

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



28 August 2026

Our Ref Overview and Scrutiny Committee 8
September 2026
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To: Members of the Committee: Councillors Jon Clayden (Chair), Claire Winchester (Vice-Chair), Sadie Billing, David Chalmers, Elizabeth Dennis, Dominic Griffiths, Nigel Mason, Caroline McDonnell, Ralph Muncer, Martin Prescott, Paul Ward and Daniel Wright-Mason

Substitutes: Councillors Matt Barnes, Sam Collins, Sarah Lucas, Bryony May, Steven Patmore, 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, SG6 3JF**

On

TUESDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 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 - 9 JUNE 2026	To take as read and approve as a true record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 9 June 2026.	(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. INFORMATION NOTE: ANNUAL REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN AND ADULTS 2025-26

(Pages
17 - 26)

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE DIRECTOR – GOVERNANCE

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

10. INFORMATION NOTE: WASTE AND RECYCLING UPDATE

(Pages
27 - 40)

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE DIRECTOR – ENVIRONMENT

An update on lessons learnt on communal collection issues, composting KPI, recycling and missed bin performance.

11. COUNCILLOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT

(Pages
41 - 46)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – GOVERNANCE

To provide details to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the completion of mandatory and required learning and development to be completed by Councillors.

12. ALLOCATION OF MHCLG HOMELESSNESS GRANT

(Pages
47 - 58)

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR – REGULATORY

The Council has received a multi-year funding settlement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), ring-fenced for the purpose of supporting the Council in meeting its homelessness duties. This report details proposals for the allocation of some of this funding in line with grant conditions, national policy and local priorities.

13. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2026-27

(Pages
59 - 76)

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY OFFICER

This report highlights items scheduled in the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2026-27 civic year. It also includes items that have not yet been assigned to a specific meeting of the Committee.

14. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To consider passing the following resolution: That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following report will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

15. PART 2 MINUTES - 18 JUNE & 2 JULY 2024, 7 JANUARY & 11 MARCH 2025 AND 9 JUNE 2026

(Pages
77 – 92)

To take as read and approve as a true record the Part 2 minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on the 18 June & 2 July 2024, 7 January & 11 March 2025, and 9 June 2026.

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 2

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNO
ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF
ON TUESDAY, 9TH JUNE, 2026 AT 7.30 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Jon Clayden (Chair), Claire Winchester (Vice-Chair), Sadie Billing, David Chalmers, Elizabeth Dennis, Nigel Mason, Caroline McDonnell, Ralph Muncer, Martin Prescott, Paul Ward and Daniel Wright-Mason.*

In Attendance: *Rumi Bose (Churchgate Project Manager), Ian Couper (Director - Resources), Robert Filby (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Chris Jeffery (Customer and Digital Services Manager), Jeevan Mann (Scrutiny Officer) and Anthony Roche (Chief Executive).*

Also Present: *There were no members of the public present.*

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Resources, Councillor Val Bryant, as Leader of the Council, and Councillor Sean Nolan, as Executive Member for Customers.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 01 minutes 56 seconds

There were no apologies for absence received.

2 MINUTES - 24 MARCH 2026

Audio recording – 02 minutes 07 seconds

Councillor Jon Clayden, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Ralph Muncer seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 24 March 2026 were approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chair.

3 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 03 minutes 46 seconds

There was no other business notified.

4 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 03 minutes 51 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 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 05 minutes 01 seconds

There was no public participation at this meeting.

6 URGENT AND GENERAL EXCEPTION ITEMS

Audio recording – 05 minutes 06 seconds

The Chair noted one urgent item in relation to the Churchgate Regeneration Project – Update & Next Steps. The Chair provided details for its urgency and advised that the full Urgency Notices for both items had been published on the Council website.

7 CALLED-IN ITEMS

Audio recording – 05 minutes 48 seconds

There had been no called-in items.

8 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Audio recording – 05 minutes 53 seconds

No questions had been submitted by Members.

9 INFORMATION NOTE: FULL YEAR PERFORMANCE UPDATE ON 3C'S 25/26

Audio recording – 05 minutes 58 seconds

Councillor Sean Nolan, as Executive Member for Customers, presented the Information Note entitled 'Full Year Update on Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3C's) 25/26' and advised that:

- Overall comments had decreased compared to the previous year.
- Complaints received by the Council and their contractors and details of this were shown at paragraphs 3.5 – 3.7 in the information note.
- The percentage of interactions resulting in a complaint was below 1%.
- 82% of stage 2 complaints had been resolved within 10 days, which met the 80% target.
- Only 15 stage 2 complaints had been deemed as justified, and they had been related to waste.
- Leisure Centre comments, compliments and complaints had dropped 50% compared to the previous year, and had returned to a consistent level since the contract change.
- The Local Government Ombudsman had received 6 complaints over the year as detailed at paragraph 3.12, but none of these had been upheld.

- The Council and their contractors had received 202 compliments as seen in Appendix B to the report.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Sadie Billing

In response to questions, the Customer and Digital Services Manager advised that:

- Justified complaints had been higher on the year due to the waste contract change, and staffing issues in the Waste Team around that time.
- Problems experienced with key staff leaving the Waste Team had been resolved.
- The leisure contractor followed timescales used by the Council for complaints, and they provided their complaint data to the Council at the end of each period.
- Auditing on complaint data from the leisure contractor was not currently done, but this could be raised with the Leisure Team to see if it could be implemented.
- Baseline complaint data had been provided by the previous waste contractor before the customer service element of the contract had been transferred to the Council.
- Contacts were monitored both day-to-day and monthly so peaks and troughs could be identified.
- Since the garden waste resubscription period and the waste contract change, complaints had dropped to a stable level.
- Complaints and service requests were distinguished appropriately and captured well by Customer Service Centre (CSC) staff, but data would be provided on this if it was available.
- A drop in complaints received by the waste contractor since the contract change had occurred as complaints now came directly to the Council, unlike the last contract.
- Most complaints were still dealt with by the leisure centre operators as seen in Appendix B to the report.
- Figures related to waste indicated that they were at a normal level currently.
- AI had been deployed on CSC telephone lines to answer basic enquiries, but officers were available to handle more complex enquiries and complaints.
- There were no plans to replace CSC officers with AI as it was a supporting tool.
- Appendix B to the report detailed the number of compliments, but they would be happy to share specifics.
- There were no specific examples of complaints turning into compliments, but the CSC Team prided themselves on their customer service skills.

The Chair advised that data related to Key Performance Indicators relating to waste and customer service were available to view on Ideagen.

Councillors Ralph Muncer and Martin Prescott put on record their thanks to the Shared Service Manager – Waste and the Senior Contracts Officer for their help during the waste contract change.

The Chair thanked Councillor Nolan and the Customer and Digital Services Manager for their presentation.

10 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Audio recording – 25 minutes 06 minutes

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

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following report will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

11 CHURCHGATE REGENERATION PROJECT UPDATE & NEXT STEPS - PART 2

N.B. This item was considered in restriction session and therefore no recording was available.

Details of minutes taken on this item are restricted due to the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of Section 200A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

12 CHURCHGATE REGENERATION PROJECT UPDATE & NEXT STEPS - PART 1

Audio recording – 01 hours 03 minutes 38 seconds

Councillor Val Bryant, as Leader of the Council, presented the report entitled 'Churchgate Regeneration Project Update & Next Steps – Part 1 and advised that:

- Since the consideration of the project at a Full Council meeting in July 2025, they had worked to test the most critical issues of the site such as parking, public realm, the future of the market, governance and long-term sustainability of the town centre.
- The Council was in a stronger position than it was 12 months ago as there was a strong technical and financial evidence base, and a clearer understanding of the site constraints, viability and delivery challenges, market appetite and delivery expectations.
- Soft market engagement recently undertaken had confirmed strong confidence in Hitchin as an attractive town centre regeneration opportunity with long-term potential.
- It was a finely balanced scheme, which required detailed feasibility work and delivery planning, and a proportionate approach to risk before any delivery route was chosen.
- The Council was seeking to appoint specialists with regeneration expertise to work alongside the project team and take it from ambition and planning to delivery and implementation.
- A phased approach would ensure that investment, funding and risk remained proportionate to uncertainty at each stage of the project and reflect the scale and complexity of the opportunity and feedback received from the soft market engagement.
- This would ensure that the project would progress in a measured way by maintaining strategic oversight and decision-making control and reduce uncertainty before any long-term partnership was entered into.
- The recommendations would support the ambition to deliver a viable, high-quality regeneration scheme to support the sustainability and vitality of Hitchin town centre.

The Chair advised that an updated version of this report had been published as a supplementary document.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor David Chalmers
- Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis

In response to questions, the Churchgate Project Manager advised that:

- Viability testing would not decrease the quality or delivery of the project or affordable housing as the regeneration aimed to produce a high-quality mixed-use development that celebrated the market, public realm and heritage of the area.
- The additional funds would allow testing of design quality, viability, and deliverability together rather than separately, while allowing the Council to have strategic oversight over quality control.

In response to questions, the Chief Executive advised that:

- The Secretary of State would place restrictions on the financial decision-making ability of the Council once a shadow authority was created, which would mean signoff from the shadow authority being required for financial decisions over a certain threshold and the potential need for multiple signoffs on this project.
- If they focused on delivering a viable scheme that made sense to the Council, it should also make sense to a shadow authority.
- However, they could not speak on behalf of a shadow authority that did not yet exist and whose purpose would be to oversee the preparation of the unitary authorities.

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

- Funding for this work would not go towards their current consultants, but to a different development partner or similar company.
- Appointing an external partner for this stage would put them in a better position due to the complexity of the project, and the expertise they would provide on appropriate testing before going out to the market.
- Not procuring an external partner would significantly impact both time and costs spent on the project, and using this funding would get them the right advice to proceed correctly.

In response to questions, Councillor Val Bryant advised that:

- There were detailed month by month plans in place for the project and there was no reason why the project should not be in a good position when Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) took place if they followed this.
- It would be an advantage for them to merge with other authorities such as Stevenage Borough Council as part of LGR as they were looking at bigger regeneration projects.

Councillor Jon Clayden proposed recommendation 2.1 in the report and the amended recommendation 2.2, and these were seconded by Councillor Claire Winchester, as follows:

- (1) That the recommendation to Full Council and to Cabinet is noted, and that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee also note the provided update/next steps of the project.
- (2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that Cabinet recommend that Council approves the allocation of additional funds, referencing the Part 2 report.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Nigel Mason

The following points were made as part of the debate:

- There was a fear that this project had reached a tipping point whereby the Council would continue to commit funding to it past the point of no return.
- The initial estimates for the project had been inadequate, and with turbulence in both the economy and construction industry, the overspend was unacceptable and the administration should evaluate their projects in a phased approach to focus on what was realistic.
- Additional costs were likely to arise in the future, and it would be useful for Members to be provided with more costing information before they reached the pre-development stage.
- They wanted the project to succeed, but not at any cost, therefore, measures should be taken to prevent it from spiralling.
- From experience with previous Council projects, it was important that this additional funding was allocated so that the Council was in the strongest possible position before the planning phase, and to prevent last minute changes from spiralling the project.
- The Churchgate Project Board had given this considerable thought, and they trusted the approach that was being taken.
- There was no reason not to support the recommendations.
- The project should not be stopped considering it was a multimillion-pound investment.
- The project was complicated and expensive, but they understood that the Project Board were doing their best to deliver this.
- They were not telling the Project Board to stop the project but simply telling them to be cautious.
- The Council should always remember that this was taxpayer money being spent, but the proposal was sensible and those living in Hitchin would benefit.

The Chair summarised discussions and outlined that:

- There had been discussion over the risk for the Council versus the risk for a developer in being involved in this project and how to balance that.
- Uncertainties would be present at the later stages of the project around financial decisions and upper bounds when LGR took place.
- The Committee did not want to see a loss of quality on the final scheme because of challenging market conditions or a stop to the project because of LGR.
- Reasons for involving external parties in the project had been discussed at length.

The Chair thanked Members and officers on the Project Board for their contributions.

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

RESOLVED: That the recommendation to Full Council and Cabinet was noted, and that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee also noted the provided update/next steps of the project.

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet recommends that Council approves the allocation of additional funds, referencing the Part 2 report.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To ensure that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee are content with the decisions being put forward to Cabinet on 16 June 2026 and to Full Council on 16 July 2026. This report provides an overview of the recent work completed and details how the project team and Project Board propose to move forward – providing the Committee with an opportunity to ask any further details.

N.B. Following the conclusion of the item, there was a break in proceedings at 21.08 and the meeting reconvened at 21.17. During the break, Councillor Martin Prescott left the Chamber and did not return.

13 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION FUNDING

Audio recording – 01 hours 46 minutes 22 seconds

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Resources, presented the report entitled 'Funding for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)' and advised that:

- This report was seeking agreement on how the LGR reserve for the next two financial years would be allocated, and the decision making and reporting mechanisms for this.
- Spending on LGR could be put into three categories, which were county-wide costs, additional staffing costs arising from LGR related work and staff training costs.
- £1 million would be allocated to county-wide costs, with any contribution to this being a fair share contributed by each council, and this would be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with executive members.
- Up to £200K would be spent on staff training costs, which would be hugely important in the context of LGR.
- The recent delegated decision allocated £450K of the LGR funding to four full-time, two-year, fixed-term posts in HR and IT to address workload pressures.
- However, recruitment was ongoing for these posts, and they would not necessarily need to spend the full allocation.
- Delegated decisions were likely to be published for spending on staff backfill and county-wide costs, but may not be needed for the learning and development allocations as these transactions would be low value and allocated in tranches, but they would be monitored in the quarterly budget reports.
- Proposals for spending would go the Leadership Team for review and prioritisation in the context of the available budget.
- Significant officer time spent on LGR related work would continue.
- Centralised spending would be easier to compartmentalize through workstream leads and project plans.
- Funding for the LGR Reserve was fixed and they might need to reevaluate the allocation as part of the budget setting next year, but currently it was robust.
- Points raised about managing funds effectively on large projects such as LGR would be taken onboard.
- There would be continued opportunities for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Finance, Audit and Risk Committee to review spending on LGR.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Sadie Billing

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

- The £200K for additional staff training costs had been set after conversations with the Learning and Development Manager, and most costs had been absorbed within existing budgets so far, meaning it was a realistic figure.
- More spending on new positions would not take place soon as the immediate workload pressures had been addressed.
- Future recruitment would occur as LGR related work grew more intense.
- If additional staff were needed, there would be a need to make timely decisions, and the benefit of wider consultation on spending would have to be considered.
- Risk from potential redundancy costs following LGR due to appointing additional staff was a factor, but the risk of not appointing additional staff was even greater.
- It was speculated that additional staff might be needed beyond LGR.
- The county-wide costs went towards a central pot for the county-wide LGR programme overseen by the Chief Executives Co-ordinating Group, and this appointed additional staff, but also had staff loaned from existing authorities and there were mechanisms in place to ensure the right flows of funding.
- Resources to support mental health and wellbeing in the Council were good, but it was recognised that that the HR Team would need additional staff to help transition existing staff to a new unitary authority and beyond.
- There was no contingency built into the LGR Reserve, but there would be an opportunity to review this when the next budget was set, and it was noted that the reserve could increase next year as LGR progressed.
- It was likely that most staff would be transferred across to the new unitary authorities and any severance costs would be for them to handle after April 2028, which had been factored into the LGR submission documents sent to the Government.
- £900K had been promised for each new unitary authority by the Government to support the LGR process, but there were no expectations of further government funding.

In response to questions, Councillor Ian Albert advised that:

- Transparency on decisions around resourcing and prioritisation would continue to be provided through the Council Delivery Plan.
- Directors would look at lower priority areas in consultation with Executive Members and the importance of transparency and ensuring that Members and residents were aware of decisions taken on these was noted.
- They would consider the suggestion to include the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and political Group Leaders in the consultation process when the Chief Executive approved spending on LGR related staffing backfill costs.
- However, it would be important that they worked quickly to recruit, and they had already allocated a significant amount of the £1 million reserved for additional staffing costs.

Councillor Sadie Billing proposed the recommendations as set out in the report and this was seconded by Councillor Nigel Mason.

