

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



23 August 2024

Our Ref Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3
September 2024
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To: Members of the Committee: Councillors Matt Barnes (Chair), Tom Tyson (Vice-Chair), Tina Bhartwas, Jon Clayden, Elizabeth Dennis, Ralph Muncer, Louise Peace, Martin Prescott, Laura Williams, Claire Winchester, Donna Wright and Daniel Wright-Mason

Substitutes: Councillors David Barnard, Clare Billing, David Chalmers, Emma Fernandes, Keith Hoskins, Vijaiya Poopalasingham, Sean Prendergast and Claire Strong

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF A

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

to be held in the

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON
ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF**

On

TUESDAY, 3RD SEPTEMBER, 2024 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. 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.	
2. MINUTES - 18 JUNE, 2 JULY 2024	To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 18 June and 2 July 2024.	(Pages 5 - 26)
3. 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.	
4. 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.	
5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	To receive petitions, comments and questions from the public.	
6. URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS	The Chair to report on any urgent or general exception items which required their agreement. At the time of printing the agenda, the Chair had not agreed any urgent or general exception items.	

- 7. 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.
- 8. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**
To receive and respond to any questions from Members either set out in the agenda or tabled at the meeting.
- 9. COMMUNITY SURVEY ROUND TWO RESULTS (MARCH-MAY 2024)** (Pages 27 - 66)
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – PLACE

To consider the key findings and observations from the Community Survey Round Two results (March - May 2024).
- 10. COUNCIL PLAN 2024-2028** (Pages 67 - 86)
REPORT OF THE POLICY AND COMMUNITIES MANAGER

This report proposes a new Council Plan and process for finalising the Plan. This is the plain-text version. Once the content is approved, the plan will be designed and formatted.
- 11. COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024-25 (QUARTER 1 UPDATE)** (Pages 87 - 108)
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES

This report presents progress on delivering the Council Delivery Plan for 2024-25. This is a Quarter 1 update, but reflects progress up to the point that this report was prepared.
- 12. LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT PROCUREMENT - END PROJECT REPORT** (Pages 109 - 122)
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – PLACE

This report refers to the End Project Report and lessons learnt for the Leisure Management Contract Procurement Project.
- 13. SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24** (Pages 123 - 144)
REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – LEGAL AND COMMUNITY

To consider the Annual Safeguarding Report 2023-2024.
- 14. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME** (Pages 145 - 158)
REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

This report highlights items scheduled in the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2024-25 civic year. It also includes items that have not yet been assigned to a specific meeting of the Committee.
- 15. SCRUTINY CHARTER** (Pages 159 - 164)
REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

In the recent LGA Peer Review, a recommendation was made to develop and adopt a definition of what Scrutiny is at the Council. This Charter has been developed to address this recommendation.

16. DECISIONS AND MONITORING TRACKER
REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

(Pages
165 -
168)

To consider the outcome of Overview and Scrutiny Committee decisions.

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF
ON TUESDAY, 18TH JUNE, 2024 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Matt Barnes (Chair), Tom Tyson (Vice-Chair), Jon Clayden, Elizabeth Dennis, Ralph Muncer, Louise Peace, Martin Prescott, Laura Williams, Claire Winchester, Donna Wright, Daniel Wright-Mason and Val Bryant.*

In Attendance: *Ian Couper (Service Director - Resources), Chris Jeffery (Customer Service Manager), Caroline Jenkins (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Sarah Kingsley (Service Director - Place), Jeevan Mann (Scrutiny Officer), Louise Randall (Leisure and Active Communities Manager) and Melanie Stimpson (Democratic Services Manager).*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting there were no public in attendance.*

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 30 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tina Bhartwas.

Having given due notice, Councillor Emma Fernandes substituted for Councillor Bhartwas.

2 MINUTES -12 MARCH 2024

Audio Recording – 1 minute 50 seconds

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Ralph Muncer seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 12 March 2024 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 55 seconds

There was no other business notified.

4 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 58 seconds

(1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.

(2) 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.

(3) The Chair advised that for the purposes of clarification clause 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution does not apply to this meeting.

(4) The Chair advised a change in the order of the published agenda. Agenda items 15 – 18 would be considered after item 8, followed by items 11 – 14 and finally items 9 and 10.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 4 minutes, 10 seconds

There was no public participation at this meeting.

6 URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 18 seconds

The Chair noted two urgent items in relation to the Leisure Investment Options and Award of the Waste Collection and Street Cleaning Contract.

The Forward Plan of Executive Key Decisions was published on Tuesday 28 May 2024, which listed both matters as being considered as Part 1 and Part 2 reports at the Cabinet meeting on 25 June 2024 and the Cabinet meeting on 9 July, respectively. However, the required 28-day private notices were not published ahead of the decision being taken.

Both matters were commercially sensitive, and the decisions could not practicably be delayed to the next Cabinet meeting in September 2024 as they were time critical.

As per the requirements, the Council obtained the agreement of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the formal notices were published on the Council's website.

7 CALLED-IN ITEMS

Audio recording – 5 minutes, 6 seconds

There were no called-in items.

8 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Audio recording – 5 minutes, 10 seconds

No questions had been submitted by Members.

9 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Audio Recording - 5 minutes 19 seconds

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded and, following at vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

10 PART 2 MINUTES - 7 NOVEMBER, 5 DECEMBER 2023

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded, and following at vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Part 2 Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 7 November and 5 December 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

11 LEISURE INVESTMENT OPTIONS - PART 2

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET: That the Part 2 report is taken into consideration when reaching the decisions detailed in Part 1.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: As Part 1 Report.

12 LEISURE INVESTMENT OPTIONS - PART 1

Audio recording: 50 minutes and 50 seconds

The Chair introduced the item and reminded Members that confidential questions should have been asked in Part 2 and to be mindful of questions put in this public session. The Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Green Spaces confirmed he had no further update from the Part 2 presentation.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Daniel Wright – Mason
- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Matt Barnes

In response to questions the Service Director - Place advised that:

- There was a very short time window for the decarbonisation scheme application, which required high level information on heat decarbonisation proposals. The plans for the sites were produced but did not include the technical feasibility at the application stage. To have carried out the surveys and feasibility prior to submitting the application would have committed the Council to spending money before confirmation of grant funding. The issues identified in the feasibility studies showed what was optimal for the leisure centres, with practical possibilities, but an increase in costs.
- Initial plans were to insulate the underside of all the roofs in all 3 centres. Condensation prevented this from going ahead, as well as needing to close the pool facilities for up to 8 weeks whilst scaffolding was used.
- Insulation will be on the outside of the roofs. Whilst there may be minor disruptions, this will prevent long closures of the leisure centres.
- An additional cost will be for temporary plant to be introduced whilst heat pumps are installed, to minimize disruption at the centres.
- Everyone Active have a clause in their contract regarding the liability for loss of income being on the council due to any disruption, however it is hoped that the programme proposed will minimize that risk.

- There will be effective communications with residents about the works, possible disruptions and their options at accessing leisure facilities in the area.
- The Council chose to appoint Willmot Dixon for the initial stages through the scape framework, via the Regional Major Works Construction Framework. There was no requirement for the Council to go outside that, as the scape framework had been fully tested.
- Differences in maintenance costs between heat pumps and gas boilers would be sourced and provided to members.
- It was noted there is a £757,000 penalty clause for this contract. This will decrease over the life of the contract with Centrica, with the agreement up until 2035. This figure will be slightly less as heat pumps will not be installed by March 2025. Attempts were made by the Council to negotiate on the termination costs with Centrica. There was no movement on this.
- Grant conditions were that this needs to be spent by March 2026, with it also being front loaded for spending in 2024/25. This decision was made to make sure of no issues with the delivery of the Air Source Heat pumps and solar PV panels.
- There was no option to have a phased approach with this project outside of the timeline given by Salix, unless it was carried out without the £7.7m grant and funded through the Council own capital.
- The Council can afford this project. It was clear there would need to be a review of the wider capital program as there were priorities to be made. It was for Cabinet to decide whether the learner pool goes ahead at this stage, but not to lose sight of this should it not be agreed.
- If the boilers at all three leisure centres had to be replaced if the project didn't go ahead, the costs would be £200,000 for each site.
- The project provides a co2 reduction of over 60% of total emissions across the three sites. North Herts Leisure Centre gas boilers for the learner pool are too new to qualify for funding.
- The gas boilers at the outdoor pools at Hitchin Swim Centre and Letchworth Lido are too new to qualify for funding. Gas boilers would ultimately need to be replaced with Low carbon alternatives once they reach end of life, if we are to meet the council's net zero carbon goals.
- Other projects will arise, but these will come up when the boilers are end of life and dependent on the Councils priorities at the time.

In response to questions the Service Director - Resources advised that:

- The learner pool at Royston Leisure Centre could remain under review.
- The project could be left in the capital programme.
- The possibility of the learner pool project being deferred to a later date could enable a full tender process and there is a possibility that it could lead to a more competitive price, which could reduce the costs of the project. Interest rates may also come down.
- The council can borrow to fund capital expenditure, but this will come with interest costs. A Minimum Revenue Provision charge also has to be made.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis raised an amendment to recommendation 2.3 and the wording:

- It was felt there were serious questions to do with the identification of possible external funding options for the learner pool at Royston, a facility that residents valued.
- The Council had passed a motion to regard health impacts to residents on all decisions. This felt that the Council was missing out on a key health opportunity and also to save and invest for the future.
- It was clear there were significant budget gaps, with the delivery of the learner pool and what the Council can recover.

- The budget line had been agreed for the facility, giving residents false hope for much needed swimming facilities.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis proposed that recommendation 2.3 be amended to reject the removal of the capital budget for the Royston Learner Pool from the capital programme and an additional recommendation that the Royston Learner Pool be kept under review and to explore other funding options. This was seconded by Councillor Martin Prescott.

The following Members took part in debate on the amendment:

- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Tom Tyson

Points raised during the debate included:

- If the budget line allocation is left in the capital budget, that will assume the council will spend that capital money, there will then be interest charges associated, spreading the charge over the life of the asset. Leaving cost in the revenue budget, increasing the budget gap, and savings will need to be made to offset this.
- Concerns were over a question of financial viability of the learner pool. This has health and social benefits but equally decisions need to be affordable. At this time, it was felt it would be unaffordable. It was felt not appropriate to keep the 2.5M in the capital program and needs to be re-allocated. In future budgets may be stretched elsewhere and the money would not be available.
- The current business case does not stack up on a financial basis. This should be kept under review and different revenue streams should be sought out. This could be a future project to generate more revenue and income.
- Councillors to consider “more pressured” or “more needy” projects when considering budget lines.
- That following comments by other Members, the amendment made would not be re-amended.
- There is no need to change any increase in spending made by cabinet. The revenue budget will offset the capital spend.
- The revised recommendation will be for Cabinet to decide on and take any impact, amendments or adjustments in other areas.
- The recommendation involves significant costs and some members were not satisfied that all funding opportunities for the learner pool had been explored.
- It was pointed out that this was not the provision of a new facility but an extension of a current facility and childrens swimming lessons will still go ahead in Royston if this project does not go ahead. The learner pool will also be for members of the public with special needs.
- It was felt difficult to make a decision on this, when possible sacrifices to be made in the future were unknown. However, it was hoped that Cabinet would look carefully at ways to fund this.

The amendment was proposed and seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: that agreed amendments to points 3 and 4 should read:

- (3) That Cabinet does not approve the business case for Royston Leisure Centre Learner Pool at this time due to matters identified in the part 2 report.

- (4) That the Project Board keep business case under review and meaningful and legitimate work to explore all funding options is undertaken for Royston learner pool.

The following Members took part in the debate on the substantive motion:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Jon Clayden

Points raised during the debate included:

- The increase in capital expenditure of £2.4m into the capital programme for the decarbonisation work should be recommended to Cabinet and hopefully recommended to Council. No guarantee that there will be a future scheme of a similar nature. The Council cannot complete the costs for the decarbonation project without funding to avoid budget cuts and unsustainable levels of borrowing.
- It was normal to have penalty clauses in contracts, however this must be recommended to Cabinet, otherwise this has an implication on the terms of the grant.
- The increase in the capital budget of £250k for the Royston Leisure Centre (RLC) gym extension. There was a clear business case for this to make the Council more revenue.
- Financial implications for the decarbonisation scheme were significant with the risk unable to reduce. It was felt a gamble with future energy prices, but also there would be no future access to funding available now. To enable the Councils target of Net zero by 2030, this was felt the biggest single contribution to provide.
- It was felt not to be an ideal time to be making decisions with significant unknown future risks. It was unsure of future government positions on net zero targets.

Having been proposed and seconded, the substantive motion, as amended, was voted on, following which it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet takes into account the matters set out in the Part 2 report when reaching the following decisions:

- (1) That Cabinet agree in principle to terminate the Combined Heat and Power Centrica contracts at North Herts Leisure Centre (NHLC) and Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre (HSFC) at the appropriate time during the PSDS project and recommend to Council as per 2.6 below regarding the termination fee.
- (2) That Cabinet expresses its profound disappointment at the position taken by Centrica over the cost of the CHP contract termination, given the company's stated position as "Energising a greener, fairer future" and requests that the Council continues to raise, and seek solutions to, the issue of long-term inflexible agreements for gas CHPs with Salix and Government, which will inevitably prevent many public sector organisations from achieving their net zero ambitions.
- (3) That Cabinet does not approve the business case for Royston Leisure Centre Learner Pool at this time due to matters identified in the part 2 report.
- (4) That the Project Board keep business case under review and meaningful and legitimate work to explore all funding options is undertaken for Royston learner pool.

That Cabinet recommends to Council:

- (5) an increase in capital expenditure of £2.4m into the capital programme for the decarbonisation work to the three leisure centres. The overall budget will be profiled across 2024/25 and 2025/26.

- (6) an increase in the capital budget of £250k for the Royston Leisure Centre (RLC) gym extension, to ensure the extension is built to net zero carbon standards.
- (7) approval of revenue expenditure of up to £757k for termination and removal fees of the gas CHPs at North Herts Leisure Centre and Hitchin Fitness and Swimming Centre. This would be funded from General Fund reserves.

13 INFORMATION NOTE - FULL YEAR UPDATE ON 3Cs 23/24

Audio Recording: 2 hours 6 minutes and 10 seconds

Councillor Val Bryant, as Executive Member for Community/Partnerships presented the Information note entitled "Full Year Update on 3Cs 23/24" and advised that:

- Members were referred to Page 39 Appendix A regarding the 3cs dashboard, and page 41, the breakdown of service and type, Appendix B.
- The number of compliments and complaints to the Council decreased as compared with 2022/23. Comments received by the Council rose slightly.
- Complaints received by the Council and contractors decreased by 8% compared to 2022/23.
- 53.4% of those complaints received related to services delivered by our key contractors, ie Waste Services and Leisure Centres.
- The percentage of stage 1 complaints resolved in 10 days had increased by 86%. The councils target was 80%.
- The percentage of interactions, collections and visitors resulting in complaints was below 0.5%
- The council received 142 compliments across its services.
- The Council received 29 stage 2 complaints, but only 4 of these were deemed to be justified.
- There were 6 Stage 3 complaints forwarded to the Ombudsman in 2023/24. This was a 54% decrease from 2022/23. Out of these cases, 0 have been upheld and 1 remains open.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Tom Tyson

In response to questions, the Customer Services Manager stated that:

- The stage 2 complaints were general across various service areas and varied reasons why the complaints were not justified. One query was withdrawn, showing the Council was not at fault, and one was a query on public spending.
- The system did ask for any feedback to be taken or any learning opportunities that can be taken onboard to make improvements.
- It was confirmed that in the 3Cs table, this would now be split to show positive, negative and neutral comments and the Council would work towards a target of 90% of complaints responded to in 10 working days.
- A benchmarking procedure was started in 2023 with other councils across the county. Data had been received from some authorities for 2022/23 and further data had been requested for 2023/24. This was being collated and would be shared with the committee.
- This information note will be published on the Members Information Service.
- The Committee may want to consider this information during the item regarding Key Performance Indicators.

14 REPORT FOLLOWING CALL TO ACCOUNT - HARKNESS COURT

Audio Recording: 2 hours 19 minutes and 4 seconds

Councillor Val Bryant, as Vice Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023-24, presented the report entitled 'Call to Account - Harkness Court' and advised that:

- A report was requested by this committee in March 2023, regarding the refurbishment of Harkness Court. The inspection took place on 7 November 2023. A report was to come from the previous Chair of the committee on the project and lessons learnt from it. This was not carried out. Councillor Bryant as Vice Chairman had put together this report to the Committee. Members were asked to see Page 47 of the report for the recommendations.
- It was stated that no clear thought was given on the project management. It was thought to be a relatively small project and not in need of much management. It has now been recommended that going forward, each project should have a named project manager.
- There should be clear identification at the beginning of the project scope, risk assessments, knowledge of the project software, building control requirements, financial transparency and monitoring of the timescale of the project.
- Personnel should be trained in managing contracts. Consistent staffing on projects was thought to be very important.

The following members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis

In response to questions, Councillor Bryant stated that:

- Officers were at the starting point of following the recommendations as to the expectations from projects from now on. The Service Director – enterprise felt that progress on this had been made already.

The Service Director – Resources stated that:

- The project management guidance had been updated since the Harkness Court project and made information clearer about sizes of projects.
- There was currently an Internal review of project management being carried out, looking at the recommendations and being clear each year on what projects were being undertaken.
- This will be followed by a review as to how the project was carried out by the Council.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Matt Barnes

Points raised in debate included:

- There were failures on the early stages of this project.
- The call to account needs to be utilized more, together with the Task and Finish groups to identify any mistakes that may be made during the project process.
- Service Directors should appear before the Committee to provide updates on the relevant projects and this will form part of the working culture of the council.

- The call to account on this project was difficult and too long. Many of the officers that took part in the project were no longer in post. Many of the recommendations had already been implemented.
- The task and finish groups are one tool that can be used to focus on the processes used. It was recommended to strongly consider how the Committee uses them going forward.

Having been proposed and seconded, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

The content of the Vice Chair's report, attached as Appendix A, was noted and findings included within were endorsed.

15 Q4 COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN UPDATE

Audio recording – 2 hours 29 minutes 59 seconds

The Service Director – Resources presented the report entitled 'Q4 Council Delivery Plan Update' and highlighted:

- That the plan had been refreshed for this Civic Year (2024/25) to reduce the number of reported projects contained within it and would allow for Members to focus on the key projects.
- There were 27 key projects in total on the plan, with details provided on progress made and the performance of that project.
- These reports would be received quarterly by Overview and Scrutiny Committee for regular monitoring and would seek comments from Members for consideration at Cabinet.
- Members could request specific projects to be included in the quarterly updates presented.
- Members could also ask questions on items that were not prioritised on the plan.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Ralph Muncer

In response to questions, the Services Director – Resources advised that:

- The waste depot lease needed to be signed. There would be plans around further waste depots, but that was not needed imminently. It would be needed as the population increased further.
- Focus was to be kept on key projects. 27 projects were thought to be too many.
- The delivery plan would be changed over time, together with the prioritisation tool for reviewing items on the plan. It should focus on key projects.
- A full annual review would take place, together with quarterly reports with what was on the plan and whether it was fit for purpose and met the relevant criteria.

In response to questions, the Executive Member for Finance and IT advised that:

- The project for Charnwood may not come via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee before going to cabinet. The Service Director - Enterprise and Service Director - Resources would confirm this and work with the Chair of Scrutiny and the Scrutiny Officer on this.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That Overview and Scrutiny Committee determined any project that they want to receive more detail on as part of the next monitoring report.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet:

- (1) Notes the progress against Council projects as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A) including new milestones and changes to milestone dates.
- (2) Note the completion in Q4 of the projects detailed in paragraph 8.5.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) monitoring reports provide Overview and Scrutiny, and Cabinet, with an opportunity to monitor progress against the key Council projects, and understand any new issues, risks, or opportunities.

16 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2024/25

Audio Recording – 2 hours 42 minutes and 27 seconds

The Service Director – Resources presented the report entitled 'Key Performance indicators 2024/25' and advised that:

- This was a further evolution of the reporting of performance indicators, following previous changes which had been made and feedback received on these.
- Key indicators were provided across a wide range of areas to help support the scrutiny committee, and Cabinet, to monitor how the Council was performing and that any issues were able to be picked up at an early stage.
- Targets were measurable and meaningful and were indicated in red, amber and green.
- The proposed indicators were outlined at paragraph 8.3 of the report and these would be reported to the Committee on a quarterly basis, with supplementary detail provided in the 3Cs reports provided on a half-yearly basis.
- Staffing was included as this was an important part of the Council and monitoring of this would relate to both staff wellbeing as employees, as well as the retention and recruitment of staff.
- Two identified risks relating to Financial and Environmental Sustainability had been identified and included within the report for monitoring. More detail on the Financial Sustainability would be provided to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.
- Key areas of Service Delivery had been identified and included where relevant and meaningful indicators were available.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Donna Wright
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Matt Barnes

In response to questions, the Service Director – Resources advised that:

- Qualitative reporting could be provided in future to add context to some of the areas being monitored, but these would not be as frequently available as the quantitative data provided on a quarterly basis. This would also include any staff surveys which had taken place.
- Benchmarking against other authorities could be introduced, but there were often local issues which impacted on different rates across local authorities.

- Short term sickness leave for staff could be benchmarked, and previously this figure had been around 3.5 days. It was more difficult to benchmark long term absences, as these were usually due to specific illness.
- Providing corporate context to the performance indicators (i.e. what Council priority they impact) could be introduced for future reports.
- Key Performance Indicators monitoring could be provided in the Members Information Service publication and would also be included on the Ideagen platform.
- Many areas were contracted out to third parties, including leisure and waste services, and therefore monitoring was completed by the contract holders. It would need to be discussed with the relevant services areas as to whether further information could be included.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason

Points raised in debate included:

- The recruitment and retention of staff, as well as their wellbeing at work, was important to monitor regularly.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed that the recommendations be amended to include a request to consider including performance indicators from third party suppliers in future reporting and that the Key Performance Indicators be included in Members Information Service publication, once made available for Cabinet. Following a vote, this amendment was accepted.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed, as amended, and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet

- (1) Adopt the performance indicators set out in paragraph 8.3 for 2024/25.
- (2) Consider adding Key Performance Indicators regarding performance a third-party suppliers and staff satisfaction.
- (3) Agree that Key Performance Indicators are published to the Members Information Service when provided to Cabinet.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: The Council had tried to move towards having indicators that were focused on our key projects. However, it was found that these do not generally give the level of Council oversight that Members would want. Therefore, these performance indicators are proposed to give that view of overall performance.

17 RESOLUTIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Audio Recording: 2 hours 59 minutes and 26 seconds

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and stated that:

- There was one referral to Cabinet of the update of the Councils delivery plan for 2023/24. This was considered on 19 March 2024. The comments were approved and recommended.
- There were two other resolutions on the report. These were marked as complete and are now closed.
- Ideagen training is available to members on the Growzone, under the Members Training section.

- An alternative resolutions tracker will be used from September 2024, to enable a full record of resolutions to be kept in one place. Open resolutions will continue to be presented at meetings.

There were no questions from Members.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed the recommendation and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded and following a vote, it was:

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

18 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Audio recording - 3 hours 1 minute and 28 seconds

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Overview and Scrutiny work programme and stated that:

- The current workplan has been compiled. Items currently scheduled include the Safeguarding report, Crime and Disorder Matters and the Draft Annual Report of Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2024/25.
- Items yet to be scheduled are Green Spaces, Enterprise Service Area updates and the Implementation of the Leisure Contract.
- Any suggested topics would be welcomed by discussion at this committee meeting, with the Chair or Vice Chair or emailing the Scrutiny Officer.

The Chair of the Committee stated that:

- As part of the Corporate Challenge, the draft Scrutiny Charter had been circulated to Members and thanks were given for their feedback and comments.
- The Enterprise Service Area updates would be scheduled for September 2024
- Work on the Task and Finish Group regarding the Waste Contract would begin in September 2024.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Martin Prescott

In response to questions, the Scrutiny Officer stated that:

- Task and Finish groups historically have not gone ahead due to lack of Members interest. Members were asked for more involvement otherwise this would not go ahead.
- A report would initially be put together by the Scrutiny Officer for consideration, followed by 3-4 sessions of work. More guidance can be given to Members.

In response to questions, the Head of Democratic Services stated that:

- It was thought that the timeline would be compromised if to commence the Task and Finish Group at the next meeting, particularly as officers and Members were in the middle of a General Election period. It was also pointed out that meetings are not held during the summer, due to the summer recess.

- The Terms of Reference were to be focussed and set for the group and a timeline of work that could be achievable. This could be set for September 2024 running through to January 2025.

In response to questions, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee stated that:

- Executive Members and Portfolio holders should be asked to attend the committee meetings to identify priorities in their areas and answer questions on their portfolio.
- It was noted that the Waste Contract was shared between North and East Hertfordshire Councils, therefore any scrutiny of this would need to be in collaboration. The project board involves officers and members from both authorities and reports would be identical. Reports should be robust enough to be scrutinised.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee prioritises 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) That the Committee, having considered the most recent iteration of the Forward Plan, as attached at Appendix B, suggests a list of items to be considered at its meetings in the coming civic year.
- (3) That the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan as attached at Appendix C be considered.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 2 July 2024 at 19:30.

The meeting closed at 22:47

Chair

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE ROOM 2, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON ROAD,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY, HERTS, SG6 3JF
ON TUESDAY, 2ND JULY, 2024 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Matt Barnes (Chair), Tom Tyson (Vice-Chair), Jon Clayden, Elizabeth Dennis, Martin Prescott, Claire Winchester, Donna Wright, Daniel Wright-Mason, Claire Strong.*

In Attendance: *Ian Couper (Service Director – Resources), Chloe Hipwood (Service Manager), Caroline Jenkins (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Sarah Kingsley (Service Director - Place), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Jeevan Mann (Scrutiny Officer) and Anthony Roche (Managing Director).*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting there were no members of the public present.*

Councillors Ian Albert, Amy Allen and Daniel Allen were also in attendance as Executive Members.

19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 16 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Louise Peace, Tina Bhartwas, Ralph Muncer and Laura Williams.

20 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 1 minute 45 seconds

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) 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.
- (3) The Chair advised that for the purposes of clarification clause 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution does not apply to this meeting.

21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording: 2 minutes 25 seconds

There was no public participation at this meeting.

22 PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

Audio Recording: 2 minutes 29 seconds

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Daniel Allen, presented the report entitled 'Productivity Plan' and advised that:

- The Cabinet was required to approve the Productivity Plan, as requested by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), before returning the Plan.
- The Plan had been published on the North Herts Council website.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Donna Wright
- Councillor Claire Strong

In response to questions, the Managing Director advised:

- There were no defined ways to measure productivity as each Council measures itself differently. At the last meeting of the committee, new measures were discussed about the performance of the Council services and these would be used to measure productivity. Due to the Council work being qualitative rather than quantitative, this made this process difficult.
- Many of the questions provided by DLUHC were not around productivity.
- When the General Election was announced, the Local Government Association (LGA), the District Council Network (DCN) and DLUHC were all contacted to confirm if the plan was still required with a possible change of government, and it was confirmed that the Plan was still required.
- It was also thought that a neat summary of information about what the Council has been working on and its achievements would not be such a bad idea for any incoming government to see.
- White papers from the LGA, Cooperative Councils Network (CCN) and DCN all came out after the plan has been drafted, therefore content from those documents were not taken into account.
- It was felt that most points in the white papers were already covered in the Plan, and those that were not covered, did not apply to this Council.
- Further clarification and statistics could be added to the report where available, including the figures around the letting of office space. If Members had any further areas where statistics could be included, they should inform the Managing Director. This needed to be balanced with keeping the plan high level.
- The plan highlighted areas, specifically within Green Spaces and the use of technology, where the Council had made improvements to productivity and further examples could be added if suggested by Members. The attempt was to highlight more recent improvements.
- Very little money had been spent by the Council on equality, diversity and inclusion training or consultants, however this was not included within the Plan due to the nature of the question posed.

Councillor Claire Winchester proposed recommendation 2.1 of the report and this was seconded by Councillor Tom Tyson.

