

<b>Item No</b>	<b>Referred from:</b>	<b>OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>6A</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>9 September 2025</b>
	<b>Title of item:</b>	<b>Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 (Q1 Update)</b>
<b>To be considered alongside agenda item:</b>		<b>Agenda Item 13 – Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 (Q1 Update)</b>

The report considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the meeting held on 9 September 2025 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 9th September, 2025, 7.30pm | North Herts Council](#)

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:** That Cabinet notes progress against Council projects and performance indicators, as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A), and approves new milestones and changes to milestones.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:** The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) monitoring reports provide Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet, with an opportunity to monitor progress against the key Council projects, and understand any new issues, risks, or opportunities.

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 32 seconds*

Councillor Ian Albert, as Executive Member for Resources, presented the report entitled 'Council Delivery Plan 2025-26 (Quarter 1 Update)' and advised that:

- Cabinet valued input from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Council Delivery Plan (CDP) report.
- In response to the Corporate Peer Challenge and the subsequent audit, the Council had been investigating how to extend Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to focus on achieving the outcomes set out in the CDP.
- These would be included in the Q2 report and smart measures would also be introduced without increasing pressure on workload.

The Director – Resources gave a verbal presentation and advised that:

- Digital Transformation and Leisure Centre Decarbonisation were the only projects with an amber status.
- The amber status classified projects that had missed one or more milestone dates without there being a significant impact to their delivery.
- In Appendix A, changes to milestones and new milestones that were subject to Cabinet approval were highlighted in yellow and blue respectively.
- Leisure Centre Decarbonisation, Churchgate, Decarbonisation of Council Buildings – Phase 2 and Local Plan Review all had a red risk level, as well as the overarching corporate risks.
- A red risk level was present where the project had scored highly on likelihood and impact which led to a higher level of monitoring and review.
- Three KPIs had a red status, with two of these related to Careline Installations and the other to Customer Service Centre (CSC) calls answered in 45 seconds.
- Explanations and planned actions were detailed in paragraph 8.4 of the report.
- The performance indicator for the Revenue Budget KPI was +2.4%.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Claire Winchester

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

- The red status on Careline Installations was due to resourcing issues, however, there were actions in place to address these to aim to progress them to a green status.
- KPIs on working days lost to short-term absence and staff turnover were worth measuring as they could present problems if they exceeded target levels.
- Both KPIs had been measured over a long period and had targets despite them not being included in the table. This error would be rectified before the report was presented to Cabinet.
- No additional financial implications were expected from the Building Safety Act issues detailed within the report.
- The due date on the milestone to provide Salix with finalised project data had not changed as ancillary works would not have a direct climate impact and as such, data could be provided before they were complete.
- The Leisure Centre Decarbonisation Project Manager had left their post due to a change in personal circumstances, however, the project had now entered the construction phase and would not require the same level of support that had been given by them during the project setup phase.
- An illustrated grid for risk level scoring was included at page 22 of the report.
- The assessment of whether the impact would be low, medium or high not only accounted for the impact on residents, but considered legal impacts, financial impacts and other impacts to the Council as a whole.
- Each impact was assessed by the officer relevant to that area, but it was also down to Cabinet, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Finance, Audit & Risk (FAR) Committee to provide feedback on these.
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy due date had been changed to reflect the Full Council meeting date, and it would go to Cabinet prior to that.
- Recent waste data was not yet available, as priority had been given to oversee the waste contract and service change first. Once this had been completed, all the relevant data would be processed and made available. The period in which no data had been provided would not be lost.

In response to questions, Councillor Ian Albert advised that:

- There was no update on the implementation of a learner pool at Royston Leisure Centre but the importance of this was noted and they would aim to have information available at the upcoming Budget Workshop.
- Members were invited to attend the quarterly Resource and Performance Management Group meetings where risks were highlighted and discussed in more detail.

Councillor Jon Clayden proposed and Councillor Sadie Billing seconded the recommendations.

As part of the debate, Councillor Ralph Muncer suggested that Members should receive an update at the next meeting on the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme as milestones associated with this had slipped and costs had significantly increased since initial project estimations, therefore, they should monitor issues to be able to act at the earliest opportunity.

After consulting the Executive Member for Resources and Director – Resources, the Chair confirmed that Members would be able to ask additional questions.

