

Council Plan – Proposed Actions

Objective One: Be a welcoming, inclusive, and efficient council

1. Continue to ensure that individuals and community groups presenting petitions, grant applications, opinions or objections to Committees, Cabinet and Council are treated as welcome guests at all times; that Chairs are encouraged to take a flexible and enabling approach to their participation.
2. Maintain our programme of regular engagement and survey activities which will enable us to measure progress in how the Council's work with residents and community groups is perceived, and how it encourages new ideas for improvement.
3. Continue to review the 3C's (Comments, Compliments, and Complaints) Policy and where appropriate act on feedback from customers.
4. Trial a range of additional online activities for events such as Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD), Local Democracy week (now will be Parliamentary Week), Chair's Reception/Volunteer Awards, Town Talks, Village Voices, Cabinet Question Times, Young People's Question Times, and Village Talks.
5. Launch the established Community Engagement and Co-Operative Development Cabinet Panel to give local organisations and residents a district wide voice on strategic decisions.
6. Encourage young people to become more involved in local democracy through increased work to promote local democracy week, working with youth councils, schools and youth clubs as well as other organisations working with young people.
7. Encourage councillors to actively engage with children and young people to enable them to have a voice and better influence decision making.
8. Ensure that we maintain access to our services for all residents.
9. Ensure that all parts of the district are given opportunities to participate fully in a range of engagement activities such as both general and subject specific Town Talks and Village Voice forums, as well as all-party councillor surgeries, whether remote or in person.
10. Ensure that new and existing councillors are offered a range of opportunities to become fully equipped to help residents through induction and on-going development opportunities in all aspects of their roles, including the use of remote (Zoom) meetings for Council and Community Engagement purposes, accessing Local Government Association learning platforms, and other relevant training modules.
11. Undertake some specific work to ensure that we find new and innovative ways to ensure the involvement and engagement of our Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in Council work, to include learning and development from the Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement and other relevant bodies.
12. Continue to value our staff and the staff of our contractors, who are also part of our community.
13. Continued focus on delivering services as efficiently as possible, but mindful of potentially significant reductions in our funding. Any fundamental budget reviews will involve public consultation to help identify the services that residents value the most.
14. Continue to ensure that the Council's website encourages public use and engagement, particularly in relation to high use areas.

Objective 2: Build thriving and resilient communities

15. Continue to work with the full range of voluntary and charitable organisations both during Covid-19 and afterwards to assist with the needs of all local residents in terms of food, housing and financial assistance.
16. Ensure that we have the best possible officer and member-led partnership working with the County Council and the Police and others, to ensure that the views of the public are heard and that partners are fully engaged on matters of local priority.
17. Ensure that the public and councillors are fully aware of the District Council's remits and initiatives in Community Safety Matters including: Health and Wellbeing, Safeguarding and Community Safety concerns (such as environmental crime and other types of anti-social behaviour).
18. Work with our Executive members (Community Engagement and Co-operative Development) to promote and support Arts & Culture across North Herts including the Hertfordshire Year of Culture 2020 activities which have been postponed due to Covid-19, and encourage outdoor visual and performance art.
19. Exploring opportunities for funding the Healthy Hub and its associated activities such as inter-generational work and support for carers and people living alone, from its current remote status back to active community engagement as soon as this is possible.
20. Review all charges for council services and introduce concessions where they're needed and it's possible.
21. Aim to restore indoor and outdoor leisure facilities as rapidly as can be achieved safely, to reflect their importance as a community asset.
22. Deliver Council-led community safety events across the district to raise public awareness and address specific issues such as dog fouling, fly tipping, household waste duty of care, and other community and environmental issues.

