
	Project not due for completion in year / has not reached due date
	Project Completed.




Status	Q1	Summary of Movement this Qtr.
	1	Crematorium project has moved from Amber to Red
	3	
	10	
	0	
Total	14	




- Where projects are b/f from previous years, their status is retained until they are complete – to ensure transparency




Projects supporting the Council Plan 2021/2026


	Portfolio	Corporate Objective	Milestones for Completion in 2021 Year	Due Date Where available	Status	Comments
Status – COMPLETE - 0						
Status – GREEN -10						
Refurbishment of lifts at Lairage Car Park – Project will span more than 1 year (capital programme)	Finance and IT	A More Welcoming and Inclusive Council	Determine requirements  Procurement of Contractor  Practical completion	Summer 2020 Dec 2020 December 2021		Milestone complete Contract signed 11/12/2020 2021 Rubax Lifts Limited started work on the 17 June 2021 to replace the lifts at Hitchin multi-storey car park. The works will be carried out in stages so there will always be a lift in operation. It's anticipated that all the works will be completed by the end of December 2021.
Set up Community Tree Planting Programme (Council Plan)			Order Trees Finalise arrangements for receipt and storage of tree stock	30/04/2021  12/05/2021 		The project is on track and all milestones to date have been met.





			Commenced initial promotion of scheme – expressions of interest	25/06/2021 		
			Investigate options and finalise distribution arrangements	31/08/2021		
			Commence full promotion of scheme	01/09/2021		
			Receipt of tree stock	30/11/2021		
			Distribution of trees to the community – 01/12/21 to 31/03/22	31/03/2022		
Preparation of a Cycle and Walking Strategy (Capital Programme)	Planning & Transport		Working in partnership with HCC on the Preparation of Local Cycling, Walking & Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) – with identified schemes for implementation post 2021.	Nov 2021		NHDC and HCC are currently in the process of producing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for the district. LCWIPs were identified in the DfT's first Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (2017) as a new strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements at a local level. By having an adopted LCWIP, this will enable both NHDC and HCC to be in a stronger position to bid for any future Government funding opportunities. Work commenced in December 2020 with an officer working group meeting fortnightly and it is anticipated to be completed in Autumn 2021.

<p>Trial / Experimental EV Charging Points in North Herts (Council Plan)</p>			<p>Adoption of EV Strategy and associated Action Plan in accordance with the Review and adoption of NHDC Climate Change Strategy.</p> <p>Roll out of Trail/Experimental EV charging points together with seeking suitable funding opportunities for delivery</p>	<p>December 2021</p> <p>March 2022</p>		<p>Now that the Revised Climate Change Strategy has been adopted the EV Strategy can start to take form. HCC are no longer partnering with NHDC, so approach will need to be updated for actions NHDC will be able to take, particularly in light of resource issues within the service area.</p>
<p>Roll out separated recycling across the district, including bins in Parks and Green Spaces (Council Plan)</p> <p>Project will span more than one year.</p>	<p>Waste, Recycling & Environment</p>		<p>Roll out recycling bins in Great Ashby</p> <p>Investigate funding options for further roll out in towns and rural areas</p>	<p>March 2022</p>		<p>Due to Covid and other issues, the planned audit has been delayed until later this year. Future provision requirements to be determined following the audit.</p>
<p>Provide Housing at Market Rents</p>	<p>Enterprise and Co-operative</p>					<p>The utilities have not yet given firm dates for the completion of their work at Harkness Court. It is currently anticipated that the work will be completed by the end of August 2021. Likewise, the current</p>

(Capital Programme)						expectation is that the main contractor work will be completed by mid-September 2021.
Introduce a North Herts Community Lottery	Enterprise and Co-operative		Obtain License	31/10/2021		The License Application has been submitted. The process can now take up to 16 weeks for the license to be approved.
			Run engagement events	12/11/2021		
			Go Live	31/01/2022		
Disposal of surplus assets (Remove maintenance obligation and generate capital receipts) Will span more than one Financial year. (capital programme)	Enterprise and Co-operative	Enable an Enterprising & Co-operative Economy	Land at Clare Crescent, Baldock	31/03/2022		Cabinet approved the intention to dispose of land on 20/07/2021. Estates are now in negotiations for the sale of the land. A report to Cabinet will be produced once negotiations are complete, seeking approval for the sale.
			Land adjacent 1 North End, Kelshall; 	31/03/2021		
			Land adjacent 9 North End, Kelshall;	31/03/2022		

