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Jeff Hughes
*Head of Democratic and Legal
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MEETING : ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
VENUE : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE : TUESDAY 26TH FEBRUARY, 2013
TIME : 7.00 PM

PLEASE NOTE TIME AND VENUE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor Daniel Abbott (Chairman)
Councillors W Ashley, S Basra, R Beeching, E Buckmaster, P Gray,
N Poulton, C Rowley, B Wrangles and J Wyllie (Vice-Chairman)

Conservative Group Substitutes: Councillors A Dearman and M Pope
Liberal Democrat Group Substitutes:
Independent Group Substitute: Councillor M Newman

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

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DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

1. A Member, present at a meeting of the Authority, or any committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee of the Authority, with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in any matter to be considered or being considered at a meeting:
 - must not participate in any discussion of the matter at the meeting;
 - must not participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting;
 - must disclose the interest to the meeting, whether registered or not, subject to the provisions of section 32 of the Localism Act 2011;
 - if the interest is not registered and is not the subject of a pending notification, must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days;
 - must leave the room while any discussion or voting takes place.

2. A DPI is an interest of a Member or their partner (which means spouse or civil partner, a person with whom they are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom they are living as if they were civil partners) within the descriptions as defined in the Localism Act 2011.

3. The Authority may grant a Member dispensation, but only in limited circumstances, to enable him/her to participate and vote on a matter in which they have a DPI.

4. It is a criminal offence to:

- fail to disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest at a meeting if it is not on the register;
- fail to notify the Monitoring Officer, within 28 days, of a DPI that is not on the register that a Member disclosed to a meeting;
- participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which a Member has a DPI;
- knowingly or recklessly provide information that is false or misleading in notifying the Monitoring Officer of a DPI or in disclosing such interest to a meeting.

(Note: The criminal penalties available to a court are to impose a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale and disqualification from being a councillor for up to 5 years.)

AGENDA

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Minutes (Pages 5 - 14)

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 November 2012

3. Chairman's Announcements

4. Declarations of Interest

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

5. Update on the 2012 Anti Litter Campaign - Presentation

6. Review of Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (Pages 15 - 54)

7. Environment Health Check September - December 2012 (Pages 55 - 70)

8. Environment Committee - Work Programme (Pages 71 - 80)

9. 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 COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
13 NOVEMBER 2012, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Abbott (Chairman).
Councillors W Ashley, S Basra, R Beeching,
E Buckmaster, M Pope, B Wrangles and
J Wyllie.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors G McAndrew and P Ruffles.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Cliff Cardoza	- Head of Environmental Services
Marian Langley	- Scrutiny Officer
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Pulham	- Parking Manager
George A Robertson	- Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services
Neil Sloper	- Head of Customer Services and Parking
Ian Sharratt	- Environmental Manager
Trevor Watkins	- Waste Services Manager

408 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors P Gray, N Poulton and C Rowley. It was noted that Councillor M Pope was in attendance as

substitute for Councillor C Rowley.

409 MINUTES – 11 SEPTEMBER 2012

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

410 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred Members to replacement papers in respect of Minute 416 – Environment Scrutiny Health Check for July to August 2012, as the original papers had contained a minor error.

411 MOBILE (ANPR BASED) PARKING ENFORCEMENT

The Executive Member for Economic Development submitted a report in respect of establishing a policy framework and priorities for the operation of a mobile Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) based parking enforcement service in East Herts.

Members were advised that, since the adoption of Civil Parking Enforcement, the guidelines for enforcement had been revised. East Herts Council also had a Parking and Transport Strategy and most residents valued the traffic management and safety benefits of Civil Parking Enforcement.

The Parking Manager stated that use of a mobile ANPR vehicle had already been approved by the Council and would be used in line with Secretary of State guidelines, as well as taking account of best practice and relevant statutes.

Members were advised that this vehicle would not be a substitute for Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs), which often acted as a deterrent to illegal parking. Members were further advised that the main function of the ANPR vehicle would be to target difficult to reach areas such as school zig zag markings and dangerous junctions.

In response to a query from Councillor B Wrangles, the Parking Manager advised that the Authority was licensed to retain DVLA data for the purposes of mobile ANPR enforcement. Officers were able to trace a vehicle's registered keeper and send them a parking contravention notice in the post. The DVLA data would only be held for as long as was necessary for the purposes of Civil Parking Enforcement.

Councillor B Wrangles commented on whether ANPR would be useful in tackling on-street or pavement parking where this caused an obstruction. The Parking Manager stated that it was not an offence to park on the footway unless there were single or double yellow lines. The Police could however enforce under criminal law if a vehicle was obstructing the footway.

Councillor J Wyllie commented on whether the ANPR vehicle could differentiate between a parked vehicle and one which was stationary in a queue of traffic. The Parking Manager stressed that there was no reason to believe this would become a problem in East Herts.

Councillor R Beeching queried whether the ANPR vehicle and associated technology and running costs would prove to be cost effective. The Parking Manager stressed that cost effectiveness could be measured as much in safety as in financial figures. Members were advised that the vehicle would be leased and would address issues residents found particularly offensive and dangerous, such as parking on school zig zag markings.

In response to a concern from Councillor R Beeching, the Parking Manager advised that the vehicle's ANPR technology would not be used to assist the activities of the police.

Councillor B Wrangles commented on whether the ANPR data could be used to target taxi drivers blocking the footway. The Parking Manager emphasised that enforcement could only happen if a contravention had

occurred.

In response to a query from Councillor M Pope, the Parking Manager stated that making footway parking a contravention would involve enacting a Traffic Regulation Order following a systematic District wide audit. Officers could then consider a District wide ban with exemptions or localised bans based on a systematic priority list of sites.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received: and

(B) the policy framework and priorities for the operation of a mobile ANPR based enforcement service in East Herts be recommended to the Executive for adoption.

412 VEHICLE REMOVALS – TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ACT 2004

The Executive Member for Economic Development submitted a report confirming the policy framework and priorities for the operation of a vehicle removal service in East Herts and also to confirm the mechanism by which the associated charges would be set.

Members were advised that the purpose of this report was to set out the policy framework for the clamping and removal of vehicles parked in apparent contravention of the rules in East Herts. The Parking Manager reiterated that such powers would not be used lightly as removing a vehicle was a draconian measure to take.

In response to a query from Councillor R Beeching, the Parking Manager stated that vehicles would very likely be claimed and in the unlikely event that a vehicle was unclaimed an auction sale would be the subsequent course of action. Hertfordshire Police would be notified in a timely manner of any instance of vehicle removal in case the vehicle was subsequently reported stolen.

In respect of further queries from Councillor R Beeching, Members were advised that all the charges were such that the authority would not be expected to make a surplus whilst operating a vehicle removal service.

In terms of removing automatic vehicles, the Parking Manager stressed that all aspects of safe vehicle removal was entrusted to NSL as the successful tenderer.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received: and

(B) the policy framework and priorities for the operation of the East Herts vehicle removal service be recommended to the Executive for adoption.

413 INCREASING DRY RECYCLING CAPTURE

The Head of Environmental Services submitted a report updating Members in respect of the progress made in improving recycling performance.

The Head of Environmental Services stated that, at the Environmental Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 26 June 2012, Members had been informed that the five lowest performing recycling areas had been identified and that bin hangers had been sent out advising residents that they were in one of these areas. Residents had been reminded of the range of materials they could recycle and how to contact the Authority if they required new or additional containers.

Members were advised that, to date, there had been a significant increase in recycling levels in all but one of the targeted areas.

The Waste Services Manager stated that dry recycling capture was being continually monitored. Officers would be continuing to spread the message in respect of increasing dry recycling capture across the District in

2013.

In response to comments from Councillor R Beeching, the Waste Services Manager confirmed that paper recycling was down 8.7% as more people were reading newspapers online, glass recycling levels were holding steady and plastics and cans recycling was steadily increasing.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received; and

(B) the Executive be advised that Environment Scrutiny Committee supported the roll-out to the next group of rounds.

414 GROUND'S MAINTENANCE CONTRACT REVIEW
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TASK AND FINISH
GROUP

The Chairman of the Grounds Maintenance Contract Review Task and Finish Group submitted a report advising the Environment Scrutiny Committee of the results of the review of the contract by the Task and Finish Group. The Committee Chairman thanked Officers for their support of the work of the Task and Finish Group.

Members were advised that the Task and Finish Group had assessed whether the existing contract represented good value for money. Members were referred to paragraph 2.11 of the report now submitted for the contractor's final offer in the event of an extension. Councillor G McAndrew referred to the positive comments that had been received from Riversmead and South Anglia Housing Associations.

Members were referred to paragraph 2.17 for the improvements brought about by the contractor as part of the effective working relationship with East Herts Council. The Committee Chairman also referred Members to page 50 of the report now submitted for the options open to the

Committee when making recommendations to the Executive.

In response to a comment from Councillor E Buckmaster regarding the savings from any extension to the contract, the Head of Environmental Services confirmed that there would be a reduction in the annual contract charge.

Councillor R Beeching proposed and Councillor B Wrangles seconded, a motion that the Executive be advised that the preference of the Environment Scrutiny Committee would be for a 5 year extension to the Grounds Maintenance Contract.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED. The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received;

(B) the approach and findings of the Grounds Maintenance Contract Task and Finish Group be endorsed;

(C) the Executive be advised that the current Grounds Maintenance Contract represented good value for money and an extension to this contract was the option most likely to deliver best value to the Council; and

(D) the Executive be advised that the preference of the Environment Scrutiny Committee would be for a 5 year extension to the Grounds Maintenance Contract.

415 2012 – 13 SERVICE PLANS: SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AND EXCEPTIONS REPORT

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report in respect of a mid-year summary of the Council's achievements against its priorities for 2012/13 and details of service plan actions

that required a revised completion date or had been suspended. The report also monitored the outstanding four service plan actions from 2011/12, which were detailed in Essential Reference Paper “D” of the report submitted.

Members were referred to paragraph 2.1 of the report for the 30 actions covered by the 2012/13 service plans, of which 13% (4) had been achieved, 60% (18) were on target, 13% (4) had revised completion dates, 3% (1) had been suspended and 10% (3) had been deleted as they were no longer appropriate.

Members were referred to Essential Reference Paper “B” for an overview of Service Plan Actions by Corporate Priority. This also detailed the actions taken by the Authority in relation to the outcomes that had been achieved.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the progress against the Council’s priorities and the revised completion dates, suspensions and deletions against the 2012/13 Service Plan Actions be received.

416 ENVIRONMENT HEALTH CHECK JULY TO AUGUST 2012

The Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services submitted a report on the performance of key indicators relating to Environment Scrutiny Committee from July to August 2012, the detail of which was set out in the report now submitted.

In response to a concern from Councillor J Wyllie in respect of EHPI 2.1e – Planning Enforcement: Service of Formal Notices, the Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services undertook to provide a written response after the meeting.

The Committee received the report.

RESOLVED – that the reported performance for the period July to August 2012 be received.

417 WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

The Chairman submitted a report setting out the Committee’s future work programme for 2012/13, the detail of which had been set out in Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ to the report now submitted.

The Chairman referred to a vacancy on the Agenda for the 26 February 2013 meeting of the Committee. He invited Members to e-mail him or the Scrutiny Officer with ideas for this vacancy.

The Committee approved the report.

RESOLVED – that the work programme be approved.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

Chairman
Date

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26 FEBRUARY 2013

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

REVIEW OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- This report introduces the new Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2013 – 2018. This replaces the previous strategy following a comprehensive review and update which explores its effectiveness and revises its direction of travel for the next five years.