Councillor Ralph Muncer proposed an amendment to recommendation 2.2 in the report to include that any spend can be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and political Group Leaders in addition to the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Resources, and this was seconded by Councillor Elizabeth Dennis.

There was no debate on the amendment.

Following a vote, the amendment was **CARRIED**.

As part of the debate on the substantive motion, the Chair summarised discussions and outlined that they had talked about staff training costs versus county-wide costs, transparency going forwards, and the need for further consultation on decisions.

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

RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:

- (1) That Cabinet approve that up to £1 million of the available funding be allocated to county-wide costs. Any contribution will be based on a fair share from each Council and can be approved by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Member for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation and Executive Member for Resources.
- (2) That Cabinet approve that up to £1 million of the available funding be allocated to additional staffing costs, noting that £450k has already been allocated. Any spend can be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Resources, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and political Group Leaders, except where the Constitution already requires different approval processes.
- (3) That Cabinet approve that up to £200k of the available funding can be spent on additional training costs. Any spend can be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Resources.
- (4) That any spend is subject to a cap of £1 million in 2026/27 and £2 million overall.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: This is intended to provide a practical framework for agreeing LGR costs. It aims to allow timely reactions in what will need to be a fast-moving project.

14 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2025/26

Audio recording – 02 hours 18 minutes 47 seconds

Councillor Claire Winchester, as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025/26, presented the report entitled 'Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025/26' and advised that:

- The Committee had examined 30 items and made 26 recommendations to Cabinet.
- It was recognised that the Committee had worked to improve and refine decisions rather than rehash them.
- They were grateful for the diligent work of Members, including the additional commitment given by Members of the S106 Task and Finish Group.
- Time had been taken to reflect on the work they had been undertaken to ensure an appreciation for cooperative and transparent working that had focused on building mutually respectful relationships with Members, officers and portfolio holders.
- There would be a lot for the Committee to consider with the coming of unitary authorities, and luck was wished to the new Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Members and officers were thanked for the support they had given over the last year and for the opportunity given.

Councillor Jon Clayden proposed the recommendations in the report, and this was seconded by Councillor Ralph Muncer.

Councillor Ralph Muncer put on record his thanks to Councillor Winchester for her time as the Chair of the Committee and for the support she had provided to the S106 Task and Finish Group. He additionally thanked Members, officers and Executive Members for their support over the past year.

Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason put on record his thanks Councillor Winchester and highlighted the effectiveness of cross-party scrutiny within the S106 Task and Finish Group.

The Chair put on record his thanks to Councillor Winchester for her work as the Chair of the Committee last year and for the collaborative relationship they had built. He also put on record his thanks to the Scrutiny Officer and Councillor Ralph Muncer as the Chair of the S106 Task and Finish Group.

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

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and provided comments on the draft Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025/26, attached as Appendix 1, prior to consideration by Full Council.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025/26, as attached at Appendix 1, be noted.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on the report of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the work of the Committee in the 2025/26 Civic Year prior to consideration by Full Council.

15 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2026/27

Audio recording – 02 hours 23 minutes 24 seconds

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report entitled 'Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2026/27' and advised that:

- Members had undertaken scrutiny training on 12 May, and following this, Members had helped to develop the Work Programme for 2026/27, which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report, and included items for the next Committee meeting in September.
- Members were invited to raise items for the Work Programme through various means if they provided reasons for why it should be considered by the Committee as this would help with preparations and ensure that objectives could be met.
- Updates could also be received outside of meetings through methods such as spotlight reviews and site visits.
- Specific questions should be raised by Members ahead of Committee meetings to allow officers and Executive Members to coordinate a response ahead of time.
- The Forward Plan for 15 May was attached at Appendix 2.
- The Decisions and Monitoring Tracker was attached at Appendix 3, and detailed each recommendation made to Cabinet from the last Committee meeting.

Councillor Ralph Muncer suggested that an update on the progress made by Cabinet on the S106 Task and Finish Report should take place at the Committee meeting on 10 November as that would give significant time for officers and Executive Members to give a response and factor in the next stage of the Local Plan Review.

Councillor Daniel Wright-Mason suggested that they should look at the merger of Settle and Paradigm and how this would impact residents, with the potential to invite them to a future Committee meeting to improve their working relationship with the Council going forward.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Claire Winchester, the Scrutiny Officer advised that:

- They usually contacted Hertfordshire Constabulary in November each year regarding a topic that the Committee would like them to present for the Crime and Disorder Matters item in January.
- The Leadership Team would be able to provide steer to the Committee on local issues that they might want Hertfordshire Constabulary to consider.

Councillor Claire Winchester suggested that the Committee should pick just one topic for them to present at the Committee meeting in January.

Councillor Nigel Mason highlighted that the presentation by Hertfordshire Constabulary should focus on impacts, not just data and insights.

Councillor Ralph Muncer highlighted that they should focus the Crime and Disorder Matters on the impact that policing reorganisation would have on local community policing and its priorities.

The Scrutiny Officer highlighted that Members should raise key requirements for the report on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Future Plans as soon as possible.

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis advised that:

- It would be hard for the Committee to make requests on the report until they knew the number of unitary authorities and which one the Council would be merged into.
- However, she suggested that the Committee should look at the protections of nature, ecological assets and parks and playgrounds, and potential stewardship models for these.
- The Committee should also reflect on housing and homelessness provisions and outside organisations providing services in tandem with these and the impact that LGR would have on this.
- The roles of community forums should also be looked at, particularly in respect of future neighbourhood governance models.

Councillor Paul Ward suggested that they should look at the impact of LGR on service delivery for residents and projects.

Councillor Ralph Muncer proposed and Councillor Claire Winchester seconded and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee prioritised topics for inclusion in the Work Programme attached as Appendix 1 and, where appropriate, determined 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 2, suggested a list of items to be considered at its meetings in the coming civic year.
- (3) That the Committee, noted the Decisions and Monitoring log, as attached at Appendix 3.

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 10.09 pm

Chair

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 8 SEPTEMBER 2026

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: ANNUAL REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN AND ADULTS 2025-26

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE: Director - Governance

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Governance

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Thriving Communities;

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council has robust procedures in place that govern how staff and councillors deal with concerns about children and adults with care and support needs at risk of abuse to maintain our statutory duty to safeguard their welfare. An operational review has taken place, and work is ongoing to ensure that these procedures are understood and followed consistently throughout the organisation.
- 1.2 That the Committee consider the following questions:
- What progress has been made against the Council's fulfilment of the statutory duty to maintain an effective safeguarding function regarding children, adults with care and support needs, modern slavery, Prevent and domestic abuse?
 - Are there sufficient and robust processes in place at the Council for application and review of safeguarding processes?

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 The key responsibility for safeguarding in Hertfordshire lies with the County Council. The District Council's main statutory role is to refer concerns to the appropriate agency (Social Care, or other) for action. The District Council should be notified if a referral meets the threshold for further inquiry, though this may not always occur. Officers involved with victims might need to support further proceedings or provide more information. If concerns don't meet the investigation threshold, they are returned to the originating organisation. Officers must offer advice and contact information for relevant agencies. All concerns are logged centrally to monitor ongoing reports that may warrant future referrals.
- 2.2 The role of the Councillor, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider is to inform and report concerns, not to investigate or judge. A District Council is not responsible for investigating any safeguarding incidents or allegations, involving children, young people or adults at risk, but provides the local 'eyes and ears' to enable a route to report any concerns.
- 2.3 District Council representation is maintained at various Hertfordshire safeguarding and partnership boards (Adult Board, Children Partnership, District and Borough Councils Safeguarding Group, Domestic Abuse Partnership and Multi Agency Prevent Board).
- 2.4 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive an annual safeguarding report summarising the Council's activities and upcoming initiatives.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

3.1 As shown in figure 1 below, the Council has continued to record and report more concerns year on year since 2014 when centralised records began. There is no evidence to suggest that our rising referral rates have been reflective of an increase in abuse in our local communities, but due to positive developments at the Council such as the introduction of a central database of referrals, mandatory corporate safeguarding training and numerous awareness raising campaigns. These have resulted in both an increased awareness and confidence amongst staff as well as improved corporate oversight about the safeguarding actions undertaken across the organisation resulting in a steady increase in our recorded referral rates.

3.2 The Council's safeguarding referral rates:

Figure 1 – Number of total external referrals per reporting period.

Referral type	Number of referrals - 25/26	Number of referrals - 24/25
Adult Social Care	148	99
Adult Safeguarding	96	67
Child Services	47	57
SPA (Mental Health)	57	66
SADA (Domestic Abuse)	131	165
Prevent	0	0
Modern Slavery	0	0
Total referrals	479 432 – Adults 47 - Children	454 397 – Adults 57 - Children
Incidents / Concerns which do not meet threshold for referral (internal records)	67	91

Figure 2 – Type of referrals per reporting month 2025/26

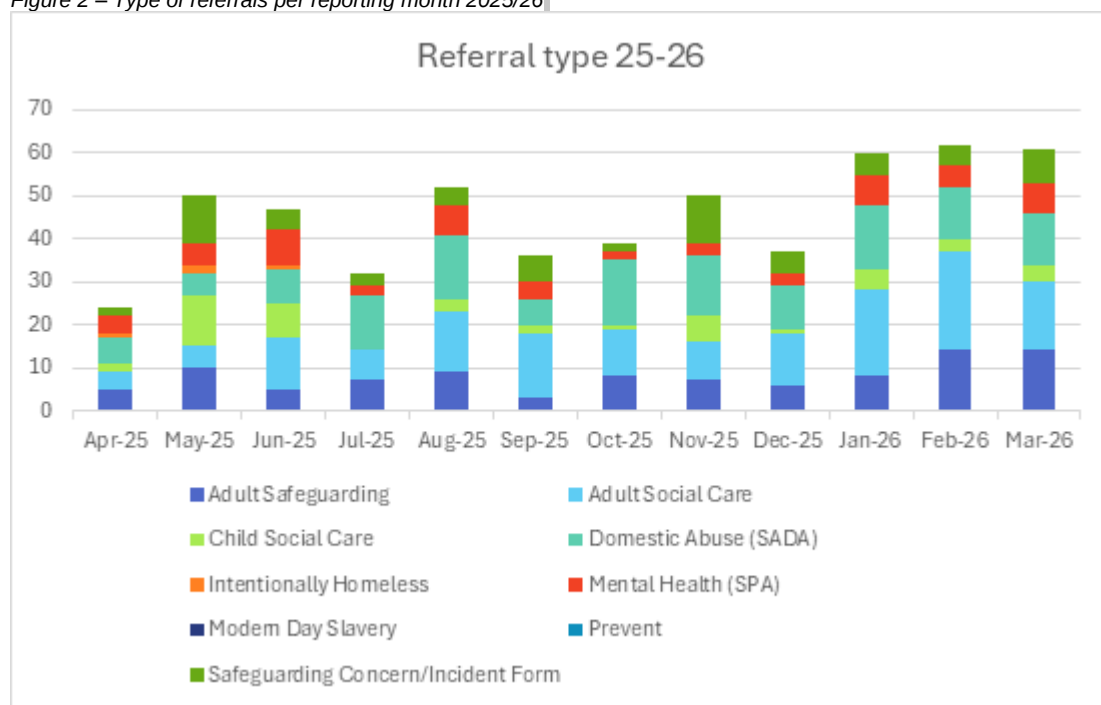
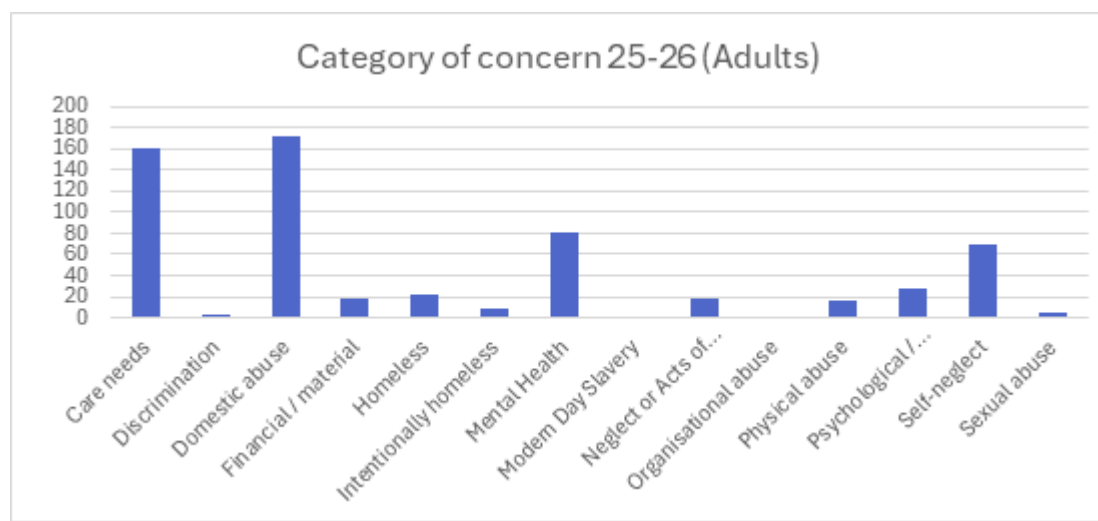
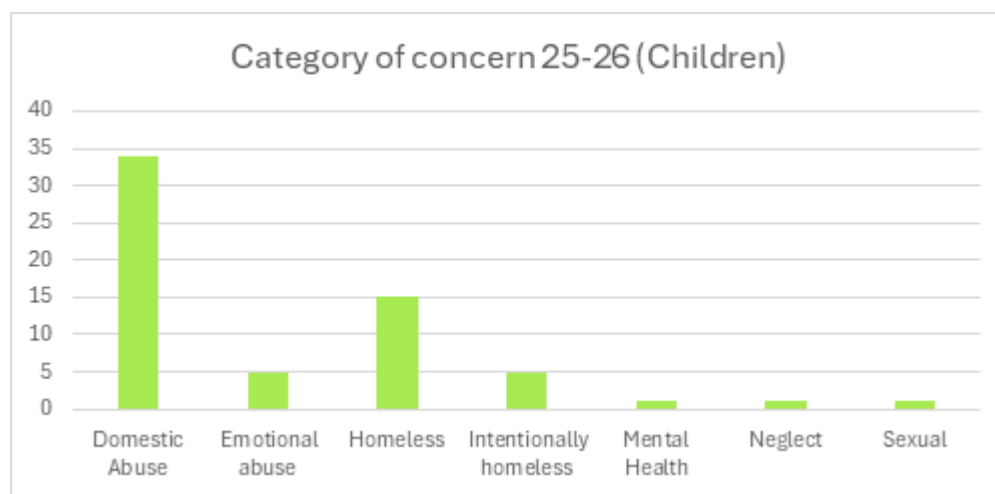


Figure 3 – Categories of concern (Adult referrals) 2025/26



- a. In 2025/26, referral rates have continued to rise, with a significant increase in referrals for adults with care & support needs at risk of significant harm, and adults with unmet care needs. The most frequent reasons for referral are domestic abuse, mental health and unmet care needs, with most of the latter coming via the Careline service. Figure 3 represents the categories of concern within the referrals. There are often multiple categories cited in referrals, so this explains the increased number of categories compared to referrals (604 categories in 432 referrals for adults)
- b. Referrals for specialist mental health support have remained consistent. Whilst the referrals to specific mental health services (SPA) appears to be less numerically than the previous year, in practice, referrals incorporating multiple needs, including mental health, are also passed to Adult services, who then determine the most appropriate service for that individual, based on the information and priority need. Therefore, some mental health referrals are captured within the Adult Safeguarding figure. It is worth noting that number of referrals does not equate to the number of individuals referred; this does not account for cases of repeated referrals for one individual. It is the request of mental health services to supply updated referrals as and when necessary so they can ensure they remain updated with current health information hence there could be multiple referrals for the same individual.
- c. The Council commission Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) to provide expert help for domestic abuse victims. Primarily, SADA are contacted in cases of domestic abuse, and it is agreed that it is their role to further refer adults and children for additional safeguarding or care services. However, where applicable, the Council make safeguarding referrals for adults and children affected by domestic abuse in North Herts, especially where consent is not obtained for referrals to SADA. Legislation requires public bodies to automatically refer children to safeguarding who are living in a household where domestic abuse is present. Adults can separately be referred for support with their consent.
- d. In 2025/26, domestic abuse was the primary reason for Child Safeguarding referrals by North Herts Council, followed by concerns around homelessness, both intentional and incidental. The data in figure 4 for domestic abuse does not contain additional referrals that may have been made by SADA following the initial referral from the Council.