			<p>Land at The Green, Ashwell Road, Newnham;</p> 	31/08/2021		<p>Highway's consent are granted, NHDC will aim to sell its freehold interest in this site following an open marketing exercise. Difficult to be precise on expected disposal date but estimate Quarter 4 of Financial Year 2021-22.</p> <p>The sale of land adjacent to The Green, Ashwell Road, Newnham completed on 29 June 2021.</p>
<p>Develop and Implement a cohesive Empty Homes Strategy</p> <p>(project will span more than 1 year)</p>			<p>Develop Strategy</p> <p>Further Milestones to follow on.</p>	31/03/2022		<p>The draft Strategy has been written and is currently being reviewed, prior to being taken to Cabinet for approval. More detailed milestones can then be determined to enable implementation.</p>
<p>Acquisition of Property investments</p> <p>(capital programme)</p>	Enterprise and Co-operative	Enable an Enterprising & Co-operative Economy	<p>Continue to explore opportunities to improve the financial viability of property letting company and seek to explore other opportunities for trading companies.</p> <p>The commercial team will explore acquisition</p>			<p>The Commercial team continue to explore acquisition opportunities and if they meet the acquisition criteria, each one will require a business case to seek approval for the Council to proceed. Recently the Council bid for an investment opportunity (Leasehold for the Garden Square Shopping Centre) but was unfortunately outbid by another company. A financial assessment has been undertaken for Harkness Court to</p>

			opportunities, if they meet the acquisition criteria each one will require a business case to seek approval for the Council to proceed.			be moved into the Property Letting Company, which demonstrates it is viable. Officers are now seeking legal advice with regards to the company structure and how it is set up. Once this work has been completed a full business case will be developed. Currently, it is hard to set a definite timeframe for finalising the company structure and completing the business case, as we need external advice and at the moment, we do not know how long this might take. The current estimate is that it could be completed in 3-4 months.
Status – AMBER - 3						
Examination and Adoption of the Local Plan 2011 - 2031 (b/f form previous year)	Planning and Transport	Build Thriving & Resilient Communities	Milestones and dates will depend on the Planning Inspectorate Consultation on Main Modifications following March 2021 Cabinet Letter from the Inspector Full Council for adoption of the Local Plan			The consultation period on further proposed main modifications has now ended. NHDC administers the consultation on behalf of the Inspector and so there is some processing and reviewing to be done before the representations get returned to him. The aim is to get them back within the next few weeks. The next steps are up to the Inspector, but – subject to no significant new issues being raised – he has previously indicated his intention to move to issuing his report. Officers are currently working to an assumption of receiving his report in Autumn 2021 and a Council decision on adoption following receipt. All information has been added to the Councils website at the link below. www.north-herts.gov.uk/localplan

Develop long term museum storage solution To equip the museum service with a sustainable storage solution suitable for the effective management of the collection for the foreseeable future. (capital programme) Project will span more than 1 year	Enterprise and Co-operative	Build Thriving & Resilient Communities	Develop Fully Costed Proposal Further Milestones to follow	Nov 2020		Having fully established the needs and potential layout for the museum storage facility, NHDC has engaged with a developer via a framework to gain a more accurate idea of costs. The indicative cost plan sent back contrasted with earlier feasibility studies for the development of additional facilities in this location and suggested an overall cost of the development in excess of the identified budget. Officers are currently investigating whether this can be offset through commercial use of the rest of the plot or through the sourcing of grant funding. Once commercial investigations are completed, officers will undertake a procurement to source alternative quotes for the overall scheme and gain a clear picture of the costs involved.
Renovate play area Howard Park, Letchworth (capital programme b/f from previous year)	Environment & Leisure	Build Thriving & Resilient Communities	Consultation on Design  Complete renovation	10/08/2020 30/11/2021		The Howard Garden Play Equipment has been received and is now in storage. The plan is to commence works on site mid-September once the paddling pool closes.
Status RED - 1						
Development of a Crematorium in	Environment & Leisure		Appeal Hearing	13/05/20		Central Bedfordshire refused the outline planning application in March 2019.