The following members took part in debate:

- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Matt Barnes

Points raised during the debate included:

- Some Members felt that Item 2.1 should be recommended to Cabinet. Officers had already carried out good work on the Productivity Plan and to add more workload was felt too much. Members felt to recommend the plan as it is now.
- Others felt that the 2.2 option would be more advantageous to the Cabinet. It did not state that items needed to be added to the plan, it just gave the option that they could if felt necessary.
- It was also noted that Cabinet could make its own decision on the plan when given the recommendations from this committee.

Having been proposed and seconded and following a vote, it was tied. The Chair cast the deciding vote and the motion was lost.

The Chair moved to a vote on recommendation 2.2 and, following a vote, it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet delegates to the Leader of the Council and Managing Director authority to agree any amendments required to the Productivity Plan as a result of discussion at either Overview and Scrutiny Committee and/or Cabinet and authority to submit the Plan on behalf of the Council.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: The recommendations are to ensure that the Council complies with the requirements set out by DLUHC to produce a Productivity Plan.

23 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

24 WASTE, RECYCLING AND STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT AWARD PART 2

N.B. As this item was considered in private session, no audio recording is available.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed and Councillor Jon Clayden seconded and after a vote it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the Part 2 report be noted.

25 WASTE, RECYCLING AND STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT AWARD PART 1

Councillor Amy Allen presented the report entitled 'Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract Award Part 1' and advised that:

- The report sought consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the work which had gone into preparing for the award of the contract.

- North Herts Council were the lead authority in the partnership with East Herts Council, who considered a similar report at their meeting of Overview and Scrutiny yesterday. East Herts Council would be seeking similar recommendations to award the contract on 9 July.
- Cabinet agreed the service design for the new contract on 12 December 2023.
- The agreed aim and principles of the Shared Service were based around delivering services which were both financially and environmentally sustainable.
- The contract had been built around collaborative working, encouraging bidders to work cross boundary with a shared service design for the greatest efficiencies.
- Officers had completed an extensive procurement and will be seeking a decision from Cabinet to award the contract to the preferred bidder on behalf of both Councils.
- Although the preferred bidder had been determined, the report also sought a delegation to the Chief Finance Officer on the decision to Capital fund vehicles. The preferred bidder would need to swiftly order vehicles once the necessary standstill period is complete, for them to be available when needed at the start of the contract.
- The delegation was to prevent a delay in ordering vehicles and to make the most up to date assessment of the financial benefit to the council in relation to the options.
- A new joint project board was proposed to oversee the start of the new contract, as this will require input from many corporate teams to ensure its success, in particular, digital transformation, communication and customer service and the start of the new services.
- The report also contained information on the developing plans for mobilisation, which will ensure the successful implementation of services and for which the joint mobilisation project board will provide oversight, this includes a work programme and a draft communications plan.
- Overview and Scrutiny should note that during the procurement exercise the Government released draft guidance to support their proposals for 'Simpler Recycling' linked to new legislation introduced by the Environment Act in response to the 2018 Resources and Waste Strategy. This guidance is yet to be officially published but the legislation required that Councils had due regard for any guidance.
- An additional recommendation will be considered by Cabinet to reconfirm the collection of residual waste on a three-weekly basis, which was originally agreed in October 2022 and reconfirmed in the revised service design presented at Cabinet in December 2023.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Donna Wright
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Claire Strong
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason

In response to the questions, the Service Manager – Waste advised that:

- The recommended guidance on the 9-month timeline included procuring the fleet vehicles with any additional costs. It was noted that it was tight on time for the vehicles and temporary vehicles needed and this may fall back to the Council as our delay to the programme. The vehicles themselves were not "off the shelf" and building slots would need to be organised. The supplier was aware that East and North Herts Councils would be purchasing a lot of vehicles, with different makes and models. It was noted that if any other purchaser paid for vehicles before the Council, this could amend the timeline of work and delay the production longer.

- All vehicles would be new, but in mixed stages of condition towards the last 3 months of the contract. With ongoing technical advancements, for example with electric vehicles, the fleet could be swapped part way through the contract.
- The recent “flex collect” trial was highlighted. This was a trial collection of soft plastics in Knebworth. Soft plastic was not recycled much in the UK, with different types of plastic being recycled into new products or chemical recycling, which was not as useful but was still seen as recovering a product.
- The recycling of plastics depended on the capacity and capabilities of the sorting facilities. The tender companies all had sufficient capacity for 2025, all with viable solutions.
- Some residents required additional services, such as larger bins for Incontinence wear or properties with larger families.
- During the changeover stages of the service staff would be on hand, doorstepping residents to reassure them of any details during the major service change.
- The contractor would also be in contact with the Councils over any changes and introduction of the service and communications required. Parish and Town Councils would be informed for more rural areas, Roadshows would be utilised, and local press will help move messages to residents. Elected Members will also be asked to update residents with details on social media.
- It was agreed that both Councils have different set ups, but it was concluded to have the most appropriate members on the project board. It was suggested that the Leader of the Council should clarify who should sit on the project board.
- It was noted that £60,000 had been allocated across the two authorities for the first year for the communications plan. This budget was lower than the sum of activities in the draft communications plan. Any difference once the final plan is agreed would go through the budget round. The Council would try to keep communication costs down but had to factor in postage of bespoke letters to households, to avoid poor communications.
- There would be no return for bins that had not been put, where the fault was with residents. This was a very expensive resource to deliver. Additional staff will be hired to manage the waste and residents would be asked to pay attention when reminders were sent out to put bins out. It was thought that residents would remind each other as to bin collection days and encourage their street to put bins out on the correct day.
- Recyclable side waste would be collected if left beside the bin in a recyclable or reusable bag. Any black bags would not be collected in the new contract. Waste would also be taken if placed in a paper bag, a recyclable or reusable container. Card and paper will be split to a new bin collection.
- The new service would see a wheely bin being collected each week for a three-week cycle, together with the usual food caddy and garden waste (if subscribed).
- A phone app was being looked at to help with the roll out of the new contract. It was hoped that in the future, functions such as planning applications, complaints and library opening times.
- Residents will be asked to put their bins on the boundary of their property. If residents are on holiday, neighbours will be encouraged to put their bins out for them. There will be a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) provided online.
- There will be contingency issues with a new service and possibly small items of fly tipping. Black sacks beside the road will be cleared by the contractor. It was also noted that the average resident doesn't fly tip in the area.
- If there was a change of contractor and which would also mean a change of some staff, it was noted that the service may not start as 100% perfect. From a client perspective, the contractor should provide a quick and efficient service with residents in more rural areas being able to get through to the Council to report any queries or complaints.
- The customer services manager would be responsible for the resources of call data. Complaints would be encouraged to be logged online, leaving the telephone lines free for those with no access to the internet.
- Residents would be encouraged to carry out more home composting on biodegradable items.

- There would not be a single project manager for this, however the majority of the project management work would be the responsibility of the Service Manager – Waste.

In response to questions, the Managing Director advised that:

- Both Councils may not make the same decision regarding the contract. This is procured for both authorities and the contract award was not viable with a unilateral decision. The project came with difficult decisions and joint cross party working parties would be required for agreements to be made.
- It was unlikely that frequency of collection of residential waste becomes a law. There was other legislation regarding the production of waste to pay for packaging disposal.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Martin Prescott

Points raised during the debate included:

- That challenges were clear from the previous contract and the correct Executive Member should be chosen to be part of the project board. Councillor Ian Albert was suggested.
- It was agreed to amend 2.3 to “Executive Member for Finance and IT”.
- It was suggested that members of the Community Forums should be added as partners on the Project Board and consulted on contracts.
- The Project Board was noted to be joint with East Herts Council. It was recommended that all councillors receive briefings from the board.
- It was agreed that communications should plan an element of councillor interaction. The communications plan should be revised to include more engagement with Members.
- There were concerns with the issue of missed bin collections. It was reassured that bins missed by the contractor would be collected, residents will have to report this. Repeat issues would be investigated to stop them happening.
- It was agreed that recommendations would be made for Cabinet to decide.

During the debate, Councillor Daniel Allen advised that Councillor Ian Albert had already been approached and was happy to be recommended to Cabinet for the position on the Project Board.

Councillor Matt Barnes proposed, as amended, and Councillor Tom Tyson seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That Cabinet agrees to award the waste, recycling and street cleansing contract to the preferred bidder, as identified in Part 2 of this report.
- (2) That Cabinet agrees to the delegation of powers to the Director of Resources and the Director of Place in consultation with the Executive Members for Finance and IT and Recycling and Waste Management to determine whether the Council Capital funds vehicles.
- (3) That Cabinet agrees to approve the formation of a joint mobilisation project board to include the Executive Members responsible for Finance and IT as well as the Executive Member covering waste, recycling and street cleansing services for both EHC and North Herts to monitor the progress of the mobilisation of the waste, recycling and street cleansing contract.

- (4) That Cabinet has regard for the draft statutory guidance in Appendix 6 and taking into account the matters set out in this Part 2 report and any Part 2 clarifications, reconfirms the decision on the 3-weekly collection frequency of residual waste collections made by Cabinet as per 7.5 and provides clear reasons for the decision.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) An extensive procurement exercise has been undertaken for waste, recycling and street cleansing services.
- (2) The procurement including specification development has been supported by external consultants Eunomia and legal advisors from Sharpe Pritchard.

The meeting was closed at 22:09

Chair

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 3 September 2024

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: Community Survey Round Two results (March – May 2024)

REPORT OF: Service Director, Place

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Leader of the Council, Daniel Allen

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST and A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To advise Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet of the key findings from the Community Survey Round Two results (March – May 2024).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Committee comment on and note the key findings and observations from round two of the Community Survey and comment on the approach to future surveys (as detailed in section 8.7.2) and make any recommendations or comments to Cabinet.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To ensure that Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet are aware of the round two results of our digital Community Survey and how they compare to both our round one (2023) results and the Local Government Association (LGA) February 2024 Resident Satisfaction phone survey results.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Community Survey Round Two results report was taken to the internal, informal Political Liaison Board of the Executive and the Leadership team on 6 August 2024. The Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader of the Council have also been consulted on the report findings.

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 Resident surveys are a key tool to gauge residents' 'of the moment' views and perceptions of the council.
- 7.2 In 2023 North Herts Council ran our first-ever digital residents survey which became the baseline for future survey results comparisons. Our second Community Survey round, which ran from March to May 2024 means we are now in the position to make a direct comparison with those satisfaction results.
- 7.3 The survey, which is run by Zencity, uses the powerful tools that Google and Facebook have built to digitally target a representative sample of the North Herts community, (based on 2021 Census data) through targeted digital ads. It's important to note that the sample size, which aims to be representative of North Herts population, is small (599 residents) and that the digital Community Survey is not designed to be an official consultation, but instead capture a snapshot of resident feeling, at a given point in time.
- 7.4 As with previous surveys, we continue, where we can, to compare our digital survey resident satisfaction levels with the satisfaction levels in the most recent Local Government Association (LGA) phone survey, which was run in February 2024. Interestingly, this LGA survey round saw some of the lowest/joint lowest scores since LGA polling began, particularly in areas such as satisfaction with the way local councils run things and the extent to which local councils act on the concerns of local residents.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Key findings

8.1 Headlines

- 8.1.1 When comparing residents 2024 satisfaction levels with our 2023 results: 8 scores have improved; 8 scores have remained the same; and only 1 has declined 'to what extent are you aware of what your local councillor does in your local area'.
- 8.1.2 In comparison with the latest LGA phone survey results: North Herts Council are still tracking significantly lower than the LGA phone survey scores, aside from 'satisfaction with North Herts as a place to live'. However, research (source: Gallup; Oxford Academic; Nielsen) shows that phone survey results tend to be more positive than digital survey results, as there is an opportunity for the researcher to give greater explanation and build a relationship during the call.
- 8.1.3 It is important to note when considering these results to review them in context alongside resident feedback we have received through other channels during the same time-period e.g. Councillor surgeries and the [23/24 Comments, Compliments & Complaints \(3 C's\) results reported to Overview & Scrutiny in June 2024](#) - which showed that the number of complaints received by both the Council and our contractors decreased from 417 in 22/23 to 384 in 23/24 (an 8% decrease).

8.2 Highlights

- 8.2.1 Our residents continue to be satisfied with North Herts as place to live (74%). This is on a par with the latest LGA phone survey findings (also 74%), with both Letchworth

and Royston residents' satisfaction levels slightly higher than the last survey, at 76% and 75% respectively.

- 8.2.2 Two thirds, or 66% of residents, would recommend North Herts as a place to live. Royston resident satisfaction levels have improved by 10% since round one of our Community Survey.
- 8.2.3 46% of those surveyed trust North Herts Council. This has improved by 3% since last year, with Royston and Southern Rural resident trust levels improving by 12% since our last survey. This is also significantly higher than the latest Office for National Statistics 'Trust in government' report (2023) findings of 34% trust in local government and 27% trust in the UK national government.
- 8.2.4 We have seen a significant improvement in satisfaction levels from the Royston residents who responded in round two across all question areas vs our last survey. This is a positive development, as Royston resident satisfaction levels were a key concern from the 2023 survey results, however it is important to note that this was from a small base of 45 residents.

8.3 Satisfaction with our overall running of North Herts Council

- 8.3.1 Satisfaction with the way we run things remains at 43% (2024 vs 2023). This is 10% lower than the LGA phone survey results (53%). However, it is interesting to note the percentage difference has decreased, as it was 17% lower than the LGA on the previous survey.
- 8.3.2 Our value for money score has improved by 3% since we last surveyed (to 28%) which is significantly lower than the LGA phone survey score of 40% which itself has dropped by 2% since 2023.
- 8.3.3 30% of our residents believe we are working to make North Herts greener and cleaner. This is in line with our 2023 results but includes an 11% improvement in Royston residents' views (from 27% to 38%) and an 18% decline in Baldock residents' views (from 44% to 26%).

8.4 Satisfaction with our services **

*** Please note when reviewing these figures that the Round Two survey included a 'do not use' option to ensure that the satisfaction responses were gathered from residents who use the service in question. This option was not included in Round One.*

- 8.4.1 **Overall resident satisfaction with waste and recycling collection** (65%) has increased by 3% since our last Community Survey. Although encouraging, this score is considerably lower than the corresponding LGA phone survey results (79%). Since we last surveyed, Royston resident satisfaction levels have improved by 13% (from 56% to 69%) and Southern Rural resident satisfaction levels have improved by 10% (from 60% to 70%).
- 8.4.2 **Overall resident satisfaction with street cleaning services** (51%) has increased by 3% since our last Community Survey. Satisfaction is only 5% lower than the LGA phone survey results (56%).
- 8.4.3 **Resident satisfaction with our parks and greenspaces remains at 64%.** This is only 9% lower than the LGA phone survey results.

- 8.4.4 **47% of those residents surveyed are satisfied with our leisure facilities** which is on a par with 2023. Although the satisfaction levels have remained the same, there has been a clear improvement in Royston resident satisfaction levels (14%), alongside a clear decline in Letchworth residents' satisfaction levels which have dropped by 15%. Everyone Active took over as our Leisure operator on the 1 April and there were some initial teething issues with the new booking system, which may have led to this reduction in Letchworth residents' satisfaction levels.
- 8.4.5 **Resident satisfaction with our car parks remains low at 36%** and the cost of current charges (which are felt to be expensive) feature heavily in the open-ended feedback.

8.5 Informing, engaging and communicating with our residents.

- 8.5.1 Only 30% of residents feel aware of what their local councillor does in their local area, which is 3% lower than when we surveyed in 2023 (largely influenced by a 12% drop in score from Letchworth residents) and 13% less than the LGA phone survey results score. This score is interesting as councillors were out campaigning for our Local Elections when our Community Survey was running, which we would have expected would result in an improvement in awareness levels.
- 8.5.2 35% of residents surveyed feel that we keep them informed about the services and benefits we provide. Royston residents' views have improved by 21% (from 23% to 44%), however scores from our remaining four areas have declined. Since our new Marketing and Communications strategy was approved in January, we have focused efforts on communicating our services more (including which services North Herts provide versus which services Herts County Council provide), but it is clear more needs to be done.
- 8.5.3 80% felt we should listen/consult more and only 18% of the residents who responded agree they can influence decisions affecting their local area. Both scores have improved by 4% and 3% respectively since our 2023 Community Survey results and participation rates in our consultations are high compared to other local authorities. However, we could explore ways to encourage more people to take part in consultations, such as promoting them at Councillor surgeries.
- 8.5.4 A quarter of residents surveyed feel we make an effort to find out what people want and/or involve, consult, and engage with the local community. Agreement scores have improved in these areas since 2023, particularly by Royston residents, but are still relatively low.

8.6 Areas of focus

8.6.1 Continuing themes:

- **Improve our roads** – including fixing potholes, general road safety, easing traffic congestion, and clearing litter from our roads, pavements and drains.
- **Housing** – build more affordable housing; protect green and brown spaces; homeless provision and involve affected communities more in decision-making.
- **Carparks** – charges are too expensive. Lower carpark charges to encourage people to visit local shops.

8.6.2 Emerging themes:

- **Young people/teenagers** – need to create more for them to do as there is a perception that there isn't much for them to do currently. A greater provision of low-cost/free activities and entertainment were mentioned, in view of the current cost of living crisis.
- **Planning** – mentioned specifically this time rather than just general housing including enabling communities to be part of the planning process and giving them greater time to have their say at Planning Control Committee meetings.
- **Listening to residents** – although our scores have improved in this area since our last Community Survey, those residents who have low satisfaction levels with the way North Herts Council runs things did mention listening to and involving residents more.

8.7 Proposed next steps

8.7.1 Actioning residents' feedback

It is proposed that we continue with the Community Survey 5-point 'you said, we've listened' action plan (created and agreed with previous Leader and Deputy earlier this year and included in the appendices) to visibly show to residents that we have listened/are acting on the feedback they give us. The North Herts Council services versus Hertfordshire County Council services graphic is a great example of how feedback has been used to produce something which constructively helps residents in the future.

8.7.2 Future survey approach

8.7.2.1 We have two more rounds of our digital Community Survey before our contract with Zencity ends on the 31 March 2025. Round Three will run September to November 2024 and Round Four will run January to March 2025.

8.7.2.2 The Political Liaison Board felt that a new approach should be considered when surveying North Herts residents in the future. One that is targeted and asks residents their thoughts on specific issues (budgets and spending for example) to gain detailed feedback which can be actioned rather than the current 'broadbrush' survey approach offered by Zencity. This will be investigated by the Communications team.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. If any actions are identified as a result of the findings of the Community Survey Round Two results (March to May 2024), the legal implications of those will be considered at the time.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The cost of the Community Survey is met through existing communications/consultations budgets.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2 Conducting the Community Survey is an important tool for gaining a snapshot of resident feeling at a given point in time. If the areas of focus identified in the survey are not seen to be acted upon, there is a risk that public satisfaction with the Council will reduce, leading to a negative impact on the Council's reputation.

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. The returned sample of those surveyed was matched to the 2021 Census ethnicity, age and gender distribution of North Herts and rake-weighting applied to ensure none of these demographic groups was over or underrepresented in the results. This ensured that the results are broadly representative of the population of North Hertfordshire, however it should be noted that there is potential for an element of self-selection bias as respondents have chosen to participate in the digital survey rather than being randomly selected.

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 the findings of the Community Survey Round Two results (March to May 2024).

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no known Human Resource impacts or requirements that apply to the findings of the Community Survey Round Two results (March to May 2024).

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Zencity Community Survey Round Two (March to May 2024) results report.
- 16.2 Appendix B – Community Survey – Round Two Vs Round One results comparison.
- 16.3 Appendix C – Community Survey – Round Two digital survey results Vs LGA 2024 phone survey results.
- 16.4 Appendix D - Community Survey 5-point 'you said, we've listened' action plan.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 Christine Crofts, Communications Manager, christine.crofts@north-herts.gov.uk, 01462 474544.
- 17.2 Sarah Kingsley, Service Director: Place, sarah.kingsley@north-herts.gov.uk, 01462 474552.
- 17.3 Isabelle Alajooz, Legal Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer: Legal Services, Isabelle.Alajooz@north-herts.gov.uk, 01462 474346.
- 17.4 Ian Couper, Service Director: Resources, ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk, 01462 474243.
- 17.5 Ellie Hollingsworth, Policy & Strategy Officer, ellie.hollingsworth@north-herts.gov.uk , 01462 474220.
- 17.6 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy and Communities Manager, reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk, 01462 474212.
- 17.7 Rizwan Sarwar, Procurement Officer, rizwan.sarwar@north-herts.gov.uk, 01462 474392

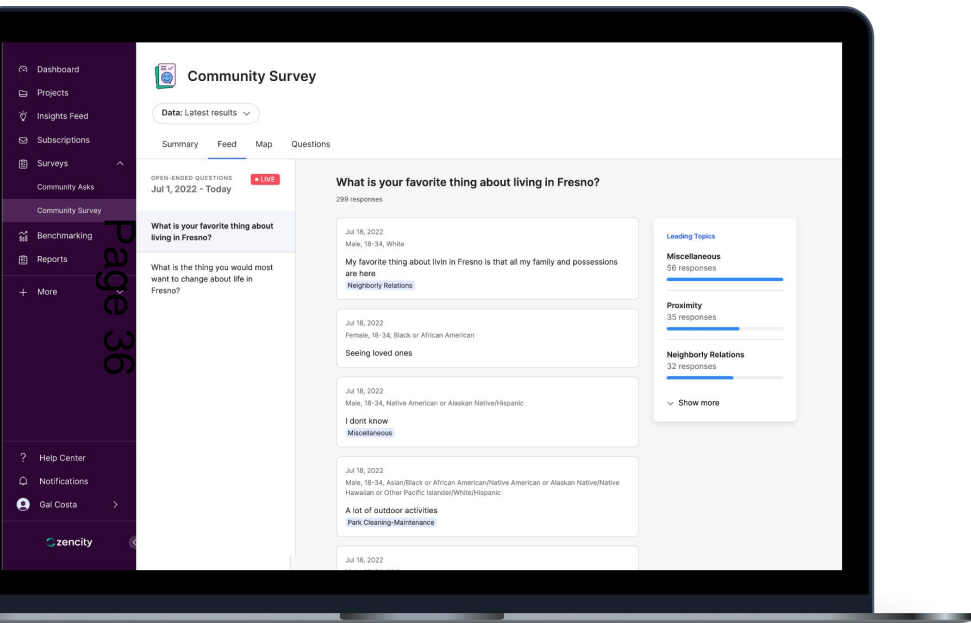
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North Herts Council Community Survey

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March - May 2024



The Zencity Community Survey

A recurring survey, the Zencity Community Survey measures how satisfied residents are with their community and with local government-provided services and allows officials to compare these scores over time and against a cohort of similar communities.



Survey Methodology

599 new respondents were digitally recruited (e.g. over social media, mobile apps, local websites, and survey panels) between March - May, 2024. Zencity built a representative sample by matching respondent data to the 2021 Census's ethnicity, age, and gender distributions in North Herts. Finally, rake-weighting was applied as a statistical safeguard to balance out any remaining discrepancies in distribution, so no demographic group is overrepresented or underrepresented in the final score. This technique assigns a unique weight to each respondent based on their demographic characteristics. This process ensures that the distribution of these characteristics in the final weighted sample aligns with the community's overall demographics to ensure a stronger representation of the whole community. For example, if 61% of respondents were women, but they only constituted 52% of the population of the city, weighting decreases that representation so that women count as 51% of the sample.

Sample size selection: Sample size calculators estimate sample size based on the desired margin of error—which assumes a probability sample—and the population size.

Although Zencity does not use probability sampling, we can use these kinds of calculators as a guide. Because our surveys are recurring, we must consider the risk of “sample burnout”, when residents tire of taking surveys and slowly stop responding over time. Therefore, in order to maximize sample size while preventing sample burnout, we assume a 4% “margin of error”.

Sample Details

North Herts
March - May 2024

Powered by
 Zencity

4

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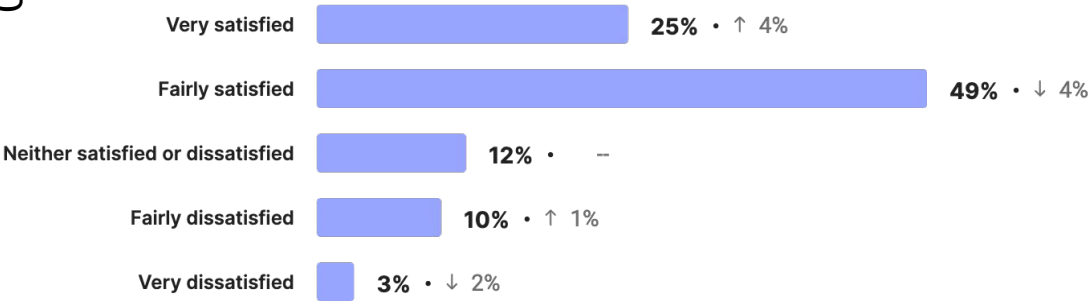
Area	Number of responses (unweighted)
Baldock and District	93
Hitchin	235
Letchworth	131
Royston	45
Southern Rural	95

Group	Number of responses (unweighted)	Distribution target (based on census)
16-34	142	100
35-54	191	140
55+	256	160
Female	360	208
Male	235	191
White	499	373
Other ethnic groups	69	27

Overall Satisfaction

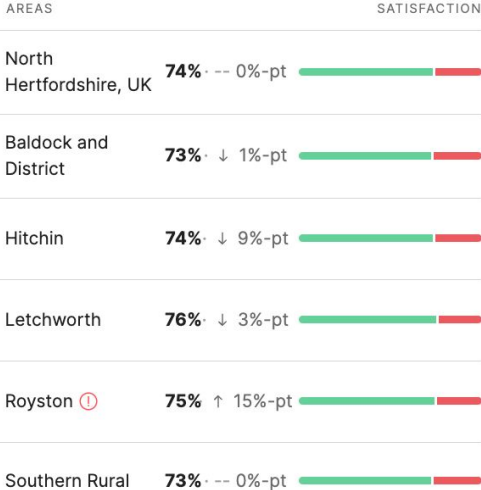
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Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with North Herts as a place to live?



74%

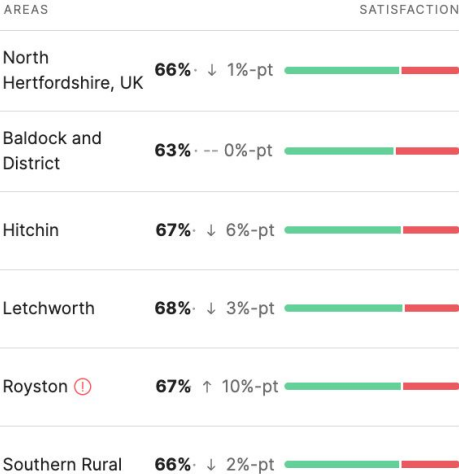
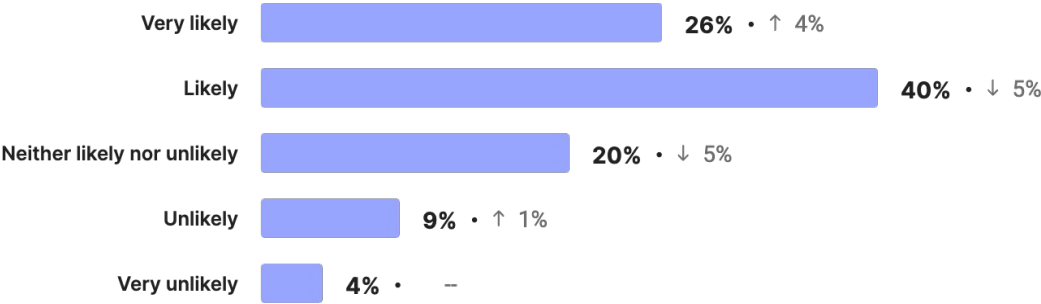
of residents are satisfied with North Herts as a place to live



How likely are you to recommend North Herts as a place to live?