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:</u>	
That:	
(A)	The Committee scrutinise and comment upon the Draft Strategy prior to publication for external consultation.
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EXECUTIVE: That:</u>	
(B)	The Draft Strategy be approved for public consultation.

1.0 Background

1.1 The original Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2007-2012 formed the policy framework under which Parks Management Plans for individual sites have been developed and consulted upon.

Following an extensive consultation process it defined the key objectives relating to the management and development of the Council's open spaces.

1.2 The original strategy was first presented to the (former) Policy Development Scrutiny Committee for comment and consideration

on 20 March 2007. Subsequently the Strategy was open to public consultation during July 2007 prior to its adoption.

- 1.3 Results and achievements against the previous strategy were reported to the Environment Scrutiny on 13 September 2011 and it was agreed that it should be reviewed and an updated draft that was appropriate for the next 5 years brought forward.
- 1.4 Officers have consulted internally with those departments which affect the delivery of the revised strategy and who have shared interests in the outcomes.
- 1.5 The Draft Strategy will be submitted to the Executive for approval for public consultation on 5 March 2013. It will be published on the Council's web site and circulated by email to external stakeholders including "Friends of" groups for consideration and comment. This part of the consultation process will be open for a period of 4 to 6 weeks. Following consultation the Strategy will be considered by the Executive and Council for final approval in summer 2013.
- 1.6 Residents will be asked to focus their feedback on three main areas:
 - Does the strategy cover the key areas relating to open spaces that they feel are important?
 - Is the strategy sufficiently inclusive?
 - Are the objectives appropriate to meet the identified needs?

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2013-18 has been reviewed and developed to set out the policy framework for the parks and open spaces owned and managed by East Herts Council for the next five years. Green spaces represent one of the things that are best about East Herts and are consistently seen as important by our customers. The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that parks and open spaces, as a valuable natural resource, are managed and developed in a responsible and effective way.
- 2.2 The Strategy sets out aims and objectives within a framework that considers:
 - The wider context
 - The vision for parks and open spaces provision
 - An overview of existing provision in East Herts

- What is our strategy aiming to achieve?
- Our commitment

2.3 The document recognises that parks and open spaces serve different needs and groups and aims to deliver quality and accessible services described in the context of:

- Parks for people
- Parks for recreation and enjoyment
- Parks for wildlife, conservation and heritage

2.4 The resultant draft strategy considers the needs of our customers and how the asset of open space can deliver an important contribution to enhancing health and wellbeing. This aspiration has been realised in a number of ways during the previous 5 year plan. Our experience from delivering a high standard of maintenance along with successive improvements shapes the ongoing strategy. Our parks are under various pressures relating for example to the need for us to:

- protect their natural beauty
- conserve their importance for wildlife and the environment
- provide outlets for leisure and play
- control anti social behaviour and
- rise to the challenge of the current economic climate

The strategy considers these and other pressures and provides a balanced way forward for the next five years.

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'**.

Background Papers

Report to Policy Development Scrutiny Committee - Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and Green Flag Award accreditation - 20 March 2007

<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=3363> Item 8

Report to Executive - Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2007 and status report on current projects - 4 September 2007

<http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/CeListDocuments.aspx?Committeed=119&MeetingId=518&DF=04%2f09%2f2007&Ver=2> Item 8

Report to Environment Scrutiny Committee - Parks and Open Spaces
Development Programme – Progress Report – 13 September 2011
[http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=154&MId=1404
&Ver=4](http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=154&MId=1404&Ver=4) Item 282

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS

<p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives</p>	<p><i>People</i> <i>This priority focuses on enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.</i></p> <p><i>Place</i> <i>This priority focuses on the standard of the built environment and our neighbourhoods and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.</i></p>
<p>Consultation:</p>	<p><i>Internal consultation has been carried out with Environmental Health, Community Safety, Leisure Services, Engineers, Planning Policy, Community Engagement, and Environmental Coordination. External consultation will take place pending acceptance by Scrutiny and prior to approval by Executive.</i></p>
<p>Legal:</p>	<p><i>There are no statutory requirements arising from the proposals.</i></p>
<p>Financial:</p>	<p><i>There are none for this report. The objectives set out in the strategy can be achieved within existing revenue and capital budgets but can be enhanced through successful application of external grants. Continued capital funding has proven to assist bids through match funding. It is recognised however that the aspirations to develop open spaces has to be scaled back in relation to the considerable successes of the previous five years. Whilst some development will still be possible, it is important that limited resources are prioritised to maintain and protect the high quality of provision achieved.</i></p>
<p>Human Resource:</p>	<p><i>The careful and flexible deployment of staff across the department whilst working with partners and the community continues to provide sufficient resources to deliver the aspired outcomes of the strategy.</i></p>
<p>Risk Management:</p>	<p><i>The risks associated with approving (or not) the proposals relate principally to the Council's ability to contribute to its corporate priorities and to deliver outcomes affecting a wide range of needs.</i></p>

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Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

2013 - 2018

DRAFT VERSION

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Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2013 - 2018

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy has been developed to set out the policy framework for the parks and open spaces owned and managed by East Herts Council for the next five years. This follows a review of the previous 5 year strategy which has assessed the current validity of the objectives and how effective we have been in delivering them.

East Hertfordshire is rich in green spaces and attractive, rolling countryside. The small towns and villages stand in an area of natural beauty with winding country lanes, nestling in shallow valleys of many rivers and streams that criss-cross the district. These natural green spaces, alongside parks and play areas, enrich peoples' lives and provide enjoyable and purposeful facilities for residents and visitors to the area.

Parks and green spaces represent one of the things that are best about East Herts. The purpose of this strategy is to ensure that parks and open spaces, as a valuable natural resource, are managed and developed in a responsible and effective way and that they provide good health and leisure outlets for our customers.

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy document will cover the following:

- The wider context
- The vision for parks and open spaces provision
- An overview of existing provision in East Herts
- The role of Parks and Green Spaces
- The role of the Council

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy forms the policy framework under which Parks Management Plans for individual sites are developed and consulted upon.

This strategy focuses primarily on how the Council will manage the public open spaces it owns. The Council's policy on open space provision on privately owned land is contained within the East Herts Local Plan 2nd Review (April 2007) LRC3 "Recreational Requirements in New Residential Developments.

The Wider Context

This strategy fits within a series of other policy documents, the intention is to expand on key issues and actions of relevance to parks and open spaces but not duplicate this other work.

The East Herts Corporate Strategic Plan takes into account the Council's vision and corporate priorities to set out the overall vision and direction for the

council over the next four years. It highlights the high level priorities for the council and identifies the key outcomes that will be achieved. The Corporate Strategic Plan forms the basis for the council's performance management activities and drives the distribution of resources.

The Council has recently adopted a new framework of overarching priorities to ensure that it continues to provide high quality services and remains committed to the community. As part of this, the corporate priorities have been reduced from six to three. These are:

People

This priority focuses on enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.

- Reduce health inequalities, for example, by addressing obesity, smoking and physical inactivity
- Reduce fuel poverty
- Increase community engagement
- Deliver strong and relevant services
- Improve outcomes for vulnerable families and individuals

Place

This priority focuses on the standard of the built environment and our neighbourhoods and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.

- Reduce residual waste and increase our recycling rate
- Reduce the carbon dioxide emissions from our own operations by 25% by 2020 and work with partners to reduce the emissions of households and businesses
- Maintain our clean streets and reduce litter
- Maintain our parks, play areas and open spaces
- Reduce anti social behaviour and the fear of crime
- Ensure future development meets the need of the district and its residents

Prosperity

This priority focuses on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic and social opportunities.

- Deliver value for money
- Enhance the economic well being of East Herts
- Deliver sustainable rural business growth
- Protect the environment

East Herts Council describes the strategic objectives and direction of its leisure, sport, art and cultural aims in Everyone Matters – A Sustainable Community Strategy for East Herts 2009 – 2024 which replaces the previous Cultural Strategy and includes reference to young people in place of the Children and Young People’s Strategy 2007 – 2012. Everyone Matters describes, in more detail, the objectives for parks and open spaces within this framework. It also supports the objectives of the current East Herts Public Health Strategy and the new Public Health Strategy which is being developed and likely to come in to effect in 2014.

The Ageing Well agenda, recently adopted by the Council, has been developed within the context of the Council’s corporate priority to enhance the quality of life, health and well being of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable. The Ageing Well agenda sits within the context of the Council’s Sustainable Community Strategy and the Health and Well Being themes of the Public Health Strategy. The agenda does not currently prescribe any immediate actions that relate directly to the provision of parks and open spaces but the aspirations in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy to ensure our parks remain accessible and provide leisure and health opportunities for all residents fit well with the Ageing Well ethos.

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy reflects on the Local Planning Framework and the new District Plan documents currently being produced as part of the changes to the planning system.
(See Appendix 1 for information on relevant national policies and Appendix 2 for more information on relevant East Herts policies).

The vision for parks and open spaces provision

Together with our partners we want to protect and preserve our parks and green space while at the same time develop them in a sustainable way that meets the needs of the 21st century – balancing out environmental, health, social and economic considerations. The process we have adopted to deliver this focuses on three questions; what are our priorities, what are our subsequent objectives and what actions do we need to take to deliver these?

An overview of existing provision in East Herts

The Metropolitan Green Belt, which contains 4 of the 5 towns, covers around one-third of the District; much of the District is also covered by Policy GBC14 “Landscape Character” of the Local Plan Second Review (April 2007),

East Hertfordshire is a beautiful, rural district with large amounts of green wild and cultivated space. At the commencement of the previous strategy an audit and assessment of public open space provision by all providers identified 566 open spaces and outdoor sports facilities that are either owned by the Council, parish or town council, private landowner, housing association or

community group. Of these, 312 are considered parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural green space, amenity green space and provision for children and young people. Details of the level of provision can be found in the PPG17 Audit and Assessment Report (July 2005). Planning guidance is now in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in March 2012. A key message from this document which relates to the aims of this strategy states that:

Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision is required.

We have committed to and delivered comprehensive audits of our play facilities and ensure that our management plans carefully assess needs on our open spaces.

East Herts Council owns and manages 120 open spaces. These include “village greens”, formal gardens, woodland, naturalised areas and 45 main parks. There are currently 56 equipped play sites owned and maintained by the Council within the District.

The Council’s five ‘main’ parks in terms of size and usage are:

- Southern Country Park – Bishop Stortford
- Hartham Common and the Meads – Hertford and Ware
- Castle Gardens – Hertford
- The Castle Grounds – Bishop’s Stortford
- Grange Paddocks and Red White and Blue – Bishop’s Stortford

In addition, the Council owns:

- Layston Court Gardens – Buntingford, which is maintained on behalf of East Herts Council by Buntingford Town Council.
- Pishiobury Park – Sawbridgeworth, which is maintained as a ‘Country Park’ and historic landscape.

The Council provides a number of sites for formal sport and informal recreation. Examples of the larger ones include:

- Thorley Open Space – Bishop’s Stortford

- Northern Parkland (Thorley Common) – Bishop’s Stortford
- Sacombe Road Recreation Ground - Hertford
- Presdales Recreation Ground – Ware
- King George Recreation Ground – Ware

The physical development of parks and open spaces has been largely determined by the level of external funding. The Council’s capital budget set aside each year for parks and open spaces including play areas has provided valuable match funding for a wide range of improvements. It is worth noting that the funding achieved from external sources and under Section 106 agreements from 2007 to 2011 brought in an additional sum of nearly 1 million pounds to the Council.

