

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



19 December 2025

Our Ref Overview and Scrutiny Committee 6
January 2026
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To: Members of the Committee: Councillors Claire Winchester (Chair), Jon Clayden (Vice-Chair), Tina Bhartwas, Sadie Billing, Cathy Brownjohn, David Chalmers, Elizabeth Dennis, Dominic Griffiths, Ralph Muncer, Martin Prescott, Paul Ward and Daniel Wright-Mason

Substitutes: Councillors Matt Barnes, Sam Collins, Sarah Lucas, Caroline McDonnell, Vijaiya Poopalasingham 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, 6TH JANUARY, 2026 AT 7.30 PM

Yours sincerely,

Isabelle Alajooz
Director – Governance

****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 - 11 NOVEMBER 2025 | To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 11 November 2025. | (Pages 5 - 16) |
| 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. CRIME AND DISORDER MATTERS
To receive an update from Hertfordshire Constabulary on crime against the LGBTQ+ Community and cybercrime against elderly residents in North Herts.

10. COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2025-26 (QUARTER 2 UPDATE) (Pages 17 - 58)
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES

This report presents progress on delivering the Council Delivery Plan for 2025-26.

11. INFORMATION NOTE: MUSEUM COLLECTION FACILITY UPDATE (Pages 59 - 66)
INFORMATION NOTE OF THE CULTURE AND FACILITIES SERVICE
MANAGER

An Information Note on the Museum Collection Facility Project in response to a request for a progress update.

12. EFFECTIVENESS OF COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME AND PROPOSALS FOR 2026/27 (Pages 67 - 86)
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – RESOURCES

This report sets out the context of Council Tax support provided by the Council and the proposed minor changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2026/27.

13. INFORMATION NOTE: COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW (Pages 87 - 90)
INFORMATION NOTE OF THE LICENSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
MANAGER

The purpose of this Information Note is to provide the committee with an overview of the work undertaken by the Community Safety Team.

14. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 91 - 104)
REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

This report highlights items scheduled in the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2025-26 civic year. It also includes items that have not yet been assigned to a specific meeting of the Committee.

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF
ON TUESDAY, 11TH NOVEMBER, 2025 AT 7.30 PM**

MINUTES

Present: Councillors: Claire Winchester (Chair), Jon Clayden (Vice-Chair), Sadie Billing, David Chalmers, Elizabeth Dennis, Ralph Muncer, Martin Prescott and Caroline McDonnell.

In Attendance: Robert Filby (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Sarah Kingsley (Director - Environment), James Lees (Climate Change and Sustainability Project Manager), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Jeanette Lowden (Shared Service Manager - Waste & Recycling), Jeevan Mann (Scrutiny Officer), Louise Randall (Leisure and Active Communities Manager) and Louise Symes (Strategic Planning and Projects Manager).

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

Councillor Amy Allen, as Executive Member for Environment, Councillor Val Bryant as Executive Member for Customer Experience, Councillor Donna Wright as Executive Member for Place, Mark Leahy as Regional Contract Manager for Everyone Active, and Illana Shaw as Divisional Head of Municipal Operations for Veolia, were in attendance.

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 37 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tina Bhartwas, Cathy Brownjoh, Dominic Griffiths, Paul Ward and Daniel Wright-Mason.

Having given due notice, Councillor Caroline McDonnell substituted for Councillor Ward.

26 MINUTES - 9 SEPTEMBER 2025

Audio Recording – 1 minute 53 seconds

Councillor Claire Winchester, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Jon Clayden seconded and, following a vote, it was:

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

27 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 35 seconds

There was no other business notified.

28 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 40 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 reminded Members of the adopted North Herts Scrutiny Charter and the need to ensure that the meeting was conducted with independence, initiative and integrity. The full Charter was available to Members via the Scrutiny Intranet pages.
- (5) The Chair advised of a change to the Agenda order and following Agenda Item 8, the remaining items would be considered in the following order: Agenda Item 11, Agenda Item 12, Agenda Item 10, Agenda Item 13 and Agenda Item 9.

29 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 4 minutes 19 seconds

There was no public participation at this meeting.

30 URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 26 seconds

No urgent or general exception items were received.

31 CALLED-IN ITEMS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 28 seconds

There have been no called-in items.

32 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Audio recording – 4 minutes 34 seconds

No questions had been submitted by Members.

33 INFORMATION NOTE: MOBILISATION OF WASTE, RECYCLING AND STREET CLEANSING CONTRACT

Audio recording – 4 minutes 40 seconds

Councillor Amy Allen, as Executive Member for Environment presented the Information Note entitled 'Mobilisation of Waste, Recycling and Street Cleansing Contract' and advised that:

- The report provided a focused overview of the new waste collection services and highlighted issues encountered, resolutions implemented and next steps.

- The new service had a strategic aim to reduce waste and increase recycling which early indicators had confirmed so far.
- Apologies were given to residents who had experienced disruptions from the initial service rollout due to route optimisation delays, missed collections, bin configurations and service frequency.
- System refinements, training and strengthened public communications had been administered to address these issues which included the launch of a new waste app.
- Next steps would focus on the stabilisation of service delivery, enhancement of service performance and monitoring of resident engagement to support long-term behaviour changes.
- Lessons learned from the new contract would inform future improvements.
- The Waste Team, Customer and Digital Services Team, Communications Team and Veolia had all been instrumental in the success of the service change.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor David Chalmers
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Caroline McDonnell
- Councillor Sadie Billing

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

- After operational problems were experienced with the merger of the narrow rounds across East Herts and North Herts, the decision was taken to split the rounds back to their original routes and recruit additional experienced crew members which generated some initial improvements.
- Information was also gathered from residents and Members on specific collection points to add to the Veolia account management system.
- Customer complaints regarding missed collections were forwarded directly to Veolia who generated tickets for their crews to follow up on the following day.
- Waste and recycling data shown in the report was for both East Herts and North Herts but this could be separated by district and provided after the meeting.
- Data trends looked positive so far, however, they would need to go through more data cycles to confirm this.
- Since the rollout, both food and carboard waste had increased in North Herts due to behavioural changes created by the new three-weekly collections.
- Seasonal changes in waste would be seen once the waste contract had been operational for at least a year.
- Comparisons could be made with garden waste and food waste last year as they were still collected bi-weekly and weekly respectively, however, it was acknowledged that weather variations between years would affect this data, particularly for garden waste.
- A further increase in food waste would be targeted through increased communications to residents before Christmas.
- Problems with street cleanliness in Barley would be addressed.
- Litter bin removals had been carried out across the district after an audit had taken place, however, a visit to Barley could be arranged to investigate litter bins.
- Missed litter bin collections in Letchworth could be due to personnel change or sickness but this issue would be investigated.
- Limited resources in the Waste Team had prevented them from updating communal bin labelling prior to the service change, however, additional staff members had been recruited to deliver revised communal leaflets and implement stickering.

- Veolia recently initiated a housing association forum in North and East Herts and there were plans to increase the uptake by holding the next meeting virtually.
- Veolia had a good relationship with Settle who distributed materials to residents on their behalf.
- Settle also held skip days for its residents which council officers endeavoured to attend.
- A Waste Communications Officer would progress communication with residents and housing associations once recruited.
- Collection problems from hybrid properties that consisted of both residential and commercial facilities had been resolved but if any further problems arose, Members should flag these to the Waste Team.
- Data mapping for the new bin deliveries was done in conjunction with Veolia and they were delivered to residents before the service change.
- All undelivered bins due to mismatched data had now been delivered but requests to replace damaged and lost bins were ongoing.
- Lessons learned from route nuances would be captured by the waste management system and help to advise any potential future service changes.
- Crews checked off whole roads when making collections except in the case of assisted collections and properties which were on the hotspot list and both required manual intervention.
- Unforeseen turnover of contract officers had overwhelmed the team slightly due to lost knowledge, however, remaining members of the Waste Team had been adaptable in their roles to support others when a refocus of priorities had been required.
- A new Contracts Manager would start in December and recruitment for a Service Performance and Projects Officer would begin imminently.
- The entire EV refuse vehicle fleet was anticipated to be operational by the end of December.
- Refuse vehicles using Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil were already in use.
- Call surges in March were due to the garden waste subscription renewal.
- The increased fraction of cardboard and food waste was being recycled.
- Shortages of bins and caddies had been experienced early into the service change, however, additional stock had since been purchased and distributed to residents.
- Once more data had been captured, it would be internally reviewed to measure the success of the service change.

In response to questions, the Divisional Head of Municipal Operations for Veolia advised that:

- Initially, support crews were drafted in to rectify missed collections but normal crews were switched onto this duty to build knowledge, create ownership and enforce accountability.
- Missed bins had not always been collected the next day at the start of the rollout, however, this had sometimes been due to issues beyond their control such as road closures.
- Residents should not be reluctant to make Veolia aware of issues as resolving them would help to deliver services that residents deserved.
- Where a change of this scale occurred, a lessons learned exercise would always be carried out.
- While there had been issues with the service change, there had been less than expected.
- They had not been able to utilise all staff from the previous waste services operator.
- Once the service change had stabilised, there would be more time to scrutinise data and implement changes where nuances had been picked up.
- False collection logging was a training issue and they actively addressed this through vehicle camera monitoring and retraining where applicable.

The Chair thanked Councillor Amy Allen and officers for their participation.

34 LEISURE AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES CONTRACT YEAR ONE OVERVIEW

Audio recording – 1 hour 4 minutes 1 second

Councillor Amy Allen, as Executive Member for Environment, presented the report entitled 'Leisure and Active Communities Contract Year One Overview' and advised that:

- The first year of the Leisure and Active Communities contract with Everyone Active had been successfully delivered.
- Initial challenges during mobilisation around booking systems and operational policies had been resolved as users had adapted to new procedures.
- Year one had seen substantial capital investment by both Everyone Active and the Council which included pool safety upgrades, gym refurbishments and facility improvements to ensure modern, customer-focused environments.
- Performance monitoring from year one would service as a data baseline, as data recorded by the previous operator was not directly comparable.
- Year two data would also be incomparable due to temporary closures resulting from decarbonisation works.
- £460,632 had been delivered in social value which signified 13.31% of progress to date.
- The Active Communities programme to promote physical activity inclusion and health improvements had been launched successfully.
- The new agency agreement effective May 2025 was expected to improve the VAT position of the Council and deliver £270,000 of surplus with no visible impact on services for customers.

The Regional Contract Manager for Everyone Active provided Members with a visual presentation of the services delivered in year one of the contract, between April 2024 to March 2025.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Sadie Billing
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor David Chalmers
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis

In response to questions, the Regional Contract Manager for Everyone Active advised that:

- Membership discounts based on geographical proximity to centres was not currently being considered.
- It would be impossible to offer free memberships to all those with disabilities, however, they would take comments on board about expanding their free membership scheme.
- 95% of their staff had worked for Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) previously, and anecdotal feedback from them indicated that facilities had been a lot busier than they had been under the previous contractor.
- Everyone Active were transparent on their decision making and data collection.
- Programmes were constantly reviewed to see what worked well.
- Marketing for their active communities programmes was significant, however, it was acknowledged that the best marketing came from word of mouth and referrals from friends.
- They were proactive when receiving customer complaints and engaged with the Council where necessary on these.

- Capacity of weekend sessions at North Herts Leisure Centre had been reduced due to limited access to changing facilities which had in turn helped to manage vehicle access while a portion of the car park had been closed for decarbonisation works.
- It was difficult to signpost residents to alternative swimming pools during closures, however, they managed several sports halls and diverted residents to those in Baldock, Stevenage and Central Bedfordshire where possible.
- Good communication had been maintained with regular hirers ahead of closures.
- Green travel plans were in place across all their sites.

In response to questions, the Director – Environment advised that:

- It would only be possible to compare individual metrics such as swim memberships with the data from SLL.
- The social value from the contract was monitored through the portal.
- The closure of changing facilities in the winter had not been ideal. However, the only alternative would have been to close pools completely which would have resulted in a significant loss of income and increased dissatisfaction from residents.
- It was accepted that some adults would not want to use pools during the changing room closure, however, it seemed that sessions for children had been largely unaffected.
- Once the changing facilities were reopened, they would push communications to encourage attendance at Family Fun sessions.

The Chair summarised discussions and outlined that the breadth of qualitative and quantitative data records should be retained by Everyone Active, and that concerns from residents should be listened to.

Councillor Jon Clayden proposed and Councillor Sadie Billing seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on the Leisure and Active Communities Contract performance for 2024/25.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to scrutinise year one of the Leisure and Active Communities contract.

35 NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DRAFT TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

Audio recording – 1 hour 58 minutes 12 seconds

Councillor Donna Wright, as Executive Member for Place presented the report entitled 'Draft Town Centres Strategy' and advised that:

- The adopted Local Plan 2011-2031 required the Council to prepare and maintain up-to-date town centre strategies to support their strategic policy approach and respond to any changes since the Local Plan evidence base was first prepared.
- Since the Local Plan adoption, online shopping had continued to increase, and pressures from the cost of living and COVID-19 pandemic had also impacted town centres.
- The Council wanted town centres in North Herts to be welcoming and vibrant for residents.
- An overarching Town Centres Strategy had been prepared with consultants from Lichfields as seen at Appendix A to the report.
- Moving to an overarching model instead of four distinct town centre strategies had saved officer resources and time which had helped the Council to manage speculative planning applications through the Local Plan review period.

- Cross-cutting planning-based thematic policies to guide development and key investment priorities tailored to the needs of each town centre had been identified within the strategy.
- The strategy would act as a bridge between the Local Plan and its future review and would also provide guidance for developers and planning officers when developing and determining planning applications.
- Key Priorities within the Council Plan would be supported through the strategy.
- Other Council strategies such as the Economic Development and Sustainability strategies as well as the Churchgate Shopping Centre Regeneration project would also be linked with the strategy.
- Proposals in the strategy would differ to those in the Local Plan which meant that it would be adopted as a material planning consideration for relevant planning applications rather than as a supplementary planning document.
- The strategy would also ensure that plans for town centres continued to be carried out through the Local Government Reorganisation process.
- The document had been divided into four sections with the third section focused on the strengths and weaknesses of each town centre and the fourth section on further actions that the Council could consider to effectively deliver the ambitions within the strategy.
- Formal consultation would also be carried out with key stakeholders and partners and feedback from this would shape a clear, action-focused delivery plan in the final version of the strategy which would be regularly reviewed and updated.
- Initial drafts of the strategy had been reviewed by the Strategic Planning Board and the Political Liaison Board had reviewed the final draft in October.
- Subject to Cabinet approval, the strategy would be issued for public consultation in late 2025 with the final version anticipated for presentation in early 2026.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor David Chalmers
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis

In response to questions, the Strategic Planning & Projects Manager advised that:

- As part of the Town Centre Retail Study review, a residential telephone survey was undertaken which also included businesses.
- Workshops were also carried out with key businesses and Business Improvement District (BID) Managers to inform the strengths and weaknesses of each town centre in addition to the key priorities.
- Key stakeholders and businesses would be consulted again as part of the wider public consultation.
- The number of businesses engaged, and the location of these, in the Retail Study would be provided after the meeting.
- The strategy would guide developers on development in town centres and allow them to use the evidence base outlined in the first section as justification for developments going forward.
- Consultants from Lichfields engaged with Royston First BID and the Chief Officer from Royston Town Council and they would continue to work with them to raise the profile of the consultation in Royston to encourage more feedback.
- The strategy aimed to address active travel while recognising vehicle use, however, it was acknowledged that modal shift to active travel would take time.
- They would work to implement measures such as the Walking and Infrastructure Plan to improve links within town centres and improve links between rural villages and town centres using S106 contributions and working with Hertfordshire County Council.

- Protection of Public Realm was referenced in the strategy through measures such as the promotion of community facilities.

In response to questions, Councillor Donna Wright advised that:

- Placemaker would be used in the consultation phase to enable readers to interact with the sections of the strategy that were of interest to them.
- New information was contained within the strategy rather than it being a summary of the sources cited within, particularly in the third section.
- Community and culture within the Public Realm were referenced in the strategy, however, if stakeholders felt that they needed enhancing, they would be able to express their views on this through the consultation.
- Parking in town centres would be looked into as part of the Parking Strategy review, particularly in Hitchin where they would investigate underutilised car parks as part of the Churchgate project.
- The glossary within the strategy was currently a draft and would be expanded over time.

Councillor Jon Clayden suggested that signposting on page 44 of the Draft Town Centres Strategy should be expanded, particularly for residents who might be interested in reading the document.

Councillor Martin Prescott noted that public transport was limited in the villages surrounding Royston, therefore, sufficient parking in the town centre was vital to attract residents and help town centre businesses, who would otherwise be impacted by larger businesses on the outskirts of the town where car parking was more available.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis noted that lessons could be learned from Baldock Town Centre which encouraged active travel over vehicle use and was successful with this despite having surrounding villages. It was also noted that the community use of Public Realm spaces in Baldock should be protected within the strategy.

The Chair summarised discussions and outlined that two concerns raised by Members were that the community and value aspects of retaining public realms in town centres was important in the strategy and that consideration should be given to travel to town centres, as well as parking in the centres.

Councillor Martin Prescott proposed and Councillor David Chalmers seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That the draft Town Centres Strategy (attached as Appendix A to this report) and its associated Appendices be endorsed and approved for public consultation.
- (2) That delegated authority is granted to the Director – Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Place to make any minor non-material corrections, including but not limited to cosmetic additions or presentational alterations, to the draft Town Centres Strategy as considered necessary for the public consultation.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) To allow the draft Town Centres Strategy to be progressed to public consultation so that it may be developed and eventually adopted as a material planning consideration to support developers, landowners and relevant stakeholders when considering developing proposals and to provide policy advice to development management officers when determining planning applications until superseded by any new Local Plan.

- (2) To set key priorities which seek to maintain and enhance the unique character and vitality and viability of the district's four town centres through agreed partnership working.
- (3) To reinforce and deliver the Council's ambitions as set out in the Council Plan (2024 - 2028).

36 SOLAR FOR BUSINESS SCHEME

Audio recording – 2 hours 32 minutes 3 seconds

Councillor Amy Allen, as Executive Member for Environment, presented the report entitled 'Solar for Business Project Closure Report' and advised that:

- The report provided an overview of the project closure and lessons learned from the Solar for Business pilot project.
- Despite efforts, it had not been possible to put legal agreements in place with any businesses to deliver solar installations on commercial premises.
- As detailed in paragraph 7 of the report, the scheme was modelled on a successful scheme operated by West Suffolk Council.
- Paragraphs 7.7 and 7.9 outlined the targeted outreach to large businesses and commercial premises with high electricity use.
- Interest was attracted from 22 businesses and 7 were shortlisted, however, some were removed due to short leases or lack of financial return for the Council.
- 3 businesses proceeded to negotiate, however, they withdrew due to reasons surrounding savings versus installation costs, the proposed lease and practical issues.
- After their withdrawal, the decision was taken to discontinue the pilot project and prioritise other projects with key climate actions instead.
- Paragraph 8 outlined delivery constraints of the scheme and lessons learned.
- One lesson learned was that businesses were more willing to invest directly in solar technology due to the falling price of solar panels.
- Feedback from the project was used to inform the Sustainable Communities Grant which was open to businesses and community groups.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor David Chalmers
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Sadie Billing

In response to questions, the Climate Change & Sustainability Project Manager advised that:

- Just over £8,000 of funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund had been spent on the project and the remaining funding had been reallocated to other projects since its closure.
- Officer time on the project had mainly been his, but officers from Legal, Policy & Strategy and Procurement had also spent time on the project.
- The scheme entailed the Council undertaking solar installations on the roofs of business premises in return for a reduced rate on electricity produced by the solar panels through a long-term power purchase agreement.
- Pricing and leases offered to businesses had been similar to those offered by West Suffolk Council and other authorities in the market.

