

Everyone Matters

A Sustainable Community

Strategy for

East Herts

2009 to 2024

East Herts Local Strategic Partnership
(LSP logo)

Lead LSP Partners:

East Herts Council, the Community Voluntary Service, Hertfordshire County Council, East and North Herts Primary Care Trust, Hertford Regional College, Hertfordshire Police Authority, South Anglia Housing Association, Riversmead Housing Association, Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce, Glaxo SmithKline

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Introduction from the chairman of East Herts Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Board, Councillor Tony Jackson, leader of East Herts Council.

On behalf of the LSP Board, it is an honour to introduce the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) 2009 - 2024 – Everyone matters - for the East Herts district. This strategy upgrades and replaces – our previous Community Strategy – East Herts Together.

The strategy sets out our vision and ambitions for the future well-being of the area and is based on hard evidence collected from a wide range of sources (appendix vi) and a structured process of public consultation and stakeholder engagement (appendix vii).

This new Sustainable Community Strategy will become the over arching framework for all key services in the district covering the period 2009 to 2024. The strategy has been developed in close collaboration with the emerging Local Development Framework (Core Strategy), which will guide future land use and spatial planning in the area.

The East Herts Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is the body responsible for delivering the ambitions set out in the strategy: the lead and wider membership of the partnership is set out at appendix v. Our intention is to work closely as a partnership to quicken the pace of change. The delivery of our shared ambitions will be achieved through annually monitored action plans linked to the priorities of Herts Forward, Local Area Agreements and other national and local indicators.

East Herts is an attractive, generally affluent area consisting of five market towns and over 100 rural settlements located within proximity of London. This core character shapes much of the economic, environmental and social opportunity and challenge addressed in the strategy. We have organised our evidence, our assessment of the key characteristics and our ambitions into the following themes:

- Environment – (Energy and Climate Change) East Herts
- East Herts people and community safety
- Housing East Herts
- East Herts character (built and natural environment)
- East Herts economy, skills and prosperity
- East Herts on the move
- East Herts health, wellbeing and play
- Green East Herts

On behalf of the LSP I would like to thank everyone who has helped to create the strategy either by taking part in the consultation, by offering evidence or through discussion. We have called the strategy ‘Everyone matters’ because it reflects the ambitions of the partnership to address the needs and aspirations of all East Herts residents as well as those that work and enjoy leisure time in the district.

(Tony’s signature to be inserted)

East Herts Local Strategic Partnership's vision is to:

Create a thriving, fair, and inclusive East Herts that safeguards and enhances our unique mix of rural and urban communities, where people choose to live, work and visit because:

- it is safe, clean, green and well connected;
- everyone matters and can take part in decisions that affect their lives;
and
- there are sustainable economic and social opportunities that improve quality of life and are available to all.

Everyone Matters – East Herts sustainable community strategy

Environment – (Energy and Climate Change) East Herts

East Herts size as geographically the largest district in Hertfordshire; its make up as a district of small market towns with a large rural area; its range of traditional housing stock; and, its location on good transport links close to London give rise to a range of development pressures and challenges in terms of creating a sustainable environment.

The total per capita CO₂ emissions of East Hertfordshire are the highest in the county and are continuing to rise year on year. This is accounted for by increasing emissions in the commercial and domestic sectors, but especially by the significantly large part that road transport plays in the emissions figures. Car ownership is high in East Herts as is total mileage per resident partly as a result of the geography of the area, but also due to the relative affluence of the population. This helps to explain the large ecological footprint of the district, some 13% higher than the UK average.

Reducing carbon emissions is key to helping mitigate climate change. Models suggest that East Herts, as part of the Eastern Region, is likely to be one of the worst areas in the UK in terms of affects of climate change. In particular over the next 30 years, the district is likely to see decreased summer and increased winter precipitation, alongside higher summer temperatures and increasingly variable weather patterns. This could see a rise in incidences of flooding in those parts of the district particularly at risk and conversely the need for increasing irrigation of farmland.

River water quality and availability of potable water is under pressure in the district. Already the district has one of the highest per capita levels of water consumption in the UK.

The Environment Scrutiny Committee of East Herts Council has set up a Task and Finish group and developed a climate change strategy and action plan.

Environment – (Energy and Climate Change) East Herts LSP's shared ambitions are to:

- *improve and adapt effectively to the impacts of climate change on our residents and businesses*
- *develop initiatives to reduce carbon emissions and water consumption and to plan for appropriate adaptation to the effects of climate change where necessary*
- *encourage our residents to save energy and money, through improved insulation measures in their homes and to promote the use of appropriate domestic alternative energy measures*

- *encourage all new developments to be both carbon and climate friendly reflecting and conserving the special local distinctiveness of the District.*

East Herts people & community safety

Voluntary Sector

Registered charities and voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups are an important part of the local infrastructure and economy. East Herts is particularly well served by community groups providing social, health, cultural and leisure opportunities, training, advice, information, befriending and fundraising services. In total there are more than 1,000 VCS groups active in the district and this represents the highest number of groups in any district in Hertfordshire. Whilst 30% of the voluntary groups in East Herts appear to be well funded, these groups tend to be those that provide services across the county, the region or nationally. Almost 50% survive on income of less than £5,000 per annum and 20% declared income of less than £1,000 p.a. or are completely unfunded. The voluntary sector in East Herts:

- manages and runs many of the 60 community centres and rural village halls that offer cultural and leisure opportunities close to home. Many of these buildings are ageing assets and need careful management in order to meet the needs of a modern society.
- provides support and mentoring to vulnerable people and families
- supports almost 20,000 active volunteers

The LSP funds Voluntary Services (CVS) to work with and develop local voluntary groups and organisations to provide frameworks and support systems to help them grow and get their ideas off the ground. Currently, the CVS has over 200 member groups active in East Herts ranging from Age Concern Bishops Stortford and Home Start East Herts to Hertford Heath Village Hall and Braughing Music Society.

Herts Sports Partnership (Active Hertfordshire Sports Facilities Strategy 2008-2016) states that 4000 volunteers contribute 3 million hours of unpaid time (this is a county wide figure).

Older and Vulnerable People

East Herts has a generally affluent population. Life expectancy here is above the national average. However, comparing females from the five most deprived wards against the five least deprived wards we find a two year difference in life expectancy. It is anticipated there will be a 60% rise in people over 75 years in the District by 2025, and expectations are changing: significantly, people increasingly want to have more control over their own lives and how their needs are met.