Since the original audit and creation of the Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme in 2007 a total of sixteen projects attracted additional external funding totalling £627,000. This enabled the development of projects, such as the creation of new play areas which would not have been possible with the Council’s resources alone. Appendix 3 contains a table showing the projects and income achieved.

However, these sources of income are becoming increasingly less available in this economic climate. The Council is still able to progress with some developmental work but on a much diminished scale. We must continue to carefully prioritise and plan to ensure we achieve best value and meet the most important needs of our customers with the limited resources available.

What is our Strategy aiming to achieve?

We have identified why our parks and open spaces are important to our customers and how we believe they should be looked after and improved. We have thought about how they improve people's lives and what other benefits they provide. We have then decided which areas are most important and have grouped these together to help us prioritise our actions. Within some priority areas we have set ourselves achievable objectives taking into consideration the things we have learnt from the last 5 years and the advice we have received from our partners and stakeholders. We aim to continue looking after our parks and open spaces responsibly and to make wise and lasting improvements where we are able to.

The role of parks and open spaces

Well managed and appropriately placed parks and open spaces serve as an excellent delivery mechanism for two of the three corporate objectives; People and Place. Most obviously parks and open spaces contribute to improving people's quality of life, health and well-being as individuals, families and communities. But parks and open spaces can also influence perceptions of community safety, deprivation and poverty levels and the local economy.

Parks and Open Spaces include: town squares, village greens, sports fields, allotments, playgrounds, graveyards, formal gardens, country parks, wild life reserves, and natural wastelands. As there are many differing ways of describing these features, East Herts Council has chosen to refer to the typologies listed in PPG 17 Audit and Assessment Report (July 2005). These are a nationally recognised standard, fit with our objectives and will allow for benchmarking in future projects. Whilst the document has been replaced by the NPPF, these typologies remain relevant. See Appendix 4 for these typologies in detail.

All these places give residents a place to relax and enjoy what is best in East Hertfordshire. It is acknowledged that parks and open spaces are valuable places for all people to play, exercise, meet one another, and hold public events. As a focal point of a community; parks and open spaces can contribute to building community spirit and community cohesion.

This role, however, must be carefully balanced with the role of parks and open spaces as a home to wildlife. This is stated as objective 5 in Chapter 10 (Leisure, Recreation and Community Facilities) of the Local Plan Second Review (April 2007) - *"to take into account the value of open space, not only as an amenity, but as a contribution to the conservation of the natural and built environment of the District."*

Green Infrastructure is described in Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Spatial Planning, as *"a network of multifunctional green space...both new and existing...both rural and urban...which supports the natural and ecological processes...and is integral to the health and quality of life of sustainable communities..."* This definition is reinforced in Natural England's Green

Infrastructure Guidance and expanded in Green Infrastructure in Hertfordshire: A Framework. We aim to work alongside this emerging planning tool to ensure that our own open spaces support and contribute to this network.

The East Herts Green Infrastructure Plan (GIP) is a high level plan which identifies further technical and project work which will be needed in the future to deliver green infrastructure. Among other things the GIP considers opportunities for enhancement and creation of green infrastructure. The work we are undertaking to develop a management plan for the green finger reaching out through open spaces from the town centre at Bishop's Stortford is a prime example of where the careful development of our open spaces can support this. We will keep close links with the creation of specific projects through the GIP through our work with the Countryside Management Service, the Town Council and the direct involvement of our Landscape Officer as it evolves.

Priority areas

The Council recognises that parks and open spaces serve different needs and groups. The Council aims to deliver quality, accessible services in the areas of:

- Parks for people
- Parks for recreation / enjoyment
- Parks for wildlife / conservation / heritage

It is important that these three priority areas compliment each other and do not compete. The Council is conscious of the tensions that sometimes arise between the role of parks and open spaces as a place for sport and informal recreation and at the same time a place for wildlife and a valuable habitat. All these roles will be taken into account and an appropriate balance attained.

The Council wishes to achieve greater use of parks by those people who find it difficult to take part by providing appropriate information on facilities and improving access. In particular, the vulnerable, people with disabilities and young children. According to the 2011 Census, 20.6% in total of East Herts households have at least one person in the household with a long term health problem or disability, (with or without dependent children). East Herts also has an ageing population as discussed later.

The following pages outline the actions that will be taken in the above priority areas and include a summary of the achievements from the previous 5 year period with some examples of how we are able to build upon these successes for the future.

Parks for People

This is about taking a customer focussed approach to the maintenance and development of our green space. The Council will work with the community, where appropriate, taking notice of people's opinions, ideas and concerns and giving them influence over actions that affect them. The Council will:

1. Develop facilities and infrastructure on site to meet a wide range of user's needs, including those who normally find access difficult.
2. Develop a 'Friends Of' group for a third major park (identifying user groups and other stakeholders).
3. Increase participation through more "fit for purpose" design – the right type in the right place and of the right size. Consulting to identify the type of open space required.
4. Develop safe yet exciting spaces where children are free to be children.
5. Work with partners to provide diversionary facilities and activities to help reduce anti-social behaviour.
6. Design spaces in ways that reduce the fear of crime.
7. Ensure that provision for children and young people is of a high quality and strategically located by expanding upon the improvement already achieved through the Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme.
8. Invest in good, safe spaces for teenagers to meet their friends and for older people to meet and exercise.
9. Continue to maintain the high standards that lead to the successful achievement of two Green Flag Awards.
10. Improve access in terms of information both on site and remotely.
11. Retain current maintenance standards and ensure value for money.

Two "Friends of" groups are now well established at Southern Country Park and Pishiobury Park. Information about each of these groups is available on our web site. The groups have successfully attracted local people to become actively involved in the development of their parks. They provide a voice for local residents to work in partnership with us as we develop our management plans and install new facilities, and in relation to our maintenance regimes. They create a popular opportunity to take part in conservation tasks on site and in regular events that provide the wider public with leisure activities and information. The Southern Country Park group for instance currently has a membership of 38 and contributed a colossal 766 volunteer man hours working in the park during 2012. They worked on an annual butterfly survey, helped us with our 'Get Park Active' event and made 34 single improvements to the park including woodland management, planting whips, building a bird screen, fencing repairs, rebuilding steps, laying woodchip and creating an

additional woodland path. A third “Friends of Group will help the Council to work closely with residents at another key location. This, along with other projects such as the Pines Playing Field improvements mentioned later, builds upon our wider objectives and meets those in the recent Localism agenda to engage with the community, listening to their views and providing them with a valuable way of getting directly involved in the services we provide. Appendix 1 contains a summary of the Localism Act 2011 actions and underlying concepts.

The Ridgeway Local Park in Hertford has achieved considerable accolade in “fit for purpose” design with its popular natural play area created in a “lost” overgrown section of the park. It was the result of a thorough programme of consultation and the bringing together of skills from outside the authority such as Hertfordshire Groundwork with our own expertise in providing play facilities that children really want. The park has been awarded a Green Flag and attracts attention from even further than those children on the estate for which it was originally intended. The continuing development of skills and contacts obtained through delivering this type of project sets us up to successfully continue meeting our objectives of providing the right type of high quality parks for our customers.

Diversionary facilities and activities to help reduce anti-social behaviour (ASB) have been developed at a number of sites such as The Ridgeway and Vantorts in Sawbridgeworth. Feedback from our Community Safety team informs that our activity in this area to date has helped support their work. We have worked closely with them to manage the expectations of our customers and to find effective ways of working in partnership with the police. A prime example where this has been achieved to good affect is King George Recreation Ground in Ware and will be replicated in future projects. Customers sometimes believe that there are only limited solutions to dealing with ASB. For instance to install “No Ball Game” signs on spaces where young people are creating noise or by simply trying to chase children away to a different location. We have found however that such actions are rarely effective. Signs that cannot be enforced will ultimately send the wrong message to young people. We have though been able to divert nuisance behaviour away from resident’s houses by for instance planting shrubs against fences that have been used to kick balls against and by installing properly designed areas nearby that can provide a much more attractive area to play football. The installation of cameras have sometimes been called for but this is governed strictly by legislation that quite rightly insists on a balanced approach to consider people’s privacy. Cameras can only be used where there is sufficient evidence of serious crime such as consistent theft or damage of a substantial value.

Our diversionary tactics working closely with the police at sites such as Vantorts Close and previously at The Ridgeway and King George Recreation Ground allow us to open dialogue with the young people creating a nuisance and to use our limited resources to fund far more sustainable solutions such as play spaces that young people are excited about and that will ultimately draw them away from “problem” areas. It is important that whilst our work in

this area should focus on those residents who are suffering the consequences of poor behaviour, we do not lose sight of the valuable resource that our open spaces provide to young people. They can provide “somewhere to go” and “something to do” in a social climate that in many ways is now less tolerant of young people and their needs. We will continue to work with our Community Safety Team and the police to ensure that residents’ perception of crime is realistic and that we adopt a methodical approach to problem solving in each separate case. We cannot rely on actions that simply move a problem “out of our area of responsibility”. Successfully restricting access to one of our parks for instance will no doubt result in moving an ASB problem to “the area in front of the shops” or the “garage block behind the houses”. The problem still remains and often with worse consequences.

Following on from these types of activities we have found ways to work in partnership with local groups and the police to reduce the fear of crime. The Quaker Burial Ground in Ware for example underwent a major overhaul to improve and design out the previous problems at this site and the work at Vantorts Open Space in Sawbridgeworth has transformed an old traditional play site which had over the years suffered from problems with drug use into a vibrant and popular open space. Local residents had considerable concerns about the site but with the help of the police and the Town Council a project was developed to successfully tackle the specific issues raised.

The Parks and Open Spaces Development Programme devised a framework for the development of management plans for the major parks and open spaces and a programme of specific improvement works. The individual needs of each site have been explored through consultation culminating in the creation of a working management plan to guide improvements and attract external funding where required.

The youth shelter in Thorley Wedge, The Ridgeway natural play space and the wheeled sports facility at Vantorts have provided good, safe spaces for teenagers to meet their friends. These compliment existing very well used areas such as the skate park in Hartham Common and the teenage play area in Southern Country Park. We have also developed a network of specially designed kick about areas and Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs) across the district that provide areas which not only allow young people to kick a ball about without conflict with local residents but also somewhere they can call their own. We currently have 3 MUGAs, 4 sports walls and 7 kick about areas, and have been trialling a new all weather surface at the kick about area in Southern Country Park.

Green Flag Awards:

The Green Flag Award scheme is the benchmark national standard for parks and green spaces in the UK. It was first launched in 1996 to recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country.

The Scheme is licensed to Keep Britain Tidy by Communities and Local Government (CLG) who own the green Flag Award Scheme. Awards are

given on an annual basis and winners must apply each year to renew their Green Flag status. As all green spaces are different, each site is judged on its own merits and suitability to the community it serves.

East Herts has achieved 2 Green Flag Awards:

- Southern Country Park achieved the coveted Award in 2008 and has successfully retained this every year since.
- The Ridgeway Local Park gained our second Green Flag Award in 2009 and again has successfully retained it every year.

Applications are judged against eight key criteria (See Appendix 5 for the Green Flag Criteria).