- Template leases developed during the project had the potential to be used with in the future.
- Interest had not been expressed by any businesses that occupied council owned buildings, however, this could be revisited when tenancies were up for renewal.
- Economies of Scale might have been achieved through the bulk buying of solar panels if multiple businesses had signed up, however, they would have been achieved primarily through the installation on larger roofs, where the price per kilowatt installed would have been less.
- Great effort had been put into engagement with the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, Business Improvement Districts and business groups.
- A business target list had been built for the scheme using business rate lists and through communication with their Estates Team.
- Interest had been received from smaller businesses through the general release of the scheme, however, they were not deemed to be financially suitable for the scheme.
- Feedback from businesses who declined the scheme indicated that businesses were more interested in purchasing the solar panels directly, or through funding from grant schemes and other sources, which had been a contributing factor to the work undertaken on the Sustainable Communities Grant.
- Further work would undertaken to help businesses to reduce their emissions.

In response to questions, the Director – Environment advised that:

- The project closure was due to the inability to reach arrangements with suitable businesses that would generate sufficient financial return, as well as contribute towards their climate change goals.
- It was decided that officer time would be better spent on the delivery of other actions within the Sustainability Strategy, as they would have a greater impact.
- The Council had no regrets in piloting the scheme as they had gained valuable insights and limited their financial exposure before making any commitments.
- Business engagement would be looked at going forward to deliver wider sustainability goals across the district.
- The scheme had been managed in line with Council project management framework.
- Officer time spent on the scheme had been funded through existing budgets and had not been recorded as the Council did not record officer time in this way for any projects.

In response to questions, Councillor Amy Allen advised that lack of effort from officers had not been the reason behind the closure of the project.

Councillor Martin Prescott noted that business communication networks such as the Royston Chamber of Commerce existed and could have been utilised in the outreach phase to businesses. He also highlighted that 5-year asset leases for solar panels with reasonable payback terms existed and therefore businesses would have found the 25-year lease offered unattractive.

Councillor Jon Clayden proposed and Councillor Sadie Billing seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and noted the findings of the Solar for Business Project Closure Report (Appendix A).

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Committee to scrutinise the reasons for closure of the project.

37 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

Audio recording – 3 hours 7 minutes 54 seconds

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report entitled 'Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2025-26' and advised that:

- Work Programme updates were now published monthly in MIS and included a link to a work programme suggestion form.
- The item on Crime and Disorder Matters at the next meeting would focus on crime against the LGBTQ+ community and cybercrime against elderly residents.
- All Work Programme details could be found in Appendix A to the report.
- A Task and Finish Group meeting took place on 30 September with Senior Planning Officers to address questions regarding scope and S106 obligations.
- The consultation on developer contributions had been extended to 20 November to allow parish councils more time to respond.
- Another Task and Finish Group meeting would take place later in the week to identify themes from the responses in the consultation and to form next steps.
- There had been one open referral on the decisions and monitoring log which had been accepted by Cabinet at the meeting on 23 September.

The Chair outlined that an email had been circulated to all Members of the Council to draw their attention to the work programme suggestion form, through which Members could suggest items for scrutiny input.

Councillor Ralph Muncer noted the High Court Case with the Chief Constable of Northumbria Police and Northern Pride and suggested that Members should consider this in relation to the Crime and Disorder Matters item at the next meeting.

Councillor Sadie Billing proposed and Councillor Jon Clayden 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.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (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.
- (2) The need to observe Constitutional requirements and monitor the Forward Plan for appropriate items to scrutinise remains a key aspect of work programming.

The meeting closed at 10.13 pm

Chair

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 6 JANUARY 2026

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2025-26 (QUARTER 2 UPDATE)

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: RESOURCES

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / ACCESSIBLE SERVICES / RESPONSIBLE GROWTH / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents progress on delivering the Council Delivery Plan for 2025-26. This is a Quarter 2 update but generally reflects progress up to the point that this report was prepared (late November 2025). The report includes:

- For the projects identified by Cabinet, 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 Council's key performance indicators (KPIs).

Two projects have been completed (King George V Skate Park and Waste and Street Cleansing Contract) and associated risks have been managed to the target level. Five projects have an amber delivery status (Decarbonisation of Council Buildings - Phase 2, Digital Transformation, Oughtonhead Common Weir, Pay on Exit Parking, and Resident/Public EV Charging in our Car Parks). Four projects have a red risk status (Churchgate, Decarbonisation of Council Buildings - Phase 2, Leisure Centre Decarbonisation, and Local Plan review). The four over-arching Corporate Risks also have a red status. There are three KPIs that have a red status (two relating to Careline installations and one relating to CSC calls answered in 45 seconds).

This report also sets out plans for developing KPIs that align better to the objectives within our Council Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 2.1 Provide comment on the Council Delivery Plan Quarter 2 monitoring report, including the recommendation to be made to Cabinet i.e.:
 - That Cabinet notes progress against Council projects and performance indicators, as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A), and approves new milestones and changes to milestones.
- 2.2 Determine any project 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 Committee, 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.
- 4.2 In relation to adding new KPIs to better reflect delivery of the Council Plan, there would be an option to just retain the current KPIs and accept that they are primarily focused on delivery of core services.

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 2 update was provided to the Risk and Performance Management Group (RPMG) in November 2025. The Group has a standing invite to the Executive Member for Resources (has responsibility for performance monitoring), the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (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 the Q2 update. There were no specific issues raised by the Group.
- 5.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to provide comments on the current progress of the CDP, including recommendations to Cabinet.

5.4 In August 2025, proposals in relation to adding new KPIs to better reflect the Council Plan were discussed at the internal informal Political Liaison Board of the Executive and Leadership Team. The conclusion was that it would be desirable to have additional KPIs that helped describe the actions in the Council Plan. This was followed by a further discussion at the Political Liaison Board in December.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan dated 21 November 2025.

7. BACKGROUND

7.1 The CDP brings together projects, risks, and performance indicators in one document. The projects and performance indicators have been rolled forward from 2024/25 into the current year. There has been one project added (decarbonisation phase 2).

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Appendix A provides an update on the progress made in delivering the Council Delivery Plan 2025-26. Whilst it is labelled as a Quarter 2 update, it generally reflects the latest position at the time the report was written (late-November). 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 Five projects have an amber status, with the remaining seven having a green status, two of which have now been completed. Comments on the amber statuses are provided below, and as detailed in Appendix A, some of the projects with a green status also have proposals for changes to (yellow highlights) or new (blue highlights) project milestones.

| | |
|--|--|
| Decarbonisation of Council Buildings - Phase 2 | Amber status reflects that target dates for some milestones will not be confirmed until a quantity surveyor, designer, and architect have been appointed. |
| Digital Transformation | Amber status reflects a delay in the go live date for the new Safety Advisory Group (SAG) platform, which will now follow a feedback session with SAG scheduled for mid-January 2026. |
| Oughtonhead Common Weir | Amber status reflects delays to previously reported milestone dates and that we are awaiting a further update from HCC's Countryside Management Service on revised project timings. |
| Pay on Exit Parking | Amber status reflects a delay confirming requirements for an updated TRO for Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre and concerns with the quality of installed parking signage. However, the project is still expected to be completed within the Capital funding period. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Resident/Public EV Charging in our Car Parks | Amber status reflects delays commissioning new charging points due to the need to obtain required third party wayleave agreements and lead in times for required Distribution Network Operator works. |
|--|---|

8.3 Our performance indicators reflect the overall performance of the Council. Performance levels are rated as either green (achieving or exceeding the target), amber (not achieving the target level and look to take action to get back on track) or red (urgent action needed to get back to target). For this report:

- 5 indicators are rated green.
- 6 indicators are rated amber.
- 3 indicators are rated red.
- 9 indicators do not have a target.

8.4 For performance indicators rated red, the following actions are being taken:

Careline Installations: Although year-to-date performance remains below target, we have seen a marked improvement over recent months. In September 2025, Careline achieved 89.2% of installations within 5 working days (only 0.8% below the 90% target) and in October 2025, performance improved to 90.1% (exceeding the target by 0.1%). Key factors behind current performance of both KPIs are workforce constraints (redeployment and recruitment efforts are mitigating this), and training and development of new staff (training programmes are progressing well, and efficiency is improving). Positive indicators are that despite the challenges, the upward trend demonstrates that corrective actions are working and that year-to-date performance against the 10 working days KPI remains high despite performance issues earlier in the year. We are currently ensuring that almost all installations are completed within 10 working days. Next steps will be to continue monitoring client availability issues and explore proactive contact strategies, maintain focus on staff training and onboarding to accelerate productivity, and ongoing recruitment.

Call Answering: There have been several key factors influencing performance during the first half of 2025-26. The Customer Service Centre (CSC) has experienced ongoing staffing challenges, and temporary staff were brought in to help manage contacts. Alongside this, the CSC has had increased call demand due to seasonal peaks and service changes. Notably, the annual Council Tax billing period combined with the garden waste resubscription period in March/April 2025 followed by the introduction of new Waste services in August/September 2025, significantly increased call and email volumes. In terms of mitigation and improvement action, we have had ongoing campaigns to fill vacancies and retain temporary staff in order to stabilise the workforce. Fast track training has been implemented to get any new starters or temporary staff up to speed as soon as possible. The Council's new AI telephony system is helping to promote self-service options on our website, and the chatbot is receiving good usage since its implementation earlier this year. As we moved through the first half of the year, the percentage of calls answered improved, but meeting the 45-second target remains challenging, with continued focus on resourcing, training, and digital channel adoption expected to deliver improvements in the coming months.

8.5 As can be seen in Appendix A, there is no 2025-26 data for the previously reported KPI entitled 'Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of domestic household waste'. Officers are working with Veolia on contract data, but currently the only missed collections data available to us from the start of the new contract relates to the contract as a whole, covering both East and North Herts:

| | Apr 25 | May 25 | Jun 25 | Jul 25 | Aug 25 | Sep 25 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Missed collections per 100,000 lifts (per month) | | 40 | 79 | 72 | 317 | 236 |

8.6 There are 12 risk entries linked to specific projects and four over-arching corporate risks. For this report:

- 4 risks are assessed low risk (green).
- 4 risks are assessed medium risk (amber).
- 8 risks are assessed high risk (red).

8.7 As referenced in the 2024-25-year-end CDP report, the Council's Corporate Peer Challenge report included recommendations around better linking KPIs to the Council Plan. An Internal Audit report then provided some benchmarking as to how this could be achieved. A summary was then considered by the informal Political Liaison Board in August, and it was recommended that KPIs be developed that reflect the outcomes achieved by the Council Plan. Following further discussion, the KPIs detailed in Table 1 below are proposed to be added to future monitoring. These were developed by reviewing the Council Plan for specific actions and then considering whether there was something that could be measured. It was also considered whether there was likely to be sufficient variation in that measure, the extent to which Council actions would have a direct impact, and how much work it would be to measure. Most of the results are input or output measures, but over time we will look at how we can develop more outcome-based measures. Initially, there are no targets set, but these will also be reviewed. Some of the measures may be changed slightly if it is found that a similar measure provides a better view of performance or is easier to measure. Some are ones that we measure already (and these ones may have a target), but this confirms the link to the Council Plan action.

Table 1

| KPI | Council Plan Priority | Detailed Council Plan Link | Executive Member | Frequency of Measuring |
|--|-----------------------|--|------------------|------------------------|
| Leisure Centre Visits | Thriving Communities | "we support our communities to improve their health and wellbeing" | Environment | Monthly |
| Measure linked to Active Communities (number of users) | Thriving Communities | "we support our communities to improve their health and wellbeing"/ "deliver physical activities for beginners, older age groups, and those who are less active" | Environment | Quarterly |

| KPI | Council Plan Priority | Detailed Council Plan Link | Executive Member | Frequency of Measuring |
|--|------------------------------|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Value of community grants awarded (£) | Thriving Communities | “support local groups who provide important services to our residents”/ “Continue to allocate grant funding to local groups who provide important services and activities for our residents and enable our communities to thrive” | Governance | Quarterly |
| Environmental Health – number of food premises inspected | Thriving Communities | “Protect our communities from environmental and noise hazards and ensure that restaurants and hospitality venues in the district are hygienic and safe” | Regulatory | Quarterly |
| Environmental Health – number of noise complaints responded to/ number or percentage upheld | Thriving Communities | “Protect our communities from environmental and noise hazards and ensure that restaurants and hospitality venues in the district are hygienic and safe” | Regulatory | Quarterly |
| Number of people responding to consultations | Thriving Communities | “support local people to have a say in the future of where they live and on the issues that matter locally” | Customers | Annually |
| Landlords signed up to Good Landlords Charter | Thriving Communities | “Develop and launch a Good Landlords Charter to encourage landlords to voluntarily commit to higher standards than are currently required by law” | Regulatory | Quarterly |
| Percentage of (primary) schools subscribed to the museum loan service | Thriving Communities | “loaning objects and archives to schools and digitising our archives so the wider museum collection is accessible to the community” | Enterprise | Annually |
| Current CSC measures | Accessible Services | “We want to make sure that our services are accessible to everyone and easy to use” | Customers | Monthly/ Quarterly |
| Staff Turnover | Accessible Services | “look at ways to improve recruitment and retention, making sure North Herts Council is an excellent place to work” | Resources | Quarterly |
| Number of new properties built/ growth in properties paying Council Tax/ number of new homes granted planning permission | Responsible Growth | “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”/ “deliver more sustainable growth” | Place | Annually |

| KPI | Council Plan Priority | Detailed Council Plan Link | Executive Member | Frequency of Measuring |
|---|------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Section 106 spend – value returned to developers (zero target) | Responsible Growth | “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”/ “deliver more sustainable growth” | Place | Annually |
| Carbon emissions | Sustainability | “sets out our approach to reducing carbon emissions”/ “Reducing our contribution to climate change” | Environment | Annually |
| Number (number of BNG units) of Council- approved habitat banks in the district | Sustainability | “supporting the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain” | Place | Annually |
| Number of electric vehicle charge points (in Council car parks and through HCC partnership) | Sustainability | “More electric vehicle charge points, making it easier for residents to access chargers in our town centres and to switch to an electric vehicle” | Place | Annually |

8.8 The CDP 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 resources are available to deliver them. Projects will be removed when they are completed, or if they are no longer a priority. Cabinet (following prior review by Overview and Scrutiny Committee) will be asked to approve any changes to milestones. An initial meeting of the Project Board for the new museum collection facility project was held in September 2025, and this project will be added to the CDP in time for the next monitoring report.

8.9 Overview and Scrutiny Committee can ask for more detail on any of the CDP projects. This 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.

8.10 Access to Ideagen

All the detail behind the projects, risks and performance indicators is available to view in Ideagen, the Council's performance and risk system. 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 Committee 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 areas. To consider risk 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.
- 9.4 It is worth noting that a robust and measurable delivery plan is an important tool for the Council to fulfil the 'best value' requirement set out in Section 3 of the Local Government Act. The Act requires authorities, including the Council, to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness." Monitoring reports to Members and actions arising from those reports will ensure discharge of this statutory responsibility.

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 CDP 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 CDP helps 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 2025-26 Q2 Monitoring Report

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 17.1 Ian Couper, Director - Resources
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- 17.2 Tim Everitt, Performance and Risk Officer
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- 17.4 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy and Community Manager
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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 None

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Council Delivery Plan – Status Key

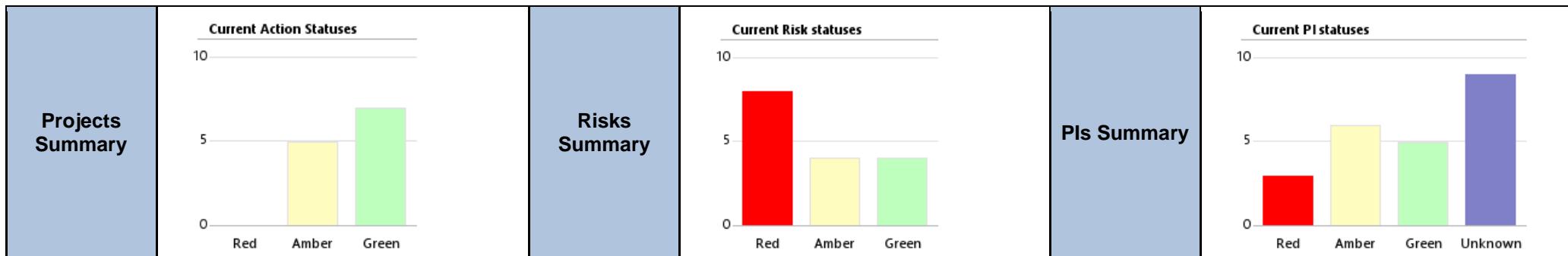
| Status | Description |
|-----------------|---|
| Projects | |
| | The project (and all recorded milestones) has been completed. |
| | All ongoing milestones have not reached their due dates (or do not have due dates). |
| | There is at least one ongoing milestone that has not been completed by the 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. |

Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 Q2 Monitoring Report – Project Statuses



| Project | Status | Risk Level |
|--|--------|------------|
| Decarbonisation of Council Buildings - Phase 2 | 🟡 | 🔴 |
| Digital Transformation | 🟡 | 🟡 |
| Oughtonhead Common Weir | 🟡 | 🟢 |
| Pay on Exit Parking | 🟡 | 🟢 |
| Resident/Public EV Charging in our Car Parks | 🟡 | 🟡 |
| Churchgate | 🟢 | 🔴 |
| Engaging the community on our finances | 🟢 | 🟡 |
| Leisure Centre Decarbonisation | 🟢 | 🔴 |
| Local Plan Review | 🟢 | 🔴 |
| Town Centres Strategy | 🟢 | 🟡 |
| King George V Skate Park | 🟢 | 🟢 |
| Waste and Street Cleansing Contract | 🟢 | 🟢 |

Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 Q2 Monitoring Report - Status Summaries



Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 Q2 Monitoring Report - Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

| KPI | Latest Update | Current Value | Current Target | Status | Trend (Compared with the same time last year) | 2025/26 Target |
|---|----------------|-----------------------|----------------|---|---|----------------|
| Percentage of council tax collected in year | September 2025 | 54.26% (year to date) | 55% |  |  (55.33%) | 97% |
| Percentage of NNDR collected in year | September 2025 | 53.81% (year to date) | 54.5% |  |  (54.95%) | 96% |
| Council's Scope 1-3 emissions (tonnes CO2e) | 2023/24 | 3,197.13 | N/A Data Only |  |  (3,168.30) | N/A Data Only |
| Number of Stage 1 complaints | Q2 2025/26 | 125 (year to date) | N/A Data Only |  |  (106) | N/A Data Only |

| KPI | Latest Update | Current Value | Current Target | Status | Trend (Compared with the same time last year) | 2025/26 Target |
|--|----------------|------------------------|----------------|--------|---|----------------|
| Percentage of Stage 1 complaints resolved within 10 working days | Q2 2025/26 | 72% (year to date) | 80% | | (95%) | 80% |
| Percentage of Stage 2 complaints resolved within 20 working days | Q2 2025/26 | 77% (year to date) | 70% | | (71%) | 70% |
| Total number of alarm calls in a given period | October 2025 | 217,485 (year to date) | N/A Data Only | | (222,670) | N/A Data Only |
| Rolling number of Careline service users supported under the HCC contract | September 2025 | 7,110 | N/A Data Only | | (6,905) | N/A Data Only |
| Percentage of Careline installations completed within 5 working days | October 2025 | 78.9% (year to date) | 90% | | (New KPI from January 2025) | 90% |
| Percentage of Careline installations completed within 10 working days | October 2025 | 97.8% (year to date) | 100% | | (New KPI from January 2025) | 100% |
| Percentage of CSC calls answered | Q2 2025/26 | 84% (year to date) | 90% | | (95%) | 90% |
| Percentage of CSC calls answered within 45 seconds | Q2 2025/26 | 51% (year to date) | 80% | | (68%) | 80% |
| Sign-ups to the Digital Budget Hub | Q2 2025/26 | 688 | N/A Data Only | | (235) | N/A Data Only |
| Average number of penalty points awarded per Grounds Maintenance contract monitoring inspection. (Lower numbers are good.) | September 2025 | 2.2 (year to date) | N/A Data Only | | (5.71) | N/A Data Only |

| KPI | Latest Update | Current Value | Current Target | Status | Trend (Compared with the same time last year) | 2025/26 Target |
|---|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------|---|------------------------|
| Working days lost due to short-term sickness absence in the last 12 months per FTE employee | September 2025 | 4.29 | 4.00 | | (4.54) | Not Measured for Years |
| Working days lost due to long-term sickness absence in the last 12 months per FTE employee | September 2025 | 3.47 | N/A Data Only | | (4.73) | N/A Data Only |
| Staff turnover - rolling 12-month percentage | September 2025 | 8.64% | 15% | | (8.68) | Not Measured for Years |
| Percentage of advertised vacancies filled in first round | Q2 2025/26 | 86.4% (year to date) | 75% | | (75.8%) | 75% |
| Number of visits to leisure facilities | October 2025 | 1,018,051 (year to date) | N/A Data Only | | (1,000,591) | N/A Data Only |
| Percentage of all planning applications determined within the relevant statutory or agreed time periods | Q2 2025/26 | 83.78% (year to date) | 80% | | (87.23%) | 80% |
| Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting | Q2 2025/26 | *58.96% (year to date) | 60% | | (59.92%) | 59% |
| Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of domestic household waste | March 2025 | 47 (year to date) | N/A Data Only | | (60) | N/A Data Only |
| Performance against revenue budget (projection against original budget) | Q2 2025/26 | -1.1% (year to date) | 0% | | (-5.9%) | 0% |

* Data is provisional and may be subject to change when finalised.

Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 Q2 Monitoring Report - Projects / Risks

| | | | | | |
|--|---|-----------------|---|----------------------|-------------|
|  | Decarbonisation of Council Buildings - Phase 2 | | | | |
| Council Plan Objective | Sustainability (2024-28) | Due Date | 31-Mar-2028 | Original Date | 31-Mar-2028 |
| Project Summary | Finalise plans and complete works to decarbonise a further four Council buildings - Hitchin Town Hall, North Herts Museum, District Council Offices, and the learner pool at North Herts Leisure Centre. 2025/26 is a planning year, with works commencing in 2026/27 and due to complete by 31 March 2028. Current milestones only relate to the planning year 2025/26. | | | | |
| Latest Update | 18-Nov-2025 2025/26 is a planning year, with works commencing in 2026/27 and due to complete by 31 March 2028. Funding for the project has been secured via the Capital Programme 2025-35 and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (Phase 4) funding. A Project Board has been established, and the project is moving forward. In September 2025, Cabinet approved additional funding to appoint a quantity surveyor and principal designer, whose services were not covered by the existing project budget. In early November 2025, CPW (MEP engineers) provided an updated feasibility study and Varsity Consulting (quantity surveyors) provided related costings. On 13 November 2025, these were presented to Project Board, and a decision was made on the preferred delivery route. This includes formally appointing a quantity surveyor, principal designer, and architect for the duration of the project. Precise timings for securing these services are still to be confirmed, although we currently anticipate this being possible by the end of January 2026. Subsequent milestones and timings will be confirmed following the three appointments. We continue to update Salix on progress via quarterly monitoring reports. At this planning stage, there is still a degree of uncertainty associated with many aspects of the project and the overall risk level is assessed as high. However, governance arrangements in place and further activities planned for the remainder of the year aim to mitigate associated risks and reduce the currently assessed risk level. | | | | |
| Milestone | Due Date | Complete | Note | | |
| Full Council approve NHC capital budget to deliver project. | 27-Feb-2025 | Yes | On 27 February 2025, Full Council approved a capital budget of £1.98m as part of the Capital Programme 2025-35. | | |
| Salix funding secured. | 30-Apr-2025 | Yes | In April 2025, Salix awarded the Council £1.17m of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (Phase 4) funding. At this time, the estimated total project cost was £3.15m. | | |
| Commence engagement with officers delivering the Leisure Centre Decarbonisation project. | 21-May-2025 | Yes | We have commenced discussions with the project team delivering the Leisure Centre Decarbonisation project to share internal lessons learned and help inform our approach to managing this Phase 2 project. | | |
| Submit first Salix monitoring report. | 13-Jun-2025 | Yes | We have submitted our first monitoring report to Salix and have met our Salix relationship manager. | | |
| Project Board established. | 17-Jun-2025 | Yes | | | |
| Appoint Quantity Surveyor to review initial feasibility study. | 15-Jul-2025 | Yes | We have appointed Varsity Consulting (who provide QS support to the Leisure Centre Decarbonisation project) to review the initial feasibility study. | | |
| Feasibility study received from Willmott Dixon Construction Ltd. | 01-Aug-2025 | Yes | We appointed WDC (the contractor who assisted us with our funding application) to conduct a feasibility assessment. The aim was for this to help us validate the original funding submission, revise/update overall costs, update the project programme, revise cash flow in line with total project value and Salix submission, update anticipated running costs, review planning options, and provide options for procurement of solutions. | | |
| Technical presentation of feasibility study by WDC. | 13-Aug-2025 | Yes | | | |
| Initial meeting with Varsity Consulting to discuss options to take forward to Project Board. | 15-Aug-2025 | Yes | Initial meeting held. | | |

| Project Board to agree a preferred procurement option for delivering the pre-construction phase. | 08-Sep-2025 | Yes | Project Board meeting took place, but no decision was made on a preferred procurement option. Following advice from Varsity Consulting, an additional feasibility study was requested. | |
|---|-------------|----------------|--|--------------|
| Cabinet report seeking funding approval for appointing a Principal Designer and a Quantity Surveyor for the full project. | 23-Sep-2025 | Yes | Services provided by Quantity Surveyor and Principal Designer are not covered by existing project budget. Cabinet approved the additional funding via the first quarter Capital Budget Monitoring Review 2025/26 report. | |
| Pre-construction Service Agreement signed. | 26-Sep-2025 | No | Due date to be removed. New target date to be confirmed following the appointment of a quantity surveyor, designer, and architect, and the development of subsequent project plans and timings. | |
| New Milestone - CPW to provide updated feasibility study and Varsity Consulting to provide related costings. | 04-Nov-2025 | Yes | New milestone. Requested by Project Board on 8 September 2025. | |
| New Milestone - Project Board decision on a preferred delivery route. | 13-Nov-2025 | Yes | New milestone. | |
| Surveys of the four buildings completed. | 04-Dec-2025 | No | Due date to be removed. New target date to be confirmed following the appointment of a quantity surveyor, designer, and architect, and the development of subsequent project plans and timings. | |
| Design phase commences. | 05-Dec-2025 | No | Due date to be removed. New target date to be confirmed following the appointment of a quantity surveyor, designer, and architect, and the development of subsequent project plans and timings. | |
| Confirm to Salix that we intend to proceed with the project into the first delivery year, in line with funding conditions. | 16-Jan-2026 | No | Due date to change to 31 January 2026. Aligns with Salix timetable. | |
| New Milestone - Appoint quantity surveyor, designer, and architect to help deliver project. | 31-Jan-2026 | No | New milestone. On 13 November 2025, Project Board approved the project approach and the appointment of a quantity surveyor, designer, and architect to assist with the delivery of the project. Although precise timings for securing these services are still to be confirmed, we currently anticipate this being possible by the end of January 2026. | |
| Risks | Risk Level | Original Score | Current Score | Target Score |
| Key Risks: - NHC responsible for funding all project costs beyond agreed grant funding. - Failure to deliver project in line with agreed grant conditions leads to loss of grant funding - grant spend scheduled for 2026/27 and 2027/28. - Delays obtaining required Distribution Network Operator/Planning approvals lead to delays in commissioning/completing project works. - Failure to obtain planning permission - particular risk for Hitchin Town Hall as it is a listed building. - Unforeseen detailed survey findings require changes to project specifications and lead to additional financial costs e.g., identification of asbestos. | | 7 | 7 | 5 |

|  | Digital Transformation | | | | |
|---|--|----------|--|---------------|-------------|
| Council Plan Objective | Accessible Services (2024-28) | Due Date | 31-Janc-2026 | 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 for the short-term. | | | | |
| Latest Update | 08-Dec-2025 The new Grants database is live and was officially launched in November 2025. The Digital Services team delivered a Safety Advisory Group (SAG) platform for testing in early October 2025, which was then subject to wider testing by NHC teams and external partners. Digital Services are currently working through the feedback received and updates will be completed before Christmas 2025. However, due to limited availability over the festive period, a feedback session with SAG is not scheduled until the week commencing 12 January 2026. We do not anticipate many changes after this session, so now expect the new platform to go live by the end of January 2026. We are currently undertaking finance system integrations for both Waste and Grants process automations, which are expected to be completed by the end of 2025. We are also planning CRM/Tascomi integrations for a number of regulatory services, although the timing of these is still to be confirmed. The Oversight Group has decided to place the Burials application project on hold, pending further information on Local Government Reorganisation. This has been communicated to the NHC Burials team who in the meantime will continue to use existing processes and the in-house database. In general, key risks to the programme are the availability of sufficient resources and Local Government Reorganisation creating general uncertainty across the organisation. | | | | |
| 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 | Yes | The Azure tenancy is ready to go and can facilitate single sign on for customers to sign in via MyAccount or for staff to sign into any applications created. | | |
| Commence development of waste services processes and preparations for integration with new contractors' software. | 01-Oct-2024 | Yes | Work commenced, with plans agreed with Veolia. | | |
| Hitchin Town Hall booking system developed. | 31-Oct-2024 | Yes | The Hitchin Town Hall application has been completed and handed over. | | |
| Waste Services - integrations with contractors' software. | 30-Jun-2025 | Yes | Completed on 7 August 2025. There was a slight delay fully integrating with Veolia systems, caused by late access to Veolia's ECHO system/data (April 2025) and delays clarifying specific data requirements. This delay did not have any impact from a customer perspective. | | |
| Waste Services - project delivery. | 30-Jun-2025 | Yes | High priority waste services processes were available for the start of the contract, with lower priority/frequency processes completed and delivered by 7 August 2025. Potentially, there is one additional form, Waste Issues, which may not go live until 14 August 2025. This form is to file a complaint to Veolia e.g., if property is damaged during collection, but there is currently an alternative way for Customer Services to do this so any delay will have no impact on the customer experience. Therefore, the milestone is complete, albeit with the potential for some minor ongoing optimisations. | | |
| Development and delivery of Trade Waste processes. | 07-Aug-2025 | Yes | This work is outside of the scope of the original Waste Services project. The majority of Trade Waste processes went live on 7 August 2025 when we implemented the weekly system updates. There is a small part still outstanding due to needing process clarity, but the rest are now live. There is minimal impact from this outstanding item and the milestone is considered complete, albeit with some minor ongoing optimisations. | | |

| Safety Advisory Group (SAG) platform. | 31-Aug-2025 | No | Due date to change to 31 January 2026. The Digital Services team delivered a platform for testing in early October 2025, which was then subject to wider testing by NHC teams and external partners. Digital Services are currently working through the feedback received and updates will be completed before Christmas. However, due to limited availability over the festive period, a feedback session with SAG is not scheduled until the week commencing 12 January 2026. We do not anticipate many changes after this session, so now expect the new platform to go live by the end of January 2026. | |
|---|---|----------------|--|--------------|
| Development and delivery of a Grants database. | 28-Nov-2025 | Yes | Database is now live, and was officially launched on 24 November 2025. | |
| Develop and deliver a Burials application. | 31-Dec-2025 | No | Due date to be removed. Oversight Group decided to place this project on hold, pending further information on Local Government Reorganisation. This has been communicated to the NHC Burials team who in the meantime will continue to use existing processes and the in-house database. | |
| New Milestone - TechnologyOne integrations: Waste and Grants process automations. | 31-Dec-2025 | No | New milestone. | |
| New Milestone - CRM/Tascomi integrations - Regulatory services. | | No | New milestone. Timings still to be determined. | |
| 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. Delays in receiving required responses from the new waste contractor. 4. Amount of data needing to be imported to the burials application and our ability to do this within the constraints of the project schedule (project on hold - risk only relevant if project goes ahead). 5. Local Government Reorganisation creates uncertainty around the delivery of the wider programme. |  | 6 | 6 | 3 |

| | | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|---|----------------------|-------------|
|  | Oughtonhead Common Weir | | | | |
| Council Plan Objective | Sustainability (2024-28) | Due Date | 30-Nov-2026 | Original Date | 30-Sep-2024 |
| Project Summary | Complete works to rectify the collapsed weir. | | | | |
| Latest Update | 17-Nov-2025 Currently, we are awaiting a further update from HCC's Countryside Management Service (CMS) regarding revised project plans and timings. The start of the procurement process has been delayed due to a need to clarify requirements for a review of revised designs by the Environment Agency's National Fish Pass Advisory Panel. This has also delayed the submitting of designs for Ordinary Watercourse Consent. In addition to our weir project, the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust has also developed a separate project for habitat enhancements along the River Oughton more widely. These designs have been through the consenting process, although funding hasn't been secured yet. NHC/CMS have recently been approached by Affinity Water, who are potentially interested in helping progress this wider work and are looking for projects to support on the River Oughton, as they are about to re-start abstraction from the aquifer. Initial thoughts are that it makes sense to try and combine both projects, which would help deliver the greatest benefits for nature, as well as maximise efficiency in procurement/project management etc. CMS have sent relevant documentation to Affinity Water for review and are currently awaiting a response from them on the best way to proceed. The detailed designs for the weir project included a Buildability Statement, which outlined delivery options. This suggested an optimal timing of late summer/early autumn, when breeding bird season will have finished, ground conditions should be most favourable, and river levels will be at their lowest, all of which should create the best conditions for delivery. Therefore, although precise details are still to be confirmed, we are now looking at late summer/early autumn 2026 for delivery of the project. This should allow sufficient time for designs to be confirmed with the Environment Agency and to explore opportunities for delivering the two River Oughton projects together. All Hitchin Members have been kept up to date on the situation and once project details have been confirmed, public communications throughout the procurement process and delivery phase will be key to managing stakeholder expectations and potential reputational risks associated with delays. The impact of a delay in completing the project is still assessed as low, as any further deterioration of the existing weir is unlikely to result in significant environmental damage, with water quality actually improving since the damage to the existing weir occurred. | | | | |
| Task | Due Date | Complete | Note | | |
| 01. Conduct the further modelling requested by the Environment Agency. | 31-Aug-2024 | Yes | Cost of completing further modelling circa £3k. | | |
| 02. Obtain required Environment Agency permits. | 31-Dec-2024 | Yes | Permits obtained in December 2024. | | |
| 03. Commence tender process for undertaking required works. | 19-Sep-2025 | No | Revised due date to be confirmed. Awaiting update from CMS regarding revised project timings. Following production of revised designs, these were shared with the Environment Agency (EA) who requested the designs be reviewed by their National Fish Pass Advisory Panel. We had not initially anticipated needing to do this, and following discussions with the designers, some additional data collection may now be required to satisfy this review. A meeting is due to be scheduled with the EA and the designers to clarify what may be required. This has delayed the submitting of the designs for Ordinary Watercourse Consent and the start of the procurement process. | | |
| 04. Appoint contractor(s) to undertake required works. | 14-Nov-2025 | No | Revised due date to be confirmed. Awaiting update from CMS regarding revised project timings. CMS have confirmed the details are likely to be complex and so expect a six-week period for the tender to be open to allow sufficient time for contractors to put their returns together, followed by a two-week period for evaluating and scoring returns. Therefore, the procurement process is expected to last for approximately two months. | | |
| 05. Successful contractor confirms project plan and timings. | | No | Due date to be confirmed. Will be confirmed following contract award. | | |
| 06. Undertake further communication with the public regarding plans. | | No | Due date to be confirmed. Will take place once contract awarded and plans have been finalised. | | |

| 07. Commence work on-site. | | No | Due date to be confirmed. Will be confirmed when successful contractor confirms project plan and timings. | |
|--|---|----------------|--|--------------|
| 08. Works on-site completed. | | No | Due date to be confirmed. Will be confirmed when successful contractor confirms project plan and timings. | |
| Risks | Risk Level | Original Score | Current Score | Target Score |
| Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External funding from HCC, EA and residents is not available leading to full allocated Capital budget being used (currently assessed as low risk in view of reduced work now being required and possible new funding stream from Affinity Water). - Existing situation deteriorates prior to any works being undertaken requiring further urgent temporary solutions to manage an immediate changing situation (currently assessed as low risk). - Failure to obtain planning permission (no longer a risk). - Failure to obtain Environment Agency (fish pass approval) and HCC (ordinary watercourse consent) approval/consent (currently assessed as low risk). - Lack of contractor appetite to undertake works prolongs procurement process and delays project delivery (prior to tender process, assessed as relatively low risk). - Without confirmed plans for the procurement process and project delivery, there is a risk that the project will not be completed in line with current stakeholder expectations (currently assessed as low risk, although delivery now likely to be in summer/autumn 2026). |  | 4 | 2 | 1 |

