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Jeff Hughes
*Head of Democratic and Legal
Support Services*

MEETING : ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
VENUE : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE : TUESDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER, 2011
TIME : 7.00 PM

PLEASE NOTE TIME AND VENUE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

Councillor Diane Hollebon (Chairman).

Councillors D Abbott, W Ashley, S Basra, R Beeching, P Gray, N Poulton, C Rowley, M Wood and J Wyllie.

(Conservative Group Substitutes: Councillors E Bedford and A Dearman.

Liberal Democrat Group Substitutes: Councillor J Wing.

(Note: Substitution arrangements must be notified by the absent Member to Democratic Services 24 hours before the meeting).

CONTACT OFFICER: Peter Mannings
01279 502174 (8.45am – 5.00pm)
07702 083051 (5.00pm – 7.30pm)
only on day of meeting.

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PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

1. A Member with a personal interest in any business of the Council who attends a meeting of the Authority at which the business is considered must, with certain specified exemptions (see section 5 below), disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest prior to the commencement of it being considered or when the interest becomes apparent.
2. Members should decide whether or not they have a personal interest in any matter under discussion at a meeting. If a Member decides they have a personal interest then they must also consider whether that personal interest is also prejudicial.
3. A personal interest is either an interest, as prescribed, that you must register under relevant regulations or it is an interest that is not registrable but where the well-being or financial position of you, members of your family, or people with whom you have a close association, is likely to be affected by the business of the Council more than it would affect the majority of inhabitants of the ward(s) affected by the decision.
4. Members with personal interests, having declared the nature of that personal interest, can remain in the meeting, speak and vote on the matter unless the personal interest is also a prejudicial interest.
5. An exemption to declaring a personal interest applies when the interest arises solely from a Member's membership of or position of general control or management on:
 - any other body to which they have been appointed or nominated by the authority
 - any other body exercising functions of a public nature (e.g. another local authority)

In these exceptional cases, provided a Member does not have a prejudicial interest, they only need to declare their interest if they speak. If a Member does not want to speak to the meeting, they may still vote on the matter without making a declaration.

6. A personal interest will also be a prejudicial interest in a matter if all of the following conditions are met:
 - the matter does not fall within one of the exempt categories of decisions
 - the matter affects your financial interests or relates to a licensing or regulatory matter
 - a member of the public, who knows the relevant facts, would reasonably think your personal interest is so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.

7. Exempt categories of decisions are:
 - setting council tax
 - any ceremonial honour given to Members
 - an allowance, payment or indemnity for Members
 - statutory sick pay
 - school meals or school transport and travelling expenses: if you are a parent or guardian of a child in full-time education or you are a parent governor, unless it relates particularly to the school your child attends
 - housing; if you hold a tenancy or lease with the Council, as long as the matter does not relate to your particular tenancy or lease.

8. If you have a prejudicial interest in a matter being discussed at a meeting, you must declare that interest and its nature as soon as the interest becomes apparent to you.

9. If you have declared a personal and prejudicial interest, you must leave the room, unless members of the public are allowed to make representations, give evidence or answer questions about the matter, by statutory right or otherwise. If that is the case, you can also attend the meeting for that purpose. However, you must immediately leave the room once you have finished or when the meeting decides that you have finished (if that is earlier). You cannot remain in the public gallery to observe proceedings.

AGENDA

1. Appointment of Vice Chairman

2. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

3. Minutes - 7 June 2011 (Pages 5 - 16)

4. Chairman's Announcements

5. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Member's Declarations of Interest and Party Whip arrangements.

6. Enforcement Review (Pages 17 - 22).

7. Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme - Progress Report (Pages 23 - 64).

8. Environment Scrutiny Health Check - April To June 2011 (Pages 65 - 92).

9. Work Programme 2011/12 (Pages 93 - 98).

10. Urgent Business

To consider such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration and is not likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE WAYTEMORE ROOM,
COUNCIL OFFICES, THE CAUSEWAY,
BISHOP'S STORTFORD ON TUESDAY 7
JUNE 2011, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs D Hollebton (Chairman)
Councillors D Abbott, W Ashley, R Beeching,
P Gray, N Poulton, J Wyllie and J Wing.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors M Carver and G McAndrew.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Dave Cooper	- Performance Officer
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Assistant
Andrew Pulham	- Parking Manager
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services

71 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Basra, C Rowley and M Wood. It was noted that Councillor J Wing was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Wood.

72 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED - that the appointment of the Vice Chairman be deferred to the next meeting to enable all Members of the Committee to be present.

73 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

74 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed all new and returning Members to the first meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee for the 2011/12 Civic Year. She hoped that the Committee would conduct interesting and good work throughout the year.

75 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J Wing declared a personal interest in the matters referred to at Minute 79 – Contract Performance - Environmental Operations, on the grounds that he was involved with the Ware in Bloom project.

76 EAST HERTS TRANSPORT AND PARKING STRATEGY

The East Herts Parking Manager submitted a report inviting Members to consider work that Officers had undertaken to date on the preparation of a Transport and Parking Strategy for East Herts. Members were also requested to establish a Task and Finish Group to shape and guide the development of this Strategy to its conclusion.

The Committee was advised that Councillor M Carver had also attended Town Council meetings as well as a full round of Community Voice meetings. Hertfordshire County Council had prepared a local transport plan

(LTP3). This document had taken into account issues relevant to the East Herts District.

The Parking Manager stated that the County Council had delivered the Local Transport Plan in April 2011. They had also prepared an Urban Transport Plan for Ware and similar documents for Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth. Officers were now analysing a considerable body of evidence in drafting the strategy.

The Committee was reminded of the need to shape this evidence into a strategy document that was relevant and pertinent to East Herts. Officers were seeking authority from Members to convene a Task and Finish Group so that this Strategy could be finalised.

The Parking Manager anticipated that member's participation in the group's work would involve the reading of the background documents and he expected there to be 4 or 5 meetings during the summer and early autumn. He stated that he was seeking to draw on the local knowledge of members and this might mean a Member from each of the 5 main towns plus one rural Member to participate in the work of the Group.

Councillor N Poulton commented on whether a Member was required from each of the 5 main towns. He also queried whether the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group should be a Member of this Committee.

The Committee noted the work undertaken to date in respect of the strategy. Members also approved the set up of a Task and Finish Group to shape and guide the development of the Strategy. Members were requested to submit expressions of interest to the Chairman of the Committee by 17 June 2011.

RESOLVED – that (A) the work undertaken to date on the preparation of a Transport and Parking Strategy for East Herts be noted;

(B) a Task and Finish Group be set up to shape

and guide the development of the Strategy to its conclusion; and

(C) Members should submit expressions of interest to the Chairman of the Committee by 17 June 2011.

77 2010/11 END OF YEAR SERVICE PLANNING REPORT

The Leader of the Council submitted a report that provided a summary of the 2010/11 Service Plan actions that were relevant to the remit of the Environment Scrutiny Committee. Members were referred to service plan actions that had been achieved, as well as details of actions that required a revised completion date.

Members were invited to ask questions of Officers in respect of the report now submitted.

Councillor J Wing referred to town maintenance and graffiti that had been cleaned up in Hertford following the success of Community Service Orders. He stated that problems of graffiti and fly posting had been controlled in Ware but there had been an explosion of both problems in Ware throughout 2011.

The Head of Environmental Services stated that there was reference later in the agenda to how the Authority worked with other bodies in getting things rectified across the District. Members were reminded of the work of the Environmental Quality Task and Finish Group in shaping how East Herts Council worked with partners.

Members were advised of useful feedback that had been received in relation to the Community Payback Scheme. The Head of Environmental Services stressed that East Herts Council was not responsible for removing all instances of graffiti but the Authority would remove graffiti from street furniture and public buildings.

The Committee was advised that for other instances of graffiti, the Authority aimed to work with partners,

residents and businesses to arrange for its removal from private property.

He stated that, when the Authority did get involved in removing it directly, this was normally undertaken by its contractors. The Community Payback scheme was, however, a good way of involving offenders in maintenance activities in the public realm.

The Committee was reminded that the removal of graffiti from private property without the owners permission posed the risk of litigation and claims for damage. The Council did offer a service to businesses and residents to remove it from private property at a cost, so long as the right to make a claim was waived.

Councillor G McAndrew commented on Southern Country Park and sought clarification on how the residents' survey information had been obtained. The Head of Environmental Services explained that the Council's main residents' survey was conducted every 2 years.

He summarised how the surveys for these specific sites were conducted and explained they were based on questionnaires completed by people who had attended community events in the parks or responded to a local survey in the case of Vantorts.

The Chairman congratulated Officers on the high level of satisfaction with East Herts parks and playgrounds which had come out of the recent questionnaires and survey.

RESOLVED – that (A) the summary of achievements against the 2010/11 Service Plan actions be received; and

(B) the Service Plan Actions that required revised completion dates be noted.

78 ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY HEALTH CHECK - FEBRUARY TO MARCH 2011

The Director of Customer and Community Services

submitted a report on the performance of key indicators relating to the Environment Scrutiny Committee during the period February to March 2011.

The Director reminded Members that this report was a regular item that was submitted to all of the Scrutiny Committees as an update of performance against key indicators. The financial elements were included in a version of the report that was submitted to the Executive.

The Committee was advised that the East Herts Performance Indicators (PIs) were reviewed along with other targets every year. Members were invited to ask questions of the Director in respect of the report now submitted.

Councillor N Poulton invited the Director to detail the difference between East Herts PIs and National Indicators (NIs). The Director explained that East Herts PIs were not measured nationally and the Authority monitored the targets that were most relevant to Council business.

The Director stated that the definition of how indicators were measured had been set out by central government if they were originally national indicators. The Parking Manager commented that PCN stood for Penalty Charge Notice and was essentially the parking ticket issued by Civil Enforcement Officers. He stated that the NTO was a Notice to Owner, which was a statutory document issued to the public in pursuit of payment for parking offences.

Councillor G McAndrew sought and was given clarification on the process residents had to initiate if they wished to challenge a PCN. The Parking Manager explained that the charge was reduced by 50% if paid within 14 days. A resident would not be placed in any jeopardy by challenging a PCN.

Councillor J Wing expressed concerns in relation to the levels of repetition in the agenda papers. He stated that he had been struggling to make sense of the abbreviations detailed in the reports. He also questioned

the need to included guidance on declarations of interest in each agenda issued to Members.

Councillor Wing requested that Officers provide Members with a list of the most commonly used abbreviations. The Director commented that Members had been issued with a list of abbreviations last year. He requested that the Scrutiny Officer arrange this list be made available to all members through their weekly Information Bulletin.

Councillor Wing commented on whether a missed bin collection included the failure by a resident to present a bin for collection.

The Head of Environmental Services explained that if a bin was not presented for collection, this absence was recorded by the refuse crews. If a resident complained of a missed collection and it had not been recorded as absent on the boundary on the collection day, a crew would be sent back to the property concerned. Members were advised that the Authority was conducting about 80,000 collections each week.

Members received the report.

RESOLVED – that the report be received.

79 CONTRACT PERFORMANCE - ENVIRONMENTAL OPERATIONS

The Head of Environmental Services submitted an annual report detailing the current performance of the three main contracts for refuse and recycling, street cleansing and grounds maintenance.

The Committee was advised that 2010/11 provided a full year of operation of the Alternate Refuse Collection (ARC) Scheme. The previous year, 2009/10 was only 6 months of ARC, which commenced in November 2009. Members were advised that performance had exceeded targets in relation to the numbers of missed bins per 100,000 collections. Members were also advised that

such data also covered periods of severe weather.

The Head of Environmental Services, responded to a question about how waste collection information was disseminated during last year's severe weather around the festive season and stated that the Council's website had been heavily utilised during this period.

He stressed that it was very difficult to decide what to tell residents until the changes to conditions were known as the Authority always sought to avoid promising collections that the contractors could then not meet if the adverse weather continued.

The Head of Environmental Services stated that Street Cleansing Complaints had fallen by 19% and although there had been a 25% increase in small fly tips, these mostly arose from the new recording criteria used by our contractors. The smaller fly tips, such as items the size of a standard black sack or less, would be collected by the Council's street cleansing contractors as part of their normal duties.

The number of larger fly tips had decreased by 2% but there had been a trend of increasing fly tipping for the last few years. Members were advised that prosecutions on most fly tips were very difficult to achieve. Officers had carried out 124 waste related investigations last year and it was necessary for the Authority to be tough on any offenders that were caught.

The Head of Environmental Services referred to a 12% increase in recycling and composting since the introduction of the ARC scheme. He stressed that this exceeded the Authority's performance target for last year. Officers also expected this to be the case at the conclusion of the current year.

Members were invited to scrutinise the performance of the Authority in respect of each of the services covered by the Environmental Operations. The Head of Environmental Services referred to a Hertfordshire Waste

Partnership target of 50% for recycling. He advised that the Authority was on course to achieve that target.

In response to comments from Councillor R Beeching in respect of permission for residents to issue free literature, the Head of Environmental Services advised that the Authority had the powers to require anyone distributing free literature in designated areas to seek permission.

The Authority also had powers to confiscate literature and issue fixed penalty notices where an individual did not have authority to hand this out. The purpose was to discourage littering by ensuring distributors took responsibility for any discarded material. Permission is not granted for placing literature on car windscreens.

In response to a query from Councillor P Gray, the Committee was advised that the Authority charged approximately £32 for an official permission to distribute literature.

Councillor J Wing stated that unlike at some other Local Authorities, the ARC scheme had been implemented with relatively little controversy.

In response to a comment from Councillor Wing in respect of Ware in Bloom and grounds maintenance standards in the Town, the Head of Environmental Services stressed that, whilst the Authority supported Ware in Bloom with officer and contractor time, limitations in funding meant that it was not possible to support the scheme financially.

Councillor Wing acknowledged the hard work put in by Officers. He stated that more could be done in certain areas of performance covered by the contracts referred to in the report now submitted. The Head of Environmental Services encouraged Members to inform Officers of any particular issues.

The Chairman congratulated Officers for all of their efforts to date. The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the performance of the Council's main environmental management term contracts be received.

80 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

The Committee considered items for scrutiny during the Civic Year 2011/12 and additional items for inclusion within the Committee's Work Programme. These were set out in the report now submitted.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that the work programme contained issues that were chosen and agreed at the previous meeting of the Committee in March 2011. There had been a few changes to the work programme since that meeting to take account of the budget setting process.

Members were referred to the material in the work programme that had been highlighted in green, as those issues that were within the remit of the Committee. Members were asked to pay particular attention to the specific issues from the Medium Term Financial Plan and capital programme that had been highlighted in the report now submitted.

The Scrutiny Officer sought the Committee's views on any items in the work programme that needed clarifying. Members were asked to inform The Director of Customer and Community Services of any financial items in need of clarification within the next couple of weeks.

In reference to paragraph 2.4 of the report now submitted, the Scrutiny Officer stated that there had been interest in carrying out some detailed work in respect of Environmental Crime Policy.

The Head of Environmental Services advised Members that, when this was proposed last year, Officers had not anticipated the extent of the Government's review of anti-social behaviour legislation and its significant impact on

and overlap with Environmental Crime. Officers considered it appropriate to await clarity on the legislative position in respect of Environmental Crime before undertaking this piece of work. This was agreed.

Members approved the Committee’s Work Programme as now submitted with the addition of the task and finish group to work on the policy development for Transport and Parking and the delay in the group to review Environmental Crime policy.

RESOLVED – that the work programme be approved.

The meeting closed at 8.03 pm

Chairman
Date

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 13 SEPTEMBER 2011

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN OF PLANNING ENFORCEMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP

6. ENFORCEMENT REVIEW

WARD(S) AFFECTED: All

Purpose/Summary of Report:

- To enable the committee to consider the recommendations made by the task and finish group in relation to possible performance indicators that were originally agreed for a trial period following the review of the Council's Planning Enforcement policy in 2010/11.

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR DECISION:</u> that	
(A)	The amended performance indicators detailed in paragraph 2.13 of this report in relation to the Council's Planning Enforcement service be supported; and
(B)	The Executive be advised that the Enforcement Policy be amended to reflect the recommendations of the Environment Scrutiny Committee (with minor consequential amendments as necessary).

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Members of the committee will recall that a review of the Council's Enforcement Policy was undertaken during the 2009/10 year. This work was undertaken by a Task and Finish Group established by this committee (the group). Following a report to the 16 March 2010 meeting of the committee, the revised policy was adopted by the Council and implemented in April 2010.
- 1.2 As part of the policy three potential performance indicators (PIs) were identified. Before a decision was made to adopt these, the group recommended that data be collected for the period of a year. That would be analysed and the outcome assessed. A

finalised set of PIs would then be recommended. The committee endorsed this approach.

1.3 Twelve months of data has now been collected and the group met again on 6 June 2011 to consider the outcome.

1.4 The group also considered the wider context for its work. Since the 2009/10 year there has been a national change in approach to PIs. The new government has sought to reduce the bureaucracy associated with them and has greatly reduced the overall number of PIs nationally. The group felt that this approach should be reflected in its work.

2.0 Proposed Indicators

2.1 The draft indicators which had been identified by the group and set out in the policy were:

- the percentage of cases closed without the need for formal action;
- the percentage of notices served in accordance with the agreed timescales;
- the percentage of customers satisfied with the service received.

2.2 The outcome of the data collection in relation to each of these is considered below. In addition to the PIs there were a number of other timescales for service provision set out in the policy. These are also further discussed below.

Currently suggested PIs: Cases closed without the need for formal action

2.3 The data collected indicated that 476 cases had been opened in the 12 months and 168 had been subsequently closed without the need for significant investigation. It is often the situation that a number of cases are simply and quickly resolved as they relate to very minor development or development which is allowed to take place as a result of permitted development rights.

2.4 Of the remaining cases (308), 263 were resolved with some subsequent negotiation by officers and with action on behalf of the landowner or developer. 45 required formal action to be taken. This indicates that, in 91% of cases, there is no requirement for formal action.

- 2.5 When considering this PI, whilst of interest, bearing in mind the national approach to reducing the number of PIs and the resources involved in gathering the information, it was suggested that it should not comprise one of the finally agreed PIs. The group were of the opinion that collection of this PI would be of no value to either improve the service for the public or increase the efficiency of its delivery.