Whilst smoking rates are lower than the England average, one in five adults smoke, killing 170 people each year. Transport and access to services is an

issue in East Herts. The district has the third highest number of people aged 65 plus, living alone with no transport and people aged 65 plus with poor mobility, specifically there is rural isolation characterised by elderly people living alone, with poor mobility, without their own means of transport. There are reported issues regarding access to information and advice services, and there are 6,647 carers over 50 in the District and 2,500 people over 50 in East Herts have depression. 59% of people aged 50 plus do not participate in any physical activity.

East Herts has the second highest number of people aged 45 plus and second highest number of people aged 50 plus with a learning disability in Hertfordshire.

The partners within the East Herts LSP will work together on these and other issues. To drive forward our work, a new Health and Well-being LSP sub group will be set up to plan effective ways to tackle the needs of older and vulnerable people in the district, including adults with mental illness, people with learning disabilities and carers.

Children and Young People

The number of young people in the East Herts area continues to grow in relation to the rest of the districts in Hertfordshire. They are the future and our strategy reflects that. The East Herts District Children and Young People's Trust Partnership seeks to address and develop the needs of all young people in the area in accordance with the aims of the five outcomes of Every Child Matters: Staying safe, Being healthy, Making a positive contribution, Enjoying and achieving, Making an economic contribution. An annual action seeks to address the priorities that include, amongst other priorities, young people's perceptions of bullying in the district.

The capacity of the partnership has been bolstered over the last year with the emergence of the extended schools co-ordinators, children centre managers, the introduction of Common Assessment Framework arrangements, the review at county level of the Safeguarding Children Board, the emergence of Youth Connexions, the increasing involvement of the voluntary sector and the further development of the Youth Council and annual Youth Conferences.

The East Herts District Children's Trust Partnership Plan has identified that there is not sufficient provision locally for children and young people with more complex needs.

Community Safety

Crime levels in East Herts are very low (one of the lowest crime rates in the country). From 2005-2008 crime was reduced by 17.5% - progress made by key agencies and established partnership working. Despite this, the public perception of crime and feeling unsafe is higher than the reality.

Community Safety will be addressed through the Community Safety Plan:

- reassuring people that the district is a safe place to live
- reducing all crime, including home burglary, robbery and vehicle crime
- working with local people to reduce anti social behaviour
- working with people to reduce alcohol misuse
- working with people to minimise the harm caused by the use of illegal drugs
- working in partnership to raise awareness and address issues relating to domestic violence

People and community safety – East Herts LSP’s shared ambitions are to:

- *keep crime levels low and reassure the public that East Herts is one of the safest places to live and work*
- *strengthen social cohesion and empower communities by encouraging volunteering and working in partnership with the voluntary sector in the design and delivery of public services*
- *engage with young people to achieve the five outcomes of Every Child Matters: staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and making an economic contribution.*
- *narrow inequalities by working in partnership to address the needs of vulnerable groups and individuals*
- *ensure quality of life for older people by addressing gaps in service provision and improving access to services*

Housing East Herts

The LSP recognises how important it is that everyone has a decent settled home and the devastating impact the lack of a home or poor quality housing can have on a person’s life. Good quality, secure and reasonably priced housing is a crucial element affecting people’s ability to enter training, get a job, have a better standard of health and be able to take advantage of opportunities that are offered. There are significant financial costs in meeting the housing needs of households that are homeless or in housing crisis as well as the potential longer term social effects on peoples lives such their health or their children’s education potential. The Council and its housing providers in particular the two main Registered Social Landlords (Riversmead Housing Association and South Anglia Housing association) have set out the long-term vision for housing, across all tenures and the action needed to get there in its Housing Strategy, and associated Homeless and Homeless Prevention Strategy in July 2008.

There are a total of 56,252 dwellings registered in East Herts at 1st April 2007. The Office for the National Statistics records 86% of these properties as being owner occupied or privately rented compared to 81% for England. The social rented sector accounts for 14% of the housing compared to 18.4% for England. Housing Stock Condition Survey 2004 shows groups with high levels of 'non-decency' included private rented pre-1919 dwellings, single pensioner and vulnerable households.

The attractiveness of East Herts as a place to live has led to high house prices, with the District witnessing an 18% overall price increase since 2005 (Herts Observatory (HO) July 2007). This has resulted in a growing number of households being financially restricted, due to inflated house prices, from entering the private housing market. Information from the HO shows that in 2007 the ratio of the average house price in East Herts to the average income was 10:1 i.e. the average cost of a home was 10 times the average income. This was the third highest ratio in Hertfordshire.

The population of East Herts is ageing with the numbers of people aged 65+ set to rise by 40 % between 2001 and 2021. This factor alongside increasing life expectancy will increase the demands on existing services and existing accommodation choices for older people. There is a continuing need to examine, with partners, the possibilities of refurbishment, remodelling or re-provision of existing sheltered and elderly schemes where they no longer satisfy modern standards or customer expectations.

Housing – East Herts LSP's shared ambitions are to:

- *meet the housing need and aspirations of the existing and future residents of East Herts*
- *improve the condition of people's homes, in both the public and private sectors and ensuring that current stock is maintained, is energy efficient and accessible*

East Herts Character – (Built & Natural Environment)

East Herts is predominately a rural district comprising approximately a third of the area of the county of Hertfordshire. The topography of the district is largely made up of the southern upland area of London Clay, and this has resulted in an undulating mix of arable, grass, and wooded land cover, with over half of the woodland classified as ancient. The distinctiveness of the landscape is encapsulated in the 63 landscape character areas that have been identified across East Herts.

Rivers have played an important role in the history of East Herts and they have provided the focus for much of the historic settlement pattern of the five historic market towns of Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Ware, Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford, and over a hundred villages and hamlets of varying sizes. The centres of all five main towns, as well as 40 villages are designated as conservation areas. There are over 4,000 listed buildings of which just over

one per cent is Grade 1 Listed of exceptional interest. There are also 42 Scheduled Monuments, 450 sites of archaeological significance and 15 Registered Parks and Gardens as well as a significant number of locally important historic parks and gardens.