| Pay on Exit Parking | | | | | |
|------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|---|-------------|
| Council Plan Objective | Accessible Services (2024-28) | 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 town centre car parks. Capital budget approved to deliver the project over two years - 2024/25 and 2025/26. | | | | |
| Latest Update | 05-Nov-2025 The Norton Common TRO has been updated (delegated decision notified 27 June 2025). However, there has been a delay with Leisure/Everyone Active confirming the requirements for the updated TRO for Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre. Therefore, now expect the updated TRO to be effective by the end of March 2026 at the latest, which allows a reasonable amount of time to agree requirements and progress the necessary arrangements. As subsequent works at both car parks are dependent on the completion of both TROs, this is now also expected to be completed by the end of March 2026. From a scheduling and resource perspective, it is preferable for installation works at both car parks to be undertaken at a similar time. The installation of all new tariff boards has also been pushed back to the end of the initial Capital funding period (March 2026). We are currently in discussions with the contractor regarding the quality of installed parking signage and this needs to be resolved before we are happy to proceed with the installation of new tariff boards. However, work has commenced on design and wording. Should a change in tariff board provider be required, there is a risk that tariff boards will not be installed until after the revised target date. However, currently, we anticipate all works relating to this project being completed by the end of March 2026. As with the introduction of any new technology, the Council and users have experienced a number of issues associated with the new machines and payment options, including network connectivity issues at some car parks. These issues have settled down over recent months and we have continued to work with the contractor to address connectivity issues and agree arrangements for monitoring income lost associated with these. Investigations continue at the two Portmill Lane car parks and dependent on the success of potential remedies, there is a risk that the parking machines will need to be moved to fully resolve connectivity issues. The Parking Team continue to work tirelessly to respond to and resolve users' issues, which has been key to managing the possible reputational risks associated with a negative public reaction to the changes. Despite the teething problems experienced, the majority of users have successfully continued to pay for parking. | | | | |
| Phase | Task | Due Date | Complete | Note | |
| Procurement | Procure supplier to replace tariff boards. | 30-Aug-2024 | Yes | Procurement complete. Supplier appointed on 2 September 2024. | |
| Implementation | Draft implementation programme received from contractor. | 30-Nov-2024 | Yes | | |
| Implementation | Full implementation programme agreed with contractor. | 31-Dec-2024 | Yes | Full implementation programme agreed in December 2024 with some minor modifications finally agreed early February 2025. Installation of new parking machines scheduled to start mid-February 2025. | |
| Implementation | Commence installation of new parking machines on a town-by-town basis, along with new entrance/information signage. | 17-Feb-2025 | Yes | Rollout commenced in Hitchin. | |
| Implementation | Update TROs. | 18-Feb-2025 | Yes | The majority of updated TROs became effective on 18 February 2025. Updated TROs introduced alternative methods of payment, virtual permits and season tickets, and reviewed the definitions and length of stay for electric vehicle parking bays within the Council's car parks. | |
| Implementation | Complete installation of new parking machines and new entrance/information signage. | 31-Mar-2025 | Yes | Works on site completed. However, as with the introduction of any new technology, the Council and users have experienced a number of issues associated with the new machines and payment options, including network connectivity issues at some car parks. Officers are working hard with the contractor to address these issues. | |

| Installation of new tariff boards completed. | 31-Oct-2025 | No | Due date to change to 31 March 2026. This milestone has been pushed back to the end of the Capital funding period. We are currently in discussions with the contractor regarding the quality of installed parking signage and this needs to be resolved before we are happy to proceed with the installation of new tariff boards. However, work has commenced on design and wording. Should a change in tariff board provider be required, this is likely to further impact the due date. | |
|--|---|----------------|---|--------------|
| Complete installation of new parking machines and signage at Norton Common and Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre car parks. | 28-Nov-2025 | No | Due date to change to 31 March 2026. This action is dependent on the completion of the new TRO for Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre. From a scheduling and resource perspective, it is preferable for installation works at both car parks to be undertaken at a similar time. | |
| Norton Common and Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre TROs updated. | 28-Nov-2025 | No | Due date to change to 31 March 2026. The Norton Common TRO has been updated (delegated decision notified 27 June 2025). However, there has been a delay with Leisure/Everyone Active confirming the requirements for the updated TRO for Hitchin Swimming & Fitness Centre. Therefore, now expect the updated TRO to be effective by the end of March 2026 at the latest, which allows a reasonable amount of time to agree requirements and progress the necessary arrangements. | |
| Risks | Risk Level | Original Score | Current Score | Target Score |
| Risks:  1 Budget implications of selected scheme (no longer a risk).  2 Inability to procure suppliers within approved budget (no longer a risk, as procured suppliers within budget).  3 Negative public reaction to changes and disruption during works.  4 Loss of income during associated works and immediate post-installation period.  5 Failure to bring together separate project elements to achieve seamless project delivery.  6 Public have issues using the new parking machines or understanding new payment options.  7 Issues with installed signage leads to a change in tariff board provider being required. |  | 1 | 2 | 1 |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|-----------------|-----------------|---|-------------|
|  | Resident/Public EV Charging in our Car Parks | | | | |
| Council Plan Objective | Sustainability (2024-28) | Due Date | 31-May-2026 | Original Date | 31-Mar-2025 |
| Project Summary | Finalise contract/leases with private sector partner and subsequently install new EV charging points in six of our outdoor surface car parks. OZEV grant secured to help deliver the project, although availability of funding has only currently been formally extended to September 2025. | | | | |
| Latest Update | 06-Nov-2025 Installation and commissioning of new EV charging points in all six outdoor surface car parks now expected to be completed by the end of March 2026, with all relevant leases being formalised once this has happened. Revised milestone target dates acknowledge continued uncertainty relating to the completion of required wayleave agreements and the timing of subsequent Distribution Network Operator (DNO) tasks. The first phase of installation works has been completed, with all EV charging points now in place at the six outdoor car parks. Three of these are up and running - Civic Centre, Warren, and Woodside. Works at the other three car parks have been held up due to a delay in obtaining required third-party wayleave agreements and the lead in time for the DNO to connect the new charging points to the main power grid. Wayleave agreements have now either been or will soon be obtained, and DNO tasks are expected to take place in November 2025 for Hillshot and January 2026 for Twitchell, with works at Bancroft possibly not taking place until February 2026. All relevant leases will be formalised once all EV charging points have been installed and commissioned, and necessary details have been discussed and agreed with the contractor to allow this to happen. Leases have been drafted but will require site plans reflecting the actual location of installed items prior to completion. We have contacted the Department for Transport requesting a further extension to the current grant funding deadline, moving it from December 2025 to March 2026. We are also due to issue a progress report to the Department for Transport in December 2025 in line with grant funding conditions. Outside of the scope of this Council Delivery Plan OZEV ORCS funded project, new EV charging points are also due to be installed in our multi-storey car parks, although the schedule for these works is still to be finalised. Although there remain risks associated with completing remaining tasks and the formal extension of the grant funding deadline, overall project risks are reducing but are still currently assessed as 'medium'. | | | | |
|  | Milestone | Due Date | Complete | Note | |
|  | ABC to start promoting project. | 31-Oct-2024 | Yes | Our investment in EV charging infrastructure was included in the Winter 2024 edition of Outlook magazine, which was published in early December 2024. | |
|  | Contract finalised with private sector partner. | 31-Dec-2024 | Yes | Contract finalised 7 January 2025. Contract amended to enable the OZEV ORCS funded project (installation of new EV charging points in our outdoor surface car parks) to progress in advance of the further project to replace existing charging points in our multi-storey car parks, which was delayed by the need to satisfy the Council's property insurer regarding potential fire risks. | |
|  | Contractor to commence works. | 03-Mar-2025 | Yes | Having issued authority-to-proceed letters to the contractor, works commenced at the Civic Centre car park in Royston on 22 April 2025. | |
|  | Complete relevant leases with contractor for the length of the contract. | 31-Oct-2025 | No | Due date to change to 31 May 2026. The intention remains that all relevant leases will be formalised once all EV charging points have been installed and commissioned, and necessary details have been discussed and agreed with the contractor to allow this to happen. Leases have been drafted but will require site plans reflecting the actual location of installed items prior to completion. The installation and commissioning of new EV charging points in the remaining three car parks is now expected to be completed by the end of March 2026, although this is dependent on the timings of required UKPN connections. | |

| Installation and commissioning of all new EV charging points completed. | 31-Oct-2025 | No | Due date to change to 31 March 2026. The first phase of installation works has been completed, with all EV charging points now in place at the six outdoor car parks. Three of these are up and running - Civic Centre, Warren, and Woodside. We have contacted the DfT requesting a further extension to the current grant funding deadline, moving it from December 2025 to March 2026. This has been caused by a delay in obtaining required third-party wayleave agreements. These have either been or will soon be obtained, but the project schedule has been further impacted by the lead in time for the Distribution Network Operator to connect the new charging points to the main power grid in the remaining three car parks. These are expected to take place in November 2025 for Hillshott and January 2026 for Twitchell, with works at Bancroft possibly not taking place until February 2026. | |
|---|---|----------------|--|--------------|
| New Milestone - Issue progress report to the Department for Transport in line with grant funding conditions. | 31-Dec-2025 | No | New milestone. | |
| Risks | Risk Level | Original Score | Current Score | Target Score |
| Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 (no longer a risk). 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 funding and no longer a risk for this specific Council Delivery Plan project). |  | 5 | 5 | 1 |

| Churchgate | | | | | |
|--|--|----------|--|---------------|--|
| Council Plan Objective | Responsible Growth (2024-28) | Due Date | 31-Mar-2026 | Original Date | |
| Project Summary | Progress the long-term regeneration of the shopping centre and surrounding areas. Project will span a number of years. Currently, recorded action relates to key milestones up to the end of 2025/26. | | | | |
| Latest Update | 19-Nov-2025 A Churchgate Project Manager, who has a high level of related experience, has now commenced working for NHC. The Project Team is busy progressing a number of work packages to support fully informed decision making on options/viability for example, car park survey analysis. We continue to engage with stakeholders to discuss progress and possible concerns. Two workshops are planned for late November/early December 2025, where Project Board will assess possible options and preferred routes to delivery based on two scenarios and with access to the findings from all completed work streams. The expectation is that Project Board will be in a position to make a decision on a recommended option at this time. A report will be presented to Full Council on 4 December 2025 taking Members through findings to date and future plans. Should the project proceed with a procurement exercise for a development partner, the aim is to work in partnership with them to prepare a masterplan application for the Churchgate Regeneration Zone. Further milestones and related timings for the Council Delivery Plan will be confirmed following a decision on a recommended option and in time for the Q3 2025/26 monitoring report. Due to the number of variables associated with the project and the uncertainty this creates, the overall risk level remains high. However, current project management arrangements and controls enable us to manage these risks as well as we can, albeit that certain external factors are out of our control. | | | | |
| Milestone | Due Date | Complete | Note | | |
| Start of engagement. | 02-Sep-2024 | Yes | | | |
| Run workshops. | 16-Sep-2024 | Yes | Hitchin Market Board workshop held 9 September 2024. Hitchin Forum workshop held 9 September 2024 (in the evening). Tenants workshop held 12 September 2024. | | |
| Start public consultation. | 17-Sep-2024 | Yes | | | |
| Public consultation ends. | 01-Oct-2024 | Yes | The consultation period was extended to 3 November 2024 to take into account the leaflet drop to all North Hertfordshire households. | | |
| Open 'in-person' Churchgate Regeneration Hub on market days, up to the end of the consultation period. | 17-Oct-2024 | Yes | Churchgate Regeneration Hub opened in an unused Churchgate unit. | | |
| Feedback to Project Board. | 29-Oct-2024 | Yes | October 2024 Project Board meeting re-scheduled. Update on progress presented to Project Board on 14 October 2024. | | |
| Feedback to Project Board. | 26-Nov-2024 | Yes | Project Board meeting re-scheduled to 4 December 2024. Consultation findings were presented to Project Board at this meeting. | | |
| Publish second stage public consultation feedback report. | 28-Feb-2025 | Yes | Consultation results published in February 2025 and communicated throughout March 2025. | | |
| Complete detailed evaluation of consultation findings and financial options appraisal. | 16-May-2025 | Yes | | | |
| Project Board decision on overarching direction and preferred pathway. | 16-May-2025 | Yes | | | |
| Attend UKREiiF 2025. | 22-May-2025 | Yes | Anthony Roche, Steve Crowley and Chloe Gray attended UKREiiF - 20-22 May 2025. | | |

| Report to Council and formal decision on overarching direction and preferred pathway. | 10-Jul-2025 | Yes | At Full Council on 10 July 2025, councillors voted to progress with their preferred approach to regenerate the Churchgate area, following extensive public consultation and technical feasibility work. | |
|--|---|----------------|---|--------------|
| New Milestone - Churchgate Project Board Workshop 1 | 28-Nov-2025 | No | New milestone. | |
| Further report to Full Council. | 04-Dec-2025 | No | Agreed to report back to Full Council in December 2025. | |
| New Milestone - Churchgate Project Board Workshop 2 | 08-Dec-2025 | No | New milestone. | |
| 1. Start procurement process for development partner. | | No | Milestone and due date to be confirmed. Dependent on Project Board's recommended option for moving the project forward. Project Board workshop scheduled for 8 December 2025. | |
| 2. Procurement process for development partner ends and contract awarded. | | No | Milestone and due date to be confirmed. See note for above milestone. | |
| 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 possible high inflation and increasing cost of building materials. 3. Availability of specific funding for consultants beyond previously agreed timeframe. 4. Overspends against agreed project budgets. |  | 9 | 8 | 6 |

| Engaging the community on our finances | | | | | |
|---|---|----------|--|---------------|-------------|
| Council Plan Objective | Sustainability (2024-28) | 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 | 29-Oct-2025 As previously reported, adoption of a new MTFS has been delayed to early December 2025. This was due to uncertainty over new fair funding formula. Provisional finance settlement will be used to determine scale of funding gap by the end of December 2025. Budget proposals for 2026/27 will consider consultation feedback and the budget is scheduled to be approved by Council on 26 February 2026. Overall risk level remains medium, as there is still uncertainty relating to future funding, the scale of any budget gap and our options for addressing this, and the impacts of local government reorganisation. | | | | |
| Milestone | Due Date | Complete | Note | | |
| Update the Digital Budget Hub content to highlight the funding pressures we face and likely implications. | 31-Aug-2024 | Yes | Updates: - Homepage copy amended to reflect current situation. - 'How we set our budget' graphic created and added (to show residents the process we go through). - 'Did you know' film created and promoted, showing what services residents' council tax helps to provide. Above promoted across our social media channels and ENewsletters. | | |
| Approve our Medium Term Financial Strategy. | 30-Sep-2024 | Yes | Council agreed adoption of the MTFS 2025-30 on 19 September 2024. | | |
| Update content (Digital Budget Hub and other communications) through process for setting the 2025/26 budget. | 28-Feb-2025 | Yes | The content update on the Hub was not completed due to it moving from the Zencity platform to the NHC website. However, we did communicate budget information via other channels, with 2025/26 budget and Council Tax communications being promoted via PR to local media, on our website, across our social media channels and via our ENewsletter. | | |
| Further update of Digital Budget Hub content to align with the start of the 2025/26 financial year. | 31-May-2025 | Yes | Content updated to include the following: 2025/26 Council Tax pie chart graphic; budget consultation mention (and link to survey) included in homepage copy; timeline updated with the 2025/26 Council budget PR and Waste Service change PR; and finally, timeline order changed so that the newest news date is first. | | |
| Carry out detailed consultation on spend priorities and savings options for 2026/27 onwards. | 31-Jul-2025 | Yes | Budget consultation (across both digital and non-digital channels) ran for eight weeks. Budget consultation launched on 6 June 2025, and it was open until 1 August 2025. | | |
| Consider feedback in setting the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy and approve the Strategy. | 04-Dec-2025 | No | Delayed the MTFS until early December 2025 due to uncertainty over new fair funding formula and hoping for greater certainty. | | |
| New Milestone - Provisional finance settlement used to determine scale of funding gap. | 22-Dec-2025 | No | New milestone. | | |
| Consider consultation feedback in forming budget proposals for the 2026/27 budget and approve the 2026/27 budget. | 28-Feb-2026 | No | Council to approve budget at the meeting scheduled for 26 February 2026. | | |

| Risks | Risk Level | Original Score | Current Score | Target Score |
|--|---|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| <p>Risks:</p> <p>1. Timing of Government announcements over future funding makes it difficult to engage residents in the scale of the budget gap and the savings that will be required.</p> <p>2. Lack of engagement means that the consultation doesn't reflect a wide range of views.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>4. Local government reorganisation adds uncertainty to medium-term planning.</p> |  | 8 | 5 | 2 |

| Leisure Centre Decarbonisation | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|--|-------------|
| Council Plan Objective | Sustainability (2024-28) | Due Date | 22-Jul-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 | 30-Oct-2025 Following agreement on how practical completion would be agreed in a way that complies with the new Building Safety Act and the completion of subsequent Legal work, we formally entered into a construction contract with Willmott Dixon Construction in September 2025. Works commenced at Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre in October 2025. This was slightly later than initially planned due to a delay with Natural England issuing the required Bat Licence. As a result, the expected completion date of works has changed from the 7th to the 22nd of July 2026. However, the previously advised completion dates for works at North Herts Leisure Centre and Royston Leisure Centre (both 26th May 2026) remain the same. There is still uncertainty regarding our ability to agree required landowner easements for new power cables to power the ASHPs and to do so in line with the current project plan (despite planning 12 weeks into the programme for this). Therefore, there is a risk of related unbudgeted costs and of works having to stop/be delayed, especially at North Herts Leisure Centre. We continue to communicate with relevant landowners (LGCHF and Hitchin Cow Commoners Trust) to progress these matters in a timely manner to help manage these risks. There also remain key risks relating to unknown issues presenting themselves when existing infrastructure is being removed, the scheduling of UKPN works, and possible extensions to planned closure periods. Although some of these can be managed, some are out of our control for example, UKPN scheduling. Taking everything into account, the overall project is still currently assessed as high risk. We continue regular communication with Salix relating to the grant funding, including the completion of Monthly Monitoring Reports (MMRs). | | | | |
| Milestone | | | | | |
| ① | 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 | | |
| ② | Pre-Construction Services Agreement with Willmott Dixon signed. | 29-Jul-2024 | Yes | Agreed and signed on 2 August 2024. | |
| ③ | Appoint external Quantity Surveyor to oversee NHC's interests. | 30-Aug-2024 | Yes | Appointed Varsity Consulting to act as the Employers Agent for North Herts Council on the leisure decarbonisation project. This includes carrying out tasks of Quantity Surveyor, Cost Consultant and Contract Administrator. Decision taken 24 September 2024. Decision notified 27 September 2024. | |
| ④ | Project Board - hold point to decide whether to continue the project. | 04-Nov-2024 | Yes | Project Board approved a number of recommendations allowing the project to move into the next phase. | |
| ⑤ | Complete Stage 3 design phases. | 11-Nov-2024 | Yes | Stage 3 completed. | |
| ⑥ | Council decision on preferred option. | 15-Jan-2025 | Yes | | |
| ⑦ | Willmott Dixon Construction submit contract offer. | 20-Mar-2025 | Yes | Contract offer received from Willmott Dixon. This is now being reviewed by our Quantity Surveyor, prior to the final agreement of costs. | |
| ⑧ | Provide Salix with required project updates. | 01-Apr-2025 | Yes | All grant conditions and updates for the 2024/25 financial year have been issued and reviewed. Conditions 2-4 have been approved by Salix consultants and are with Salix to approve. Condition 1 will need to be reviewed, amended, and resubmitted later. | |