Figure 4 – Categories of concern (Children's referrals) 2025/26



4.0 NEXT STEPS

4.1 April 2026 to March 2027:

- 4.2 During 2024-2025, the team had been under resourced, with vacancies at both Team Leader and Support Officer level. During this time, the focus was the core safeguarding functions (correct referral collation and responding to FOI and Data subject requests) with limited capacity for campaigns or departmental development. The roles within the team are currently filled.
- 4.3 During Q3-Q4, the safeguarding team conducted a full review and overhaul of the training provisions within the Council, with the aim to ensure the safeguarding learning and development was appropriate and relevant for staff and Councillors. This work has introduced a series of updates, namely the introduction of a safeguarding induction for new starters, revised mandatory online course material, and format and content changes to the in-person training for all. This work has also seen the introduction of a safeguarding handbook and quick reference guide to support individuals' responses to concerns.
- 4.4 Most significantly, 2025/26 has seen the implementation of two bespoke databases created for Safeguarding at North Herts Council. One is a case management system, providing audited, secure storage and analysis of case records and the other, a training system, designed to support the organisation and management of mandatory safeguarding training.
- 4.5 The work plan for 2026/27 will include the continuation of all ongoing day to day safeguarding functions: training for new staff and refresher training for existing staff; review and management of referrals, advice and guidance to colleagues, maintenance of the databases and information sharing requests; representation on relevant networks and partnership groups ;revision and coordination of Corporate Designated Safeguarding Champions, promoting local and national campaigns and data retention compliance.
- 4.6 The team will ensure effective compliance regarding the Authority's duties in relation to modern slavery and human trafficking and Domestic Homicide Reviews, providing input as and when requested.

- 4.7 Ensure staff and Designated Safeguarding Champions are equipped to support complex requests for help from individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, in terms of technical skills and knowledge but also aftercare for colleagues supporting individuals who are self-harming or threatening suicide.
- 4.8 The Team reviewed the audit actions that arose out of the HSAB Audit in 2025 and the s11 Audit in 2026. Recommendations from these audits have formed part of the Safeguarding operational plans for 26/27 and will be addressed in line with priority and resource capacity.
- 4.9 A dedicated Safeguarding team was originally appointed in December 2022 and there have been several personnel changes since this time, with the current Team Leader in place since December 2024 and Support Officer since August 2025. The periods during which no team was in place, were covered by ad-hoc administrative support and the Policy and Community Manager. The Team Leader role was initially a part time position, but this increased to full time in April 2026 to support the growing requirements of the team and role. The Support Officer is a part time position of 20 hours per week, and the current officer is due to start maternity leave in September 2026, with interim cover recruited.

5 APPENDICES

- 5.1 Appendix 1 - North Herts Safeguarding Data 2025/26
- 5.2 Appendix 2 - Comparative District Data 2025-2026.

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

Reuben Ayavoo	Policy & Community Manager	reuben.ayavoo@north-herts.gov.uk, Tel: 01462 474 212,
Cassi Wright	Safeguarding Team Leader	cassi.wright@north-herts.gov.uk, Tel: 01462 474 126

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

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Appendix 1 North Herts Safeguarding Data 2025/26

Figure A1 – Total referral type per month, 2025-2026

Referral type	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Total
Adult Safeguarding	5	10	5	7	9	3	8	7	6	8	14	14	96
Adult Social Care	4	5	12	7	14	15	11	9	12	20	23	16	148
Child Social Care	2	12	8	0	3	2	1	6	1	5	3	4	47
Domestic Abuse (SADA)	6	5	8	13	15	6	15	14	10	15	12	12	131
Intentionally Homeless	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Mental Health (SPA)	4	5	8	2	7	4	2	3	3	7	5	7	57
Modern Day Slavery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prevent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Safeguarding Concern/Incident	2	11	5	3	4	6	2	11	5	5	5	8	67
Total	24	50	47	32	52	36	39	50	37	60	62	61	550

Figure A2 – Comparison by month of referral type, 2025-2026.

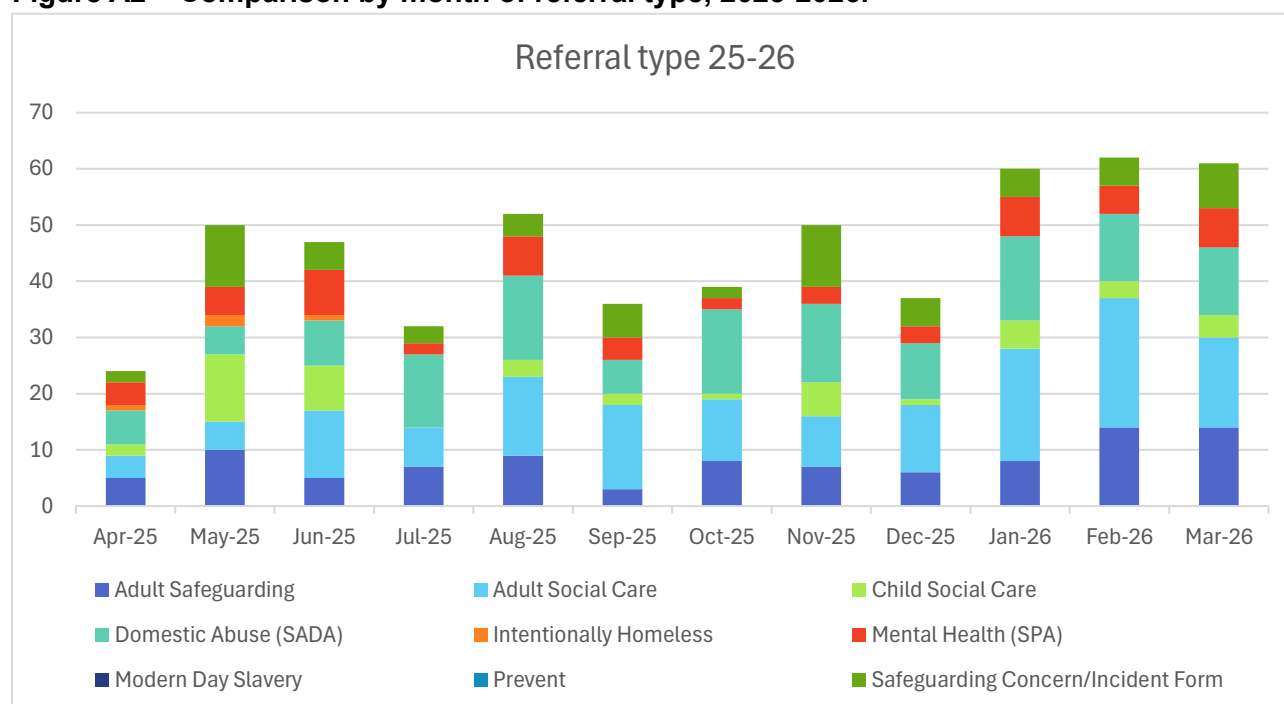


Figure A3 – Categories of concern for adult referrals, 2025-2026.

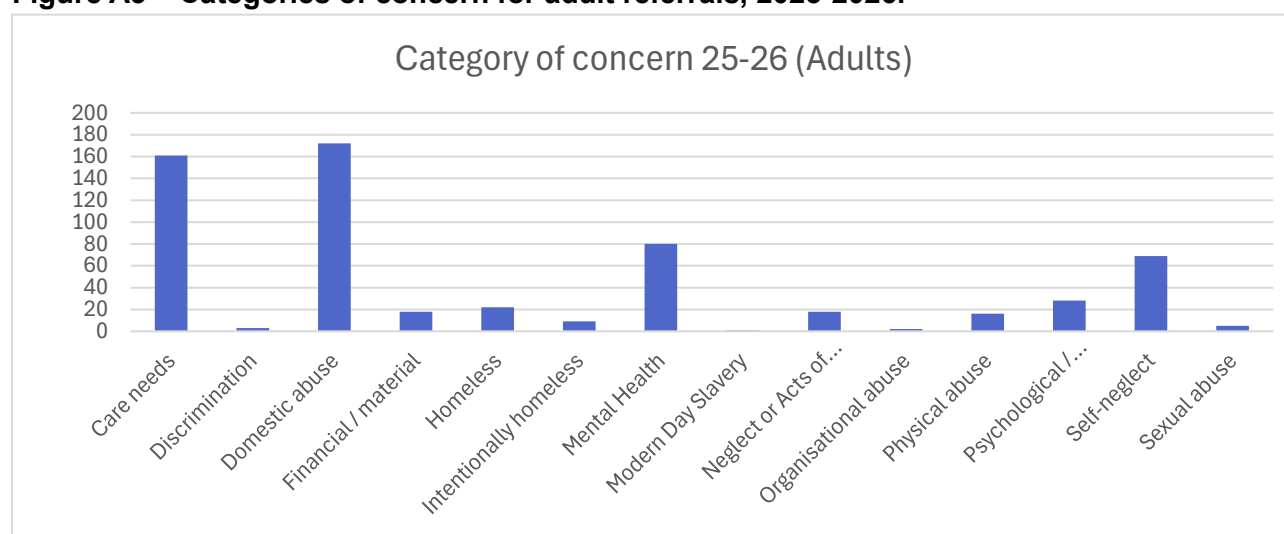
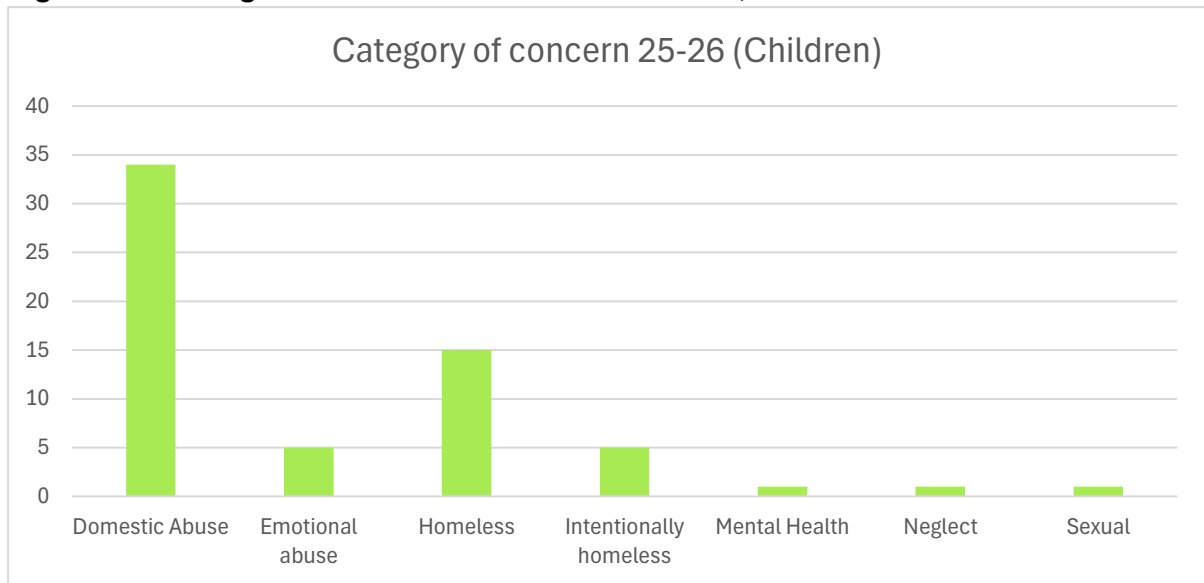


Figure A4 – Categories of concern for Child referrals, 2025-2026.



Appendix 2 – Comparative District Data 2025-2026.

Please note this data is prepared and presented by Herts County Council and contains whole district referrals rates, not limited to those made by local district councils. North Herts Council accepts no responsibility for the accuracy of this data and is unable to provide further analysis. It is shared for your information and interest.

Figure B1 – Referrals to Children Social Care by Districts, 2025-2026.

Referrals to Social Care by District

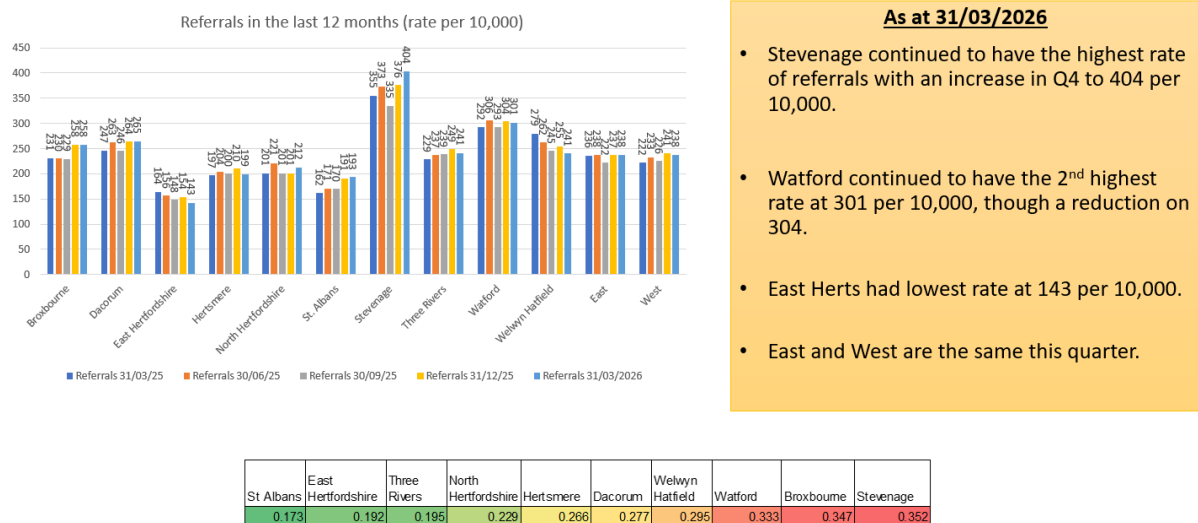


Figure B2 – Referrals to Adults Social Care and HPFT (SPA), 2025-2026.

A closer look by District

This section shows on a district level the splits in the number of concerns and enquiries for HCC and HPFT. This is calculated on activity for the year to date from April 2025 - March 2026 - per 10,000 population (HCC & HPFT data unless stated otherwise). Please note this data is based on the Adult's postcode not the location of abuse.