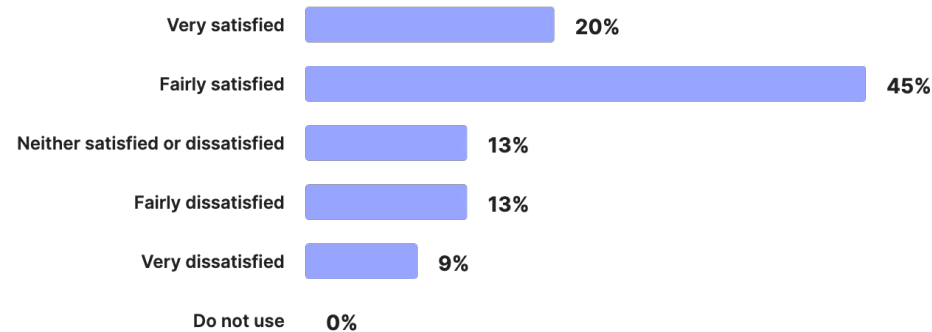
66%
of residents would
recommend North Herts as a
place to live

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Satisfaction with Council Services

We'd like to know how satisfied you are with the current services provided by North Herts Council:
Waste and recycling collection



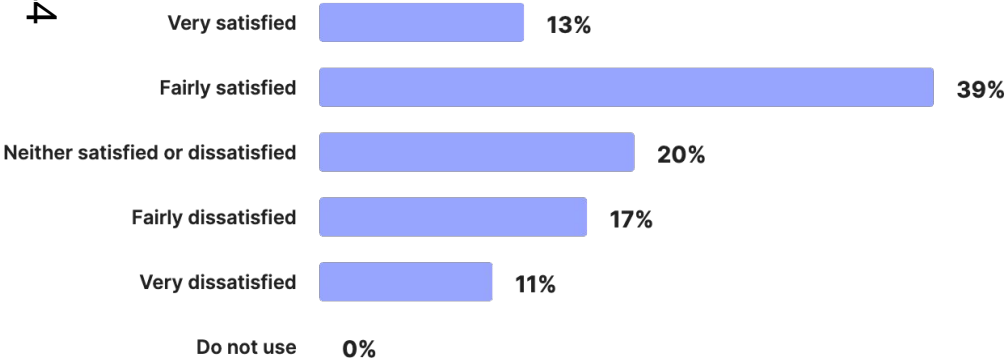
65%
of residents are satisfied with the waste and recycling collection

AREAS		SATISFACTION	
North Hertfordshire, UK	65%	· --	<div></div>
Baldock and District	68%	· --	<div></div>
Hitchin	69%	· --	<div></div>
Letchworth	50%	· --	<div></div>
Royston ⓘ	69%	· --	<div></div>
Southern Rural	70%	· --	<div></div>

We'd like to know how satisfied you are with the current services provided by North Herts Council:

Street cleaning

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Please note, the sum of percentages may seem slightly different to what is shown in the graph due to the impact of rounding the percentages.

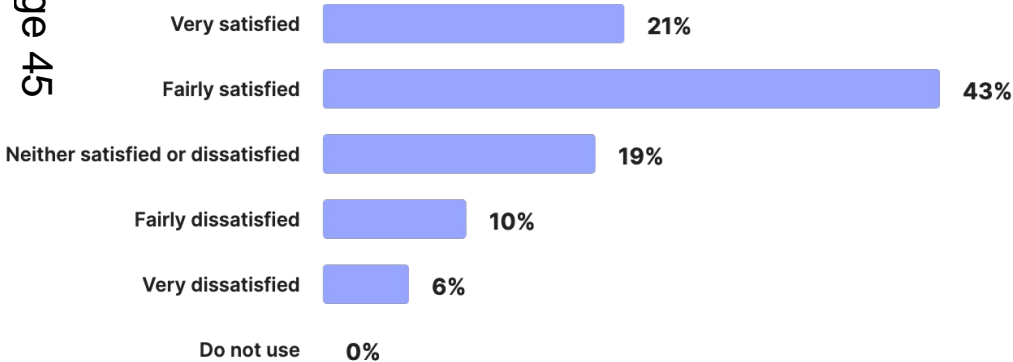
51%
of residents are satisfied with the street cleaning

AREAS		SATISFACTION	
North Hertfordshire, UK	51%		
Baldock and District	57%		
Hitchin	47%		
Letchworth	55%		
Royston	58%		
Southern Rural	48%		

We'd like to know how satisfied you are with the current services provided by North Herts Council:

Parks and green spaces

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64%

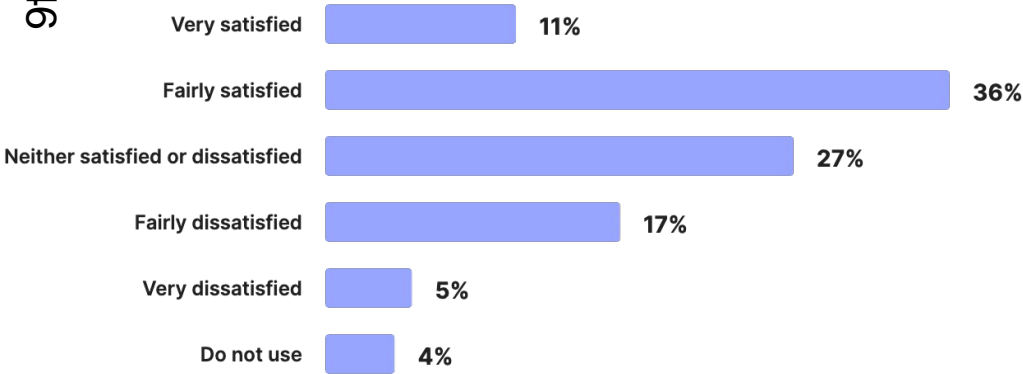
of residents are satisfied with the parks and green spaces

AREAS		SATISFACTION	
North Hertfordshire, UK	64%	· · ·	<div></div>
Baldock and District	66%	· · ·	<div></div>
Hitchin	61%	· · ·	<div></div>
Letchworth	65%	· · ·	<div></div>
Royston ⓘ	67%	· · ·	<div></div>
Southern Rural	65%	· · ·	<div></div>

We'd like to know how satisfied you are with the current services provided by North Herts Council:

Leisure facilities

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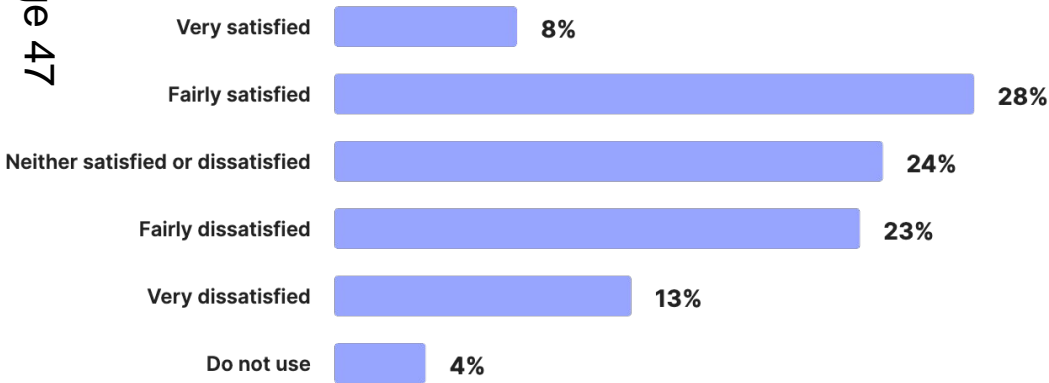
47%
of residents are satisfied with the leisure facilities

AREAS		SATISFACTION	
North Hertfordshire, UK	47%	· · ·	<div></div>
Baldock and District	43%	· · ·	<div></div>
Hitchin	45%	· · ·	<div></div>
Letchworth	39%	· · ·	<div></div>
Royston ⓘ	53%	· · ·	<div></div>
Southern Rural	61%	· · ·	<div></div>

We'd like to know how satisfied you are with the current services provided by North Herts Council:

Car parks

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36%

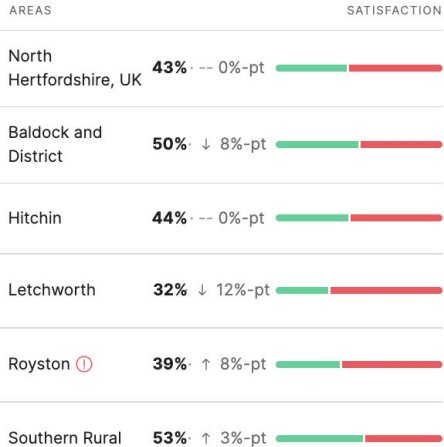
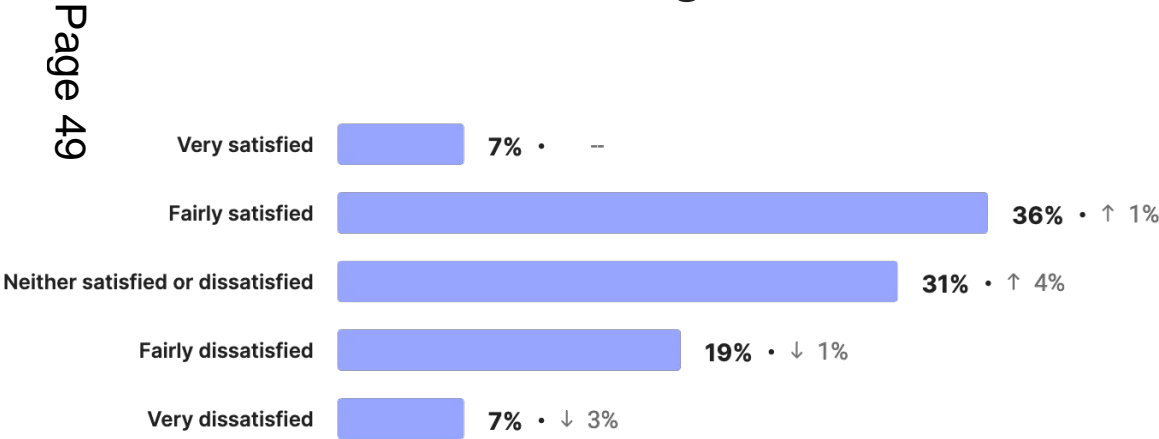
of residents are satisfied with the car parks

AREAS		SATISFACTION
North Hertfordshire, UK	36%	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Baldock and District	34%	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Hitchin	35%	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Letchworth	34%	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Royston ①	43%	<div><div></div><div></div></div>
Southern Rural	38%	<div><div></div><div></div></div>

Satisfaction With North Herts Council

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way North Herts Council runs things?

43%
of residents are satisfied with the way North Herts Council runs things

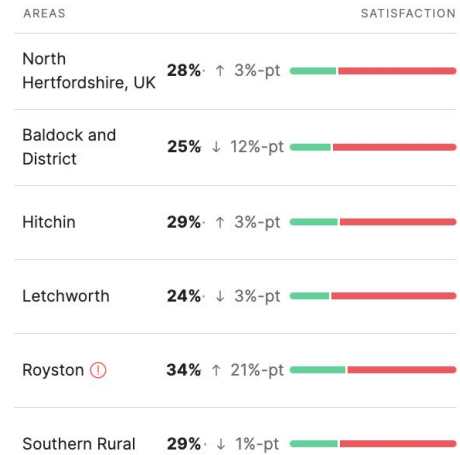
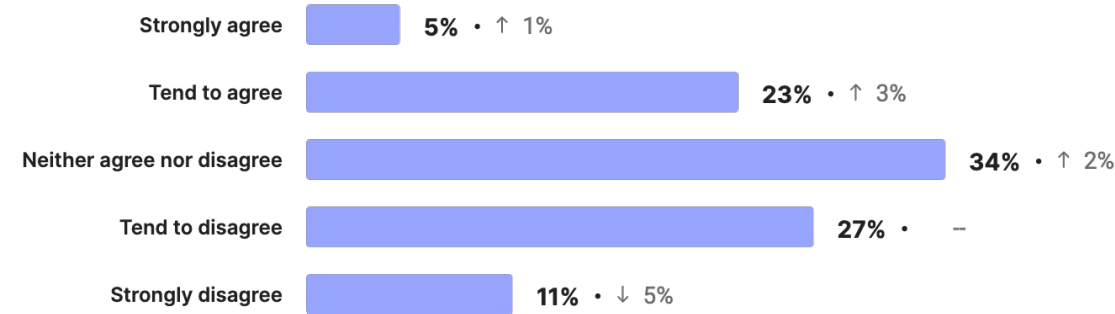


To what extent do you agree or disagree
that North Herts Council provides value
for money?

28%

of residents agree that North
Herts Council provides value
for money

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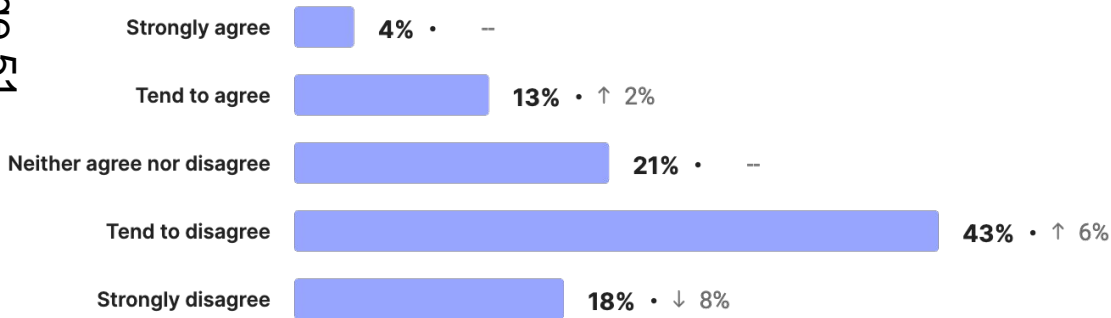


Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?

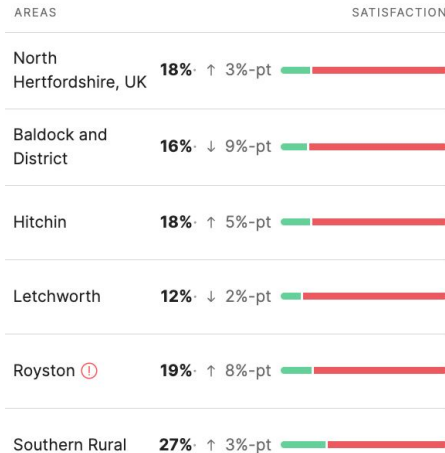
18%

of residents agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area

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Please note, the sum of percentages may seem slightly different to what is shown in the graph due to the impact of rounding the percentages.

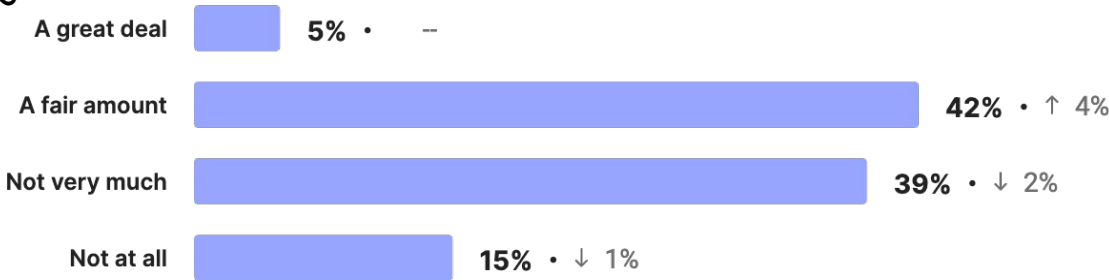


How much do you trust North Herts Council?

46%

of residents trust North Herts Council

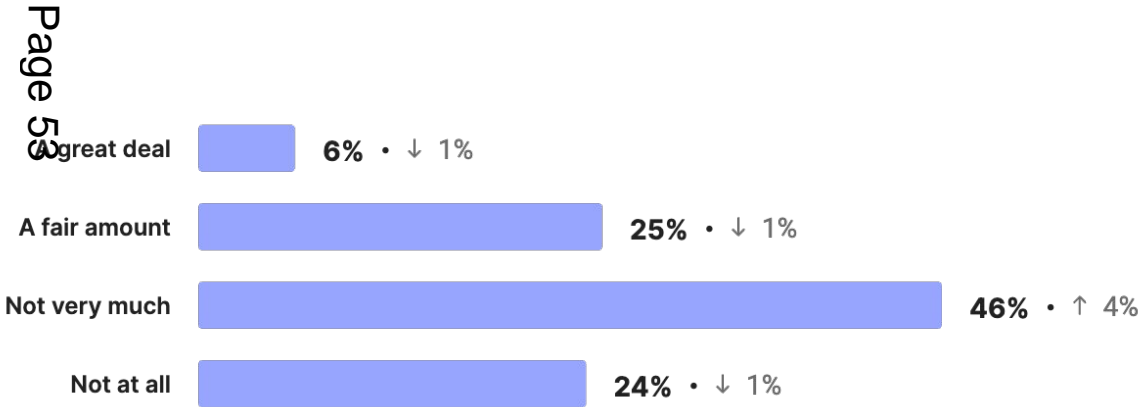
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Please note, the sum of percentages may seem slightly different to what is shown in the graph due to the impact of rounding the percentages.

AREAS	SATISFACTION	
North Hertfordshire, UK	46%	↑ 3%-pt
Baldock and District	42%	↓ 12%-pt
Hitchin	46%	— 0%-pt
Letchworth	39%	↓ 4%-pt
Royston ⓘ	55%	↑ 22%-pt
Southern Rural	58%	↑ 12%-pt

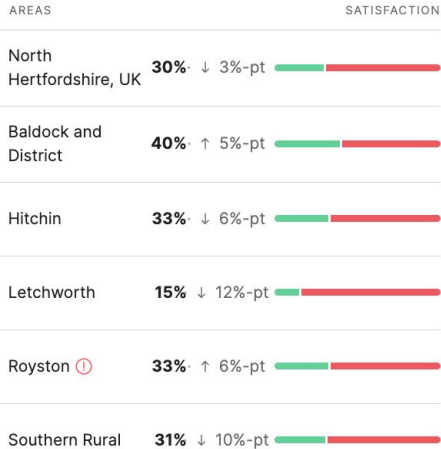
To what extent are you aware of what your local councillor does in your local area?



Please note, the sum of percentages may seem slightly different to what is shown in the graph due to the impact of rounding the percentages.

30%

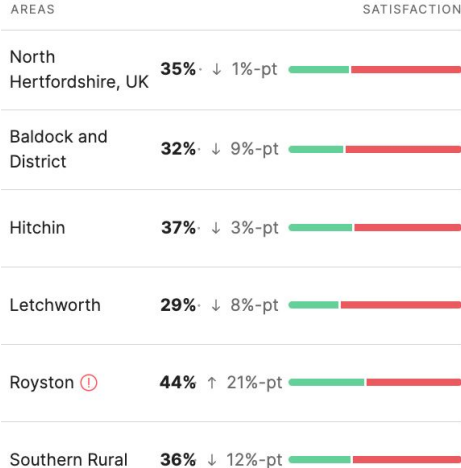
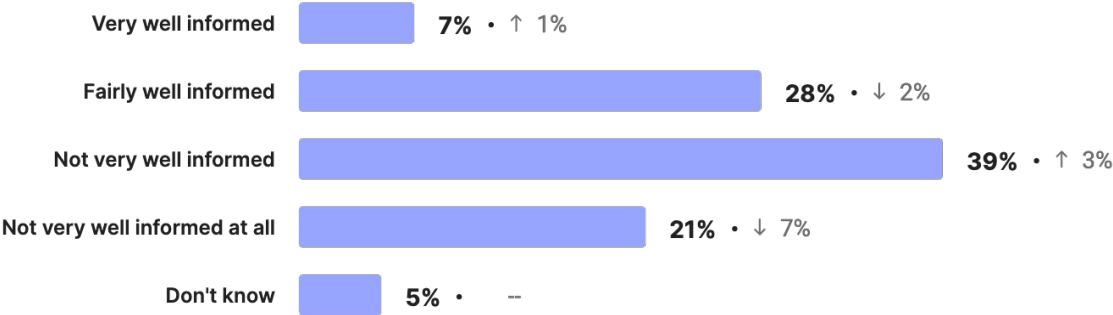
of residents feel aware of what their local councillor does in their local area



Overall, how well-informed do you think North Herts Council keeps residents about the services and benefits it provides?

35% of residents think North Herts Council keeps residents well-informed about the services and benefits it provides

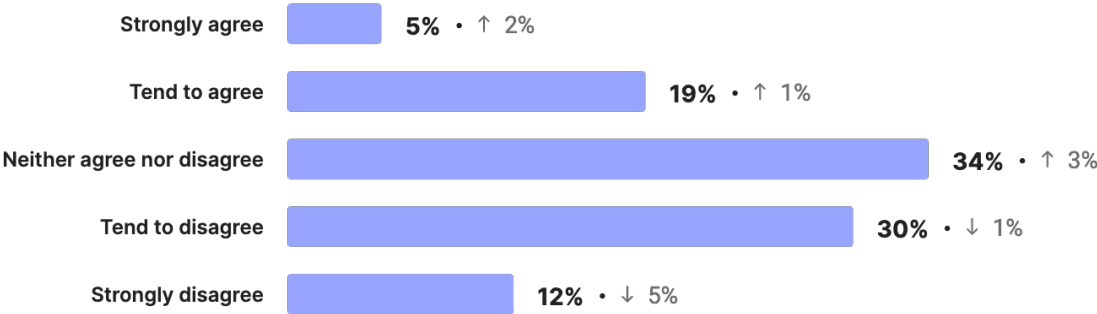
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Attitudes Towards North Herts Council

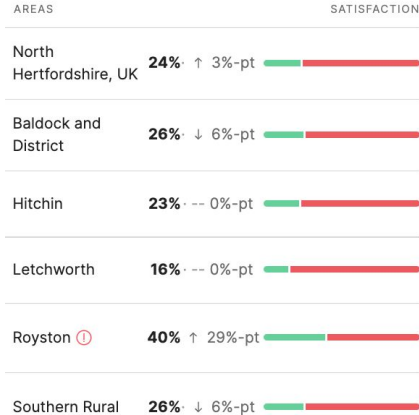
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North Herts Council involves, consults and engages with the local community



24%

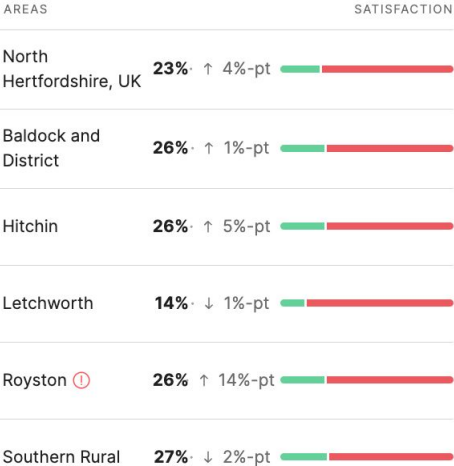
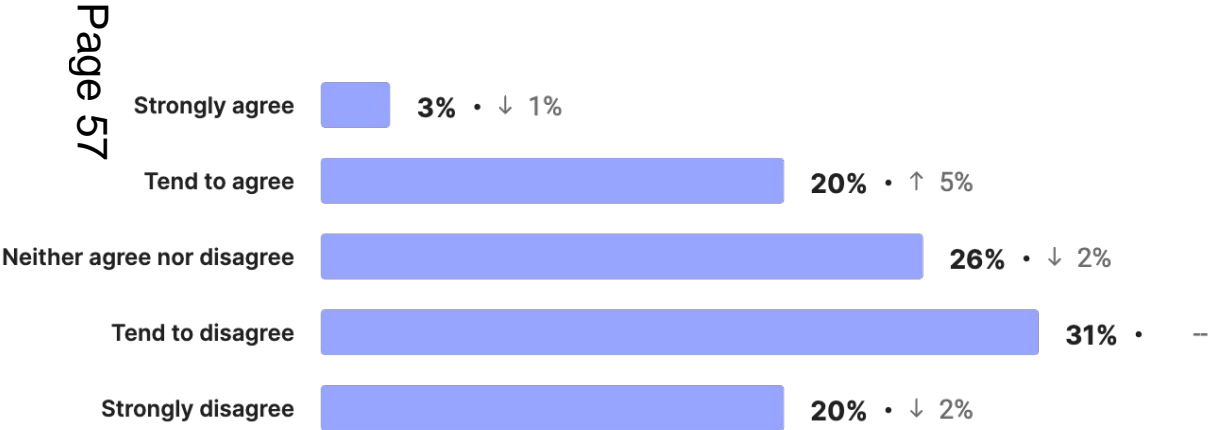
of residents agree that North Herts Council involves, consults and engages with the local community



North Herts Council makes an effort to find out what people want

23%

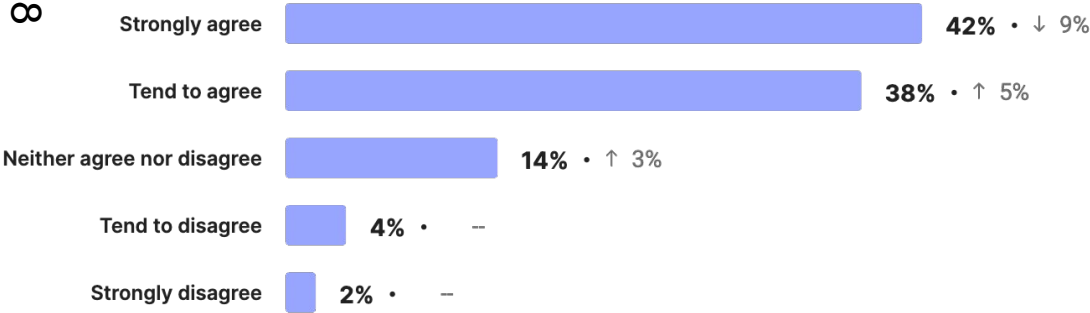
of residents agree that North Herts Council makes an effort to find out what people want



North Herts Council should listen/consult more

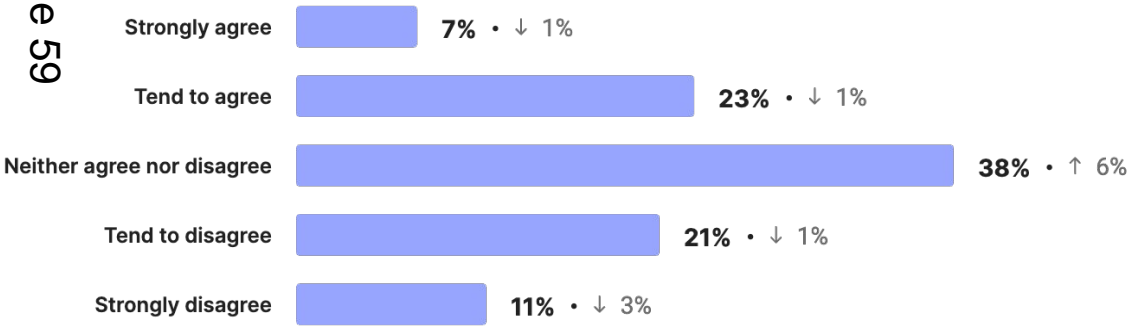
80%
of respondents think
North Herts Council
should listen/consult
more

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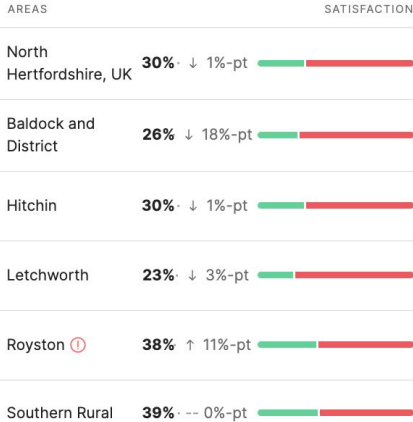
North Herts Council is working to make the area cleaner and greener

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30%

of residents agree that North Herts Council is working to make the area cleaner and greener





North Herts Community Survey 24 Vs 23 comparison

Survey dates	ROUND 2 (March to May 2024)	ROUND 1 (March to June 2023)
Survey mode	Digital (targeted social & Google ads) run by Zencity	
Respondent engagement level	Likely to be people with no current relationship with us	Likely to be people with no current relationship with us
Number of respondents	599	715
Weighted by area, age, gender and ethnicity		
Weighted / Unweighted		
Survey questions and answers:		
Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with North Herts as a place to live	74%	74%
How likely are you to recommend North Herts as a place to live	66%	67%
How satisfied are you with the current services provided by North Herts Council		
a. Waste collection	65%	62%
b. Street cleaning	51%	48%
c. Parks and green spaces	64%	64%
d. Leisure facilities	47%	47%
e. Car parks	36%	36%
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way North Herts Council runs things	43%	43%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that North Herts Council provides value for money?	28%	25%
Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?	18%	15%
How much do you trust North Herts Council?	46%	43%
To what extent are you aware of what your local councillor does in your local area	30%	33%
Overall, how well-informed do you think North Herts Council keeps residents about the services and benefits it provides?	35%	36%
North Herts Council involves, consults and engages with the local community	24%	21%
North Herts Council makes an effort to find out what people want	23%	19%
North Herts Council should listen/consult more	80%	84%
North Herts Council is working to make the area cleaner and greener	30%	31%

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2024 North Herts Community Survey Vs LGA survey comparison

Survey owner	North Herts Council	LGA
Survey dates	March to May 2024	February 2024
Survey mode	Digital (targeted social & Google ads) run by Zencity	Phone
Respondent engagement level	Likely to be people with no current relationship with us	Random selection of adults
Number of respondents	599	1,000
Weighted / Unweighted	Weighted by area, age, gender and ethnicity	Unweighted
Survey questions and answers:		
Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with North Herts as a place to live	74%	74%
How likely are you to recommend North Herts as a place to live	66%	N/A
How satisfied are you with the current services provided by North Herts Council		
a. Waste collection	65%	79%
b. Street cleaning	51%	56%
c. Parks and green spaces	64%	73%
d. Leisure facilities	47%	54%
e. Car parks	36%	N/A
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way North Herts Council runs things	43%	53%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that North Herts Council provides value for money?	28%	40%
Do you agree or disagree that you can influence decisions affecting your local area?	18%	N/A
How much do you trust North Herts Council?	46%	55%
To what extent are you aware of what your local councillor does in your local area	30%	43%
Overall, how well-informed do you think North Herts Council keeps residents about the services and benefits it provides?	35%	54%
North Herts Council involves, consults and engages with the local community	24%	N/A
North Herts Council makes an effort to find out what people want	23%	N/A
North Herts Council should listen/consult more	80%	N/A
North Herts Council is working to make the area cleaner and greener	30%	N/A

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Community survey 5-point action plan **

** Please note that the plan points highlighted in green are those which have been actioned so far

AIM **Visibly show we have listened and are taking action.**

PLAN **5-point plan for Councillors and Comms.**

DIGITAL (Comms)	INPERSON (Councillors)
1. Regular 'How to have your say' comms.	1. Councillor Surgeries.
2. Regular 'You said, we listened' comms.	2. Area Forums.
3. Regular North Herts Council Vs Herts County Council services comms.	3. Ward Walks – an opportunity for Cllrs to discuss current Ward issues which affect their residents with Leader/MD.
4. Explore the key feedback further with our Citizens panel – ask for thoughts/ideas.	4. Reaching the younger people who responded – pop ups at North Herts college?
5. Run mini surveys with our followers to gain further feedback on the key points.	5. Greater visibility in Royston ie potential for pop-ups?