| | | | |
|--|-------------|-----|---|
| Further report to Cabinet to approve contract award and additional budget. | 20-May-2025 | Yes | Cabinet agreed to increase the project capital budget, approved the extension of lido seasons at both outdoor pools, approved changes to the 2025/26 General Fund budget as a result of the increase in net expenditure caused by planned closures and extended lido seasons, and awarded the contract to WDC. |
| Salix confirm acceptance of our 2024/25 updates. | 31-May-2025 | Yes | Salix have approved and paid the Council the 2024/25 grant amount in full. |
| Commence de-carb works at Royston Leisure Centre. | 17-Jun-2025 | Yes | Willmott Dixon started setting up on site in the week commencing 14 July 2025 and started to shutdown areas of the building to prepare for works in the week commencing 21 July 2025. |
| Planning permissions obtained. | 19-Jun-2025 | Yes | Planning permission received for Royston and Letchworth on 19 June 2025, with Hitchin granted on 11 July 2025. |
| Commence de-carb works at North Herts Leisure Centre. | 23-Jun-2025 | Yes | Willmott Dixon started setting up on site in the week commencing 14 July 2025 and started to shutdown areas of the building to prepare for works in the week commencing 21 July 2025. |
| Commence de-carb works at Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre. | 01-Sep-2025 | Yes | The start date for commencing works was pushed back due to a delay with Natural England issuing the required Bat Licence. |
| Enter into construction contract with Willmott Dixon. | 07-Sep-2025 | Yes | There was a slight delay completing this milestone, as it took longer than expected to reach agreement on how practical completion would be agreed in a way that complies with the new Building Safety Act and to undertake the subsequent Legal work prior to signing. |
| Provide Salix with finalised project data (including costs and energy values) and details of carbon savings monitoring and reporting arrangements. | 02-Feb-2026 | No | |
| Complete de-carb works at North Herts Leisure Centre. | 26-May-2026 | No | Due date reflects the need to get Building Safety Act sign off before works can be handed over. However, this date is dependent on obtaining an easement over LGCHF land to enable UKPN to install required cabling in line with current plans. |
| Complete de-carb works at Royston Leisure Centre. | 26-May-2026 | No | Due date reflects the need to get Building Safety Act sign off before works can be handed over. |
| Complete de-carb works at Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre. | 07-Jul-2026 | No | Due date to change to 22 July 2026. This change to the project schedule is due to commencing works later than initially planned, which was caused by Natural England delays in issuing the required Bat Licence. The due date reflects the need to get Building Safety Act sign off before works can be handed over. However, this date is dependent on obtaining an easement over Hitchin Cow Commoners Trust land to enable UKPN to install required cabling in line with current plans. |

| Risks | Risk Level | Original Score | Current Score | Target Score |
|---|---|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| <p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NHC responsible for funding all project costs beyond agreed grant funding. - NHC paying up front for the larger Air Source Heat Pumps. - Unforeseen detailed survey findings require changes to project specifications and lead to additional financial costs. - Failure to obtain required planning permissions (no longer a risk). - Delays obtaining required Distribution Network Operator approvals lead to delays in commissioning/completing project works. - Delays obtaining required easements 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 (no longer a risk). - Disruption to day-to-day operations during works leads to customer dissatisfaction. - Demand on existing officer resources to cover the loss of the dedicated Project Manager. |  | 8 | 8 | 6 |

| Local Plan Review | | | | | |
|---|---|----------|---|---------------|-------------|
| Council Plan Objective | Responsible Growth (2024-28) | Due Date | 31-Dec-2027 | Original Date | 31-Dec-2027 |
| Project Summary | To undertake an update of the Council's statutory Local Plan as agreed in principle by Cabinet in January 2024. | | | | |
| Latest Update | 08-Dec-2025 Guidance on the new plan making system was released on 27 November 2025. The Government has indicated that secondary legislation will be laid in January 2026, with the new system expected to come into effect six weeks later. However, the Government are also inviting feedback (not formal consultation) on the new system until 15 March 2026. Therefore, there is the possibility that revised guidance will be issued after the feedback has been analysed. Officers are currently reviewing the overall programme, taking into account requirements as currently set out in the guidance to the regulations, while noting some areas remain unclear. A revised Local Plan programme will be presented to Cabinet in January 2026 with a request for delegated powers to enable officers to submit the required documentation once the new system is operational. The guidance specifies a minimum four-month notice period once the system is formally enacted. This means that formal external stages of the plan are unlikely to commence until mid to late June 2026. This requirement is to allow for preparatory work in line with new obligations and ensures stakeholders have sufficient notice of the Council's intention to begin work on the new Plan. The Strategic Planning Manager role is currently occupied on an interim basis and will be advertised in early 2026. Two senior planner roles were advertised to assist in the capacity of the wider team. Only one role has been successfully recruited to with the remainder unoccupied. A contract role is being filled for six months to cover capacity gaps within the wider team. The consultation and site analysis digital platform has started to be implemented, and evidence and scoping work is ongoing. The initial Call for Sites ran from June to mid-September 2025 with further analysis currently ongoing. This work will inform the site allocations work to support the Local Plan. As reported in the Q1 monitoring report, previously recorded milestone due dates have been removed until there is greater certainty around required activities and related timings. | | | | |
| 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. | 14-Jan-2025 | Yes | Approved by Cabinet in January 2025. | | |
| 03. Notice of start of plan-making given to Secretary of State. | | No | Milestone in line with approved LDS, subject to commentary dated 8 December 2025. | | |
| 04. Complete 'Gateway 1' advisory assessment. | | No | Milestone in line with approved LDS, subject to commentary dated 8 December 2025. | | |
| 05. Complete first mandatory public consultation. | | No | Milestone in line with approved LDS, subject to commentary dated 8 December 2025. | | |
| 06. Complete 'Gateway 2' advisory assessment. | | No | Milestone in line with approved LDS, subject to commentary dated 8 December 2025. | | |
| 07. Complete second mandatory public consultation. | | No | Milestone in line with approved LDS, subject to commentary dated 8 December 2025. | | |
| 08. Complete 'Gateway 3' assessment and submit for examination. | | No | Milestone in line with approved LDS, subject to commentary dated 8 December 2025. | | |
| 09. Receipt of examination outcome. | | No | Milestone in line with approved LDS, subject to commentary dated 8 December 2025. | | |
| 10. Finalisation and adoption of digital plan. | | No | Milestone in line with approved LDS, subject to commentary dated 8 December 2025. | | |

| Risks | Risk Level | Original Score | Current Score | Target Score |
|--|---|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| <p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. We have been unsuccessful with previous recruitment exercises, with limited interest in roles due to salary vs experience expectations not being in line with other local authorities in the area. - Internal complexities that delay putting necessary resources in place in a timely fashion. - Lack of general resource to accomplish the Local Plan update. - Lack/confliction of direction and vision from Council. - 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. - 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. - Local Government reorganisation proposals divert resources, impact upon the timetable or approach, or result in new workstreams. |  | 5 | 7 | 3 |

| Town Centres Strategy | | | | | |
|--|--|----------|--|---------------|-------------|
| Council Plan Objective | Responsible Growth (2024-28) | Due Date | 30-Jun-2026 | Original Date | 31-Mar-2025 |
| Project Summary | Progress development of an overarching Town Centres Strategy, including guidance on developing strategic plans for individual town centres. | | | | |
| Latest Update | 20-Nov-2025 Political Liaison Board reviewed the draft Town Centres Strategy on 7 October 2025 and were happy with it on the basis that Section 4 (Delivery) was developed further. In view of comments received, working with stakeholders to develop an action plan will now form part of the consultation process. On 21 October 2025, Project Board approved the draft Strategy and revised consultation approach. The draft Strategy was presented to O&S on 11 November 2025, and Cabinet endorsed and approved the Strategy for public consultation on 19 November 2025. This extended eight-week public consultation is scheduled to take place over December 2025 and January 2026. During this time, the intention is to also present the draft Strategy to Community Forums. Dependent on the analysis of consultation responses, the draft Strategy will then go back to Cabinet for formal adoption. Although the timing of this is still to be confirmed, it is unlikely to happen until April 2026 at the very earliest. However, we currently expect the final Strategy to be presented to Cabinet during the first half of 2026. Although things are moving along, there remains uncertainty regarding the outcomes from the consultation process and subsequent committee meetings. Also, the new approved Strategy will not yet be a material consideration in a planning context as it does not form part of the currently adopted Local Plan. Therefore, the overall project risk level continues to be assessed as 'medium'. | | | | |
| Milestone | Due Date | Complete | Note | | |
| 1. Undertake work to complete evidence base. | 31-Jul-2024 | Yes | Consultants presented initial report on evidence base and stakeholder workshop held to review findings. | | |
| 2. Further review/refinement of evidence base and final sign-off. | 20-Dec-2024 | Yes | Finalised retail evidence base in December 2024. Consultants to review wider evidence base for draft Strategy. To be published as supporting evidence base when consulting on the draft Town Centres Strategy. | | |
| 3. Project Board review draft Town Centres Strategy. | 20-May-2025 | Yes | Project Board members requested further work to be undertaken and to see the revised version prior to submitting the Strategy to Cabinet. There was not enough time to do this in time for Cabinet in June 2025, so we are now aiming for Cabinet in September 2025. | | |
| 4. Project Board review and approval of draft Town Centres Strategy. | 15-Jul-2025 | Yes | Presented the detailed overview and priorities for each of the town centres at the Project Board meeting on 15 July 2025. At this meeting, Project Board suggested the draft Strategy should be presented to PLB prior to the September 2025 Cabinet meeting. | | |
| 5. Development and finalisation of draft Strategy. | 15-Aug-2025 | Yes | Consultants provided a first full draft of the Town Centres Strategy on 3 September 2025 for officer review and comment. Over the subsequent four weeks, further tweaks were made, and Section 4 (Delivery) was further developed. | | |
| 6. Present draft Strategy to Political Liaison Board (PLB). | 02-Sep-2025 | Yes | Presented on 7 October 2025. PLB were happy with the draft Strategy on the basis that Section 4 (Delivery) was developed further. Working with stakeholders to develop an action plan will now form part of the consultation process. | | |
| 7. Present draft Strategy to Overview & Scrutiny Committee. | 09-Sep-2025 | Yes | Following Project Board approval of the draft Strategy and consultation approach, the draft Strategy was presented to O&S on 11 November 2025. | | |
| 8. Present details of draft Strategy, including guidance sections for each town, to Cabinet. | 23-Sep-2025 | Yes | Draft Strategy presented to Cabinet on 19 November 2025. Cabinet endorsed and approved the Strategy for public consultation. | | |
| 9. Consultation on draft Town Centres Strategy. | 31-Jan-2026 | No | Due date added. Following the November 2025 Cabinet decision, an extended eight-week consultation is scheduled to take place over December 2025 and January 2026. During this time, the intention is to also present the draft Strategy to Community Forums. | | |

| 10. Cabinet adopt Town Centres Strategy. | 30-Jun-2026 | No | Due date added. Actual Cabinet meeting still to be confirmed, as dependent on the analysis of and findings from consultation responses. Draft Strategy will not go to Cabinet until April 2026 at the earliest but is expected to be presented to the Committee during the first half of 2026. | |
|--|---|----------------|--|--------------|
| Risks | Risk Level | Original Score | Current Score | Target 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. |  | 5 | 5 | 1 |

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|--|--|-----------------|-----------------|--|-------------|---|---|
|  | King George V Skate Park | | | | | | |
| Council Plan Objective | Accessible Services (2024-28) | Due Date | 31-Oct-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 | 04-Nov-2025 The new skate park opened for use on 27 October 2025. Therefore, the project to deliver a much-improved facility that meets the needs and expectations of stakeholders has been completed. Following discussions with relevant parties, we are also planning to hold a ceremonial opening event, but this will not take place until next Spring. Currently, the provisional date for the event is 29 May 2026. All previously identified risks to the successful delivery of the project are no longer applicable. | | | | | | |
| Milestone | | Due Date | Complete | Note | | | |
| Finalise formal SLA with Groundwork relating to the management of procurement processes. | | 12-Jul-2024 | Yes | | | | |
| NHC Legal to review relevant procurement documentation prior to Groundwork commencing tender process. | | 18-Aug-2024 | Yes | Legal review of procurement documentation undertaken. This took slightly longer than originally envisaged and was completed in September 2024 rather than August 2024. | | | |
| Groundwork confirms procurement timetable. | | 11-Oct-2024 | Yes | Timetable confirmed following Legal review of relevant procurement documentation. | | | |
| Commence tender process. | | 14-Oct-2024 | Yes | ITT published on 14 October 2024. | | | |
| Award contract following evaluation of tender responses. | | 17-Dec-2024 | Yes | Following evaluation of tenders in November 2024, the contract was awarded mid-December 2024. | | | |
| Contractor to conduct further communication/consultation during the early stages of the project prior to project delivery. | | 30-May-2025 | Yes | This was completed in May 2025 prior to commencement of works on-site. | | | |
| Contractor confirms project plan and timings. | | 31-May-2025 | Yes | Contract signed on 22 April 2025. Further consultation on the final design held in May 2025. Works commenced on 14 July 2025, with an anticipated 12-week delivery window. | | | |
| Contractor to commence on-site project delivery. | | 14-Jul-2025 | Yes | Work started on Monday 14 July 2025 to revamp the skatepark. | | | |
| Contractor completes on-site works. | | 05-Oct-2025 | Yes | Works on-site have been completed and have been signed off. The new facility opened to the public on 27 October 2025. | | | |
| New skate park officially opened to the public. | | 31-Oct-2025 | Yes | The new skate park opened for use on 27 October 2025 and so the project is now considered complete. However, following discussions with relevant parties, we are also planning to hold a ceremonial opening event next Spring, with a provisional date of 29 May 2026. | | | |
| Risks | | | | | | | |
| Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Until precise timings are confirmed, there is a risk that the project will not be completed in line with stakeholder expectations (no longer a risk). - As with all procurement processes, there is a risk that the outcome will be challenged (no longer a risk, as the outcome was not challenged). - Possible reputational risk due to the park being closed during the construction period (no longer a risk). | | | |  | 2 | 1 | 1 |

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|---|--|-----------------|--|----------------------|-------------|
|  | Waste and Street Cleansing Contract | | | | |
| Council Plan Objective | Accessible Services (2024-28) | Due Date | 30-Nov-2025 | Original Date | 31-Aug-2025 |
| Project Summary | Complete procurement and mobilisation of a new Waste and Street Cleansing contract. Plan for and implement agreed service changes included in the contract. | | | | |
| Latest Update | 20-Nov-2025 Rollout of new services commenced on 4 August 2025. As with all significant service changes, some issues did arise. However, these were managed on a case-by-case basis, helped by the mitigating measures we had put in place prior to rollout for example, having additional vehicles available to respond to initial teething problems. The final Project Board (Mobilisation) meeting was held on 23 October 2025. The specific project to mobilise the new waste and street cleansing contract and implement the agreed service changes included in the contract is now considered complete for Council Delivery Plan purposes. An update on delivery of the new contract and services was presented to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 11 November 2025. The remaining activity is to undertake a lessons learned exercise in early 2026, which will be reviewed by members of the Project Board. All project specific risks are no longer applicable, although there remain some residual operational risks for example, staff resources, public confusion and issues with service delivery, and maintaining an acceptable level of missed collections. These risks will continue to be managed as business-as-usual activities, with the introduction of the new Waste app being an example of initiatives being implemented to enhance management of operational and reputational risks, by providing residents with an easily accessible option for obtaining information on available services and related requirements. | | | | |
| Milestone | Due Date | Complete | Note | | |
| Evaluation of final tenders and production of Evaluation Report. | 17-Jun-2024 | Yes | | | |
| Project Board sign off of Evaluation Report and award recommendation. | 21-Jun-2024 | Yes | | | |
| Executive and Cabinet approval to award the contract to the preferred bidder. | 09-Jul-2024 | Yes | Cabinet agreed to award the contract to the preferred bidder, contingent upon the completion of the Letchworth depots lease assignment from the incumbent provider to the Council. The assignment of the Letchworth depots lease was subsequently completed. | | |
| End of contract award standstill period. | 12-Aug-2024 | Yes | | | |
| First meetings held with preferred bidder. | 15-Aug-2024 | Yes | | | |
| Intention to award contract phase completed. | 31-Aug-2024 | Yes | Milestone completed and communicated in September 2024 that we will be re-establishing a partnership with Veolia. | | |
| Press communication. | 10-Sep-2024 | Yes | | | |
| Commence procurement of new fleet vehicles. | 15-Nov-2024 | Yes | We approved capital funding of £5.285 million (excluding VAT) for the purchase of waste and street cleansing vehicles for the new contract. This allowed the procurement process for NHC vehicles to commence. This process has now completed. | | |
| Develop IT specifications. | 30-Nov-2024 | Yes | Full specifications for the garden waste platform and additional forms developed. Relevant build processes commenced. From a technical standpoint, we have the information we needed to scope and plan the project. | | |
| Finalisation and signing of contract (formal contract award). | 28-Feb-2025 | Yes | Delay did not impact our ability to prepare for contract mobilisation. | | |

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|---|-------------|-----|--|
| Confirmation of final delivery plans and H&S arrangements. | 04-Mar-2025 | Yes | Delivery plans finalised and H&S risk assessments completed and received. Delivery plans were revisited in advance of service change. |
| Member briefing session (March 2025). | 31-Mar-2025 | Yes | Member briefing session held on 27 March 2025. |
| Condition surveys and demobilisation of depots. | 03-May-2025 | Yes | Completed. Property Services managed dilapidations with the outgoing tenant (FCC). |
| Commence mobilisation of new contract. | 04-May-2025 | Yes | Veolia undertook street cleansing from 4 May 2025 and waste collection operations began on 6 May 2025 following the bank holiday. |
| New bin and caddy deliveries start. | 06-May-2025 | Yes | Bin and caddy deliveries commenced. Expected to continue prior to and up to commencement of the new services. |
| Finalise new service collection rounds. | 30-Jun-2025 | Yes | We have finalised collection rounds for the agreed service changes included in the contract. |
| Member briefing session (July 2025). | 14-Jul-2025 | Yes | Member briefing session held on 14 July 2025. Approximately 15 Members attended. |
| New bin and caddy deliveries completed. | 04-Aug-2025 | Yes | Programme of bin and caddy deliveries has now been completed. However, we continue work to rectify identified issues with some deliveries. |
| New services to commence. | 04-Aug-2025 | Yes | New services commenced on 4 August 2025. |
| Update report on service delivery to Overview & Scrutiny Committee. | 11-Nov-2025 | Yes | Presented on 11 November 2025. |

| Risks | Risk Level | Original Score | Current Score | Target Score |
|--|---|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| <p>Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delay in completing the assignment of Letchworth depot lease delays contract award (no longer a risk, as lease assignment completed). - Insufficient resources/capacity to deliver mobilisation and new service provision work (no longer a risk for this specific project, although still a risk relating to the delivery of business-as-usual services). - Final Government Resources & Waste Strategy differs from contract specification (no longer a risk, as contract specification aligns with new Simpler Recycling policy published late 2024). - Uncertainty over certain cost elements (no longer a risk, as costs finalised with inflationary uplift). - Any delays cause mobilisation challenges (no longer a risk, as any challenges were addressed during project delivery and the project is now completed). - Capability to develop online forms and integrate these with new systems (NHC income management system and preferred supplier systems). This has been completed for North Herts. - EV charging infrastructure is not in place for start of contract (no longer a risk, as EV charging points installed). - Public confusion around contract mobilisation and service changes (residual operational risk remains, with management of the risk being improved with the introduction of the new Waste app). - Discover new collection rounds are not optimal once operational (no longer a risk, as did not materialise for North Herts). - Increased missed collections during the initial rollout period of new collection services (risk materialised and although things have now settled down, an associated residual operational risk remains). |  | 9 | 3 | 3 |

Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 Q2 Monitoring Report - Corporate Risks

| Risks | Risk Level | Original Score | Current Score | Target Score |
|--|---|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| <p>Resourcing</p> <p>Risks:</p> <p>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. Also, impacts of emergency planning events on staff resources. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) increases work pressures and also may affect staff recruitment and retention.</p> |  | 8 | 9 | 8 |
| <p>Cyber Risks</p> <p>Risks:</p> <p>Prolonged widespread disruption to/failure of IT infrastructure/systems.</p> <p>Possible causes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. <p>Leading to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">  Ability to deliver services/projects.  Unbudgeted costs to enable recovery.  Reputational damage. |  | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| <p>Financial Sustainability</p> <p>Risks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 6. Local government reorganisation adds uncertainty to medium-term financial planning. |  | 9 | 9 | 5 |

| Risks | Risk Level | Original Score | Current Score | Target Score |
|--|---|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| <p><u>Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution</u></p> <p>Risks:</p> <p>The Government have published a White Paper and written to all Local Authorities. This requires Local Authorities to work together to come up with a proposal that results in unitary rather than 2-tier Councils. It also seeks a Strategic Authority structure that allows devolution of powers to a Mayor. Those powers include "housing, planning, transport, energy, skills, employment support and more." The risks relate to this being a very substantial project requiring significant change. Specific risks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The work to get to a proposal on a unitary structure (noting that proposal needs to be agreed across 11 Councils, although can include multiple options) is significant in terms of the negotiations needed. High additional workload for the collation of information and analysis to support that decision making process, across multiple workstreams with input from Chief Executive (workstream co-lead and co-ordination group), Directors (one as workstream lead) and others. - If there is an inability to agree proposals, it may prolong the period above, or lead to a structure being imposed upon Hertfordshire. - After a new structure is agreed, there would be even more significant work to move towards the implementation of that new structure. - Efficiency is mentioned as one of the reasons for moving to a unitary structure. This may lead staff to believe that their job may be at risk. Alternatively, the additional work of moving to unitary status may be seen as too much. - Focusing on a new structure may lead to decision making that is too short-term (getting things done before they can be de-prioritised by a new larger Council with wider priorities) or too long-term (avoid making decisions and leave them to the new unitary Council). The Government have provided guidance that Councils should not make decisions that have negative consequences for new Unitary Councils, but unclear how this would work in practice until Government publishes further details as part of a Structural Changes Order. - Under the new Unitary Council(s), some current district services may have to be curtailed e.g., in order to help fund social care. - Ensuring that the views of stakeholders continue to be heard during the transition process and within the new structure. |  | 9 | 9 | 5 |

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Agenda Item 11

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
6th January 2025

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: Museum Collection Facility Update

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE: Culture and Facilities Service Manager

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Cllr Tamsin Thomas, Executive Member for Enterprise and Arts

PRIORITY: Thriving Communities

1. SUMMARY

1.1 This Information Note provides an update on the Council project to deliver a new facility to house the museum collection of North Hertfordshire.