Currently suggested PIs: Service of Notices

- 2.6 The data presented to the group was as follows: Out of a total of 45 notices served during the 12 month period, 42 were served within the 30 working day target period. This represented 93% of notices served.
- 2.7 The view of the group was that, whilst a robust approach to enforcement action should be maintained, it was necessary to allow service managers to make decisions with regard to how extensive negotiations should be in the period after which formal action has been endorsed by the Development Control (DC) committee. The view of the group then was that this indicator should be retained as one of the finalised indicators for the service. In addition it was requested that, when update reports are provided for the DC committee on authorised enforcement action, that the timescale between agreement for formal action and the date of the service of the notice (in three month bands) should be included in future.

Currently suggested PIs: Customer satisfaction

- 2.8 The group had anticipated that this would be a difficult issue to measure and that it would be probable that limited feedback would be provided from customers. It was also acknowledged that, in almost all cases, the various parties involved (often with opposing views) would be either satisfied or dissatisfied, depending on the outcome from their perspective.
- 2.9 In the event 14 customer satisfaction surveys had been returned during the 12 months and, of those, 11 indicated that the service overall was either excellent or good. The remaining 3 indicated that service was fair and none expressed the view that it was poor or very poor.

2.10 Given the costs and resources involved in gathering this information the group decided that this should not remain as a PI. Instead, it was felt to be sufficient to rely on the council's recognised complaints procedures as being sufficient to identify any dissatisfaction with the service if it existed.

Not currently suggested PI: Initial site visits

2.11 As set out above, whilst not initially suggested as PIs, other timescale measures are set out in the policy. One of these is target timescales for initial site visits. These are that, for urgent priority cases an initial site visit is undertaken in 2 working days, in other cases 15 working days is permitted. (Note that, in urgent cases, where irreplaceable assets are potentially at risk, officers will endeavour to visit within half of a working day).

2.12 The group was of the view that this area of activity should be included as a final PI for the service as it could serve to monitor the quality of the service to the public.

2.13 The group's final conclusion with regard to service PIs is that they should comprise the following:

- the percentage of initial site visits which are undertaken within the agreed timescales;
- the percentage of notices served in accordance with the agreed timescales;

3.0 Other Matters

3.1 The group considered the awareness of local Ward Members of cases that are being investigated in their area. Officers set out that, in contrast to planning applications, enforcement cases are initially considered on a confidential basis. This is to ensure that those who bring matters to the attention of the Council remain willing to assist the Council with investigations if that becomes necessary. It also ensures that Members are not placed in a difficult position if they have any awareness of or relationship with the party under investigation.

3.2 Of course, when officers reach the view that formal action is required, the matter is reported to the DC committee for authority to do so and, except in very sensitive and unusual circumstances, this in the normal public session of the committee. At that stage, the ongoing investigation therefore becomes public. The group

considered that it would be appropriate then for local Ward Members to be formally notified of the case. This would take place when the agenda for the DC committee on which any case is included, is published.

3.3 The group also reviewed the use of Planning Contravention Notices (PCNs). 25 of these had been served in the 2010/11 year. It was considered that the criteria that were set out on the guidance note for the use of PCNs and as endorsed by the committee at its meeting of 16 March 2010, remained valid. No change was proposed.

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 This further consideration of the PIs and other issues completes the work of the group. Subject to endorsement by the committee, the changes will be recommended to the Executive and the policy updated to reflect the agreed amended PIs and include the two minor changes in procedures relating to DC reports (para 2.7) and notification to Ward members (para 3.2). No further changes are recommended.

5.0 Implications/Consultations

5.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within Essential Reference Paper 'A'.

Background Papers

Papers submitted to the Environment Scrutiny committee meeting of 16 March 2010.

Data collected in relation to the possible PIs during the 2010/11 year.

Contact Member: Councillor Nigel Poulton, Chairman of Planning Enforcement Task and Finish Group

Executive Member: Councillor Malcolm Alexander, Executive Member for Community Safety and Environment

Contact Officer: Kevin Steptoe, Head of Planning and Building Control, Extn: 1407.

Report Author: Kevin Steptoe, Head of Planning and Building Control, Extn: 1407.

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives</p>	<p>Promoting prosperity and well-being; providing access and opportunities <i>Enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.</i></p> <p>Fit for purpose, services fit for you <i>Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.</i></p> <p>Pride in East Herts <i>Improving standards of the built neighbourhood and environmental management in our towns and villages.</i></p> <p>Shaping now, shaping the future <i>Safeguard and enhance our unique mix of rural and urban communities, ensuring sustainable, economic and social opportunities including the continuation of effective development control and other measures.</i></p> <p>Leading the way, working together <i>Deliver responsible community leadership that engages with our partners and the public.</i></p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>The reviewed policy ensures that a transparent and clear approach to enforcement matters is pursued by the Council.</p>

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY – 13 SEPTEMBER 2011

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH, HOUSING
AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

7. PARKS AND OPEN SPACES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME –
PROGRESS REPORT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report:

- Members have requested regular updates on the progress of the 'Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme'. This report details progress made from the last report to Committee in March 2009. It also provides information on the 'Play Area Development Programme' and details other significant achievements and improvements made since the last report.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION: that	
(A)	That the Committee review progress with the 'Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme 2007 - 2012', and The 'Play Area Development Programme 2007 - 2012' and
(B)	A review of the 'Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2007 – 2012' be undertaken and submitted to Committee in 2012.

1.0 Background

- .1 East Herts Council owns and maintains approximately 120 public open spaces of all kinds, including 40 main parks and 56 play areas. In 2007 the Council agreed a 5 year Parks & Open Spaces Strategy, with the objective of ensuring that the parks and open spaces under its control, as a valuable natural resource, are managed and developed in a responsible and effective way.
- .2 In addition to the adoption of the Strategy, 'a High Level Action Plan was produced which identified the future actions to be taken within the 'Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme'. This included a thorough audit of all Council owned and managed open spaces and play areas, the development of a framework for the production of management plans for significant parks and open spaces and information on the selection of parks for Green Flag bids. See Report to Executive – 'Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2007 and Status Report on Current Projects' - 4 September 2007
- .3 This has resulted in significant improvements and developments in the last few years and progress reports on these programmes were subsequently reported to the Environment Scrutiny Committee as requested.
- .4 In 2008 a report was presented to Environment Scrutiny Committee to explain the methodology and initial results of the Parks and Open Space Audit and Development Programme. Detailed information was also provided on the methodology behind the Play Area Development Programme, which has provided a structured framework for improving the play areas according to need and suitability. See Report to Environment Scrutiny Committee – 'Progress Report on Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme' - 10 June 2008
- .5 A further progress report was presented to Environment Scrutiny Committee in 2009 to provide update information within the Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme and detailed the framework for Management Plans. See Report to Environment Scrutiny Committee – 'Progress Report on Parks and Open Spaces Development

Programme' - 3 March 2009.

- .6 Further progress reports have been requested by the Environment Scrutiny Committee. Consequently an update for the Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme and an insight into the major improvements undertaken since the last report are provided below.

Report

- .1 This report firstly provides information for works undertaken as part of the 'Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme' from Spring 2009 to Autumn 2011, including the production of management plans, the ongoing 'Play Area Development Programme' and new projects developed with external funding.
- .2 'Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme' - A framework for the production of management plans was considered by the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 3 March 2009. The parks listed below are the five major East Herts owned parks along with three others that have featured prominently in development activity:
 - Southern Country Park, Bishop's Stortford
 - The Ridgeway Local Park, Hertford
 - Hartham Common, Hertford
 - Grange Paddocks / Red, White and Blue, Bishop's Stortford
 - Pishiobury Park, Sawbridgeworth
 - Hertford Castle Gardens
 - Bishop's Stortford Castle Gardens
 - King George V Recreation Ground, Ware.
- .3 There have been many improvements to each of these sites as they have been focussed upon through the programme. A prime objective has been to explore the needs of each site through consultation culminating in the creation of a working management plan. Currently two management plans have been completed, with a third out to consultation, four have been produced in draft and one is due later in the programme.
- .4 Each development / management plan is a dynamic

document and timescales for specific projects have been adjusted to take advantage of external funding opportunities where these have arisen and to respond to residents needs, expressed through consultation exercises. This has resulted in a re-prioritisation in some cases to make maximum use of grant funding to deliver better value for money for the Council. Details of this external funding can be found in the table in paragraph 2.18

- .5 A summary of the developments at these parks is as follows:
- .6 Southern Country Park, Bishop's Stortford – since the Council took over ownership of the park in 2001 significant improvements have taken place. The Council has completed many successful projects to greatly improve the whole park for both the public and wildlife. The five year management plan, completed in 2008, has provided the basis for this programme of improvement works, enabled Officers to successfully seek additional external funding opportunities and helped win the prestigious Green Flag Award in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. The Friends Group formed in 2009 is a great asset to the park and has undertaken many tasks, such as hedgelaying and woodland management, with the support and guidance of the Council and the Countryside Management Service. The annual 'Get Park Active' event (held in July since 2008 as part of the national Love Parks week) is very well attended - with over 500 attendees in 2011. Southern Country Park is now one of the most popular parks in the District, and has strong community involvement.
- .7 The Ridgeway Local Park, Hertford – the park has successfully been transformed into a Green Flag Award winning open space. The five year management plan produced in 2009 has guided significant development projects on the site and allowed Officers to bid for external funding. A new play area and open space has been created in the previously derelict overgrown hollow at the rear of the park and is now known as the Dell. Interest and support from the local community has helped to guide these projects to successful outcomes. The park is now a well used and valued asset to the local area and community.

- .8 Hartham Common, Hertford – Officers have collaborated with partners, such as the County Council, Environment Agency and Groundwork, to undertake many improvements across the park and attract additional external funding. The redevelopment of the Leisure Centre, improvements to the play areas and football pitches and landscaping works have had a significant positive effect on the visual amenity of the open space. The initial public consultation has helped shape the draft management plan and further consultation with stakeholders will soon commence.
- .9 Grange Paddocks / Red, White & Blue, Bishop's Stortford – Although the initial plans to create a new play area and BMX track as part of the Play Builder scheme will not now go ahead, due to the cancellation of the funding scheme, work has continued with the Countryside Management Service on the draft management plan. The possibility of creating a 'green finger' to link from the town centre out to the Red, White and Blue open space is being explored. Officers continue to seek opportunities for external funding with a view to future development of both parks. The grazing of long horned cattle has been introduced at Red, White and Blue to improve the flora and fauna of the open space. A very successful 'Meet the Animals' event was held in July 2010 (as part of the Council events organised for Love Parks Week) to explain the importance of grazing within the park and introduce the park to new users.
- .10 Pishiobury Park, Sawbridgeworth – the Historic Landscape Restoration Plan has informed the design considerations for the major improvements undertaken in the park over the last few years. Significant work has been undertaken to improve the car park and entrances to the park, create a new picnic area, reintroduce grazing of historic cattle breeds and make the park a more welcoming place. Events organised by the newly formed Friends group, and the 'Meet the Animals' events, held annually in July since 2010 as part of Love Parks Week, have greatly increased the public's awareness of the park. Feedback from residents has been extremely positive and visitor numbers have increased.
- .11 Hertford Castle Gardens – following transfer of the lease of the buildings and surrounding land to the Town Council, Officers are now discussing the future management of the

site and proposed joint working practices to produce a management plan for the whole site. This will not only secure the public's regard for the historic park but also allow continued and sustained enhancement through planned development.

- .12 Bishop's Stortford Castle Gardens – work has been undertaken to redesign the bedding schemes to improve value for money and allow town centre planting improvements. Initial aims for the management plan have been identified and the basic draft is being produced, supported by an archaeological report commissioned by Conservation Officers in Development Control.
- .13 King George V Recreation Ground, Ware – the open space has been greatly transformed with two new play areas created with additional external funding, new planting and the clearance of overgrown scrub backing onto the fences around the edge of the park. The local community, and especially local children, have been very committed to working with the Council on these projects, and continue to support initiatives such as community litter picks and the July 'Community Fun Day'. The park is now highly valued and well used, and has won a prestigious Town Award from The Ware Society.
- .14 Work will continue to finalise the remaining "major" park management plans and to undertake the specific improvement works as outlined in the operational action plans developed for each individual site.
- .15 Further information of the specific improvements to these parks is detailed in Appendix 1 – 'Environment Scrutiny Report – Specific site information update - August 2011'.
- .16 'Play Area Development Programme' update – Since the 2007 /08 Audit and the subsequent formulation of the three year 'Play Area Development Plan 2007 - 2009', which provided a timetable for improvements to the play areas on a site by site basis, significant improvements have been made to 30 play areas. This includes 5 new ones developed with additional external funding and 2 created with section 106 funding.

- .17 Following on from the success of this original programme of works, a further 3 year programme - 'Play Area Development Programme 2010 – 2012'- has been devised for the next 14 play areas identified in the original audit as benefiting from improvements to increase their play value. These projects have been allocated Capital funding and wherever possible additional external funding will continue to be sought to increase the scope of the programme.
- .18 Information on the individual play areas improved under these Development Programmes on a year by year basis is shown in Appendix 2 – East Herts Play Area Development Programme - Progress Update August 2011.
- .19 External Funding – a key objective of the Parks & Open Spaces Strategy was to use the Council's Capital funding as 'pump priming' and match funding to lever in additional external funding to undertake some of the major projects identified within the Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme and the Play Area Development Programme.
- .20 It is worth noting that the funding achieved from external sources and under Section 106 agreements from 2007 to the present day has brought an additional sum of nearly 1 million pounds in to the Council.
- .21 Since the original audit and creation of the Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme in 2007 a total of sixteen projects have attracted additional external funding totalling £627,000. This has enabled the development of projects, such as the creation of new play areas, which would not have been possible within the Council's resources.
- .22 The following table provides a list of projects which have attracted external funding from 2007 to the present day:

Externally Funded Projects 2007 to 2011				
Year of Work:	Site:	Works:	Amount of External Capital Funding:	Source of funding:
2007	The Ridgeway Local Park, Hertford	New Multi User games Area	£48,000	Section 106 funding
2008	Southern Country Park Play Area, Bishop's Stortford	New older children's play area	£75,000	Section 106 funding
2008	Turners Crescent Play Area, Bishop's Stortford	New younger children's play area	£45,000	Section 106 funding
2008	King George V Recreation Area, Ware	New Multi User games Area	£25,000	Riversmead Housing Association
2009	Bentley Road Play Area, Hertford	Redesign of original play area to provide an inclusive play area accessible to children of all abilities	£37,000	Big Lottery Funding
2009	King George V Recreation Area, Ware	New Adventure Play Area	£85,000	Big Lottery Funding
2009	The Dell Play Area at The Ridgeway, Hertford	New older children's play area	£53,000	Play Builder Funding
2009	The Ridgeway, Hertford	New access route into the Dell	£55,000	Lafarge Landfill Community Fund

2010	Southern Country Park, Bishop's Stortford	Wetland Restoration Project – further detailed information is in the Appendix	£46,000	Biffaward Landfill Community Fund
2010	Southern Country Park, Bishop's Stortford	Fishing Platforms around the balancing pond	£9,000	Environment Agency Funding
2010	Southern Country Park, Bishop's Stortford	New park signage and wildlife information boards	£10,000	Countryside Management Service
2010	Hartham Common, Hertford	Meadow Restoration Project – further detailed information is available in the Appendix	(£90,000 anticipated funding)	Environment Agency Funded Project
2011	Vantorts Open Space, Sawbridge-worth	Contribution to the 'Vantorts Open Space Revamp Project' – redesign of original play area with a new wheeled sports and ball court area on the decommissioned tennis court	Up to £40,000 Subject to STC decision pending final tender details	Sawbridge-worth Town Council
2011	Vantorts Open Space, Sawbridge-worth	Additional contribution to the 'Vantorts Open Space Revamp Project'	£7,500	Joint Action Group Funding
2010	Buryfields, Ware	Interpretation Plinth in the open	£1,000	Ware In Bloom /GSK

		space		
2011	Kibes Lane, Ware	Contribution to the redesign and landscaping of the Quaker Burial Ground	£500	Ware Society
TOTAL:			£627,000	

- .23 Section 106 Projects - In addition the Council has adopted 4 new play areas and adjacent open spaces under Section 106 Planning Obligation agreements funded by developers since 2007. These represent an external funding contribution of approximately £250,000 Capital (had the Council created the play areas) and £72,700 in Revenue to fund the maintenance of these adopted areas over 10 years.
- .24 The table below provides information on location, age range and adoption date for each of these new play areas and open spaces:

SECTION 106 Play Areas - designed and built by developers, then formally adopted by East Herts Council				
Adopted by EHC:	Site:	Works:	Revenue received as part of Section 106 Agreements	Source of funding:
Adopted 2007	Lilbourne Drive Play Area, Hertford	New younger children's play area	£10,000	Section 106 funded
Adopted 2008	Millmead Road Hertford	Two new younger children's play areas and surrounding wooded open	£30,000	Section 106 funded

		space		
Adopted 2009	Yearlings Close, Gt Amwell	New younger children's play area and surrounding open space	£32,700	Section 106 funded
TOTAL approximate revenue income contributions to Section 106 Funded Play Areas:			£72,700	

- .25 Other significant works undertaken since the last report to Scrutiny Committee include:
- .26 The Safety of Closed Churchyards - Operational Management Plan June 2010 - The Council manages three closed churchyards as part of its open space provision. There has been some national attention on the way in which Local Authorities have dealt with the risk of injury from unstable memorial stones. This Operational Management Plan provides procedures to minimise these risks using a sensitive and proportionate approach. It is the result of considerable research and comprehensive consultation. Further information is available on the Councils' website.
- .27 'Grazing Cattle in our Parks' – a document has been produced to provide a comprehensive guide as to how and why we graze cattle and sheep in our parks. It provides helpful guidance to residents should they have concerns about sharing the park with these animals. This information is available in the parks and open spaces section of the councils' website.
- .28 Quaker Burial Ground at Kibes Lane, Ware - a major restoration project has been completed to redesign and replant this historic site in conjunction with the Society of Friends (Quakers), Ware Town Council, Ware Civic Society and the Ware In Bloom Group. An official opening of the site is planned.
- .29 Grounds Contract Development Projects - The digital mapping data that provides information to determine the

contract value and to control works output has been reviewed to ensure that all relevant quantities are now linked in to a planned programme of works. Previously a significant proportion of “scrub” areas and features that had not featured in the grounds contract core works, such as woodland areas, had been managed in an adhoc way. All areas have now been carefully categorised to create a new set of work descriptions and items have been prioritised to create a long term programme of winter works. This ensures that budgets are controlled more closely and that areas less prominent in terms of contract maintenance but potentially troublesome to local residents are inspected and maintained on a rotational basis. This new system still allows flexibility to minimise expenditure, but has reduced customer complaints relating to “adhoc” areas.