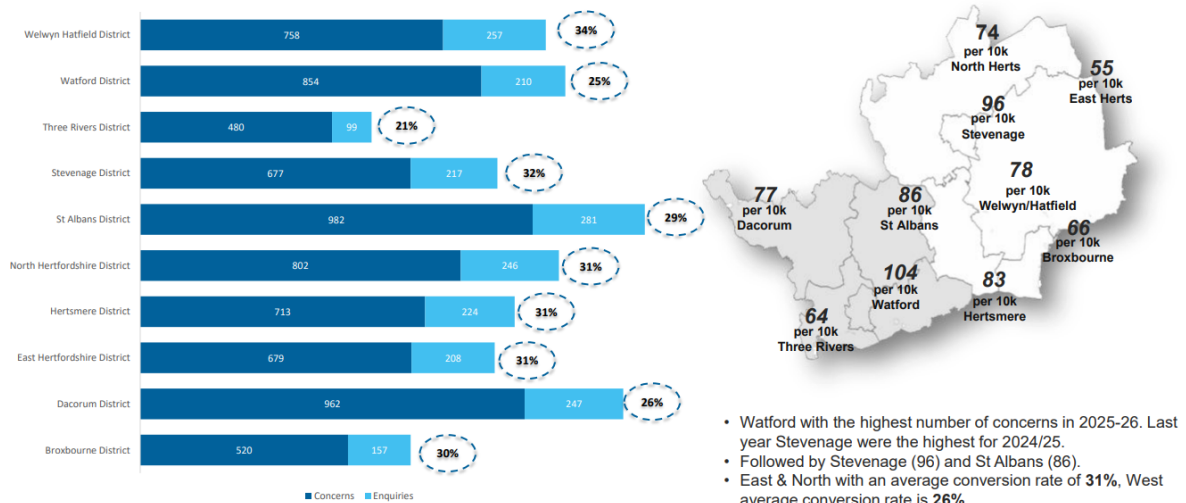
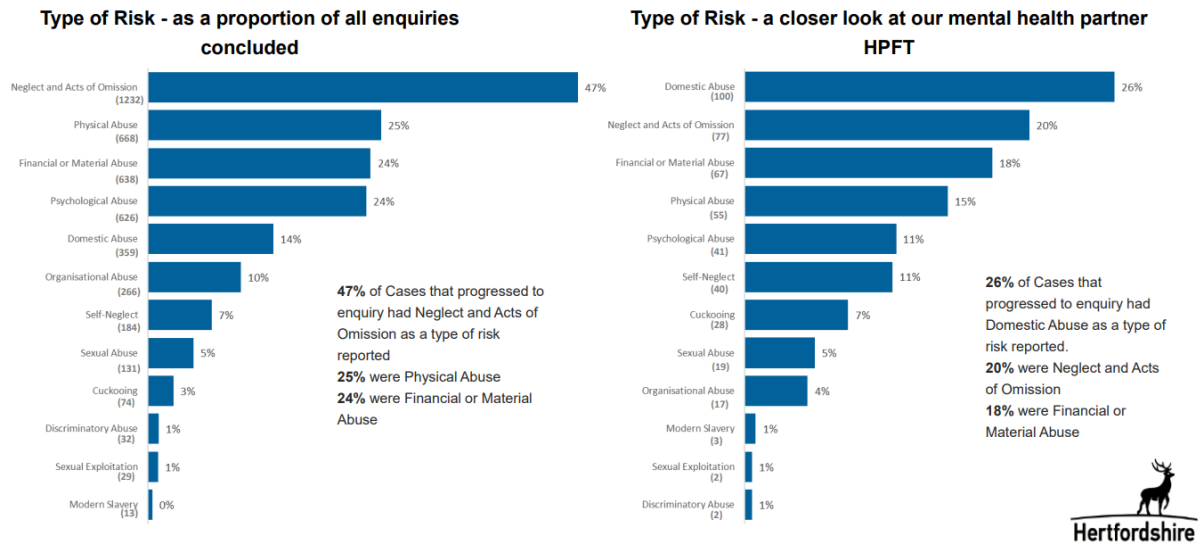


Figure B3 – Categories of risk and concern in referrals to Social Care and HPFT SPA

Breakdown - Type of Risk

This section references concluded enquiries (unless otherwise stated). It looks at the types of risk for enquiries concluded in the year 2025/26 (HCC & HPFT data unless stated otherwise).



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 8 SEPTEMBER 2026

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: WASTE AND RECYCLING CONTRACT PERFORMANCE

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE: Director - Environment

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Environment

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Accessible Services; Sustainability;

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this information note is to provide Members with an update on the performance of the waste and recycling service, specifically addressing areas identified by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
- Lessons learned from communal collection service issues and the time taken to resolve them.
 - Household composting performance.
 - Recycling performance trends and reasons why expected increases have not fully materialised.
 - Missed collection performance and actions being taken to improve service reliability.

2 STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 This note has been prepared following a request from Members for an update on the current position, including a review of actions taken to date, the outcomes achieved, and lessons learned. The purpose of the report is to provide Members with assurance regarding progress made and to identify opportunities for continuous improvement.

3 INFORMATION TO NOTE

3.1 COMMUNAL COLLECTIONS

3.1.1 Background

Following the introduction of the new service arrangements in August 2025, a number of communal properties experienced service issues. These were primarily linked to data inaccuracies relating to collection frequencies having been rescheduled to align with the three weekly service change.

3.1.2 Impact

This represented 6.7% of communal developments in North Herts, and approximately 1166 residents were affected.

The principal issue arose from an error meaning collection frequencies were amended to a three-weekly schedule at some sites. Additionally, in some locations, existing container capacity was insufficient to accommodate the change alongside the expansion of recyclable material.

This caused capacity issues in bin stores and a build-up of waste at a number of locations.

The impact of these issues can be seen in Graph 1 and 2. Graph 1 shows the total communal missed bins increased significantly following the August service changes. Missed communal bins rose from 1 in August 2025 to a peak of 53 in November 2025, remaining at elevated levels throughout December 2025 (41) and January 2026 (49).

Graph 2 breaks down the total missed collections by waste stream showing that the issue was primarily driven by residual waste collections, which accounted for the largest proportion of communal misses during this period. Mixed recycling and cardboard and paper collections also experienced increased missed collections, although to a lesser extent. The data suggests that the combination of incorrect collection frequencies and insufficient container capacity particularly affected sites with higher levels of residual waste generation.

3.1.3 Actions Taken

A number of actions were implemented to address those issues: -

- Additional crews were put in place to correct the frequency error and ensure all communal locations were cleared of any backlog of waste.
- A review was carried out to identify and correct communal property data affected by the error.
- Site visits undertaken by the Shared Waste Service, signage and newly created communal information leaflet delivered to all residents.
- Capacity assessments were undertaken at affected communal locations to identify capacity shortfalls, with additional or larger containers provided and collection frequencies revised where required.
- Revised collection schedules implemented where required.

3.1.4 Time Taken to Resolve

Whilst immediate action was taken to address the most urgent service issues, resolving the communal collection problems required a phased approach over several months. The underlying causes varied between sites and included incorrect collection frequency data, insufficient container capacity and site-specific operational requirements. As a result, each affected development required individual review and validation to ensure that the correct collection arrangements were implemented.

The resolution process involved detailed data checking and correction of property records, site visits by Shared Waste Service officers and Veolia, capacity assessments, liaison with managing agents and residents, and where necessary the provision of additional containers or changes to collection frequencies. The period also coincided with the Christmas collection season, when waste volumes traditionally increase and operational resources are under additional pressure. Although additional crews were deployed to clear accumulated waste and restore services, implementing permanent solutions across multiple communal developments took longer as changes needed to be assessed, agreed and embedded on a site-by-site basis.

As shown in Graph 1, missed communal bins reduced steadily following the peak period in late 2025 and early 2026. The sustained downward trend indicates that whilst the issues could not be resolved immediately, the measures implemented resulted in continual improvement and ultimately restored service performance to expected levels.

3.1.5 Lessons Learnt

Key lessons identified include:

- Greater verification of communal property data prior to implementing major service changes, including additional quality assurance checks on collection frequencies and property records.

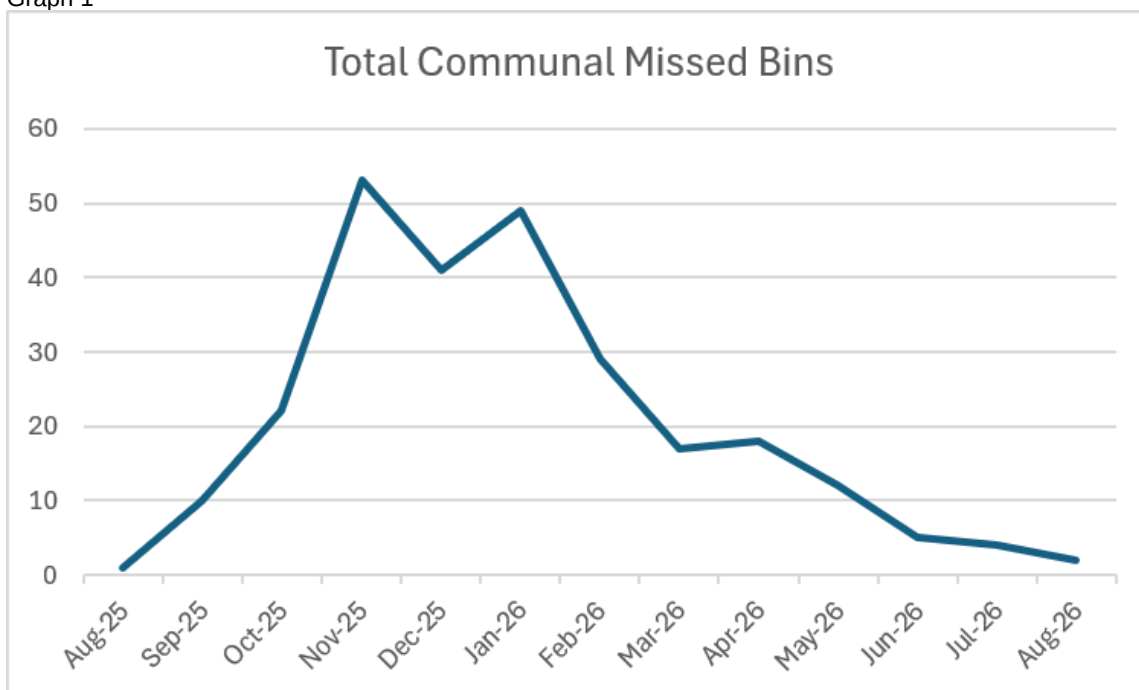
- Earlier engagement with managing agents, housing providers and residents to identify site-specific issues and agree suitable collection arrangements before changes are introduced.
- More robust validation of collection frequencies and container capacities to ensure they remain appropriate when service models or material streams change.
- The importance of undertaking capacity assessments in advance of service changes, particularly where additional recyclable materials are being collected or collection frequencies are changing. The need for enhanced monitoring of communal sites immediately following service implementation so that emerging issues can be identified and addressed before significant waste build-up occurs.
- Greater use of site-specific communication materials and clear signage to help residents understand collection arrangements and make best use of recycling facilities.
- Improved cross-team governance between operational, contract management and customer service teams to ensure issues are identified, escalated and resolved more quickly.
- The importance of maintaining accurate communal property databases and implementing formal change-control processes when collection schedules are amended.

3.1.6 Current Position

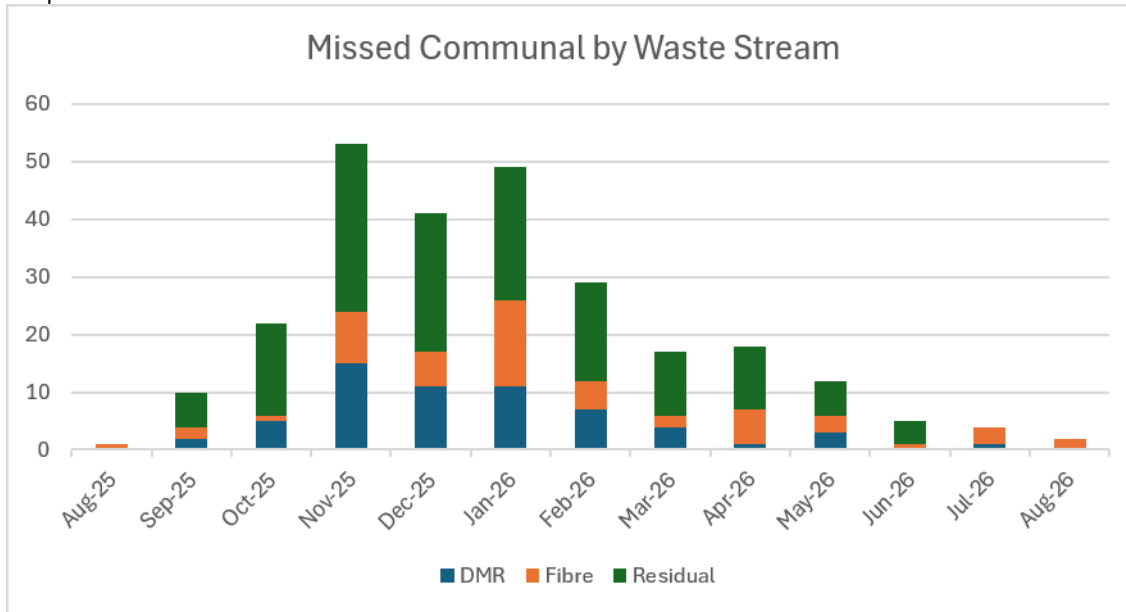
Following the corrective actions undertaken, all known communal properties affected by the frequency error have been reviewed and appropriate collection arrangements implemented.

- Performance data demonstrates that these actions have been effective. As shown in Graph 1, communal missed bins reduced from a peak of 53 in November 2025 to just 2 in August 2026, representing a reduction of approximately 96%. The sustained downward trend suggests that the underlying causes have been successfully addressed rather than simply mitigated.

Graph 1



Graph 2



3.2 HOUSEHOLD COMPOSTING PERFORMANCE

3.2.1 Background

Household composting contributes significantly to the Council's overall recycling performance and is influenced by seasonal factors, weather conditions and resident participation in garden waste collection services. During 2025/26, composting tonnages were lower than anticipated, reflecting both local and national trends. The exceptionally dry and warm conditions experienced during spring and summer 2025 affected vegetation growth and reduced the volume of garden waste generated by households, resulting in lower composting tonnages than in previous years.

3.2.2 Impact

A number of factors contributed to the reduction in household composting tonnages during 2025/26:

- Prolonged dry weather and reduced rainfall resulting in lower garden waste arisings.
- Reduced grass growth and garden maintenance requirements during the spring and summer periods.
- Changes in the volume and composition of waste being presented for collection.
- Increased diversion of food waste through separate food waste collection services.
- National trends indicating reduced garden waste tonnages in areas experiencing similar weather conditions.

These factors reduced the volume of compostable material available for collection and processing, impacting overall composting performance against target.

3.2.3 Actions Taken

The Council continues to take proactive steps to support household composting performance and maximise participation:

- Promoting home composting through education and awareness campaigns.
- Delivering targeted communications to encourage residents to make full use of garden waste and food waste services.

- Reviewing garden waste subscription trends and resident feedback to identify opportunities to increase participation.
- Monitoring seasonal tonnage performance and benchmarking against regional and national trends.
- Continuing to promote waste reduction and the correct segregation of organic waste streams.
- Using performance data to inform future service planning and forecasting assumptions.

3.2.4 Lessons Learnt

Key lessons identified include:

- Composting performance is significantly influenced by external factors, particularly weather conditions and seasonal garden growth patterns.
- Extreme weather events can have a substantial impact on garden waste arisings and composting tonnages.
- Annual performance should be assessed alongside wider environmental and seasonal factors.
- Monitoring participation and renewal rates following the annual subscription period to identify opportunities to improve customer engagement and maximise service uptake.
- Resident engagement is best measured through a combination of participation levels, subscription data and tonnage performance.
- Forecasts and targets should allow greater flexibility where performance is heavily weather dependent.
- Regular monitoring enables the Council to identify trends early and adapt communications and service planning accordingly.

3.2.5 Current Position

Household composting tonnages remain below those achieved in 2024/25, particularly during the peak growing season between May and August. As shown in Graph 3, this reflects a reduction in the amount of garden waste generated rather than a reduction in resident participation. Garden waste subscription levels, shown in Graph 4, have remained broadly stable at around 30,000 subscriptions throughout the reporting period, demonstrating continued resident engagement with the service. The evidence therefore suggests that lower composting tonnages have been driven primarily by environmental factors rather than reduced participation.

Performance against the missed garden waste collection KPI has remained above target during parts of the reporting period. As shown in Graph 4a, missed collections follow a seasonal pattern, with lower rates recorded during the winter months when fewer garden waste bins are presented for collection and service demand is reduced. Performance then increases during the spring and summer period when garden waste volumes are at their highest.