2. STEPS TO DATE

2.1 Efforts to address the deteriorating conditions at the current museum collection facility on Burymead Road, Hitchin have been ongoing for several years with numerous options explored.

2.2 In late 2024 a detailed options appraisal was prepared with the intention of gaining support for the pursuit of a small number of specific solutions available and to formally discount other options from consideration.

2.3 The options appraisal and accompanying report was taken to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12th November 2024, where members of the committee signalled their support for some options to be discounted, whilst a limited budget was to be allocated for officers to explore some of the leading proposed solutions.

2.4 Cabinet approved the discounting of some options and the allocation of budget to pursue leading options on 19th November 2024.

Options discounted were as follows:

Option A – ‘Do Nothing’

Option B – ‘Prolong the life of the existing facilities’

Option G – ‘Relocate the museum collection to another council owned facility’

Options where budget was approved to develop further understanding were as follows:

Option D – ‘Redevelop the existing site’

Option E – ‘Purchase of a freehold/long leasehold building’

Options retained to explore further were as follows:

Option C – ‘Renovate the existing facilities’

Option F – ‘Leasing a building’

Option H – ‘A partnership solution with other local museum providers’

2.5 One such option which officers explored further was to secure the long leasehold interest in a local suitable property coming to the open market. Unit 1, City Park, Letchworth was one such building and officers were able to use the allocated budget available to carry out due diligence and pull together a business case and report on the

building. This facility was considered to boast a number of distinct advantages over other options. It represented a comparatively cost effective proposition, which both allowed for the long term future preservation of the collection to be secured whilst it also would allow for sufficient contingency in terms of space.

- 2.6 A proposal to purchase the long leasehold interest in Unit 1, City Park was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11th March 2025 for review and the committee signalled its support of this proposal which was then taken to Cabinet.
- 2.7 Cabinet approved the acquisition of the long leasehold interest of Unit 1, Works Road at its meeting of 18th March 2025, with a view to this being converted into the new long term home for the museum collection of North Hertfordshire.
- 2.8 Members of Overview and Scrutiny requested an Information Note and update on the project be presented to the committee at its January 2026 meeting.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 The long leasehold interest in Unit 1, City Park has been formally acquired. At the time of acquiring the long leasehold interest, the property had a sitting tenant in place until January 2026.
- 3.2 The Project Board has been formed, and all standard project management documentation has been prepared and is being followed (Terms of Reference, Project Plan, Risk, Lessons and Issues Logs, along with Highlight Reports).
- 3.3 An expression of interest to secure additional grant funded roles to support the project has been submitted and the Council have been invited to submit a full application to be considered further.
- 3.4 A Communications Plan for the project has been drafted and adopted, with outreach and engagement with relevant stakeholders actively taking place.
- 3.5 Officers are in advanced negotiations with a potential contractor to deliver the Professional Technical Services support necessary to advise the Council and take the Project through the design phases. This expertise will allow the output specification as defined by officers to be converted into a technical specification with which to procure a suitable renovation contractor to begin the conversion works.
- 3.6 As the design phase and project timescales will not lead to renovation works starting until the summer, the Council has agreed an extension to the sitting tenants lease, which now concludes in July 2026, allowing time for the design work and procurement of a principal renovation contractor to conclude whilst securing an ongoing income stream in the meantime and avoiding a void period.
- 3.7 An indicative plan for the recruitment and engagement of volunteers to support the project has been drafted, with the intention that this phase of the project will follow on from the renovation.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Officers are aiming to appoint the Professional Technical Services team early in 2026.
- 4.2 The Design work and refinement of the technical specification will be born out of the work and supporting surveys this team undertakes. It is intended that this element will conclude around March 2026.

4.3 Concluding the design works around March 2026 will facilitate the procurement of a suitable works contractor to deliver against the technical specification created, with a view to appointing this contractor in time to start work shortly after the expiry of the current sitting tenant's lease.

4.4 Whilst it is not possible to be exact with regards to further milestones until work on designs and procurement timescales begin to crystallise, an Indicative Top Level Gantt Chart has been included as an appendix and an indication of the milestones is as follows:

- March 2026: Design works conclude.
- June 2026: Works contractor is procured and mobilised.
- July 2026: Existing tenant departs and works begin on renovation.
- August 2026: Collection strand project roles are recruited.
- December 2026: Volunteers are recruited and trained.
- December 2026: Works complete on renovation.
- January 2027 to December 2027/early 2028: Collection relocation takes place.
- Mid to late 2028: Burymead fully vacated.

5. APPENDICES

5.1 The following appendices are included:

Appendix 1 - Indicative Top Level Gantt Chart

Appendix 2 - Aspirational Images

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

6.1 Robert Orchard, Culture and Facilities Service Manager
(and Project Manager – Museum Collection Facility)
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01462 474287

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 There are no background papers other than the reports regarding Museum Collection storage pressures presented at the following committees:

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee (12th November 2024)
(<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=3616&Ver=4>)
- Cabinet (19th November 2024)
(<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=3593&Ver=4>)
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee (11th March 2025)
(<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=3619&Ver=4>)
- Cabinet (18th March 2025)
(<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=3596&Ver=4>)

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Appendix 1

Museum Collection Facility – Indicative Top Level Gantt Chart

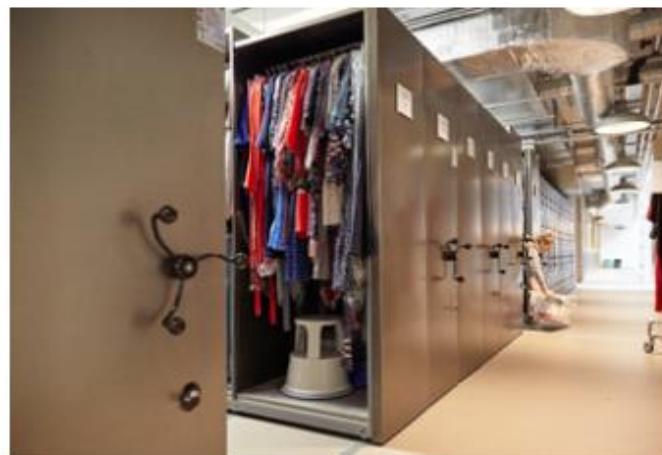
| (Facility Conversion Strand) | Status | 2025 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2026 | | | | | | | | | | | | 2027 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| (Collection Relocation Strand) | | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | | | | | | | | | |
| Cabinet Approval to Acquire Unit 1 | COMPLETE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Unit 1 Long Leasehold Acquired | COMPLETE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Project Board Formed | COMPLETE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Project Board Meetings Begin | COMPLETE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stakeholder Engagement Plan Approved | COMPLETE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Project Comms Plan Approved | COMPLETE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Grant Funding Expression of Interest Successful | COMPLETE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Design Team Procurement Route Approved | COMPLETE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Project Standard Templates Approved & Adopted | COMPLETE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Design Team Procurement Undertaken | IN PROGRESS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Design Phase | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Principal Contractor Procurement | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Renovation Works | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Appointment to Collection Project Roles | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Recruitment and Training of Volunteers | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Collection Relocation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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Appendix 2

Museum Collection Facility – Aspirational Images



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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 JANUARY 2025

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: THE COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME (EFFECTIVENESS AND PROPOSALS FOR 2026/27)

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR – RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: RESOURCES

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / ACCESSIBLE SERVICES / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Committee asked for a report on the effectiveness of our Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS). This report therefore sets out the context of Council Tax support, including the introduction of local schemes for working aged people from 2013. Initially the Council followed the broad structure of the previous central scheme. However, in 2024 the Council moved to a banded scheme.

It is difficult to precisely answer how effective a CTRS scheme is, as there will always be a balance between cost and level of support. The implementation of a banded scheme went well in terms of the support provided, although the Council has seen a slight increase in the cost of the scheme.

The report recommends that the Council make a change to our discretionary policy to help avoid people dying in poverty. This is based on the campaign by Marie Curie.

Finally, the report sets out minor changes to the CTRS for 2026/27, which will be considered by Cabinet before approval by Full Council.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Committee comment on the report and consider any further mechanisms that would provide data on the effectiveness of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- 2.2. That the committee provide comments to Cabinet on the recommendations: (i) Agree to amend the Council Tax discretionary policy to include the support provided to residents with a terminal illness, with the wording detailed in paragraph 8.17, and (ii) Approve changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme bands to reflect the impact of inflation.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. To respond to the request from Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and to consider changes for next year.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. Not take any action – The Council could choose to retain the scheme exactly as it is and not apply any inflationary increases.

4.2. Similarly the Council could choose to make no change to the scheme to reflect the Marie Curie report on 'Dying in Poverty'. That would reflect that the CTRS already provides up to 100% for working aged people. The Council cannot go much further than the proposals set out in this report for the period 2026/27, as more significant changes would require a full consultation to be undertaken as required by the legislation.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. Our major preceptors will be notified of the planned changes to the changes to thresholds.

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 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced by Central Government in April 2013 as a replacement for the Council Tax Benefit scheme administered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As part of the introduction, the Government;

- placed the duty to create a local scheme for working age applicants with billing authorities.
- reduced initial funding by the equivalent of ten per cent from the levels paid through benefit subsidy to authorities under the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme; and
- prescribed that anyone of pension age would be dealt with under regulations set by Central Government and not the authorities' local scheme

7.2 Since that time, funding for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) has been amalgamated into other Central Government grants paid to Local Authorities (where in receipt of Revenue Support Grant) and within the Business Rates Retention regime. It is now generally accepted that it is not possible to identify the amount of funding provided from Central Government sources

7.3 The current CTRS administered by the Council is divided into two schemes, with pension age applicants receiving support under the rules prescribed by Central Government, and the scheme for working age applicants being determined solely by the local authority.

7.4 Pensioners, subject to their income, can receive up to 100 per cent support towards their Council Tax. The Council has no power to change the level of support provided to

pensioners and therefore any changes to the level of Council Tax Reduction can only be made to the working age scheme.

7.5 When Council Tax Reduction was introduced in 2013, for working age applicants, the Council broadly adopted the previous means tested Council Tax Benefit scheme as the basis of awarding support. Due to the reduction in funding from Central Government, the Council also required all working age applicants, even those on the lowest income, to pay a contribution towards their Council Tax. This was achieved by applying a standard deduction from any award granted. This standard deduction was 25% until the banded scheme was introduced.

7.6 Up until being replaced by a banded scheme in 2023(see following paragraphs), the working age scheme had only been amended in a minor way, primarily to adjust the standard deduction, to introduce a tolerance and to align it with Housing Benefit and Universal Credit payments where possible.

7.7 During 2022 the Council carried out a full review of the previous scheme and implemented a new banded scheme (for working age applicants). This was approved at the Full Council meeting in January 2023, and applied from April 2023 onwards. Further details can be found in that report (see background papers). At the time the reasons for implementing the new scheme were to:

- enable us to increase the overall level of support for the lowest income households
- reduce the administrative burden placed on the Council following the introduction of Universal Credit, and
- make the scheme easier for our customers to understand and calculate entitlement.

7.8 It was expected that the cost of the scheme would increase slightly, but not significantly. The North Herts share of the additional cost was estimated at £15k. A discretionary scheme was put in place to support the transition.

7.9 In January 2024, Council considered the CTRS for April 2024 onwards. That report identified that the scheme had achieved the outcomes set out in paragraph 7.7. There had been very little demand for the discretionary scheme that was put in place to support the transition. In that first year the Council had 6 applicants who were awarded a discretionary transition amount which reflected the amount that they lost under the new scheme. The fund was discontinued as the scheme was generally more generous. Although the specific fund was discontinued, the Council still have a discretionary scheme. In 2024/25, due to the uprating of benefits being so much higher, there were more requests for assistance as some claimants had to pay towards their Council tax where they had not been previously required, but they were in an improved financial position overall, so these cases were refused.

7.10 The January 2024 report, identified that the scheme was costing the Council more than had been estimated. It was agreed that the discretionary scheme budget would be used to help off-set some of that increased cost. No changes were made to the banded working age scheme for 2024/25.

7.11 In January 2025, Council considered the CTRS for April 2025. This proposed that only minor changes were made to the scheme. The changes proposed increased the

thresholds for each of the bands in line with inflation. This was to prevent households being pushed in to higher bands (i.e. paying more Council Tax) just through the impact of inflation on their income. There were higher than inflation increases (2.7% rather than 1.7%) applied to some thresholds where the inflationary uplift on their benefits would push them in to a higher band, and they would end up being worse off in terms of total income. The report at that time noted that the scheme was still costing a bit more than originally estimated.

7.12 The Council continues to have no control over the pension age CTRS. This is administered in line with Government regulations.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Current working age scheme

8.1. The current scheme is based on an income grid model. The income bands are based on a weekly net income as detailed in the table below:

| Band | Discount | Single person | Single Person 1 child | Single person 2 children | Single person 3 children | Couple No children | Couple 1 child | Couple 2 children | Couple 3 children |
|------|----------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 100% | £0 to £103.00 | £0 to £169.00 | £0 to £224.00 | £0 to £336.00 | £0 to £144.00 | £0 to £208.00 | £0 to £264.00 | £0 to £346.00 |
| 2 | 75% | £103.01 to £185.00 | £169.01 to £252.00 | £224.01 to £305.00 | £336.01 to £391.00 | £144.01 to £226.00 | £208.01 to £290.00 | £264.01 to £346.00 | £346.01 to £402.00 |
| 3 | 45% | £185.01 to £246.00 | £252.01 to £313.00 | £305.01 to £366.00 | £391.01 to £452.00 | £226.01 to £288.00 | £290.01 to £351.00 | £346.01 to £407.00 | £402.01 to £463.00 |
| 4 | 25% | £246.01 to £308.00 | £313.01 to £375.00 | £366.01 to £427.00 | £452.01 to £513.00 | £288.01 to £349.00 | £351.01 to £412.00 | £407.01 to £468.00 | £463.01 to £524.00 |
| 5 | 0% | Over £308.01 | Over £375.01 | Over £427.01 | Over £513.01 | Over £349.01 | Over £412.01 | Over £468.01 | Over £524.01 |

Table 1: Income bands for the 2025/26 working age scheme

8.2. The following are currently incorporated into the scheme:

- To encourage work, a standard £50 per week disregard will be provided against all earnings.
- Disability benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments will be disregarded.
- Where any applicant, their partner or dependent child(ren) are in receipt of a disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payments or Disability Living Allowance, a further disregard of £50 per week will be given, thereby supporting those with disabilities.
- Carer's Allowance and the Support Component of Employment and Support Allowance will be disregarded.
- Child benefit and Child Maintenance will be disregarded.
- The amount in respect of the housing element, within Universal credit will be disregarded.
- The total disregard on war pensions and war disablement pensions.

8.3. The full current working age CTRS is included as a background paper.

Assessing the effectiveness of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme

8.4 Any scheme will be a balance between cost and level of support provided. The intention of the new banded scheme (when it was agreed in January 2023) was that it would better provide support to those most in need, with the costs of the scheme being broadly in line with the previous scheme. The report to Council in January 2024 highlighted some issues that either could not be modelled in advance or were missed. These were:

- Disregard of limited capability to work. This could not be modelled in advance, but it was included in the scheme as those in this category are some of the most vulnerable.
- Previous administration of the rent element within universal credit claims had not been disregarded. This was not identifiable during the initial modelling.
- During 2023/24 the council distributed support payments of up to £25 to a number of claimants. This figure was not included in the modelling; however, it has reduced our collectable amount of council tax.

8.5 In addition to the above impacts, it is not possible to isolate the effect of general economic conditions on levels of Council Tax support. Whilst inflation was dropping from its peak by the time the new scheme was implemented, it was still at a very high level, and residents were (and still are) feeling the impact of that.

8.6 The introduction of a new finance system has had an impact on our processes and the usefulness of the data that the Council can currently provide. During the implementation of the new system, a lot of payments went into a suspense account. This, combined with getting used to the new system, has meant that recovery action was suspended for a period. Recovery action has now recommenced, but this has affected the accuracy of the Council's collection rate data. A more generous CTRS would reduce the amount of Council Tax that can be collected, so represents a cost to the Council (and other preceptors). However, a well targeted scheme (and all other things being equal) may see a reduction in that cost if the Council can then collect more of the income that is due. That means less debt is written off and less resources are expended in chasing the debt. However, the Council cannot currently show whether this is the case.

Cost of our Council Tax Reduction Schemes

8.7 Table 2 below shows the cost of our CTRS up until 2021 (data produced for the Council report in January 2023). This includes the value of the CTRS as a percentage of the Gross Council Tax liability. By showing it as a percentage of total Council Tax it helps to strip out the effect of inflation. This shows a steady decline in the percentage cost up until 2019, and then an increase from 2020. This is likely to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

| Financial Year | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Gross CT Liability £ | 83,774,520 | 84,591,594 | 86,434,938 | 89,845,133 | 94,684,222 | 100,685,225 | 105,302,251 | 110,123,753 | 115,611,353 |
| CTR £ | 6,998,498 | 6,902,064 | 6,693,360 | 6,761,037 | 6,770,869 | 6,863,664 | 6,771,613 | 7,208,969 | 8,218,400 |
| % | 8.35% | 8.16% | 7.74% | 7.53% | 7.15% | 6.82% | 6.43% | 6.55% | 7.11% |

Table 2: Cost of CTRS over time, up to Financial Year 2021/22.