Examples of 'Have your say' comms transitioning to 'you said, we listened' comms:

General 'Have your say' comms:

Welcome to North Herts

Search the site

Services unavailable on Saturday 23 March

Popular pages

- View or comment on a planning application
- Find your bin collection day
- Your Council Tax bill
- Pay your Council Tax
- Job vacancies

Have your say

You can give us your views on projects and consultations we're running that affect your community and the North Herts district.

Joined our **online community hubs** yet?

We're keen to hear your views throughout the year, not just when we're running a survey or consultation and our online community hubs are the perfect place for us to share future ideas and updates with you for your feedback and thoughts. We have three community hubs:

Our Budget hub - be part of our future budget conversations and help us understand your priorities.

Budget Hub

Our Churchgate Conversations hub - help us shape the vision of the Churchgate shopping area of Hitchin by joining the conversation.

Churchgate Conversations

Our Climate Hive - a hive of ideas and activities to help us reach our climate targets for North Herts.

Climate Hive

You can find them all at: www.north-herts.gov.uk/consultations

North Herts Council **News update**

26 January 2024

In the news this week

HOW TO... HAVE YOUR SAY

How to have your say

Did you know there are lots of ways to have your say on future decisions and new projects in North Herts (including signing up for our weekly newsletter, which you've already done)?

Just go to www.north-herts.gov.uk/haveyoursay where you can get involved in current consultations and also join our citizens panel. On social media? Click on the icons at the bottom of this email and become our friend on social too.

NHC Vs HCC services comms:

13:26

North Herts Council

Posts About Videos More

Like Comment Copy Share

North Herts Council

The findings from our most recent community survey highlighted that it's not always clear which service... See more

Here to help you

Knowing who to get in touch with when you need help is important, so here's a handy guide of the different services we and Hertfordshire County Council support you with.

North Herts Council

- Waste collection & recycling
- Parks & greenspaces
- Street cleaning
- Learning
- Highways & transport
- Adult social services
- Community grants
- Planning
- Public health
- Registration services

Hertfordshire

- Recycling, Re-use Centres & waste management
- Trading standards
- Public Health
- Highways and transport (including public transport, street lights, traffic lights, potholes, gritting, road repairs & verge maintenance)
- Adult social services, including blue badge applications, adult social care, day services and support for unpaid carers
- Children's social care, including fostering and adoption
- Schools and education, including SEND, schools admissions & free school meals and transport

www.north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474000

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk 0300 1234040

Welcome to the summer edition of Outlook magazine.

The 1 April saw us turn 50 so we thought we'd celebrate this golden milestone with a timeline trip down memory lane on pages 4 and 5. How many events do you remember?

We're always keen to ensure you are kept informed, updated, and involved in the work we are doing on your behalf. We have lots of ways you can get involved and have your say on future projects and next steps on services - just go to pages 8 and 9 for all the details.

One thing you have told us since the last edition is that it's not always clear what we are responsible for and what Hertfordshire County Council are responsible for. Hopefully the handy guide below will help.

Despite the weather not always playing ball, we're officially in the summer season now which gives us all the perfect opportunity

Anthony Roche, Managing Director

In this issue...

Page 3
Play the North Herts Community Lottery

Pages 4 & 5
Celebrating 50 years of North Herts

Pages 7, 10, 11, 12 & 13:
Investing in our communities

Page 15:
Everything you need to know about the General Election

Pages 18 & 19:
Free Healthy Hub family sessions

Cabinet
10 September 2024

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: Council Plan and Priorities 2024-2028

REPORT OF: Policy and Communities Manager

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITY: People First/Sustainability/A Brighter Future Together

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report proposes a new Council Plan and process for finalising the Plan.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet reviews and recommends the approval of the Council Plan to Full Council (Appendix A) with the four new Council Priorities as outlined below:

- Thriving Communities
- Accessible Services
- Responsible Growth
- Sustainability

2.2 Delegate authority to the Managing Director and Leader of the Council to approve any minor amendments to wording required as a result of the design process.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Council Plan is a key element of the corporate business planning process, as a high-level strategic document it sets out the Council's Priorities for the next four years. As an overarching policy framework document, it guides and influences the use of Council resources; providing a focus for activities, plans, and services that the Council provide. The introduction to the plan highlights the link between the Council Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and service delivery plans.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 That the current Council Plan (2022-2027) and its Priorities remain as they are. However this does not reflect the changed political landscape at a national level. For example, the new government has recognised the need for longer term funding reform for local government but there is still uncertainty around the timeframes for this and exactly what this will look like for us. The current plan also does not reflect our most recent and upcoming work. It should be noted that it is the wish of the new leader and their administration to update the Council Plan and the priorities following their election in May 2024 for a four-year term.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 No external consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this report. An externally facilitated workshop took place to establish the parameters for the new plan and priorities with the Administration, Leadership Team, the Policy & Strategy team and the Communications Manager attendance. A smaller working group was subsequently set up, comprising of the Managing Director, Section 151 officer, Service Director for Environmental Health and Housing, Leader and Deputy Leader, administration members selected by the Leader, the Policy & Strategy Team and the Communications Manager. The Policy & Strategy team were tasked with drafting the Council Plan, priorities and accompanying initiatives in more detail. Two subsequent workshops were held with the administration to gain feedback on the suggested direction. All members of the small working group and the Leadership Team have been given the opportunity to comment on a draft of the plan. The Political Liaison Board will have also considered the new Priorities and draft Plan. Their comments will be incorporated into the final version of the plan.

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 The Council Plan is considered alongside the budget position (Medium-Term Financial Strategy) of the authority. It is underpinned by the Council Delivery Plan and subsequent Service Plans.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. The Council Plan highlights key issues and aims for the district. The Plan sets out the context in which the Council operates, our ambitions, and the close links to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The Council Plan will inform the Council Delivery Plan. This Delivery plan sets out the key projects that are carried out through each year to support the priorities of the Council plan. This is monitored on a quarterly basis to make sure the projects achieve the stated objectives. This then allows for the subsequent agreement of the service plans as prepared by each directorate within the Council, setting out each service, team and individual's objectives. Having considered the relevant factors, the Council Priorities for 2024-2028 are to be the following:

- Thriving Communities
- Accessible Services
- Responsible Growth
- Sustainability

- 8.2 All projects which go on to be included in the Council Plan Delivery Plan should be subject to the provision of sound business cases with specific targets established as they are introduced. The Council's performance against these will be monitored and reported on a regular basis.

8.3 It should be noted that this is a plain-text version only. The plan will be formatted and designed once the content is approved. The design will draw from the look and feel of our current strategies to ensure brand consistency.

8.4 The recommendation to delegate authority to the Managing Director and Leader of the Council to approve minor amendments is to enable small changes which may be needed at the design stage to ensure a well-designed document.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Cabinet's terms of reference include at 5.7.38 the power, by recommendation *"to advise the Council in the formulation of those policies within the Council's terms of reference"*.

9.2 Full Council's terms of reference at 4.4.1 (a) provide *"approving or adopting the Policy Framework"* which at 4.2.1 (f) include *"Priorities/ Objectives for the District."* The Council Plan 2024-2028 at Appendix A represents the priorities.

9.3 The Council Plan Priorities outlined for 2024-2028 onward will provide high level reference points that will assist the Council making clear and effective decisions.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Council Plan recognises the importance of aligning with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This ensures that Council adopts policy-led budgeting, and also does not commit to policies or projects that it cannot afford to deliver. The Council Plan generally provides high level policy commitments, which can be delivered in several different ways and therefore the resources required cannot be fully determined.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.

11.2 Adoption of the Council Plan and within it the Council's Priorities for 2024 – 2028 commences the Council's Business Planning processes for the next financial year. A robust Corporate Business Planning process that links the Council Plan with the Medium-Term Financing Plan is key to managing the Council's identified Corporate Risk of "Financial Sustainability".

11.3 The risks and opportunities associated with the individual projects proposed will be assessed to ensure informed decisions are made on the overall programme of activity that the Council can deliver and to be in the best position to manage potential threats to success and maximise opportunities.

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 In setting its Council Plan Priorities, the Council is seeking to address various inequalities amongst communities including health and social inequalities. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken for relevant projects as and when they reach fruition.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. Environmental impacts assessments will be carried out against the relevant proposed actions as they reach fruition. Sustainability is one of the proposed Priorities and as such projects should come forth to support this priority and projects in general should align with this priority.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no additional human resource requirements arising from this report. The resources needed to deliver services are considered and addressed through the Corporate Business Planning process and Service Plans. Once these Priorities are agreed for retention, then these will be cascaded to staff via staff briefings with several reminders via Insight, the SCF and the intranet.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A Council Plan 2024-2028.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None.

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North Herts Council Plan 2024-2028

Front Page

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Text version only, the plan will be designed, formatted and images added after content approved*

Introduction

Over the last few years we have achieved many things together. We have approved our Local Plan which will help deliver much-needed homes in our district. We have awarded grant funding to local groups so that they can continue supporting our communities. We have improved our online services and made them easier for residents to use. And we have won £7.7million of central government funding to reduce emissions from our leisure centres. We have achieved all of this and more, despite the challenging circumstances of the last few years, and the broader challenges posed by more than a decade of cuts to our funding.

The previous national government reduced funding to our district by around £5.5 million in real terms since 2010. This amounts to almost 28% of our current annual budget. At the same time, the population of North Herts has increased by around 5%. Essentially, we have been trying to do more with less.

The new government has shown that it recognises the need for longer term funding reform for local government, as well as the ability to plan further ahead. However, there remains uncertainty around the timeframes for this and exactly what that will look like for us. This means that the next four years will not be without challenges, but we are committed to achieving financial sustainability while continuing to serve our communities and provide the services that you use every day.

North Herts is a great place to live but we know that it can be even better. We know that there are things we can do to make our communities healthier, safer, and fairer. We know that we can improve our services and make them easier for residents to use. We can play a key part in supporting our local economy and town centres, and the delivery of much-needed homes in the district. And we can help make sure that this growth happens in the most responsible way possible. We also have a role to play in protecting our environment and tackling climate change, which are two of the most important challenges of our time. This plan and its priorities reflect these ambitions. Over the next four years we will focus on supporting and delivering:

Thriving Communities

Accessible Services

Responsible Growth

Sustainability

We can't achieve what we want to without your help and knowledge. There are various ways to get involved outlined in this plan and we hope you'll work with us to make North Herts a better place to live and spend time in.

Daniel Allen, Leader of the Council

This Council Plan sets out our vision for North Herts and our strategic priorities for the next four years. The plan will guide how we manage our finances, monitor progress and ensure we are meeting the needs of the communities we serve. We have highlighted some of the initiatives that will support our priorities, but this is not an exhaustive list. Other policies and strategies, such as our Medium-Term Financial Strategy and delivery plans, will all flow from this plan's vision and provide more detail.

Our staff are critical to the delivery of this plan. Without them we would not be able to deliver all that we do, which is why we try to make the Council as inclusive and welcoming a workplace as possible. It is that care for our staff that allows us to recruit and retain high-quality people. We will continue to look at how we can be even better, whilst promoting our values of Adaptable, Inclusive, Learning, Listening, and Together.

With the funding challenges faced by the whole Local Government sector, we recognise that we cannot deliver this Council Plan on our own. We are committed to working collaboratively with all of our resident and business communities; Hertfordshire County Council; Parish, Town and Community Councils; other public sector bodies; and our Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sectors.

Anthony Roche, Managing Director

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It is a huge privilege to serve the people of North Herts and we have achieved so much together already. We know that there are challenges ahead but together we can make North Herts a better place for all of us.

Daniel and Anthony

About North Herts (1 of 2)

Graphics from the ‘About North Herts’ document are being collated for this section. This page will focus on the district itself and the communities within it. See examples below:



About North Herts (2 of 2)

Graphics from the ‘About North Herts’ document being collated for this section. This page will focus on the council itself – our services and our staff. See examples below



Our Vision

Working with you for a fairer, greener North Herts

Our Priorities

Thriving Communities

Accessible Services

Responsible Growth

Sustainability

Thriving Communities

North Herts is a mix of vibrant towns and beautiful villages, each with their own unique sense of place and a range of communities. We want to support all the communities across our district to thrive.

We know that inequalities still exist here, including health inequality, and economic and social inequality. We will make sure we support our communities to improve their health and wellbeing. We will consider how we can reduce social and economic inequalities and continue to support local groups who provide important services to our residents.

We also want you to feel safe. We will continue working with partners like the Police through The North Herts Community Safety Partnership to identify current crime and disorder issues and set priorities for tackling these.

We know that residents across our towns and villages are proud of their communities and want to preserve the things that make them special. We will continue to support local people to have a say in the future of where they live and on the issues that matter locally.

Accessible Services

We provide a wide range of services for you, our residents and communities, from waste collection and planning, to benefits and leisure facilities. We want to make sure that our services are accessible to everyone and easy to use.

Our Digital Strategy sets out our vision for transformation, and as part of this we're investing in projects which make our services more modern and more accessible to you. This means that we're making our services available online, including on mobile devices, wherever possible so that you can access them 24/7.

We recognise that some of our residents can't or don't use online services, so we're committed to remaining accessible in other ways including by post, phone and via our Customer Service Centre.

We also want to deliver high-quality services and to do this we need to be able to retain and recruit high-quality staff. We will continue to look at ways to improve recruitment and retention, making sure North Herts Council is an excellent place to work.

Responsible Growth

We want North Herts to be a thriving and prosperous district, where we meet the current and future needs of our communities. We need responsible growth to deliver much-needed homes including social housing and homes that residents can afford to live in. We want the places that are created here to have the necessary infrastructure to make new development sustainable and to be well-designed, reflecting the local landscape and character of the area.

Over the course of this Council Plan, we will be implementing our Local Plan which sets out the development planned for our district. Supporting guidance like Supplementary Planning Documents and Masterplans will help ensure good design, appropriate infrastructure, connectivity and opportunities for active and sustainable travel. We will review our Local Plan to see where we can strengthen and improve it to deliver more sustainable growth.

We also want to support economic growth across our district. We will prepare Town Centre Strategies and an Economic Development and Tourism Strategy to outline our approach to enhancing our town centres, business engagement and support, tourism, and emerging economic growth opportunities. We will work closely with businesses and other partners to deliver on our key objectives.

Sustainability

Sustainability means the ability to fulfil the needs of today's generation, without compromising the needs of future generations. Sustainability is important to us. We recognise the climate and environmental challenges our district faces, as well as the financial challenges that we face as a council.

The previous government reduced funding to our district by around £5.5 million in real terms since 2010, whilst our population increased by 4.8% between 2011 and 2021. This puts us in a difficult position and means that careful financial planning is necessary to achieve financial sustainability for the council so that we can continue to provide the services you use every day. Our finance strategies support the delivery of our priorities, and we regularly review these to make sure we make the best use of taxpayers' money.

We have also declared a climate emergency and an ecological emergency, and set goals to become net zero, to show we understand the seriousness of these crises, the impact on our district, and that we will do what we can to act on these issues.

We strive to be sustainable in our service-delivery and will continue to follow a policy-led budget, while placing our environmental responsibilities at the centre of our policymaking. We will work with you to achieve balanced budgets, improve environmental sustainability, and reduce carbon emissions as much as we can to work towards our net zero ambitions.

Thriving Communities

What we've achieved so far

Tackling health inequality

Continued to run projects to improve the health and wellbeing of residents via our Healthy Hub.

Safe and equal communities

Conducted a review of homelessness in North Herts to inform our new Housing Strategy.

Responded to almost 1,800 requests for help with housing in 2023/24 and helped hundreds of households, including those facing homelessness, into secure accommodation.

Worked with partners to reduce fly-tipping through pro-active stop and check operations.

Worked with partners to launch a Women's Safety Charter to make pubs and clubs in our district safer for women.

Won an Outstanding Partnership award for our Community Safety Partnership work with victims of anti-social behaviour (ASB).

Investing in our communities

Provided grants for local groups to support communities and distributed a £100,000 Community Investment Fund to help groups improve or expand their activities.

Set up and facilitated various co-operative networks including food provision, arts and culture, support for asylum seekers, and greenspaces and nature. These networks bring together local groups and individuals to co-ordinate community action.

Shaping communities

Created online community hubs so residents can have their say on the Churchgate regeneration, our budget, and our climate change work.

Provided ways for people to discuss issues of local importance including surveys and consultations, Councillor Surgeries, and Community Forums.

Over the next four years we will

Tackling health inequality

Work with partners to deliver projects that improve the health of our residents and reduce health inequalities. This will include working with Everyone Active, our leisure provider, to deliver physical activities for beginners, older age groups, and those who are less active.

Safe and equal communities

Continue to work on our Community Safety Priorities and other areas of community safety:

- Anti-social Behaviour
- Violence against Women and Girls
- Environmental Crime e.g. fly tipping
- Tackling crime against young people

Respond to the Government's Young Futures programme.

Protect our communities from environmental and noise hazards and ensure that restaurants and hospitality in the district are hygienic and safe.

Work towards becoming an awarded District Council of Sanctuary. This means committing to the values of the City of Sanctuary charter and being welcoming to those fleeing persecution and violence.

Re-affirm the Armed Forces Covenant which is a commitment to support those who have served in the armed forces and their families. This includes supporting former members of the armed forces at risk of homelessness.

Develop a Homelessness Strategy to support those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in our district.

Develop and launch a Good Landlords Charter to encourage landlords to voluntarily commit to higher standards than are currently required by law.

Investing in our communities

Continue to allocate grant funding to local groups who provide important services and activities for our residents and enable our communities to thrive.

What difference will this make?

Grants help local groups to improve their communities and support residents including in the areas of food provision, mental and physical health, and social issues.

A greater range of physical activity opportunities so people of all ages and abilities can improve their physical health.

People in our district are supported when they are vulnerable, including homeless people, asylum seekers, former veterans, and those affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

The ability to shape the development that occurs in your local area through Neighbourhood Plans.

Opportunities to discuss local issues via Councillor surgeries and Community Forums.

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Look at opportunities to develop Community Hubs that provide public spaces and support for our communities.

Continue to improve our museum service and archives including loaning objects and archives to schools and digitising our archives so the wider museum collection is accessible to the community.

Continue to look for the best option for museum storage so we can preserve the collection for future generations.

Shaping communities

Support communities to create Neighbourhood Plans which give them more control over the type, location, size, and design of development in their local area.

Conduct a Community Governance Review (CGR) of the whole district focusing on arrangements at parish level. This includes looking at parish boundaries, numbers of parish councillors, and parish election dates to establish whether changes are needed.

Continue providing support and advice to communities seeking to register Assets of Community Value.

Accessible Services

<p>What we've achieved so far</p> <p><u>Interacting with the Council</u></p> <p>Developed and launched a new MyAccount customer portal where you can access information, report problems, pay for services, and apply for council tax reductions.</p> <p>Launched a website chatbot (Nova) to help you with common queries and a live chat function for more complex queries.</p> <p>Implemented a digital consultation and engagement platform to make it easy for you to have your say.</p> <p>Digitised files like planning documents so that you can easily access these online.</p> <p>Continued to operate our Customer Service Centre and worked with partners to improve its offering, including health improvement services like NHS health checks and blood testing.</p> <p><u>Improving key services</u></p> <p>Implemented our Council Tax Reduction Scheme to help those in most need. Under this scheme, households on the lowest incomes don't need to pay any council tax.</p> <p>Entered a new ten-year Leisure and Active Communities Contract with Everyone Active to ensure we continue to provide high-quality leisure services for you.</p> <p>Agreed changes to waste collection and recycling including providing an additional bin for cardboard and paper and introducing collection of soft plastics. These changes will come into effect with our new Waste and Recycling Contract in 2025.</p> <p>Improved our facilities for children and young people by continuing to fund regular playground renovations and updated skate parks.</p>	<p>Over the next four years we will</p> <p><u>Interacting with the Council</u></p> <p>Continue to improve the customer experience for you including improving our online services and developing our translation services so we are more accessible to those who do not have English as their first language.</p> <p>Look at opportunities to simplify and improve the customer experience for you when your issue or query involves more than one organisation.</p> <p><u>Improving key services</u></p> <p>Implement the new Waste Collection, Recycling, and Street Cleansing contract which will provide you with more opportunities to recycle.</p> <p>Work with Everyone Active and other partners to deliver our Active North Herts Strategy to make physical activities and leisure facilities accessible to more people. This includes a programme of walking sport, and sport for older people and beginners.</p> <p>Work with Everyone Active to enable improvements to our leisure centres including a gym extension at Royston Leisure Centre, and full gym refurbishments at North Herts Leisure Centre and Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre.</p> <p>Review car parking arrangements including alternative payment options to make it easier for you to spend time in our towns and help rejuvenate town centres.</p> <p>Look at how we can use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to modernise routine processes and increase efficiency.</p>
<p>What difference will this make?</p> <p>High-quality services that are quicker and easier to use at the most convenient time for you.</p> <p>Improved efficiency by reducing the need for manual administration. This means our staff can spend time dealing with more complex issues.</p> <p>Better quality facilities and opportunities to make good use of them.</p>	

Responsible Growth

What we've achieved so far

Planning development

Approved our Local Plan for 2011-2031 which sets out the development that will take place in North Herts across this period.

Started the Local Plan review process.

Published our [Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document](#) (SPD). This sets out the contributions we will seek from developers to make sure new developments have the right infrastructure and facilities.

Drafted and consulted on our Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This sets out our expectations for sustainable development and encourages developers to commit to higher standards.

Worked with the Hertfordshire Growth Board to launch the Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter which encourages developers to pledge higher-quality sustainable development.

Prepared for the Biodiversity Net Gain legislation by hiring an ecologist to review developer proposals for delivering biodiversity and advise on how significant developments will affect nature in North Herts.

Economic development

Purchased the leasehold for the Churchgate Shopping Centre in Hitchin and begun consulting residents on what improvements they would like to see to the area.

Over the next four years we will

Planning development

Continue to implement our Local Plan 2011-2031 by working with housing providers to develop new homes for residents.

Review and update our Local Plan to align with the national government's approach to growth and set out how North Herts will develop beyond 2031.

Finalise and publish our Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to encourage high-quality sustainable development in North Herts.

Economic development

Develop and implement our Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, and our Town Centre Strategies to set out how we will support businesses, enhance our town centres, and take advantage of upcoming economic opportunities.

Continue to engage with the community to establish the best option for regenerating the Churchgate area of Hitchin. This includes progressing the development of a River Walk between Bridge Street and Biggin Lane to increase footfall in this part of the town centre.

What difference will this make?

More social rented and affordable housing delivered across the district.

More new homes in the area for people to buy or rent.

Well-planned growth with our Local Plan policies and Supplementary Planning Documents driving responsible and higher-quality development.

Rejuvenated local economies and town centres where people want to spend time, supporting local businesses to thrive.

Harnessing economic growth opportunities will support local job creation.

Sustainability

<p>What we've achieved so far</p> <p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>Balanced budgets and income generation.</p> <p>Secured external grant funding for projects which meet our priorities, including Electric Vehicle charge-points for residents and visitors, low-impact exercise classes for older people and those with dementia, and a multi-million-pound decarbonisation of our three leisure centres.</p> <p>Worked with the District Councils Network and the Local Government Association to lobby for a fair multi-year funding settlement for local government.</p> <p><u>Environmental</u></p> <p>Hired a Climate Change and Sustainability Project Manager to deliver some of our key sustainability projects.</p> <p>Made our assets more sustainable by transitioning our fleet to Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles, installing Electric Vehicle chargers at our council offices, and improving our buildings through energy efficiency measures and solar panels.</p> <p>Calculated the Council's emissions to help us target and measure the success of efforts to reduce them.</p> <p>Supported retrofit and renewable energy schemes like Solar Together.</p> <p>Worked with partners to develop guidance for developers to help them create more sustainable development in North Herts.</p> <p>Worked with partners and residents to develop a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which identifies opportunities, constraints, and the approach to improving walking and cycling in North Herts over the next ten years.</p> <p>Improved nature in our district by reducing the frequency of grass-cutting including on highway verges, and through rewilding projects, including supporting the Bee Corridor.</p> <p>Established the North Herts Climate Hive to engage and update residents on our sustainability work.</p>	<p>Over the next four years we will</p> <p><u>Our finances and assets</u></p> <p>Return a balanced budget.</p> <p>Continue to look for grants to deliver projects which support our priorities.</p> <p>Maximise the use of our assets for community benefit, including looking at the potential to re-purpose empty buildings as community hubs.</p> <p>Continue to review income generation opportunities through our Enterprise Team. For example, ongoing work to progress the Churchgate project.</p> <p>Give you the opportunity to have your say on our budget through our Budget Hub.</p> <p><u>Our Environment</u></p> <p>Develop a Sustainability Strategy which sets out our approach to reducing carbon emissions, adapting to climate change, and improving nature in North Herts.</p> <p>Continue to work with partners like the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership and the Regional Climate Change Forum on projects to help North Herts become a net zero district.</p> <p>Support nature in North Herts through rewilding projects, expansion of the bee corridor, and supporting the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain.</p> <p>Support efforts to protect the chalk streams in North Herts.</p> <p>Monitor air quality in the district.</p> <p>Engage with residents on climate change and environmental sustainability using the North Herts Climate Hive, and the Cabinet Panel for the Environment.</p>
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<p>What difference will this make?</p> <p>Planning for the future means we can continue providing the services you use every day.</p> <p>More homes made energy efficient and more comfortable through retrofit schemes.</p> <p>More Electric Vehicle charge points, making it easier for residents to access chargers in our town centres and to switch to an electric vehicle.</p> <p>Nature will be protected and improved across the district.</p> <p>Reducing our contribution to climate change and the ecological crisis will help minimise damage to our district and make where we live more resilient.</p>	
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Involving you

As our vision says, we’re working **with you** for a fairer, greener North Herts.

