

<b>Item No</b>	<b>Referred from:</b>	<b>OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY</b>
<b>6c</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>20 JUNE 2023</b>
	<b>Title of item:</b>	<b>NORTH HERTS PLACE NARRATIVE</b>

The report considered by Overview & Scrutiny Committee at the meeting held on 20 June 2023 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 20th June, 2023, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:** That Cabinet approves the North Herts Place Narrative.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

- (1) Despite being a district since 1974, North Hertfordshire has no clear identity and needs a point of differentiation within the county. This will help North Herts stand out as the place to invest, live, visit and work in Hertfordshire.
- (2) Currently, the Council and its partners are all telling different stories about North Herts which leads to fragmented communications. A joined up and coherent approach in the future will have greater impact, generate greater engagement and raise the profile of North Herts the place.

*Audio recording – 20 minutes 3 seconds.*

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis presented the report entitled 'North Herts Place Narrative' including that:

- It is often remarked that there is no such place as North Herts, but from engagement with residents, businesses and those who work in the district it was clear there were things that tied people together.
- The Narrative compiled the different views and interpretations of the district and place so there was one message to promote to industries, as well as promoting North Herts as a place to move, live and engage to drive the local economy.
- The Narrative focussed on the people, culture and businesses that makes North Herts a unique place, consisting of a logo, a strapline and passage of copy.
- It was based on research completed by a partner Council and had been completed at no cost to North Herts Council with funding and support provided by the Local Government Association.
- The Narrative put people at the centre and was aligned to the priorities of the Council, including the People First priority.
- Bold colours were used for the logo and strapline and these deliberately avoided traditional political colours or those of the Council branding, to ensure that it was about the place North Herts, not North Herts Council.
- It showcased what made North Herts a unique place, including our local artists, writers, businesses, residents and greenspaces, and would be key in recovery of town centres and the local economy.
- It would assist in drawing people into the area, retaining the existing economy, growing local skills, and investing in people.

- The project would be the responsibility of the Communication team to embed the Narrative and initially this would have minimal costs, though more ambitious strategies may be considered alongside partners.
- The Narrative was about evolution not revolution and selling North Herts as a place that exists which is vibrant and unique.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Adam Compton
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor David Levett
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Clare Billing
- Councillor Dominic Griffiths

In response to questions, Councillor Elizabeth Dennis clarified that:

- The Narrative could be used when considering other policies and strategies of the Council, such as the climate strategy or town centre recovery, to make North Herts a better place.
- The Herts Growth Board has a workstream looking into town centre regeneration, including understanding and creating place narratives. The progress has been slow and a number of districts and boroughs, including North Herts, have therefore undertaken their own work.
- The comments from Leaders and Chief Executive were based on perception of place, which still had a role in contributing to the Narrative, but Members needed to be mindful of this.

In response to questions the Communications Manager clarified that:

- Royston BID were unavailable when the research was completed but they now have a new manager in place, who would be consulted on the work before rollout. However local Councillors had been involved, as well as representatives from creative and arts groups in Royston.
- Therfield Heath had been directly referenced in the copy produced as part of the Narrative.
- The launch was expected in September 2023 with organic growth expected from key partners following this date.

During the debate, Councillor Muncer noted his support for the work produced, but questioned whether it was overly negative in the copy at Appendix D, specifically the penultimate paragraph. Following comments from other Members, it was agreed that it was important to recognise the challenges and issues that the district faced and therefore should be retained.

Councillor Nigel Mason proposed, and Councillor Dominic Griffiths seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:** That Cabinet approves the North Herts Place Narrative.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

- (1) Despite being a district since 1974, North Hertfordshire has no clear identity and needs a point of differentiation within the county. This will help North Herts stand out as the place to invest, live, visit and work in Hertfordshire.

(2) Currently, the Council and its partners are all telling different stories about North Herts which leads to fragmented communications. A joined up and coherent approach in the future will have greater impact, generate greater engagement and raise the profile of North Herts the place.