Whilst approximately the southern third of the district is designated as Metropolitan Green Belt, residents' value the openness of the whole of the rural area, in addition to the district's historic character. As such, seen in the wider context East Herts functions as an effective "green bubble" lying as it does between the three New Towns of Stevenage, Harlow and Welwyn Garden City. The significant challenge facing East Herts, therefore, is to maintain the historic and rural character of the district whilst accommodating significant development and growth.

There are five museums, which are located in Bishop's Stortford, Datchworth, Hertford, Much Hadham and Ware, as well as a heritage centre in Buntingford and the Henry Moore Foundation at Perry Green. The museums are all managed by charitable trusts and have an important role in conserving and interpreting local heritage for their communities and visitors. Volunteers are critical to heritage work in the district: some organisations are run entirely by volunteers and others rely on them to help deliver their services. East Herts Council provides support to local museums through its museum development service and partnership grants towards major capital projects funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Character Built & Natural Environment – East Herts LSP's shared ambitions are to:

- *ensure that development is sustainable and that proposals continue to meet high standards of design that reflect local distinctiveness*
- *continue to conserve and enhance the district's built and natural historic environment*
- *enhance and promote the district's heritage as both a cultural and leisure opportunity and for economic benefit*

East Herts Economy, Skills & Prosperity

East Herts is one of the more prosperous districts in Hertfordshire with a high level of skills and qualifications, high income and low levels of unemployment. One of the districts key characteristics is the out commuting of residents with high skills to London and through the M11 corridor.

The majority of businesses in the district employ between 1-10 employees with a trend in recent years for the registration of a high percentage of new business compared to the county average. East Herts has the most significant rural economic profile in Hertfordshire.

However, there are a number of challenges facing the district if it is to continue its current economic well-being. At the time of writing the country is facing recession and the impact is being felt by businesses and residents in East Herts. It is important therefore, that businesses requiring support are aware of the services available and that the services are accessible and effective. Despite the high skill level across the district there are pockets of low attainment particularly in relation to the attainment of (NVQ) level 2 skills – the equivalent of five GCSEs.

In order to achieve local employment it will be necessary to respond to the demand for space by ensuring that sufficient employment land is available to business. This will also help to secure high value jobs locally. The care and retention of existing business as well as countywide inward investment services will remain important themes in securing local employment. This will be achieved through strengthening and continuing partnership work with Business link east and others business support agencies to ensure delivery at a local level. The role of Herts Regional College will be critical in ensuring access for local residents to the skills necessary to take advantage of opportunities in innovation and knowledge economies.

Our town centres face significant competition from retail parks located near neighbouring new towns with the advantage of space to grow. It will be critical to enhance the town centre offer in the future by taking measures to increase footfall.

Our rural farming and other land based businesses require support and opportunities to diversify in order to ensure sustainability.

The LSP is working together to ensure that everyone in the community, who is entitled to do so, can access appropriate welfare benefits and good quality financial support and other advice services.

Tourism

Tourism has increased over many years and the latest research shows that it is continuing to grow. East Herts is strategically located being close to London, it also has an excellent transport infrastructure which offers easy access to the capital, and provides convenient connections to the wider UK rail and road network. Around 24 million passengers use the nearby Stansted Airport. The eastern region will be hosting two sports competitions in the 2012 Olympics. Although these events are not taking place within the district, Cycling in Essex and the Canoe/Kayak Slalom at Broxbourne will help East Herts businesses benefit through day visitors and overnight stays.

Economy, Skills and Prosperity – East Herts LSP's shared ambitions are to:

- *prepare for the future by identifying a way forward for a low carbon economy*

- *maintain and develop economic resilience through business support services*
- *address attainment of level 2 skills in identified areas of low attainment or where skills gaps are identified*
- *continue strengthening partnership with Hertford Regional College and other learning agencies and partnerships to deliver educational learning outcomes*
- *ensure the economic sustainability of land-based rural businesses*
- *increase prosperity and security of vulnerable people by tackling the financial, educational and aspirational causes of poverty by enabling access to financial benefits and a range of support services*
- *maximise cultural and economic opportunities arising from the Olympics 2012 with emphasis on the legacy*

East Herts on the Move

Transport and access to services pose significant issues for a large rural district such as East Herts. As a result of a high level of commuting, traffic growth and congestion, transport contributes to the district having one of the highest carbon footprints in the country. The Census 2001 revealed that car ownership in East Herts is at a high level with 1.48 vehicles per household which is the highest rate of ownership of any district in the county which itself has an average of 1.34 (nationally 1.11); 47% of households have two or more cars. Conversely, 13% of households have no access to a car. Rail access is provided in the district by two separate lines and regular bus services are available in some locations. However, in parts of the district the desire to travel to particular destinations by means other than the private motor vehicle is currently unmet and there is also evidence that there are rural areas in the district where lack of transport means it is difficult to access services. These scenarios may be defined as transport deprivation.

The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England 2008 – 2031 makes reference to the importance of transport and seeks to encourage a transport system that fully supports sustainable economic growth.

Hertfordshire County Council is the Highway Authority for the district and is the body with primary responsibility for transportation issues. The Local Transport Plan 2006 – 2011 and related documents (Bus Strategy, Rail Strategy, Accessibility Strategy, and Cycling Strategy etc) detail the main functions of HCC in this respect. However, other bodies and agencies are able to contribute towards addressing transport problems through various means. The Transport and Access Partnership (which supports Herts Forward in the delivery of the transport and access elements within Hertfordshire's Sustainable Community Strategy), Highways Joint Member

Panel and planning obligations are examples of delivery mechanisms, which may be supplemented by other initiatives.

Traffic Growth/Congestion

Traffic growth and congestion remain a continuing concern for residents. Government predictions of traffic growth in East Herts are much higher than national projections, largely due to proposed increases in the number of households and jobs in the district. According to the HCC Traffic and Data Report, 2007, the forecast local traffic increase for East Herts in 2021 (baseline 2001) is 43.7%, the highest in the county with an overall projected increase of 35.6% (national projection 31.3% over the same period) HCC Traffic and Data Report, 2007. Traffic congestion in the district can be especially acute at peak times, both within the historic core centres of the district's main towns and also on parts of the primary road network. Congestion not only slows traffic and makes journey times longer, but also has other significant implications. Noise and air pollution denigrate the environment, lowering the quality of life for people in areas suffering congestion. This may potentially lead to health problems, such as asthma etc, being experienced. Furthermore, in terms of efficiency, there is a direct economic effect where delays are experienced due to congestion. This could impact on the future vitality of towns in the district if access to other neighbouring settlements is achieved more easily, making them more attractive both to financial investors and end users. Techniques aimed at influencing people's travel behavior towards more sustainable options, including those detailed in DfT's 'Smarter Choices' initiative, are therefore to be supported in both reducing congestion and helping to maintain and improve the district's commercial interests.