You know the district best, and we want to provide you with as many opportunities as possible to have your say on issues that are important to you and your community.

The feedback you give us enables us to find out what we’re doing well, where we could do better and, crucially what is important to you so that we can continue to shape our services in the future.

Our council plan is just the start of working with you for North Herts. We want to ensure that you are involved at every step, so here are all the ways you can get involved and have your say:

How we will reach you

We use lots of different channels to ensure that our news and updates reach you on whichever platform you prefer. These include:

- **Local media:** for example, The Comet and Crow newspapers.
- **Social media:** you can find us on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn and NextDoor.
- **Our website:** www.north-herts.gov.uk. This includes a dedicated page to live consultations: www.north-herts.gov.uk/consultations
- **Weekly email newsletters:** sent every Friday straight to your inbox.
- **Outlook magazine:** delivered twice a year to your home.
- **In-person:** at our monthly councillor surgeries and area forums.

How you can reach us

- Our Customer Service Centre: you can contact us [online](#) or give us a call on 01462 474000
- **Facebook:** @northhertsdc
- **X (formerly Twitter):** @NorthHertsDC
- **Instagram:** @northhertsdc
- **LinkedIn:** North Herts Council
- **NextDoor:** [click here](#) to join us on NextDoor today.
- **Email newsletters:** [click here](#) to sign up
- **Outlook magazine:** please email outlook@north-herts.gov.uk if you do not receive our residents' magazine.
- **Councillor surgeries:** www.north-herts.gov.uk/councillor-community-surgeries
- **Community Forums:** www.north-herts.gov.uk/area-forums

Get involved:

If you'd like to play a bigger part in helping us shape future ideas, why not sign up to one of our online community hubs or our Citizens Panel. These give you the opportunity to get involved with future initiatives from the beginning and ensure your voice is heard.

- [Online community hubs](#)
- [Citizens panel](#)
- [Cabinet Panel for the Environment](#)

Thank you. We look forward to working with you as we deliver a fairer, greener North Herts.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 3 SEPTEMBER 2024

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2024-25 (QUARTER 1 UPDATE)

REPORT OF: REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: FINANCE AND IT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST, SUSTAINABILITY, A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents progress on delivering the Council Delivery Plan for 2024-25. This is a Quarter 1 update, but generally reflects progress up to the point that this report was prepared (mid-August). The report includes:

- For the projects identified by Cabinet in March 2024, it details milestones and progress against them.
- The risks in relation to the delivery of those projects, as well as the corporate risks that could impact the delivery of all our projects and services.
- Latest data for the performance indicators identified by Cabinet in June 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on the Council Delivery Plan Quarter 1 monitoring report, including the recommendations made to Cabinet i.e:
- That Cabinet notes the progress against Council projects as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A) including the new milestones that have been set for the current year.
- 2.2 That Overview and Scrutiny Committee determine any project that they want to receive more detail on as part of the next monitoring report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) monitoring reports provide Overview and Scrutiny, and Cabinet, with an opportunity to monitor progress against the key Council projects, and understand any new issues, risks, or opportunities.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 In developing the CDP, it was agreed that Cabinet would receive quarterly updates. The updates are also provided to Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that they can provide additional oversight and support to Cabinet.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 Service Directors and Service Managers have provided updates on progress and will have made Executive Members aware of progress made.
- 5.2 A draft of the Quarter 1 update was provided to Risk and Performance Management Group (RPMG) in August. The Group has a standing invite to the Executive Member for Finance and IT (has responsibility for performance monitoring), the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) and the Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (FAR). Other members of O&S and FAR are also encouraged to attend when they can. RPMG were asked to comment on Q1 update. There were no specific issues raised by the group.
- 5.3 The CDP is reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and they are asked to provide comments and recommendations to Cabinet.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision first notified on the Forward Plan on the 19 July 2024.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The CDP brings together projects, risks, and performance indicators together in one document. The projects to be included in the 2024/25 Council Delivery Plan were agreed by Cabinet in March 2024, following a project prioritisation exercise. The performance indicators that are included were determined by Cabinet in June 2024.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Appendix A provides an update on the progress made in delivering the Council Delivery Plan 2024-25. Whilst it is labelled as a Quarter 1 update, it generally reflects the latest position at the time that the report was written (mid-August). As this is the first report of the year, each project has milestones set to help monitor progress. Milestones are set as far ahead as possible, but are not included where there is too much uncertainty over the scope or timing of the milestone.

8.2 In previous years the report included a percentage completed. This has now been removed as it over-simplified the position. The percentage completion only counted the milestones that were in place (rather than the entire project) and it treated all milestones as being of equal complexity. As there are now fewer projects on the Council Delivery Plan, the focus will be on providing a description of the progress made. Projects are still rated on overall progress, i.e. shown as completed, on track, some delays, significant delays. Where there are delays, Cabinet will be asked to consider revisions to milestones. For this first report:

- All the milestones are new for this year, so there are no proposed changes to milestones.
- No projects have been completed.
- All the projects are on track with a green status.

8.3 As detailed in the June 2024 reports (Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny), our performance indicators now reflect the overall performance of the Council. This replaces the focus on specific projects. Performance levels are rated as either green (achieving or exceeding the target), amber (not achieving the target level and need to look at actions to get back on track) and red (urgent action needed to get back to the target performance). For this report:

- 9 indicators are rated green.
- 5 indicators are rated amber.
- 8 indicators do not have a target.
- No indicators are rated red.

8.4 For the indicators that are rated amber, the following actions are being taken:

- Stage 2 complaints resolved within 20 working days (64% against a target of 70%). This is based on a small number of complaints and will be kept under review. We will remind Officers of the need to provide timely responses to complaints.
- Percentage of Customer Service Centre priority queue calls answered within 45 seconds (74% against a target of 80%). This will be kept under review, both in terms of performance and identifying ideas for improvement.
- Working days lost due to short-term absence per FTE (4.51 days against a target 4). We will continue to develop ways to support employee health and wellbeing as part of our response to the staff survey. We will be offering flu vaccines to help reduce winter absences. It should be noted that there is a national trend for increasing levels of employee absence.
- Percentage of vacancies filled first time round (70% against a target of 75%). We will continue to review the content of our job adverts to make sure that they promote the benefits of working for North Herts. The performance against this measure can be affected by the types of post being advertised so we will keep this under review.
- Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (60.29% against a target of 60.5%). This is a profiled target and the annual target is lower than the Q1 target. The profiling reflects varying volumes of

garden waste over the year. As this is a very small shortfall it will be kept under review, especially as this is a provisional total and it might improve. Actions and initiatives to encourage more recycling by residents will continue.

- 8.5 The Council Delivery Plan is intended to be a live document. Councillors and Officers can access IdeaGen for the latest position. New projects can be added to the Plan, if they are a strategic priority and there are resources available to deliver them. Projects will be removed when they are completed, or if they are no longer a priority. Cabinet (following review by Overview and Scrutiny) will be asked to approve any changes to milestones.
- 8.6 Overview and Scrutiny can ask for more detail on any of the Council Delivery Plan projects. That can either be provided as a written update or can be included as part of the next quarterly update, to support discussion in the meeting.
- 8.6 **Access to Ideagen (previously known as Pentana)**
All the detail behind the projects, risks and performance indicators is available to view in Ideagen, the Council's performance and risk software. A guest login is provided on the intranet for any member to use, along with a procedure note and short video on how to view the data.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The constitution determines the role of Cabinet as including: "To take decisions on resources and priorities, together with other stakeholders and partners in the local community, to deliver and implement the budget and policies decided by the Full Council. To monitor performance and risk in respect of the delivery of those policies and priorities" (paragraph 5.7.3).
- 9.2 The constitution determines the role of Overview and Scrutiny as including: "To review performance against the Council's agreed objectives/ priorities and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/ or service area. To consider risks to the achievement of those objectives/ priorities. To make recommendations to Cabinet" (paragraph 6.2.7 (s)).
- 9.3 There are no specific legal implications arising from the CDP. However, there may be individual legal implications for some of the projects outlined. Any commissioning of work on new and existing projects will follow the standard legal requirements and those required by the Council's internal standing orders, contained within the Constitution.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Where projects are linked to efficiencies or investments then these are included in the budget proposals and monitored through the quarterly finance reports.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2 The Council Delivery Plan aims to support the risk management process by directly linking the risks to projects being undertaken. The aim of these proposals is to strengthen the link between performance and risk and make risks more current. This should provide an improved perspective of the risks that the Council faces.

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 equalities implications arising from this report.

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 There will continue to be a need to align Council and Service objectives with available people resources to be able to achieve them. The Council Delivery Plan will help to make that link clearer.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report. However, a number of the projects to be monitored throughout the year are related to key environmental issues.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Council Delivery Plan 24-25 Q1 Monitoring Report

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

















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- 17.4 Isabelle Alajooz, Legal Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
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- 17.5 Ellie Hollingsworth, Policy and Strategy Officer
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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

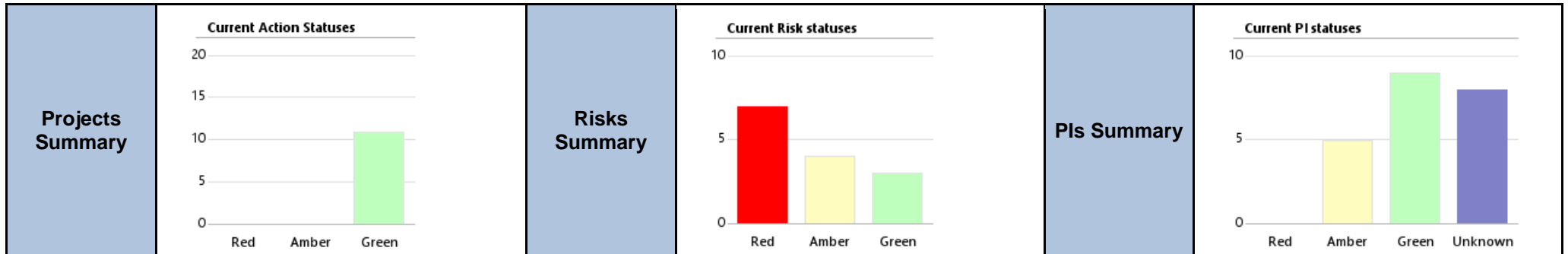
- 18.1 Council Delivery Plan projects for 2024-25 agreed by Cabinet (March 2024):
<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24602/Council%20Delivery%20Plan%20Q3%20update%20and%20projects%20for%202425.pdf>
- 18.2 Performance Indicators for 2024-25 agreed by Cabinet (June 2024):
<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s25289/KEY%20PERFORMANCE%20INDICATORS%20202425.pdf>

Council Delivery Plan – Status Key

Status	Description
Projects	
	The project (and all recorded milestones) has been completed.
	All ongoing milestones have not reached their due dates (or do not have due dates).
	There is at least one ongoing milestone that has not been completed by the due date, but the overall project due date has not passed. Proposals to change milestone due dates will be made, which may also lead to a proposed change to the overall project due date.
	Overall project due date has passed and there is at least one milestone that has not been completed. Proposals to change project due date and milestone due dates will be made.
Risks	
	Assessed as a low risk.
	Assessed as a medium risk.
	Assessed as a high risk.
KPIs	
	Data value has met or exceeded the target figure. Performance is at an acceptable level.
	Data value has not achieved the target figure. Need to consider appropriate action to return performance to an acceptable level.
	Data value has not achieved the target figure. Urgent action required to return performance to an acceptable level.
	Data value is reported for 'information only' and there is no requirement to set targets for the KPI.
	Ideagen cannot calculate a status, as officers have not entered a target figure for the period.
	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.
	Ideagen cannot calculate a direction of travel, as previous data is not available for comparison.































4	7	9
2	5	8
1	3	6

Status Summaries





Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)



KPI	Lastest Update	Value	Target	Status	Trend
Percentage of council tax collected in year	July 2024	37.38% (year to date)	37%		
Percentage of NNDR collected in year	July 2024	39.47% (year to date)	37%		
Council's Scope 1-3 emissions (tonnes CO2e)	2023/24	3,147.76	N/A Data Only		
Number of Stage 1 complaints	Q1 2024/25	53	N/A Data Only		
Percentage of Stage 1 complaints resolved within 10 working days	Q1 2024/25	96%	80%		
Percentage of Stage 2 complaints resolved within 20 working days	Q1 2024/25	64%	70%		
Total number of alarm calls in a given period	June 2024	95,595 (year to date)	N/A Data Only		


KPI	Lastest Update	Value	Target	Status	Trend
Percentage of non-urgent installations completed within 20 working days	June 2024	100% (year to date)	100%		
Rolling number of Careline service users supported under the HCC contract	June 2024	7,009	N/A Data Only		
Percentage of CSC calls answered	Q1 2024/25	96%	90%		
Percentage of CSC priority queue calls answered within 45 seconds	Q1 2024/25	74%	80%		
Sign-ups to the Digital Budget Hub	Q1 2024/25	223	N/A Data Only		
Average number of penalty points awarded per Grounds Maintenance contract monitoring inspection. (Lower numbers are good.)	June 2024	5.44 (year to date)	N/A Data Only		
Working days lost due to short-term sickness absence in the last 12 months per FTE employee	July 2024	4.51	4.00		
Working days lost due to long-term sickness absence in the last 12 months per FTE employee	July 2024	4.55	N/A Data Only		
Staff turnover - rolling 12-month percentage	July 2024	6.83%	15%		
Percentage of advertised vacancies filled in first round	Q1 2024/25	70%	75%		
Number of visits to leisure facilities	June 2024	389,228 (year to date)	318,854		
Percentage of all planning applications determined within the relevant statutory or agreed time periods	Q1 2024/25	84.37%	80%		
Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	Q1 2024/25	60.29%	60.5%		
Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of domestic household waste	June 2024	52 (year to date)	N/A Data Only		
Performance against revenue budget (projection against original budget)	Q1 2024/25	-3.3%	0%		


Projects / Risks



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	Digital Transformation	Due Date	31-Mar-2025	Original Date	31-Mar-2025		
Project Summary	Invest in and develop a low code digital platform that can be used to transform our services and applications. Programme to span a number of years, with the Council Delivery Plan project focussing on key activities planned during 2024/25.						
Latest Update	02-Aug-2024 Initial investigations and scoping for replacing the current in-house burials database completed and a decision made to proceed with this project. Further related milestones will be added once detailed scoping and delivery timeframes have been agreed. The completion date for the new Hitchin Town Hall booking system has been delayed, as this needs to be integrated into the new cashiering system that doesn't go live until October 2024. Currently working on design aspects for the new waste services system, following initial groundwork and IT approval to proceed. Although development and preparations for integration continue, there remains uncertainty around system/integration details and precise project timings until the new waste contract has been awarded and we commence work with the successful contractor. Resources to deliver the programme have been secured in the short-term, with a view to securing these on a permanent basis to continue delivering the programme over the coming years. Engagement with stakeholders and NHC teams continues, with a new communications plan being developed.						
Milestone		Due Date	Complete	Note			
Scope and investigate replacement of Burials system.		30-Jun-2024	Yes	Initial scoping for the replacement of the current in-house database completed. Decision made to provide a replacement system via the new digital platform.			
Integrate Netcall into Microsoft Azure for wider integration capabilities.		30-Sep-2024	No	Needed for wider integration.			
Commence development of waste services processes and preparations for integration with new contractors' software.		01-Oct-2024	No	Work has commenced. Further milestones to be added once we have agreed plans and precise timings with the successful contractor.			
Hitchin Town Hall booking system developed.		31-Oct-2024	No	Due to be completed later than previously reported (September 2024), as it needs to align with the October 2024 go live date for the new cashiering system.			
Risks				Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: 1. Resources within key teams available to deliver. 2. Unexpected limitations within new digital platform. 3. Unexpected delays or limitations relating to the new waste contract/contractor.					6	6	3



	King George V Skate Park	Due Date	31-Mar-2025	Original Date	31-Mar-2025
Project Summary	Following complications with the initial procurement exercise in 2023/24, complete a procurement exercise to appoint a contractor to replace the existing King George V skate park and oversee delivery of the completed project.				
Latest Update	26-Jul-2024 We have finalised a formal SLA with Groundwork to enable them to manage the procurement process. However, Legal have requested to review relevant procurement documentation prior to Groundwork commencing the tender. Therefore, we are unable to confirm the procurement timetable until this initial task has been completed. Although precise timings are still to be agreed for the majority of milestones, we anticipate the new skate park being completed and open for use in this financial year. Due to not yet having an agreed procurement or delivery plan in place, there is a risk that project completion could be delayed, although this is likely to only have a low impact should it materialise.				
Milestone		Due Date	Complete	Note	
01. Finalise formal SLA with Groundwork relating to the management of procurement processes.		12-Jul-2024	Yes		
02. NHC Legal to review relevant procurement documentation prior to Groundwork commencing tender process.		18-Aug-2024	No	NHC Legal awaiting receipt of relevant documents. Once received, expected turnaround period is approximately one week.	
03. Groundwork confirms procurement timetable.			No	Due date to be confirmed - timing dependent on when Legal completes the review of relevant procurement documentation.	
04. Commence tender process.			No	Due date to be confirmed - awaiting confirmation of the procurement timetable.	
05. Award contract following evaluation of tender responses.			No	Due date to be confirmed - awaiting confirmation of the procurement timetable.	
06. Contractor confirms project plan and timings.			No	Due date to be confirmed - depends on when the contract is awarded.	
07. Contractor to commence on-site project delivery.			No	Due date to be confirmed - will be confirmed when the delivery plan is agreed with the selected contractor.	
08. Contractor to conduct further communication/consultation during the early stages of project delivery.			No	Due date to be confirmed - will be confirmed when the delivery plan is agreed with the selected contractor.	
09. Contractor completes on-site works.			No	Due date to be confirmed - will be confirmed when the delivery plan is agreed with the selected contractor.	
10. New skate park officially opened to the public.			No	Due date to be confirmed - will be confirmed when the delivery plan is agreed with the selected contractor.	
Risks				Risk Level	Original Score
Risks: - Until precise timings are confirmed, there is a risk that the project will not be completed by the end of March 2025. - As with all procurement processes, there is a risk that the outcome will be challenged.					2
					2
					1



	Leisure Centre Decarbonisation	Due Date	02-Feb-2026	Original Date	02-Feb-2026
Project Summary	Using a combination of external funding and NHC capital funding, deliver a project to decarbonise our three leisure centres. The main activities are replacing end of life gas boilers with Air Source Heat Pumps and installing Solar PV panels to enable on-site generation of electricity. Replacing gas heating for our leisure centres with low carbon alternatives is the single most effective action we can take towards meeting our target of being carbon neutral by 2030.				
Latest Update	14-Aug-2024 On 11 July 2024, Council approved the additional funding required to deliver the project. A dedicated project manager is now in post. We finalised the Pre-Construction Services Agreement with Willmott Dixon in early August 2024. We are entering the Stage 3 design phases, where site-specific surveys will identify detailed requirements and costings. We aim to appoint an external Quantity Surveyor to provide expertise and oversee NHC's interests by the end of August 2024, which will help us to validate project costs and manage the project effectively. Following completion of the Stage 3 design phases, the aim is to commence planning submissions in September 2024. A Project Board is in place, with a representative from SIAS providing external oversight of project risks and governance arrangements. Throughout the project, regular meetings will be held with Willmott Dixon to monitor progress and address identified issues. Overall, the project is currently assessed as high risk, and a detailed Project Risk Log is in place and reported to Project Board. Key risks are final project costs exceeding grant and NHC funding due to unforeseen detailed survey findings, failure to obtain required planning permissions, delays to commissioning works due to delays obtaining required Distribution Network Operator/Planning approvals, and loss of grant funding due to not delivering project in line with agreed grant condition timescales.				
Milestone		Due Date	Complete	Note	
Council approves an increase in capital expenditure for the decarbonisation work and revenue expenditure for the termination and removal fees of gas CHPs.		11-Jul-2024	Yes		
Pre-Construction Services Agreement with Willmott Dixon signed.		29-Jul-2024	Yes	Agreed and signed on 2 August 2024.	
Appoint external Quantity Surveyor to oversee NHC's interests.		30-Aug-2024	No		
Complete Stage 3 design phases.		11-Nov-2024	No	Stage 3 design phases scheduled between September and November 2024.	
Planning permissions obtained.		07-Feb-2025	No	Planning submissions for each site and subsequent determinations scheduled to take place between November 2024 and January 2025.	
Enter into construction contract with Willmott Dixon.		19-Feb-2025	No		
Commence de-carb works at Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre.		18-Mar-2025	No		
Commence de-carb works at Royston Leisure Centre.		24-Mar-2025	No		
Provide Salix with required project updates.		01-Apr-2025	No	Any changes to proposed energy savings, evidence relating to the size of radiators and heat distribution systems, and calculations supporting the size of selected heat pumps.	
Commence de-carb works at North Herts Leisure Centre.		15-Apr-2025	No		
Complete de-carb works at Royston Leisure Centre.		06-Aug-2025	No		
Complete de-carb works at Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre.		11-Aug-2025	No		
Complete de-carb works at North Herts Leisure Centre.		09-Sep-2025	No		

Provide Salix with finalised project data (including costs and energy values) and details of carbon savings monitoring and reporting arrangements.	02-Feb-2026	No				
Risks			Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NHC responsible for funding all project costs beyond agreed grant funding. - Unforeseen detailed survey findings require changes to project specifications and lead to additional financial costs. - Failure to obtain required planning permissions. - Delays obtaining required Distribution Network Operator/Planning approvals lead to delays in commissioning/completing project works. - Failure to deliver project in line with agreed grant conditions leads to loss of grant funding. - Short programme delivery timeframes impact the ability to drawdown Year 1 2024/25 Salix grant funding within the agreed financial year leading to loss of funding. - Disruption to day-to-day operations during works leads to customer dissatisfaction. 				8	8	6



	Local Plan Review	Due Date	31-Dec-2027	Original Date	31-Dec-2027		
Project Summary	To undertake a review and update of the Council's statutory Local Plan as agreed in principle by Cabinet in January 2024.						
Latest Update	29-Jul-2024 The previously reported Council Delivery Plan item entitled 'Local Plan Delivery and Review' has been reviewed and updated to focus upon the upcoming Local Plan Review. Cabinet resolved in January 2024 that a full review and update of the Local Plan should be undertaken, fulfilling the requirement set in Policy IMR2 of the adopted Local Plan 2011-2031. Cabinet agreed that the scope of the update and timetable should be prepared once relevant secondary legislation supporting the Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 was published. Prior to the General Election this was anticipated to be in Autumn 2024. Following the change in Government the timetable for this, and the more general issue of whether the new Government will proceed with the previous administration's programme, is unclear. The steps and timescales set out in the project milestones below are based upon the proposed process and milestones set out in the (then) Government's Plan Making Reforms consultation of 2023 and are subject to confirmation and / or change.						
Milestone		Due Date	Complete	Note			
01. In principle approval that Local Plan review is undertaken.		16-Jan-2024	Yes	Approved by Cabinet in January 2024.			
02. Approval of Local Development Scheme.		31-Dec-2024	No	Subject to commentary dated 29 July 2024.			
03. Notice of start of plan-making given to Secretary of State.			No	Due date to be confirmed - currently, only a general estimate for completion is available (Spring 2025).			
04. Complete 'Gateway 1' advisory assessment.			No	Due date to be confirmed - currently, only a general estimate for completion is available (Summer 2025).			
05. Complete first mandatory public consultation.			No	Due date to be confirmed - currently, only a general estimate for completion is available (Autumn 2025).			
06. Complete 'Gateway 2' advisory assessment.			No	Due date to be confirmed - currently, only a general estimate for completion is available (Spring 2026).			
07. Complete second mandatory public consultation.			No	Due date to be confirmed - currently, only a general estimate for completion is available (Autumn 2026).			
08. Complete 'Gateway 3' assessment and submit for examination.			No	Due date to be confirmed - currently, only a general estimate for completion is available (Spring 2027).			
09. Receipt of examination outcome.			No	Due date to be confirmed - currently, only a general estimate for completion is available (Autumn 2027).			
10. Finalisation and adoption of digital plan.			No	Due date to be confirmed - currently, only a general estimate for completion is available (December 2027).			
Risks				Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: - Government fails to provide regulations and guidance in a timely fashion. - Government introduces different or new or substantive reforms to the planning system and / or national policy. - Failure to retain/recruit sufficiently experienced officers to implement required programme of work. - Failure to secure funding to resource the process. - Failure to obtain political and / or Government approval at key stages or gateways. - Government intervention if inadequate progress is made upon Local Plan Review.					5	5	3



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inadequate guidance leads to scheme outcomes that do not appropriately respond to, or contribute towards, corporate objectives and priorities of climate change, environment, economy and place. - Poor scheme outcomes that do not appropriately respond to local character and context. - Adverse appeal findings on other/non-Local Plan sites if progress on the Local Plan Review is delayed or stalled. 				
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	Town Centre Strategies	Due Date	31-Mar-2025	Original Date	31-Mar-2025
Project Summary	Progress development of an overarching Town Centre Strategy, including guidance on developing strategic plans for individual town centres. <i>Project carried over from the 2023/24 Council Delivery Plan.</i>				
Latest Update	13-Aug-2024 Further refinements to the initial evidence base are now expected to be agreed and signed-off by the end of August 2024. As a result, finalisation of the draft Strategy and associated engagement will take place during late Summer 2024, with a report to Cabinet in November 2024 now scheduled on the Forward Plan. The draft Strategy will include sections for each town, providing guidance on developing individual strategic plans. If Cabinet are happy with the report recommendations, expect to undertake public consultation during late 2024/early 2025 and go back to Cabinet for formal adoption in March 2025. However, the precise timing of milestones following November 2024 Cabinet are still to be confirmed.				
Milestone		Due Date	Complete	Note	
Undertake work to complete evidence base.		31-Jul-2024	Yes	Consultants presented initial report on evidence base and stakeholder workshop held to review findings.	
Further review/refinement of evidence base and final sign-off.		31-Aug-2024	No		
Development and finalisation of draft Strategy.		31-Oct-2024	No		
Present details of draft Strategy, including guidance sections for each town, to Cabinet.		19-Nov-2024	No	Will go to Cabinet slightly later than previously reported (September 2024) due to further work being required to sign-off evidence base.	
Consultation on draft Town Centre Strategy.		31-Jan-2025	No	To be confirmed, as dependent on outcome of November 2024 Cabinet meeting. Currently anticipated to take place over December 2024 - January 2025.	
Cabinet adopt Town Centre Strategy.		18-Mar-2025	No	To be confirmed. Exact timing dependent on Cabinet approval to proceed to consultation and findings of the consultation exercise.	
Risks				Risk Level	Original Score
1. Lack of available resource to produce and deliver identified strategies. 2. Lack of strategic direction leads to speculative development that undermines function of town centres. <i>Risk entry carried over from the 2023/24 Council Delivery Plan.</i>					5
					5
					1



	Waste and Street Cleansing Contract	Due Date	31-Aug-2025	Original Date	31-Aug-2025
Project Summary	Complete procurement of the new Waste and Street Cleansing contract and commence mobilisation. Prepare to implement agreed service changes included in the contract.				
Latest Update	22-Aug-2024 Assignment of Letchworth depot lease now been completed. This has delayed the contract award. Delays are shortening the mobilisation period, which creates risks to completing the numerous required mobilisation activities prior to the contract start date.				
Milestone		Due Date	Complete	Note	
01. Evaluation of final tenders and production of Evaluation Report.		17-Jun-2024	Yes		
02. Project Board sign off of Evaluation Report and award recommendation.		21-Jun-2024	Yes		
03. Executive and Cabinet approval to award the contract to the preferred bidder.		09-Jul-2024	Yes		
04. Contract award.		31-Aug-2024	No	Exact due date dependent on when the Letchworth depot lease assignment is completed. Currently expect to award contract sometime in August 2024.	
05. End of contract award standstill period.			No	Due date to be confirmed once exact contract award date is known.	
06. Press communication.			No	Due date to be confirmed. To follow contract award.	
07. First meetings held with preferred bidder.			No	Due date to be confirmed. To follow contract award.	
08. Commence procurement of new fleet vehicles.			No	Due date to be confirmed with preferred supplier following contract award. Needs to commence as soon as possible.	
09. Develop IT specifications.			No	Due date to be confirmed following contract award.	
10. Finalisation of contract			No	Due date to be confirmed. Expected to take approximately 4/5 months following contract award.	
11. Condition surveys and demobilisation of depots.			No	Due date to be confirmed, although expected to be March/April 2025.	
12. Confirmation of final delivery plans and H&S arrangements.			No	Due date to be confirmed with preferred supplier following contract award.	
13. Commence mobilisation of new contracts.			No	Exact start date of new contract still to be confirmed. Will be sometime in May 2025.	
14. Finalise new collection rounds.			No	Due date to be confirmed. Currently expect collection rounds to be finalised in June 2025.	
15. New bin and caddy deliveries.			No	Due date to be confirmed. Currently expect bin and caddy deliveries to take place during June/July 2025.	
16. New services to commence.			No	Due date to be confirmed. New services to commence sometime in August 2025.	
Risks				Risk Level	Original Score
Risks: - Delay in completing the assignment of Letchworth depot lease has delayed contract award. - Insufficient resources/capacity to deliver mobilisation work in the required timeframe. - Final Government Resources & Waste Strategy differs from contract specification (Government response to proposed statutory guidance consultation published May 2024). - Uncertainty over certain cost elements, including new MRF contract.					9
					9
					6