The following Members asked additional questions:

- Councillor David Chalmers
- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Paul Ward
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Jon Clayden

In response to additional questions, Councillor Ian Albert advised that:

- There had not been a lack of transparency on the Churchgate project as regular Member briefings had been held and there would be more in the future.
- A report had also been presented to Council in July and the next phase of the project had been approved.
- £296,000 had been spent on Churchgate to date, mostly on consultancy fees.
- An extensive public consultation process had yielded over 3,000 responses.
- A Parking Strategy Survey would be conducted to review existing parking usage which would inform how they could signpost users to alternative parking sites.
- Understanding the impact that the project would have on pedestrians and other modes of transport across Hitchin was critical.
- Hitchin Market Board had been consulted from the beginning of the project and the importance of working with market traders was recognised.
- The Council had been working with Market Curators to determine the best look and feel for the market in Hitchin after Churchgate had been redeveloped.
- A report at Full Council in December would take Members through the findings to date and plans in the lead up to a full procurement exercise.
- Depending on the procurement route taken, the building work would begin in 2027 or 2028.
- A highly experienced Project Manager who had worked with several local authorities had been appointed and would start next week.
- Project Board workshops had been held and regular audits through the Internal Shared Audit Service had been carried out to hold the team accountable for each phase of the project to ensure that it had been effectively run.
- The latest audit made three recommendations, and these had been addressed within the agreed timescales.
- Engagement on the project masterplan was planned.
- Market traders, the Market Manager and Hitchin BID Manager were engaged with regularly and had been consulted on their concerns around the project.
- There was a challenge between balancing parking space and the redevelopment of Churchgate which the Parking Strategy Survey would help to inform.
- It was recognised that the Churchgate project would continue after Local Government Reorganisation had taken place and that they would need to consult shadow authorities once they had been formed.
- Inevitably, projects in their early stages or with a degree of uncertainty were likely to have a red risk level, but there were mitigations in place to manage risk.
- £30,000 of the initial £400,000 funding allocated for Charnwood House had been spent on essential roofing works, electrical works and clearance to maintain structural integrity and prevent further decay of the building.
- They were committed to the revitalisation of Charnwood House for the benefit of Hitchin and the wider district.

- External agents were appointed with the task of engaging suitable operators to run the building as a community hub, however, their marketing had not yielded a letting for various reasons.
- There would be a review of the work on the building to date, and future options for the building would be put to Executive Members.
- While it was not formally on the market, they had retained contact details of groups that were formerly interested in running it as a community hub.
- Ensuring that Charnwood House would be in the community for the long-term was important.
- A dedicated webpage with periodic updates on Charnwood House was available on the Council website.
- Regular reports on Charnwood House were given at Hitchin Community Forum.
- The remainder of the initial funding allocated to the project would hopefully act as seed funding to help a future operator of the facility obtain further funding from other sources for the project.

In response to additional questions, Councillor Val Bryant advised that there was a page on the Council website entitled 'The Churchgate Conversation' which gave a detailed the timeline of the project and associated documentation.

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

- The status of the high priority audit finding would be checked and verified before the next FAR Committee meeting.
- The purpose of the report was to highlight risks and to track the completed actions against the planned actions that had been put in place to address those.
- More detail on each project including their risks and planned actions could be found on Ideagen.
- Charnwood House would not be on the Council Delivery Plan until a defined plan had been made for it. It would be investigated as to whether a service risk was needed.

In response to additional questions, the Chief Executive advised that:

- Ongoing reviews of strategy and policy documents would have to account for the changes that Local Government Reorganisation would bring, including Hertfordshire County Council assets that would come under the control of the future unitary authority and impact their current assets, especially if they were nearby or adjoining.
- Once assets for all eleven authorities across Hertfordshire had been mapped out, a division of these would be negotiated among the new unitary authorities.

Following additional questions from Members, there were no more points in the debate.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) Provided comment on the Council Delivery Plan Quarter 1 monitoring report.
- (2) Determined any project they want to receive more detail on, as part of the next monitoring report.

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:** That Cabinet notes progress against Council projects and performance indicators, as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A), and approves new milestones and changes to milestones.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:** The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) monitoring reports provide Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet, with an opportunity to monitor progress against the key Council projects, and understand any new issues, risks, or opportunities.