Transport and carbon footprint

The Ecological Footprint of Hertfordshire, Hertfordshire Environmental Forum, 2006 reveals that in Hertfordshire the average resident has an ecological footprint of 5.5 global hectares (gha). At 5.94 gha/resident, the ecological footprint of East Hertfordshire is the highest in Hertfordshire and significantly higher than the UK average which is 5.4 gha per person.

Personal transportation accounts for a high ecological footprint in an area of extremely high car ownership (87%), together with high levels of commuting. The district scores well in terms of the efficiency per km travelled as high train use brings down the impact, but this gain in efficiency is lost through increased consumption (i.e. the total distance travelled).

The Report makes several policy recommendations to reduce the ecological footprint including home working and car sharing.

Access to services

A considerable amount of evidence exists to show that parts of rural East Herts suffer from a lack of access to services such as health facilities. "The

Hidden Need, Overcoming Deprivation in Hertfordshire” HCF 2006 showed that “there are quite large remote areas where more than 10% of households do not own a car.” Hertfordshire’s Local Transport Plan Accessibility Strategy 2006/07 – 2010/11 demonstrated that rural parts of East Herts showed pockets of poor access to services.

The Accessibility Strategy Appendix 2, Priority Groups acknowledged that “There is potential to reduce the dependence on the car by people living in rural areas, by improving passenger transport including community transport and Demand Responsive Transport to market towns and integrating with more strategic services into the urban centres. In many areas, where social exclusion is to be tackled, demand responsive services may offer the greatest levels of accessibility to all.”

Passenger transport and the needs of vulnerable people

Passenger transport provision in the district is likely to come under increasing scrutiny with pressure to contain costs and maximise the value of bus subsidies. At the same time there is a need to ensure that vulnerable people, particularly frail elderly people, young people and disabled people, have access to services. Lack of mobility for these people can have a severe effect on their quality of life.

In respect of rail provision, usage in the district is currently operating over capacity at peak times on most services. Timetable restrictions exacerbate this situation while off peak services are also a concern in terms of frequency of provision. Generally, the limited scope of the existing infrastructure to meet pressures for increased provision as a sustainable alternative to private motor transportation needs addressing. The initiatives contained in the Rail Utilisation Strategies, (Greater Anglia Rail Utilisation Strategy, Network Rail, December 2007; East Coast Main Line Rail Utilisation Strategy, Network Rail, February 2008) that cover the district are supported. However, these proposals should be linked to improvements in other passenger transport modes to ensure a fully integrated service.

Maximising the potential of rail, bus and coach routes servicing Stansted airport

BAA Stansted seeks to continue to improve the public transport mode share. Although the areas under consideration lie outside East Herts, some of the proposed new or improved routes could be configured to either existing bus/coach routes or develop demand responsive transport services within the district. The improvements in services from these areas to the Airport could help ease traffic congestion and could contribute to an improvement in east-west travel.

Walking & cycling

Walking and cycling are recognised as being beneficial for physical and mental wellbeing. Enjoying the countryside and green spaces is a key factor

in the cultural life of East Herts and a quality that local people most appreciate about the area. However, whilst, walking and cycling are often perceived as leisure pursuits, they can also be used as alternative means of getting to work and school. In addition to health benefits for the walker or cyclist, a shift from motorised transportation can help reduce congestion and pollution in the local environment. The National Cycle Network includes routes throughout the district and is especially supported in providing infrastructure to enable the use of a safe alternative to motorised transport.

The improvement of walking and cycling facilities, (especially in respect of reversing the decline in these modes for trips to and from work), is supported along with the provision of areas of open space that are welcoming, safe, and well maintained for local people and visitors from the wider district to enjoy.

On The Move – East Herts LSP's shared ambitions are to:

- *reduce the district's carbon footprint and relieve congestion by achieving less use of private car use (modal shift) and more integrated travel options and initiatives*
- *improve safe access to services in rural and urban areas*

East Herts Health, Wellbeing & Play

Parks and Open Spaces

The Parks Strategy sets out our commitment to deliver management plans for all major open spaces in East Herts. The Partners are committed to maintaining and managing all parks and open spaces to a high standard and have successfully been awarded the first Green Flag at Southern Country Park. Both the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and the Cultural Strategy include commitments to prioritise provision for older children.

By working in partnerships East Herts Council has started to organise events on open spaces to promote health walks and to enjoy the parks. East Herts Council has purchased the services of Greenstat through a joint procurement with other neighbouring local authorities to give residents the opportunity to comment easily on how they rate our parks. The data collected helps the partners to find out who is using the parks and what improvements they can be made. The results can be benchmarked against the other participating authorities to see how East Herts is performing.

The LSP is aware of the need for greater emphasis on teenage play. The partners have been ensuring that the annual capital play budget is used to develop teenage play wherever possible and have been keeping a record of progress in terms of play area improvement now for three years. East Herts Council monitors its progress to ensure that these improvements are consistently applied across the district and that all play areas provide a good range of play value for all children.

As part of the work to deliver Parks Development Programme we have carried out a comprehensive audit of all play areas. The data from this now helps partners to plan ahead and ensure that the partners prioritise those equipped sites that require more urgent improvement. It also gives the partners a more detailed picture of the play value and features that each site has and how this links with other nearby sites.

Health

The health of the East Herts population is generally good although this tends to mask clear indications of relative deprivation in some town based ward areas and certain rural wards. The key themes to concentrate upon include smoking, obesity and physical activity with 2008 figures showing an overall decrease in number of smoking related deaths but an increase in number of adults smoking. Obesity levels of adults has also increased in line with national rates and this may be linked to in part to physical activity levels remaining static. Overall life expectancy has increased marginally for residents living in East Herts in 2008 which is positive. However to enable life expectancy improvements to continue, wards with specific health issues such as smoking, obesity and physical activity need to be targeted in addition to promoting the benefits of a healthy lifestyle to other residents.