8.8 The above table includes both working age and pension age claimants. Table 3 below shows the caseload split between working age and pension age claimants. This shows a continuing steady reduction in pension age claimants, but a spike upwards for working age claimants in 2020 and 2021, with a slight decline in 2022. In more recent years the number of working-age claimants in April each year has been: 4,575 in 2023, 4,652 in 2024 and 4,794 in 2025. The equivalent pension age claimants have been: 2,529 in 2023, 2,457 in 2024 and 2,474 in 2025.

| Financial Year Commencing | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Working Age | 4797 | 4718 | 4537 | 4327 | 4187 | 4058 | 3980 | 4355 | 5151 | 4823 |
| Pension Age | 4214 | 4065 | 3831 | 3608 | 3404 | 3120 | 2981 | 2874 | 2746 | 2636 |
| Total | 9011 | 8783 | 8368 | 7935 | 7591 | 7178 | 6961 | 7229 | 7897 | 7459 |

Table 3: Claimant numbers by year, split between working age and pension age.

8.9 The latest data (estimates for 2025/26 as at November 2025) is that the cost of the scheme will be £9.6 million. That is against a Gross Council Tax amount of £130.6 million, which equates to 7.39%. That is made up of 2,427 pension age cases (estimated cost of £3.4 million) and 5,109 working age cases (estimate cost of £6.2 million). The detailed split is shown in Table 4 below:

| Scheme Category | No. of households claiming | Estimated cost of CTRS support |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Couple with one child | 190 | £194,095.99 |
| Couple with two children | 199 | £192,322.13 |
| Couple with three children | 170 | £192,223.35 |
| Couple | 306 | £396,725.13 |
| Passported | 77 | £287,417.62 |
| Single with one child | 891 | £959,531.31 |
| Single with two children | 707 | £733,678.32 |
| Single with three children | 376 | £502,566.39 |
| Single | 2,193 | £2,717,118.18 |
| Total working age | 5.109 | £6,175,678.42 |
| | | |
| Pensioner | 2,427 | £3,482,447.30 |
| | | |
| Overall Total | 7,536 | £9,658,125.72 |

Table 4: Detailed CTRS cases (November 2025)

8.10 This data can also be split by Council Tax band, as shown in Table 5 below. All households who are liable to pay Council Tax, can apply and an assessment is performed against our scheme criteria. This also applies to occupants would are jointly liable who are not part of the same household. In these circumstances, each joint person can make a CTRS claim in their own right. This accounts for a difference in the number of households (7,536) and the number of properties by council tax band (7,522).

| Council Tax Band | No. of properties with Council Tax support |
|------------------|--|
| A | 993 |
| B | 2470 |
| C | 3204 |
| D | 614 |
| E | 172 |
| F | 52 |
| G | 16 |
| H | 1 |
| Total | 7,522 |

Table 5: Number of properties with Council Tax support by property band

8.11 All Councils complete an annual Council Tax return, which includes data on Council Tax Reduction Schemes. This can be used as a way of comparing data between Councils. The table below looks at the value of CTRS support as a percentage of the total Council Tax that would be payable before the impact of CTRS. It provides a comparison of North Herts with all of Hertfordshire, all East areas and all of England. These totals will be affected by relative demographics and deprivation.

| District/ Area | Cost of Working Age CTRS as a % of Total Council Tax | Cost of Pension Age CTRS as a % of Total Council Tax | Cost of Total CTRS as a % of Total Council Tax |
|-----------------|--|--|--|
| North Herts | 4.75% | 2.70% | 7.45% |
| Hertfordshire | 4.53% | 2.64% | 7.17% |
| East of England | 4.28% | 3.06% | 7.34% |
| All England | 5.06% | 3.67% | 8.73% |

Table 6: Costs of CTRS as a percentage of Total Council Tax

8.12 The data for North Herts in the table above is different to the data in paragraph 8.9 because of the timing of when the data was taken. Overall North Herts is probably slightly above (i.e. more generous) than where you would expect. This will be due to the scheme design and thresholds that have been agreed.

8.13 As part of the consultation on the Fair Funding formula over the Summer, there was a proposal that the impact of CTRS should be reflected through modelled data, rather than actual scheme costs. The consultants who advised us on our consultation response found that our scheme costs were about £100k above the modelled costs.

Dying in poverty

8.14 Marie Curie have published a report on dying in poverty (<https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/document/dying-in-poverty-report-2025>). This raises awareness around those with terminal illnesses, and that over 100,000 die in poverty each year. Having a terminal illness can affect someone's earnings and also lead to them facing increased costs. The report highlights a number of actions that they would like to see. Most of these are targeted at Government, but there is an action related to Council Tax support.

8.15 The specific recommendation that Marie Curie make is: "The UK government, as well as devolved administrations, should ensure that people living with terminal illness are guaranteed support for council tax. Until that point, individual councils in England should consider how they can provide similar support in their area". They reference that Manchester City Council became the first council in the country to implement specific, additional support for households in which someone has a terminal illness.

8.16 The support that Manchester City Council (MCC) provide is that any household that has someone living there with a terminal illness will pay zero Council Tax. This will apply from the date of diagnosis, until up to a year after the date of death. Whilst the Council are very sympathetic to those with a terminal illness it is not felt that this level of support can be replicated at this Council. The reasons for this are as follows:

- MCCs standard CTRS provides support up to maximum of 85%. Our CTRS provides up to 100%, so the poorest residents already pay no Council Tax.
- The Council cannot see how MCC costed the potential impact of this, and North Herts Council calculations show that the costs could run into millions.
- MCC are a Unitary Authority. If the Council made a change through our CTRS then residents would be required to be consulted with and alongside preceptors (Herts County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner). This would take time which would mean that it would take until 2027/28 to implement this proposal. There may also not be support for the proposal. Further if the Council fully provided this level of support through our discretionary scheme then it would pay the full cost, which could be a disproportionate amount to be met by the Council alone.
- The cost of providing support would either need to come from reducing other levels of CTR support, or through reductions in service levels.
- The support does not seem to be well targeted, for North Herts in comparison to Manchester. According to Loughborough University data that previously accompanied the Marie Curie report, there were estimated to be 166 people per year aged 20+ dying in poverty in North Herts. However, that was estimated to be only 13.3% of those that were dying from a terminal illness in North Herts. That means that there would be over one thousand people per year dying from a terminal illness who are not in poverty. Whilst the poverty level is a low threshold, and the Council would aspire for residents to be well above poverty levels, it is very likely that a high number of those affected by a terminal illness are very significantly above those poverty levels. The equivalent estimated percentage for Manchester City Council was 32.6%.

8.17 For 2026/27 the suggestion is that the primary focus is on our CTRS providing support to all those on the lowest incomes, to reduce the overall numbers of those in poverty. This reflects that the CTRS already provides up to 100% support. The Council would look to supplement this with a change to the discretionary policy to ensure that those with a terminal illness do not fall through any gaps in the main CTRS scheme. For example, it may not be immediately obvious that someone's income has dropped, or they may be incurring increased costs as a direct result of a terminal illness. If something like that took them below the CTRS thresholds then the Council would ensure that the discretionary support was implemented. A copy of our current discretionary scheme is attached at Appendix A. The proposal is that paragraph 4.1 is amended to add a second sentence that would read: *"That would include households where a member of the household has been diagnosed with a terminal illness and this has resulted in a*

significant impact on the net income of the household to an extent that it makes their Council Tax unaffordable”.

8.18 We have made contact with Marie Curie to understand their thoughts on the balance between specific support and the general support we provide to our residents. They acknowledged that changes to the CTRS policy take time to achieve, due to the consultation required. They have not yet provided a specific view on the fact that we already provide up to 100% support.

Proposals for 2026/27

8.19 In addition to the proposed change to our discretionary scheme (as per paragraph 8.17), The Council also intend to uplift each of the threshold bands by inflation (expected to be 3.8%). Reflecting inflation ensures that that eligibility continues at the same affordability thresholds. The Council consider these to be minor changes and therefore not subject to full consultation. We will make our major preceptors (Hertfordshire County Council and Police and Crime Commissioner) aware of the proposed changes.

Local Government Reorganisation and CTRS

8.20 Under Local Government Reorganisation there will be a need for each new Council to have a CTRS for working aged people (assuming that the national scheme for pension aged people continues). Any significant changes made to the scheme for 2026/27 or 2027/28 should ideally consider the schemes in relevant other Councils.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. Under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 a local authority is permitted reduce its council tax. Accordingly Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act requires a local authority to have in place a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

9.2. The Council is required to maintain and annually review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with Section 13A and Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012).

9.3. Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to make any revision to its scheme or any replace scheme no later than 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect.

9.4. Section 3(1) of Schedule 4 of the Local Government Finance Act 2012, which inserts Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to consult on any changes to its scheme as follows:

- Consult any Major Precepting Authority which has power to issue a precept to it,
- Publish a draft scheme in such manner as it thinks fit, and
- Consult such other persons as it considers are likely to have an interest in the operation of the scheme.

9.5 Full Council's terms of reference include at 4.4.1 (z) “approving the Council Tax Reduction Scheme”. In considering the CTRS, Cabinet is acting in accordance with

statutory provisions and in accordance with its obligations under the Council's constitution.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The Council Tax Reduction Scheme in this year is estimated to cost approximately £9.7m which is borne by the Council's Collection Fund. Costs are shared between the Council and the Major Precepting Authorities which is in approximately the following proportions:

- County Council (including Fire and Rescue Service) (around 76%)
- Police and Crime Commissioner (around 12%)
- District Council (around 12%)

These proportions are based on the overall share of Council Tax income and will change over time in line with decisions made by each Authority on levels of Council Tax increase. Recently, these have mainly been affected by the levels of increase (without a local referendum) that have been allowed by Government. The costs of Council Tax Reduction are not funded by the Precepting Authorities directly. Instead, the estimated level of eligibility is converted into a number of band D equivalent properties. That then reduces the overall tax base (i.e., the number of properties expected to pay Council Tax), and therefore the amount of income that each Precepting Authority should expect to receive. Differences between what was expected, and the amount collected are managed through a Collection Fund. The precepting Authorities will share any surpluses or shortfalls in the following year.

10.2. Increasing the threshold bands by inflation aims to ensure that households with a similar level of income in real terms will continue to be eligible for the same level (as a percentage) of Council Tax support. All other things being equal, this would mean that the band D equivalent eligibility for Council Tax support would remain consistent.

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. General economic factors can have an impact on the number of people that claim CTRS and therefore it is difficult to predict the number of households that will be eligible in the future and the extent of that entitlement and impact on the cost of the scheme. The only way to mitigate the risk of increasing spend is to make the scheme less generous. This in turn will mean increases in the amount of Council Tax to be collected, which may prove counter-productive and move the problem into increased bad debts.

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 An equalities impact assessment (EIA) was completed for the current scheme in December 2022 before it was implemented. As no major changes are being made, another assessment is not required.

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 direct HR implications arising from this report.

16. APPENDICES

16.2 Appendix A: Current Discretionary Scheme

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

17.1 Ian Couper, Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk; ext 4243

17.2 Geraldine Goodwin, Revenues, Systems and Technical Manager, Geraldine.goodwin@north-herts.gov.uk, ext 4277

17.3 Anne Banner, Benefits Manager, anne.banner@north-herts.gov.uk, ext 4610

17.4 Natasha Jindal, Deputy Monitoring Officer, natasha.jindal@north-herts.gov.uk

17.5 Ellie Hollingsworth, Policy and Strategy Officer, ellie.hollingsworth@north-herts.gov.uk

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 *New banded Council Tax Reduction Scheme implemented in April 2023* [Agenda for Council on Thursday, 19th January, 2023, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council](#), see minute 171

18.2 Review of the Scheme in January 2024 <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=3400&Ver=4> see minute 259

18.3 Current Council Tax Reduction Scheme <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-11/North%20Herts%20S13A%20202526%20Scheme%20FINAL.pdf>

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North Hertfordshire District Council

Council Tax

Discretionary Reduction in Liability

S13A (1)(c) Policy

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1 Introduction and Legislation

- 1.1 Section 13A (1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, provides the Council with additional discretionary powers to enable it to reduce the council tax liability where statutory discounts, exemptions and reductions do not apply.
- 1.2 These discretionary awards can be given to:
 - Individual Council Taxpayers;
 - Groups of Council Taxpayers defined by a common set of circumstances;
 - Council Taxpayers within a defined area: or
 - To all Council Taxpayers within the Council's area.
- 1.3 This policy is basically divided into the following areas namely:
 - (a) **The Flood Recovery Framework** – this part of the policy covers situations outlined by Central Government where any parts of the Council's area were to be designated as a designated flood area;
 - (b) **Crisis** – this part of the policy deals with all cases where a reduction in liability is claimed where there the taxpayer experiences a crisis (other than mentioned in (a) to (c); and
 - (c) **Other circumstances** – this part applies where the application is made other than for (a) to (d) above.

- 1.4 The relevant legislation (S13 (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012), states the following:

Reductions by billing authority

- (1) The amount of council tax which a person is liable to pay in respect of any chargeable dwelling and any day (as determined in accordance with sections 10 to 13);
 - (a) in the case of a dwelling situated in the area of a billing authority in England, is to be reduced to the extent, if any, required by the authority's council tax reduction scheme;
 - (b) (not applicable)
 - (c) **in any case, may be reduced to such extent (or, if the amount has been reduced under paragraph (a) or (b), such further extent) as the billing authority for the area in which the dwelling is situated thinks fit.**

- 1.5 The provisions stated in (c) above, allows the Council to reduce the Council Tax liability for any taxpayer in addition to any application for Council Tax Reduction under the Council's scheme. This is a general power that has always been available to the Council.
- 1.6 When deciding on whether to grant a reduction in liability, the Council will consider each application on its merits. Principles of reasonableness will apply in all cases with the authority deciding each case on relevant merits.

- 1.7 Any decision made will be without reference to any budgetary considerations notwithstanding the fact that any awards must be balanced against the needs of local taxpayers who will ultimately pay for any reduction in Council Tax income. However, where Central Government provides funding directly to the Council to compensate for specific events, the Council will look to use **all** funding provided.
- 1.8 The period of any reduced liability will be considered in conjunction with the circumstances of the Council Taxpayer except where specified by Central Government.

2. The Flood Recovery Framework

- 2.1 In a severe weather event with significant wide area impacts, local authorities may need central support to help their communities and businesses return to normal. Building on these principles, a core package of business and community recovery support has been developed by Central Government to serve as a framework for flood recovery funding when needed.
- 2.2 It will be for Government Ministers to determine when this support will be made available. Weather incidents with localised impacts will not usually trigger a recovery support package.
- 2.3 In relation to Council Tax, Central Government have developed a Council Tax discount package that is available under S13A (1) (c).

Who is eligible for a council tax discount?

- 2.4 Where the Council Tax Discount Scheme is activated following severe weather, MHCLG will refund eligible local authorities for granting discounts in the following circumstances:
 - (a) 100% discount for a minimum of 3 months, or while anyone is unable to return home if longer, for **primary residences** whereas a result of the relevant weather event:
 - Flood water entered into the habitable areas; or,
 - Flood water did not enter into the habitable areas, but the local authority regards that the residence was otherwise considered **unliveable** for any period of time.

AND

- (b) 100% council tax discount on temporary accommodation for anyone unable to return to their home, in parallel with the discount on their primary residence where applicable.

- 2.5 Second homes and empty homes will **not** be eligible.
- 2.6 Instances where households might be considered **unliveable** could include:
 - where access to the property is severely restricted (e.g. upper floor flats with no access);
 - key services such as sewerage, draining, and electricity are severely affected;

- the adverse weather has resulted in other significant damage to the property such that it would be, or would have been, advisable for residents to vacate the premises for any period of time, regardless of whether they do vacate or not;
- flooded gardens or garages will **not** usually render a household eligible but there may be exceptions where it could be demonstrated that such instances mean effectively that the property is unliveable.

2.7 It will be for the Council to determine eligibility under the scheme.

Properties affected by multiple instances of flooding

2.8 Residences impacted in multiple flood events will not be precluded from repeat support where this is made available by Government in respect of separate weather events.

2.9 Where the scheme is activated for two separate instances of flooding within 3 months of each other, the two discount periods will run concurrently. For example, if the second flood event occurred after 2 months, flooded properties already receiving support could be eligible for another 3 months' discount, making the total period of reimbursement 5 months.

Funding

2.10 In such cases, Central Government will make payment to the Council via a Section 31 grant.

The Council's Policy in respect of the Flood Recovery Framework

2.11 The Council shall operate the scheme strictly in accordance with Central Government guidelines.

3 Crisis

3.1 The Council will consider requests for assistance from Council Taxpayers who, through no fault of their own, have experienced a crisis or event that has made their property uninhabitable, where they remain liable to pay council tax and for which they have no recourse for compensation nor have recourse to any statutory exemptions or discounts.

3.2 All such requests must be made in writing detailing the **exact** circumstances of why reduction in the liability is required and specifying when the situation is expected to be resolved.

3.3 The Council will consider applications on a case-by-case basis in consultation with other organisations as appropriate. Any reduction will be applied where they remain liable to pay council tax and for which they have no recourse for compensation nor to any statutory exemptions or discounts or where the crisis or event is not covered by any insurance policy.

4 Other Circumstances

- 4.1 The Council will consider requests from Council Taxpayers for a reduction in their liability based on other circumstances, not specifically mentioned within this document. However, the Council must be of the opinion that the circumstances relating to the application warrant further reduction in their liability for Council Tax having regard to the effect on other Council Taxpayers.
- 4.2 No reduction in liability will be granted where any statutory exemption or discount could be granted.
- 4.3 No reduction in liability will be granted where it would conflict with any resolution, core priority or objective of the Council.

5 Changes in circumstances

- 5.1 The Council may revise any discretionary reduction in liability where the applicant's circumstances or situation has changed.
- 5.2 The taxpayer agrees that he/she must inform the Council immediately either by phone or in writing about any changes in their circumstances which might affect the claim for under this policy. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of the reduction granted for the year and the requirement to repay any outstanding amount to the Council.

6 Duties of the applicant and the applicant's household

- 6.1 A person claiming any reduction in liability must:
 - Provide the Council with such information as it may require to make a decision;
 - Tell the Council of any changes in circumstances that may be relevant to their ongoing claim; and
 - Provide the Council with such other information as it may require in connection with their claim.

7 The award and duration of a reduction in liability

- 7.1 Both the amount and the duration of the award are determined at the discretion of the Council and will be done so on the basis of the evidence supplied and the circumstances of the claim.
- 7.2 The start date of such a payment and the duration of any payment will be determined by the Council. In any event, the maximum length of the award will not exceed the end of the financial year in which the award is given.
- 7.3 The application and any supporting documentation will be submitted to the Service Director - Customers for a decision.

8 Payment

8.1 In line with legislation, any award shall be granted as a reduction in the liability of the Council Taxpayer thereby reducing the amount of Council Tax payable

9 Reductions in Council Tax liability granted in error or incorrectly

9.1 Where a reduction in liability has been granted incorrectly or in error either due to a failure to provide the correct or accurate information to the Council or some other circumstances, the Council Taxpayers account will be adjusted and billed in the normal way.