Implications/Consultations

- .1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper ‘A’**.
- .2 The appendices mentioned in the report and listed below are attached as **Essential Reference Paper B**.
 - Appendix 1– Parks and Open Spaces Achievements
 - Appendix 2 – East Herts Play Area Development Programme 2007 – 2012 - Progress Update August 2011.

Background Papers:

- Report to Environment Scrutiny Committee – ‘Progress Report on Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme’ - 3 March 2009.
- Report to Executive – ‘Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme’ - 1 July 2008.
- Report to Environment Scrutiny Committee – ‘Progress Report on Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme’ - 10 June 2008.

- Report to Executive – ‘Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2007 and Status Report on Current Projects’ - 4 September 2007.
- Report to Policy Development Scrutiny Committee – ‘Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and Green Flag Award Accreditation’ - 20 March 2007.

Contact Member: Councillor Linda Haysey, Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support.

Contact Officer: Cliff Cardoza, Head of Environmental Services, Extn: 1698.

Report Authors: Ian Sharratt – Environment Manager – Open Spaces.
Jackie Bruce – Service Development Officer.

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives (delete as appropriate):</p>	<p>Promoting prosperity and well-being; providing access and opportunities <i>Enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.</i></p> <p>Pride in East Herts <i>Improving standards of the built neighbourhood and environmental management in our towns and villages.</i></p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>The Parks and Open Spaces team has worked closely with various departments across the Council in determining the strategy to improve the Council's parks and open spaces, including Community Development, Leisure Services, Community Safety, Environmental Health, Property Services and Planning and Building Control. The Service is working directly with the Countryside Management Service and also considers the views of other key stakeholders such as County Youth Services, Groundworks Hertfordshire and the Town and Parish Councils of East Herts. Public and stakeholder consultation is and continues to be a key element in the development of future management plans and subsequent developmental work.</p> <p>Public consultation exercises are carried out with local residents and young people to inform open space development prior to the design stage for any major projects.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>NONE.</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>Capital projects detailed within this report were funded from the approved Capital Programme.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>There are none for this report.</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>There is a risk that development aims identified within management plans may have implications, both positive</p>

and negative, for some residents and may raise expectations. This will be mitigated through careful and considered consultation to develop the management plans.

Green Flags are awarded on an annual basis, with each park having to apply each year to renew them. There is a risk that if parks fail to make planned improvements or to continue maintenance to a satisfactory level they may lose their Green Flag status with the resultant bad publicity this would entail. Therefore it is crucial that adequate resources are assigned to sustain the prestigious Green Flag award status.

Many sources of external Government funding have now ceased and it is much more difficult to lever in significant capital expenditure to improve the council's parks and play areas. Innovative approaches are being considered with the private and voluntary sectors to maximise available funding. It is essential that the Council continues to commit match funding through its Capital Programme to access these sources. Proposals for specific sites will be brought to Members for comment before proceeding.

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER B:

APPENDIX 1 – Environment Scrutiny Report –

Specific site information update - August 2011

Southern Country Park, Bishop's Stortford

The management plan for this park was considered in great detail involving public events and consultation with all those that had an interest in the park. The park is now in the third year of the development programme determined by this crucial document.

The final plan set out a wide range of objectives and targets many of which could only be achieved with external funding and that required the enthusiasm and cooperation of local residents.

The list of improvements that have successfully been achieved during the consultation process, and as part of the planned actions within the current management plan, includes:

- The awarding of Green Flag status, annually from 2008 to the present day
- Resurfacing of the principal footpaths across the park to create a new “easy access” network for all visitors
- A new and exciting play area designed for older children (funded by section 106 contributions)
- Changing the way regular maintenance work such as grass and woodland management is undertaken to create new and better habitats for wildlife
- The introduction of sheep grazing in parts of the park to improve grassland habitats
- A wetland restoration project that included works to:
 - Improve the diversity of species in the nationally significant reed bed
 - Restore the eastern and southern bank of the balancing pond with marginal planting creating a wide boggy zone that controls access to the water’s edge and minimises wave erosion
 - Create a specially designed wildfowl feeding area that separates this activity from the areas now set aside for fishing
 - Build eight “easy access” fishing platforms including one specifically designed for disabled visitors and schools

- Create a new wetland habitat behind and around these platforms limiting access to the waters edge between the fishing swims
- Remove a sunken gabion from the lake (the old duck nesting island) to improve safety
- Restoration of the small pond with improved plants and safer access out of the water and the creation a new spring-fed pond beside the main lake
- Construct a viewing platform and boardwalk link adjacent to the small pond
- Create a dew pond in the corner of the activity field that provides a new semi-dry habitat in the park where the grass regime has also been modified from close cropped to conservation grassland.
- The design and installation of three permanent orienteering courses in partnership with a local orienteering club
- A dog free long grass meadow for young children to play in complete with grass maze and tree arbour
- A new dog agility course to provide dog owning visitors with an alternative area to exercise and have fun with their dogs
- A new football kick-about area with an all weather surface
- A health walk programme in partnership with Countryside Management Service
- A vibrant chalk bank inhabited with a growing number of plant species each year
- Regular wildflower and butterfly surveys conducted by volunteers in partnership with local naturalist groups
- A geo caching installation for keen followers to hunt for hidden 'treasures' using GPS tracking
- A resurfaced car park with more attractive and robust security
- Several new kissing gates to improve access and control motor bikes
- Improvements to the main entrance making it more attractive and welcoming as well as safer and easier to access
- New interpretation boards across the park that provide information to visitors about habitats and facilities
- New street signs on the highways around the park to guide visitors and help promote the park
- An extremely successful Friends of Southern Country Park group that has helped significantly to bring the park to life with their presence on site, ideas and practical tasks

The 'Friends of Southern Country Park' group was formed in 2009 and now has 36 members, including a Committee of six. The members

arrange their own work / task programme with the support and guidance of the Council. Since the first task in May 2009, a total of 42 have been completed with a further six planned for later in 2011 and two for early 2012. These tasks have included hedge laying, woodland management and creating new steps and pathways. The work completed by the Friends can be identified within the park by small round plaques with the 'Friends logo' on them. The Friends provide a vital resource within the park as they are able to respond to the public and provide immediate feedback to the Council from park users.

The management plan continues to guide the final objectives for the programmed 5 year period. It has proved to be a valuable communication tool to attract outside investment and ensure that improvements are developed consistently and effectively in a sustainable manner.

The Ridgeway Local Park, Hertford

The Ridgeway Local Park, whilst continuing to be a focal open space for the estate and popular with residents, has been undergoing an incredible transformation and has been dramatically improved over the last few years.

It has been developed from an old fashioned 1950's recreation ground into a vibrant local park which caters for the needs of a wide range of visitors and local residents.

This open space was brought forward in the Development Programme when the opportunity to bid for external funding and a partnership project arose.

The Sele Estate has been a social priority in East Hertfordshire, with the highest levels of Council or Social Housing in the District and nationally high levels of divorce, separation and poor health. It has the highest level of deprivation in East Herts based on national indices and was recognised as an area needing environmental improvements.

The initial phase of the park development project delivered a new Multi Use Games Area in the park and a complete redesign of the landscape. The consultation with local residents at this time lead to the creation of the 5 year management plan that has controlled the further development of the park.

Following the award of the first Green Flag in 2009, The Ridgeway Local Park successfully retained the prestigious award in 2010 and 2011. The judges have been consistently complimentary about the park's development and the quality of the management plan.

The Improvement Programme has continued delivering the development of the park through both internal and external funding sources. In 2009/10 over £100,000 of external funding was brought in dependant largely on the quality of the management plan. Working with Groundwork Hertfordshire, the Council engaged with the community to successfully complete a natural play area for older children and improve access into the lower Dell area of the park. The play element was funded in partnership with the County Council through the Play Builder project set up by central government to improve the quality of play across the country.

The new 'Dell' play area has:

- a giant embankment slide
- a large dramatic climbing frame
- a bird hide to meet and shelter in
- challenging rope swings
- a deep sand pit with exhilarating climbing logs recycled from Pishiobury Park.

Some of the access based improvements were

- a new easy access pathway into the lower Dell area created to allow buggies and less mobile visitors a convenient route into the new play area
- inset seating has been installed on the way down the pathway
- a large tree trunk recycled from one of the other parks in the district has been placed to provide additional seating, or climbing for the more adventurous

This element was funded by a community landfill grant and has greatly improved the area to the rear of the existing children's play area and Multi User Games Area. This lower Dell area has been transformed from an overgrown hollow not accessible to anyone into a wide open space that is accessible for all and that creates a welcoming transition from the built up environment of the estate to the countryside beyond.

As the Green Flag Judges noted, there is a real sense of local ownership of the site from local residents and the Police Community Support Officers. The successful completion of these major improvement works has been very well received by the local community.

A “Winter Fun Day” was held on 4 December 2010 in partnership with Groundwork Hertfordshire to celebrate the completion of the works and to finalise some of the shrub planting scheme. Local residents helped to plant 5 oak trees and new shrubs in the newly created borders running along the easy access pathway into the lower Dell area. The event was well attended by the local community despite the cold weather.

The upper grassed open space, younger children’s play area and Multi User Games Area continue to be a great success with both local children and their parents. Several Council Services worked closely with the local Housing Association and the Police to promote the park as part of the Sele Community Action Day 2010 - a football match and barbeque were held on the site.

More recently in July 2011 the park hosted a Community Fun Day organised in partnership with the local Extended Schools Consortium, Youth Services and the Police. The event provided the opportunity for a wide range of local groups to engage with the public to offer their services and support. It was also an opportunity for local school children to showcase their singing talents. Despite the weather, attendance was good and positive feedback received.

Through our work with the Countryside Management Service, Groundwork Hertfordshire, local housing association and the Police, a robust partnership framework has been developed to promote this valuable green space for the benefit of the local community and other users.

The current management plan and operational action plan continue to guide further development of the park.

Hartham Common, Hertford

An initial version of the management plan has been drafted for consultation and follows an event held on site in 2009 to engage with the local community, seeking their views about the park and how they would like to see it improved.

Key feedback from this consultation was that park users wanted the Council to:

- enhance the appearance of the main entrance leading in from the town
- improve the easy access network of footpaths around the park
- develop ideas to introduce a wetland nature reserve
- make better use of the park's rivers both for nature and as a visitor attraction
- introduce new play and leisure facilities
- provide visitors with a better understanding of what the park has to offer by introducing sign-posted walks, interpretative notice boards and leaflets

The Town Council have been briefed on the key proposals to be included in the draft management plan. In response to these initial proposals, they have endorsed the principal of a coordinated approach and agreed in general with the many suggestions. They emphasised the importance that the park should be recognised as part of one of the Green Fingers (Lea Valley) and asked that more consideration was given to the built environment within the park. They shared the aspirations to make better use of the rivers with paddling points and improved natural margins and were keen to see the restoration of the bridge link to what used to be the pitch and putt area.

The document requires some fine tuning to bring it to the next stage where it can be shared with key stakeholders for comment before being set in place to begin the improvement programme.

Officers are also considering the impact the new supermarket may have on the open space and how this development can be used to improve the site.

However, the park's development has not entirely stood still;

Play:

As part of a separate project and after a series of consultation exercises and negotiations a new skate park was procured and installed in 2007. The displacement of teenage equipment on the chosen skate park site also led to the development of a new older children's play area in the park. Both these projects were delivered to a high standard and have been extremely popular with local residents and visitors from further afield. Improvements have also been undertaken in the younger children's play area with the trialling of a new safer surfacing material and replacement sand in the play pit area. This play area is also designated for major improvements in 2012 as part of the Play Area Development Programme.

Footpath improvement:

Groundwork Hertfordshire were commissioned by Hertfordshire County Council's Rights of Way Unit to carry out improvement works to the footpath and cycleway through Hartham Common in Hertford. The project was developed in partnership with East Herts Council and the improved pathway stretches between the bridge linking to Mill Road and Hertford Lock.

The route forms part of the National Cycle Network and was identified through the Rights of Way Improvement Plan as requiring improvement. It was also identified as a key project proposal by the Hertford River Corridors Partnership (Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Groundwork Hertfordshire, the Countryside Management Service, Environment Agency, Hertford Civic Society and East Herts Council).

The path is well used by walkers and cyclists and gives an opportunity for all to access this site and beyond into the wider Kings Mead nature reserve, Hertford Town Centre and recreational facilities.

Meadow Restoration:

Officers from East Herts Council and the Countryside Management Service developed an exciting new project with the Environment Agency (EA) to restore part of Hartham Common back to Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat i.e. flood plain grazing marsh or flood plain meadow.

The EA had identified £90,000 funding to restore a 3ha area of wetland meadow and create an area of important wildlife habitat along the Beane and Lea rivers' edge within the park. The project is part of the larger Hertford River Corridors Project which is a partnership between Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, the Countryside Management Service, Herts

Rights of Way, Groundwork Hertfordshire, Hertford Civic Society, Herts County Council - Biological Records Centre and East Herts Council.

Some initial consultation found that the original plans to open the bund along the river edge and enable the field to flood during high water events could not go ahead. There was insufficient evidence to reliably reassure neighbouring properties that this might not cause slight flooding to their gardens.

The project was therefore modified to create similar benefits to flora and fauna in the area by installing a series of ponds and arranging to re-graze the field.

The initial works in the park have been completed. The next phase of the project is to consider introducing grazing and improving public access to this area of the park.

Other areas of improvement that have been achieved without conflicting with the direction that the Management Plan will take when it is adopted for action are:

- Football pitches have been relocated and an improved relationship with the clubs through Leisure Services has been developed
- Landscape features around the newly improved leisure centre have been upgraded. This includes replanted shrub beds and thinned tree lines to afford views from the refitted gym without losing the screening affect from the park
- The existing play areas has been partially revamped with some items of new equipment and improved safer surfaces

Grange Paddocks / Red, White & Blue, Bishop's Stortford

Grange Paddocks is seen primarily as a sports ground but has the potential for much more. It also forms an important link between the Red, White and Blue Open Space to the north, the old town tip to the south, the Town Council's Sworder's Field and ultimately Bishop's Stortford Castle Grounds. These sites all form a green finger that provides for a pedestrian link out from the town.

The initial intention prior to full consultation is to develop and make the most of the park's natural assets. The Environment Agency have indicated interest in helping to improve the river system to increase its

capacity to sustain a wider range of wildlife and to ensure that they retain their wider function of distributing water effectively as part of the County's natural flood drainage system.

An objective to facilitate play in the park has been informally in place for some time. The Playbuilder Scheme that funded the new play area at The Ridgeway was also planned to benefit Grange Paddocks. Arrangements were in place to develop a project to install a new BMX facility in the park but unfortunately the Playbuilder Scheme was withdrawn by central government.

Whilst this project has therefore had to be put on hold, the initial work to scope its potential will still be useful in the future should further external funds be identified.

The implementation of a cycle path and improvements to the existing car parks are in the Capital Programme and currently at the Planning stage. They are set to deliver some important access improvements to the park and its sports facilities.

Work has been started to formulate the Management Plan for this site by arranging for a survey and an initial description of aspirations based primarily on the environmental needs of the park. This has been developed by the Countryside Management Service and has been provided in the form of a map based proposal.

A needs survey has been carried out and the findings included in the plan. Some final work is now required to complete a tidy up of the draft management plan before it is at a stage that can be shared firstly with internal stake holders.

Pishiobury Park, Sawbridgeworth

Pishiobury Park is Grade II listed in the English Heritage register of Historical Parks and Gardens and, as part of the Stort Valley, is mentioned in the South Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment. East Herts Council purchased the park in 1980. An Advisory Group was formed in 1998 consisting of officers from the Council and the Countryside Management Service, a Town Councillor and representatives from local Residents' Associations. A plan was written to guide the management of the park for 5 years from April 2001.

Given the historical significance of the park and the responsibility that the Council has in determining its future it was decided that a specialist consultant would be commissioned to prepare a Restoration Plan to follow on from this original document. This linked directly to one of the aims agreed by the earlier Advisory Group to enhance the parks' ecological and landscape heritage by commissioning a Historical Landscape Assessment. It followed after this plan was published in 2005 that it then went on to provide a worthy framework to deliver the requirements of the Parks Development Programme.

The plan provided clear conclusions from its findings to advise the Council what action needed to be considered as part of the long-term management of the park. It suggested clear aims for future cohesive management of the wider historic landscape. It explored the various periods of the parks history and considered the relevant importance of each period. The landscape designs of Capability Brown are traditionally felt to be important but other periods such as the keeping of deer during the 16th and 17th century and the earlier settling during the Neolithic period needed to be explored and given some weighting.

Other areas of the park's management were also given clear direction for future development, including:

- The tree belt "enclosure" of the park that is understood to have been an important feature of the 18th century design
- The introduction of cattle grazing in the park
- The style of infrastructure across the park including the timber fencing around the tree copses, tree guards and furniture
- The car park
- The potential conflict between what might be appropriate for the park in terms of its landscape character and what modern visitors expect from it

The works to complete the Restoration plan and deliver these objectives have now been completed. Additional significant improvements have also been achieved. The wide range of improvements delivered to date includes:

- New park furniture commissioned from a local timber specialist to our own design that meets closely with the objectives of the restoration plan

- The picnic area has been opened up and enhanced to fit much better in the landscape and to provide a greatly improved facility for visitors
- An attractive new bridge replaces an old one that had restricted access. This was delivered in partnership with our Engineers and with close guidance from the Environment Agency
- A project to rejuvenate an existing pond to add to the biodiversity of the site was completed
- In conjunction with this project the redesign of an enclosed spring fed pond was undertaken to create a bio-diverse and usable area
- Grazing in the park was reintroduced with the support of a local grazier that specialises in providing a unique conservation grazing service to local authorities. The rare breeds fit perfectly into the park's historical setting and greatly benefit its ecological development
- A grazing guidance document was researched and published on the Council's web site to provide local residents with comprehensive information on why the animals benefit the park and how they are managed safely
- Natural England's Countryside Stewardship Scheme continues to help finance some of the conservation based improvements
- An operation with the local Police to discourage anti-social behaviour has been completed to deal with misuse of the park by a very small number of users
- The car park has been redesigned and modified to present a more attractive appearance that discourages anti social behaviour
- New parkland trees have been planted and protected with tree guards designed to fit into the parks landscape
- The shape of the woodland "roundels" have been redefined with the introduction of a far less obtrusive system to protect them from the cattle
- A leaflet has been produced and recently updated that provides information to local residents and visitors from further afield about the park including some attractive walks
- An innovative project has been completed to create a dramatic and more welcoming approach to the park's two main entrances

An updated management plan for 2011 to 2016 that sets out an Action Plan to manage the remaining targets is being developed. This potentially includes a circular woodland walk, another bridge and some

new board walks. This will be developed in consultation with the newly formed Friends of Pishiobury Park group.