The Council is proud of its two awards and we will continue to work hard to retain them. The level of resources and capital investment to bring a park up to the required standard is considerable and given the current aims of the Council to ensure limited funds are used to their best advantage, we are not aiming at present to increase the Council's number of Green Flag parks. We are however ensuring that management plans consider the criteria as a fundamental part of the process to develop our parks. This way, we will gradually ensure that all our parks are looked after in a way that aspires to the Green Flag principals. In the future we will then be in a strong position to make the final investments required to achieve new flags.

Grounds Maintenance:

Value for money remains a key aim, a good example being the review of the Grounds Maintenance Contract which has been successful in securing a range of improvements offered by John O'Conner as part of their bid to secure a contract extension. Along with an actual cost saving negotiated as part of an agreement to extend the contract from January 2015, we have already worked closely with the contractor to deliver innovative continuous improvement initiatives such as;

- Joint auditing of health and safety and management procedures.
- A partnership approach to In Bloom and Green Flag success.
- The installation of tracking devices on vehicles.
- The installation of inclinometers on grassing cutting machinery to minimise risks on slopes.
- Sourcing plants from peat free suppliers.
- Training staff to NVQ standards and introducing an apprenticeship scheme.
- Play area inspections recorded on a tailor made database and input from PDAs on site.
- Customer calling card to leave in the event of any problem on site.
- The creation and annual review of a shrub manual that informs how and when each species is pruned. This is also helps the contractor to deal proactively with missing or unhealthy shrubs.

New initiatives will include a more advanced system of providing up to the minute information on works progress, direct access for the Council to the

contractor vehicle tracking system, improvements to the transportation of green waste and two additional apprenticeship positions on the contract.

Public Health:

The Public Health Outcomes Framework is the new set of measurement areas which aims to help reduce health gaps or inequalities and support healthy lifestyle improvement. These indicators will contribute to the local landscape of the Health and Wellbeing Board and its Strategy objectives. Local health evidence such as the measures described below will help parks and open spaces to support promotion of physical activity even more.

- Utilising green space for exercise/health reasons.
- Proportion of physically active and inactive adults.
- Excess weight in adults.
- Excess weight in 4-5 year olds and 10-11 year olds.
- Falls and injuries in the over 65's (less direct but parks and open spaces can be a positive catalyst in terms of prevention of these aspects of older age by enabling exercise and recreation).

Encouraging exercise and general fitness reduces a range of health risks and therefore the number of people requiring treatment in the future. This is particularly important for East Hertfordshire where there is a rapidly ageing population. Our parks are being continually developed to ensure that there are good opportunities for exercise and outdoor activity for all age groups and abilities. Some of the above indicators are supported directly by specific activities such as the Get Park Active events and orienteering, Geocaching, health walks and the Friends Groups at Southern Country Park and Pishiobury Park.

Ageing Well:

East Herts has an ageing population. The 2011 Census identified that 15.3% of East Herts total population is over 65. In response to the changing demographic, the Council has agreed "Ageing Well Ambitions" as part of the ongoing development of the Ageing Well agenda to make the District a good place to grow old in.

The Council is committed to ensuring its policies and services are accessible to an ageing population. One of the ambitions of this Ageing Well agenda under the 'Prosperity and well being' section is to '*encourage appropriate healthy activities*' and this will be taken on board as we continue to develop our parks and open spaces. (The Ageing Well Ambitions are shown in Appendix 2).

We are committed to making all our parks and open spaces accessible to all as places to visit, walk and play in. The aims of this strategy provide a strong mechanism to create spaces for healthy outdoor activities regardless of age or ability.

Parks for Recreation

This is about providing facilities for individuals and groups to enjoy, balancing the various uses and demands upon them. The Council will:

1. Develop parks so that there are a range of fun and enjoyable things to do for the different age groups, focussing particularly on those groups identified within the Council's Corporate Priorities.
2. Work with partners to promote the use of parks and open spaces for community events / festivals and active recreation such as walking clubs.
3. Ensure that spaces are 'multi-purpose' and meet the needs of a wide range of users where possible.
4. Work toward creating a network of accessible high quality spaces connecting paths and footpath networks aspiring to ensure our parks and green spaces are fully accessible by all forms of transport.
5. Ensure that leisure needs are met locally but not overloading the green spaces that provide these opportunities.
6. Target capital investment on those areas that have been identified as deficient in facilities.
7. Ensure that new housing developments incorporate safe, healthy environments which encourage walking, cycling and informal play.
8. Provide leisure and community facilities within open spaces that are properly coordinated with all forms of development and land use policies.
9. Consider the community need for recreational space and ensure that adequate land and water resources are identified for both organised sport and informal recreation.

Promotional activities over the last five years have been developed to include a wide range of media. Information on our web site has been increased and reviewed to ensure that all our major open spaces are covered with relevant, useful and interesting information. Our individual management plans and specific projects are featured. There is also information on play areas, allotments, countryside access, byelaws and grounds maintenance. We are always looking to add to and update this information to make it more accessible and useful. We provide regular updates on services in Link, in the local press where appropriate and on new social media such as Twitter and Facebook. The use of QR codes on posters is being used to develop and promote events and improvement works in our parks and open spaces. Our fun community events on site attract much praise from residents and have become regular and popular features at, for example, Southern Country Park and Pishiobury Park. Each time we plan any significant improvements, we consult with the public using on site events where possible and inviting comment through questionnaires. This enables us to continually learn about

our customers and equally to let them know what opportunities our open spaces offer.

The aforementioned planned approach to open space development has ensured that we firstly assess what we already provide, we find out what is needed and then we design our improvements to ensure that money is spent wisely. This can often be improving what we have by for example adding play activities that are missing. Our initial audit identified what makes a good play area; swinging, rotating, climbing etc and we have been able to add equipment that plugs the gaps. It has also meant that where more than one or two items of equipment have been found to be nearing the end of their useful life, we have been able to completely revamp certain sites. Two popular examples have been Vantorts Close Local Park and Bentley Road Inclusive Play Area. This methodical and informed approach has meant that we have also been able to look at the wider picture across each town to ensure that play experiences are not duplicated. As the programme to create management plans has developed, we have progressed toward linking plans to ensure diversity but also through creating maps which show safe pedestrian routes between parks.

We will continue to facilitate healthy walking activities in partnership with the Countryside Management Service and our own Leisure Services team. We are also looking closely at the services offered by external providers for fitness and health who currently use our open spaces such as personal trainers and boot camps. We will be charging a fee to any profit making company to contribute towards the upkeep of our parks and will be providing information on our web site to better inform our customers of the diverse range of activities offered.

As we continue to develop our open spaces we have found other benefits by exploring their wider access issues. For example at The Pines woodland in Hertford we worked with the County Council and Groundwork to develop a new attractive and safe walking route across the town. This provides a better walking route for residents to visit the Pines playing field and the linear park on Foxholes Estate. This has led to further improvement of the play area for which we hope to attract external funding, working directly with a local community group. We are also looking at how five open spaces which spread around Southern Country Park can be easily accessed on foot. This has led to a jointly funded project with the County Council to improve some of the footpath links ensuring that there is a safe circular route taking in all of the open spaces in the area. Ongoing work with Riversmead Housing Association in Hornsmill, Hertford has led to a project that aims to improve the landscape around the community centre and to engage residents in a programme of improvements.

We have worked closely with Development Control by providing advice relating to planning applications. We have been successful in securing additional funds from Section 106 Agreements to improve existing open space facilities. We encourage developers to install good quality open spaces and play areas as a priority for the new communities they have created. Sacombe

Road Open Space in Hertford for instance has recently benefited from a completely redesigned play area on our open space built and funded by the developers of an adjacent housing scheme. Completely new open spaces and play areas have been built and adopted by the Council in Hertford, Bishop's Stortford and Ware during the last 5 years.

We have actively sought and benefited from considerable investment, not only through section 106 agreements but also through Landfill Tax Grants, Big Lottery and other external funding. Some prime examples of this have been the wetland restoration works at Southern Country Park and Hartham Common, the natural play spaces at The Ridgeway and King George Road and the access improvements at Pishiobury Park.

We have also worked with colleagues in Planning and Leisure Services to assess needs across the district in terms of sporting provision by developing the Play Pitch Strategy July 2110.

Parks for Wildlife, Conservation and Heritage

In managing open spaces, the Council will pay particular attention to biodiversity, natural features, wildlife and flora, buildings and structural features. Structures will be designed to perform their function without undue pressure on the surrounding environment or the identified purpose of the space. The Council will seek to identify and protect the historic features, structures, landscapes and characteristics of specific sites, recognising that there may be a variety of historical contexts. The Council also recognises the need for differing emphasis to be placed on access to the various open spaces throughout the District, to take into account the use and biodiversity of each site whilst considering public access and enjoyment of the natural environment. The Council will:

1. Ensure that identified wildlife habitats, such as those that carry the status of Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or county Wildlife Site (WS), are preserved through management strategies and appropriate maintenance.
2. Develop our management systems and operational practices to ensure biodiversity in our parks and open spaces in a way that compliments and enhances the recreational experience.
3. Consider and apply sustainable management practices in the provision and maintenance of open spaces.
4. Use our statutory planning powers and community leadership role to influence what happens on public open space that the Council does not control.

The Council provides advice to residents in its capacity as the Local Authority administering Tree Preservation Orders. We advise customers who have trees in their gardens that these trees are crucial not only to the landscape but

in many other ways. Amongst other things they reduce carbon dioxide levels, filter and absorb pollution, absorb noise, produce oxygen, reduce the stress of modern lifestyles, provide habitats for wildlife and offer shade and shelter. We advise that most trees have the potential to outlive both ourselves and the homes we live in and that they deserve our care and respect. To that extent we also ensure that we manage our own tree stock with considerable diligence. We operate a comprehensive tree risk inspection programme which enables us to keep our trees safe and healthy and have developed a systematic tree replacement programme. Where possible we involve local people in replanting trees on our open spaces through our Friends Groups and we ensure that tree planting benefits our customers in immediate ways such as creating shade in our play areas. We have developed a woodland management programme that defines a long term approach to maintaining and looking after our woodlands. A systematic maintenance regime is already in place to execute the basic works and individual management plans for all our key woodlands are being developed with the assistance of the Countryside Management Service. Where possible we aim to secure external funding to deliver some of the more ambitious projects that emerge.

We work closely with the Council's Environmental Coordinator to ensure we are contributing to the Councils' objectives with regard to carbon management and reduction both through our planting initiatives and through the way we manage our maintenance contracts. Likewise, we have delivered a number of improvements such as new bridges and water features at Pishiobury Park with our Engineers making best use of some of the funds they have available to look after the Districts water courses. We are also working closely with them to ensure we properly maintain sustainable drainage features where possible and encourage others to do the same. We have features such as the balancing pond at Southern Country Park which has recently benefited from an externally funded wetland restoration project and we have a number of water courses running through our parks. We have created a new wetland habitat at Hartham Common in partnership with the Countryside Management Service, The Environment Agency and Herts and Middelsex Wildlife Trust and will aim to find other ways to benefit from this crucial working relationship in the future to further improve biodiversity in our parks. We will work with both the Engineers and Development Control to explore how housing developers find appropriate solutions relating to sustainable drainage infrastructure. We are looking at ways to reduce the amount of water we use for our annual bedding schemes and have been using plants grown in peat free compost for some years. The Green Flag criteria help us to ensure that sustainability is always considered as we manage and develop our parks.