10 Notification of a reduction in liability

10.1 The Council will notify the outcome of each application in writing. The notification will include the reason for the decision and advise the applicant of their appeal rights.

10.2 If a Council Taxpayer is aggrieved by the council's decision a written request for a review of its decision can be submitted if it is made within 2 months of the original decision. If the original decision is upheld and the council taxpayer remains aggrieved, there is a further right of appeal to the valuation tribunal.

11 Delegated Powers

11.1 This S13A (1) (c) policy has been approved by the Council. However, the Service Director - Customers is authorised to make technical scheme amendments to ensure it meets the criteria set by the Council and, for certain defined schemes, Central Government guidance.

12 Appeals

12.1 Appeals against the Council's decision may be made in accordance with Section 16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

12.2 The Council Taxpayer must in the first instance write to the Council outlining the reason for their appeal. Once received the council will then consider whether any additional information has been received which would justify a change to the original decision and notify the Council Taxpayer accordingly.

12.3 Where the Council Taxpayer remains aggrieved, a further appeal can then be made to the Valuation Tribunal. This further appeal should be made within 2 months of the decision of the Council not to grant any reductions. Full details can be obtained from the Councils website or from the Valuation Tribunal www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk

13 Fraud

13.1 The Council is committed to protecting public funds and ensuring funds are awarded to the people who are rightfully eligible to them.

- 13.2 An applicant who tries to fraudulently claim a reduction in liability by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under The Fraud Act 2006.
- 13.3 Where the Council suspects that such a fraud may have been committed, this matter will be investigated as appropriate and may lead to criminal proceedings being instigated.

14 Complaints

- 14.1 The Council's Complaints Procedure (available on the Council's website) will be applied in the event of any complaint received about this policy.

15 Policy Review

- 15.1 This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as appropriate to ensure it remains fit for purpose. However, a review may take place sooner should there be any significant changes in legislation.

Agenda Item 13

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY 6 January 2026

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE: LICENSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: CLLR MICK DEBENHAM - REGULATORY

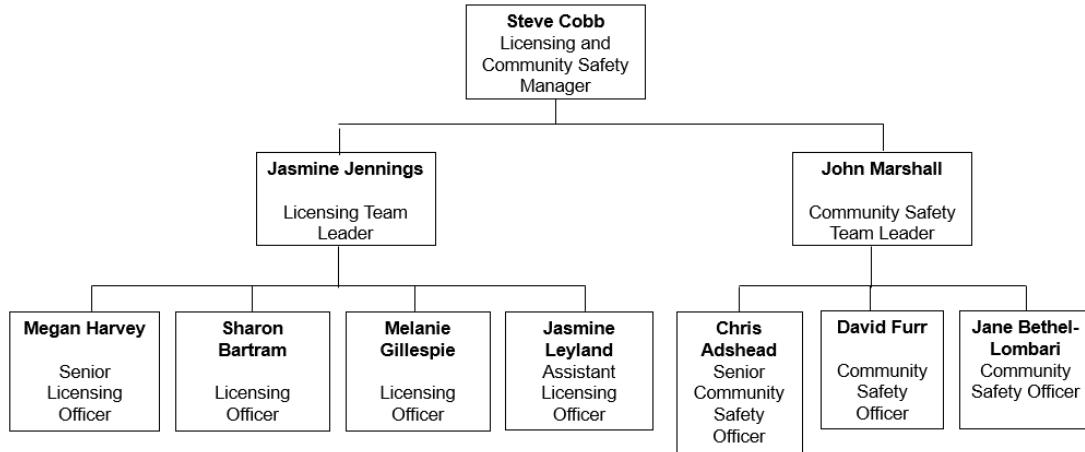
PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this Information Note is to provide the committee with an overview of the work undertaken by the community safety team.
- 1.2 The Information Note will also highlight the impact of the additional officer and new budget approved by Full Council for 2025/26.

2. TEAM OVERVIEW

- 2.1 The community safety team sit within the licensing and community safety team in the Regulatory Directorate.



- 2.2 The new officer for 2025/26 is the senior community safety officer.
- 2.3 There are some synergies between the two teams which allow officers to work together on certain issues.
- 2.4 The community safety team are the Council's first point of contact for partnership working and information sharing with Hertfordshire Constabulary.
- 2.5 The team are responsible for the administration and chairing of the Community Safety Partnership Joint Action Group.
- 2.6 The licensing and community safety manager is the Council Lead for the PROTECT and PREVENT strands of the CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy.

- 2.7 The community safety team leader represents the Council on the CCTV Partnership management group.
- 2.8 The community safety team are also responsible for:
 - Abandoned vehicles
 - Fly-tipping
 - Littering
 - Dog fouling
 - Anti-social behaviour (ASB)
 - Unauthorised encampments
 - Hate crime

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 Prior to 2025/26, the two community safety officers worked primarily on envirocrime but also assisted the community safety team leader with ASB issues.
- 3.2 This resulted in most ASB work being reactive rather than proactive, and the fly-tipping resource being insufficient.
- 3.3 The addition of a senior community safety officer has strengthened the team and now enables it to be more proactive, both with ASB and fly-tipping.

Fly-tipping

- 3.4 Increased patrols are now taking place at fly-tipping hotspots which has received a positive response from our customers.
- 3.5 Two recent joint working operations have taken place with the Hertfordshire Constabulary Rural Operations Support Team to target fly-tipping hotspots. This resulted in the seizure of a vehicle.
- 3.6 Since 1 April 2025, the team have issued 56 sanctions to the end of November comprising of fixed penalty notices, community protection warnings/notices, or prosecutions. The previous highest annual total was 54 which has already been exceeded with 4 months remaining.
- 3.7 There has been 3 successful court prosecutions this year, 1 for an abandoned vehicle and 2 for fly-tipping. Additionally, there are 3 outstanding warrants for suspects that have failed to appear at court and one ongoing case.
- 3.8 Joint working is being planned with neighbouring authorities to prevent cross-border fly-tipping

ASB and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

- 3.9 With the new community safety budget allocation of £10,000 the team has been able to undertake proactive work to tackle ASB by engaging with and educating children.
- 3.10 During September Freshers Week, 4 separate Women's Safety Talks were held at Emil Dale Academy in Letchworth. Approximately 250 male and female students attended to learn about the importance of women's safety receiving positive feedback from the Academy.

- 3.11 In November, the team were the main sponsor of a Crucial Crew event that ran for 2 weeks. Over 1,000 year 6 primary school children in North Herts attended to receive educational training in a range of personal safety topics including online safety, bullying, railway safety, drugs, alcohol, and basic cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- 3.12 Work is ongoing with the Educational Support Centre in North Herts to produce 6 short 'Tik-Tok' style video clips to warn about the dangers around alcohol, drugs, sexting, cyber-bullying, smoking and vaping. These videos are being written and produced by the children to ensure the format is one that will capture the interest of children. These videos will be made professionally using actors from the Emil Dale Academy.
- 3.13 In addition to targeting children to raise awareness at an early age, a Women's Safety Talk was also held at the Council Offices in June that was open to residents. Over 50 residents and staff attended, both male and female, with a positive response. It is hoped to organise more of these talks around the district in due course.
- 3.14 The team have worked with colleagues in the licensing team to promote the roll-out of the Women and Girls Safety Charter. The Charter is now in operation in Hitchin and Letchworth, with Royston currently being targeted. Further work will include Baldock and the villages to help ensure North Herts remains a safe place to visit as part of the night-time economy.

Other successes

- 3.15 In July, the team applied for and was granted a Closure Order for a vape shop in Royston that was selling unlawful products. North Herts was the first local authority in Hertfordshire to achieve this and has already been asked to assist other local authorities based on its experience. This was a superb partnership working operation between the community safety team and Hertfordshire Trading Standards.
- 3.16 To address youth-related issues on the Jackmans estate, the team provided funding to launch Jackmans Youth Club.
- 3.17 Existing mobile CCTV locations were limited due to new restrictions on the placing of cameras on street furniture. Having undertaken a review of ASB hotspots in conjunction with Hertfordshire Constabulary, funding has been used to upgrade street furniture in current hotspots to allow for the installation of mobile CCTV.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 The team strongly believe that a more targeted approach at fly-tipping hotspots, in partnership with Hertfordshire Constabulary and neighbouring authorities, can have a significant impact on current high fly-tipping statistics.
- 4.2 Additionally, one of the best ways of reducing ASB and VAWG is to educate children at an early age.
- 4.3 The £10,000 budget and additional officer has allowed a range of proactive work to be undertaken in tackling fly-tipping, ASB and VAWG that was previously unable to be delivered. Having a budget also opens up the ability to bid for external funding which is easier to obtain when you have match-funding opportunity.
- 4.4 2025/26 has been an excellent start but there is so much more the Council could do with an increased budget utilising existing staffing resource. More engagement with schools and colleges, more resident safety talks, targeted joint working at fly-tipping hotspots, increased fly-tipping enforcement, to name a few.

- 4.5 One area where the team can improve is public engagement, specifically letting our customers know what we are doing to improve the district. This is also the case with keeping Councillors informed. Feedback has been received as part of the biannual community safety survey that customers would appreciate understanding more about the work undertaken and some evidence that their survey contributions are being listened to.
- 4.6 The one area out of the team's control is the frustratingly low sanctions given by the courts for fly-tipping. A prime example is where an offender is offered a fixed penalty notice (FPN) but opts to go to court, where the court issues a fine less than the FPN value and only partial costs. It makes it very difficult to use press releases of prosecutions as a deterrent when the sanctions are not prohibitive.

How can the Overview & Scrutiny Committee assist the team?

- 4.7 The team would like the committee to endorse its work and recognise the additional proactive work being undertaken by the new budget allocation.
- 4.8 The committee comments on this report, and any suggestions on how the service could be improved would be welcomed.
- 4.9 The licensing team provide an annual report to the Licensing and Regulation Committee which includes:
 - Comparative data over a 5-year period (applications, licences, service requests, enforcement actions, etc)
 - A summary of work undertaken (policies, engagement, service improvement, etc)
 - An overview of planned work for the following year

Would the committee find it beneficial to have a similar annual report on the community safety service?

5. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 5.1 Steve Cobb
Licensing and Community Safety Manager
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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 JANUARY 2026

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / ACCESSIBLE SERVICES / RESPONSIBLE GROWTH / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights items scheduled in the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2025-26 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.

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 an Action Plan, all actions in the plan have now been completed and the Action Plan will no longer be part of this report.

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 2025-26.
- 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 December can be found at Appendix B. Members can view currently published forward plans here: [Browse plans - Cabinet, 2025 | North Herts Council](#)
- 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.

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 meet its statutory obligations.
- 9.2 Section 6.2.7 (u) of the constitution allows the Committee "to appoint time limited task and finish topic groups to undertake detailed scrutiny work and report back to the overview and scrutiny committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet."
- 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 2025-2026

16.2 Appendix B – Forward Plan – 19 December 2025

16.3 Appendix C – Overview and Scrutiny Decisions and Monitoring Tracker

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@northherts.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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| KEY |
|-------------------------------------|
| Items identified for work programme |
| Annual reports |
| Scrutiny reports |
| Completed |

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

| MEETING DATE | ITEMS AT MEETING | EXECUTIVE / REPORT AUTHOR |
|------------------|---|---|
| 10 June 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> O&S Annual Report 3C's – info to note Waste Contract Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillor Matt Barnes Councillor Val Bryant Councillor Amy Allen Scrutiny Officer |
| 9 September 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Delivery Plan & Performance indicators - Q1 Update Pay on Exit Parking Local government Reorganisation Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillor Ian Albert Councillor Donna Wright Councillor Laura Williams Scrutiny Officer |
| 11 November 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Centre Strategy Leisure and Active Communities Contract update Waste and Recycling Service change mobilisation Solar for Business Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillor Donna Wright Councillor Amy Allen Councillor Amy Allen Councillor Amy Allen Scrutiny Officer |
| 6 January 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crime and Disorder Issues – Hertfordshire Constabulary Council Delivery Plan & Key Performance Indicators – Q2 Update New Museum collection facility update Effectiveness of Council Tax Reduction Scheme Community Safety Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hertfordshire Constabulary Councillor Ian Albert Councillor Tamsin Thomas Councillor Ian Alber Councillor Mick Debenham Scrutiny Officer |
| 3 February 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Transformation and Inclusion Enterprise portfolio Update Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillor Val Bryant Councillor Tamsin Thomas Scrutiny Officer |
| 24 March 2026 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RIPA Council Delivery Plan & Key Performance Indicators – Q3 Update S106 Task and Finish Group Report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillor Daniel Allen Councillor Ian Albert Councillor Ralph Muncer (Chair of |

| MEETING DATE | ITEMS AT MEETING | EXECUTIVE / REPORT AUTHOR |
|--------------|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker | Task and Finish Group • Scrutiny Officer |

Items deferred / to be rescheduled

- Annual Safeguarding Review
- Environmental Health
- Local Plan Review
- Update on Health Equalities

For further investigation

- Decarbonisation
- National Planning Changes
- Officer recruitment / retention – grow your own / apprentices / career grading

Candidate topics to be scheduled:

- Cabinet Panel
- Impact of the Council's grant policies
- Officer recruitment & retention
- Sustainability
- Tackling Homelessness in North Herts

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Forward Plan of Key Decisions - 19 December 2025

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 |
|---|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Revocation of Air Quality Management Areas in Hitchin | | Cabinet | 20 Jan 2026 | | Jo Doggett, Director - Regulatory jo.doggett@north-herts.gov.uk, Frank Harrison, Environmental Health Manager frank.harrison@north-herts.gov.uk, Lucy Tucker lucy.tucker@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| Local Plan next steps | | Cabinet | 20 Jan 2026 | | Rachael Rooney, Interim Strategic Planning Manager rachael.rooney@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| Garden Waste Charge 2026-27 | | Cabinet | 20 Jan 2026 | | Sarah Kingsley, Director - Environment sarah.kingsley@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| Q2 Council Delivery Plan Update | | Cabinet | 20 Jan 2026 | | Ian Couper, Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |

| Decision required | Overview and Scrutiny | Decision Maker | Date of Decision | Documents to be submitted to Decision Maker | Contact Officer from whom documents can be requested | Confirmation that other documents may be submitted to the Decision Maker | Procedure for requesting details of other documents |
|--|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|---|--|--|---|
| TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW 2025/26 | | Cabinet | 20 Jan 2026 | | Ian Couper, Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| CAPITAL PROGRAMME MID-YEAR REVIEW 2025/26 | | Cabinet | 20 Jan 2026 | | Antonio Ciampa, Accountancy Manager antonio.ciampa@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| SECOND QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2025/26 | | Cabinet | 20 Jan 2026 | | Ian Couper, Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| North Herts District Design Code | | Cabinet | 17 Feb 2026 | | Sohanna Srinivasan, Principal Planning & Urban Design Officer sohanna.srinivasan@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| Proposed Parking Tariffs for 2026/27 | | Cabinet | 17 Feb 2026 | | Louise Symes, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager louise.symes@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| Lease on Letchworth Multi Storey Car Park | | Cabinet | 17 Feb 2026 | | Steve Crowley, Director - Enterprise steve.crowley@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |

| Decision required | Overview and Scrutiny | Decision Maker | Date of Decision | Documents to be submitted to Decision Maker | Contact Officer from whom documents can be requested | Confirmation that other documents may be submitted to the Decision Maker | Procedure for requesting details of other documents |
|--|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Arrangements for carrying out Public Health Funerals | | Cabinet | 17 Feb 2026 | | Frank Harrison, Environmental Health Manager frank.harrison@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| Stray Dog Policy | | Cabinet | 17 Feb 2026 | | Frank Harrison, Environmental Health Manager frank.harrison@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| Parking Permit Review | | Cabinet | 17 Feb 2026 | | Louise Symes, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager louise.symes@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| Homelessness Prevention Grant allocations and update | | Cabinet | 17 Feb 2026 | | Martin Lawrence, Strategic Housing Manager martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| Q3 Council Delivery Plan Update | | Cabinet | 14 Apr 2026 | | Ian Couper, Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| TREASURY MANAGEMENT THIRD QUARTER REVIEW 2025/26 | | Cabinet | 14 Apr 2026 | | Ian Couper, Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |

| Decision required | Overview and Scrutiny | Decision Maker | Date of Decision | Documents to be submitted to Decision Maker | Contact Officer from whom documents can be requested | Confirmation that other documents may be submitted to the Decision Maker | Procedure for requesting details of other documents |
|--|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|---|---|--|---|
| THIRD QUARTER CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW 2025/26 | | Cabinet | 14 Apr 2026 | | Ian Couper, Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| THIRD QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2025/26 | | Cabinet | 14 Apr 2026 | | Ian Couper, Director - Resources ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| Developer Contributions SPD | | Cabinet | 14 Apr 2026 | | Clare Skeels, Senior Planning Officer clare.skeels@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |
| Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2026-2030 | | Cabinet | 14 Apr 2026 | | Reuben Ayavoo, Policy & Community Manager reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk | Yes | Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6 |

DECISIONS

| Item number | Recommendation/ Referral | Details from Cabinet | Status |
|----------------------------------|---|--|--------|
| NORTH HERTS TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY | | | |
| 26 | <p>RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:</p> <p>(1) That the draft Town Centres Strategy (attached as Appendix A to this report) and its associated Appendices be endorsed and approved for public consultation.</p> <p>(2) That delegated authority is granted to the Director – Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Place to make any minor non-material corrections, including but not limited to cosmetic additions or presentational alterations, to the draft Town Centres Strategy as considered necessary for the public consultation.</p> <p>REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <p>(1) To allow the draft Town Centres Strategy to be progressed to public consultation so that it may be developed and eventually adopted as a material planning consideration to support developers, landowners and relevant stakeholders when considering developing proposals and to provide policy advice to development management officers when determining planning applications until superseded by any new Local Plan.</p> | <p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>(1) Endorsed and approved the draft Town Centres Strategy (attached as Appendix A to this report) and its associated Appendices for public consultation.</p> <p>(2) Delegated authority to the Director, Place in consultation with the Executive Member for Place to make any minor non-material corrections, including but not limited to cosmetic additions or presentational alterations, to the draft Town Centres Strategy as considered necessary for the public consultation.</p> <p>REASON FOR DECISION:</p> <p>(1) To allow the draft Town Centres Strategy to be progressed to public consultation so that it may be developed and eventually adopted as a material planning consideration to support developers, landowners and relevant stakeholders when considering developing proposals and to provide policy advice to development management officers when determining planning applications until superseded by any new Local Plan.</p> <p>(2) To set key priorities which seek to maintain and enhance the unique character and vitality and viability of the district's four town centres through agreed partnership working.</p> | Open |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Tuesday, 11th November, 2025</p> <p>(2) To set key priorities which seek to maintain and enhance the unique character and vitality and viability of the district's four town centres through agreed partnership working.</p> <p>(3) To reinforce and deliver the Council's ambitions as set out in the Council Plan (2024 - 2028)</p> <p><u>O&S committee meeting - Tuesday 11th November 2025 @ 7.30pm</u></p> | <p>(3) To reinforce and deliver the Council's ambitions as set out in the Council Plan (2024 - 2028).</p> <p><u>Cabinet meeting – Wednesday 19th November 2025 @ 7.30pm</u></p> | |
|---|--|--|