Through the focus of the Public Health Strategy in East Herts and its yearly action plan, funds as they become available are being used to tackle joint priorities as agreed by the LSP.

Leisure and culture

The strength of the cultural offer in East Herts is the diverse range of small and medium sized, local, voluntary, clubs, societies and trusts based in the towns and the villages. This offer is complemented by public facilities in the five towns, commercial facilities and ventures, parish and school based facilities. The character of this cultural offer is in contrast to large municipal or public pay as you go type facilities – and is in large part a reflection of the geographic make-up of the area with its market-town and rural mix.

East Herts Council is the biggest leisure provider in the district, with facilities in the five towns providing a mix of gym, pool and playing pitch provision.

The challenge is to support and collectively market the offer so that people are aware of what they can take part in and how to access those opportunities. For example, young people in the area often say that there is nothing to do and it may be that there are barriers to accessing small clubs and societies that young people need encouragement and assistance with. The Local Strategic Partnership through its community safety led summer activities programmes has demonstrated how this can be done – by collectively funding and supporting clubs to run taster sessions for young people in a number of arts (e.g. dance) and leisure (e.g. fishing, canoeing) activities. The LSP will publicise the youth offer annually.

Community facilities (pubs, post offices, halls, places of worship)

There are 60 community centres and village halls in the district of which nine are owned by the East Herts Council. The majority of these buildings are ageing and it is an on-going effort for volunteers to raise funds for modernisation and general maintenance. East Herts Council's Community Capital Grant Programme provides one source of funding for this type of building improvement as does the Community Development Agency and other regional and national funding initiatives.

Rural village halls and community centres are used by voluntary groups and individuals to run sports, arts and social activities - mainly for older people and children under age 11. Few activities are provided specifically for teenagers. There is a perception of fear about anti social behaviour and vandalism to the facilities.

Additionally, many of the village halls/community centers are not welcoming to teenagers due to issues of potential vandalism and anti social behavior and a lack of confidence on how to deal with challenging behavior. One of the answers is the Village Hall Challenge which rewards management committees with strong business plans and bonus points if they hire out their venue to groups providing activities for teenagers.

Churches, pubs and post offices are also important places for people to meet up and socialise. Being able to walk to places like the post office and churches, gives older people and parents without access to cars during the day a reason to get out of the house and a destination for a journey. Many churches are valuable not only for religious worship but also for their use as community buildings; serving as venues for coffee mornings or parent and toddler groups. Pubs on the High Street also provide a venue for meeting up with friends and relaxing. In some cases, the pub is the only public building in a village and serves as a place for various committee meetings and charity fund raising events.

Having these community facilities on the doorstep is a big part of ensuring vibrant and cohesive rural communities with a strong local economy.

The Arts

The arts scene in East Herts is vibrant with over 100 arts groups around the district. These include local amateur theatre companies, music groups and visual art galleries. The vast majority of these are run by the voluntary sector.

As well as the voluntary arts scene, East Herts Arts Development Officer works alongside leading professional arts companies including Theatre Is; the regions' beacon Theatre Company for Young people, Oily Cart, an internationally recognised theatre company, specialising in groundbreaking

work with the very young with complex difficulties and The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Support needs to be given to develop their work and their aspirations through providing space and artistic programmes. Working with professional practitioners and professional companies more inspirational work can lead on engaging with these communities and in turn help to raise artistic and cultural aspirations.

Hertford and Bishops Stortford each have their own arts centre. The Rhodes Arts Complex in Bishops Stortford has a strong, supported programme of work. Castle Hall, run by East Herts Council is the arts venue in Hertford. Castle Hall is in the processes of change and the vision for the venue is to engage much more with the wider community, to provide high quality pieces of work and to build a strong artistic programme. In addition, Fletcher's Lea and the Drill Hall in Ware provide performance spaces managed through partnership arrangements.

East Herts plays a major role in Hertfordshire county wide projects such as the Greenheart Partnership. GHP aims to achieve growth and capacity between the arts and environment sectors. It develops projects relating to public space, buildings and infrastructure that have a significant impact on the wider public environment.

Health, Wellbeing and Play – East Herts LSP's shared Ambitions are to:

- *ensure that our residents are able to enjoy and take part in the development of our parks and open spaces in rural and town locations*
- *encourage healthier lifestyles and reduce health inequalities*
- *maintain and develop the viability of our community facilities in both rural and urban areas*
- *develop and support accessible leisure, sports, arts and cultural programmes throughout the district including those offered at smaller community centres*

Green East Herts

Wildlife and biodiversity

The landscape of East Herts is an undulating mix of grass and arable land incised by several river valleys. Woodland accounts for 9% of the land cover, half of which is classified as ancient. The scattered sites of importance are predominantly small, ancient coppice woodlands of Oak/Hornbeam or Ash/Maple stand-types (often neglected), remnant neutral grass pastures, old green lanes, village greens and ancient hedgerows.

Sites of international biodiversity importance within the district comprise a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site) in the Lea Valley (Rye Meads and Amwell Quarry). There is

also one Special Area of Conservation (SAC) at Wormley-Hoddesdon park Woods. There are 15 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the district and 609 Local Wildlife Sites (or County Wildlife Sites as they were known until recently) as of December 2007. There is also one Local Nature Reserve (LNR) within the district at Waterford Heath.

Waste and Recycling

Currently residents are not able to put food waste and cardboard in with their garden waste in their brown bin and there is not a mechanism to compost the mixed material. There is also a need to expand the kerbside collection service for paper, glass and cans to include plastic bottles. From November 2009 residents will be able to include food waste and card with their garden waste, and it will be composted at a new local facility, thus limiting landfill requirements and reducing methane and Co2 emissions. At the same time plastic bottles will be added to the recycling collection service, currently taking paper, glass and cans.

Environmental quality (pollution, noise, flooding)

Green East Herts - the LSP's shared ambitions are to:

- *protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity within the district*
- *increase the levels of recycling and composting in the district, whilst reducing the amount of waste being generated*
- *enhance air quality in the district*

East Herts Monitoring & Delivery

Making the strategy work - Implementation, Monitoring and Review

Long-term change requires strong and effective leadership across different spatial governance arrangements and across policy silos. These approaches are fundamental to the principles of sustainable development. The SCS action plan flowing from the Strategy is a comprehensive list of activities to be delivered by the LSP partners. These form the building blocks of SCS, whilst the delivery plans of service providers can use the evidence they provide to respond to the identified ambitions.