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delays cause mobilisation challenges e.g., a shortened window to procure new fleet vehicles for Day 1 of the contract. - Capability to develop online forms and integrate these with new systems (NHC income management system and preferred supplier systems). - EV charging infrastructure is not in place for start of contract. - Public confusion around contract mobilisation and service changes. 				
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	Churchgate	Due Date	31-Mar-2025	Original Date	31-Mar-2025		
Project Summary	Progress the long-term regeneration of the shopping centre and surrounding areas. Project likely to span several years. <i>Project carried over from the 2023/24 Council Delivery Plan.</i>						
Latest Update	24-Jul-2024 NHC officers attended the UKREiiF event in May 2024 to promote the Churchgate shopping area development opportunity. We continue to work with our lead consultant (Lambert Smith Hampton) and specialist sub-consultants to move the project forward. Next steps will be to commence a full engagement process, including workshops and public consultation. The intention is for findings from this process and the associated implications to be considered by Project Board in late 2024, allowing us to commence the procurement process to appoint a development partner in January 2025. Reported milestones will continue to be updated as the project progresses, and further stages/timings are agreed/confirmed. The risk level is still assessed as high due to the uncertainty around potential options and viability, but arrangements currently in place (such as regular Project Board meetings, the provision of consultants' expert advice, and the development of an engagement plan) help us to manage the associated risks.						
Milestone		Due Date	Complete	Note			
Start of engagement.		02-Sep-2024	No	Currently, ongoing communication relating to the project is delivered via the Churchgate digital hub.			
Engagement workshops.		16-Sep-2024	No	Between 2nd September and 16th September 2024.			
Start public consultation.		17-Sep-2024	No				
Public consultation ends.		01-Oct-2024	No				
Feedback to Project Board.		29-Oct-2024	No				
Feedback to Project Board.		26-Nov-2024	No				
Procurement start.		05-Jan-2025	No				
Risks				Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: 1. The regeneration will not meet expectations of stakeholders. 2. Regeneration of the Centre and surrounding area is not cost effective/not affordable. Including impacts of high inflation and likely recession. <i>Risk entry carried over from the 2023/24 Council Delivery Plan.</i>					9	8	6

	Engaging the community on our finances and how we spend our money, via the 'Prioritising our Pounds' Digital Budget Hub	Due Date	28-Feb-2026	Original Date	28-Feb-2026		
Project Summary	To help the community understand how we set our budget, what affects the funding that we receive, why we have less funding than we used to and the implications of that. To engage the community on the choices that we will need to make to ensure that our spend matches our funding, so that we are financially sustainable, and to enable our community to be part of future budget conversations.						
Latest Update	19-Jul-2024 We have launched the Digital Budget Hub and as of mid-July 2024 have 223 people signed-up.						
Milestone		Due Date	Complete	Note			
Update the Digital Budget Hub content to highlight the funding pressures we face and likely implications.		31-Aug-2024	No				
Approve our Medium Term Financial Strategy.		30-Sep-2024	No				
Launch mini survey and two-way conversations on the Digital Budget Hub, including thoughts on valued services and generating income through fees and charges.		31-Oct-2024	No				
Update content (Digital Budget Hub and other communications) through process for setting the 2025/26 budget.		28-Feb-2025	No				
Carry out detailed consultation on spend priorities and savings options (starting in May 2025).		31-Jul-2025	No				
Consider feedback in setting the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy and approve the Strategy.		30-Sep-2025	No				
Consider consultation feedback in forming budget proposals for the 2026/27 budget and approve the 2026/27 budget.		28-Feb-2026	No				
Risks				Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: 1. Lack of certainty from Government over future funding makes it difficult to engage residents in the scale of the budget gap and the savings that will be required. 2. Lack of engagement means that the consultation doesn't reflect a wide range of views. 3. The scale of the budget gap, makes it feel like there are no choices. When making choices it then feels like not taking on board feedback.					8	8	2




	Oughtonhead Common Weir	Due Date	31-Jul-2025	Original Date	30-Sep-2024
Project Summary	Replace the collapsed weir. <i>Project carried over from the 2023/24 Council Delivery Plan.</i>				
Latest Update	26-Jul-2024 The Environment Agency has requested that we complete further modelling for various scenarios, at a cost of circa £3k. Fishtek Consulting is conducting this modelling prior to obtaining the required Environment Agency permits. We will not submit final designs to Planning until we have secured these permits. Further communication with the public regarding our plans will be undertaken prior to submitting the planning application. Countryside Management Service will be responsible for managing the tender process but without required permits/permissions, we are unable to confirm precise timings for this stage and the subsequent delivery stage. We anticipate completing works in Spring/Summer 2025, although at this stage there remains a risk that the project may be completed later than this. However, the impact of this is assessed as low, as pending replacement of the existing weir, any further deterioration is unlikely to result in significant environmental damage.				
Milestone	Due Date	Complete	Note		
01. Conduct the further modelling requested by the Environment Agency.	31-Aug-2024	No	Cost of completing further modelling circa £3k.		
02. Obtain required Environment Agency permits.	30-Sep-2024	No	Fishtek Consulting responsible for obtaining required permits.		
03. Undertake further communication with the public regarding plans.		No	Due date to be confirmed - timings to be confirmed once EA permits obtained. To take place prior to submitting planning application.		
04. Submit planning application.		No	Due date to be confirmed - timings to be confirmed once EA permits obtained. Fishtek Consulting responsible for submitting designs to Planning.		
05. Planning permission granted.		No	Due date to be confirmed - timings to be confirmed when we have a timetable for submitting designs to Planning. How quickly the application is determined rests with Planning.		
06. Commence tender process for undertaking required works.		No	Due date to be confirmed - CMS to prepare tender documentation and manage tender process.		
07. Appoint contractor(s) to undertake required works.		No	Due date to be confirmed.		
08. Successful contractor confirms project plan and timings.		No	Due date to be confirmed.		
09. Commence work on-site.		No	Due date to be confirmed.		
10. Works on-site completed.		No	Due date to be confirmed.		
Risks				Risk Level	Original Score
Risks: - External funding from HCC, EA and residents is not available leading to full allocated Capital budget being used. - Existing situation deteriorates prior to any works being undertaken requiring further urgent temporary solutions to manage an immediate changing situation. - Failure to obtain Environment Agency permits or planning permission. - Lack of contractor appetite to undertake works prolongs procurement process and delays project delivery. - Without securing required permits/permissions and without confirmed plans for the procurement process and project delivery, there is a risk that the project will not be completed in line with currently anticipated timescales. <i>Risk entry carried over from the 2023/24 Council Delivery Plan.</i>					4
					2
					1

	Pay on Exit Parking	Due Date	31-Mar-2026	Original Date	31-Mar-2026
Project Summary	Replace existing parking machines and update tariff boards to implement pay on exit in all our car parks. Capital budget approved to deliver the project over two years - 2024/25 and 2025/26. <i>Project carried over from the 2023/24 Council Delivery Plan.</i>				
Latest Update	13-Aug-2024 As previously reported, preliminary works have commenced. A full implementation programme, including changes being phased on a town-by-town basis, due to be agreed by the end of September 2024. We now expect to have appointed a supplier to replace existing tariff boards by the end of August 2024. Updated TROs expected to be advertised in September 2024 and be completed by mid-November 2024. When currently recorded milestones are completed, further milestones will be added to provide an overview of what will happen and when throughout the project. Still anticipate works being fully completed by March 2026 at the latest, in line with approved Capital funding. Key risks are our ability to bring the separate project elements together and negative public reaction to changes and disruption during works, with the latter being managed in partnership with the contractor via a comprehensive communications plan. These are currently assessed as low risk.				
Milestone		Due Date	Complete	Note	
Procure supplier to replace tariff boards.		30-Aug-2024	No	Now expected to be completed later than previously reported (July 2024). The procurement process is ongoing.	
Full implementation programme agreed with contractor.		30-Sep-2024	No	Once agreed, further Council Delivery Plan milestones to be entered.	
Update TROs.		15-Nov-2024	No	Now expected to be completed later than previously reported (August 2024). Ongoing, and due to be advertised in September 2024 and completed mid-November 2024. Updated TROs required to accommodate new payment methods.	
Risks				Risk Level	Original Score
Risks: 1. Budget implications of selected scheme. 2. Inability to procure suppliers within approved budget. 3. Negative public reaction to changes and disruption during works. 4. Loss of income during associated works. 5. Failure to bring together separate project elements to achieve seamless project delivery. <i>Risk entry carried over from the 2023/24 Council Delivery Plan.</i>					1
					1
					1

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	Resident/Public EV Charging in our Car Parks	Due Date	31-Mar-2025	Original Date	31-Mar-2025		
Project Summary	Finalise contract/leases with private sector partner and subsequently install new EV charging points in our outdoor surface car parks. OZEV grant secured to deliver the project, although the funding is only available until March 2025. <i>Project carried over from the 2023/24 Council Delivery Plan.</i>						
Latest Update	14-Aug-2024 Contract still not finalised. Delay has been with the supplier obtaining agreement from their corporate legal team and the requirement for NHC to publish a VEAT Notice for transparency purposes to ensure compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Subject to there being no challenge to the VEAT Notice, current estimate is that the contract should be signed, and relevant leases completed, by the end of September 2024. This will enable the supplier to commence works in late September/October 2024 and complete the installation of new charging points by the end of December 2024. However, these are only estimated timings and actual dates are still to be confirmed as part of approving an agreed delivery and implementation plan with our partner. Pending formalisation of the contract/leases, officers continue to have weekly meetings with the supplier to work through the detail of each location. The supplier has also commenced discussions with the relevant Distribution Network Operators regarding the power supply to the new charging points. Despite the delays, still expect installation of charging points in our outdoor car parks to be delivered in line with OZEV funding requirements, although there remain risks due to not yet having agreed the contract, lease arrangements and implementation programme.						
Milestone		Due Date	Complete	Note			
Complete relevant leases with contractor for the length of the contract.		30-Sep-2024	No	Now expected to be completed later than previously reported (June 2024). Precise timings still to be confirmed by supplier, as dependent on agreed contract and implementation programme.			
Contract finalised with private sector partner.		30-Sep-2024	No	Now anticipated to be finalised later than previously reported (June 2024). Delay is with the private sector partner and legal advice to publish a VEAT Notice.			
Contractor to commence works and NHC to start promoting project.		31-Oct-2024	No	Now expected to commence works later than previously reported (July 2024). Delay in finalising the contract, and precise timings dependent on the implementation programme agreed with our partner.			
Installation of all new EV charging points completed.		31-Dec-2024	No	Despite delays with earlier milestones, still expect project to be delivered in accordance with OZEV grant requirements.			
Risks				Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Risks: 1. Not successful in obtaining grant funding (no longer a risk). 2. Unable to identify/procure a private sector partner (no longer a risk). 3. Unable to agree contract conditions/relevant lease arrangements with contractor. 4. Unable to deliver project in accordance with OZEV requirements. 5. Unable to schedule required DNO upgrades in line with implementation programme. 6. Insurance requirements lead to changes to installation plans. 7. Unable to reach agreement with Garden Square Shopping Centre regarding the replacement of existing charging points in Letchworth multi-storey car park (outside scope of OZEV project). <i>Risk entry carried over from the 2023/24 Council Delivery Plan.</i>					5	5	1

Corporate Risks

Risks	Risk Level	Original Score	Current Score	Target Score
Resourcing Risks: Ability to recruit and retain staff, as well as supporting new priorities and external pressures, affects delivery of the projects and actions in the Council Delivery Plan and service plans. This is particularly relevant for certain service areas where it is especially difficult to recruit and retain staff.		8	9	5
Cyber Risks Risks: Prolonged widespread disruption to/failure of IT infrastructure/systems. Possible causes: - Deliberate and unauthorised breaches of security e.g., ransomware, denial of service. - Unintentional/accidental breaches of security e.g., action of individual staff/Members. - Weakness/failure of essential IT infrastructure e.g., loss of internet access. - Evolving risk appetite/profile associated with IT systems, as we pursue increased use of hosted systems and associated risks to individual systems are transferred to suppliers. Leading to: - Inability to deliver services/projects. - Unbudgeted costs to enable recovery. - Reputational damage.		8	8	8
Financial Sustainability Risks: 1. Funding reductions as a result of new funding formula. 2. Sales, fees, and charges income shortfalls, either due to rates not tracking inflation and/or reductions in demand. 3. Not able to make the required decisions to deliver budget savings required. 4. Increases in costs (reductions in income) as a result of inflationary increases. 5. Uncertainty over levels of pay inflation required.		9	9	5

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

3 SEPTEMBER 2024

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT PROCUREMENT - END PROJECT REPORT

REPORT OF: THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - PLACE

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: CLLR. MICK DEBENHAM

COUNCIL PRIORITY: A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report refers to the End Project Report and lessons learnt for the Leisure Management Contract Procurement Project.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. For Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment on and note the Leisure Management Contract Procurement End Project Report.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To enable Overview and Scrutiny to consider lessons learned from the major procurement project.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Leisure Management Contract Procurement End Project Report was circulated to Project Board members and the Executive Member for Environment and Leisure on 22 August 2024.

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. The leisure contracts with Stevenage Leisure Ltd expired on 31 March 2024. The contract includes North Herts Leisure Centre, Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre, Royston Leisure Centre, Letchworth Lido and the sports centre at Fearnhill School.
- 7.2. On 14 March 2023, Cabinet gave authority to proceed with a Competitive Procedure with Negotiation (CPN) procurement for the Leisure Management contract. CPN was used for the procurement because it provided a clearly defined scope of services and services specification, with some aspects for negotiation. The procurement project programme was over a ten-month period.
- 7.3. The Leisure and Active Communities contract was awarded at Cabinet on 12 December 2023. The End Project Report is included in Appendix A and confirms that the project has been completed and details lessons learnt.
- 7.4. The last Project Board meeting was held on 22 November 2023, prior to contract award. EA produced a mobilisation plan and weekly mobilisation meetings took place between EA and the Leisure and Active Communities Manager to ensure a smooth transition. However, a lesson learnt is to have scheduled a project board meeting following contract award for the board to consider and comment on the mobilisation plan.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. The End Project Report contains a number of lessons learnt around:
 - the use of specialist consultants
 - Use of competitive procedure with negotiation
 - Timeline for procurement
 - Mobilisation of the new contract
 - communicationsThe full End Project report can be found at Appendix A.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Under section 6.2.7 of the Council's constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is entitled to review and scrutinise decisions of the Council and the cabinet. The cabinet made the decision to proceed with the Competitive Procedure with Negotiation and awarded the Leisure and Activities Communities Contract to Sports and Leisure Management Ltd (Everyone Active) and therefore the cabinet's decisions are subject to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's considerations, including any reports or recommendations.
- 9.2. Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 places an obligation on local authorities to establish overview and scrutiny committees to ensure that the local government remains transparent, accountable, and open.
- 9.3. There is no statutory requirement for a local authority to provide fitness services to the public though the Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 allows local authorities to provide such recreational facilities as it sees fit and the Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities to promote their area's economic, social and environmental wellbeing. The decision by the Council would accord with the intentions of both Acts.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. Please see End Project Report – Appendix A

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2. A risk log was maintained as part of the project management process.

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 apply to this report.

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 this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1. There are no direct Human Resource implications that apply to this report.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1. Appendix A – Project Closure Report

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1. Sarah Kingsley, Service Director – Place
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- 17.2. Louise Randall, Leisure and Active Communities Manager
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- 17.4. Ian Couper, Service Director - Resources
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- 17.5. Douglas Traill-Stevenson, Property Lawyer
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17.6 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy and Communities Manager
Reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk Ext 4212

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None

Project Name	Leisure Management Contract Procurement
Project Manager	Louise Randall
Project Board Members	<p>Cllr Steve Jarvis - NH Executive Member for Environment & Leisure</p> <p>Cllr Ian Albert, NH Executive Member for Finance and IT</p> <p>Sarah Kingsley - NH Director of Place</p> <p>Ian Couper - NH Service Director Resources</p> <p>Jeanette Thompson - NH Service Director Legal & Community</p> <p>Louise Randall - NH Place Leisure Manager</p>

Project Overview

The leisure contracts with Stevenage Leisure Ltd expired on 31 March 2024. The contract includes North Herts Leisure Centre, Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre, Royston Leisure Centre, Letchworth Lido and the sports centre at Fearnhill School.

The aim of the project was to ensure the procurement of the new leisure management contract was managed effectively.

On 14 March 2023, Cabinet gave authority to proceed with a Competitive Procedure with Negotiation (CPN) procurement for the Leisure Management contract. CPN was used for the procurement because it provided a clearly defined scope of services and services specification with some aspects for negotiation. It also gave us the flexibility to test different scenarios through variant bids before receiving final tenders. It is also the procurement method used for the majority of leisure contracts.

The procurement project plan was over a 12 month period and resource was allocated to ensure the short timeline was achieved. The Council appointed The Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy (SLC) to provide support throughout the procurement process, as project coordinators and legal advisors Trowers and Hamlin were also appointed.

We appointed SLC to provide both pre-procurement advice and support for the whole procurement process. Utilising their professional expertise and market knowledge ensured we went out to tender with a high-quality specification and followed a robust procurement process.

On 12 December 2023, Cabinet agreed to award the Leisure and Active Communities Contract to Sports and Leisure Management Ltd (Everyone Active).

The mobilisation of the new contract commenced on 2 January 2024, following a 10-day standstill period. Everyone Active devised and implemented a robust mobilisation plan across all the sites, including transfer of customer data, TUPE of staff and communication with staff, users of the facilities and wider public.

Project Requirement

To ensure the Council achieved its goals for the procurement, a Procurement strategy was developed which identified the Strategic Objectives of the new contract. These objectives were then addressed through the development of the specification of the contract. The objectives were:

1. High quality, inclusive and diverse services
2. Financially sustainable services that drive income and deliver operational efficiencies through an innovative and dynamic approach
3. Increased participation in sport and physical activity by all sections of the community
4. Increased participation in sport and physical activity by less active groups or those experiencing wider health inequalities
5. Extended reach and impact of the services through delivery of activities beyond the core facilities
6. Increased contribution to the Council's Climate Change Strategy through effective environmental management of the facilities investment in energy saving technology
7. Increased awareness through inclusive and innovative marketing and promotion
8. A skilled workforce that is able to meet the needs of people with more complex physical and mental health issues
9. Wider social value through strong partnership working with the Council, its partners and third sector providers
10. Robust asset management ensuring well-maintained and fully functioning facilities.

The project business case report set out the business needs covering the following elements.

Reasons for the Project	Cost Implications
Data Protection	Alternatives Considered
Budget	Legal
Resource	Political interest in project
Project size	

The project scope included:

- Using the Competitive Procedure with Negotiation (CPN) procedure for the procurement of the Leisure Management contract.
- Agreeing a 10-year contract with an option to extend by up to 5 years.
- Combining the existing three leisure contracts into a single contract, using the nationally recognised Sport England contract format, in order to secure economies of scale and to attract the most interest from the operator market.
- Continuing with the principle of the existing contractual shared risk approach to utilities and maintenance.

Project Products

The procurement process consisted of the following stages; Contract Notice and Standard Selection Questionnaire (SSQ), Invitation to Submit Initial Tender and negotiation, Invitation to Submit Revised Tender, followed by Contract Award.

A timeline for the procurement of the contract arrangement is shown below.

Workstream	Date
Procurement Strategy	mid March 23
Develop Tender Documents	mid April 23
Contract Notice	w/c 24 April 23
Selection Questionnaire Submissions	w/c 22 May 23
Initial Tender Submissions	17 August 23
Negotiation with Bidders	19 September 23/ 21 September 23
Revised Tender Submissions	8 November 23
Evaluation	w/c 9 November 23
Contract Award	12 December 23
Mobilisation	Jan-March 23
Contract Start	1 April 24

The procurement was carried out according to the timeframes above. Nine issues were recorded on the issue log. All recorded issues were dealt with and closed.

Benefits Achieved

The project offered an opportunity to review the existing specification and provide a clear policy position on the Council's approach to the future delivery of sports, leisure, physical activity and wellbeing across the district.

As a result of the review, a Procurement Strategy was developed to ensure the procurement delivered on the Council's objectives. In parallel, a new Active North Herts Strategy was developed which provided a strategic framework for the new Active Communities element of the contract.

The strategic outcomes from the strategy helped inform the procurement objectives and specification for the contract.

Following the comprehensive tender process, a new 10-year Leisure and Active Communities Contract, which commenced on 1 April 2024, was awarded. As well as delivering a robust new contract with a broader remit to help tackle local health inequalities, it secured the business case for c. £1M of Council investment for a gym extension at Royston Leisure Centre and has resulted in a significantly improved financial position. Despite broadening the scope of services to include a new Active Communities Programme, the new arrangements improved the management fee by c. £6M over the term of the 10-year contract.

Active Communities

The new operator, Everyone Active will work in partnership with the Council to deliver an outward facing Community Activity and Wellbeing service to support the Council's overarching Active North Herts Strategy, through the provision of a programme of activities which enable communities to become more active. Some of these include Walking Netball, Tennis and Football, Menopause sessions, Women's Club, Quiet swims, Beginners Pickleball and Outdoor fitness classes.

Royston Leisure Centre gym extension

The gym extension is due to be completed in November 2025. Within their bid submission, Everyone Active propose to utilise the existing first floor group exercise studios, the adjacent corridor, the existing gym to create a large open-plan gym with capacity for 88 stations. The fitness-studio created on the ground floor will be utilised for group exercise classes and the sports hall used for larger sized group classes.

Within their bid, Everyone Active have committed to Capital investments at the facilities in year 1 and 2 of the contract. Year 1 Capital expenditure circa £1,067,995 - Project including a gym refurbishment at NHLC, café refurbishments at Hitchin, North Herts Leisure Centre and Letchworth Lido. Year 2 Capital expenditure circa £1,193,386 – Projects include gym refurbishments at Hitchin and Royston and new reception café at Royston.

In addition, across the three sites, Everyone Active will replace cardiovascular equipment no later than year 6 of the contract and resistance equipment no later than year 8 of the contract. This will ensure customer satisfaction is maintained throughout the 10 year contract.

Finance

During the procurement bidders were asked to provide their bids on the following basis: a flat amount for years 1-2 (with a minimum payment to the Council of £400k), a flat amount for years 3-4 (with a minimum payment to the Council of £800k) and a flat amount for year 5 onwards. That structure was on the basis that it allowed the bidders to provide a better total overall compared to a flat amount across all 10 years, and the impact of the Royston fitness extension. The bid from Everyone Active was as follows;

Period	Current net income budget (subject to inflation) £000	Bid price- payment to Council (subject to inflation at CPI) £000	Budget saving (shortfall where negative) £000
Years 1-2	864	700	(164)
Years 3-4	864	1,350	486
Year 5 onwards	864	1,819	955

The above savings will be reduced by the revenue cost of capital associated with the Royston fitness extension. That will be an annual revenue cost of around £75k to account for the interest cost and Minimum Revenue Provision associated with capital expenditure.

The above savings are reduced by the impact of pay inflation to be applied from the start of the contract. This inflation was higher than expected due to the significant increase in the National Living Wage from April 2024. In the first year (and likely in later years) the position will be improved by energy prices, where we asked bidders to base their bids on prudent energy rates.

Project Team Review

The project team worked cooperatively and effectively throughout the life of the project to deliver the desired outcomes and benefits. The team included officers with specialisms in legal, procurement, finance and leisure, to ensure all aspects of the procurement were effectively managed. The Leisure and Active Communities Manager was appointed as project manager to ensure the Council's project management guidance and procedures were followed and managed effectively. External support was provided by consultants SLC, who contributed significantly to the success of the project.

A project board was established for consultation on the project, which included senior officers and the (then) Executive Member for Environment and Leisure, Cllr Steve Jarvis and Cllr Ian Albert, Executive Member for Finance and IT. The Service Director – Place was Project Executive.

Project Plan Review

Project Costs

A project a budget of £120k was secured for the consultant and legal costs. During the project lifetime there were additional costs of approx. £17k incurred, that relate to location plans of leisure facilities, legal support for leases and legal advice on Real Living Wage, site location plans and feasibility studies at Royston Leisure Centre.

Resources

The procurement took significant officer resource, which had to be managed in addition to day-to-day workloads. In particular, the leisure and active communities team were responsible for project management and project support, which put significant pressure on normal workloads. In addition, the Service Director – Place was heavily involved throughout the procurement as Project Executive.

The Council appointed The Sport, Leisure and Culture Consultancy (SLC) to provide support throughout the procurement process. SLC are specialist advisors to local authorities on leisure procurement and lead author of Sport England's Leisure Services Delivery Guidance.

Timescales

Following approval to proceed with a CPN procurement the following timeline commenced. During the Invitation to Submit Revised Tenders stage, minimal changes were required to the specification and therefore the contract award date was brought forward to allow bidders more time for mobilisation.

Workstream	Date
Procurement Strategy	mid March 23
Develop Tender Documents	mid April 23
Contract Notice	w/c 24 April 23
Selection Questionnaire Submissions	w/c 22 May 23
Initial Tender Submissions	17 August 23
Negotiation with Bidders	19 September 23/ 21 September 23
Revised Tender Submissions	8 November 23
Evaluation	w/c 9 November 23
Contract Award	12 December 23
Mobilisation	Jan-March 23
Contract Start	1 April 24

Risks

The Project Manager identified, captured and monitored risks relating to project within the risk log for the duration of the project. The risk log was presented and reviewed with Project Board members.

The following table sets out the projects most significant risks and mitigations. The mitigating actions were implemented, reducing the risks potential likelihood and impact.

Risk	Mitigation
1. In-house staff capacity to deliver procurement on time.	Allocated internal resources and external consultant support.
2. Limited flexibility in project plan leaves little room for manoeuvre if key milestone dates are not met.	Project plan/ project board in place.
3. Poor quality specification will impact contract delivery.	Sport England Leisure management Template.
4. Lack of responses to tender.	Combine leisure contracts into one single contracts.
5. Low value bids from respondents.	Identified in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
6. Awarding contract to new supplier could lead to mobilisation/operational issues at handover.	Maintain good relationship with SLL.

Lessons Learned

What would we do again?

- Hire specialist consultants and lawyers - the use of specialist expertise ensured the council had a robust procurement strategy and services specification. The consultants guided the project team throughout the whole process, using their expert market knowledge and insight to ensure the council achieved the best outcomes. The use of specialist lawyers with expert knowledge of leisure procurements, also ensured the legal process ran smoothly and were in the council's best interests.
- Use Competitive Procedure with Negotiation or a similar procurement methodology, to enable some negotiation with bidders on the specification. This also allowed us to consider a range of variant bids at ISIT (Invitation to Submit Initial Tenders) stage, which could then be reviewed and agreed whether to include in the final specification or not.

What would we do differently?

The timeline for completing the procurement and mobilising the next contract was short and normally a procurement of this nature would have commenced anywhere between 6-12 months earlier. However, due to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on our leisure contracts / supplier and the wider leisure market, we delayed the decision on whether to extend the existing contract with SLL for a year, until the market was in clear recovery. We also took external advice on timing to go to the market from SLC.