<p>North Hertfordshire (b/f from previous year)</p>			<p>Obtain outline planning permission from Central Beds</p> <p>Review Options for obtaining detailed planning permission.</p>		<p>Cabinet approved funding for an appeal on 26 March 2019</p> <p>The appeal was submitted in September 2019. The Hearing date was originally set for 13/05/2020, however this was postponed due to Covid19. A further hearing planned for the 18th November 2020 was also cancelled by the planning Inspector. The new Inquiry took place on 22/02/2021.</p> <p>A decision was received week commencing 19 April 2021, with the appeal against refusal of outline planning permission being dismissed. Officers are now considering the Inspector's reasons for this decision and are assessing the options regarding the next steps</p> <p>An options report is due to be presented to Cabinet on 21 September 2021. Executive Members are being briefed.</p>
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**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
14 SEPTEMBER 2021**

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2021-2026

REPORT OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH DENNIS-HARBURG

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A MORE WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT COUNCIL / PEOPLE FIRST

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report proposes a new customer service strategy covering 2021-2026. The strategy sets out how we will put customers at the heart of everything we do.

1.2 We've taken on board feedback from the 2020 Peer Challenge Review and have incorporated a target operating model to ensure a consistent approach to customer service across all our business areas.

1.3 We've adopted the following Customer Care Standards:

- Make it easy to access services, 24/7, thinking digital first
- Continue to offer traditional contact methods for those unable to interact online
- Take responsibility or find the right person to help
- Put customers first
- Be courteous and helpful
- Treat customers with fairness and respect

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That the Committee note the following documents:

- Customer Service Strategy 2021-2026
- Appendix B - Customer Care Standards

2.2. That the Committee note that the Strategy pre-emptively refers to the new People First Priority set out in the draft Council Plan due to be considered by Cabinet and approved by Council in September.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The Council has a Customer Service Centre (CSC) where most customer contacts are handled by a dedicated team of Customer Service Assistants (CSA's). However, some initial contacts and more complex enquiries go directly into teams across the Council.
- 3.2. We understand the pandemic has changed how people shop, do business, and generally interact with organisations, including the Council. This means that even more has shifted to online and the way in which customers choose to access services is continuously evolving.
- 3.3. As such, we recognise that technology and newer channels are becoming more popular, such as social media and interactions with the chatbot on the website, however we also recognise the continuing need to ensure that traditional contact methods remain available to those who need them so that our services are accessible to all.
- 3.4. Reflecting the new Council priorities in the Council Plan, we want to ensure a consistent approach to customer service across the Council.
- 3.5. While recognising the need for better digital services, we also know it's important to communicate with our people in the way which best meets their needs. This strategy continues to commit us to high standards of face to face and telephone interaction.

4. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1. The Customer Service Strategy clearly aligns with the updated Council Plan and sets out our corporate approach to customer service that pre-emptively reflects the new 'People First' Priority set out in the draft Council Plan due to be considered by Cabinet and approved by Council in September for 2022-2027.
- 4.2. Based on feedback from the 2020 Peer Challenge Review, the Strategy defines a new Target Operating Model (TOM) which will ensure a consistent approach towards customer service throughout the authority.
- 4.3. The operating model ensures customers know what to expect when they contact the Council, and that all staff, councillors, and contractors know what is expected. This is displayed in a user-friendly infographic within the Strategy, as well as within the Customer Care Standards (Appendix A). Simply put, we will:
 - Make it easy to access services, 24/7, thinking digital first
 - Continue to offer traditional contact methods for those unable to interact online
 - Take responsibility or find the right person to help
 - Put customers first
 - Be courteous and helpful
 - Treat customers with fairness and respect
- 4.4. The Strategy defines the future aims to enable the Council to exceed customer expectations, by providing services quickly, efficiently, and effectively.
- 4.5. The Strategy clearly sets out relevant actions between 2021-2026 to achieve these future aims.