This new and well informed Friends group was developed in late 2010 and has a fully formed committee structure. It is now attracting its own funding through grant applications. The Friends have undertaken six practical tasks as a group since November 2010, including hedge and tree planting, woodland management and installing new benches around the park. In addition they have organised eight free 'walks and wildlife events' for the public. These events have been very well attended and are supported by the Council. Both the Friends and the Council have received positive feedback from the public on the improvements to the park and the events.

A 'Meet the Animals of Pishiobury Park' event was first held in 2010 to introduce the public to the cattle grazing in the park and promote the park itself. The event was part of the free family fun events organised by the Council as part of Love Parks Week. In 2011 the 'Meet the Animals' event was organised with the assistance of the Friends and had over 250 families and children attend. Lots of positive feedback was received, with many visitors newly discovering the park.

Hertford Castle Gardens

Hertford Castle is a well known and popular open space that attracts interest from a wide range of organisations and all age groups. It has undergone a series of changes recently relating to ownership, some of which have delayed the preparation of the management plan. It was considered important to ensure that the ownership responsibilities were concluded before the draft management plan was completed and consulted upon.

Traditionally, the Council had responsibility for the whole of the Castle Grounds, part of which it owned and part (the area around the house) that was leased from the landowner. This goes back to the days when the castle was an East Herts Council Office. The building is now solely used by the Town Council and when the lease came up for renewal, in 2009, the Town Council took over the lease and is now responsible for the building, the gardens behind it and an area 15 metres in front of it. Under a separate arrangement with the County Council, it is also responsible for the Moat Gardens in Castle Street. Officers are currently working with the Town Council to consider how these areas will be maintained in the future.

The management plan will help to set out a framework for future developments in the park lead by both authorities. The Council has brought about some landscape improvements to the park over recent years that have been carefully in keeping with the parks character. Some of the key activities for future consideration include:

- how to enhance the appearance of the main entrance leading in from the town
- pedestrian and vehicular access across the park
- how to conserve and enjoy the park's rivers both for nature and as a visitor attraction
- an exploration of new play and leisure facilities
- a better understanding of what the park has to offer to visitors by introducing sign-posted walks etc
- a continued programme of horticultural and arboricultural improvements and assessing the health, aesthetic quality and historical significance of the plants in the park
- a review of the parks infrastructure
- a look at how works in the park are funded and prioritised
- the potential to improve wildlife habitats and how the high level of ornamental care is balanced with opportunities for ecological improvements

Full consultation with stakeholders will be undertaken before finalising any plans to improve the park further.

The management plan has been drafted for consultation with key partners and is soon to be considered by Hertford Town Council in preparation for a formal meeting to receive their comments. This draft document will then be modified to accommodate information gained from this element of the consultation and then published for public viewing.

The draft plan contains a range of initial aspirations developed by officers to provide some ideas for the future development of the park. These range from small changes to those that would require significant external funding but will provide consultees with a starting point for comments and further ideas.

This is the standard approach adopted as part of the programme to ensure that all views are thoroughly considered before the completed

management plan is taken forward to prepare a working action plan and to seek funding opportunities.

Bishop's Stortford Castle Gardens

This park, whilst being fairly small in comparison to our other major parks, is an important asset. It is complex in terms of the needs it provides for and the historical context that it must respect.

It will be the last of the major parks to consider in relation to the Improvement Programme but certain issues are already in hand. A mature avenue of trees for instance is in need of replacement due to disease and the potential risk of injury to visitors. A plan of action has been formulated and will feature prominently in the management plan for consultation with stakeholders.

An architectural survey was undertaken in 2008 commissioned by the Council's Conservation Officer with external funding. This provides a thorough and fascinating historical background to the park and explores the management issues that will need to be addressed in relation to the ancient mound (Motte) that forms a central feature in the park.

More recent discussions with English Heritage have indicated that they would be keen to support the development of the park with a view to ensuring that the historical significance of this important national monument is maximised.

Works have been carried out to redesign the annual bedding display around the memorial to maximise the impact of this colourful feature. Shrub beds around the park have been replanted where needed and areas that were previously heavily vegetated have been thinned and opened up to create light and improve views into the park. Safe access to the mound for the public has also been reviewed and procedures modified in partnership with the Town Council.

The mound, which needs cutting four times per annum, had been identified as a health and safety risk for the grass cutters due to the steepness of the banks. Our main contractor made arrangements to cut these mounds (and as a result of this, all steep slopes within the district) by the use of a specialist remote controlled bank cutting machine which can operate on slopes of up to 60 degrees. This was agreed as best practice for this site in consultation with English Heritage.

Surveys have been conducted internally to identify the themes and issues that will need to be considered in more detail as the management plan is developed.

Some of these issues include:

- Securing the stability of the castle remains at the top of the mound
- Considering the best way to enhance and utilise the water features either side of the park
- Considering the landscape character of the park and the significance of the ornamental planting schemes and mature trees
- Development of closer partnership working with the Town Council who manage the adjacent open space (Sworder's Field) complete with its paddling pool and play areas
- how the main access points to the park function and whether they can be improved in terms of the "welcome" they offer to visitors
- The park's infrastructure including fencing, seating and other architectural features
- The links that the park has with the Green Finger extending out to the north of the town

The park is part of Bishop's Stortford's "Green Finger" including the Town Council's Sworder's Field, Grange Paddocks and Red, White and Blue open space. The Service will work closely with the Town Council to progress a shared vision and effective management plan for the site.

King George V Recreation Ground

The King George V Recreation Ground in Ware has benefited from significant improvement works in the last few years.

As a result of ideas brought forward by local young people talking to the Police Community Support Officers, the Council worked with Riversmead Housing Association to fund a new Multi User Games Area for the park. A compact enclosed area designed for kicking a ball about or playing basket ball in all weathers.

The location of the Multi User Games Area was chosen with specific advice from the Police and the Housing Association. The main considerations were to ensure that it was in a position that the Police could easily patrol, not too close to properties that back on to the open

space and near enough to the existing play area to fall in with our existing inspection and cleansing regime.

It has been a great success with young people and at its opening ceremony was host to a celebrity freestyle football demonstration.

The park was also selected as a Big Lottery Fund "Playing on the Wildside" project. This project was about working with local children to design and build an adventurous play area that took into account their interests, needs and vision so they would have ownership of the play equipment and would look after it.

Our project partners Child UK, worked with local children through the summer to start the initial work on the project and then consulted with all local residents. This gave everybody the chance to get involved and to share any thoughts they may have about the development of the open space in general. To ensure that the consultation was effective, over 50 different young people were involved in the process and many of these also worked with our supplier to design and even build some of the installations.

The resultant new play area provides an exciting range of challenging and fun equipment for a wide range of ages and has transformed the park from a somewhat old fashioned and tired space to one that is now valued and respected by the local community. The project provided the opportunity to make some significant changes to the overall landscape across the park and to engage with residents to carry out a "clean up" of fly-tipped garden waste.

The park was selected successfully under the Town Award Scheme by the Ware Society. This year the panel of judges considered eight nominations in all and decided to make the award to the King George V play development scheme. In the opinion of the judges, "It was felt that this initiative whilst not being a 'development' in the normally accepted sense of the Award Scheme had nonetheless made a significant contribution to its surroundings and upgraded the quality of the area. The design, materials and setting were entirely suited to purpose and the scheme undoubtedly made a significant contribution to the neighbourhood community in an area of the town that is often overlooked".

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER B:

Appendix 2 – East Herts Play Area Development Programme 2007 – 2012 - Progress Update August 2011

The table below lists the play areas where work has been undertaken, or is planned, to increase the range of play elements and the overall play value of the play area for each year of the Play Area Development Programme.

Note: Play elements are defined as the play function of the equipment - ‘Swinging, Sliding, Rocking, Rotating, Climbing/Agility, Balancing, Social Play, and Older Children’s equipment (Shelters) and Games areas’.

Work completed / Due for completion:	Name of Play Area:	Town:	Works undertaken / due:
2007	Lower Campfield Road - Area 2	Hertford	General repairs & re-surfacing to enhance the visual aspect of the play area
2007	The Ridgeway - Multi User Games Area	Hertford	NEW Multi User games Area installed - EHC & external funding
2007	Lower Bourne Gardens Play Area	Ware	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value of the play area - Willys Jeep rocking climber unit
2007	Wodson Park Play Area	Ware	Re-design of the play area and new equipment - Mayflower rocking climber unit added increase the

			range of play developments and play value of the play area
2007	Eden's Mount Play Area	Sawbridgeworth	Re-design of the play area and all new equipment added to increase play value - flat swings, cradle swings, roundabout and 4-way rocking seesaw and large climbing unit with slide - EHC & external funding
2007	Foxholes Avenue Play Area	Hertford	Public consultation lead redesign of the play area and all new equipment added to increase the play value - lion springer, cradle swings, basket swing, multi climbing activity unit and a spinning cone climber
2007	Hartham Common Older Play Area	Hertford	Play area relocated & additional equipment - Climbing Boulder, spinning disc and 'Freerider' swinger added to increase play value
2007	Hartham Common Skate Park	Hertford	NEW skate bowl created in consultation with local children and funded by EHC with external funding toward revenue costs
2008	The Ridgeway Play Area	Hertford	Additional equipment added to increase the range of play elements and play value of the play area - Willys Jeep rocking climber unit, DDA roundabout, basket swing, tower slide and 2 springers

2008	The Barrons Play Area	Bishop's Stortford	All old equipment removed and 3 new springer units installed to revitalise the play area
2008	Northolt Avenue Play Area	Bishop's Stortford	Complete re-vamp to remove old equipment and add new equipment to increase the range of play elements and play value for a greater range of ages - a spring rocking seesaw, toddler multi climbing unit with slide, multi-activity climbing unit, overhead rotator, basket swing
2008	Sheering Mill Lane Play Area	Sawbridgeworth	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value - new 4-way rocking springer unit, small pole spinner, toddler multi-activity climber unit with slide and basket swing
2008	Waytemore Road Play Area	Bishop's Stortford	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value of the play area - Replaced old roundabout with a new DDA roundabout, plus 3 springer units, overhead rotator unit, multi-activity climber unit with slide and a basket swing
2008	Knebworth Court Play Area	Bishop's Stortford	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value of the play area - spinning bowl
2008	Bishops Park - Play Area 2	Bishop's Stortford	Repaired ball court wall panels

2008	Barreldown Road Play Area	Bishop's Stortford	Repaired surfacing and replaced 2 springer units
2008	Southern Country Park Play Area	Bishop's Stortford	New Section 106 funded play area. Bespoke older children's play area created with the first twin cable runway in the District, large rotating disc, rotating turnstile unit, rotating balancing beam, overhead rotator, cantilever swing and large multi-climber unit with slide
2008	Turners Crescent Play Area	Bishop's Stortford	New Section 106 funded play area - specifically designed for under 10's with cradle swings, stepping pods, small multi-climber unit with slide, spinning bowl, springer unit, play panels and small rotating pole unit
2008	King George V Recreation Area – Multi User Games Area	Ware	NEW Multi User Games Area created in consultation with the Police and, Riversmead Housing Association local children - EHC & external funding
2009	Burley Road Play Area - BS	Bishop's Stortford	New goal post and 're-bound' fencing added to the open space
2009	Beacon Road Play Area	Ware	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value of the play area - springer unit and DDA roundabout

2009	Rush Green / Martins Drive	Hertford	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value of the play area - basket swing, small rotating pole
2009	Rowley's Road Play Area	Hertford	Additional equipment added to increase play value - spring rocker and small rotating pole
2009	Ward Crescent Play Area	Bishop's Stortford	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value of the play area - small rotating pole
2009	Gladstone Road (Belfour / Founceley Rd)	Dane End	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value of the play area - springer unit
2009	Lower Park Crescent Play Area	Bishop's Stortford	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value of the play area - removed old climbing unit and replaced with basket swing and small rotating pole
2009	Northern Parkland - Play Area 2	Bishop's Stortford	Replaced 2 springer units
2009	King George Road Play Area	Ware	NEW Big Lottery Fund adventure play project - new play area designed and created in collaboration with local children with tower slide, rope bridge, overhead rotator unit, trampoline and cable runway as well as new landscaping around the site. EHC & external funding

2009	Bentley Road Play Area	Hertford	Existing play area redesigned and new equipment added in consultation with local disabled children's group as part of a Big Lottery funded project - DDA roundabout, wobbly balance beam, talk tubes, stepping pods, story telling seating, children's picnic table, basket swing, boat rocking springer unit and spinning bowl. EHC & Big Lottery funding
2009/10	The Ridgeway - The Dell Play Area	Hertford	Play Builder Project - completely new play area created in consultation with local children in the derelict Dell area of the open space - new landscaping, large wooden climbing frame, rope swing over pit, large embankment slide and sandpit with 3 climbing logs. EHC & external Central Government funding
PROJECT CANCELLED	Grange Paddocks, Play Builder project	Bishop's Stortford	Proposed Play Builder Project - a new play area & BMX track was to have been created. Project cancelled due to withdrawal of Central Government external funding.
2010	Trinity Street	Bishop's Stortford	Remove old cradle and flat swings and replaced with basket swing, springer unit and spinning pole
2010	Dimsdale Crescent Play Area	Bishop's Stortford	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value of the play area - Lion springer seesaw

2010	Hillside Crescent Play Area	Stanstead Abbots	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value of the play area - basket swing and small rotating unit added
2010	Gt. Innings South, Watton-at-Stone	Watton-at-Stone	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value of the play area for a wider range of ages - Replaced old flat swings with a new basket swing
2011	Bishops Park - Play Area 1	Bishop's Stortford	The play area has a good range of play equipment & play elements. The old cantilever swing is at the end of its useful life and is to be replaced with a basket swing
2010 - Moved to 2011	Sainsbury's - Thorley Wedge	Bishop's Stortford	This play area has a very good range of play equipment & play elements, but lacks balancing equipment. A new climbing unit with balancing and agility play elements is to be added to the play area
2011	Cannons Close Play Area	Bishop's Stortford	Additional equipment added to increase range of play elements and play value of the play area - the old multi-climber unit is to be replaced with a new multi tower climbing unit with a slide

2010 - Moved to 2011	Cecil Road Toddlers - Area 1	Hertford	Old climbing unit to be removed and replaced with a new multi-activity climber unit with slide
2011	Presdales Drive Play Area	Ware	The play area has a good range of play equipment & play elements, but the cradle swings are to be replaced with a basket swing so a wider age range of children can play on them. The tower slide is to be replaced a new stand alone slide as it has reached the end of its useful life
2010 - Moved to 2011	Vantorts Close Play Area & Open Space	Sawbridgeworth	Officers have worked closely with the Town Council and local residents to devise a scheme to enhance the open space, redesign the existing younger children's play area with new equipment and turn the decommissioned tennis court into a play area for older children. The project is currently out to Tender and is due for completion in December 2011. EHC and external funding
2011/12	Sacombe Road Play Area	Hertford	A new Section 106 play area due to be completed by developers in 2011/12 on the site of the existing play area in Sacombe Road. Officer have worked closely on the design of this new play area and an additional £10,000 from the play capital fund has been allocated to add additional equipment to enhance the overall play value of the play area

2011/12	The Bourne	Ware	Existing play equipment is reaching the end of its useful life so a possible relocation of the play area and new equipment aimed at a wider age range is proposed. External funding being sought to enhance the open space and increase the scope of the play area revamp
2012	The Castle / Castle Gardens Play Area	Hertford	New play equipment and potential redesign of the play area is to be considered with a possible relocation to a new position within the park
2012	Hartham Common Younger Play Area	Hertford	Proposed make over of the existing younger children's play area and new equipment added to increase the play experience for a wider range of children. New features such as water play, which would need additional external funding, are to be considered

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2011

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

8. ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY HEALTHCHECK – APRIL TO JUNE 2011

WARD(S) AFFECTED: All

Purpose/Summary of Report:

To set out a report on the performance of the key indicators that relate to Environment Scrutiny Committee for the period April to June 2011.

RECOMMENDATION FOR SCRUTINY MEMBERS:	
(A)	That performance be scrutinised and the Executive be informed of any recommendations.

1.0 Background

1.1 This is a performance report relevant to the Environment Scrutiny terms of reference covering the period April 2011 to June 2011.




1.3 The report contains a breakdown of the following information by each Corporate Priority:



- An overview of performance, in particular where there have been issues and remedial actions taken during the period. Should members want more detailed information on a specific month, they should refer to that month's Executive Corporate Healthcheck report available on the council website.
- The indicators where data is collected monthly, with performance for June 2011 presented in detail (the most up to date available) with previous months summarised in a trend chart.

1.4 All Councillors have access to Covalent (the Council's performance management system), should they wish to interrogate the full range of performance indicators. The Performance Team is able to provide support and training on using the covalent system if required.

- 1.5 **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** Shows the full set of performance indicators that are reported on a monthly basis to this committee. Essential Reference paper B has been sorted by status e.g. all performance in 'red' are listed first etc.

The codes used in relation to performance indicator monitoring are as follows:

Status	
	This PI is 6% or more off target.
	This PI is 1-5% off target.
	This PI is on target.

Short Term Trends	
	The value of this PI has changed in the short term.
	The value of this PI has not changed in the short term.

2.0 Report – Indicators grouped by Corporate Priority

Please refer to **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** for full details.

Pride in East Herts

Performance analysis

- 2.1 **NI 191 - Residual household waste per household.** Waste collected increased this month compared to April and is some 3% up on May 2010.
- 2.1 **NI 192 - Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting.** Performance improved in May to take cumulative performance just above the annual target. There were increases in both kerbside dry recycling and composting, compared to April, slightly countermanded by an increase in the waste collected.
- 2.2 Performance for the following indicators were 'Green', which means that targets were either being met or exceeded for June 2011. They are;
- EHPI 218a - Abandoned Vehicles - % investigated within 24 hours
 - EHPI 218b - Abandoned Vehicles - % removed within 24 hours

of required time

Please refer to Essential Reference Paper 'B' for full details.

Fit for purpose

Performance analysis

- 2.3 **EHPI 6.8 - Turnaround of pre NTO PCN challenges.** Performance was 'Red' for June 2011. Performance was off target due to continued high levels of PCN's being issued as well as staff absences.
- 2.4 **EHPI 6.9 – Turnaround of NTO Representations.** Performance was 'Amber' for June 2011. Arrangements have been put in place to improve this situation.

Please refer to Essential Reference Paper 'B' for full details.