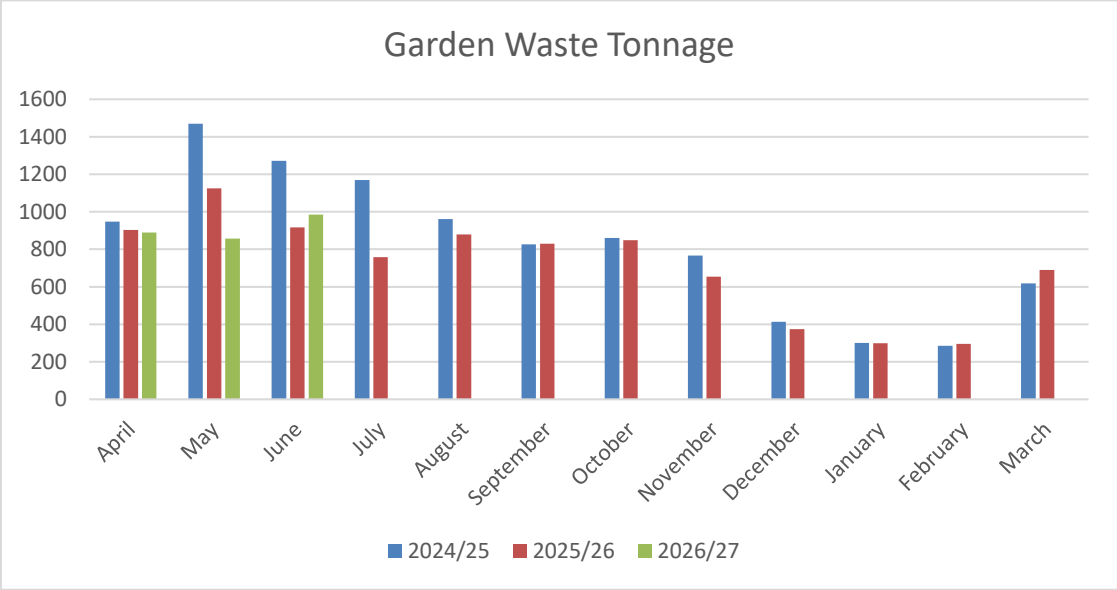
Graph 4a also shows a significant spike in reported missed collections at the start of the annual subscription period in April 2026. A key contributing factor has been residents renewing or subscribing to the service shortly before, or on the day of, their scheduled collection. Whilst subscriptions are processed as quickly as possible, there can be a short delay before information is updated across operational systems and communicated to collection crews. Residents are advised to allow up to 10 working days for service activation; however, collections reported during this period are still recorded within the missed collection figures.

The Council has worked closely with its contractor to improve performance through weekly monitoring of missed collection data, review of collection rounds where issues have been identified, and improved communication of subscription information to operational crews. The graph demonstrates that performance has improved significantly since the peak seen in April. Whilst performance remains above the missed collection target, the downward trend shown in Graph 4a demonstrates that the actions introduced by the Council and contractor are having a positive effect and that performance is moving in the right direction.

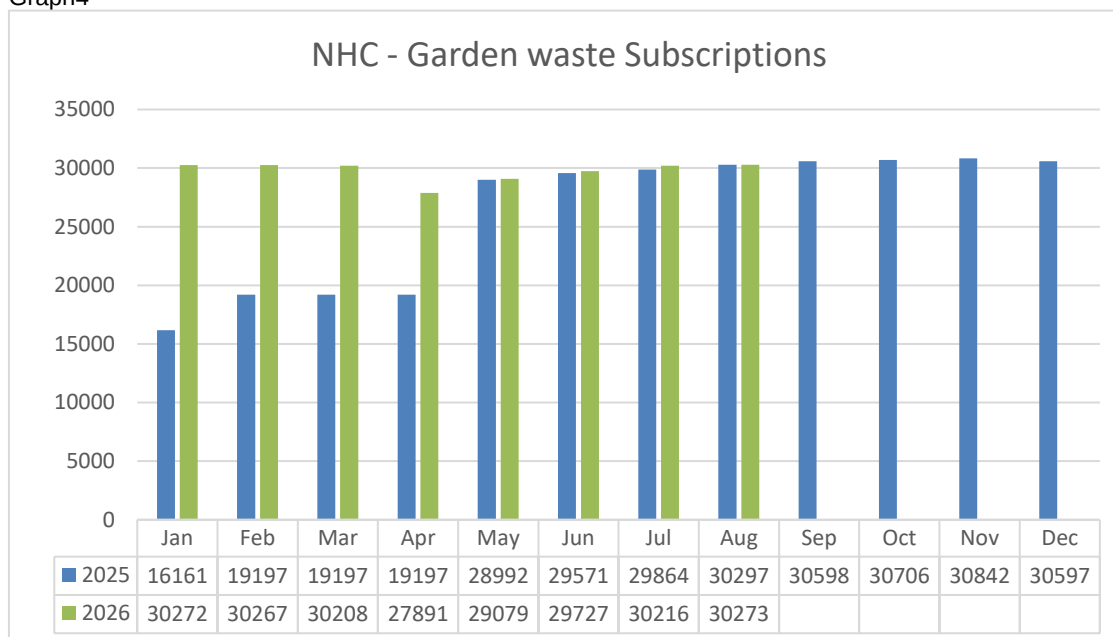
Year to date figures for 2026/27 indicate some recovery in composting tonnages compared with the same period in 2025/26. However, the current dry weather conditions may continue to affect garden waste generation during the remainder of the year and performance will therefore continue to be monitored closely

Taken together, the data demonstrates that whilst resident participation in the garden waste service has remained strong, the amount of garden waste being presented for collection has reduced. Although missed collection performance has experienced periodic peaks associated with seasonal demand and the annual subscription cycle, the overall trend since April has been one of improvement. This highlights the significant influence that weather conditions can have on composting performance and reinforces the need to consider environmental factors alongside service participation when assessing performance against targets.

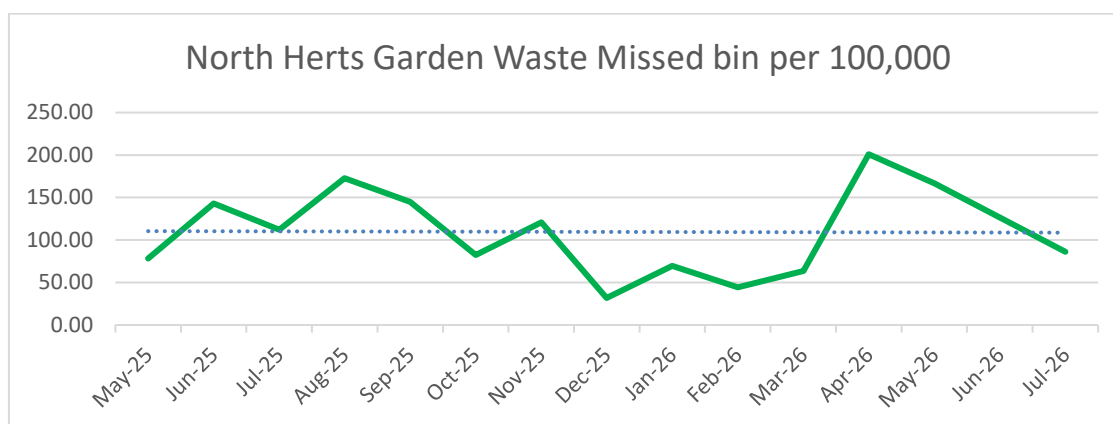
Graph 3



Graph4



Graph 4a



3.3 RECYCLING PERFORMANCE AND IMPACT OF SERVICE CHANGES

3.3.1 Background

The recycling rate increased from 57.11% in 2024/25 to 58.88% in 2025/26, representing an increase of 1.77 percentage points. Enhanced recycling services were introduced in August 2025 to support the Government's Simpler Recycling requirements and further improve recycling performance across North Hertfordshire. One of the key objectives of the service changes was to support continued improvement in recycling performance and move towards a recycling rate in excess of 60%. The service changes included:

- Inclusion of soft plastics within recycling collections.
- Increased recycling capacity for paper and cardboard.
- Introduction of three-weekly residual waste collections.
- Continued promotion of weekly food waste collections.

The aim was to encourage positive recycling behaviours, increase recycling participation and reduce residual waste.

3.3.2 Impact

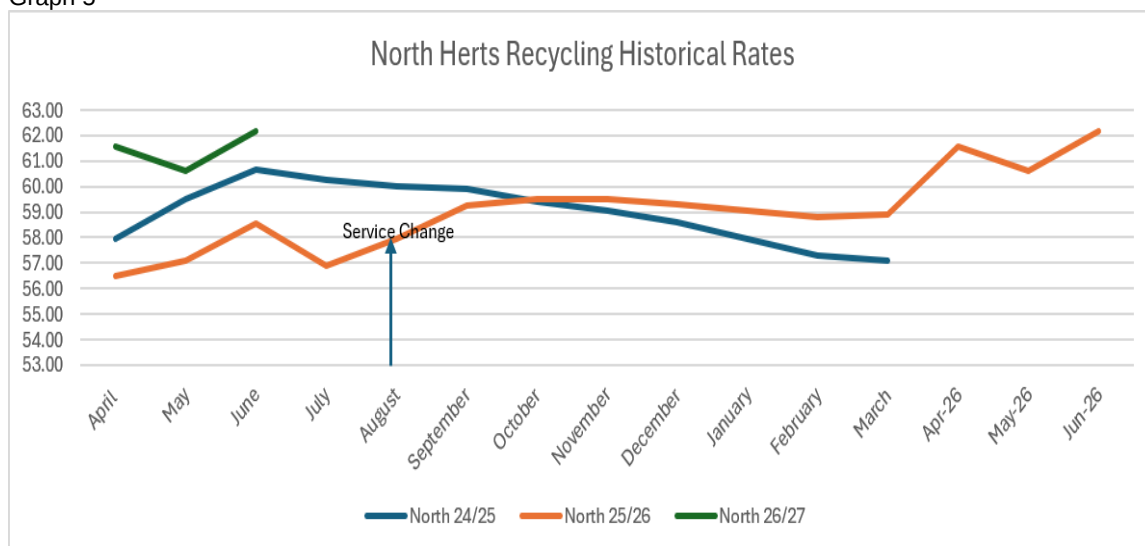
Whilst the service changes have increased opportunities for residents to recycle, the full impact was not reflected within the 2025/26 annual recycling rate, as the new arrangements were only operational for eight months of the reporting year. As shown in Graph 5, recycling performance improved during the year, however the annual figure captures a transition period during which new collection arrangements and resident behaviours were still becoming established.

Several factors influence recycling rates:

- Recycling performance is measured by weight rather than volume.
- Soft plastics increase recycling volume but contribute relatively little to tonnage.
- Behavioural changes take time to become fully embedded.
- Food waste tonnages have increased but remain below anticipated levels.
- Due to the newly introduced Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR), manufacturers are producing more increasingly lightweight packing materials, reducing tonnage despite increased recycling activity.
- Seasonal variations continue to affect waste composition and recycling performance.

Waste composition analysis also identified that significant quantities of food waste remain in residual waste streams, indicating additional opportunities to improve capture rates.

Graph 5



3.3.3 Actions Taken

The Shared Waste Service has implemented and continues to develop a programme of improvement activities including:

- Undertaking waste composition analysis to identify recyclable materials remaining within residual waste.
- Monitoring participation levels across recycling, food waste and garden waste services.
- Delivering targeted communications to improve recycling behaviours and tackle contamination.
- Developing a specific food waste recycling campaign to increase participation and capture rates.
- Monitoring the long-term impact of service changes and behavioural trends.
- Regularly reviewing performance data, contamination levels and material capture rates.
- Working with Veolia to identify opportunities for further service improvements.

3.3.4 Lessons Learnt

Key lessons identified include:

- Changes in recycling behaviour take time to become fully established.
- Recycling rates measured solely by tonnage do not always reflect increases in recycling participation.
- Waste reduction initiatives can have a positive environmental outcome whilst affecting recycling tonnage performance.
- Regular waste composition analysis is essential to identify missed recycling opportunities.
- Targeted communications remain critical in supporting behaviour change and increasing participation.
- Long-term trends provide a more meaningful assessment of performance than short-term fluctuations.

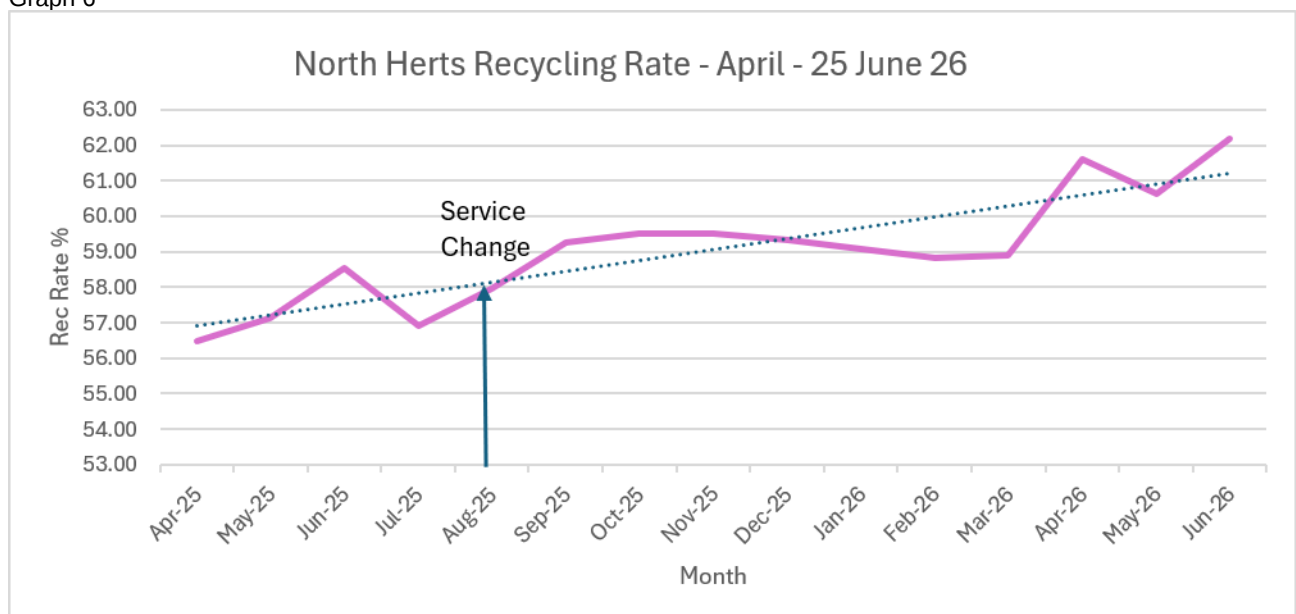
3.3.5 Current Position

The enhanced recycling service has increased the range of materials accepted for recycling and improved overall recycling capacity available to residents.

Whilst the annual recycling rate for 2025/26 increased to 58.88%, this figure includes four months of performance under the previous service arrangements and therefore does not fully reflect the impact of the enhanced recycling service introduced in August 2025. More recent performance data demonstrates a continuing upward trend.

As shown in Graph 6, the rolling recycling rate has now exceeded 62%, compared with 57.11% in 2024/25, representing an increase of just over 5 percentage points. This suggests that the benefits of the enhanced recycling service and three weekly residual waste collections are continuing to be realised as resident behaviours adapt and participation in recycling services increases.

Graph 6



3.3.6 Factors Affecting Recycling Performance

Recycling performance is influenced by a number of factors and changes in service provision do not always lead to an immediate increase in the reported recycling rate. Recycling is measured by tonnage rather than volume, meaning that some materials, such as soft plastics, can increase recycling participation without significantly increasing overall performance. In addition, behaviour change takes time to become fully established following major service changes, and recent waste composition analysis indicates that further opportunities remain to increase food waste capture.

Recycling performance can also fluctuate throughout the year due to seasonal factors, particularly changes in garden waste tonnages. Garden waste makes a significant contribution to overall recycling performance and is heavily influenced by weather conditions, rainfall levels and the growing season. As demonstrated in the composting section of this report, the prolonged dry weather experienced during 2025/26 resulted in lower garden waste arisings and reduced composting tonnages. Consequently, annual recycling performance should be considered alongside seasonal and environmental factors, particularly where garden waste forms a significant proportion of the recycling stream

3.3.7 Future Action Plan

To further improve recycling performance and maximise the benefits of the service changes introduced in 2025, the Shared Waste Service has already started to undertake a programme of ongoing monitoring and targeted interventions.

Key actions include:

Waste Composition Analysis

The findings from recent waste composition analysis will be used to identify materials that continue to be disposed of incorrectly within the residual waste stream and other collection streams. Particular focus will be placed on food waste, where analysis has identified opportunities to increase capture through the dedicated food waste collection service.