Included within the Procurement Strategy SLC developed a "Shadow Bid" which estimated the base value of the contract, using a combination of pre and post-Covid accounts and forecasts provided by SLL alongside SLC's knowledge of the wider leisure operating market. The projected management fee was very negative and did not reflect the bids received.

Communications Plan

The project communication plan was presented at Project Board meetings. Everyone Active produced a communication plan which included communications to existing members and wider communications regarding takeover of the contract. A range of communications were issued prior to the start of the contract, and Everyone Active also had staff on site prior to handover to encourage people to download their app, however it could be argued that the level of concern from centre users, particularly regarding the new booking system was underestimated.

However, issues were swiftly addressed, FAQs produced, social media comments replied to and a councillor briefing was also held to listen to their concerns. This proactive approach ensured teething issues were quickly resolved and when the outdoor pool season commenced, communications on the new system were issued well in advance and drip fed right up to the opening. This approach meant much less customer contact at opening.

We have faced some challenges around the implementation of the new booking system and changes in operational policy, however these have subsided as users get more familiar with the new systems.

Other Considerations

The contract start date was 1 April 2024, which was in the Easter holidays, which also meant that the handover took place during a very busy time. Easter 2034 does coincide with Easter holidays and therefore consideration to be given to a short extension at the end of the contract to avoid this period.

Project Closure Confirmation

Date	
Name of Project Executive	
Signature	
Additional Comments	

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 3 SEPTEMBER 2024

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: ANNUAL REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN AND ADULTS (2023-24)

REPORT OF: SERVICE DIRECTOR, LEGAL & COMMUNITY
EXECUTIVE MEMBER: COMMUNITY & PARTNERSHIPS
COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council has robust procedures in place that govern how staff and councillors deal with concerns about children and adults with care and support needs at risk of abuse in order to maintain our statutory duty to safeguard their welfare. Work is ongoing to ensure that these procedures are understood and followed throughout the organisation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee be recommended to:

- 2.1 Receive and comment on the annual report of progress made against the Council's fulfilment of the statutory duty to maintain an effective safeguarding function regarding children, adults with care and support needs, modern slavery, Prevent and domestic abuse.
- 2.2 Note the SIAS Audit Action Plan tracker (Appendix A).
- 2.3 Agree that sufficient and robust processes are in place at the Council for application and review of safeguarding processes, and that an annual review and presentation to this committee should continue.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The recommendation(s) made, contained within paragraphs 2.1 to 2.3 are the best course of action that can be accommodated within the approved budget and officer resources, that will fulfil our statutory and lawful obligations but also ensure that a regular, corporate review exists.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. None considered appropriate given the Committees remit.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT COUNCILLOR AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 The Executive Member for Community & Partnerships has been consulted and has endorsed the content of the report. The Leadership Team have also been consulted and support the contents of the report.

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 Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on all statutory agencies working with children and young people to 'safeguard and promote their welfare' and includes responsibility to monitor sufficient arrangements in services they contract out to others.
- 7.2 The Care Act 2014 places a duty on Districts Councils and other local organisations to cooperate fully with their local Safeguarding Adults Board by referring concerns and providing information when requested to assist with investigations.
- 7.3 The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to participate in Domestic Homicide Reviews whilst the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 requires local authorities to provide safe accommodation, homelessness assistance and additional support services for victims.
- 7.4 The Modern Slavery Act 2015 requires local authorities to refer child and adult victims to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).
- 7.5 District Council representation is maintained at the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board, Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, Hertfordshire District and Borough Councils Safeguarding Group, Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership and Hertfordshire Multi Agency Prevent Board.
- 7.6 Our primary statutory function remains that of referring concerns to the relevant agency for necessary action. When making a formal referral, the Council should receive notification as to whether the referral has met the threshold for further enquiry or not, although this does not always happen. An officer who has significant dealings with the victim could be asked to contribute to further proceedings and/or provide further information. Concerns that do not meet the threshold for a statutory investigation will be passed back to the organisation. Officers have a duty to offer information and support including contact details for organisations who can provide further advice and guidance. Concerns that do not meet the threshold for statutory investigation are logged on a central database enabling officers to see if the ongoing reporting of additional concerns should trigger a future referral.
- 7.7 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive an annual report detailing safeguarding activity undertaken by the Council over the previous year and significant actions that will be undertaken in the coming year. Following the Safeguarding Audit report recommendations, the Committee receive an update note bi-annually for information, that enables the Committee to note and track any recommendations and actions taken. A half yearly information note has also recently been provided to the committee (March 2024). This note provided an update following the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) report recommendations as presented to the Committee in September 2023. SIAS recommended that in addition to the Annual Report to the Committee, updates were provided in-year, on recommendations "until fully completed" and are therefore provided as an information note and Appendices.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 The Council's safeguarding referral rates:

<u>Reason for referral</u>	<u>No. of referrals</u> <u>21/22</u>	<u>No. of referrals</u> <u>22/23</u>	<u>No. of referrals</u> <u>23/24</u>
CHILD			
Child at risk of significant harm	38	51	69
Child present & parent deemed intentionally homeless	2	9	2
Child in household where domestic abuse is present <i>(Child referral figure for domestic abuse will always be higher than the number of adults referred for domestic abuse due to most domestic abuse referrals involving multiple children but only one adult)</i>	233	266	198
Modern Slavery (children)	0	0	0
Prevent (Children)	0	0	0
Concerns about a child below threshold for a referral (other help offered)	1	8	19
Total no. of cases involving children	274	334	288
ADULT			
Adult with care & support needs at risk of significant harm	29	108	166
Adult with unmet mental health need (mental health crisis)	50	74	114
Modern Slavery (Adult)	8	0	1
Prevent (Adult)	0	0	0
Domestic abuse (adult) <i>(Child referral figure for domestic abuse will always be higher than the number of adults referred for domestic abuse due to most domestic abuse referrals involving multiple children but only one adult)</i>	251	93	70
Concerns about an adult below threshold for a referral (other help offered) / or consent declined	56	95	132
Total no. of cases involving adults	394	370	483
TOTAL CHILD & ADULT CASES	668 (+24% from 20/21)	704 (+5% from 21/22)	771 (+10% from 22/23)

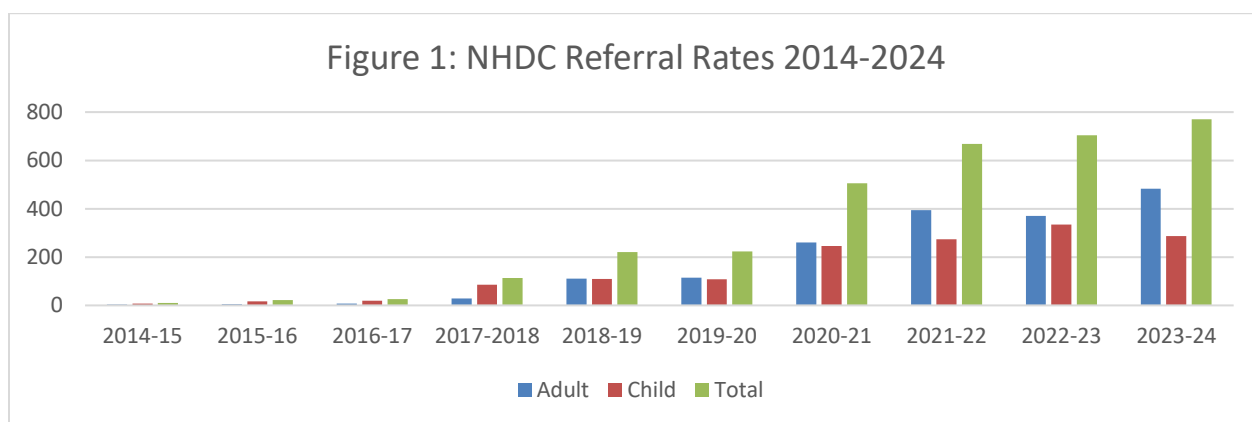
Table 1: Safeguarding referral rates 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24

- a) As shown in figure 1 (below) the Council has continued to record and report more concerns year on year since 2014 when centralised records began. There is no evidence to suggest that our rising referral rates have not been reflective of an increase

in abuse in our local communities, but due to positive developments at the Council such as the introduction of a central database of referrals, mandatory corporate safeguarding training and numerous awareness raising campaigns. These have resulted in both an increased awareness and confidence amongst staff as well as improved corporate oversight about the safeguarding actions undertaken across the organisation resulting in a steady increase in our recorded referral rates.

- b) In 2023/24, referral rates have continued to rise in most categories. We have seen a significant increase in referrals for adults with care & support needs at risk of significant harm, and adults with unmet mental health needs (mental health crisis). The effects of the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis are impacting on referral rates.
- c) The Council commission Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) to provide expert help for domestic abuse victims. Both SADA and the Council make safeguarding referrals for adults and children in North Herts affected by domestic abuse and these are presented together in 8.1. Legislation requires public bodies to automatically refer children to safeguarding who are living in a household where domestic abuse is present. Adults can separately be referred for support with their consent. The number of child referrals for domestic abuse is always higher than adult due to multiple children often being referred alongside one parent.
- d) Referrals for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis have continued to increase. We have seen an increase in several referrals due to the current cost-of-living crisis. Many statutory and third sector organisations providing mental health support report that demand currently far exceeds resources. Long waits for treatment can be distressing for the individual but also more time consuming for officers looking to provide alternative sources of support. Hertfordshire County Council have the Hertfordshire Welfare Assistance support scheme to help Hertfordshire residents facing an immediate financial crisis. [Hertfordshire welfare assistance | Hertfordshire County Council](#)
- e) Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) have commenced a project in North Herts. The project is enabling SADA to work in those areas in North Hertfordshire where we know there is under reporting of domestic abuse and high levels of deprivation.¹
- f) Referrals raised in each area of Hertfordshire to Hertfordshire County Council's Childrens Services, Adult Care Services and HPFT can be seen in Appendix B. The figures show all concerns received, regardless of the referring organisation so will include the Council's and those of other organisations.

¹ [The impact of the cost-of-living crisis on survivors of domestic abuse \(refuge.org.uk\)](https://www.refuge.org.uk)



8.2 Actions completed April 2023 to March 2024:

The following actions were completed:

- a) Introductory, basic, and advanced child and adult safeguarding training has been delivered to all officers (new or refresher) and introductory e-learning is now mandatory as a minimum level of training for all staff. All new starters should attend the relevant level of training and all new staff complete the e-learning within the first few working days). Officers refresh training every 3 years and approximately 200 bookings for training are facilitated every year.
- b) Representation has been maintained at the Hertfordshire District and Borough Council Safeguarding Group which brings together all ten districts and the Adults Board and Children's Partnership.
- c) Ongoing contribution to Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Panels involving North Hertfordshire residents.
- d) Continued delivery of the corporate safeguarding learning and development programme to ensure all new starters receive a first day information sheet and undertake a learning needs analysis, corporate induction safeguarding briefing and the relevant level of training.
- e) Continued maintenance of the corporate safeguarding database, including responses to Section 17 and 47 enquiries for children and Section 42 information sharing requests for adults as well as subject access and freedom of information requests.
- f) Officers and councillors were offered additional training on a variety of safeguarding issues including domestic abuse.
- g) A variety of local and national campaigns were promoted to the local community and to staff through monthly Insight articles, and Member Information Services Information notes including domestic abuse, honour based abuse, hoarding and promoting training opportunities.
- h) To continue to support the North Herts Community Safety Partnership's 'Protecting Vulnerable People' strategic priority which incorporates domestic abuse and violence. As a priority this encourages all partners to lead and support where appropriate campaigns through social media, exhibition stands and events to highlight issues relating to this. The Council will continue to promote all national and local support domestic abuse services available.
- i) The Committee will note that in addition to the annual report, an Information note is also provided to the Committee bi-annually to provide regular updates.
- j) The HSAB Self-Assessment Audit was completed in November 2023 by North Herts Council. However, the recommendations largely related to outstanding (HCC) Safeguarding Adult Reviews that currently remain with their authority for final completion, and Councillor training (always an ongoing issue).

8.3 Work April 2024 to March 2025:

The following actions will be carried out:

- a) The team will continue to promote local and national campaigns, which have included the National Stalking Awareness Week, World Elder Abuse Day, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week and the Anti-Slavery Day.
- b) The work will include the continuation of all ongoing day to day safeguarding functions: training for new staff and refresher training for existing staff; maintenance of database and information sharing requests; representation on relevant networks and partnership groups; coordination of Corporate Safeguarding Group with twice yearly meetings; data retention compliance.
- c) To ensure effective compliance regarding the Authority's duties in relation to modern slavery and human trafficking and Domestic Homicide Reviews.
- d) Bespoke training will be offered to officers on mental health.
- e) The Team will continue to utilise the Government Modern Slavery Statement Registry to easily assess information in relation to suppliers' compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- f) There will also be a continuation with the work in partnership with SADA to manage domestic abuse referrals and to support staff managing these cases.
- g) Ensure staff and designated safeguarding officers are equipped to support complex requests for help from individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, in terms of technical skills and knowledge but also aftercare for staff supporting individuals who are self-harming or threatening suicide.
- h) The Team will review the audit actions that arose out of the SIAS Safeguarding Audit in 2023 and will address these as practicable. Of specific relevance to this Committee, are the recommendations numbered 2 "Councillor Safeguarding Training". Councillor training uptake has been low – at best 45%. SIAS have recommended that all Councillors complete the E-learning module and that is particular importance to the Membership of this Committee (as the overseeing body).
- i) Before the full council meeting on the 11th July 2024, the Safeguarding Team presented the E-learning module to councillors to increase training compliance.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Section 6 of the Council's Constitution at paragraph 6.2.7(y) (p 59) states that the terms of reference for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee includes to "Consider reports relating to the authority's safeguarding responsibilities".
- 9.2 The relevant legislation includes the Children Act 2004, the key points of which are:-
 - Section 11 places a statutory duty on key people and bodies – including district councils to make arrangements to ensure that in discharging their functions they have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
 - Section 10 outlines the duty to promote inter-agency cooperation between named agencies (including district councils).
- 9.3 Legislation to reform multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for children formed part of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which sets out new safeguarding duties. Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCB's) have been abolished and new requirements have been placed on top tier local authorities, the police and health to make

arrangements for safeguarding children in their local area. In Hertfordshire, the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (HSCP) has been established, led by the local authority, police and health with partnership engagement from other organisations including the District and Borough Councils.

- 9.4 The Care Act 2014 came into effect on 1st April 2015 and places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide services to meet the needs of adults who require care and support. A duty to establish a Safeguarding Adults Board in every local authority area was introduced and a duty has been placed on District Councils alongside other local organisations to cooperate fully with the board.
- 9.5 The key responsibility for safeguarding in Hertfordshire lies with the County Council and it is important to remember that it is not the responsibility of any District Council councillor, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider to determine whether abuse is being experienced, or has taken place, or indeed the nature of any abuse.
- 9.6 The role of the councillor, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider is to inform and report concerns, not to investigate or judge. A District Council is not responsible for investigating any safeguarding incidents or allegations, involving children, young people or adults at risk, but provides the local 'eyes and ears' to enable a route to report any concerns.
- 9.7 Statutory guidance that was issued under 9 (3) of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to participate in Domestic Homicide Reviews. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also places a duty on local authorities in relation to safe accommodation, homelessness assistance and additional support services for victims of domestic abuse.
- 9.8 The Modern Slavery Act 2015 places specific duties on local authorities under sections 43 and 52 of the Act, to refer child victims or consenting adult victims through to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), or to make a duty to notify referral (DtN) to the Home Office for a Single Competent Authority (SCA) assessment. Modern Slavery will be treated as falling under the over-arching area of safeguarding and reported through to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as part of the annual report accordingly.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Currently, the corporate training budget provides revenue funding for all levels of safeguarding training. It should be noted that when there are increased training needs for both staff and councillors in response to the national agenda e.g. Child Sexual Exploitation, Prevent, domestic abuse, this will place additional pressure on learning and development budgets. In addition, the Council continues to source training opportunities that are provided free of charge by partners where possible.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Council's safeguarding policies and procedures outline the various steps taken to reduce the risk to employees, councillors and children and adults at risk of abuse and harm accessing our services, including procedures for safe recruitment, learning and development for employees and reporting procedures for employees with concerns.

- 11.2 These policies and procedures are now established throughout the organisation, with processes in place to monitor, review and report ongoing implementation as a business-as-usual activity.

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 Due to their age, development and dependency on adults including in the delivery of services, children are vulnerable and therefore often more open to abuse. They have a legal right to be protected and for organisations to take appropriate action to prevent and report suspected abusive behaviour. The Equality Act supports the Children Act 2004 to provide this protection to vulnerable children.
- 12.3 Equally, adults who are more vulnerable, either through decreased mental capacity/age related dementia, learning difficulties, or their personal domestic situation i.e. changing from one residential care home to another, have a legal right to be protected and for organisations to take appropriate action to prevent and report suspected abusive behaviour.

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.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 As indicated in the main body of this report, the human resource required across the Council to fulfil the Authorities statutory duties and responsibilities in relation to the safeguarding agenda is increasing and it is likely that this will continue.
- 15.2 In terms of the team in place to carry out the work relating to safeguarding, the dedicated Safeguarding team were appointed in December 2022 and the Team Leader position is currently vacant.
- 15.3 The Human Resources service role in safeguarding, includes, the corporate management, and administration of the Recruitment and Selection Policy, the Disclosure Barring Service Policy (pre-employment checks) and associated training. The Human Resources Service also assist with training required for safeguarding.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – SIAS Audit Action Tracker
- 16.2 Appendix B – Hertfordshire County Council Referral Rates by District

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 [Safeguarding Information Note - O & S Committee 12th March 2024](#)


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Legal & Community - Risks Overview

Generated on: 06 February 2024

Legal & Community - Current Actions Overview


Generated on: 06 February 2024

Action Title	Action Description	Original Due Date	Due Date	Status	Latest Note
Page 133 Safeguarding - No. 1	<u>Safeguarding (June 2023)</u> <u>Safeguarding Training</u> <u>SIAS Recommendation</u> We recommend: 1. Where officers have outstanding or overdue safeguarding training, the safeguarding team continues to work with these officers to schedule the outstanding training as a matter of priority. 2. For the Casual Careline Operator mentioned, they must undertake the same level of safeguarding training which has been assessed as required by other Careline Operators (this was the basic adult and child safeguarding training at the time of testing). 3. The Council reviews whether: - The current aim of scheduling basic or advanced safeguarding training for completion within three months is timely or whether this needs to be shortened. - E-Learning training is sufficient in the interim time where officers are waiting to receive basic or advanced safeguarding training. 4. Backing evidence must be adequately retained to demonstrate officers have attended/completed safeguarding training courses. 5. Officers assessed as requiring only E-Learning safeguarding training, must renew this training on a scheduled basis (e.g., every two years). <u>Management Response</u> 1. Responsible Officer: The member of staff/ their line manager/ follow up by the Safeguarding Team. Corporate issue. If they have failed to attend an organised Basic or Advanced level training course, then should (if reasonably practical) undertake the	31-Dec-2023	31-Dec-2023		<u>Update February 2024</u> <u>Finding/Associated Risk</u> <u>Safeguarding Training</u> We reviewed the safeguarding training completed for a sample of officers by reviewing the Councils safeguarding training tracker. The sample included a mix of officers requiring different levels of training. This included basic and advanced safeguarding training as well as E-Learning. The latter was limited to a sample of new starters from the 2022/23 financial year, due to the safeguarding team recently incorporating monitoring of this training completion into the training tracker. From the 13 officers we sampled, the following findings were noted: <u>Incomplete Training</u> - Three officers were assessed as requiring basic adult and child safeguarding training courses however, they had not completed one or both courses since starting employment at the Council. The start dates of the officers were 30/06/19, 29/03/21 and 23/08/21. It is acknowledged that actions have been taken by the current safeguarding team to try and schedule courses for these officers. Three of

Action Title	Action Description	Original Due Date	Due Date	Status	Latest Note
Page 134	<p>Introductory E-learning within a week. (Start by end of June 2023, once staff and their line managers aware.)</p> <p>2. Responsible Officer: The Careline staff, their line Manager and the Service Director: Customers.</p> <p>To ensure undertaken Introductory e-learning within the week and then to attend the next basic course arranged. Otherwise, will be reviewing with ECP if there are alternative ways to provide Basic and Advanced training.</p> <p>Casual Careline Operator has undertaken E-Learning. (31 December 2023 for ECP Training.)</p> <p>3. Reviewed and considered to be sufficient, as the courses are run every month and should be undertaken within the probation period of up to 6 months. No further action required.</p> <p>All new staff will undertake e-learning within the week, and those who just have to undertake this level of training, every 3 years.</p> <p>4. The Safeguarding team already do this, so N/A.</p> <p>5. Responsible Officer: Safeguarding Team/ Learning and Development Team.</p> <p>Agreed, albeit every 3 years. (Start implementation from July 2023.)</p>				<p>the five outstanding courses were yet to be scheduled at the time of testing.</p> <p>February 2024 - The officer with a start date of 23/08/21 has now left NHC. The officer whose start date was 29/03/21 completed the online safeguarding course in February 2024.</p> <p>The officer with a start date of 30/06/19 requires the safeguarding handout due to their job role.</p> <p>22/05/2024 – The officer's handout has now been returned.</p> <p>- A casual Careline Operator who started employment on 22/08/22 has not completed the basic adult and child safeguarding courses. It is our understanding that Careline Operators would as a minimum be required to undertake both these basic safeguarding courses.</p> <p>February 2024 - this employee has now left NHC.</p> <p>- An officer's basic child safeguarding training expired in June 2022 and at the time of testing (April 2023) had yet to be renewed. We acknowledge actions had been taken by the current safeguarding team to attempt to book a training course for renewal.</p> <p>February 2024- There were three Officers whose basic child training expired in June 22 and as of February 2024, they have now all completed training and are up to date.</p> <p><u>Timeliness of Training Completion</u></p> <p>We understand the Council aims to schedule basic and advanced safeguarding courses</p>

Action Title	Action Description	Original Due Date	Due Date	Status	Latest Note
					<p>within three months of an officers start date. We noted for some of the officers we sample tested, that they attended training courses after three months. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An officer attending basic safeguarding courses 14 and 15 months after their employment start date. - An officer attending basic safeguarding courses 6 and 11 months after their employment start date. - Two officers scheduled to attend an advanced safeguarding course 5 months after their employment start date. It is acknowledged these officers are the members of the newly formed safeguarding team. <p>We were unable to obtain confirmation of the reasons for some of the delays mentioned above (first two bullet points), due to these pre-dating the current safeguarding team and therefore inhibiting the audit trails available. We were assured that where safeguarding courses cannot be provided in a timely manner, the safeguarding e-Learning module is instead issued to officers for completion. For three of the four officers, the training tracker shows they have completed the E-Learning training. For the remaining officer the date of completion was not logged on the training tracker. We understand that the safeguarding team feel the E-learning is sufficient to cover officers until they attend basic or advanced safeguarding courses. However, as the E-Learning is an introductory module, this may not be sufficient for officers who have roles/responsibilities requiring basic or advanced safeguarding courses.</p>

Action Title	Action Description	Original Due Date	Due Date	Status	Latest Note
					<p>February 2024 - All new starters are offered available course dates that they can book onto.</p> <p>All staff that either have not attended a course or need their 3 yearly refresher are invited and booked onto available courses. Any reasons for not being able to attend are logged, so any trends can be identified. A e-learning report is provided every month to update the safeguarding training database with dates that the e-learning module has been completed. All new starters are required to complete the e-learning module as part of induction, which is monitored.</p> <p><u>Evidence of Training Completion</u> During testing, we requested to see backing evidence to confirm officers had attended/completed the basic or advanced safeguarding training courses held in person. For three officers, backing evidence could not be located to demonstrate attendance at either one or both basic safeguarding courses and for one officer no evidence could be located to demonstrate attendance to an advanced child safeguarding course.</p> <p>February 2024 - All registers are scanned, and the training provider provides a link to all the certificates and individual officers receive their certificates from the training provider.</p> <p><u>E-Learning Training</u> From discussions with key officers, it is understood that the E-Learning safeguarding</p>

Action Title	Action Description	Original Due Date	Due Date	Status	Latest Note
					<p>course is not required to be renewed. This means that officers who are assessed as only requiring the E-Learning safeguarding training, do not need to undertake any safeguarding training renewal. As all officers have a responsibility for safeguarding, a recommendation has been raised requiring these officers to renew their safeguarding training on a scheduled basis.</p> <p>February 2024 - There is a new e-learning platform being introduced in July 2024, and once this new platform is operational, staff will be scheduled to renew the e-learning every 3 years.</p> <p>Associated Risk Officers do not undertake an adequate level of safeguarding training for their job role. This could lead to officers not identifying potential safeguarding concerns or not taking appropriate action. This could result in harm to the persons affected and damage to the Councils reputation.</p> <p>July 2024 - Staff who require remote training will be invited to complete the online self-paced safeguarding course that will run in the second half of the 2024-25.</p> <p>Any staff whose training needs to be renewed, are booked onto training courses in the 2024-25 financial year.</p>
	<u>Safeguarding (June 2023)</u> Councillor/Member Safeguarding Training <u>SIAS Recommendation</u>	31-Dec-2024	31-Dec-2024		<u>Finding/Associated Risk</u> Councillor/Member Safeguarding Training

Action Title	Action Description	Original Due Date	Due Date	Status	Latest Note
	<p>1. We recommend, as a minimum, all Members complete the safeguarding E-Learning module. This is to be renewed on a scheduled basis (e.g., every two years).</p> <p>2. We further recommend, that adult and child safeguarding awareness sessions are run on a scheduled basis for Members (e.g., every two years) or when there is a significant change in membership. We are aware the Council intends to run sessions in 2023/24 following the May 2023 elections.</p> <p>3. Members with responsibility for oversight of the Councils safeguarding arrangements (e.g., members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee), should attend the awareness sessions.</p> <p><u>Management Response</u></p> <p>Responsible Officer: Committee, Member & Scrutiny Officer/ Safeguarding Team (and Service Director: Legal & Community). Responsibility is also with the Members. Dependent on self-audit (i.e., if they have undertaken before/ similar or equivalent within the last year), every 4 years.</p> <p>1. We shall undertake an audit of those elected to check they have undertaken e-learning and seek to ensure outstanding e-learning is taken by them within 6 months. Failing this, this will be completed post all out elections from June 2024. (31 December 2023 for current Members. 31 December 2024 for newly elected Members in May 2024.)</p> <p>2. E-learning is sufficient, so not accepted, as a proportionate level for District Councillors.</p> <p>3. See above, not accepted without Members agreement. This will be reviewed with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee when the Annual Safeguarding report is presented at the September 2023 meeting. At present, E-learning should be completed.</p>				<p>From discussions with key officers, we found that Councillor uptake of safeguarding training was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 22 of 48 Members have not had any safeguarding training. - 6 and 10 Members attended the safeguarding children and adult awareness session respectively. Awareness sessions were last held in 2021. - 17 of 48 Members had completed the E-Learning training. E-Learning training is currently not required to be renewed. <p>Associated Risk</p> <p>Members have a responsibility for safeguarding, as their role could include contact with members of the public, whilst they may also be required to have oversight of safeguarding arrangements operating at the Council. Without sufficient training, potential safeguarding incidents may not be identified, or appropriate action may not be taken on identification of potential concerns. This could result in harm to the persons in potential danger and damage to the Councils reputation. As part of their oversight role, Members may not have sufficient awareness of safeguarding arrangements to provide challenge and ensure these are operating effectively.</p> <p>July 2024</p> <p>Safeguarding team presented the Growzone safeguarding module to members before the Full Council meeting on the 11th July 2024, with 27 Councillors attending. This training session was recorded and shared with all Councillors.</p>

Action Title	Action Description	Original Due Date	Due Date	Status	Latest Note
					All Councillors were emailed a copy of the Councillor's handout to sign and return by the 31 st July, and 16 Councillors have returned the signed members handout.