Shaping now, shaping the future

Performance analysis

- 2.5 **EHPI 204 – Planning appeals allowed.** Performance was 'Red' in June 2011. Five out of nine appeals were allowed.
- 2.6 **NI 157a - Processing of planning applications: 'Major' applications.** Performance was 'Red' for June 2011. Seven major application decisions were released - two of which were within the target timescale. The reasons for the delays in relation to the remaining five were varied. It was necessary in one case to refer the matter to the Secretary of State. One of the proposals required the formulation of a legal agreement. One was subject to independent financial viability assessment and, in the case of an application to vary the proposals for the Sainsbury's development at Hartham and Hertford, there were protracted issues in relation to the impact of the proposals on the historic building to be resolved. These varying reasons lead to poor performance in the month overall.
- 2.7 The following indicators were 'Green', meaning that targets were either met or exceeded for June 2011. They are:
- NI 157b - Processing of planning applications: 'Minor' applications.
 - NI 157c - Processing of planning applications: Other

applications.

- EHPI 2.1b - Enforcement actions: planning b) formal actions.
- EHPI 2.1c - Enforcement actions: planning c) prosecutions.
- EHPI 2.2(45) - Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of household waste.
- EHPI 2.23 - Planning decisions delegated to officers.

Please refer to **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** for full details.

Unit Cost indicators

2.8 The following unit cost performance indicators are to update members of the 2010/11 outturn. Full details of these indicators are listed in **Essential Reference Paper B**. Data for these indicators will only be available after the 2010/11 financial accounts have closed. These indicators are used by officers as a tool to help identify possible service efficiencies:

- EHPI 8.28 - Net cost of Development Control per application
- EHPI 8.30 - Net cost of Building Control per inspection
- EHPI 8.47 - Net cost of Street Cleaning per annual linear kilometres cleansed
- EHPI 8.48 - Net cost of Domestic Refuse Collection per the number of properties
- EHPI 8.49 - Net cost of Recycling per the number of collections per annum
- EHPI 86 - Cost of household waste collection.

3.0 **Implications/Consultation**

3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers:

- Guidance note available on Environment Scrutiny Corporate Healthcheck May 2009 to July 2009 report (Submitted to committee on 15 September 2009) - Essential Reference Paper D.
- List of Performance Indicator definitions available on Environment Scrutiny Corporate Healthcheck May 2009 to July 2009 report (Submitted to committee on 15 September 2009) - Essential Reference Paper E.
- Joint Scrutiny 15 February 2011 – 2010/11 Estimates and Future

Targets report.

Contact Member: Councillor A Jackson, Leader of the Council.

Contact Officers: Ceri Pettit, Head of Strategic Direction (Shared) and Performance Manager, Extn: 2240.
Lorna Georgiou, Performance and improvement Coordinator, Extn: 2244.
Karl Chui, Performance Officer, Extn: 2243.
George A Robertson – Director for Customer and Community Services, Extn: 1410.

Report Author: Karl Chui, Performance Officer, Extn: 2243.

Essential Reference Papers:

Essential Reference Paper B – Performance Indicator set relating to Environment Scrutiny Committee for period April 2011 to June 2011.

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'



Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives:	<p>Promoting prosperity and well-being; providing access and opportunities <i>Enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.</i></p> <p>Fit for purpose, services fit for you <i>Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.</i></p> <p>Pride in East Herts <i>Improve standards of the neighbourhood and environmental management in our towns and villages.</i></p>
Consultation:	Performance monitoring discussions have taken place between, Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service.
Legal:	None specific to this report
Financial:	None specific to this report
Human Resource:	None specific to this report
Risk Management:	None specific to this report

**Environment Scrutiny Corporate Health Check
2011/12**

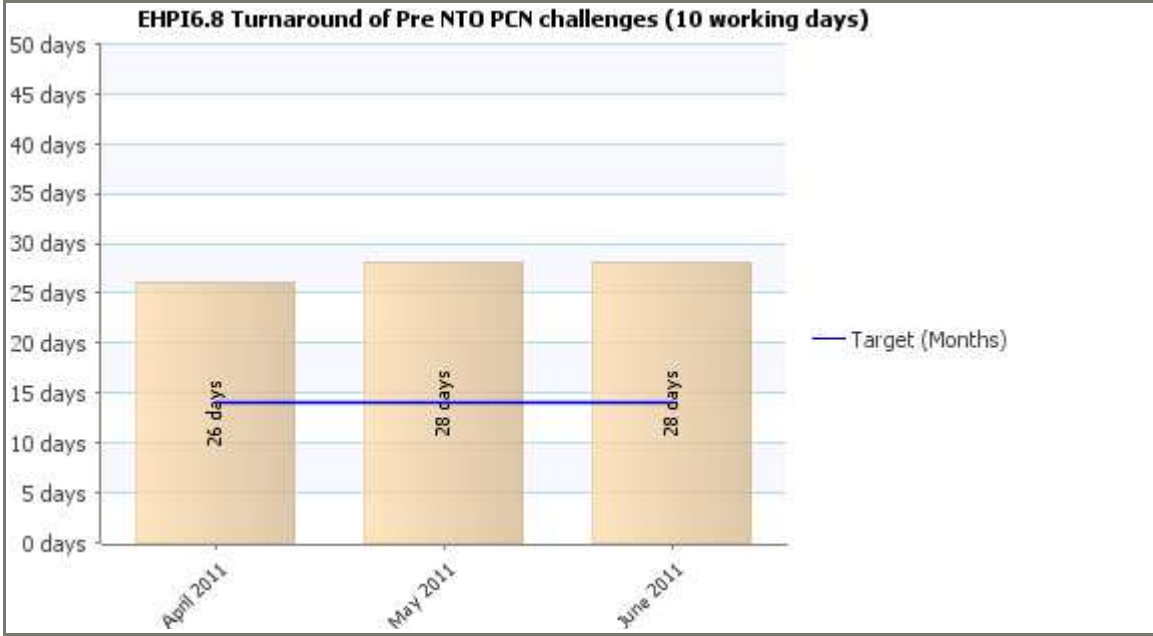


Traffic Light Red
Description Fit for purpose, services fit for you

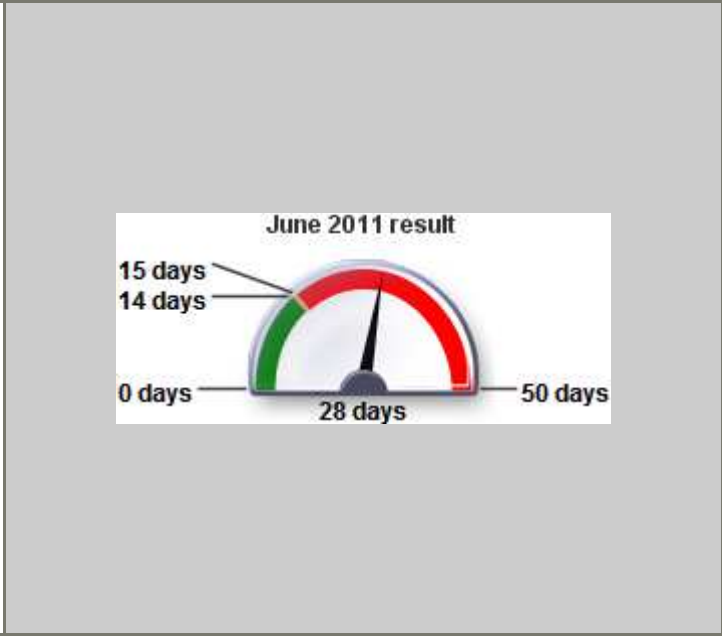
Parking Services

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHP16.8	Turnaround of Pre NTO PCN challenges (10 working days)		28 days	14 days		Staff absences due to annual leave and secondment of an officer to the Business Improvement Team continue to effect this PI. Following a business case, arrangements have been put in place to improve this situation.	

Trend Chart





Performance Gauge



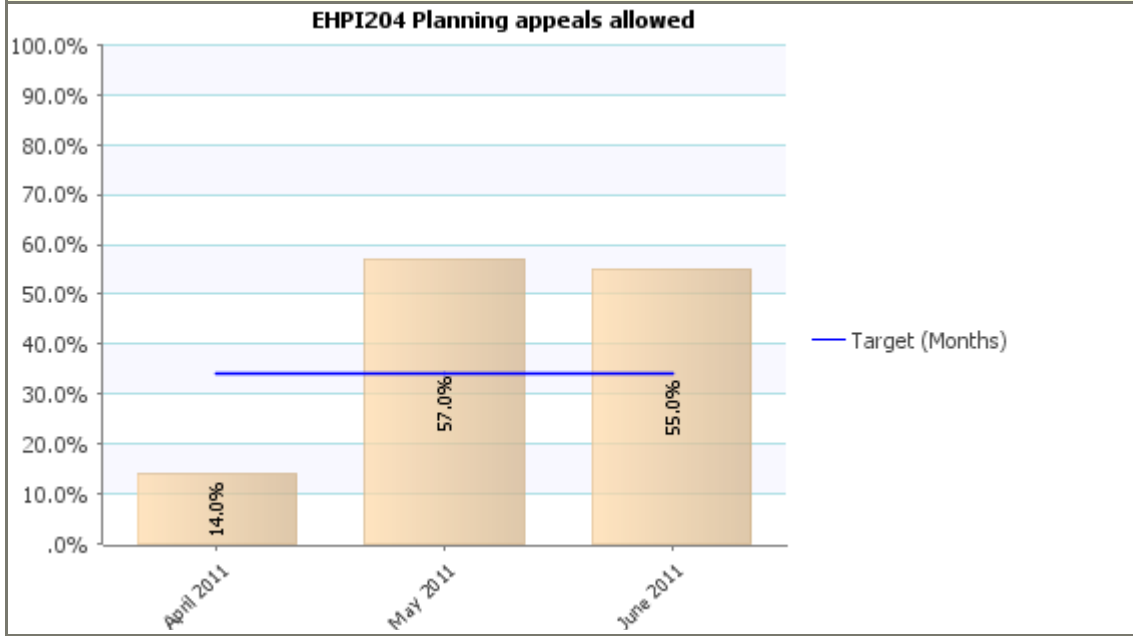
Traffic Light Red

Description Shaping now, shaping the future

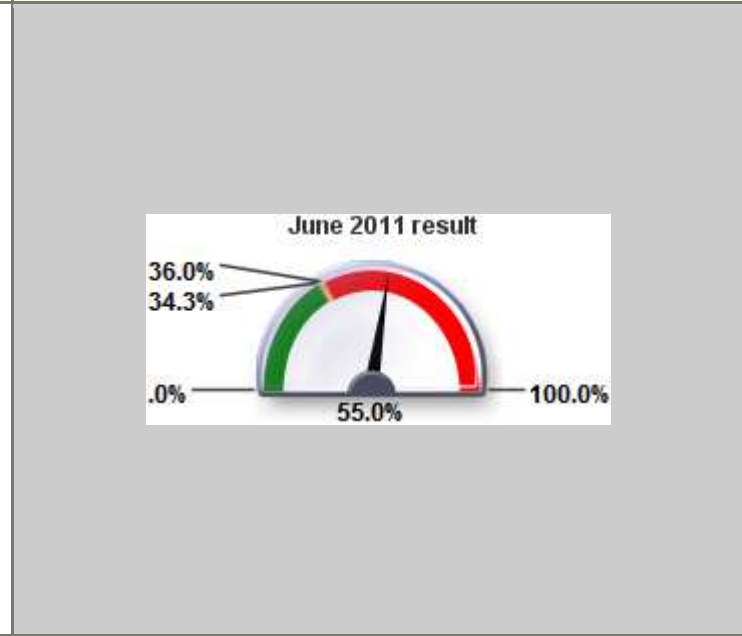
Planning and Building Control

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHPI204	Planning appeals allowed		55.0%	34.0%		5 out of 9 appeals allowed	



Trend Chart



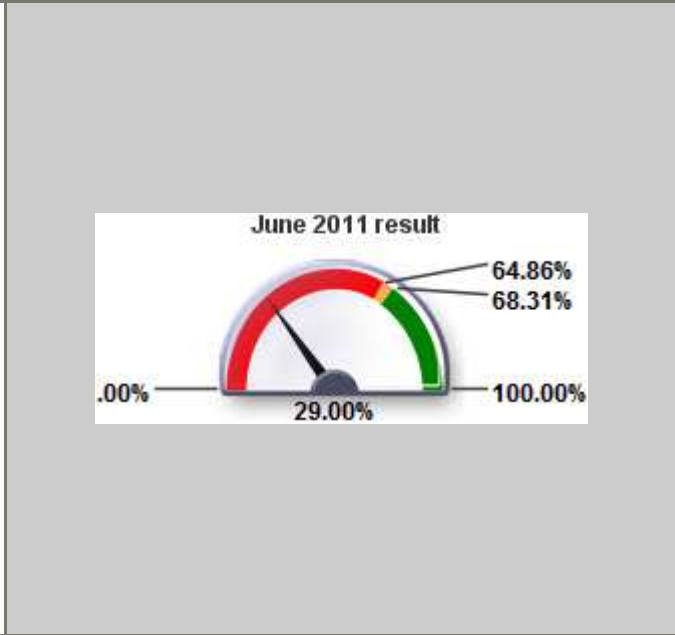
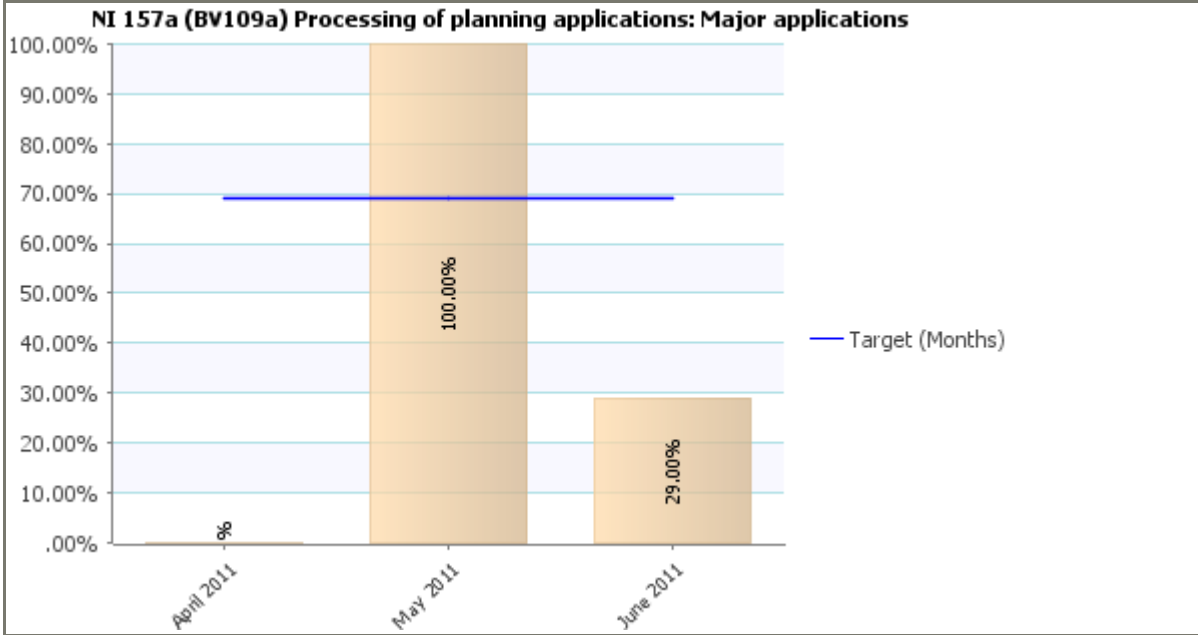
Performance Gauge



Planning and Building Control

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
NI 157a (BV109a)	Processing of planning applications: Major applications		29.00%	69.00%		June 2011: Seven major application decisions were released - two of which were within the target timescale. The reason for the delays in relation to the remaining five were varied. It was necessary in one case to refer the matter to the Secretary of State. One of the proposals required the formulation of a legal agreement. One was subject to independent financial viability assessment and, in the case of an application to vary the proposals for the Sainsbury's development at Hartham, Hertford, there were protracted issues in relation to the impact of the proposals on the historic building to be resolved. These varying reasons lead to poor performance in the month overall.	



Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**



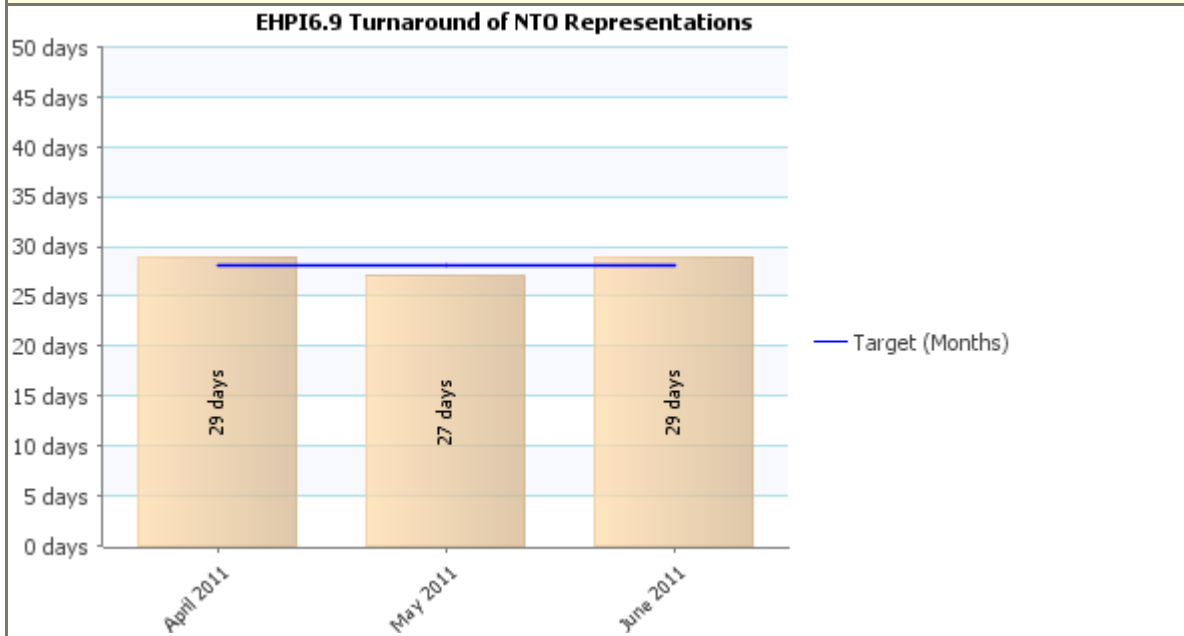
Traffic Light Amber

Description Fit for purpose, services fit for you

Parking Services

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHPI6.9	Turnaround of NTO Representations		29 days	28 days		PI affected by staff absences due to annual leave and secondment of an officer to the Business Improvement Team continue to effect this PI. Following a business case, arrangements have been put in place to improve this situation	

Trend Chart



Performance Gauge

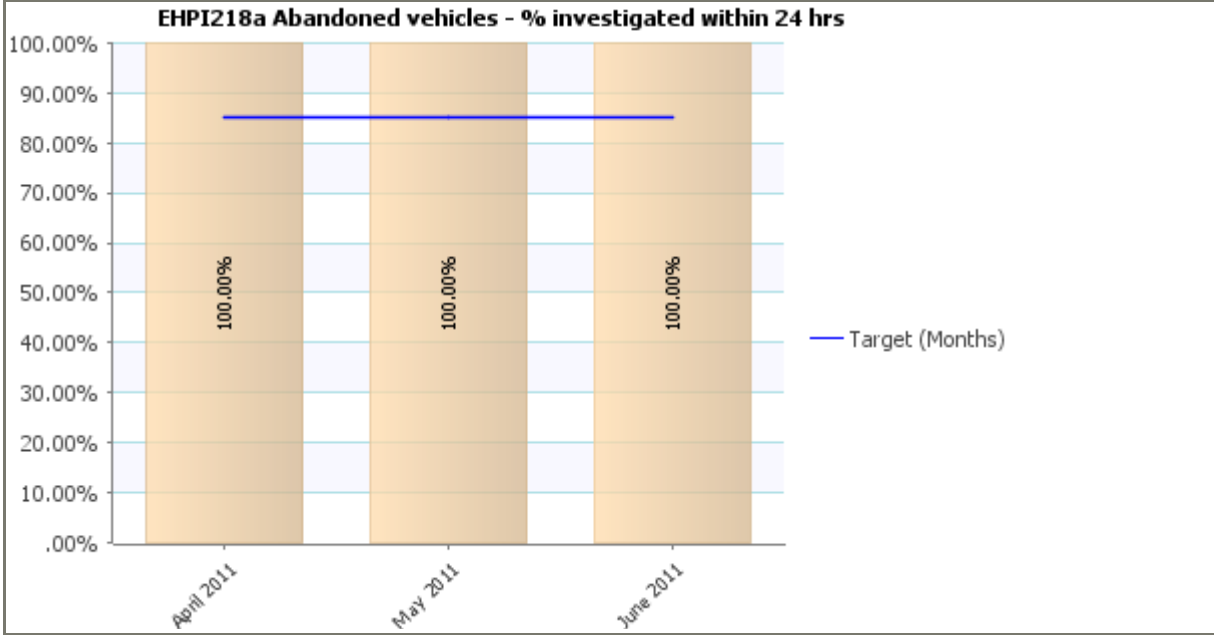


Traffic Light Green
Description Pride in East Herts

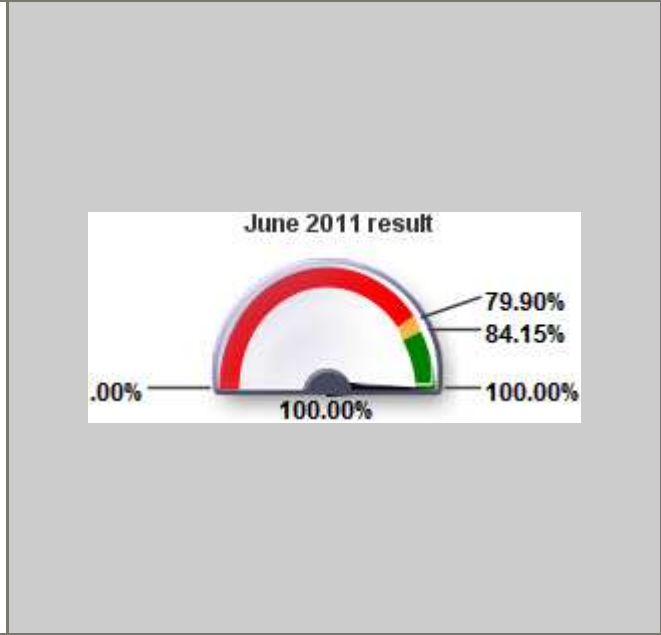
Environment Services

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHPI218a	Abandoned vehicles - % investigated within 24 hrs		100.00%	85.00%		16 cars were inspected in June all within 24 hours	

Trend Chart



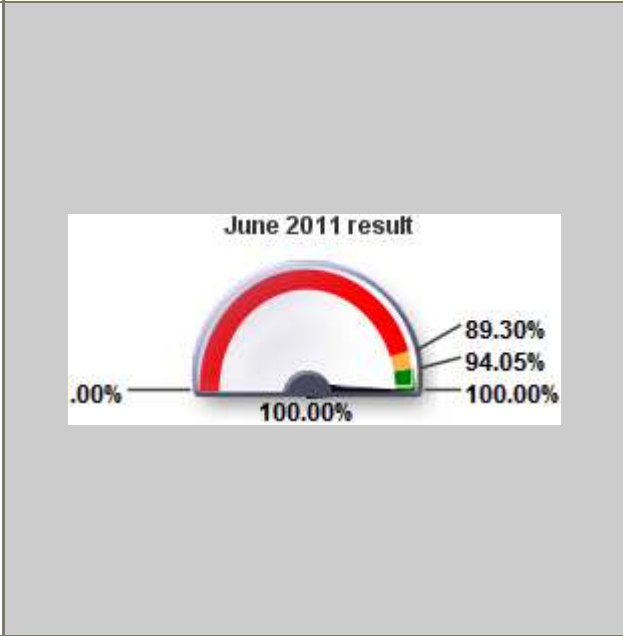
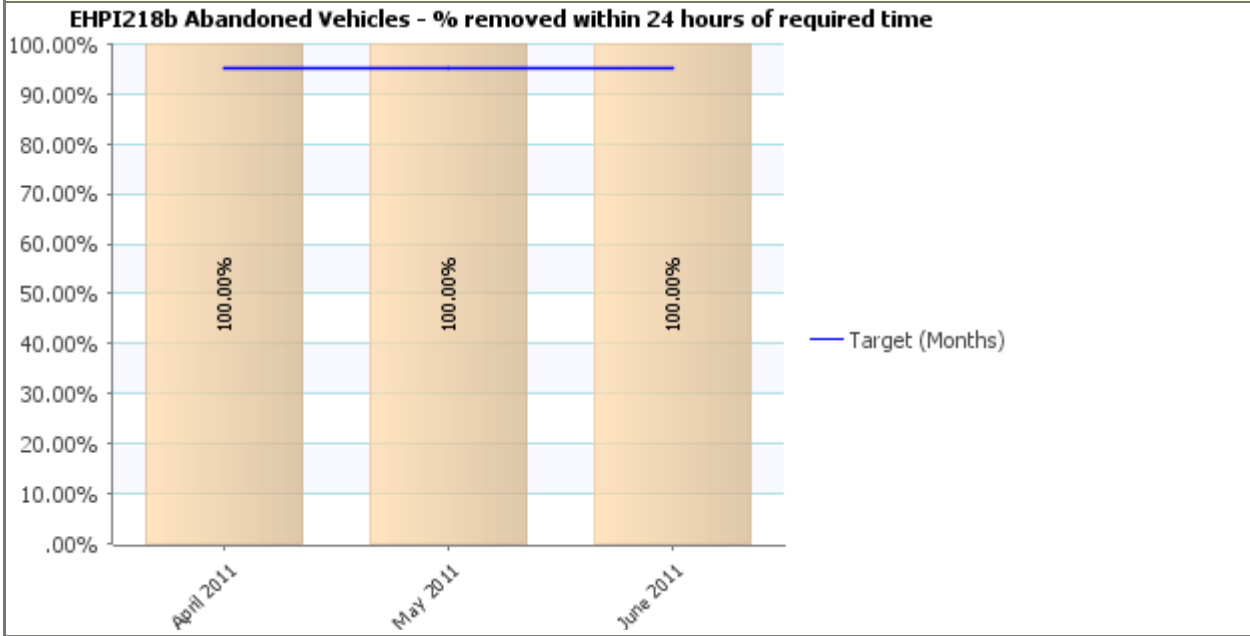
Performance Gauge



Environment Services

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHPI218b	Abandoned Vehicles - % removed within 24 hours of required time		100.00%	95.00%		no cars were removed this month	

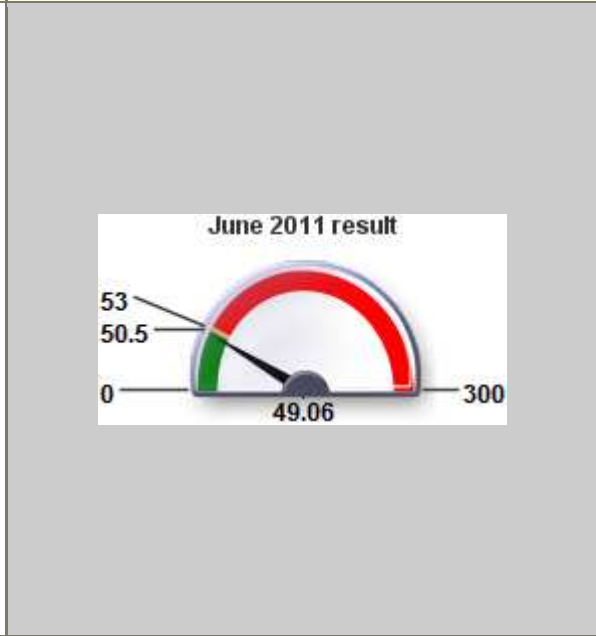
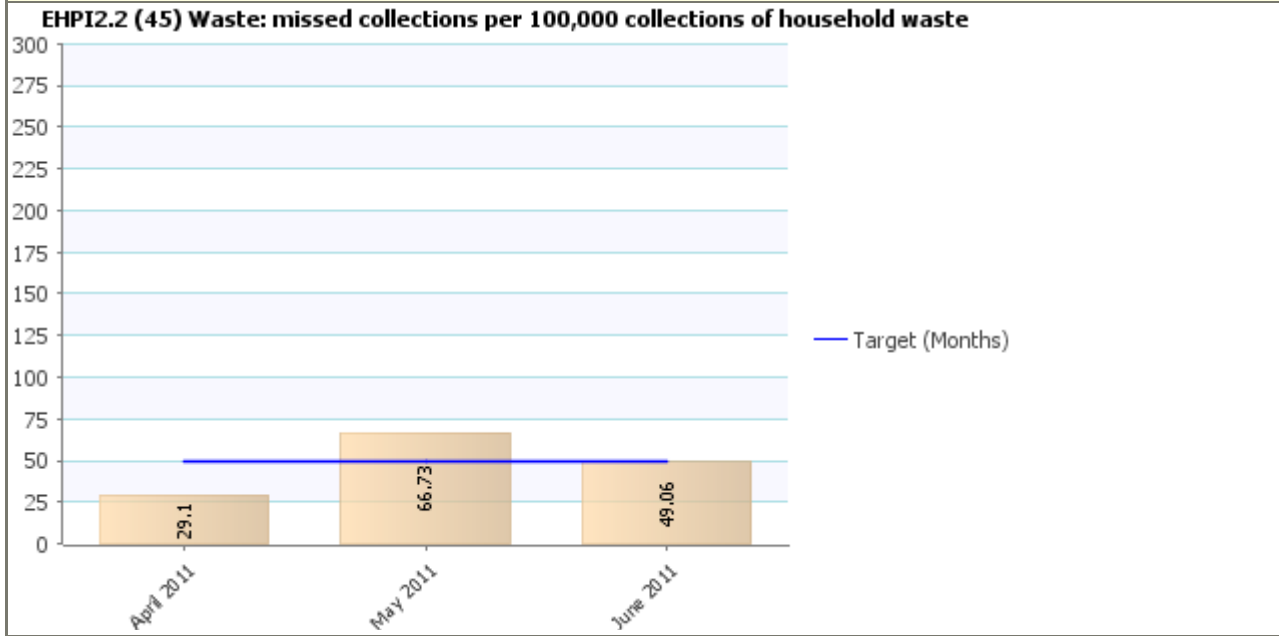
Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**



Environment Services

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHPI2.2 (45)	Waste: missed collections per 100,000 collections of household waste		49.06	50		Improved performance this month as new contract settles down.	

Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**



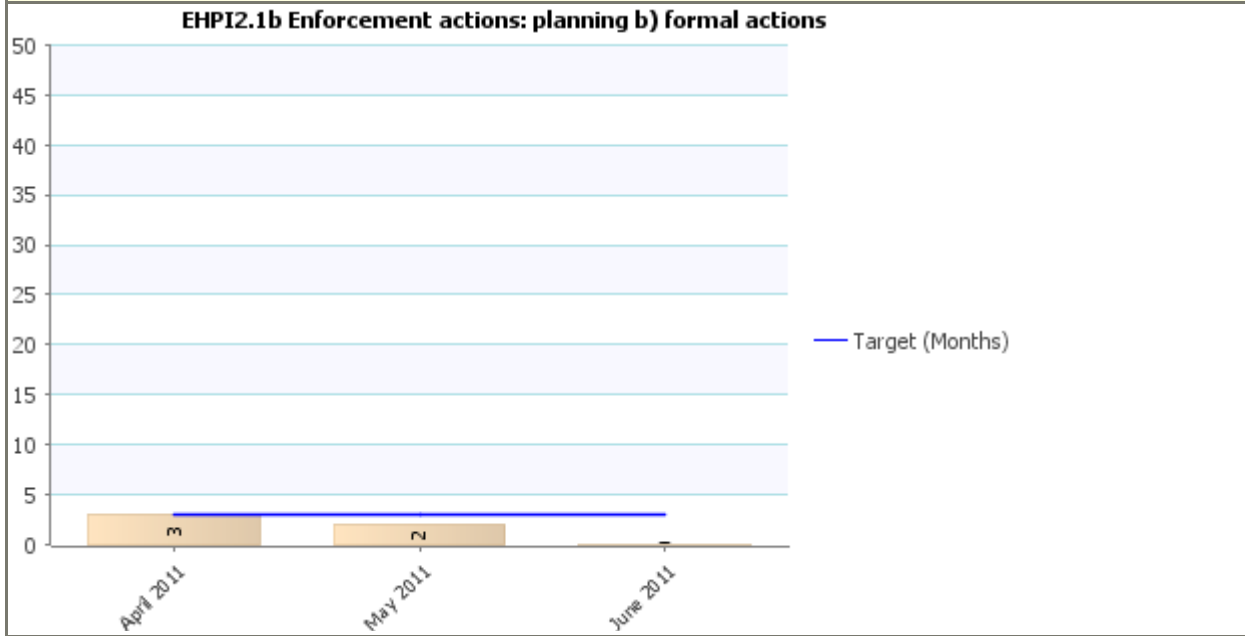
Traffic Light Green

Description Shaping now, shaping the future

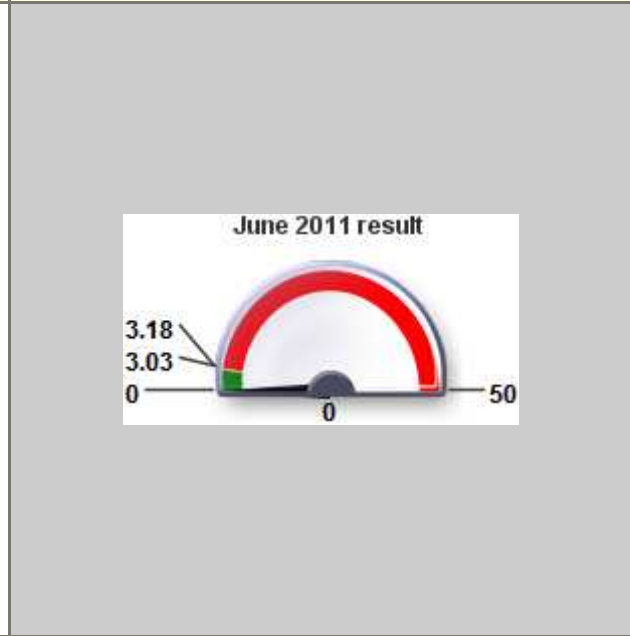
Planning and Building control

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHPI2.1b	Enforcement actions: planning b) formal actions		0	3			



Trend Chart



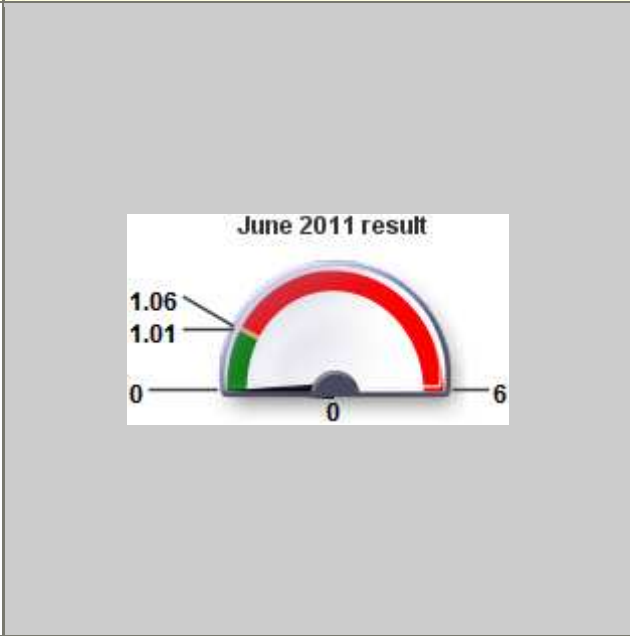
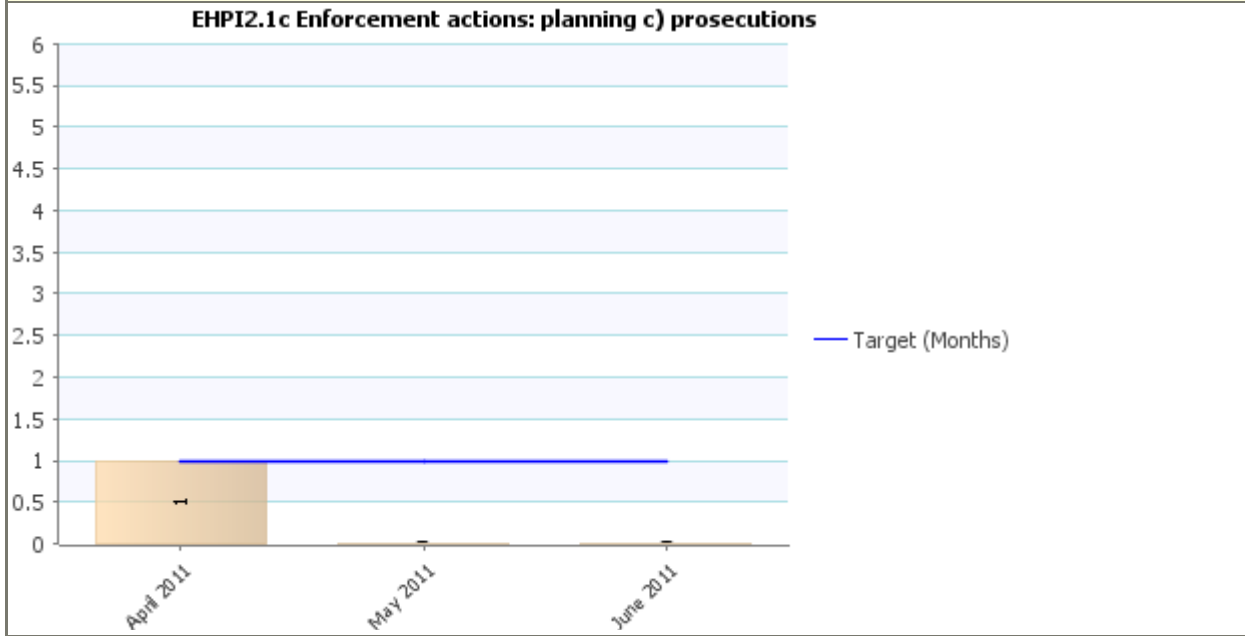
Performance Gauge