Participation Monitoring

Ongoing monitoring of participation levels across recycling, food waste and garden waste services will be undertaken to identify trends, areas of lower engagement and opportunities for improvement. This information will be used to target support and communications where participation levels are below expectations.

Targeted Communications and Behaviour Change Campaigns

A programme of targeted communications will be delivered to address contamination issues and improve the capture of recyclable materials. This will include a specific food waste recycling campaign aimed at increasing awareness of the service, promoting correct use of food waste caddies and encouraging residents to divert more food waste from the residual waste stream.

3.4 **MISSED COLLECTIONS**

3.4.1 Background

The mobilisation and implementation period of the major service change presented a number of operational challenges, including redesigned collection rounds, route optimisation activity and the integration of new collection arrangements. This contributed to an increase in missed collection reports during the early stages of the service rollout.

3.4.2 Impact

A temporary increase in missed collection reports was experienced during the early stages of service implementation.

Contributing factors included:

- Mobilisation of a new waste collection contract.
- Introduction of redesigned collection rounds.
- Route optimisation activity.
- Data and service configuration issues.
- Recruitment and training of new crew members.
- Increased resident awareness and reporting following the move to three-weekly residual waste collections.
- Residents may be less willing to wait until their next scheduled collection to report an issue due to the longer interval between collections, resulting in a higher proportion of missed collections being formally reported than under the previous service model.

These factors contributed to increased missed collection reports during the bedding-in period.

3.4.3 Actions Taken

The Shared Waste Service and Veolia worked together to address these issues through the implementation of a range of corrective measures, including:

- Targeted analysis of recurring missed collection locations to identify root causes and implement permanent corrective measures.
- Increased monitoring of rounds performing above the missed collection target, with intervention plans agreed where performance falls short of expected standards.
- Enhanced use of in-cab technology and exception reporting to identify and resolve missed collections more quickly.
- Monthly joint performance review meetings with Veolia, supported by weekly monitoring of missed collection performance and targeted action plans for rounds performing below target.
- Enhanced crew training and support.
- Improvements to operational processes and service scheduling.
- Investigation and resolution of repeat service failures. (Hotspot list)
- Enhanced communications with residents through the waste collection app and digital channels.

3.4.4 Lessons Learnt

Key lessons identified include:

- Major service changes require enhanced monitoring during mobilisation and implementation periods.
- Accurate property and service data are critical to maintaining collection reliability.
- Workforce resilience and early recruitment are essential when introducing significant service changes.
- Route optimisation should continue beyond implementation to address emerging operational issues.
- Real-time operational data improves the speed of issue identification and resolution.
- Resident communications play an important role in managing expectations and supporting service improvements.
- Early intervention at repeat problem locations prevents recurring service issues.

- Changes to collection frequency can influence customer reporting behaviour and should be considered when comparing performance data with historic service models.

3.4.5 Current position

Missed collection performance has improved significantly since the mobilisation period.

Graph 7 highlights a pronounced spike in missed collections during August and September 2025, with performance peaking at approximately 177 missed bins per 100,000 collections in August. This coincided with the introduction of the new waste and recycling contract, redesigned collection rounds and the transition to three-weekly residual waste collections. Whilst a further increase was recorded in November 2025 as operational arrangements continued to be refined, the overall pattern since mobilisation has been one of sustained improvement.

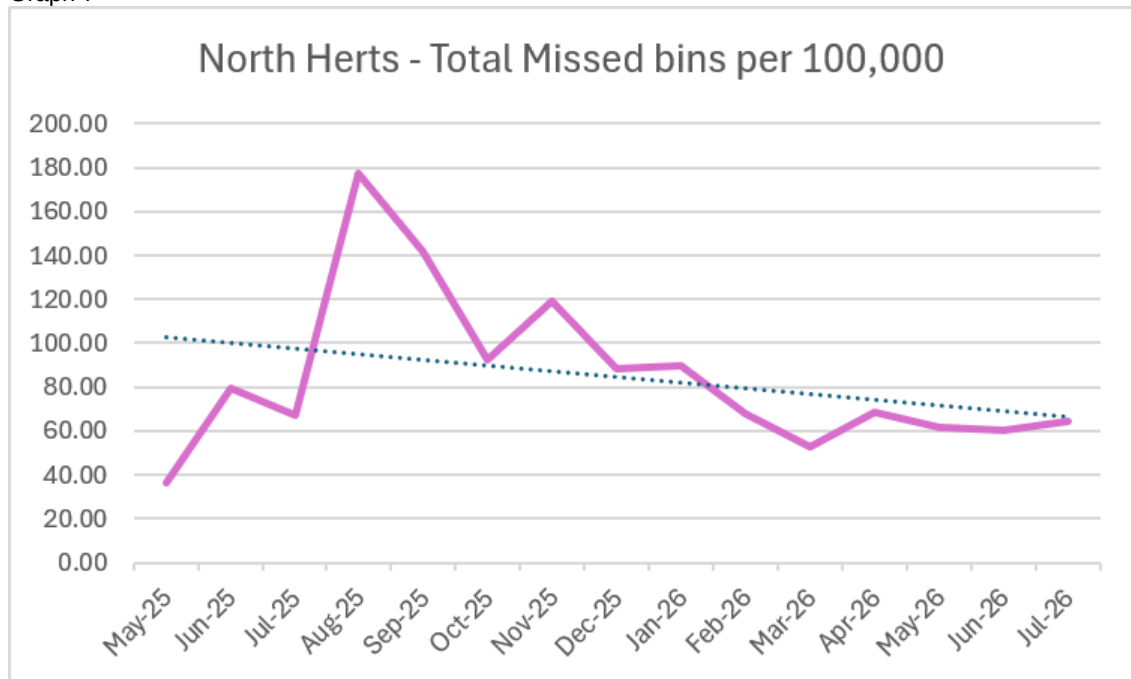
Following a programme of route optimisation, staff recruitment, enhanced crew training and ongoing performance monitoring, missed collection reports have reduced steadily throughout 2026. The trend demonstrates that the operational issues associated with mobilisation have largely been resolved and that service performance has stabilised.

The trend line shown in Graph 7 indicates a clear downward trajectory across the reporting period, demonstrating that the corrective actions implemented by the Shared Waste Service and Veolia have delivered sustained improvements in collection reliability. Missed collections reduced from a peak of approximately 177 per 100,000 collections in August 2025 to approximately 64 per 100,000 collections by July 2026, a reduction of around 64%. Whilst performance remains above the Council's target of 55 missed collections per 100,000 collections, the majority of elevated performance occurred during the mobilisation and bedding-in period between August 2025 and January 2026, with a clear improvement evident thereafter.

It is also important to recognise that the introduction of three-weekly residual waste collections may have influenced resident reporting behaviour. Where residents may previously have waited until the next collection cycle to resolve an issue informally, the longer interval between collections can increase the likelihood that missed collections are reported through formal channels. This provides greater visibility of service failures and customer experience but may also contribute to higher reported missed collection figures compared with historic performance.

Overall, the data demonstrates that missed collections were largely concentrated during the mobilisation and bedding-in period and that the actions taken by the Shared Waste Service and Veolia have resulted in sustained improvements in service reliability. The graph shows that performance has transitioned from an initial period of volatility to a more stable and consistent position, with monthly missed collection rates now significantly below those experienced during the early months of contract mobilisation.

Graph 7



4 CONCLUSION

The introduction of the new waste and recycling contract, enhanced recycling services and three weekly residual waste collections represented one of the most significant service transformations undertaken by the Shared Waste Service in recent years. Whilst the scale of these changes created a number of operational challenges during mobilisation, performance has continued to improve as the service has matured.

Issues experienced at a small number of communal developments were investigated and resolved through detailed data validation, site visits, capacity assessments and revised collection arrangements. Performance data demonstrates that these interventions have been successful, with communal missed collections reducing significantly and service performance returning to expected levels.

Household composting performance has continued to be influenced by external factors, particularly prolonged dry weather and reduced garden growth. Whilst composting tonnages remain below previous levels, stable garden waste subscription levels demonstrate continued resident engagement with the service. Graph 4a also shows that although missed garden waste collections increased following the annual subscription renewal period in April 2026, performance has improved steadily since then as operational improvements have been implemented and embedded.

Recycling performance has improved following the service changes, with the annual recycling rate increasing from 57.11% in 2024/25 to 58.88% in 2025/26. More recent rolling performance now exceeds 62%, demonstrating that the benefits of enhanced recycling capacity, expanded material streams and behavioural change are continuing to be realised.

Missed collection performance has improved significantly since the mobilisation period, supported by route optimisation, workforce development, enhanced operational monitoring and ongoing contract management. The data demonstrates that the majority of issues experienced immediately following implementation have been addressed and service reliability has improved accordingly.

The Shared Waste Service will continue to work closely with Veolia, residents and stakeholders to build on these improvements through ongoing performance monitoring, targeted communications, waste composition analysis and evidence led service development. This will ensure the service continues to improve recycling performance, reduce waste and deliver a reliable, efficient and customer-focused service for residents.

5. APPENDICES

5.1 None.

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

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7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TUESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2026
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*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: Councillor Learning and Development Annual Report

REPORT OF: Director - Governance

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Governance

COUNCIL PRIORITY: All Priorities;

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
To provide details to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the completion of mandatory and required learning and development to be completed by Councillors.
2. RECOMMENDATIONS
2.1. That the Committee note the Annual Report on Councillor Learning and Development.
2.2. That the Committee discuss and provide suggestions on Councillor Learning and Development provision and increasing Member completion.
3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS
3.1. To comply with the Councillor Learning and Development Protocol as considered and endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on Tuesday 24 March 2026.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. The Annual Report has been shared with the Councillor Learning and Development Member Champions – Councillors Val Bryant, Claire Winchester and Ralph Muncer – to provide comment and, where provided and appropriate, have been incorporated.

5.2. The Annual Report has also been presented to the Leadership Team, Group Leaders and Political Liaison Board.

6. FORWARD PLAN

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

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee were presented with the Councillor Learning and Development Protocol at its meeting on Tuesday 24 March 2026. As part of this Protocol, an Annual Report is to be presented to the Committee at September's meeting annually.
- 7.2. This report provides high-level information on completion of Member Learning and Development.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Member Induction Sessions

- 8.1. As part of the adopted Protocol, compulsory in-person sessions were arranged for Members on Monday 11 May 2026 and Thursday 14 May 2026. These sessions provided mandatory training on Safeguarding, Data Protection and GDPR, Cyber Security and Code of Conduct for Councillors.
- 8.2. 12 Members attended the in-person session on Monday 11 May 2026 and were present for all areas covered. One further Member attended only the Safeguarding session.
- 8.3. 18 Members attended the in-person session on Thursday 14 May 2026 and were present for all areas covered. Three further Members attended only the Safeguarding and Code of Conduct sessions.
- 8.4. Following these in-person sessions, Members who either did not attend or attended only part of the session were emailed directly by the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager to advise on their outstanding training requirements.
- 8.5. At the time of writing 8 Members had at least one compulsory training module outstanding. Of these 8 Members:
 - a. 4 had one module outstanding.
 - b. 1 had two modules outstanding.
 - c. 3 had four modules outstanding.
- 8.6. The relevant Group Leaders have been informed of all outstanding requirements for their members and have been asked to ensure that these are completed.

Compulsory Planning Training

- 8.7. A training session was provided on Tuesday 19 May 2026 by the Planning Officers Society which covered 'Defendable Decisions at Planning Control Committees'. This session was compulsory for all members and substitute members of the Planning Control Committee for 2026/27.
- 8.8. 19 Members attended this in-person session, including 6 members of the Planning Control Committee, as well as 6 substitute members.
- 8.9. At the time of writing, only one substitute member had not completed the compulsory Planning training and therefore will be unable to sit on the Planning Control Committee until this has been completed.

Compulsory Licensing Training

- 8.10. A training session was provided on Monday 18 May 2026 by Link Support Services which covered the Licensing Act and guidance on conducting Licensing Sub-Committee Hearings. This session was compulsory for all members of the Licensing & Regulation Committee for 2026/27.
- 8.11. 14 Members attended this virtual session, including 8 members of the Licensing and Regulation Committee.
- 8.12. As this session could not be recorded, a further session was arranged on Thursday 11 June 2026 and was delivered in-house by the Legal Services Manager.
- 8.13. 5 Members attended this virtual session, all of whom were members of the Licensing and Regulation Committee. The session was recorded and uploaded to Members GrowZone.
- 8.14. At the time of writing, two members of the Licensing and Regulation Committee had not completed the compulsory Licensing Training and therefore will be unable to sit on a sub-committee hearing until this has been completed.

Other Points to Note

- 8.15. Feedback on the sessions delivered throughout the Induction Week was requested from Members, however, only two responses were received. Given the small sample size, the feedback has not been included in this report.
- 8.16. Whilst ensuring that all mandatory training is easily accessible within the GrowZone system for Members, reminders were automatically generated and sent to Members who had already completed training. The matter is being investigated and a resolution will be put in place to ensure the issues do not reoccur in the future.
- 8.17. As discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in March, training records for Members are now available to view on each individual Modern.Gov page under 'More information about this Councillor', which provides high level detail to the public on training provided by North Herts Council (either delivered in house or external training arranged by the Council). This will include the title of the course, the date of completion and who delivered the session.
- 8.18. A Member Skills Self-Audit was conducted by the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Team through May and June 2026, with the results to be compiled and provided to the Learning and Development Member Champions ahead of a meeting with the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager in September 2026.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 As part of the North Herts Council Councillor's Code of Conduct, it is necessary for Councillors to undertake Code of Conduct training provided by the authority. Requirements for other mandatory training arises from the Council's Constitution, committee requirements, Council decisions or adopted protocols. The Council may require completion of specified training before a Councillor can participate in certain functions or committees. Repeated failure to attend training designated as mandatory by the Council may be considered by the Standards Committee where it indicates a failure to meet the standards expected of a Councillor.

It will be compulsory if:

- a. Full Council, Cabinet or a Committee decide it is, or
 - b. Group Leaders agree that it should be compulsory with any of the Statutory Officers (Head of Paid Service; Section 151 Officer/Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer); or
 - c. a Councillor is directed to attend training following a Councillor conduct complaint.
 - d. If a Councillor sits on the Planning Control or Licensing and Regulation Committee. [NB Councillors cannot participate in decision making at either Committee unless the compulsory training has been completed].
- 9.2. The Committee adopted the Councillor Learning & Development Protocol at its meeting on Tuesday 24 March 2026, which included the following requirement:

An annual report on Compulsory Training will be presented to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September (or nearest meeting available).

The annual report will also be provided to the Leadership Team, Group Leaders and the Political Liaison Board to provide key information on Councillor Development and ensure that compulsory training is being completed as required.

The report presented to O&S will be a high level annual report where aggregate data on training completion is provided. The Standards Committee will consider individual accountability, particularly in circumstances where Councillors repeatedly fail to attend mandatory training as this is likely to fall below the threshold of expected behaviours of Councillors.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are no financial implications directly related to this report.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

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

- 11.2. If mandatory training is not completed in a timely manner, there is a risk that Members do not have the necessary knowledge to undertake their responsibilities effectively and that this could subsequently result in negative impacts on the Council e.g., data breaches, successful cyber-attacks, reputational damage. The 'Councillor Learning and Development Annual Report' is a means of reporting relevant issues and managing associated risks.