- 4.6. The Strategy is underpinned by the Council's Priorities and shows how future aims can be achieved by seeking out innovative ways to make services better and deliver long-term sustainability.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Consultation has taken place with the following:

- The Leader (Executive Member for the Customer Service Centre)
- The Leadership Team (comprising of Managing Director, Service Directors and Communications Manager)
- Political Liaison Board (PLB)

- 5.2. The Strategy has also been assessed throughout the draft phase by the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS), who acted as a 'critical friend' to ensure it is in line with the Council's Priorities and other relevant strategies the Council has adopted. SIAS also considered this in line with other Council's customer service strategies.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 30th April 2021.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Cabinet's Terms of Reference include at 5.6.1 of the Constitution: 'to prepare and agree to implement policies and strategies other than those reserved to Council'

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The impact of the new Customer Service Strategy and ways of working should, over time, increase efficiencies and generate savings. These will be monitored over time as the Strategy is implemented and reported through budget monitoring reports and the annual budget setting process.

9. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There is a potential risk that we design digital services but the uptake of them is low. To mitigate against this, we will need to ensure that the design stage is robust and focussed on providing a benefit our customers.

10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their 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.

- 10.2 The Strategy sets out an increase in customer service and recognises that customers are interacting differently because of the pandemic. It also recognises that not all customers will be digitally enabled, so includes a commitment that no one is left behind.

11. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report as this is not a procurement exercise or contract.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to the Customer Service strategy.

13. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 A communication and updated training plan will be developed to ensure that all staff are familiar with the new strategy and expectations within it, in order to deliver the key areas of customer service the strategy sets out.
- 13.2 The corporate values and behaviours are also being updated through the Shaping our Future Steering Group to reflect the skills and values needed to deliver the customer service strategy.

14. APPENDICES

- 14.1 Appendix A – Customer Service Strategy
- 14.2 Appendix B – Customer Care Standards

15. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 15.1 Chris Jeffery – Interim Customer Service Manager:
Chris.jeffery@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4505
- 15.2 Jo Dufficy – Service Director – Customers
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Contributors:

- 15.3 Jeanette Thompson, Service Director: Legal and Community
Jeanette.thompson@north-herts.gov.uk; ext. 4370
- 15.4 Jo Keshishian, - Interim Human Resources Manager
Jo.keshishian@north-herts.gov.uk ext. 4314
- 15.5 Ian Couper, Service Director – Resources
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16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 16.1 None.

**“Putting our
customers at the heart
of everything we do**

**and providing appropriate support
and assistance to those who need it,
whilst ensuring customer
experiences are easy,
convenient and
effective.”**

Customer Service Strategy

2021-2026

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**North
Herts**
Council

Introduction

'People First' is one of the key objectives of the council as set out in the Council Plan, adopted in September 2021.

People make North Herts work. We value all our residents, staff, contractors, councillors, businesses and other partners and place them at the heart of everything we do.

This strategy applies across the whole council, including our staff, councillors and contractors delivering services on our behalf. To ensure a consistent approach, we have updated our Customer Care Standards (Appendix A) and defined our Operating Model below:

When you contact us, we will be easy to deal with. This means we will:



find somebody that can resolve your query if the first person you speak to is unable to, or put you in contact with the right people if it is not a council matter



take responsibility for your enquiry and ensure effective internal communications between service areas



respond to you quickly and courteously, regardless of how you contact us



make it as easy as possible to access our services, at a time and in a way that is most convenient to you



design our processes with all our customers in mind and make them as user friendly as possible



make services digital by default, whilst making sure that customers who do not use digital services can still interact with us through traditional methods, such as telephone and face to face services



provide a consistent level of customer service and treat you with fairness and respect

Listening to customer feedback

Many customer interactions and enquiries are handled by our Customer Service Centre (CSC) as the first point of contact for most council services. This means we have a dedicated team who are constantly in contact with our customers and provide insight into any issues that may be emerging, as well as hearing first-hand the things that are important to our customers.

This valuable insight, along with feedback from our corporate 3C's (Comments, Compliments and Complaints) policy can be used to help identify where we can make improvements or changes if something is not working so well, as well as building on where things are working well.

Key achievements

We have been busy enhancing and developing our customer service operations to ensure we are keeping up to date with the latest technological advances and providing the best service possible to our customers.