Through our work with the Countryside Management Service to develop responsible management plans for our open spaces, we ensure that we contribute directly to the delivery of the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

Our commitment

The Council has a duty to manage its open spaces sensitively, protecting these natural assets for the future but recognising that there are competing priorities for land use. We undertake to:

- Maintain open spaces to a good and safe standard.
- Listen to park users.
- Develop parks to meet changing needs.
- Work in partnership in developing and providing services and facilities.
- Regularly review and update our approach and this strategy.

Summary

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy has proved to be a valuable document steering us to secure external funding, achieve Green Flag Awards and high levels of public satisfaction in our open spaces. Our performance has recently been explored by the Environment Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group as they reviewed the Grounds Maintenance contract. They concluded that the number of complaints has remained consistently low despite some difficult seasonal changes in the weather. Overall satisfaction with the Council has been measured in recent years through the biannual Residents Survey which include our customer's views relating to the upkeep of parks and open spaces. The 2011 survey showed that 7 in 10 residents were satisfied with parks and open spaces. This was set against results which showed that more than a fifth of residents were dissatisfied with some services. The survey grouped parks and open spaces together with only three other areas of provision as "More Important / Least Needs Improving" indicating that this area of the Council's services is one of its key strengths.

This strategy review has found that many of the objectives set have been achieved and that what at first seemed a daunting task, by working methodically and in a planned way, has on reflection not only succeeded to deliver improvements but also brought the department closer together as a team, with our partners and with our customers.

It is imperative now that whilst we continue to work toward improving our parks and open spaces, we also ensure we are able to look after the investments made over the last 5 years. Times of austerity can attract cut backs to areas of the Council's provision that some might see as non-essential. Our successes have gone some way to show that our Parks and Open Spaces are greatly respected and well used by our customers. Our work over the next 5 years should ensure there is no deterioration in standards. Signs of neglect can attract anti social behaviour and undermine the considerable achievements to date. We intend to continue working closely with the community to maintain the "value" that our customers attribute to our open spaces, encouraging involvement to keep them vibrant and meeting needs.

Appendix 1: Strategic Context (National and regional policy)

Localism and the Big Society

The current Coalition Government is committed to decentralisation; shifting responsibility and power to local communities. As part of The Localism Act 2011, six actions of decentralisation have been identified:

1. Lift the burden of bureaucracy
2. Empower communities to do things their way
3. Increase local control of public finance
4. Diversify the supply of public services
5. Open up Government to public scrutiny
6. Strengthen accountability to local people

Underlying concepts include:

- i) Where services are enjoyed collectively, they should be delivered by accountable community groups.
- ii) Where the scale is too large or those using a service are too dispersed, they should be delivered by local institutions, subject to democratic checks and balances, enabled by full transparency.

Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

The national government's Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17) states "the government expects all local authorities to carry out assessments and audits of open space and sport and recreational facilities." Local authority planning decisions on open spaces need to be informed by local need assessments and local provision standards on quantity and quality. A greater emphasis is placed on qualitative considerations – allowing authorities to identify potential for increased use through better design, management and or maintenance of open space.

Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England (RSS14)

One of the key issues for health that is relevant for the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is the following:

New housing developments should incorporate safe, healthy environments which encourage walking, cycling and informal play.

Appendix 2: Local Policies

Corporate Strategic Plan 2012/13 – 2015/16

The Corporate Strategic Plan sets out the overall vision and direction for the council over the next four years. It highlights the high level priorities for the council and identifies the key outcomes that will be achieved. The plan forms the basis for the council's performance management activities and will drive the distribution of resources and is supported by the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. These have been taken into account and integrated into the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.

Everyone Matters – A Sustainable Community Strategy for East Herts 2009 to 2024 (replacing the Community Strategy – East Herts Together 2003 - 2015)

The vision for the Community Strategy is to create inclusive, prosperous communities within a sustainable environment, to conserve the rich and diverse natural environment and to improve the quality of life of every resident's life. The priorities that are relevant to this strategy are:

- To protect the high quality environment
- To safeguard neighbourhoods (community cohesion, building a vibrant voluntary and community sector helping community spirit)
- To support vulnerable children and young people
- To provide opportunities for older people
- To promote healthy lifestyles

Local Plan Second Review (April 2007)

Implement Village Development Strategy in order to meet rural community needs, strengthen village life and encourage vital and viable communities.

Chapter 10 (Leisure, Recreation and Community Facilities) lists several objectives that are relevant to this strategy:

1. To maintain and encourage the provision of an effective level of appropriately located leisure and recreational facilities and, wherever possible, make such facilities available to everyone, including older people and those with disabilities.

2. To take full account of the community need for recreation space and ensure that adequate land and water resources are identified for both organised sport and informal recreation.
5. To take account of the value of open space, not only as an amenity, but as a contribution to the conservation of the natural and built environment of the District.
8. To ensure that provision of leisure and community facilities are properly coordinated with all forms of development and land use policies.

A key objective of the Local Plan Second Review (April 2007) is that all residents of East Herts have access to appropriate amounts of open space, sport and recreational facilities to meet present and future needs.

The District Plan for East Herts to 2031 (will be replacing the Local Plan)

The District Plan is the new planning document that will shape the future of East Herts to 2031. It replaces the Local Plan Second Review (April 2007). The main difference is that whilst the Local Plan is a single document, the District Plan is being produced in two parts that together will plan for the future of the district. Secondly, although the District Plan is still concerned with the use of land, it embodies the concept of 'sustainable development' and has a wider role and purpose and is concerned about how our towns and villages function as places. This is known as spatial planning. The Local Plan is much more focused on traditional land-use planning. Finally, the use of the term District Plan is to take account of changes to the planning system in England and to re-emphasise the fact that the District Plan plans for the whole of East Herts district.

Although a single document, the District Plan is being produced in two parts:

District Plan: Part 1 - Strategy sets out the overarching strategy for the district including the broad locations for growth and principles for development. This document was previously known as the LDF Core Strategy. The draft District Plan Part 1 document is anticipated for January 2013 and is due to be adopted by the Council in 2014

District Plan: Part 2 - Allocations & Policies identifies specific sites for development and sets out specific policies for determining planning applications e.g. design and amenity. This is due to be adopted by the Council in 2015

Additional Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) may also be prepared that sit alongside the District Plan and provide further guidance.

Further information on the new District Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents will be available in the planning section of the Council's website. www.eastherts.gov.uk/districtplan.

Community Safety Plan

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 made it a statutory duty for local authorities to work with the Police and other partners to reduce and address crime and disorder in their areas. Amendments to this Act by the Police Reform Act 2002 and the Police and Justice Act 2006 placed a responsibility on Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) to produce a plan detailing how they intend to tackle crime and disorder and community safety challenges within their area.

East Herts Community Safety Partnership is responsible for addressing crime and disorder in East Herts. The new changes in legislation will enable East Herts Community Safety Partnership (CPS) to improve the ways in which community safety is addressed.

The CSP will be able to identify community safety priorities by:

- Producing an annual Strategic Assessment to identify priorities
- Creating and implementing annual action plans to address emerging priorities.
- More regular and frequent community consultation and engagement across the district

Community Safety Action Plan

Every year the Community Safety Partnership will carry out strategic assessments on the Community Safety Plan 2008-2011

A strategic assessment presents and interprets the summary findings of an analysis to provide a clear direction for addressing community safety issues within East Herts.

This means every year the Community Safety Partnership will identify up to date community safety issues. New priorities and changes emerging from the strategic assessment process will be detailed in partnership action plans. Action plans will run for 12 months every April, updated four times a year

Public Health Strategy

The East Herts Council Public Health Strategy gives a focus to the public health and health promotion work that different services within the Council are involved in on a day to day basis. The strategy comprises six themed areas which look to cover the main areas of public health that East Herts Council would like to focus on and contribute to. The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy takes onboard these aims and the work / events undertaken by the

Council in the parks and open spaces supports the actions developed as part of the Public Health Strategy Action Plan.

The Public Health Strategy is currently being reviewed and further information is available on the council's website.

Ageing Well Agenda and Ambitions

Source: Report to Executive 6 November 2012 – 'East Herts Ageing Well – Review of Progress'

Members agreed East Herts "Ageing Well Ambitions" as making the District a good place to grow old in. Members' suggested approach for the Council is to:

Strategy and Partnerships:

- Be prepared to make East Herts towns and parishes a good place to grow old in
- Use existing contacts and structures to connect and collaborate
- Gather intelligence/case studies to discover what works well and replicate
- Find the gaps or obstacles that can realistically be addressed to improve the experiences of an aging population
- Encourage councillors to keep up to date with matters/issues that concern older people
- Create an attitude among councillors that in all they do they are minded to consider the impacts or benefits to older people. To always consider 'what can we do to make things better'
- Establish a means of communication among various bodies.

People and places:

- Use the overlapping connections to enable change e.g. District Councillors who are also Parish and County Councillors
- Understand what organisations are doing at ground level e.g. Parish and Town Councils, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) Relevant national and local charities, Housing associations Churches, religious bodies, Clubs/associations with interest in ageing people or with a membership of ageing people, residents association, interest groups, schools that have connections with older people medical centres, doctors' surgeries'.
- Create informal communication/dialogue with these bodies
- Establish a process of 'alerts' for situations that need addressing
- Being aware of situations where people can suddenly become vulnerable e.g. bereavement
- set up informal groups of local volunteers who can assist as required, e.g. urgent need of transportation, or helping with digibox tuning

- Broadcast/publicise successful activities around the district or beyond

Achieving cost effective services

- Learn from best practices for minimising costs of delivering added value service through collaboration of 3 tiers of local government and/or private sponsorship.
e.g. community transport, residents or community infrastructure projects, good use of New Homes Bonus for community benefit, purposeful use of Council community grants system

Prosperity and well being

- Ensure East Herts Councils policies reflect the needs of an ageing population
- Ensure District Plan reflects the needs of older people
- Encourage Towns and Parishes to include policies for older people in Local Plans
- Encourage businesses that are older people 'friendly' to use or to work in.
- Encourage older people to be engaged in appropriate economic activity/employment
- Encourage able older people to volunteer or use their life skills to help others
- Encourage appropriate healthy activities.
- Encourage older people to participate in relevant education

Possible Next Steps

- Create a database of organisations to establish 'touching points' for example existing councillor involvement.
- Gather case studies on council website.
- List useful website links for reference
- Set up local meetings with residents to discover local gaps/needs using existing funding (e.g. Councillor Community Engagement Grant)
- establish priorities as a group
- Follow up with a wider meeting of interested parties to move concept forward.
- Roll out concepts to Parish and Town Councils including Rural Parish Conference

Appendix 3: PPG1 Externally Funded Projects

Source: ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY – 13 SEPTEMBER 2011 - PARKS AND OPEN SPACES DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME – PROGRESS REPORT

The following table provides a list of projects which have attracted external funding from 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	Up to £40,000 Subject to STC decision pending final tender details	Sawbridge-worth Town Council

		wheeled sports and ball court area on the decommissioned tennis court		
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 space	£1,000	Ware In Bloom /GSK
2011	Kibes Lane, Ware	Contribution to the redesign and landscaping of the Quaker Burial Ground	£500	Ware Society
		TOTAL:	£627,000	

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.

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 space	£30,000	Section 106 funded
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

Appendix 4: PPG17 Open Space Typologies

Source: PPG17 Audit and Assessment Report (July 2005).

