

Objective One - Be a more welcoming and inclusive council:

The Council has created a programme of regular engagement and begun survey activities which will enable us to measure progress in how our work with residents and community groups is perceived, and how it encourages new ideas for improvement.

We have expanded the use and promotion of Town Talks and Councillors' Surgeries. Since the COVID-19 pandemic this has included the use of virtual Town Talks and Councillors' Surgeries which has helped to engage demographics which have typically interacted less with these activities.

Throughout the lockdown, we have worked with our IT and Committee Services staff to ensure that our democracy continues through video conferencing and public streaming of meetings on our YouTube channel.

The Council is in the process of implementing a "customer account" for customers to access specific information relating to them and to enable them to transact with the Council from a single log-on.

The Council is testing and in the process of implementing a Chatbot on our external website for online assistance for residents.

The Council has joined the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN), declared itself a Co-operative Council, and used funding from the CCIN to develop our engagement with Young People in the District and to prioritise work on Enterprise and Co-operative Development.

Objective Two - Building thriving and resilient communities

The Council has created a programme of regular engagement and begun survey activities to measure progress in how the Council's work with residents and community groups is perceived, and how it encourages new ideas for improvement.

The Council has established productive and active engagement with young people across the District, including engagement with YC Herts and their Youth Council. It also engaged young people in events for Local Democracy Week.

The Community Safety team have assisted Councillors in re-establishing regular communications with police and other community safety partners.

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council established the Community Support Fund in order to ensure the continued functioning of community groups who had come under pressure as a result of the crisis. The Council has provided funding through this to groups working on food provision, mental health support, and domestic abuse support, and continues to do so in order to ensure the resilience of our communities.

Objective Three - Responding to challenges to the environment

Council Plan Appendix C: Achievements

At the Annual Meeting we declared a Climate Emergency, set up a Cabinet Panel on the Environment, and have since made progress on reducing the Council's carbon footprint, ensuring the Council uses renewable energy and "greening" the Council.

We have introduced concessions for taxi drivers who use hybrid or electric cars and are working towards a completely electric fleet.

We reversed the previous administration's policy of reducing waste and recycling collections for flats, etc. and made progress in tackling the failings of the Waste Contract.

Under consideration is having Ultra Low Emission Vehicles for all future operational vehicles leased or purchased by the council and encouraging contractors to adopt similar measures.

The Council have begun exploring opportunities for tree planting throughout the district and have conducted meetings with the Woodland Trust in order to explore how best to do this.

The Council is working on establishing its carbon footprint in order to move towards our net zero carbon by 2030 target. We have gone through the procurement process and selected a consultant who has now begun undertaking this work.

The Council has reviewed our approach to air pollution and taken action to limit idling, particularly outside schools.

The Council established Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Events, to help residents dispose of their electrical equipment to be repurposed/recycled. These events have currently been put on hold due to the pandemic.

The Council have explored ways to encourage local communities to take some responsibility in supporting, improving, and maintaining their local environment. For example, we have made it easier for residents to access litter picking toolkits and equipment.

Through the Environment Panel, the Council has consulted and engaged with the public and with interest groups on strategies for tackling challenges to the environment and on achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030. It will continue to do this.

The Council has switched to renewable energy sources for our buildings' gas and electricity.

As part of our work on sustainable transport, the Council have conducted a public consultation to inform the development of the Electric Vehicle Strategy (found here: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/consultations/electric-vehicle-strategy-consultation>), and has outlined an Electric Vehicle Charging in Town Centres Policy here: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/North%20Hertfordshire%20District%20Council%20Operational%20Guidelines.pdf> <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/consultations/electric-vehicle-strategy-consultation>

The Council ended the program of removal of equipment from play areas with the exception of any locations where there was local support for removal. For example, in June 2019 new play and fitness equipment was installed at Priory Memorial Garden in Royston.

We have worked with Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL) to begin eliminating single use plastics from Leisure Centres and Swimming Pools. Blue plastic overshoes were removed from Royston Leisure Centre and Hitchin Swim Centre on 13/12/2019 and 24/02/2020 respectively.

Concessionary charges for garden waste collection for vulnerable residents were agreed in August 2020. The ability to pay for collection by direct debit has been agreed and may be implemented in August 2020 depending on capacity amid the current pandemic.

Council led environmental health action days (including dog fouling, fly tipping, dumping of waste), such as those held on the 9/12/2019 in Letchworth and the 3/12/2019 in Hitchin. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/environmental-action-day-comes-letchworth>

Objective Four - Enabling an enterprising and co-operative economy

The development of a Property Acquisition & Development Strategy with a view to its adoption by NHDC for the next 5 years. The key elements of the Strategy are:

- NHDC's core goal and objectives for property acquisitions and developments.
- Funding the acquisitions and developments.
- Risk management and governance.
- Due diligence.

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ('the Regulations') came into force on 4 April 2020. The Council has therefore put in place arrangements for meetings to be held remotely in line with these new regulations. Council meetings are also available to view on YouTube.

During the full implementation of the national lockdown, staff were able to transition to full homeworking with minimal disruption to services, with the ability to access systems online and use video conferencing to conduct internal and external meetings.

The Council has established the Cabinet Panel for Community Engagement and Co-operative Development.

Objective Five - Supporting the delivery of good quality and affordable housing.

The Council has continued to look at opportunities to make infrastructure more ecologically friendly. Examples include the planned pedestrian/cycle bridge over the A505 at the A10 roundabout, as well as new bicycle racks across the district.

The Council has continued to support and progress the development of John Barker Place.

A review of the Planning Code of Good Conduct was completed and presented at the Council meeting in January 2020.