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 equality implications directly related to this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

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

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements directly related to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1. There are no HR implications directly related to this report.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1. None.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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Ellie Hollingsworth	Policy & Strategy Team Leader	Ellie.Hollingsworth@north-herts.gov.uk 01462 474220

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 [Item 75 'Councillor Learning and Development Protocol' at Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24 March 2026 – Agenda Pack, Minutes and Recording](#)

CABINET
TUESDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2026

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: ALLOCATION OF MHCLG HOMELESSNESS GRANT

REPORT OF: Director - Regulatory

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Regulatory

COUNCIL PRIORITY: Accessible services

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
1.1. The Council has received a multi-year funding settlement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), ring-fenced for the purpose of supporting the Council in meeting its homelessness duties. 1.2. This report details proposals for the allocation of some of this funding in line with grant conditions, national policy and local priorities. 1.3. The financial proposals contained in this report cover the full MHCLG funding period – through to March 2029 – to provide stability and continuity of service provision beyond LGR vesting day and to ensure the new Central Hertfordshire unitary authority is not left with an immediate challenge.
2. RECOMMENDATIONS
2.1 That Cabinet approves the funding proposals for the allocation of Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant received from the MHCLG as outlined in Table 1 in paragraph 8.13.
3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS
3.1. There is a need to secure housing services for homeless households in the district, including key existing services on the single homeless pathway. Adopting the recommendation at 2.1 secures the provision of high-quality local services to help those in need and provides stability into the first year of the new unitary authority. 3.2. The recommendation at 2.1 is consistent with the priorities set out in the Council's Housing Strategy (2024 – 2029) and the Council Plan.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. Cabinet could decide against approving the proposed allocations of government funding, however the services highlighted in this report would not be delivered with resulting adverse housing outcomes for households in need.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 The Executive Member for Regulatory, Cllr Mick Debenham has been consulted and is supportive of the proposals contained in this report.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on 19 June 2026.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The Council has received some form of ring-fenced homelessness funding from the government for over 20 years, usually on an annual basis. There is currently a three-year settlement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) of Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant (HRSDAG) totalling £2.9 million over 2026/27 to 2028/29. The Grant is ringfenced for initiatives to tackle homelessness in line with local authorities' legal duties and the government's policy aims which include ending rough sleeping. A detailed report was submitted to Cabinet at its meeting on [16 June 2026](#), setting out specifics of the HRSDAG settlement and the evidenced local need for homelessness support and assistance.
- 7.2. At its June meeting, Cabinet approved funding proposals for a pilot Herts Young Homeless education project in primary schools, building works to increase capacity at One YMCA's homelessness scheme at Anderson House and three years' worth of support funding for the Keystage scheme (PAIRS) at the former Lord Lister, Hitchin. This report sets out further funding proposals for allocation of the majority of the remaining HRSDAG.
- 7.3 Note that the Grant may not be spent on costs directly related to temporary accommodation (with some exceptions, including for provision of supported accommodation). Funding for temporary accommodation has now been separated out from the HRSDAG, to end the tension between councils having to choose between investment in prevention and meeting temporary accommodation costs. Instead, funding for temporary accommodation has been rolled un-ringfenced into the Revenue Support Grant as part of the wider Local Government Settlement and councils will not have a separate named allocation for temporary accommodation.
- 7.4 Following the launch of the Council's current Housing Strategy two years ago, a [review of achievements](#) has recently been produced. This highlights the degree to which our service and its outcomes rely upon strong and positive working relationships with our local partners.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Council no longer owns or manages any housing stock, and it therefore works closely with housing providers to meet local needs. Keystage Housing and One YMCA provide specialist accommodation and support as part of the Council's single homeless pathway, providing high quality, self-contained accommodation for single people with complex needs.

- 8.2 The Council has provided both Keystage and One YMCA with MHCLG grant funding over past years to ensure that appropriate support levels on the single homeless pathway could be maintained. With existing funding now expired and following on from the funding agreed for Keystage at June Cabinet, this report contains similar proposals to provide funding over the next three years to One YMCA to ensure that equivalent levels of support can continue to be provided on their part of the pathway, at Anderson House in Hitchin.
- 8.3 One YMCA opened Anderson House in April 2025 and the scheme currently provides 22 units of supported accommodation (plus an additional 24 units for young people funded by MHCLG's Single Homeless Accommodation Programme). As with the Keystage scheme, Anderson House has 24-hour support and provides a safe living environment for individuals with multiple disadvantage, enabling them to receive appropriate support, develop skills and confidence to sustain longer-term housing solutions. Residents typically receive 6-8 hours of individual in-house support per week; One YMCA also work closely with Adult Social Care, health services and other agencies to help individuals access appropriate specialist services such as mental health support. The Council has first right of refusal on vacancies arising in Anderson House and the Housing team works closely with One YMCA to secure the best outcomes for clients.
- 8.4 In its first full year of operation (2025/26), Anderson House has supported 56 individuals, most with multiple support needs. Mental health support needs were most common, reported by 80% of residents whilst 71% of residents had physical health related support needs and 71% required support for substance abuse issues. Of this cohort, 16 individuals so far have been supported to move into settled, independent accommodation including private rented accommodation or social housing. A further 15 have left the service, mostly of their own accord but a few as a result of eviction, custodial sentence or long-term hospital admission. Past experience shows that many individuals with complex needs will unfortunately cycle through available services multiple times before independent resettlement is achieved.
- 8.5 The funding proposal agreed at June Cabinet (a single payment of £81,600) will enable One YMCA to increase physical capacity at Anderson House by a further 17 units. The funding proposed in this report, for three years (2026/27 - 2028/29) totalling £910k will ensure that appropriate levels of 24-hour support can be sustained for residents with medium/complex needs. It is anticipated that Anderson House will begin operating at its new, higher level of capacity – 39 units (excluding the 24 units in the SHAP service) - over the coming months. An additional eight spaces will also be created in two four-bedroom houses on the Anderson House site which will be used as step-down accommodation for residents who are ready for more independent living.
- 8.6 The private rented sector (PRS) only provides around 15% of all housing in North Herts according to the last census however remains a valuable housing option for many of the households who approach the Council for homelessness assistance, all the more so since the enactment of the Renters' Rights Act (2025) (RRA) which has greatly enhanced security of tenure for tenants. Private rental properties are the only option for some of our clients, especially for those who are unable to access social housing (for example due to debt or unspent criminal convictions) and often offers a quicker resolution for some housing challenges. Demand for affordable housing in the District greatly exceeds supply and there are currently just over 2,000 households on the Common Housing Register, and average wait times are over two years (though can be significantly longer dependent on supply, and especially for larger properties).

- 8.7 The Council's Lets4U service works with private landlords to secure PRS properties for our clients and has secured over 100 lets in its first two years. To date, the service has been provided by one dedicated officer, and we have been able to offer small financial incentives to landlords funded via Discretionary Housing Payments and a small Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) Fund, alongside Black Squirrel Credit Union loans for those who are able to afford them. This report proposes additional funding of £550k for the HPG Fund over the three-year period to enable the service to expand further (and help more clients into homes), improve the service offered and meet the challenges brought about by the implementation of the RRA which has made landlords much more risk adverse when considering tenants for their properties. The RRA has however exempted local authorities from some of the restrictions around payment of rent in advance which places the Council in a good position to offer better financial incentives in order to secure properties.
- 8.8 The proposed funding will enable the following enhancements to the Lets4U service:
- larger financial incentives to encourage landlords to work with us, with the typical financial packages being in the region of £4k-£5k each. This may take the form of a deposit, a months' rent in advance and one-off incentive payments and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The RRA has made landlords much more cautious about who they let their properties to, making attractive financial incentives a central core of the Council's offer going forward. On occasion, other public bodies such other Councils, especially some who are London based, and the Home Office are also competing for available properties and are typically able to offer good incentives;
 - funding of commercial guarantors for clients who wouldn't otherwise have access to a guarantor, an assurance that is increasingly important to landlords as they view a perceived shifting of risk following the RRA;
 - contributions towards moving and start-up costs (e.g. purchase of furniture, appliances) for tenants, to remove what can be a significant barrier to accessing the PRS. Family-sized properties in particular are unlikely to be fully furnished, resulting in high start-up costs for new tenants.
- 8.9 Cabinet at its meeting on [17th February 2026](#) approved funding for a second dedicated private rented sector officer, who is now in post (the amount of funding proposed for the current year is lower as this additional team member only commenced their role in June). This will enable the Lets4U service to work not just with more clients, but also particularly with those with more entrenched needs, or in more complex circumstances. Such cases are typically more time-consuming and expensive to resolve due to the assurances that landlords require in order to let to people they view to be riskier potential tenants. Securing settled accommodation for a client can however be life-changing for individuals as well as freeing up resources such as temporary accommodation for other households in need.
- 8.10 The RRA has completely changed the PRS landscape, and it will take some time yet for changes to be bedded in. The sector is anticipating a fall in properties available to let, with resulting increases in rents. The proposed funding for the Lets4U service makes allowance for this and funding that remains unspent will be recycled into the budget for the following year. This funding may also allow for potential collaborations with

Stevenage Borough Council and/or Welwyn & Hatfield Borough Council as they also have a similar focus on the PRS.

8.11 This report also proposes to extend funding for the following existing specialist services by a further year (into 2028/29). All services are well established and are delivering important services for local people. The proposed extension will maintain continuity and stability through the first year of the new Central Hertfordshire unitary authority, and will ensure it is not left with an immediate challenge:

- domestic abuse advice, support and crisis intervention, provided by Survivors Against Domestic Abuse;
- housing advice service including free legal and court representation, provided by Citizens Advice;
- homelessness education prevention work (secondary schools and sixth form colleges), provided by Herts Young Homeless;
- rough sleeper outreach service, provided by One YMCA.

8.12 All of the above services are currently funded for three years, up until the end of 2027/28, as approved at Cabinet on [11th February 2025](#).

8.13 Table 1 below summarises the funding proposals detailed above, taking account of the HRSDAG that has already been allocated at June Cabinet:

Table 1. Proposals for homelessness grant allocations for 2026/27 onwards

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
Total HRSDAG received	£950,409	£959,683	£965,267	£2,875,359
Unallocated HRSDAG following proposals approved at June 26 Cabinet	£616,546	£708,092	£706,128	£2,030,766
Funding proposed in this report:				
Single homeless pathway (One YMCA)	£294,513	£303,348	£312,449	£910,310
Lets4U	£150,000	£200,000	£200,000	£550,000
Survivors Against Domestic Abuse	-	-	£53,737	£53,737
Citizens Advice	-	-	£30,418	£30,418
Herts Young Homeless	-	-	£8,034	£8,034
Rough sleeper outreach (One YMCA)	-	-	£51,271	£51,271
Total proposed funding	£444,513	£503,348	£655,909	£1,603,770
Remaining unallocated funding	£172,033	£204,744	£50,219	£426,996

- 8.14 The MHCLG have stated that local authorities should consider how they might meet unforeseen seasonal homelessness demands, including winter and other surge provision, as there should be no expectation of additional funding in year. As a result, some funding for each of the three years remains unallocated for this purpose as well as other proposals that will be presented to the Cabinet in due course (unless the decision is taken in accordance with delegated decision-making arrangements).
- 8.15 The Council agreed its latest Housing Strategy (2024-2029) in March 2024, and the proposals outlined in this report are consistent with the priorities highlighted in the Strategy.
- 8.16 All of the financial proposals contained in this report cover the full MHCLG funding period – through to March 2029 – to provide stability and continuity of service provision and to ensure the new Central Hertfordshire unitary authority is not left with an immediate challenge. MHCLG has not confirmed the homelessness funding position beyond March 2029 and the existing LGR ‘Housing and Housing Revenue Account’ workstream is reviewing existing services as part of their work plan and the future of these will be considered as part of that wider process.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Housing Act 1985 Section 1 (1) confirms that the District Council is the Local Housing Authority (LHA).
- 9.2 LHAs’ homelessness duties are contained within the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 which placed significant new duties on English local housing authorities to prevent homelessness.
- 9.3 LHAs have a legal duty to provide interim (also known as emergency) accommodation to homeless applicants, if, at any point during their enquiries, there is a reason to believe that an applicant may be:
- homeless
 - eligible for assistance, and
 - in priority need
- 9.4 The LHA also holds the ‘Relief Duty’ which applies when a council is satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible for assistance; it requires the Council to take reasonable steps to help the applicant secure that suitable accommodation becomes available for the applicant’s occupation for at least six months. This therefore requires the Council to work with the applicant to help them find and retain accommodation to meet this legal duty.
- 9.5 The Cabinet’s Terms of Reference provides at paragraph 5.7.15; “To oversee the provision of all the Council’s services other than those functions reserved to the Council”.
- 9.6 In approving the funding proposals the Cabinet would therefore be acting in accordance with its statutory requirements and in accordance with the Council’s constitution.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Council has been notified of total allocations of £2,875,359 in Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant, covering the three-year period 2026/27 – 2028/29. Grant is ring-fenced to support delivery of services to prevent and tackle homelessness including amongst those sleeping rough and survivors of domestic abuse.
- 10.2 The proposals contained in this report meet the MHCLG's grant conditions and should the proposals be agreed, grant payments will be made at appropriate intervals throughout the financial year that balance the need to ensure prompt payments to service providers, whilst also protecting the Council's interests.
- 10.3 In accordance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022, the Council has considered whether each award constitutes a "subsidy" using the four-limb test (public resources; economic advantage to an enterprise engaged in economic activity; specificity; and a more-than-incidental potential effect on competition/investment). On that basis, this funding is not considered a subsidy as the services provided are not available in the commercial sector.

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 Affordable accommodation remains extremely challenging to source in North Herts. The One YMCA scheme forms a fundamental part of the Council's single homeless pathway and without funding to support its ongoing operation, the pathway will have significantly reduced capacity to accommodate our most vulnerable clients. The private rented sector is another source of accommodation for our clients and the proposals contained within this report aim to maximise the potential offered by this sector, without which accommodation options are reduced, with knock-on effects for move-on from temporary accommodation and ongoing reliance on hotel placements.

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 Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix 1. The assessment notes the potential positive impacts this decision will have for some of the most vulnerable members of the community in North Hertfordshire.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report; however, the proposals contribute to social value by providing community benefits that would otherwise not be realised.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to the proposals in this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 None.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Martin Lawrence	Strategic Housing Manager	martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk, Tel: 01462 474 250
Jo Doggett	Director - Regulatory	jo.doggett@north-herts.gov.uk
Luke Franklin	Service Accountant	luke.franklin@north-herts.gov.uk
Natasha Jindal	Governance Consultant	natasha.jindal@north-herts.gov.uk
Daisy Harris	Policy and Strategy Officer	daisy.harris@north-herts.gov.uk
Tim Everitt	Performance and Risk Officer	tim.everitt@north-herts.gov.uk

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 [MHCLG's Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant Determination 2026 to 2027](#)

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Annex A - Equality Analysis Template