TYPE	DEFINITION	PRIMARY PURPOSE / EXAMPLES
Parks and Gardens	Includes urban parks, formal gardens and country parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal recreation • Community events
Natural and Semi-natural Greenspace	Includes publicly accessible woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (e.g. downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands, open and running water and wastelands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wildlife conservation • Biodiversity • Environmental education and awareness
Amenity Greenspace	Most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas. Includes informal recreation green spaces and village greens.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal activities close to home or work • Enhancement of the appearance of residential or other areas
Provision for Children and Young People	Areas designed primarily for play and social interaction involving children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipped play areas • Ball courts • Outdoor basketball hoop areas • Skateboard areas • Teenage shelters and 'hangouts'
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned used for sport and recreation. Includes school playing fields.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor sports pitches • Tennis and bowls • Golf courses • Athletics • Playing fields (including school playing fields) • Water sports
Allotments	Opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. May also include urban farms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing vegetables and other root crops <p>N.B. does not include private gardens</p>
Cemeteries & Churchyards	Cemeteries and churchyards including disused churchyards and other burial grounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiet contemplation • Burial of the dead • Wildlife conservation • Promotion of biodiversity
Green Corridors	Includes towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking, cycling or horse riding • Leisure purposes or travel • Opportunities for wildlife migration

Appendix 5 –Green Flag Award Assessment Criteria

Green Flag Award applications are judged against eight key criteria. Where certain criteria are not met, applicants can provide justifications that may be taken into account. What's more, if management practice changes are in progress but not yet fully implemented, transitional phases will be acknowledged and viewed positively.

The judging criteria also considers the fact that each park/green space will offer different kinds of facilities, and will be managed and developed to varying opportunities and constraints. Innovation and the way facilities offered are tailored to the needs of the community will also be taken into account.

Eight key criteria

1. A welcoming place

When approaching or entering the park/green space, the overall impression for any member of the community - regardless of the purpose of their visit - should be positive and inviting. There should be

- Good and safe access
- Good signage to and in the park/green space
- Equal access for all members of the community

2. Healthy, safe and secure

The park/green space must be a healthy, safe and secure place for all members of the community to use. Any issues that have come to light must be addressed in the management plan and implemented on the ground. New issues that arise must be addressed promptly and appropriately.

- Equipment and facilities must be safe to use
- It must be a secure place for all members of the community to use or traverse
- Dog fouling must be adequately addressed
- Health and safety policies should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed
- Toilets, drinking water, first aid, public telephones and emergency equipment where relevant (e.g. life belts by water) should be available in or near the park/green space, and be clearly signposted.

3. Clean and well maintained

For aesthetic as well as health and safety reasons, issues of cleanliness and maintenance must be adequately addressed, in particular:

- Litter and other waste management
- The maintenance of grounds, buildings, equipment and other features
- A policy on litter, vandalism and maintenance should be in place, in practice and regularly reviewed.

4. Sustainability

Methods used in maintaining the park/green space and its facilities should be environmentally sound, relying on best practices available according to

current knowledge. Management should be aware of the range of techniques available to them, and demonstrate that informed choices have been made and are regularly reviewed. Parks/green spaces should:

- Have an environmental policy or charter and management strategy in place, which is in practice and regularly reviewed
- Minimise and justify pesticide use
- Eliminate horticultural peat use
- Recycle waste plant material
- Demonstrate high horticultural and arboricultural standards
- Have energy conservation, pollution reduction, waste recycling, and resource conservation measures

5. Conservation and heritage

Particular attention should be paid to the conservation and appropriate management of:

- Natural features, wildlife and fauna
- Landscapes
- Buildings and structural features
- These should serve their function well without placing undue pressure on the surrounding environment

6. Community involvement

The park/green space management should actively pursue the involvement of members of the community who represent as many park/green space user groups as possible. The following should be demonstrated:

- Knowledge of user community and levels and patterns of use
- Evidence of community involvement in management and/or developments and results achieved
- Appropriate levels of provision of recreational facilities for all sectors of the community

7. Marketing

- A marketing strategy should be in place, which is in practice and regularly reviewed
- There should be good provision of information to users, e.g. about management strategies, activities, features, ways to get involved
- The park/green space should be promoted as a community resource

8. Management

- A management plan or strategy should be in place
- This should clearly and adequately address all of the above criteria and any other relevant aspects of the park/green space's management
- The plan must be actively implemented and regularly reviewed
- A financially sound management of the park/green space must also be demonstrated

If you would like a translation of this document in another language, large print, Braille, audio or an electronic format, please contact Communications at East Herts Council on 01279 655 261 or email communications@eastherts.gov.uk.

Jeżeli chciałbyś, aby ta informacja została przetłumaczona na język polski skontaktuj się z Działem Łączności przy Radzie Wschodniego Hertfordshire tel. 01279 655 261 lub wyślij e-mail communications@eastherts.gov.uk.

Se desejar esta informação traduzida em português, por favor contacte o departamento de comunicações do East Herts Council no telefone número 01279 655 261 ou via email communications@eastherts.gov.uk

If you need any further information please contact us:

Phone: 01279 655261

Email: operations.admin@eastherts.gov.uk

Fax: 01992 531438

Visit: www.eastherts.gov.uk

Write to: Environmental Services
East Herts Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
Herts
SG13 8EQ

Office Opening Times: 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26 FEBRUARY 2013

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY HEALTHCHECK – SEPTEMBER 2012 TO DECEMBER 2012

REPORT BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

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 for the period September 2012 to December 2012.

RECOMMENDATION FOR SCRUTINY MEMBERS: That	
(A)	The reported performance for the period September 2012 to December 2012 be received; and
(B)	The Executive be advised of any further recommendations.

1.0 Background

1.1 This is a performance report relevant to the Environment Scrutiny terms of reference covering the period September 2012 to December 2012.




1.2 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 December 2012 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 are 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 indicators that are ‘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

Place

Performance analysis

- 2.3 **NI 191 – Residual household waste per household.** Waste disposed of in December 2012 was at the same level as December 2011, maintaining the anticipated outturn at 459kgs per household per annum which is slightly worse than 454kgs set in March 2012.
- 2.4 **NI 192 - Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting.** The level of recycling/composting has fallen below 50% for the first time since April 2012, with both recycling and composting being at the lowest level this year. The overall level may continue to fall through the rest of the year whilst composting levels remain low. Current performance remains consistent with service estimated outturn to achieve 48.10% which will be just below the annual target of 50.00%.

2.1 The following indicators were 'Green', meaning that the targets were either met or exceeded for December 2012. They were:

- EHPI 2.1d – Planning Enforcement: Initial Site Inspections.
- EHPI 2.1e – Planning Enforcement: Service of formal Notices.
- EHPI 2.2(45) – Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of household waste
- EHPI 2.23 – Planning decisions delegated to officers
- EHPI 218a – Abandoned Vehicles – % investigated within 24 hours
- EHPI 218b – Abandoned Vehicles – % removed within 24 hours of required time
- NI 157a – Processing of planning applications: 'Major' applications.
- NI 157b – Processing of planning applications: 'Minor' applications.
- NI 157c – Processing of planning applications: Other applications.

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

Prosperity

Performance analysis

2.2 The following indicators were 'Green', meaning that the targets were either met or exceeded for December 2012. They were:

- EHPI 6.8 – Turnaround of pre NTO PCN challenges
- EHPI 6.9 – Turnaround of NTO Representations

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

CONCLUSION

2.3 In conclusion Members are asked to:

- Note the performance indicator analysis for the period September 2012 to December 2012 in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**
- Agree the recommendations at the start of this report.

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:

- 2011/12 Estimates and Future Targets Report – Executive 6 March 2012.

Should members require any guidance notes or Performance Indicator definitions please contact a member of the Performance team in the contacts listed below.

Contact member:

Councillor Malcolm Alexander – Executive member for Community Safety and Environment.

Councillor Paul Phillips – Executive member for Economic Development.

Contact Officer:

Ceri Pettit – Corporate Planning and Performance Manager

Contact Tel Ext No 2240

ceri.pettit@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author:

Karl Chui – Performance Monitoring Officer

Contact Tel Ext No 2243

karl.chui@eastherts.gov.uk

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives:	<p>Place <i>This priority focuses on the standard of the built environment and our neighbourhoods and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.</i></p> <p>Prosperity <i>This priority focuses on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic and social opportunities.</i></p>
Consultation:	Performance monitoring discussions have taken place between Directors and Heads of Service.
Legal:	There are no legal implications.
Financial:	There are no financial implications.
Human Resource:	There are no Human Resource implications.
Risk Management:	There are no Risk implications.

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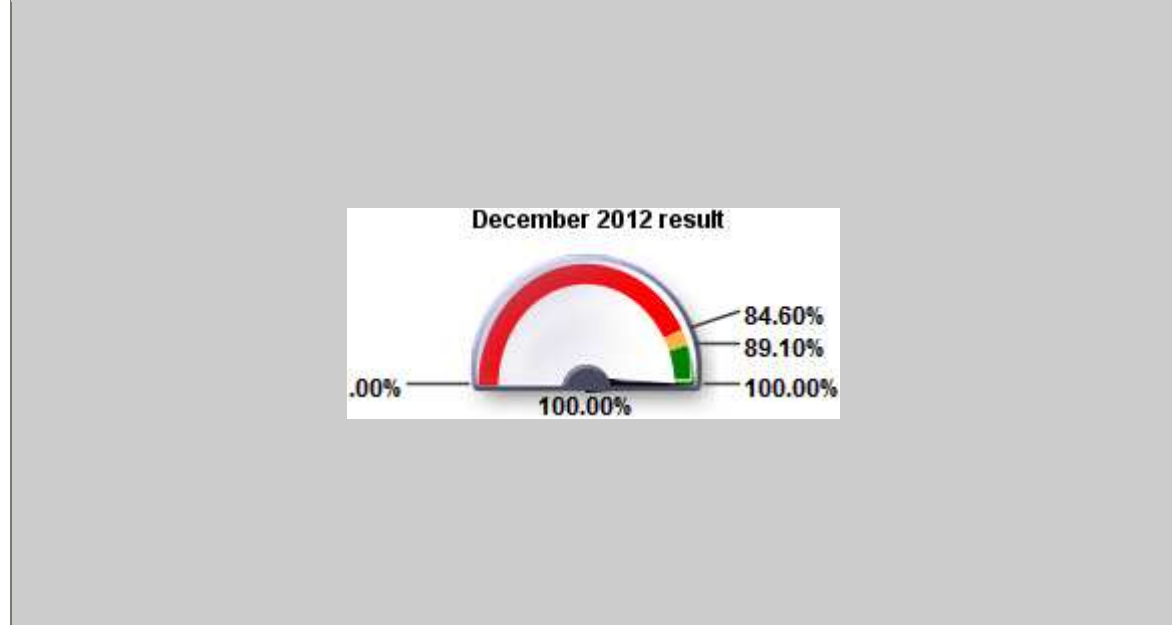
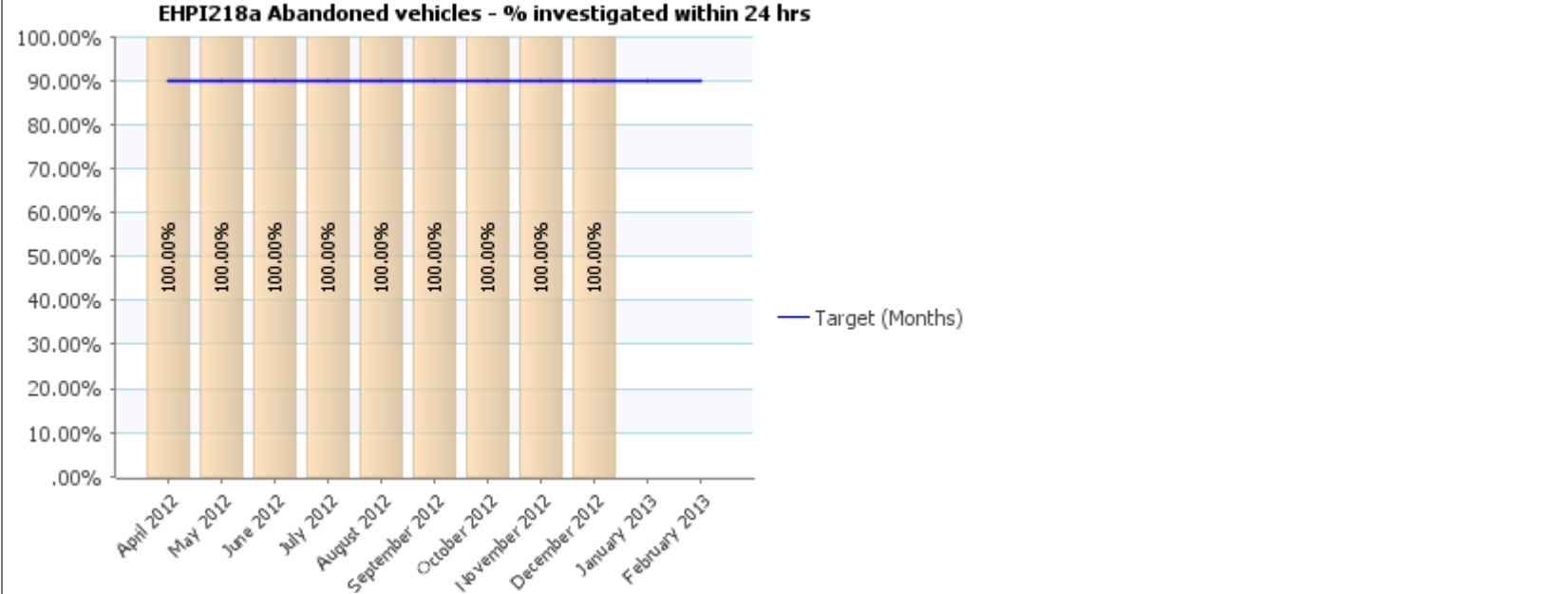
Environment Scrutiny Corporate Healthcheck September to December 2012/13