Our biggest challenge is to make this strategy bring about real improvements in quality of life for people who live, work and visit East Herts. As the SCS requires concerted action on behalf of a wide range of agencies, Everyone Matters is well placed to be the key body for ensuring that the Sustainable Community Strategy is being delivered by various partners.

Implementing, reviewing and resourcing the SCS

Action Plan: A three year action plan will be developed at the start of the strategy which will chart the delivery of our ambitions. This will be refreshed on an annual basis by selecting priority actions. Each theme in the strategy will have an associated long-term outcome. The actions will be cross referenced against the strategy's themes, those of the Herts Forward Strategy, LAA and other local and national indicators. A template for the action plan is presented at appendix vii.

Structure for delivery: Each of the themes in the Sustainable Community Strategy is led by a thematic partnership. The thematic partnerships are accountable to the LSP and responsible for delivering on the ambitions set out under each theme of the strategy.

Review: The SCS will be flexible and open to change as circumstances require. The ambitions and outcomes of the strategy will be formally reviewed every year to ensure they keep track of changing national and local circumstances and continue to reflect residents' concerns and aspirations. A new action plan will be developed every three years to complement the strategy.

Measuring the success of the Community Strategy

To ensure that we achieve our ambitions, the LSP will track whether this strategy and related actions are improving the quality of life for those who live and work in East Herts.

We will use a range of methods to measure our success on the ground:

- Each thematic partnership will conduct a regular review of performance against projects and key measures of success
- Performance against the entire strategy will be reported to the LSP on a regular basis. Poor performance will be challenged by the LSP and appropriate action taken
- We will provide a public update on performance against the ambitions in the Community Strategy at least once a year
- We will also regularly review the contribution made by individual partners to the success of the LSP, the effectiveness of the LSP overall and the added value it brings to the delivery of local services.

Appendix 1

What is a Sustainable Community Strategy?

All local authorities have a statutory duty to work with partner organisations to Produce a Sustainable Community Strategy – a document which demonstrates how local organisations and agencies will work together to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area. The Improvement and Development Agency definition for a sustainable community is “a place where people want to live and work, now and in the future” (Local Government Act 2000).

This Sustainable Community Strategy has been drawn up by East Herts' Local Strategic Partnership, which brings together organisations from the public, private, community and voluntary sector. At the heart of this strategy are the belief and the principle that local people know what needs to be done to promote the sustainability of their area.

The key objective of the partnership is to improve the quality of life in East Herts by addressing important issues such as health, housing, community safety, transport and education affecting those who live and work in the district. As a partnership we are committed to helping East Herts, and the rest of London, to develop in a sustainable way. Sustainable communities are communities which are:

- Active, inclusive and safe
- Well run
- Environmentally sensitive
- Well designed and built
- Well connected
- Thriving
- Well served
- Fair for everyone

These components of Sustainable Communities will be addressed through the themes and ambitions within this strategy. (The eight components of Sustainable Communities. Taken from 'Sustainable Communities: People, Places, Prosperity'. ODPM, January 2005.)

Appendix ii

How was the East Herts strategy developed and who was consulted?

Public and community consultation

There was a three stage public, community and stakeholder consultation process:

First stage consultation

Each of the five town based Community Voice forums had a session on identifying the key general community issues in each area.

Second stage consultation

Each of the five town based Community Voice forums had an interactive planning-for-real style session on the integrated spatial planning implications for the district. This opportunity was also presented at a special rural conference.

Third stage consultation

Issues identified in stage two and three were presented for consultation to two specially convened voluntary sector forums and to a further special session for town and parish councillors.

Desk top research and LSP

East Herts Council led on the compilation of an evidence base (appendix vi) drawing on a wide range of sources. The three tiers of the LSP discussed and reviewed the emerging evidence from both the secondary desk top sources and the public, community and stakeholder consultation sessions, challenging the findings and distilling the stand-out characteristics, challenges and ambitions for the area.

Appendix iii

Spatial profile of East Herts District Council

East Hertfordshire District covers an area of 477 square kilometers (184 square miles) and comprises approximately a third of the area of the County of Hertfordshire. Although predominantly a rural district, East Herts can best be described as 'peri-urban' lying on the northern fringe of Greater London, in the southwest of the East of England Region. The district is also located with the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough sub-region. East Herts is perhaps unique in that the three New Towns of Stevenage, Harlow and Welwyn Garden City lie immediately on its borders with approximately the southern third of the district designated as Metropolitan Green Belt.

One of the reasons for East Herts' rural character is that the district is bypassed by the strategic transport corridors; the M11 and the West Anglia Main Line to Cambridge to the east and the A1 (M) and East Coast Mainline to the west. In addition the M25 London Orbital Motorway lies further to the south whilst London Stansted Airport lies just across the boundary in Essex to the east, with London Luton Airport lying further to the west in Bedfordshire. The rural nature and scattered settlement pattern of the district in addition to high levels of affluence has resulted in high levels of car ownership with 66% of the working population travelling to work by car.

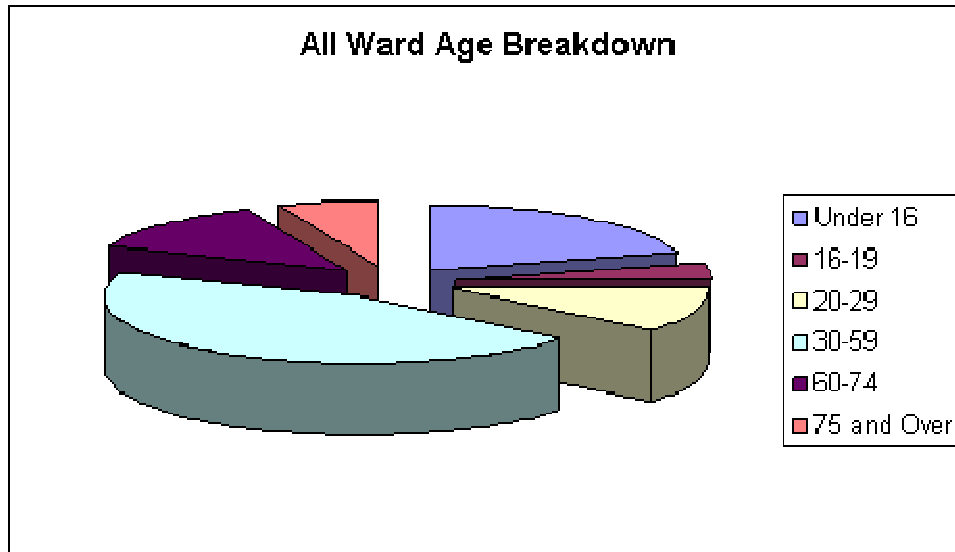
East Herts is ranked within the ten most affluent/successful Districts in England and has low unemployment with a claimant count rate of only 0.8%. Whilst the local economy is based upon small and medium sized businesses there is a predominance of managerial, professional and technical occupations amongst the residents. Given the District's location within the London Commuter Belt, some 17% of the working population commute to and from the Capital. The district has a population of 131,000 and has witnessed significant growth in recent years. The local population is one of the healthiest in England and Wales and levels of recorded crime are generally lower than the national average. Educational attainment is also generally very high with a third of the District's comprehensive schools in the top 50 nationally.