1. Name of activity:	Provision of homelessness services for North Herts residents (Homelessness Prevention Grant allocations)			
2. Main purpose of activity:	Specialist services for homelessness prevention Accommodation and support services, including for those with multiple disadvantage			
3. List the information, data or evidence used in this assessment:	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025), A National Plan to End Homelessness. Available: www.gov.uk Children's Commissioner (2025), The impact of housing instability on children's GCSE grades. Children's Commissioner for England. Taylor, G., Vale, J., Gay Jackson, B., and Turtle, M. (2025) Dying Homeless Project 2024. Museum of Homelessness MHCLG (2025), Rough Sleeping Questionnaire 2025. Available: www.gov.uk Grant Monitoring returns to NHC (not published) North Herts Council (2024) Review of Homelessness in North Hertfordshire Available: www.north-herts.gov.uk Stonewall (2024) LGBT In Britain. Home and Communities. London: Stonewall Office for National Statistics Census 2021 MHCLG, Statutory homelessness live tables 2024-25			
4. Assessment				
Characteristics	Neutral (x)	Negative (x)	Positive (x)	Describe the person you are assessing the impact on, including identifying: community member or employee, details of the characteristic if relevant, e.g. mobility problems/particular religion and why and how they might be negatively or positively affected. Negative: What are the risks? Positive: What are the benefits?
Community considerations (i.e. applying across communities or associated with rural living or Human Rights)	☐	☐	x	Negative
				Positive
				Homelessness has significant negative impacts upon communities as well as more obviously for the individual. The government's National Plan to End Homelessness details impacts including: - upon children's lives in particular, including a direct correlation between home moves and attainment at GCSE and negative impacts on children's mental and physical wellbeing; - for adults - over 1,000 people died whilst experiencing homelessness in England in 2024, with an average age of death for those sleeping rough or using temporary accommodation of 48 for men and 45 for women; - people sleeping rough use public services more than an average individual, at a cost of around £14,000 per person on average, largely stemming

				from costs to the NHS and the criminal justice system. The proposals contained in this report aim to prevent homelessness from occurring in the first place and provide support and alternative accommodation in times of crisis.
A person living with a disability	☐	☐	x	Negative
				Positive
				Almost two-thirds of households owed a homelessness duty by the Council have a support need whilst over one-third have two or more support needs. These include support needs owing to poor mental health (35%), physical ill health and disability (28%) and learning disability (14%). The proposals in this report will specifically support this cohort, especially the funding proposed for the single homeless pathway (One YMCA supported accommodation). As noted in the main body of the report, most residents on the pathway have multiple support needs, particularly relating to mental and physical health.
A person of a particular race	☐	☐	x	Negative
				Positive
				In common with national data, data for North Herts district shows that a disproportionate number of people from ethnic minority backgrounds require homelessness assistance – making up 18% of those owed a duty whilst comprising 12% of the North Herts population.
A person of a gay, lesbian or bisexual sexual orientation	☐	☐	x	Negative
				Positive
				National evidence points to LGBTQ+ people being more at risk of homelessness. District level data suggests a very small number of LGBTQ+ people owed a homeless duty by the Council (3%), although a significant proportion – 20% - of applicants chose not to disclose information about their sexual orientation.
A person of a particular sex, male or female, including issues around pregnancy and maternity	☐	☐	x	Negative
				Positive
				Households with dependent children including pregnancies and victims of domestic abuse (the vast majority of which are women) are two cohorts which automatically receive 'priority need' for homelessness assistance, which will usually

				involve the provision of emergency (temporary) accommodation. Proposals for additional funding to Survivors Against Domestic Abuse will extend the local service for a further year, benefiting those fleeing domestic abuse and includes provision of crisis intervention and accommodation as well as advice and support for those needing to remain safe in their homes.
A person of a particular religion or belief	x	☐	☐	Negative
				Positive
A person of a particular age	☐	☐	x	Negative
				Positive
				Young people facing homelessness are particularly vulnerable and early interventions to prevent homelessness or provide appropriate support are incredibly valuable for life outcomes, particularly if a first experience of homelessness or rough sleeping can be prevented. 16% of main applicants owed a homelessness duty in 2024/25 were aged under 25. The proposal to extend funding for Herts Young Homeless by a further year will particularly benefit this cohort. Proposed funding for an expanded Lets4U service will provide additional accommodation options for this group (amongst others) who in particular struggle with securing affordable accommodation.
Transgender	☐	☐	x	Negative
				Positive
				National evidence points to LGBTQ+ people being more at risk of homelessness, however local data suggests a very small number of LGBTQ+ people owed a homeless duty by the Council (3%), although with a significant non-response rate.
5 Results				
	Yes	No		
Were positive impacts identified?	x	☐	The proposals contained in this report will provide funding for prevention, support and accommodation for local households facing homelessness including those with multiple disadvantage. These households include some of our most vulnerable residents and positive impacts are identified for those living with a disability, women, young people and minority groups, as well as the wider community.	

			Without assistance, many of these, and particularly those with multiple disadvantage, will continue to face ongoing barriers to positive life outcomes including repeated homelessness, poverty, ill health and lack of opportunity.
Are some people benefiting more than others? If so explain who and why.	x	☐	Interventions targeted at assisting homeless households, or those at risk of homelessness, will by their very nature disproportionately benefit those most likely to be at risk of homelessness ie those with support needs including disabilities, victims of abuse (who are more likely to be women) and minority groups.
Were negative impacts identified (what actions were taken)	☐	x	.

6. Consultation, decisions, and actions

If High or very high range results were identified who was consulted and what recommendations were given?

n/a

Describe the decision on this activity

Continue with policy

List all actions identified to address/mitigate negative impact or promote positively

Action	Responsible person	Completion due date
Regular monitoring of all service provision (as per contractual requirements where relevant)	Service managers	ongoing

When, how and by whom will these actions be monitored?

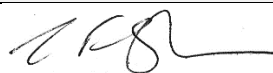
Monitoring and reporting in line with contractual arrangements and/or MHCLG funding requirements where relevant, otherwise internal monitoring will be undertaken.

7. Signatures

Assessor (Report Author)

Name: Tiranah Straughan

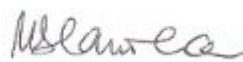
Signature**



Validated by (relevant Senior Manager)

Name: Martin Lawrence

Signature**



Forward to the Policy & Strategy Team

Signature** Daisy Harris

Assessment date: 26/08/2026

Review date: 26/08/2027

**** Please type your name to allow forms to be sent electronically. Please send to policy@north-herts.gov.uk for review by the team.**

A copy of this form should be forwarded to the corporate policy team and duplicate filed on the council's report system alongside any report proposing a decision on policy or service change.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TUESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2026
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*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2026-27

REPORT OF: SCRUTINY OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: NOT APPLICABLE

COUNCIL PRIORITY: All Priorities;

1.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
1.1	This report highlights items scheduled in the work programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2026-27 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 1 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 2, suggests a list of items to be considered at its meetings in the coming civic year.
2.3.	That the Committee, note the Decisions and Monitoring log, as attached at Appendix 3.
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 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.
- 7.2 The Committee now considers a wide range of issues, where appropriate, commencing its reviews early in the policy development process. By doing this it seeks to ensure assumptions are challenged at an early stage, mistakes are avoided, and eventual outcomes provide optimal benefit to the community.
- 7.3 The Committee seeks to ensure that consideration of agenda items minimises 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 1 contains the work programme for 2026-27.
- 8.2 When considering additional topics, Members should assess likely impact and consider prioritisation of items to ensure that the most appropriate items are taken forward to the work programme.

Forward Plan

- 8.3 The Forward Plan published in August can be found at Appendix 2. Members can view currently published forward plans here: [Browse plans - Cabinet, 2026 | 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 service delivery and other projects.
- 10.2 Although not significant, a committee attendance allowance of £25.17 per Officer per evening meeting can be claimed by officers in attendance. This is in addition to providing time off in lieu or overtime as an alternative.

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 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 Council Plan objectives might, therefore, be potentially negatively impacted.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix 1 – Work Programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2026-2027
- 16.2 Appendix 2 – Forward Plan (August 2026)
- 16.3 Appendix 3 – Overview and Scrutiny Decisions and Monitoring Log

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

Jeevan Mann	Scrutiny Officer	Jeevan.mann@north-herts.gov.uk Tel: 01462 474 295
James Lovegrove	Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager	james.Lovegrove@northherts.gov.uk
Natasha Jindal	Governance Consultant	Natasha.Jindal@north-herts.gov.uk
Tim Everitt	Performance and Risk Officer	Tim.Everitt@north-herts.gov.uk

18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2026-27

KEY
Items identified for work programme
Annual reports
Scrutiny reports
Completed

MEETING DATE	ITEMS AT MEETING	EXECUTIVE / REPORT AUTHOR
Tuesday 9 June 2026	- Annual O&S Report - Annual 3C's Update - LGR Budget - Churchgate - Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	- Councillor Claire Winchester - Councillor Val Bryant - Councillor Ian Albert - Councillor Tamsin Thomas - Scrutiny Officer
Tuesday 8 September 2026	- Annual review of Safeguarding - Councillor Learning and Development Annual Report - Allocation of MHCLG Homelessness Grant Funding - Waste Update - Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	- Councillor Daniel Allen - Councillor Daniel Allen - Councillor Mick Debenham - Councillor Amy Allen - Scrutiny Officer
Tuesday 10 November 2026	- SettleParadigm - LGR future plans update - Decarbonisation of Council Buildings - Scope for Parking spotlight review - Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	- SettleParadigm - Councillor Laura Williams - Councillor Amy Allen - Councillor Jon Clayden - Scrutiny Officer
Tuesday 05 January 2027	- Community Safety Report - Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	- Councillor Mick Debenham - Scrutiny Officer
Tuesday 02 February 2027	- Climate Emergency update - Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	- Councillor Amy Allen - Scrutiny Officer
Tuesday 9 March 2027	- RIPA - Work Programme & Decisions and Monitoring Tracker	- Councillor Daniel Allen - Scrutiny Officer

Spotlight Review

- Parking – tbc

Task and Finish Group

- None Scheduled

Site Visit

- Riverside development – Friday 4th September
- Museum Collection Facility – to be scheduled

Briefing

- Crime and Disorder Matter (topic tbc) – January 2027

Candidate items to be scheduled:

- To be confirmed

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Forward Plan of Key Decisions - 21 August 2026

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
2026-27 Q1 Council Plan Update		Cabinet	22 Sep 2026	2026-27 Q1 Council Plan Update	Rachel Cooper, Controls, Risk and Performance Manager Tel: 01462 474 606 rachel.cooper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Grounds Maintenance Contract Review		Cabinet	22 Sep 2026	Grounds Maintenance Contract Review	Sarah Kingsley, Director - Environment Tel: 01462 474 552 sarah.kingsley@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Allocation of MHCLG Homelessness Grant		Cabinet	22 Sep 2026	Allocation of MHCLG Homelessness grant	Martin Lawrence, Strategic Housing Manager Tel: 01462 474 250 martin.lawrence@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
North Hertfordshire Town Centre Strategy		Cabinet	22 Sep 2026	North Hertfordshire Town Centre Strategy	Louise Symes, Strategic Planning & Projects Manager Tel: 01462 474 359 louise.symes@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
Local Plan - content and evidence base consultation		Cabinet	22 Sep 2026	Local Plan - content and evidence base consultation	Rachael Rooney, Interim Strategic Planning Manager Tel: 01462 474 328 rachael.rooney@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Strategic Planning Matters Report		Cabinet	22 Sep 2026	Strategic Planning Matters Report	Rachael Rooney, Interim Strategic Planning Manager Tel: 01462 474 328 rachael.rooney@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan Update		Cabinet	22 Sep 2026	Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan Update	Anthony Roche, Chief Executive Tel: 01462 474 588 anthony.roche@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Charnwood House, Hitchin		Cabinet	22 Sep 2026	Charnwood House, Hitchin	Philip Doggett, Principal Estates Surveyor Tel: 01462 474 141 philip.doggett@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
FIRST QUARTER TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2026/27		Cabinet	22 Sep 2026	FIRST QUARTER TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2026/27	Dean Fury, Corporate Support Accountant Tel: 01462 474 509 dean.fury@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6

Decision required	Overview and Scrutiny	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Documents to be submitted to Decision Maker	Contact Officer from whom documents can be requested	Confirmation that other documents may be submitted to the Decision Maker	Procedure for requesting details of other documents
FIRST QUARTER CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REVIEW 2026/27		Cabinet	22 Sep 2026	FIRST QUARTER CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REVIEW 2026/27	Dean Fury, Corporate Support Accountant Tel: 01462 474 509 dean.fury@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
First Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring 2026/27		Cabinet	22 Sep 2026	First Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring 2026/27	Antonio Ciampa, Accountancy Manager Tel: 01462 474 566 antonio.ciampa@north-herts.gov.uk, Ian Couper, Director - Resources Tel: 01462 474 243 ian.couper@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6
Churchgate Shopping Centre - Historic Rent and Service Charge Arrears		Cabinet	24 Nov 2026	Churchgate Shopping Centre - Historic Rent and Service Charge Arrears	Philip Doggett, Principal Estates Surveyor Tel: 01462 474 141 philip.doggett@north-herts.gov.uk	Yes	Via the Contact Officer named in Column 6

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DECISIONS

Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
ANNUAL REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY			
1	RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered and provided comments on the draft Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025/26, attached as Appendix 1, prior to consideration by Full Council. RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025/26, as attached at Appendix 1, be noted. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: To enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on the report of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the work of the Committee in the 2025/26 Civic Year prior to consideration by Full Council. Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting Tuesday 9 June 2026 @7.30PM	N.B. This item was referred onto Full Council for consideration RESOLVED: That Council noted the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny 2025/26, attached as Appendix 1. REASON FOR DECISION To enable Council to consider and comment on the report of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding the work of the Committee in the 2025/2026 Civic Year. Council Meeting - Thursday 16th July 2026 @ 7.30pm	Open

Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
LGR Budget			
2	RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: (1) That Cabinet approve that up to £1 million of the available funding be allocated to county-wide costs. Any contribution will be based on a fair share from each Council and can be approved by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Member for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation and Executive Member for Resources. (2) That Cabinet approve that up to £1 million of the available funding be allocated to additional staffing costs, noting that £450k has already been allocated. Any spend can be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Resources, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and political Group Leaders, except where the Constitution already requires different approval processes. (3) That Cabinet approve that up to £200k of the available funding can be spent on additional training costs. Any spend can be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Resources. (4) That any spend is subject to a cap of £1 million in 2026/27 and £2 million overall. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: This is intended to provide a practical framework for	RESOLVED: That Cabinet: (1) Approved that up to £1 million of the available funding be allocated to county-wide costs. Any contribution will be based on a fair share from each Council and can be approved by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Executive Member for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation and Executive Member for Resources. (2) Approved that up to £1 million of the available funding be allocated to additional staffing costs, noting that £450k has already been allocated. Any spend can be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Resources, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and political Group Leaders, except where the Constitution already requires different approval processes. (3) Approved that up to £200k of the available funding can be spent on additional training costs. Any spend can be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Resources. (4) Approved that any spend is subject to cap of £1 million in 2026/27 and £2 million overall.	Open

	agreeing LGR costs. It aims to allow timely reactions in what will need to be a fast-moving project. Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting Tuesday 9 June 2026 @7.30PM	REASON FOR DECISIONS: This is intended to provide a practical framework for agreeing LGR costs. It aims to allow timely reactions in what will need to be a fast-moving project. Cabinet Tuesday 16 June 2026 @ 7.30pm	
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Item number	Recommendation/ Referral	Details from Cabinet	Status
CHURCHGATE			
3	RESOLVED: That the recommendation to Full Council and Cabinet was noted, and that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee also noted the provided update/next steps of the project. RECOMMENDED TO CABINET: That Cabinet recommends that Council approves the allocation of additional funds, referencing the Part 2 report. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: To ensure that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee are content with the decisions being put forward to Cabinet on 16 June 2026 and to Full Council on 16 July 2026. This report provides an overview of the recent work completed and details how the project team and Project Board propose to move forward – providing the Committee with an opportunity to ask any further details Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting Tuesday 9 June 2026 @7.30PM	RESOLVED: That Cabinet: RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That it: (1) Approves the additional capital / revenue funding set out in the Part 2 report to support the next phase of the Churchgate Regeneration Project. (2) Instructs officers to undertake a review of the Council's external communications approach, with a specific focus on improving transparency, accessibility, and the visibility of key decision-making information. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION: (1) Since the last Full Council update in July 2025, and subsequent Overview & Scrutiny Committee discussions in February 2026, the Churchgate Regeneration Project has progressed significantly and moved into a substantially more mature and evidence-led phase. (2) Over the past year, the Council has undertaken an extensive programme of work to respond directly to key matters raised by Members and stakeholders, including viability, parking, public realm, market provision, delivery options, governance and long-term town centre sustainability. This has included financial	Open

		analysis, specialist technical work, Project Board workshops and Member briefings. (3) This work has enabled the Council to move from high-level vision setting into a more informed, evidence-led and delivery-focused phase. (4) Alongside this, the Council has also undertaken early engagement with the development and investment sector to inform future procurement, delivery and partnership decisions. Feedback from this work has demonstrated strong market interest in Hitchin and increased confidence in both the credibility of the opportunity and the Council's commitment to delivering a high-quality regeneration programme for the town centre. (5) The recommendations within this report therefore represent a logical progression from the work completed to date and are intended to ensure that future decisions regarding the regeneration of the site are informed, evidence-led and commercially robust. (6) The proposed next stage of work is materially different from earlier strategic and visioning exercises. The Council is now seeking to appoint specialist regeneration and development expertise to work alongside the project team in refining a deliverable scheme, testing assumptions in greater detail, reducing uncertainty and supporting the transition from strategic visioning into delivery planning and implementation. (7) This phased approach enables the Council to retain control of the project as it develops, whilst ensuring that investment and risk remain proportionate to the level of certainty and information available at each stage.	
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		(8) The proposed next phase reflects the consistent feedback received through market engagement and specialist advice: that the appropriate next step is a structured feasibility and delivery-planning phase focused on shaping a viable, deliverable and investment ready regeneration scheme for Hitchin town centre. Cabinet Tuesday 16 June 2026 @ 7.30pm	
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