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Appendix B

Referral Rates By Hertfordshire District 2023-24

- 1.1 The data below has been provided by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), who are responsible for investigating safeguarding concerns relating to children and concerns relating to adults with care and support needs, and the Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust (HPFT), who are responsible for the provision of NHS mental health referrals.
- 1.2 The data is reflective of concerns raised by all partner organisations, not just the Council e.g GP's, hospitals, education establishments, probation and voluntary groups.
- 1.3 In all cases, the concerns raised refers to the number of reports made to these organisations that contained sufficient information to be assessed to determine whether further enquiry was needed. In many cases, needs may have been present, but the case may not have met the legal threshold for a full enquiry and instead other forms of help and support would be provided.
- 1.4 For example, in many mental health referrals, although the individual may be concerned about their mental health and requests a referral, they may not have sought any help from their GP (which should always be the first step) and the case is passed back so that primary care can be involved.
- 1.5 The conversion rate from concern to enquiry does not include or reflect referrals of poor quality. A poor quality referral could be missing contact details for the individual, not confirm consent or mental capacity status or contains insufficient information to determine the individuals needs or why a referral has been made.
- 1.6 For safeguarding, many concerns that don't meet the threshold for a full enquiry still warrant extensive early help from HCC and other organisations to support the family. This could involve parenting support, mentoring and respite care. The concern has simply not met the level required for a safeguarding enquiry but does qualify for many other forms of help.
- 1.7 All the referral rates provided are per 10,000 of population enabling the data to be compared by district.

1.8 HCC Children's Services

District	Rate of concerns raised about children per 10k population	Conversion rate of concerns proceeding to enquiries where HCC believe there is evidence to warrant further investigation for safeguarding
Broxbourne	262.2	34.0%
Dacorum	256.9	33.7%
East Hertfordshire	154.2	38.5%
Hertfordshire	233.7	42.2%
Hertsmere	211.6	48.3%
North Hertfordshire	196.8	42.2%

St. Albans	160.2	41.3%
Stevenage	312.7	42.4%
Three Rivers	218.2	51.3%
Watford	285.3	48.3%
Welwyn Hatfield	311.8	47.8%

1.9 HCC Adult Care Services

	Concerns raised total number	Concerns raised per 10k population	Enquiries continued total number	Enquiries per 10k population	Conversion Rate
Broxbourne District	535	69	251	33	47%
Dacorum District	803	67	461	38	57%
East Hertfordshire District	789	67	411	35	52%
Hertsmere District	630	75	382	46	61%
North Hertfordshire District	938	89	495	47	53%
St Albans District	773	69	457	41	59%
Stevenage District	721	104	392	57	54%
Three Rivers District	508	70	280	38	55%
Watford District	643	82	377	48	59%
Welwyn Hatfield District	850	90	451	48	53%

1.10 HPFT mental health concerns

	Concerns total number	Concerns per 10k population	Enquiries total number	Enquiries per 10k population	Conversion Rate
Broxbourne District	153	20	50	6	33%
Dacorum District	105	9	56	5	53%
East Hertfordshire District	124	11	56	5	45%
Hertsmere District	229	27	165	20	72%
North Hertfordshire District*	123	12	38	4	31%
St Albans District	98	9	52	5	53%
Stevenage District	95	14	42	6	44%
Three Rivers District	106	15	70	10	66%
Watford District	178	23	132	17	74%
Welwyn Hatfield District	149	16	41	4	28%

1.11 North Herts has the second lowest conversion rate for mental health concerns. This suggests that of the referrals being made in our area, a larger number of individuals were able to be passed to their GP to access primary support and did not currently require the intervention of more specialised mental health services offered by HPFT. The low conversion rate does not reflect a greater number of poor quality referrals as explained in 1.5.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 September 2024

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

**TITLE OF REPORT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
2024-25**

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST / SUSTAINABILITY / A BRIGHTER FUTURE
TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights items scheduled in the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2024-25 civic year. It also includes items that have not yet been assigned to a specific meeting of the Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Committee prioritises 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 most recent iteration of the Forward Plan, as attached at Appendix B, suggests a list of items to be considered at its meetings in the coming civic year.
- 2.3. That the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan as attached at Appendix C be considered.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To allow the Committee to set a work programme which provides focused Member oversight, encourages open debate and seeks to achieve service improvement through effective policy development and meaningful policy and service change.
- 3.2. The need to observe Constitutional requirements and monitor the Forward Plan for appropriate items to scrutinise remains a key aspect of work programming.

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.

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 Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.
- 6.2. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee are sent the latest Forward Plan upon publication.
- 6.3. 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. The LGA Peer Committee Support was undertaken in 2022 and finalised in January 2023, which focused on the Overview and Scrutiny and Finance, Audit and Risk Committees. Recommendations for Overview & Scrutiny were made and are set out in the Action Plan at Appendix C.
- 7.2. In line with the recommendation of the Corporate Peer Challenge 2023 Executive Members were invited to present reports that fall under their remit and to make presentations on specific issues that the Committee wish to consider.
- 7.3. 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.
- 7.4. The Committee seeks to ensure that consideration of agenda items minimises the 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 items they wish adding. Appendix A contains the work programme for 2024-25.
- 8.2. When considering additional topics their risk assessment and prioritisation will ensure that the most appropriate items taking forward to the work programme.

Forward Plan

- 8.3. The Forward Plan for May at Appendix B. Members can view currently published forward plans here: [Browse plans - Cabinet, 2024 | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/cabinet/browse-plans)
- 8.4. Members are reminded that the Forward Plan acts as public notification of key executive decisions during the next four months and beyond that it is a working document subject to regular amendments.

Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

- 8.5. The Committee agreed at the meeting held on 20 June 2023 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.
 - Assess the effectiveness of changes made.
- 8.6. The Committee is asked to consider the Action Plan and any update updates provided at Appendix C.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Under section 6.2.5 the Constitution, the Committee is responsible for setting its own work programme however it must ensure it retains sufficient capacity within the programme to meets 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.”
- 9.3. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the approval of the future scrutiny work programme falls within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. Depending 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 in 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 for 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 timeframe for scrutiny interventions should be considered in 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 this report. Effective scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring the 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. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 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 or 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.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1. Appendix A – Work Programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2024-2025
- 16.2. Appendix B – Forward Plan – 9 August 2024
- 16.3. Appendix C – Corporate Peer Committee Support Action Plan in regard to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1. Jeevan Mann, Scrutiny Officer
Jeevan.Mann@north-herts.gov.uk , ext 4295

- 17.2. James Lovegrove, Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager,
James.Lovegrove@north-herts.gov.uk , ext 4204
- 17.3. Isabelle Alajooz, Legal Commercial Team Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer,
Isabelle.Alajooz@north-herts.gov.uk , ext 4346
- 17.4. Tim Everitt, Performance and Risk Officer,
Tim.Everitt@north-herts.gov.uk , ext 4646

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1. Previous Reports to the [Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) and [Forward Plans](#).

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PROGRAMME FOR FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2024-25

KEY:

Items identified for work programme

Annual reports

Scrutiny reports

MEETING DATE	ITEMS AT MEETING	REPORT AUTHOR	PORTFOLIO HOLDER
3 September 2024	<p>Community Survey Results</p> <p>Leisure contract project closure report</p> <p>Safeguarding Report</p> <p>Council Plan 2024-25</p> <p>Council Delivery Plan & Key Performance Indicators - Q1 Update</p> <p>Adoption of Scrutiny Charter</p> <p>Decisions and Monitoring Tracker</p> <p>Work Programme</p>	<p>Christine Crofts</p> <p>Louise Randall/ Sarah Kingsley</p> <p>Helen Rae/ Jeanette Thompson</p> <p>Rachel Cooper</p> <p>Rachel Cooper</p> <p>Cllr Matt Barnes</p> <p>Jeevan Mann</p> <p>Jeevan Mann</p>	<p>Cllr Mick Debenham</p> <p>Cllr Val Bryant</p>
12 November 2024	<p>Enterprise Portfolio Update</p> <p>Museum Storage Options</p> <p>3cs Half Year Update</p> <p>Decisions and Monitoring Tracker</p> <p>Work Programme</p>	<p>Steve Crowley</p> <p>Robert Orchard</p> <p>Chris Jeffrey</p> <p>Jeevan Mann</p> <p>Jeevan Mann</p>	<p>Cllr Tamsin Thomas</p> <p>Cllr Val Bryant</p>
7 January 2025	<p>Crime and Disorder Matters (topic tbc)</p> <p>Council Delivery Plan & Key Performance Indicators – Q2 Update</p> <p>Decisions and Monitoring Tracker</p> <p>Work Programme</p>	<p>tbc (Hertfordshire police)</p> <p>Ian Couper</p> <p>Jeevan Mann</p> <p>Jeevan Mann</p>	<p>Cllr Val Bryant</p>
4 February 2025	<p>Planning & Transport portfolio update</p> <p>RIPA Annual Report</p> <p>Decisions and Monitoring Tracker</p> <p>Work Programme</p>	<p>Ian Fullstone</p> <p>Jeanette Thompson</p> <p>Jeevan Mann</p> <p>Jeevan Mann</p>	<p>Cllr Daniel Allen</p>

11 March 2025	Health Matters in NHS (topic tbc) Council Delivery Plan & Key Performance Indicators – Q3 Update Draft Annual Report of O&S Committee Decisions and Monitoring Tracker Work Programme	tbc Ian Couper Cllr Barnes Jeevan Mann Jeevan Mann	
	Candidate topics to be scheduled: Waste contract mobilisation – readiness, resident engagement Digital transformation project update LGA peer challenge report Resident survey		
	Candidate topics for Task and Finish Groups: Officer recruitment & retention Impact of the Council's grant policies Impact of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Tackling Homelessness in North Herts Review of the Master-planning process Effectiveness of Section 106 funding		

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Forward Plan of Key Decisions - 9 August 2024

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
The Council Plan 2024-2028		Cabinet	10 Sep 2024		Georgina Chapman, Policy & Strategy Team Leader georgina.chapman@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
12-25 Update on Progress against the Council Delivery Plan		Cabinet	10 Sep 2024		Rachel Cooper, Controls, Risk and Performance Manager rachel.cooper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
FIRST QUARTER INVESTMENT STRATEGY (CAPITAL AND TREASURY) REVIEW 2024/25		Cabinet	10 Sep 2024		Ian Couper, Service Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
FIRST QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25		Cabinet	10 Sep 2024		Ian Couper, Service Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6

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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
Sustainability SPD		Cabinet	10 Sep 2024		Deborah Coates, Principal Strategic Planning Officer deborah.coates@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Revised use of Commuted Sums		Cabinet	10 Sep 2024		Martin Lawrence, Strategic Housing Manager martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Permit Review		Cabinet	Before 19 Nov 2024		Louise Symes, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager louise.symes@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Museum Storage Options Review		Cabinet	19 Nov 2024		Robert Orchard, Culture and Facilities Services Manager robert.orchard@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Baldock Strategic Masterplan		Cabinet	19 Nov 2024		Nigel Smith, Strategic Planning Manager nigel.smith@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6

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

Key
Open Actions
Complete Actions

	Recommendation	Action	Led By	Timescale	Update	
Page 455	1	Define what you want your scrutiny panels to achieve.	To be discussed with the scrutiny committee but approach based on the 4 principles of good scrutiny would make sense: - · Provides critical friend challenge to policymakers and decision makers · Enables the voice and concerns to the public · Is carried out by independent-minded people who lead and own the scrutiny role · Drives improvement in public services	Scrutiny Committee	Sep-24	A Scrutiny Charter has been produced and will be presented to the O&S committee for consideration on 3 rd September 2024.
	2	Put into place scrutiny training for the whole council (members and officers) and experiment with how training could be more effective for the 2024 new intake. Ensure all members understand the benefits and role of scrutiny.	Will be incorporated within the Member training programme being developed. Group Leaders need to <u>reinforce the importance</u> of attending training with their groups.	Democratic Services Member Champions Learning + Development	On going	Training was provided in May 2024 and is available on GrowZone. Further training development is ongoing and will next be rolled out in the 25/26 Civic year.
	3	Consider how the provision of training can be improved to increase knowledge transfer and support members with ongoing training needs e.g., use of one-to-one coaching the provisional feedback from live meetings, further training to fill any gaps in knowledge and skills.	Will be incorporated within the Member training programme being developed.	Democratic Services Member Champions Learning + Development	On going	Officers from Hertfordshire County Council have confirmed that there is an opportunity to conduct peer-to-peer chair/ vice chair training and will respond with possible dates.
	5	Members to actively review the Forward Plan and invitation of cabinet members to attend O&S. This could	This is already on every agenda and is done every meeting it will be for members to take forward with the Scrutiny Officer.	Scrutiny Committee/ Scrutiny Officer	Sep-24	The forward plan will be on the O&S agenda on 3rd September 2024 and all future meetings.

	Recommendation	Action	Led By	Timescale	Update
	be overcome with a dedicated scrutiny officer in place.				
8	Officers to always facilitate the bringing forward of future agenda items requested by O&S in a timely manner	This is accepted but felt to have been a one-off example. It would be for the Scrutiny Officer to ensure this happens.	Scrutiny Officer	On going	The Officer engagement proposal was agreed and will now be taken forward with Officers and Executives.
11	Scrutiny needs to actively seek to implement the use of Task and Finish Groups.	This is for the Chair and Committee to consider with the support of the Scrutiny Officer.	Chair of Scrutiny / Scrutiny Committee / Scrutiny Officer	Sep-24	The Chair has produced a list of possible Task and Finish Groups - these will be discussed at the next O&S on 3rd September 2024
13	Establish proactive annual programme of work and agenda setting.	This is for the Chair and Committee to consider, with the support of Scrutiny Officer.	Chair of Scrutiny / Scrutiny Committee / Scrutiny Officer	Sep-24	The Chair will encourage Councillors to identify items for the work programme at the next meeting on 3rd September 2024 and all future meetings.
6	Ensure the scrutiny committee actively follow up on all recommendations.	This is already on every agenda. For Scrutiny Officer to work with the Chair and Committee to ensure it is actively looked at.	Chair of Scrutiny / Scrutiny Committee / Scrutiny Officer	Sep-24	Recommendations and referrals will be monitored going forward. These will be reviewed, and target dates set at the monthly meeting between the Chair, Vice-chair and Scrutiny Officer.
6	Establish clear meeting protocols and associated processes for questioning cabinet members.	For Scrutiny Officer to work through with the Chair	Chair of Scrutiny / Scrutiny Officer	Completed	It was agreed that the O&S work programme will be shared as part of the resolutions to Cabinet so that members have a view and can note the planned work for O&S.
4	Urgently fund and recruit a dedicated scrutiny officer.	Budget has been identified for a part-time Scrutiny Officer subject to successful recruitment.	Democratic Services Manager/Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager	Completed	The Scrutiny Officer was appointed and start on 26 March 2024.
6	Proper and effective reporting onwards to council and cabinet by O&S as required.	Chair and Scrutiny Officer will need to take this forward and consider the best way to report O&S discussion to cabinet and council. This can be done verbally. A report from a Task & Finish Group would be a written report.	Scrutiny Committee/ Scrutiny Officer	Completed	It was agreed that the Chair and Vice chair will attend Cabinet meetings together where possible, to report on O&S discussions. A written referral will also be provided to Cabinet.

	Recommendation	Action	Led By	Timescale	Update
9	Training in scrutiny questioning skills (KLOE).	Has been and will continue to be incorporated within the Member training programme being developed.	Democratic Services Member Champions Learning + Development	Completed	Covered under action point 2 and therefore this action point is closed.
10	Specific O&S training for the opposition to encourage effective opposition role. There is specific scrutiny training for groups in opposition to assist with scrutiny work and assist them in being more effective throughout the council.	Will be incorporated within the Member training programme being developed.	Democratic Services Member Champions Learning + Development	Completed	Covered under action point 2 and therefore this action point is closed.
12	It was observed by some members that the preparation for the special scrutiny meeting on the 'call to account' was beneficial and lessons learnt on how this preparation helped scrutiny should be considered in taking forward scrutiny in the future.	For Scrutiny Officer to work through with the Chair.	Chair of Scrutiny / Scrutiny Officer	Completed	Briefings will become standard before 'call to account' to best prepare Members for the item.
14	Provide O&S training in Chairing Skills.	Will be incorporated within the Member training programme being developed.	Democratic Services Member Champions Learning + Development	Completed	Covered under action point 3 and therefore this action point is closed.
17	Consideration should be given by the cabinet and portfolio holders on how they can carry out their role in a way that supports scrutiny being able to act as effectively as possible.	This links to the vision for scrutiny in recommendation one this should be a two-way critical friend relationship to be included as part of training and potentially part of work planning. Cabinet to consider how to better engage with Scrutiny.	Cabinet / Scrutiny Committee / Chair of Scrutiny	Completed	Similar to action points 6&19 and therefore closed.
18	Ensure minutes reflect the decisions of the meeting – e.g., requests for agenda items to be recorded in the minutes and added to the forward plan.	Committee Services and the Scrutiny Officer will make sure everything is accurately captured.	Scrutiny Officer	Completed	Resolutions report captures specific requests, supported by minutes produced and access to the YouTube recording of the meeting.

	Recommendation	Action	Led By	Timescale	Update
19	Cabinet members should consistently and without exception be expected to attend O&S committee meetings where decisions from their area of responsibilities are being scrutinised.	Agreed. This is the current approach unless there is an emergency. Cabinet to consider as part of how to better engage with scrutiny.	Cabinet	Completed	It was agreed that the Chair and Vice chair will build out working relationships with the Cabinet to encourage them to attend O&S meetings as appropriate. Remains 'In Progress' until process embedded.
20	The scrutiny chair or their representative should attend all cabinet meetings to present scrutiny findings particularly to enable the thinking and debate around the recommendations to be clearly communicated with the cabinet to maximise the impact scrutiny can have on decisions.	Agreed.	Chair of Scrutiny	Completed	Similar to action point 6. It was agreed that the Chair and Vice chair will attend Cabinet meetings together where possible, to report on O&S discussions. A written referral will also be provided to Cabinet.
21	Where Cabinet do not accept an O&S recommendation, reasons should be given.	Agreed. Cabinet to consider as part of how to better engage with scrutiny	Cabinet	Completed	Reasons for a recommendation not being accepted by Cabinet will be included in the Committee's Resolutions report.

Tuesday 3 September 2024

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE SCRUTINY CHARTER

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: NOT APPLICABLE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the recent LGA Peer Review, a recommendation was made to develop and adopt a definition of what Scrutiny is at the Council. This Charter has been developed to address this recommendation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Overview and Scrutiny committee:

- 2.1. Adopt the Scrutiny Charter for Scrutiny at North Herts Council, attached as Appendix A

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee members have a clearly defined purpose, objectives, and expectations of Scrutiny at North Herts Council.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The 'do nothing' option of not defining Scrutiny at North Herts has been discounted, as the Council committed to implement the actions set out in the LGA Peer report 2023 and should seek to gain benefit from that process.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 The Charter has been developed through discussion between the current Chair and Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Scrutiny Officer and the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager.
- 5.2 Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be provided a chance to consider and comment on the Charter at a meeting of the Committee.

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 A Peer Review was conducted in 2020 by the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC), the review report and Action Plan were agreed through Cabinet on 24 March 2020 and 23 June 2020, respectively.

A follow up review was undertaken by (different) LGA CPC Peers during 2022 and a further LGA Peer Committee Support report was issued in January 2023. This concentrated on the Overview & Scrutiny and Finance, Audit and Risk Committees and detailed several recommendations to improve processes at the Council. These were considered and approved for action by the Committee at the meeting on Tuesday 20th June 2023.

One of the recommendations was to 'Define what you want your scrutiny panels to achieve' and this Charter has been developed to address this recommendation.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. The Charter has been developed alongside publications from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny which provides best practice for scrutiny committees.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Section 6 of the Council's Constitution at paragraph 6.2.7 details the full terms of reference for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee [Microsoft Word - CONSTITUTION - post DD 25.7.24 \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#) (add hyperlink to Section 6) more specifically paragraphs 6.2.7 (s) and 6.2.7 (u) as noted below.
- 9.2. Section 6 of the Council's Constitution at paragraph 6.2.7 (s) - To review performance against the Council's agreed objectives / priorities and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or service areas. To consider risk to the achievement of those objectives/ priorities. To make recommendations to Cabinet.
- 9.3. Section 6 of the Council's Constitution at paragraph 6.2.7 (u) - 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.
- 9.4. Section 6 of the Council's Constitution at paragraph 6.2.5 - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be responsible for setting their own Work Programme and in doing so they should take into account wishes of members of that Committee who are not Members of the largest political group on the Council. The Work Programme should retain flexibility to deal with urgent issues.

- 9.5. The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a voluntary process and therefore there is no legal obligation to act upon the recommendations. However, it is noted that at the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 20 June 2023, proposed actions were recommended and referred to Cabinet for approval.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are no known financial implications that apply to this report.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.

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.

- 12.1. There are no known equalities implications or requirements that apply to this report.

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.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no known Human Resources implications that apply to this report.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – North Herts Council Scrutiny Charter 2024-25 v0.1

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 Jeevan Mann, Scrutiny Officer
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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on Tuesday 20th June 2023, at which the LGA Peer Review actions were presented and endorsed by the Committee - [Agenda item - CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE REPORT & ACTION PLAN | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)
- 18.2 Centre for Public Scrutiny: Good Scrutiny Guide - [CfPS-Good-Scrutiny-Guide-v4-WEB-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf \(cfps.org.uk\)](#)
- 18.3 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report 2023 - [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report 2021 \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

North Herts Council – Scrutiny Charter

This Charter sets out the purpose and objectives of Scrutiny within North Herts, as well as the expectations of those involved with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (O&S).

1. What is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny is an important part of the council's democratic governance. It is a process whereby councillors who are not part of the council's executive can play an influential role in the shaping of policy and decisions that will have a real benefit on behalf of the community they represent.

2. Objectives of Scrutiny at North Herts

Scrutiny at North Herts aims to fulfil the following objectives:

- To **provide a critical friend** to the Cabinet and senior officers of the council, on the matters of greatest importance to our residents.
- To **enhance accountability and transparency** across the Council area, thereby strengthening the democratic process.
- To **improve decision-making and policy formation**, offering independent perspectives and ensuring that a diverse range of views are considered.

3. Principles of O&S

The work of O&S at North Herts is guided by the following principles ("3i's"):

1. **Independence** – O&S members should be open-minded, and strive to operate independently of political group, the Cabinet and senior council officers.
2. **Initiative** – O&S members should be curious, resourceful, and proactive; seeking always to make positive contributions in the interests of residents.
3. **Integrity** – O&S members should be diligent, collaborative, and respectful of each other; and of those whose work or ideas are being scrutinised.

4. Key functions of O&S

O&S achieves its objectives chiefly by exercising the following functions:

1. Considering proposals from, and making recommendations to, the Cabinet and/or Leadership team.
2. Undertaking proactive exploratory work to inform policy formation, where opportunities to do so effectively are identified.
3. Ensuring council decision makers are held to account, and that where things don't go to plan, appropriate lessons are identified and then implemented.
4. Enhancing the scrutiny function itself, through continuous improvement.

The full list of functions of O&S is detailed in the Council Constitution ([Section 6](#)) and further guidance will be published in the Scrutiny Toolkit.

5. Roles and responsibilities in relation to O&S

Role	Responsibilities
Members of the Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to the objectives and principles outlined above • Understand the role and make of use of any available training • Be prepared for meetings, and attend briefings when offered • Be respectful of officer time, and where possible provide questions in advance to allow for more in-depth answers • Raise questions which are short and to the point, and in the spirit of constructive challenge • Be mindful of any proposed recommendations and focus attention on how they might be improved • Work with the Chair and Vice Chair to improve the overall effectiveness of the scrutiny function, and to ensure that it adds maximum value in line with the objectives
Chair / Vice Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead by example • Create an environment which facilitates constructive challenge • Chair meetings fairly and encourage healthy debate, whilst maintaining a clear focus on the issues at hand • Ensure that questions are answered in full and encourage members to deep dive for further information if appropriate • Lead the prioritisation of the O&S work programme, taking into account the views of committee members • Present the Committee's recommendations to Cabinet • Communicate frequently with the Scrutiny officer and work to improve the effectiveness of the committee as a whole
Scrutiny Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to the objectives and principles outlined above • Provide support to the Chair and Vice Chair - before, during and after committee meetings • Ensure that Cabinet members and seniors officers know what to expect when attending O&S meetings • Be prepared to challenge senior officers and Cabinet members at times, in pursuit of the committee's objectives • Monitor actions, recommendations and decisions of the committee to ensure its ongoing effectiveness • Schedule committee meetings, briefings, and ensure relevant materials are prepared and circulated in a timely manner • Liaise with outside representatives, where appropriate
Cabinet members / Senior officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the purpose, objectives and principles of Scrutiny • Assist the Chair, VC and Scrutiny Officer to proactively identify items where scrutiny may be beneficial or necessary • Attend O&S meetings when requested to do so, and provide relevant materials in advance • Be prepared to answer questions and to contribute to the discussion in a constructive manner

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY DECISIONS AND MONITORING TRACKER

DECISIONS:

Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
June 2024 - LEISURE INVESTMENT OPTIONS			
4	<p>Seven referrals were made to Cabinet from the Committee on 18th June 2024 and considered at Cabinet on 25th June 2024.</p> <p>The Chair, Cllr Barnes, was in attendance to present the referral to Cabinet and outlined the main discussion points raised and reasons for amending referral 2.3 and creating the additional 2.4 referral, by Members at the Overview and Scrutiny committee.</p>	<p>Referral 2.3 from O&S was adopted by Cabinet.</p> <p>Referral 2.4 was amended by Cllr Mick Debenham and adopted by Cabinet:</p> <p>That Project Board will review the business case for the Royston Learner Pool, after further work has taken place to explore any other funding options that are realistically available. That review will then feed into the planned review of the Council's capital programme, as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process</p> <p>Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday 25th June 2024 @ 7.30pm</p>	In progress
June 2024 - COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN UPDATE			
5	<p>Two recommendations were made to Cabinet from the Committee on 18th June 2024 and Considered and noted as recommended at Cabinet on 25th June 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet notes the progress against Council projects as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A) including new milestones and changes to milestone dates. That Cabinet note the completion in Q4 of the projects detailed in paragraph 8.5. <p>Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday 25th June 2024 @ 7.30pm</p>	In progress
June 2024 - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2024/25			
6	<p>Two recommendations were made to Cabinet from the Committee on 18th June 2024 and Considered and approved as recommended at Cabinet on 25th June 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Cabinet adopted the performance indicators set out in paragraph 8.3 for 2024/25. 	In progress

Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Considered adding Key Performance Indicators regarding performance of third party suppliers and staff satisfaction. Agreed that Key Performance Indicators were published to the Members Information Service when provided to Cabinet. Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday 25th June 2024 @ 7.30pm	
July 2024 - PRODUCTIVITY PLAN			
7	One recommendation was made to Cabinet from the Extraordinary meeting on 2nd July 2024 and comments were considered and noted as recommended by Cabinet on Tuesday 9 th July 2024.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendation is to ensure that the Council complies with the requirements set out by DLUHC to produce a Productivity Plan. Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday 9h July 2024 @ 7.30pm	In progress
July 2024 - WASTE CONTRACT			
8	Part 2 Report - Two recommendations were made to Cabinet from the Extraordinary meeting on 2nd July 2024 and comments were considered and noted as recommended by Cabinet on Tuesday 9 th July 2024.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An extensive procurement exercise has been undertaken for waste, recycling and street cleansing services. The procurement including specification development has been supported by external consultants Eunomia and legal advisors from Sharpe Pritchard. Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday 9h July 2024 @ 7.30pm	In Progress
July 2024 - WASTE CONTRACT			
9	Four recommendations were made to Cabinet from the Extraordinary meeting on 2nd July 2024 and comments were considered and noted as recommended by Cabinet on Tuesday 9 th July 2024.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Cabinet agrees to award the waste, recycling and street cleansing contract to the preferred bidder, as identified in Part 2 of this report. That Cabinet agrees to the delegation of powers to the Director of Resources and the Director of Place in 	In Progress

Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
		<p>consultation with the Executive Members for Finance and IT and Recycling and Waste Management to determine whether the Council Capital funds vehicles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That Cabinet agrees to approve the formation of a joint mobilisation project board to include the Executive Members responsible for Finance and IT as well as the Executive Member covering waste, recycling and street cleansing services for both EHC and North Herts to monitor the progress of the mobilisation of the waste, recycling and street cleansing contract. • That Cabinet has regard for the draft statutory guidance in Appendix 6 and taking into account the matters set out in this Part 2 report and any Part 2 clarifications, reconfirms the decision on the 3-weekly collection frequency of residual waste collections made by Cabinet as per 7.5 and provides clear reasons for the decision. <p>Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday 9h July 2024 @ 7.30pm</p>	

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