Objective 3: Respond to challenges to the environment

23. Set up a community tree planting programme to provide 10,000 whips and help the residents of North Herts plant them and care for them.
24. Set up a Climate Change Partnership, working with the community to develop and promote schemes and ideas to deal with Climate Change across the district.
25. Rewild areas of council land including wildflower areas and bee corridors and support the setting up of community orchards and gardens, consulting with residents as necessary.
26. Identify the Council's current carbon footprint and set a target for the reduction of the council's own carbon emissions (compared with a 2019/20 baseline) for this year and the following four years and review annually.
27. Further involve local people in the discussion around the Climate Emergency and the necessary plans and actions to tackle it, by Town Talks & Village Voice forums around the district focussed on Climate Change.
28. Hold Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Events (WEEE) for people to dispose of their electrical equipment for recycling or repurpose. This will take the form of one event per town, per year, once the pandemic is over. We will investigate large village venues too.
29. Roll out the separated recycling bins across the district (including bins in parks and green spaces) not just in Hitchin and Royston.
30. Run campaigns to improve rates of recycling and composting across the district.

31. As part of the 'Sustainable North Hertfordshire', work to include the development and support of policies that encourage electric vehicle use and other 'cleaner air' initiatives. This includes the issue of bus and car idling, particularly outside schools and on taxi ranks.
32. Continue to oppose the adverse environmental and transport impacts of the current planned expansion of Luton Airport Expansion upon North Hertfordshire.
33. Work to progress the implementation of a better cycle network in North Herts, linking the District and beyond.
34. Introduce trial/experimental Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points in North Hertfordshire.

Objective 4: Enable an enterprising and co-operative economy

35. Ensure that the Council's income generating activities should never look to disadvantage non-profit or charitable community groups out of principle.
36. Explore how the 'real living wage' could be incorporated into NHDC contracts.
37. Develop and support projects that not only provide good value for the council, but which also have a clear community and social benefit.
38. Support business rates reform with particular regard for small business and the self-employed and protect the services provided by the Council to its communities.
39. Work with BIDs (Business Improvement Districts) and other town partnerships to relaunch and recover our local economy.
40. Promote and support the creation of cooperatives and community interest companies.
41. Support different ways of trading as we develop a new normal, including the creation of flexible workspaces and business hubs.
42. Continue to expand promotion of Credit Unions and advice organisations particularly in light of the current economic uncertainty.
43. Investigate how to promote a local, ethical supply chain to benefit local businesses.
44. Promote and support local people to complete applications for assets of community value through the development of sustainable, alternative business models, such as co-ops or Community Interest Companies.
45. Continue our support and give advice to local organisations on apprenticeships.
46. Continue to pursue the possibilities for renewable community energy schemes.
47. Improve and simplify the means for Council car parking payments, including investigating the possibility of introducing pay on exit parking at NHDC car parks.

Objective 5 - Supporting the delivery of good quality and affordable homes

48. Assess and plan for current and future housing needs for the local population (development of the Local Plan and promotion of Neighbourhood Plans).
49. Continue to build strong relationships and to work with our local social housing providers to build new 'General Needs' housing, and to work together to support initiatives/institutions which provide for the needs of those most vulnerable in our society.
50. Seek opportunities to support new co-operative and community-led housing schemes, in line with our commitment to engage with communities and work with our residents.
51. Seek to drive up the quality of existing housing for all residents through the disabled facilities grants (via Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency - HHIA) and the Home Improvement Grant (HRG).
52. Actively work with and support SADA (Survivors Against Domestic Abuse) who provide help to the victims of domestic abuse in ensuring the victims get the housing support they need.

53. Encourage local Housing Associations to implement robust tenant engagement policies that enable all tenants to have their voices heard on the management of their homes.
54. Work jointly with our partners to prevent homelessness and support the development of a new homeless shelter in Letchworth.
55. Develop and implement a cohesive Empty Homes strategy.
56. Urge any new developments to include and deliver the appropriate infrastructure (e.g. roads, education, health care), include links to existing communities, and implement high standards in quality, design and environmental standards.
57. Work robustly to deal with and address statutory nuisance.