

# **Council Plan**

## **Purpose of the Plan**

This plan sets out our key strategic priorities for the next five years, and how we will deliver our aims and objectives. Each of our individual service areas has detailed service and action plans, which inform, and are informed by our overarching priorities.

## **Our Co-operative Values**

We are a Co-operative Council. This means that we value and build mutual support, accountability, fairness, and responsibility into all that we do.

## **Our Vision**

We put people first and deliver sustainable services, to enable a brighter future together

## **Our Priorities for North Herts**

We are setting our priorities for the next five years against the backdrop of the continued impact of the pandemic on our people, towns and economy, ongoing challenges of Brexit and continued uncertainty about how central government will support local councils. Our finance strategies support the delivery of our priorities, so we've also reviewed these to ensure they are robust, agile, and making best use of your taxpayers' money as we move forward.

### **People First**

People make North Herts work. We value all our residents, businesses, staff, contractors, councillors, and other partners, and place them at the heart of everything we do.

### **Sustainability**

We recognise the challenges our towns and district as a whole face and are committed to delivering services which are relevant and sustainable. In doing so we will place our environmental responsibilities, as well as sound financial planning, at the centre of our policy making.

### **A Brighter Future Together**

We are far-sighted and plan for the long term to secure the best outcomes for our people, towns and villages, and the local economy, ensuring North Herts continues to thrive.

## **Themes**

### **Our Environment**

North Herts is home to vital chalk streams and grasslands, ancient hedgerows and woodlands, and parts of the west of our district fall into the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We all have a duty to protect and care for these environments.

The issues caused by climate change will have a profound effect on our environment, wildlife, and our lives. In recognition of this, North Herts Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019, which commits us to take urgent action to address the causes of climate change across the district.

Since then we've developed and begun implementing our Climate Change Strategy<sup>1</sup>, with the aim of reducing carbon emissions to meet our net zero targets.

### **Our Local Economy**

Our towns and villages are the lifeblood of North Herts and we are committed to supporting them to grow and thrive. We will work with partners on town centre regeneration and on local projects which will bring jobs and investment to North Herts, as well as helping our towns and local businesses to recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

We also plan to better understand the issues facing our rural economies and industrial employment areas and seek to help address these issues.

We want to see money reinvested into the local economy for the benefit of local communities and will look to support local suppliers when we procure products and services.

### **Our Places**

We have ambitious plans to grow North Herts into a modern and thriving district, where the spaces and infrastructure we create meet the current and future needs of our people.

We want the places we create to be well-designed, reflecting the local landscape and character of the area, and to have the necessary infrastructure to make them sustainable. We want to ensure greater connectivity across and beyond the district through sustainable transport projects and by ensuring that walking and cycling are attractive options for the people of North Herts.

We remain committed to providing affordable housing and social housing and will continue supporting communities with Neighbourhood Plans.

We are also developing a Green Infrastructure Plan and Strategy which will identify where new green spaces should be provided across the district. This will sit alongside other policies to support carbon capture, biodiversity, flood and surface water management, as well as health and wellbeing of residents.

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<sup>1</sup> [Climate Change page](#)

## **Our Services**

We are an open and welcoming council, accessible to all our residents 24/7. We've started a transformation programme which will help residents access Council services more easily, when they want to, in the most convenient way to them.

We know some residents want to engage with us beyond dealing with queries about their bins or paying bills. We value what they have to say about our policies and plans, so we have set up a number of panels on the topics of Environment, Community, and Place to gather ideas and feedback. The panels meet several times throughout the year and all residents are welcome to attend and share their views.

The pandemic made us change how we do things. We began streaming our meetings on YouTube, meaning people were able to watch them live without having to physically attend a meeting, or watch them back at a convenient time. Even though face to face meetings are starting again, we plan to continue live streaming to make our meetings as accessible as possible, as well as holding virtual meetings where allowed.

We could not deliver our services without our staff, so we have launched our Shaping Our Future programme which supports staff to develop their skills and helps us consider how we retain and recruit staff to deliver our vital services.

## **Projects to deliver change**

### ***Community Spaces***

- **Working with the community to refurbish Charnwood House in Hitchin to provide a new community space**
  - **Priority:** People First ● **Theme:** Our Places
  - **Timeframe:** Exploration complete by March 2022; Delivery Ongoing
  
- **Replacement of Royston Town Hall Annexe with a food retail store, including a community space**
  - **Priority:** People First ● **Theme:** Our Places
  - **Timeframe:** Delivered by March 2023

### ***Town Centre***

- **Progression of town centre strategies to inform the recovery of our town centres**
  - **Priority:** People First; Sustainability; A Brighter Future Together ● **Theme:** Our Places; Our Local Economy
  - **Timeframe:** Ongoing

### ***Green Spaces***

- **Installation of interactive playground equipment in all four of our towns**
  - **Priority:** People First ● **Theme:** Our Places
  - **Timeframe:** Delivered by March 2022

- **Implementation of the new Green Space Management Strategy**
  - **Priority:** People First; Sustainability ● **Theme:** Our Places; Our Environment; Our Services
  - **Timeframe:** Delivered by March 2022

### ***Sports and Leisure***

- **Refurbishments at North Herts Leisure Centre, Hitchin Swim Centre, and Royston Leisure Centre, including toilets and changing rooms**
  - **Priority:** People First ● **Theme:** Our Services
  - **Timeframe:** Ongoing
- **Installation of solar thermal technology at Royston Leisure Centre to provide more sustainable energy**
  - **Priority:** Sustainability ● **Theme:** Our Environment; Our Services
  - **Timeframe:** Delivered by March 2022

### ***Waste and Recycling***

- **Delivering a recycling and waste service which is sustainable and will provide best value for money and quality service provision to our district**
  - **Priority:** Sustainability; People First ● **Theme:** Our Environment; Our Services
  - **Timeframe:** Delivered by March 2023

### ***Accessibility***

- **Further development of our online customer portal to allow residents to easily access key information about their council services, all in one place.**
  - **Priority:** People First ● **Theme:** Our Services
  - **Timeframe:** Ongoing
- **Help residents to make payments to us at locations convenient to them**
  - **Priority:** People First ● **Theme:** Our Services
  - **Timeframe:** Ongoing
- **Engage with the community on how they can get involved to help us deliver our vision**
  - **Priority:** People First ● **Theme:** Our Services
  - **Timeframe:** Ongoing

## **Involving You**

As part of our People First commitment, we really want to know what residents think of our plan, our priorities, and how well we are doing on delivering them for you. We regularly carry out research into the perceptions residents hold of the Council and our services so that we can identify how well we are doing and areas for improvement. We are also reviewing our consultation approach so that we can ensure we involve people in consultations at the right time, involve a wide range of people, and take their views into consideration when making decisions.

Keep an eye out for how you can get involved and help us deliver on our ambitions.