Planning and Building control

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHP12.1c	Enforcement actions: planning c) prosecutions		0	1			

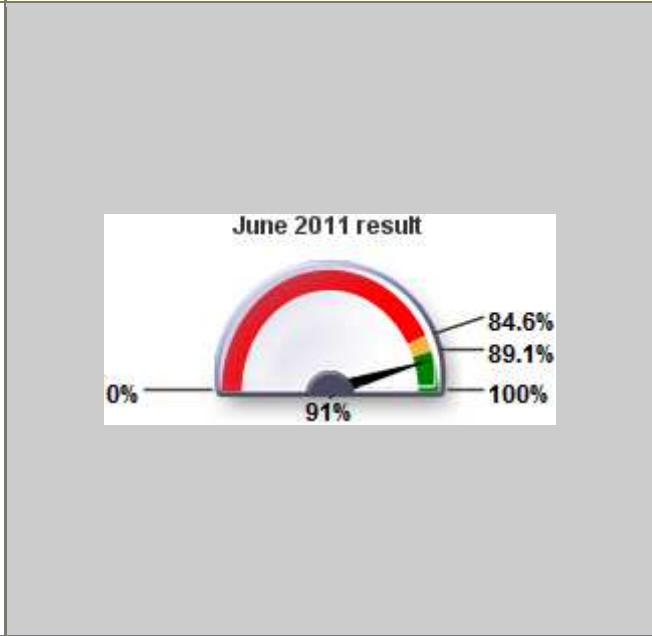
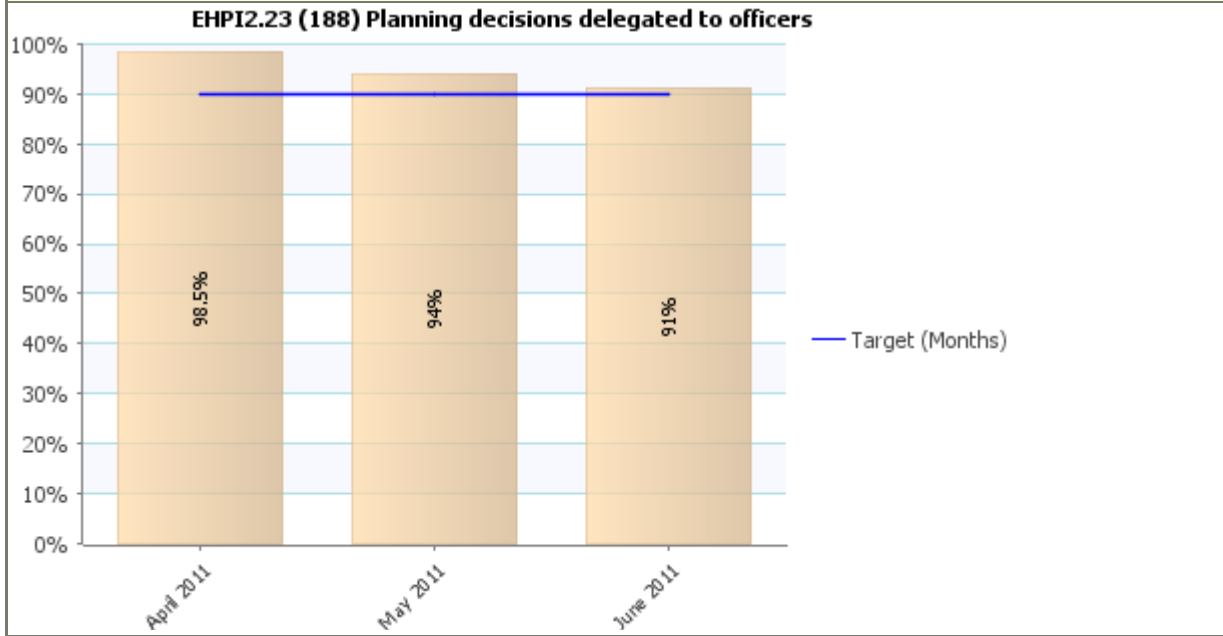
Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**



Planning and Building Control

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHPI2.23 (188)	Planning decisions delegated to officers		91%	90%		17 out of 185 decisions went to committee	

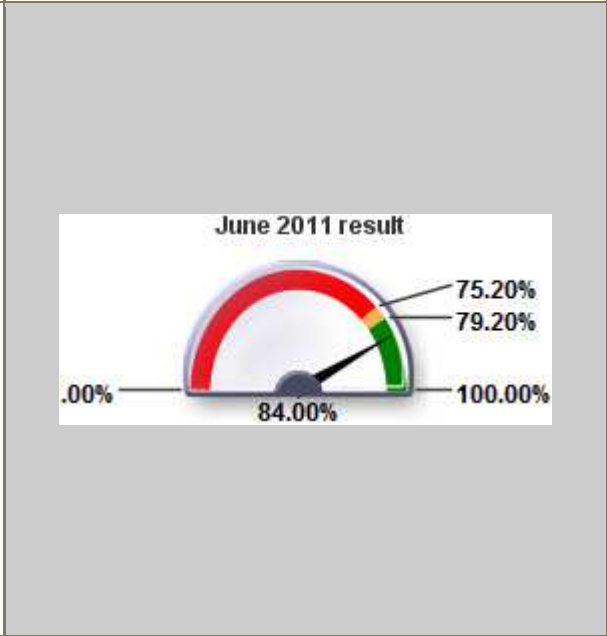
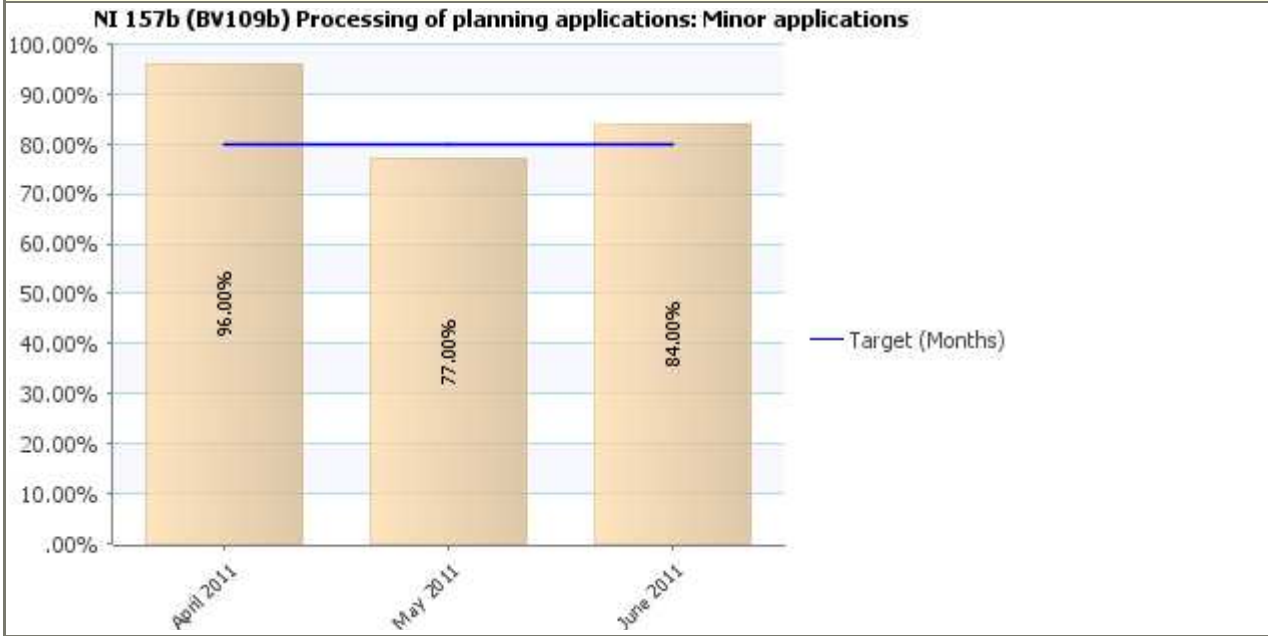
Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**



Planning and Building Control

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
NI 157b (BV109b)	Processing of planning applications: Minor applications		84.00%	80.00%			

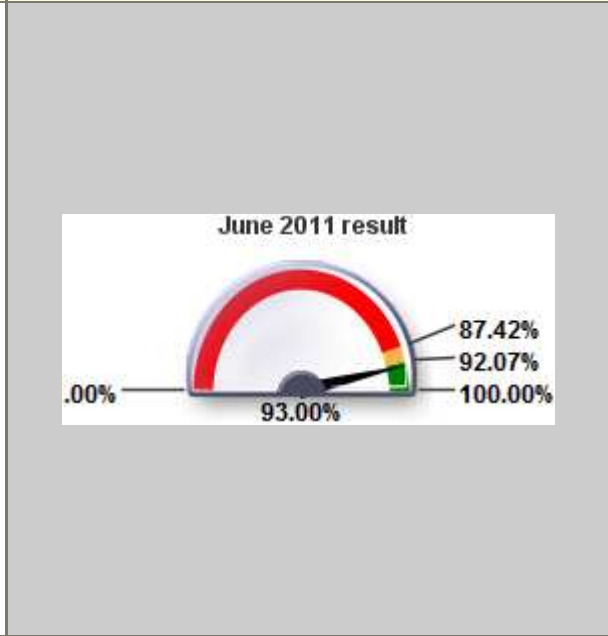
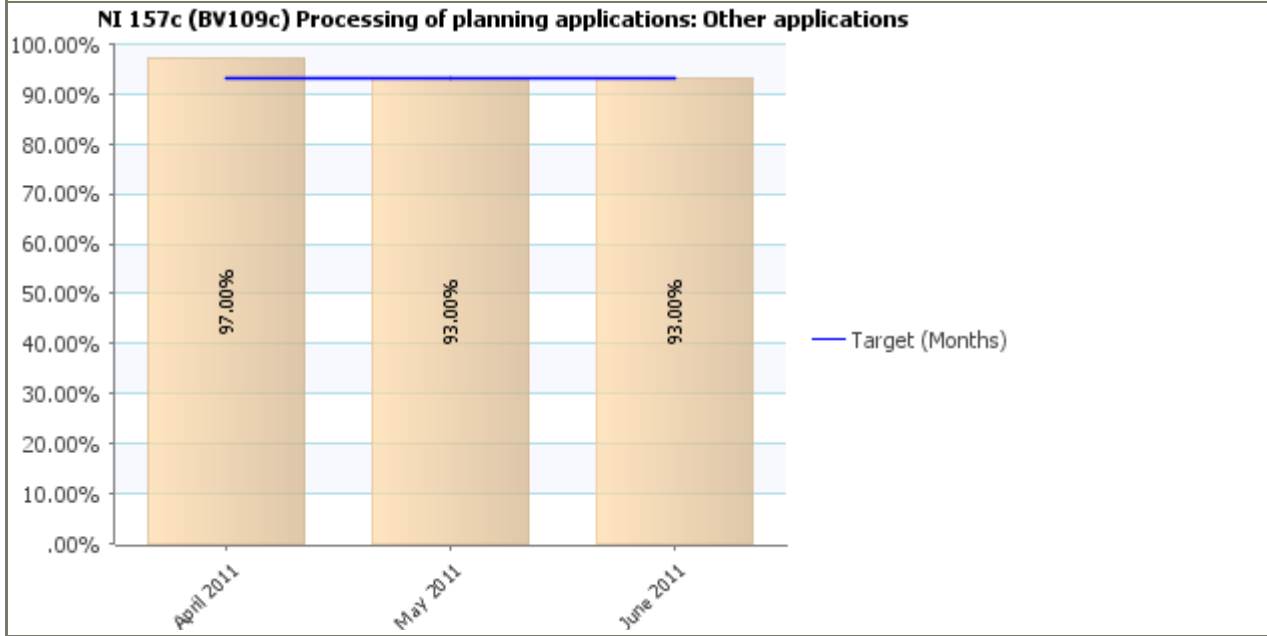
Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**



Planning and Building Control

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
NI 157c (BV109c)	Processing of planning applications: Other applications		93.00%	93.00%			

Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**

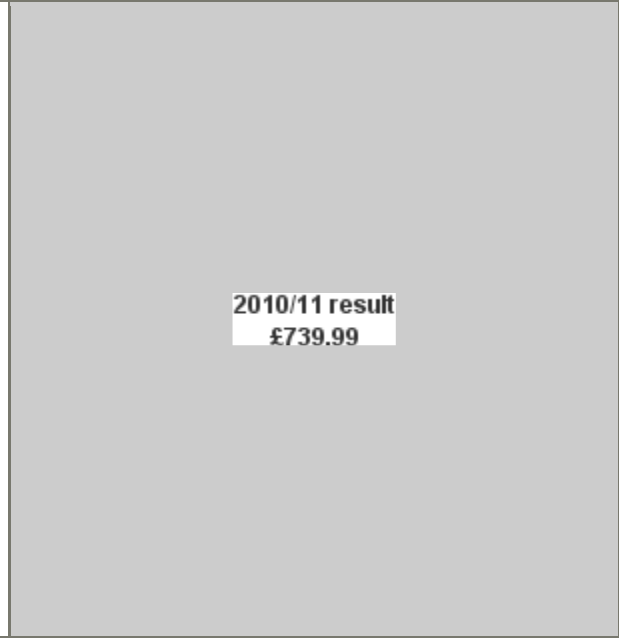
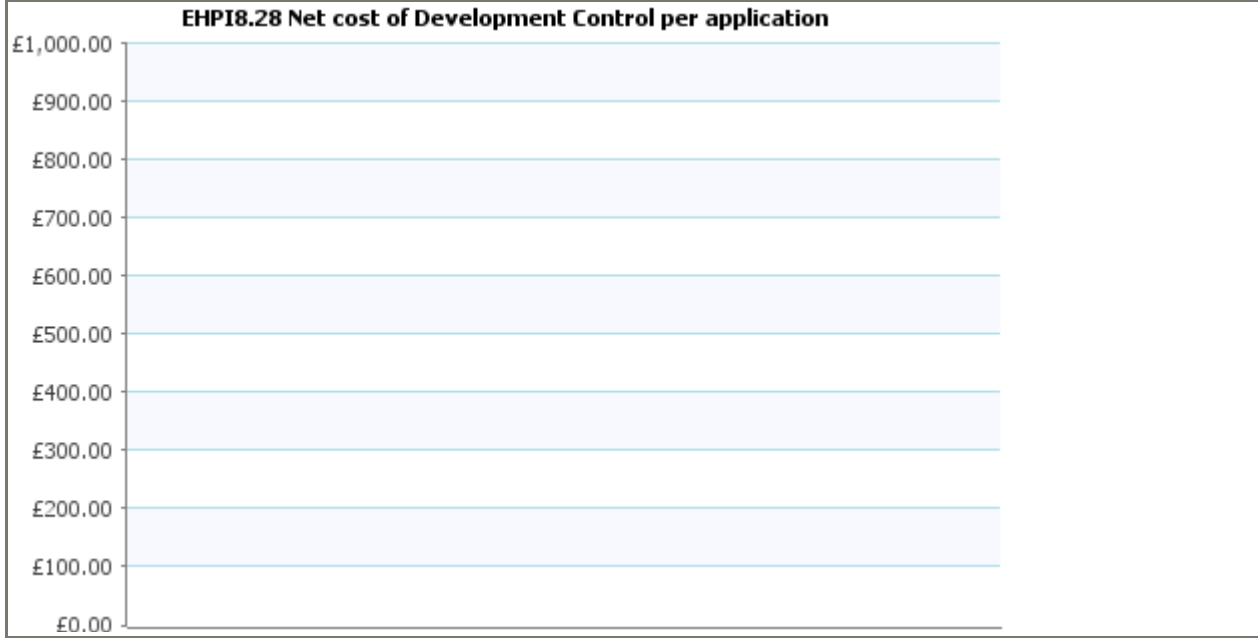


Traffic Light Data Only
Description Fit for purpose, services fit for you



Planning and Building Control

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHP18.28	Net cost of Development Control per application		£739.99				