Our key achievements include:



a new councillor portal for councillors to log and track issues on behalf of their constituents



an implementation of a modern and agile Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which gives a single view of our customers



installing a modern and future-proof telephony system which enables staff to work from any location



re-branding our existing customer portal to 'MyAccount', where customers can log and track cases as well as registering to view their key Council Tax information



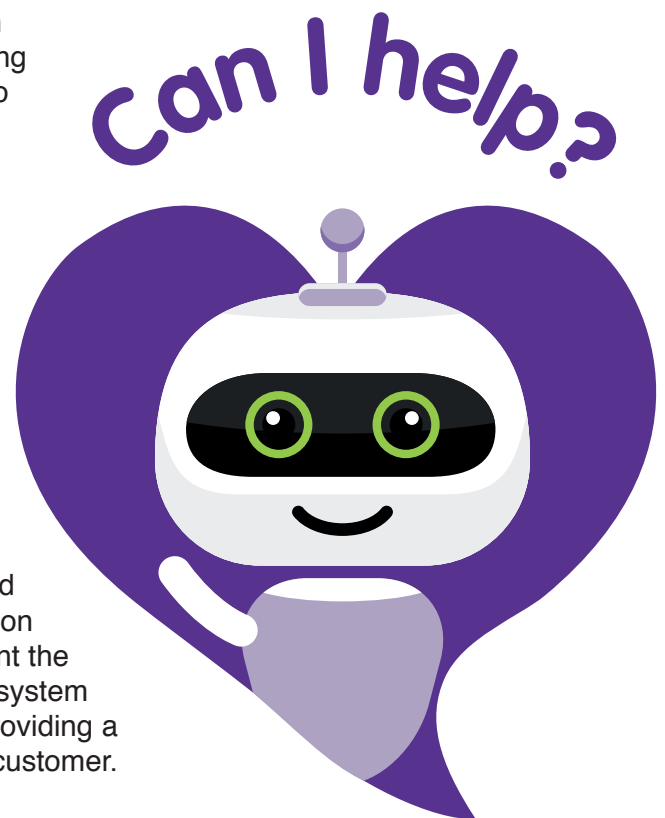
integrating social media into our customer service offering as another channel for our residents to report and enquire, covering both Facebook and Twitter

Looking ahead - our future aims

Building upon these successful foundations, we can now look ahead and focus on our future aims. Moving forward we recognise a growing need for services to be provided quickly, efficiently, and effectively. We also recognise our customers want the best experience every time, all the time.


We want to exceed customer expectations and we will aim to do that whatever the situation. There is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic has changed how we operate. In March 2020, almost our entire workforce moved to working from home full time to accommodate the pandemic and the constraints it presented.


We are now moving towards a hybrid way of working and delivering services. We have introduced new customer service channels including a chatbot on our website and online video calls which complement the traditional channels. We also have an appointment system for customers who rely on a face-to-face service, providing a personal service at a time that is convenient to the customer.





In summary, our future aims are to:


 offer alternative and convenient ways to contact us through our customer service centre such as live web chat and online video calls, to compliment traditional channels

 further develop our online services so you can access them whenever you want

 continue to improve all customer journeys so that contacting us and getting the service you expect is as easy as possible

 continually look across the council to identify where Artificial Intelligence and automation can assist service delivery and speed up processing times

 further develop our online MyAccount customer portal so you can access the personalised services that matter to you, all in one secure and convenient place

 enable you to upload documents/proofs to us from your home, without the need to visit us in person










 enable you to make payments to the council in convenient ways, including options to pay with cash in locations closer to home

Actions to achieve our aims

There are many examples of good customer service and processes that are working well, but we know there is a lot more we can and want to do.

Linked to our corporate priorities of **People First, Sustainability, and Brighter Future Together**, our actions to achieve our aims are set out below.