Bishop's Stortford is the district's largest town and sits astride the River Stort on the border with Essex and acts as a minor sub-regional centre for both east Hertfordshire and west Essex. Hertford, the County town, lies at the confluence of four rivers and is the principal employment centre within the district primarily because of the presence of local government administration. Ware and Sawbridgeworth are smaller historic market towns each with their own character and local economy, sitting astride the River Lea and adjacent to the River Stort, respectively. Buntingford situated on the River Rib is currently the smallest town in East Herts but is surrounded by an extensive rural hinterland and functions as an important rural service centre. The rural area contains numerous historic villages and hamlets of varying sizes with many still functioning as farming settlements providing vital community services for the local residents.

Appendix iv

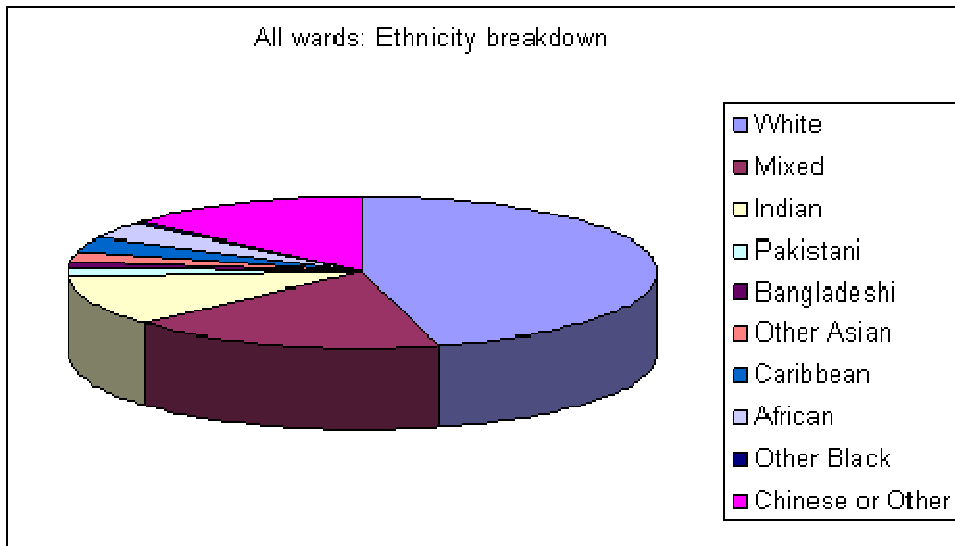
Demographic profile of East Herts

East Herts has 30 wards with very different characteristics. This ward profiles a brief overview of key 2001 Census data. East Herts has a population of 128,919. The population consists predominantly of people aged 30-59(45.0 %) and under 16 (20.8%). Almost a fifth (18.2%) of the population is aged 60 and over. The average age is 38.



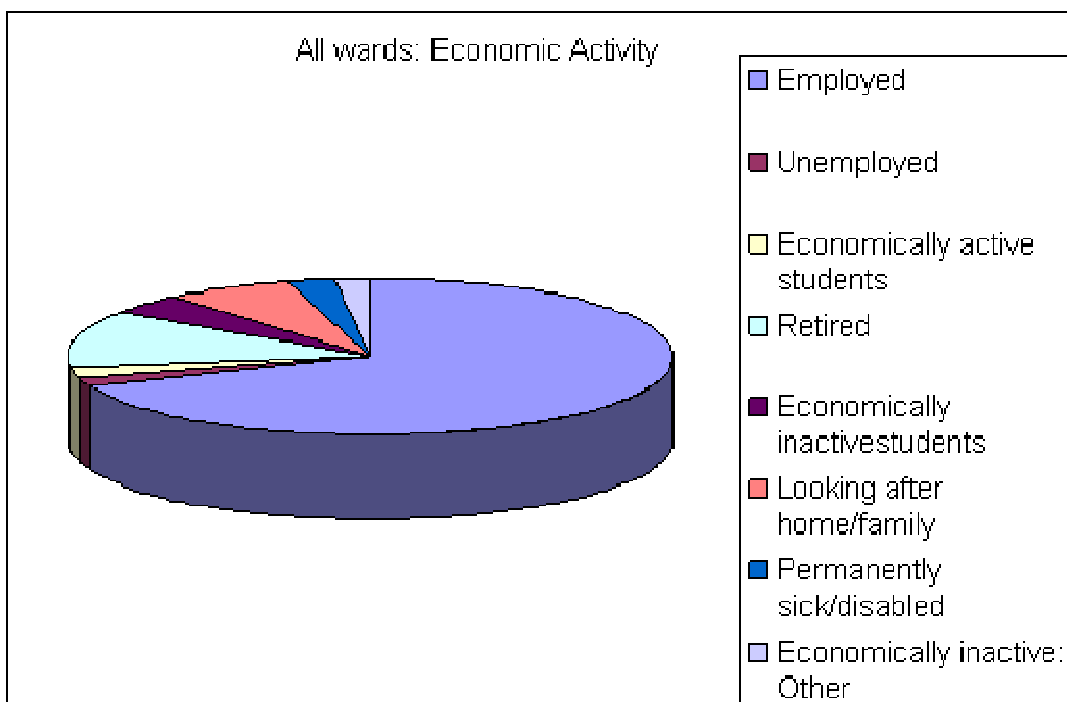
Ethnicity

East Herts has an ethnic minority population of 6.7%. The largest ethnic minority groups are Irish (1.1%), Indian (0.6%) and Chinese (0.4%). The largest ethnic minority populations are in Bishop's Stortford All Saints (9.9%), Hertford Castle (9.3%) and Hertford Heath (9.3%). Braughing has the lowest ethnic minority population at 3.0%. Three-quarters of the East Herts' population are Christian. 17.0% have no religion.