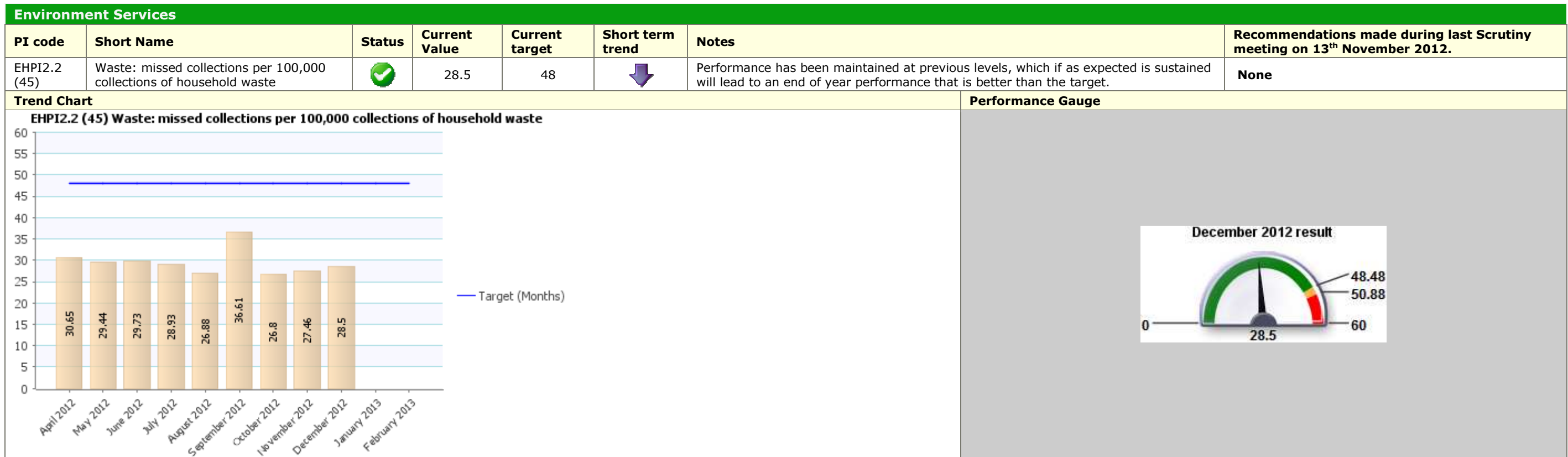
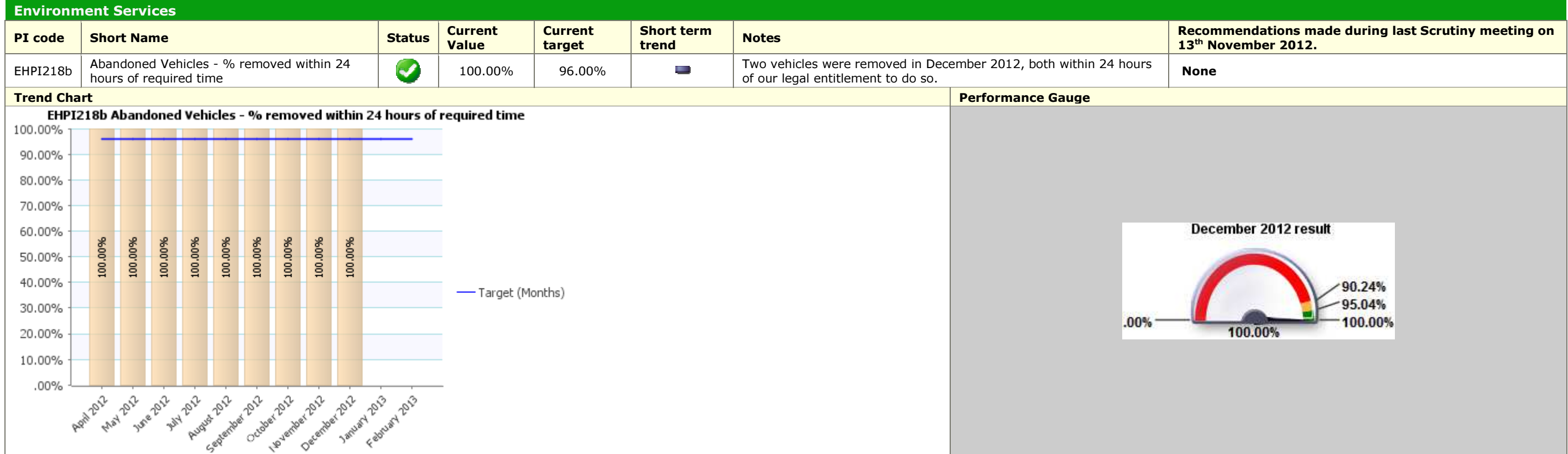
Traffic Light Green
Description Place

Environment Services

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting on 13 th November 2012.
EHP1218a	Abandoned vehicles - % investigated within 24 hrs		100.00%	90.00%		All vehicles reported as apparently abandoned were inspected within 24 hours of report being received.	None

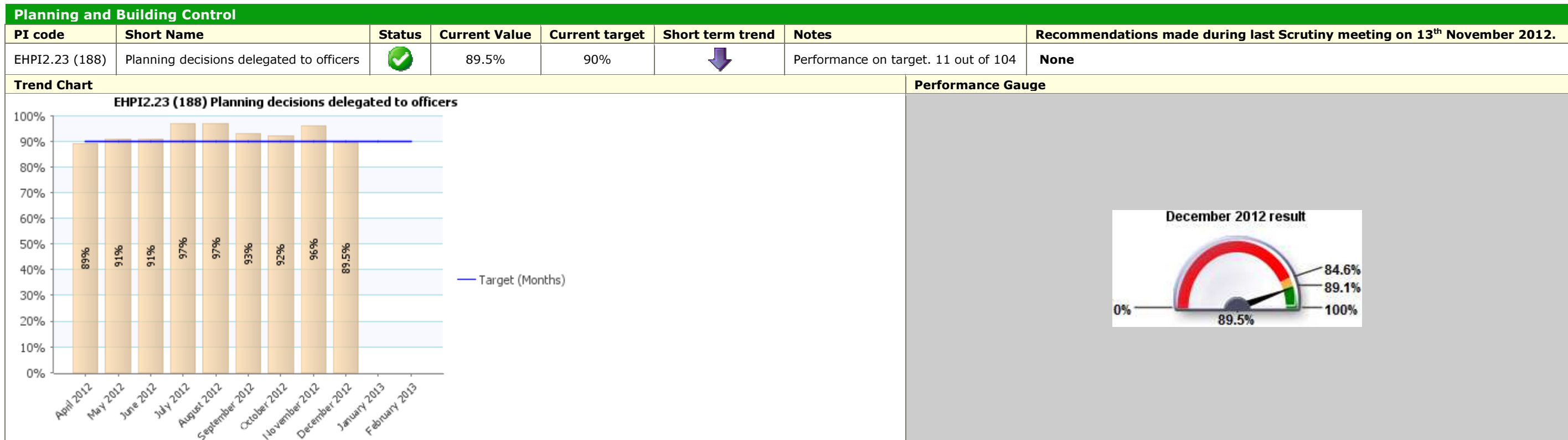
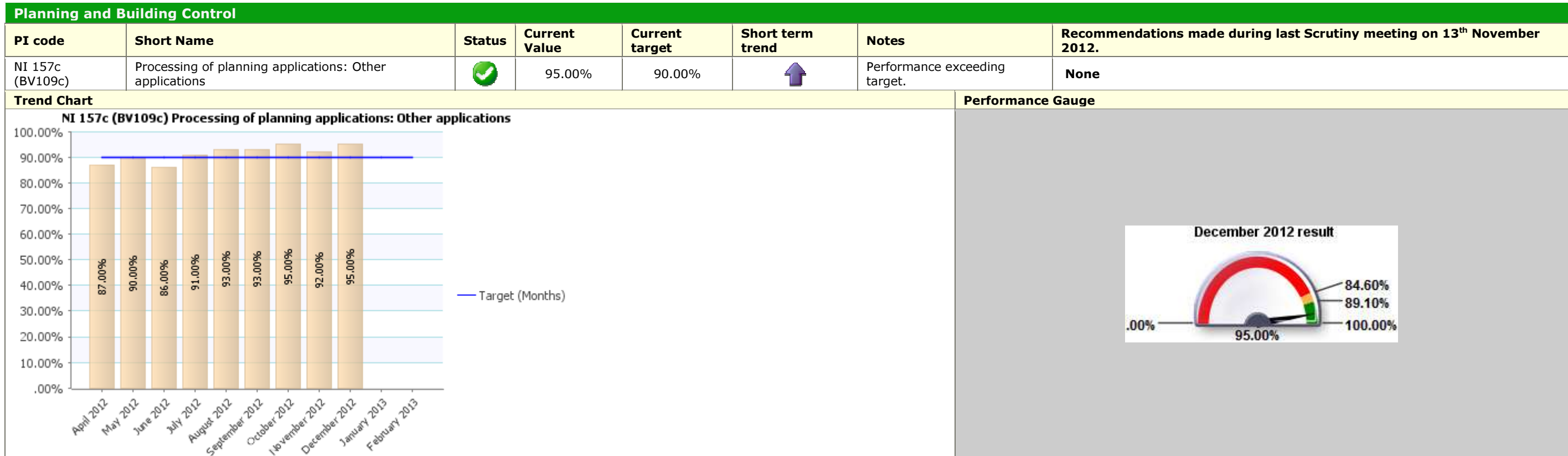
Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**