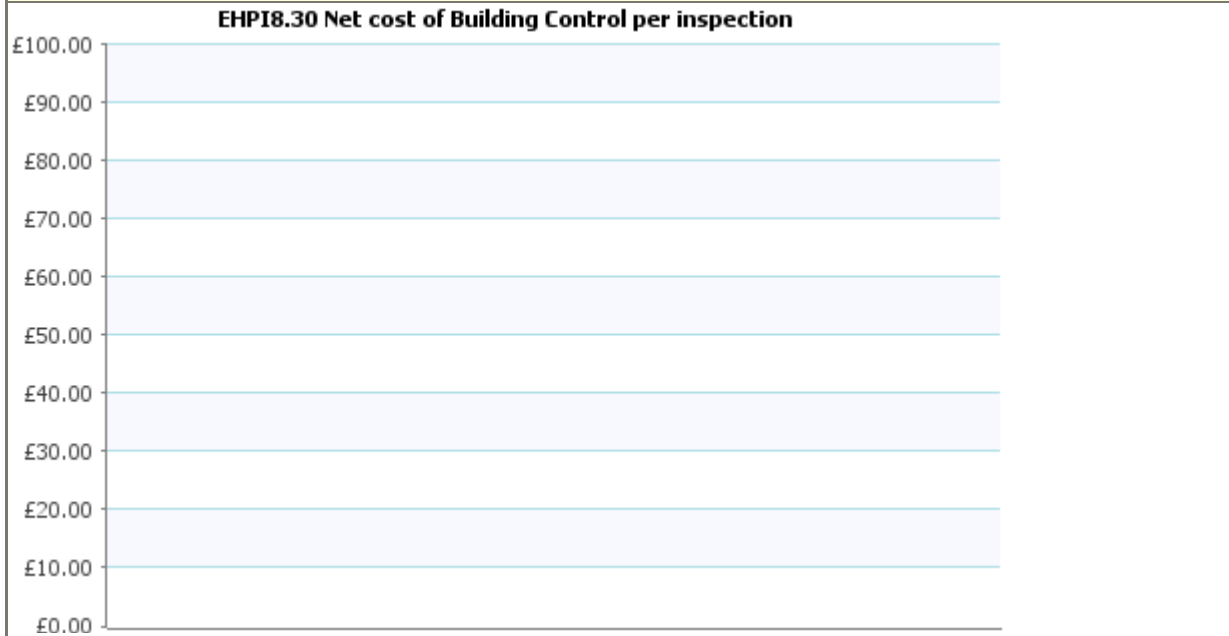
Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**



Planning and Building Control

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHP18.30	Net cost of Building Control per inspection		£12.59				



Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**



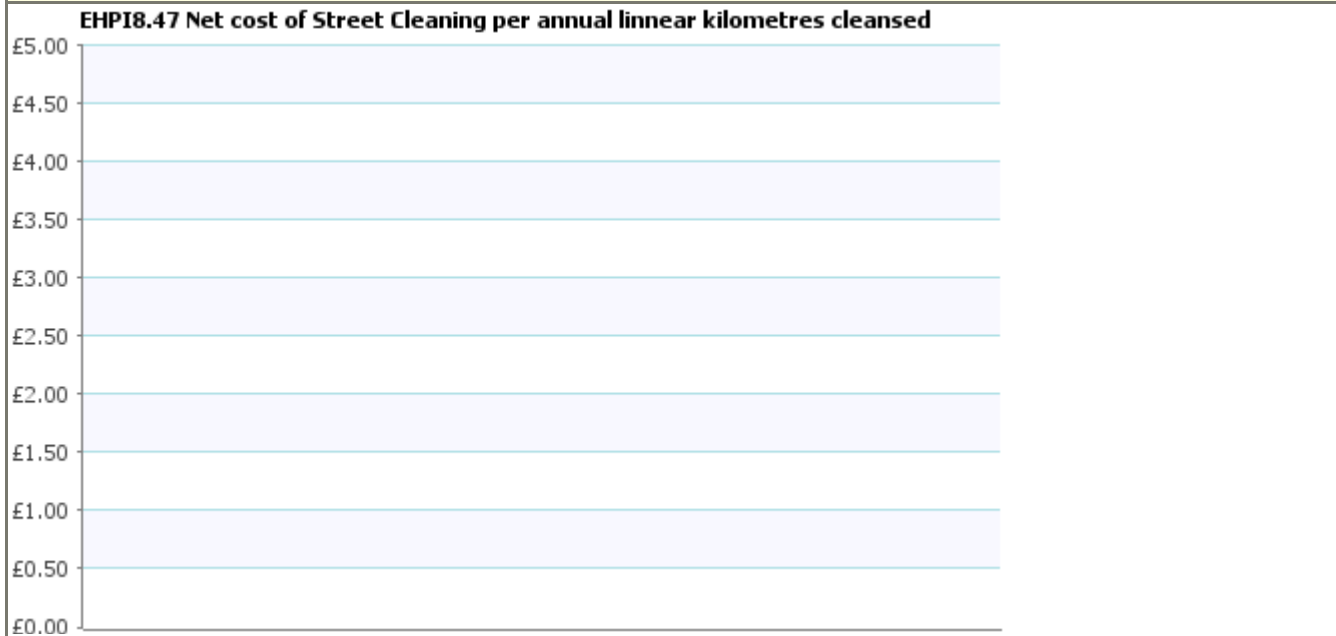
2010/11 result
£12.59

Traffic Light Data Only
Description Pride in East Herts

Environment Services



PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHP18.47	Net cost of Street Cleaning per annual linnear kilometres cleansed		£0.06				

Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**

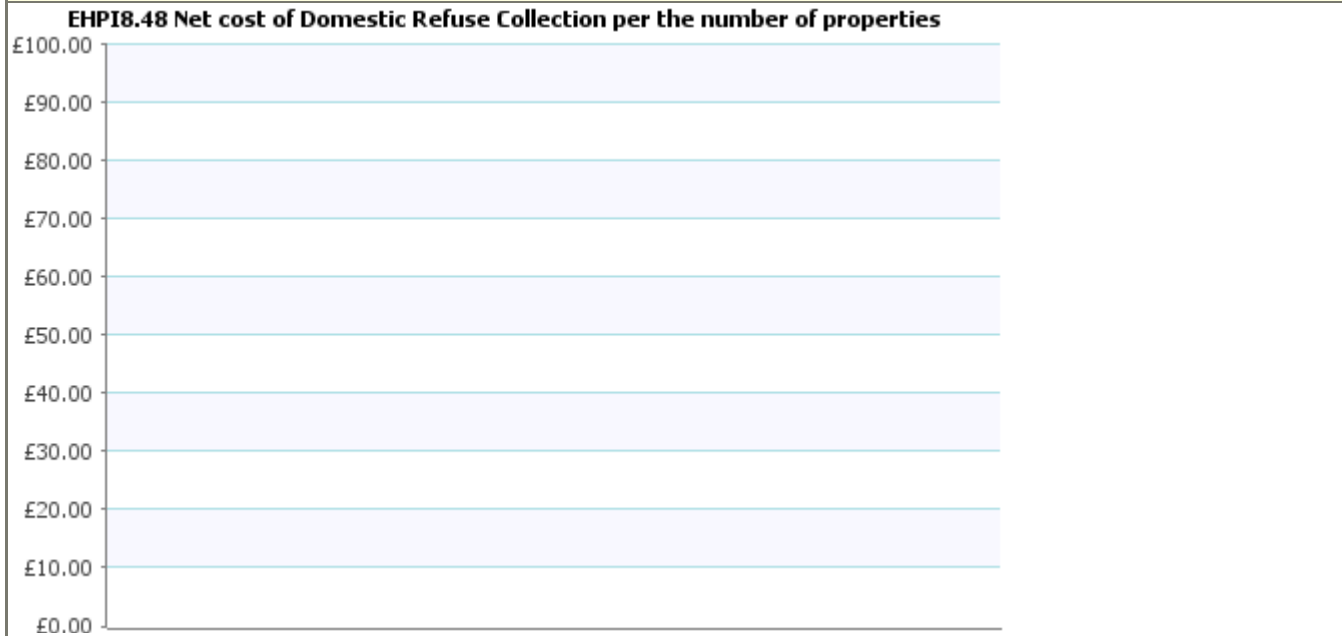


2010/11 result
£0.06

Environment Services



PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHP18.48	Net cost of Domestic Refuse Collection per the number of properties		£51.29				

Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**



2010/11 result
£51.29

Environment Services

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
EHPI8.49	Net cost of Recycling per the number of collections per annum		£0.25				

Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**

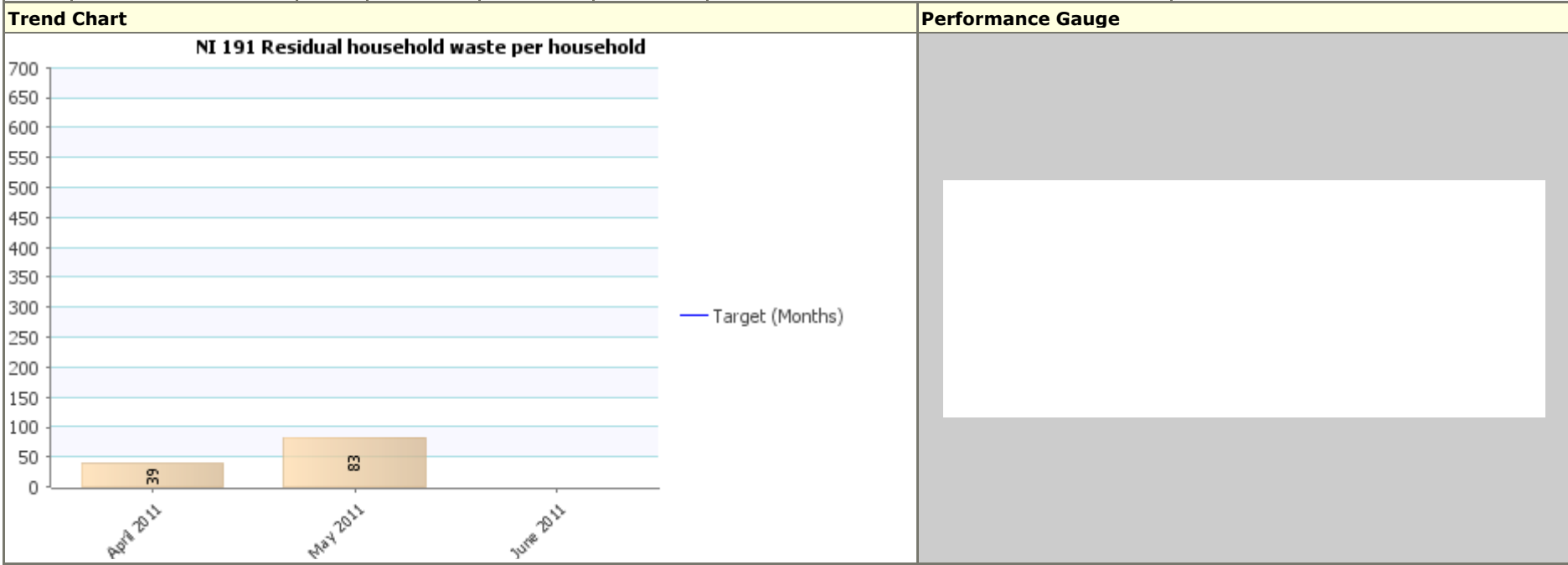


2010/11 result
£0.25

Traffic Light Unknown
Description Pride in East Herts

Environment Services

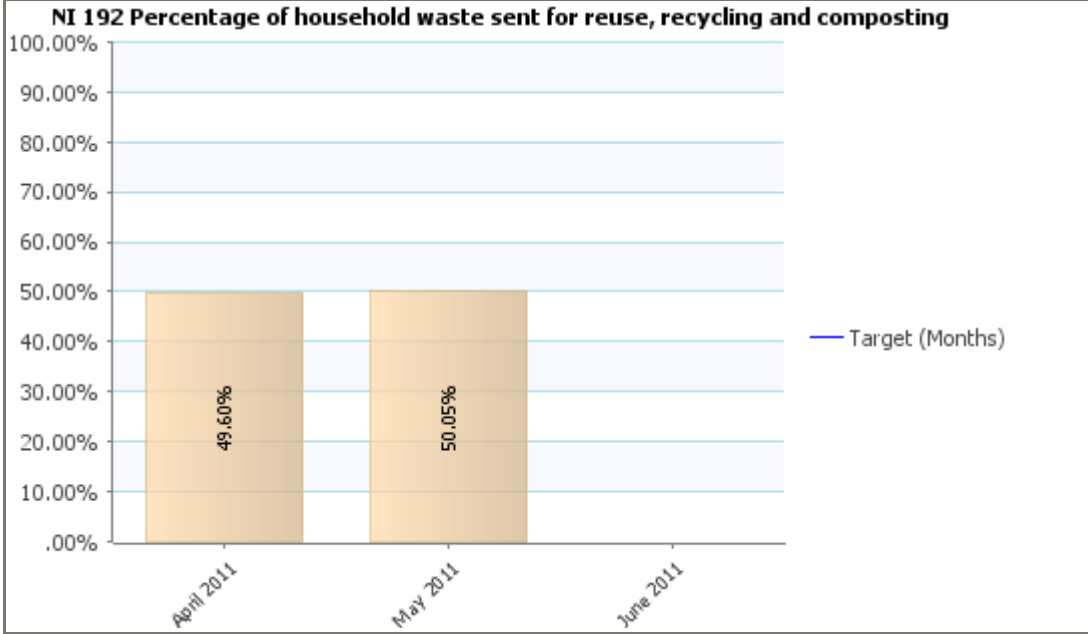
PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
NI 191	Residual household waste per household	?	83		↓	Waste collected increased this month compared to April and some 3% up on May 2010.	



Environment Services












PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting
NI 192	Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	?	50.05%		↑	Performance improved in May to take cumulative performance just above annual target. there were increases in both kerbside dry recycling and composting, compared to April, slightly countermanded by an increase in the waste collected.	

Trend Chart



Performance Gauge



PI Status		Long Term Trends		Short Term Trends	
	Alert		Improving		Improving
	Warning		No Change		No Change
	OK		Getting Worse		Getting Worse
	Unknown				
	Data Only				

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2011

CHAIRMAN OF ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

WARD(S) AFFECTED: None

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report is intended to support the Environment Scrutiny Committee in reviewing and planning its work programme for 2011/12.

RECOMMENDATION FOR ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

(A)	That the work programme shown in this report be reviewed and agreed,
(B)	That the Scrutiny Officer be asked to make any changes, additions or arrangements as might be discussed in the meeting

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Items previously required, identified or suggested for the work programme are set out in **Essential Reference Paper B**.
- 1.2 After the full 2012/13 Integrated Service Plan and Budget (ISP) timetable was settled, the 'budget setting' elements of the scrutiny work programmes were updated and agreed by members at the last meeting.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 At the last meeting of this Committee, Members agreed to set up a task and finish group to support the development of a Parking and Transport strategy for East Herts. That group has been convened and has met twice (18 August and 24 August) under the chairmanship of Councillor Graham McAndrew. An interim report will come to this committee in November 2011 and a final report in March 2012.

- 2.2 The other Members on the group are Councillors Ballam, Buckmaster, Bull, Cheswright, Gray and Phillips.
- 2.3 No new topics for scrutiny have been received from the public following the article explaining scrutiny and asking for suggestions for review from residents (which appeared in the spring 'council tax' edition of LINK magazine).
- 3.0 Implications/Consultations
- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'** which follows.

Background Papers

Four principles of good public scrutiny published by CfPS (Centre for Public Scrutiny) summarized in Essential Reference Paper B or [click here for link to CfPS external site](#)

East Herts Council's own current guidelines for selecting issues for review.

A summary of this information is printed at the back of **Essential Reference Paper B**.

Contact Member: Councillor Diane Hollebon, Chairman: Environment Scrutiny Committee

Contact Officer: Ceri Pettit, Head of Strategic Direction (shared) and Performance Manager, Extn: 2240.

Report Author: Marian Langley, Scrutiny Officer, Extn: 1612.

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives</p>	<p>Effective use of the scrutiny process contributes to the Council's ability to meet two core objectives:</p> <p>Fit for purpose, services fit for you <i>Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well managed and publicly accountable organisation.</i></p> <p>Leading the way, working together <i>Deliver responsible community leadership that engages with our partners and the public.</i></p> <p>In monitoring the performance of the council's services and action plans, the Committee is monitoring the Council's achievement of all of its corporate objectives.</p> <p>Any additional issues identified for scrutiny will relate to at least one of the Council's corporate objectives.</p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p>Potential topics for scrutiny are always invited from members of the public, the Executive and all Members.</p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p>According to the Council's constitution, the scrutiny committees are responsible for the setting of their own work programme in consultation with the Executive and in doing so they shall take into account wishes of members on that committee who are not members of the largest political group on the Council.</p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p>Any additional meetings and every task and finish group has resource needs linked to officer support activity and time for officers from the services to make the required input.</p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p>Matters which may benefit from scrutiny may be overlooked. The selection of inappropriate topics for review would risk inefficient use of resources. Where this involved partners, it could risk damaging the reputation of the council and relations with partners.</p>

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Environment Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2011/12 And Into 2012/13

Transport and Parking T&F commissioned and going ahead over summer/autumn 2011 and spring 2012.

Env Crimes T&F deferred as central gov has announced further changes to anti-social behaviour legislation which will impact on graffiti, dog fouling, fly tipping etc. Need to wait until outcome clearer.

meeting	date	topic	Contact officer/lead	Next Exec
NEXT	CIVIC YEAR			
2011/12 Meeting 3/4	15 Nov 2011 Report deadline 2 Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim report from Transport and Parking T&F Service Plans monitoring Apr 2011 – Sept 2011 (Environment only) Healthcheck through to Aug 2011 Work Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andrew + T&F chairman Ceri Pettit/Dave Cooper Lorna Georgiou/Karl Chui Marian Langley 	6 Dec 2011 10 Jan 2012 7 Feb 2012 6 Mar 2012
Member Consultation	On-line during Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2012/13 Proposed Service Options 		
JOINT SCRUTINY	17 Jan 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2012/13 Budget items Residents' survey results 		
JOINT SCRUTINY	14 Feb 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2012/13 Service Plans 2011/12 Estimates and Future targets 		
2011/12 Meeting 4/4	13 Mar 2012 Report deadline 29 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (final) Report from Transport and Parking T&F Climate Change – report on progress against action plan (2 year on) Healthcheck through to Dec 2011 Work Programme 2012/13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andrew + T&F chairman Cliff Cardoza and David Thorogood Lorna Georgiou/Karl Chui Marian Langley 	22 May 2012
meeting	date	topic	Contact officer/lead	Next Exec
NEXT	CIVIC YEAR			

**Scrutiny work programme
Essential Reference Paper B**

<p>2012/13 Meeting 1/4</p>	<p>26 June 2012 Report deadline 13 June</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Reporting – Contract Performance 2011/12 - to include any further progress on Environmental Quality – action plan • Service Plan monitoring – Oct 2012 to March 2012 • Healthcheck through to March 2012 (which includes relevant 2011/12 Out turns and 2012/13 Targets) • Work Programme 2012/13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cliff Cardoza • Ceri Pettit/Dave Cooper • Lorna Georgiou/Karl Chui • Marian Langley 	<p>10 July 2012 7 Aug 2012 4 Sept 2012</p>
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