In 2021/2022, we will:










-  launch this customer service strategy and revised customer service standards in line with the new Council Plan
-  continue to listen to and learn from customer feedback, understanding what is important to our customers and how we can improve the customer experience for all
-  champion positive customer service across the whole organisation
-  review online customer e-forms to ensure all relevant information is being captured to ensure we can deal with enquiries effectively
-  refresh our corporate customer service training approach and ensure that the operating model within this strategy is shared across the council
-  reduce the need for customers to travel to the council offices for in person visits, by improving online services where possible and developing our customer portals, including MyAccount and our councillor portal
-  explore new ways in which customers can access our services based on results from our 2021 online services survey
-  carry out a review of all customer contact reasons and aim to reduce any avoidable contact
-  continue to encourage customers to self-serve where appropriate and use digital communications instead of paper wherever possible

Between 2022-2026, we will:

-  focus on collaborative service delivery across all Council functions to ensure a cohesive customer experience
-  review customer journeys on all channels and look at where value for the customer and staff can be added, to ensure consistency and best practice
-  continue to work closely with the Transformation team to maintain existing technology and develop new innovative ideas to increase efficiency and to enhance flexibility and accessibility
-  explore and understand how artificial intelligence can support corporate customer service delivery to create efficiencies
-  be positive and proactive in all correspondence, being strong ambassadors and customer service advocates
-  engage more with customers on our social media platforms and explore whether targeted social media posts help to reduce contact, and investigate sending regular text messages/emails to promote online services
-  review customer contact points that are not currently channelled through the contact centre if appropriate to do so, with a view to streamlining and improving service delivery effectiveness
-  provide our staff with appropriate support and resources to carry out their roles effectively
-  provide a positive customer experience regardless of channel
-  make sure that our services are accessible for all and that nobody is left behind as we implement more digital solutions
-  recognise where extra support is needed and ensure support is given throughout

Measuring Success

It is our ambition for our internal and external customers, councillors, and contractors to all have a seamless, high quality interaction whenever they contact the council. By continuing to work on our future service provisions and by linking our strategy to other internal strategies and priorities, we expect to achieve the following:

-  an increase in digital contact and transactions with the council
-  consequently, we may see a reduction in telephone contact as more can be done online
-  a more convenient and personalised face to face service through the introduction of an appointment booking system
-  an increase in the number of 'MyAccount' sign ups, as the number of personalised services available through the portal increases
-  maintaining high average CSC internal quality monitoring scores of above 93% and a potential increase in the number of 3C's compliments, indicating staff continue to carry out their roles effectively
-  an increase in customer contact methods, following successful trials of new channels
-  a more convenient and efficient way for customers to submit supporting documents to us, which in turn, requires less manual processing for staff
-  an increase in online payments or cash payments through various alternative locations
-  the ability for some Council Tax processes to be fully automated from the point of first customer contact through to completion of the process, which will be more convenient to customers and increase productivity

This strategy has outlined our key aims and objectives we want to work towards between 2021-2026, whilst putting '**People First**'. We recognise that things can change very quickly, therefore we will review the strategy halfway through the five-year period and adapt it if needed. By putting our customers at the heart of everything we do, we are determined to enable our customers to get the service they require from the council in an easy, convenient, and effective way. We will continually monitor performance and achievements in order to update the service action plan on an annual basis.

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Customer Care Standards – Our Operating Model

Putting our customers at the heart of everything we do and providing appropriate support and assistance to those who need it, whilst ensuring customer experiences are easy, convenient, and effective.

When you contact us, we will be easy to deal with.

This means we will:

- Make it as easy as possible to access our services, at a time and in a way that is most convenient to you
- Take responsibility for your enquiry, and ensure effective internal communications between service areas
- Respond to you quickly and courteously, regardless of how you contact us
- Provide a consistent level of customer service and treat you with fairness and respect
- Make services digital by default which are available 24/7, whilst making sure those who do not use digital services can still interact with us through traditional methods
- Design our processes with all our customers in mind and make them as user friendly as possible
- Find somebody that can resolve your query if the first person you speak to us unable to, or put you in contact with the right people if it is not a Council matter

We also aim to:

- Answer your telephone call within four rings. The Customer Service Centre aim to answer your telephone call within 45 seconds
- Reply to your emails within two working days and letters within four
- See you within 5 minutes of your arrival when you visit us for an essential appointment
- Respond to questions and requests for service on Social Media within one working day
- Adhere to the timescales set out in the [Comments, Compliments, and Complaints \(3C's\) Policy](#)
- Continue to improve our service to you by treating your 3C's positively and pro-actively

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