Economic Activity

The unemployment rate is very low in East Herts at 1.6% compared with England and Wales (3.4%). The majority of people aged 16-74 are employed (67.6%), with the remainder retired (11.9%), looking after home/family (6.6%), students (6.0%) or permanently sick/disabled (2.4%).



Qualifications

A quarter (24.9%) of people in East Herts are qualified to degree level or higher. However, a fifth (21.0%) of people have no qualifications.

Health

The general health of people in East Herts is very good, compared with England and Wales as a whole. Only 5.8% of people describe their health as

'not good' (9.2% E&W) . 12.4% of people have a limiting long-term illness (18.2%) and 8.9% provide unpaid care (10.0% E&W).

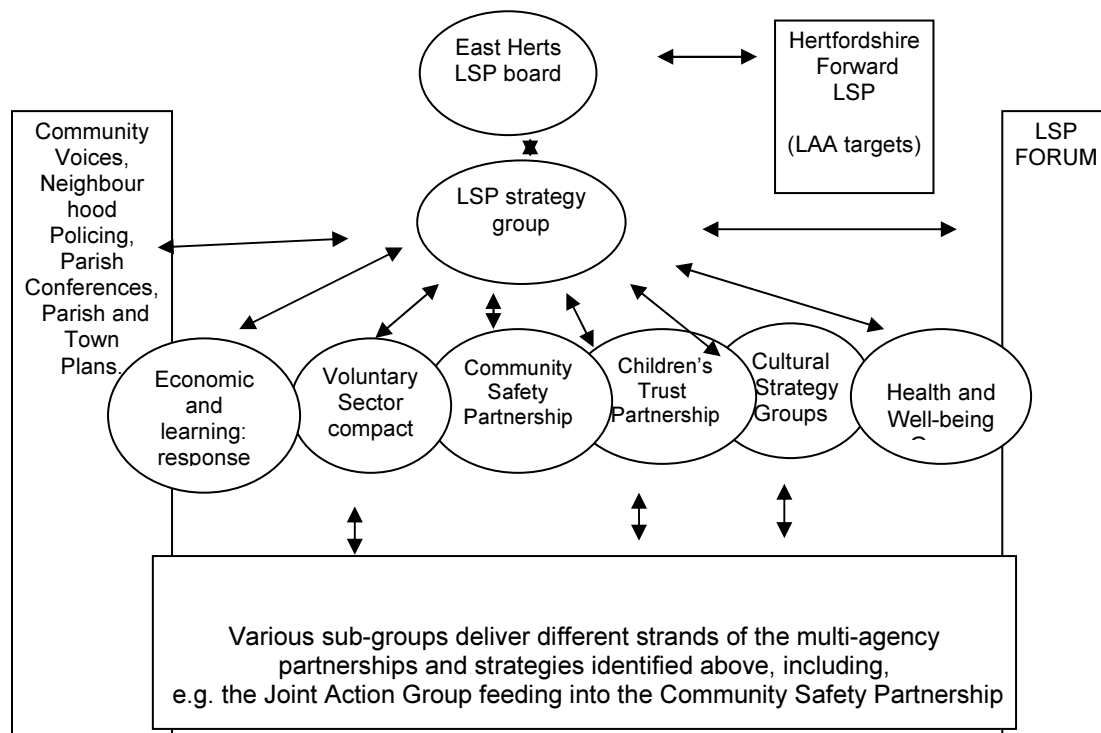
Housing

Most properties (76.2%) in East Herts are owner-occupied, with only 13.4% of properties classified as social housing(rented from Council, Housing Association or Registered Social Landlord). A quarter of households in East Herts are one-person households and 14.0% are pensioners living alone. 29.7% of households have dependent children.

Transport

10.0% of people in East Herts work from home. The majority (66.0%) of people travel to work by car and train (9.9%). Both forms of travel are more popular than in England and Wales generally. In contrast, very few people (1.8%) travel to work by bus. Car ownership is very high, with nearly half (46.5%) of households owning two or more cars. However 13.5% of households do not own a car.

Appendix v



East Herts LSP Board and Strategy Group Partners: lead agencies

East Herts Council
 The Community Voluntary Service
 The Police and Police Authority
 Herts County Council
 East and North Herts Primary Care Trust
 Hertford Regional College
 Riversmead Housing Association
 South Anglia Housing Association
 Chamber of Commerce
 Business representation from Glaxosmithkline

East Herts LSP Forum members

This is an open forum that includes a wide range of partners and stakeholders, as well as those represented on the Board and Strategy Group as follows:

East Herts Community Advice Service
 The clerks or nominated representatives of the five town councils
 Hertfordshire Community Development Agency

Bishop's Stortford YMCA
Groundwork Hertfordshire
Churches Together
Theatreis
Children Schools and Families
Adult Care Services
Herts Partnership Trust (mental health)
Victim Support
Schools Sports Development Consortium
Hertfordshire Sport Partnership
East Herts Community Sports Network
Homestart
Probation Service
Lea Valley Park
Papworth

(to be inserted on the back cover of the strategy document)

How can you contribute to the success of this strategy?

Although the LSP is the key body which will deliver on the Sustainable Community Strategy, to achieve many of these ambitions we need your help too. There are many ways that you can contribute to the success of the strategy and help to make East Herts a better place to live. Some examples include:

- Getting involved in your local community, whether through supporting a community event, becoming a school governor, organising a community clean up, checking up on a neighbour if they live alone or giving up a few hours of your time to volunteer – see www.org.uk for volunteering opportunities in East Herts
- Keeping East Herts clean and free of litter and graffiti
- Keeping healthy – taking regular exercise, having a balanced diet, drinking sensibly and not smoking
- Reducing your waste, recycling more, re-using plastic bags and using energy (gas, electricity) and water with care
- Providing us with your views on local matters and influencing local policy by joining our Citizens Panel, attending our regular Community Voice forums or if you are a young person in the borough, joining our Youth Council.