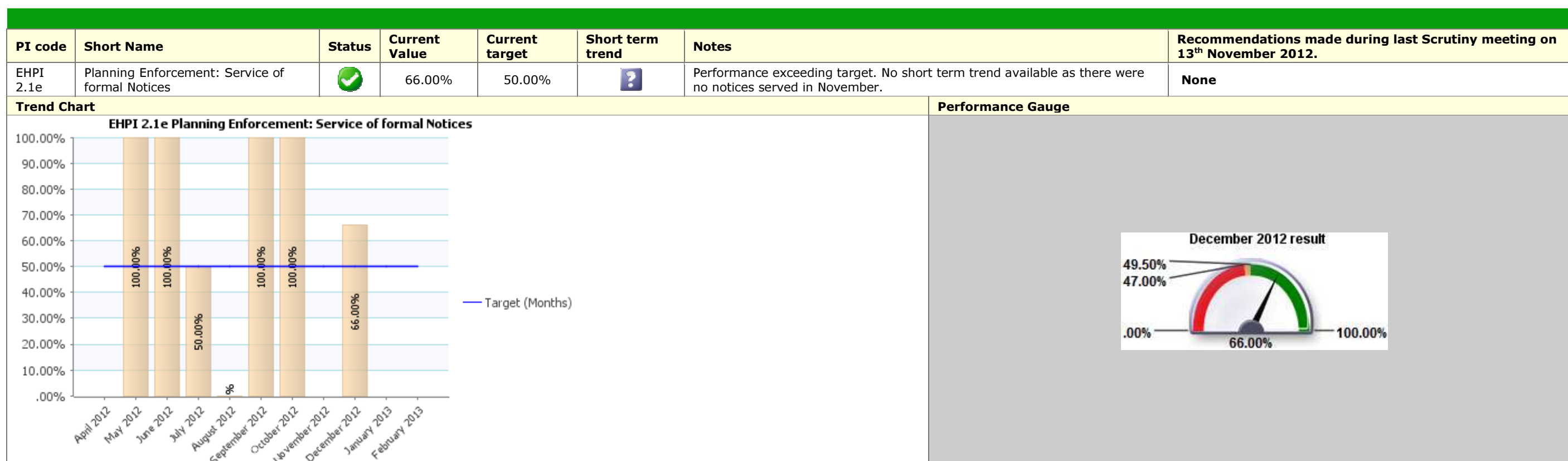
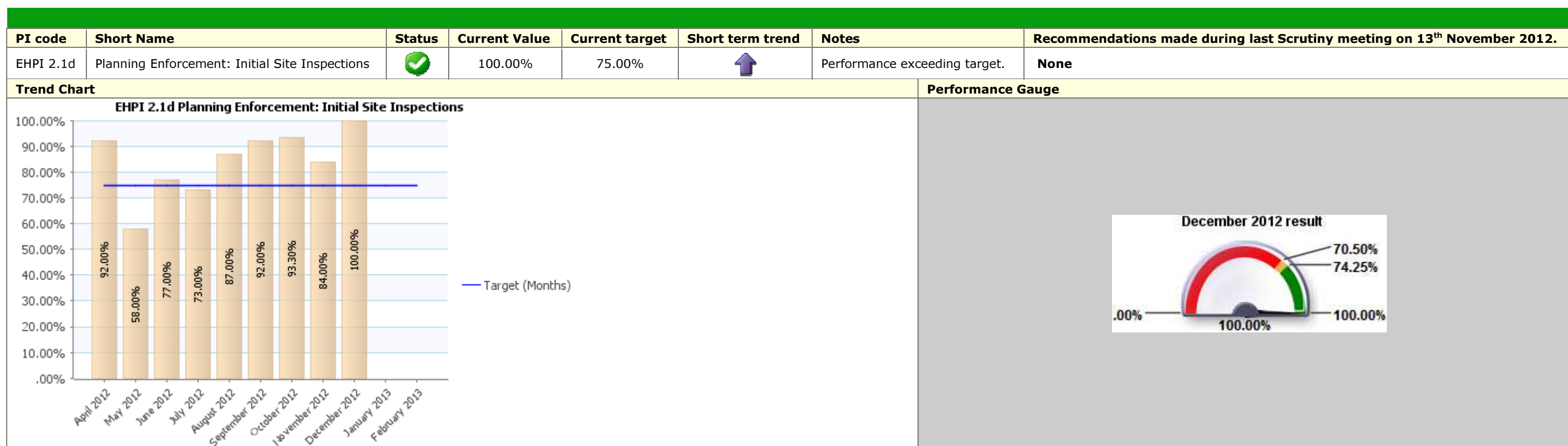




Planning and Building Control																																			
PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting on 13 th November 2012.																												
NI 157a (BV109a)	Processing of planning applications: Major applications		60.00%	60.00%		Performance on target.	None																												
Trend Chart						Performance Gauge																													
<p>NI 157a (BV109a) Processing of planning applications: Major applications</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Monthly Performance Data for NI 157a (BV109a)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>Current Value (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>April 2012</td><td>50.00%</td></tr> <tr><td>May 2012</td><td>40.00%</td></tr> <tr><td>June 2012</td><td>67.00%</td></tr> <tr><td>July 2012</td><td>100.00%</td></tr> <tr><td>August 2012</td><td>33.00%</td></tr> <tr><td>September 2012</td><td>67.00%</td></tr> <tr><td>October 2012</td><td>75.00%</td></tr> <tr><td>November 2012</td><td>100.00%</td></tr> <tr><td>December 2012</td><td>60.00%</td></tr> <tr><td>January 2013</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr><td>February 2013</td><td>-</td></tr> </tbody> </table>						Month	Current Value (%)	April 2012	50.00%	May 2012	40.00%	June 2012	67.00%	July 2012	100.00%	August 2012	33.00%	September 2012	67.00%	October 2012	75.00%	November 2012	100.00%	December 2012	60.00%	January 2013	-	February 2013	-	<p>December 2012 result</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Target (%)</th> <th>Actual Result (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>60.00%</td> <td>56.40%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Target (%)	Actual Result (%)	60.00%	56.40%
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PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting on 13 th November 2012.																												
NI 157b (BV109b)	Processing of planning applications: Minor applications		80.00%	70.00%		Performance exceeding target.	None																												
Trend Chart						Performance Gauge																													
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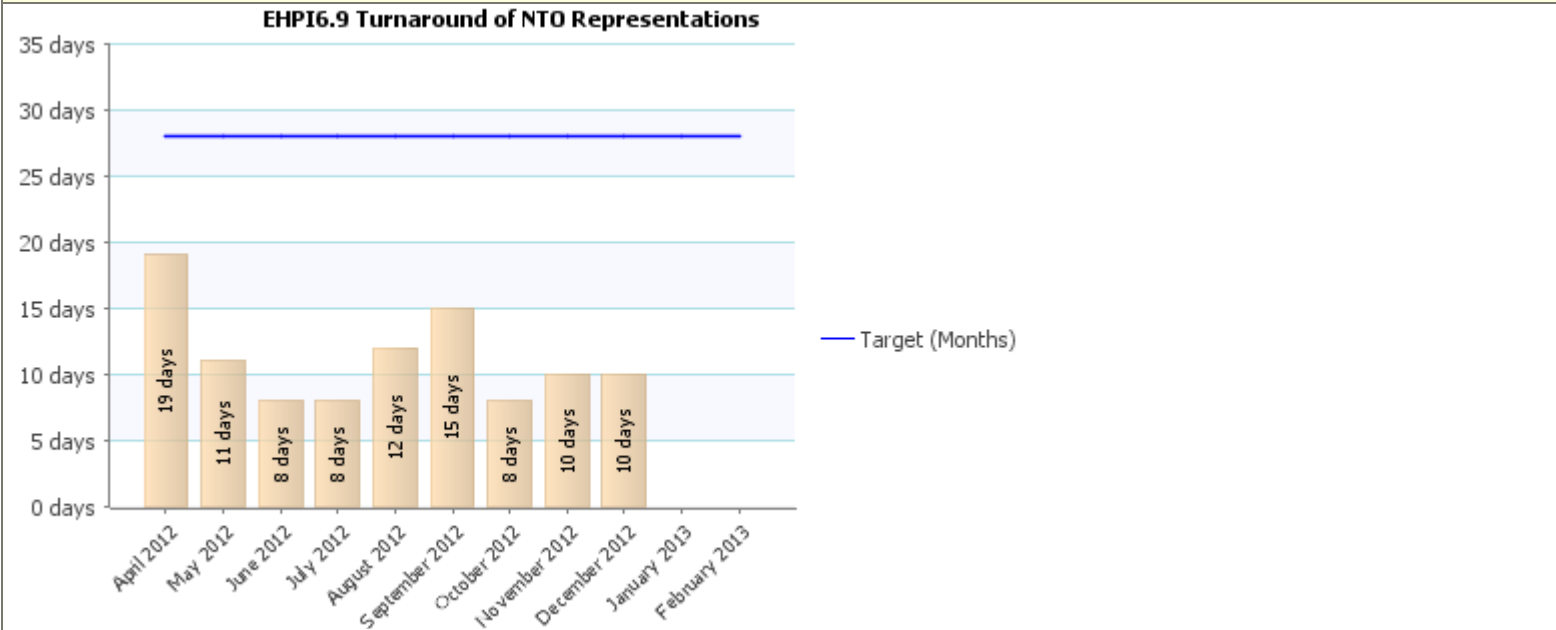


Traffic Light Green
Description Prosperity

Parking Services

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting on 13 th November 2012.
EHPI6.9	Turnaround of NTO Representations		10 days	28 days		This Performance Indicator remains within target	None

Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**



Parking Services																											
PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting on 13 th November 2012.																				
EHPI6.8	Turnaround of Pre NTO PCN challenges (10 working days)		10 days	14 days		This Performance Indicator remains within target	None																				
Trend Chart					Performance Gauge																						
<p>EHPI6.8 Turnaround of Pre NTO PCN challenges (10 working days)</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Monthly Turnaround Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>Turnaround (days)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>April 2012</td><td>19</td></tr> <tr><td>May 2012</td><td>11</td></tr> <tr><td>June 2012</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>July 2012</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>August 2012</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>September 2012</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>October 2012</td><td>8</td></tr> <tr><td>November 2012</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>December 2012</td><td>10</td></tr> </tbody> </table>					Month	Turnaround (days)	April 2012	19	May 2012	11	June 2012	8	July 2012	8	August 2012	12	September 2012	15	October 2012	8	November 2012	10	December 2012	10	<p>December 2012 result</p>		
Month	Turnaround (days)																										
April 2012	19																										
May 2012	11																										
June 2012	8																										
July 2012	8																										
August 2012	12																										
September 2012	15																										
October 2012	8																										
November 2012	10																										
December 2012	10																										

Traffic Light Unknown
Description Place

Environment Services

PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting on 13 th November 2012.
NI 191	Residual household waste per household	?	346		↓	Waste disposed of in December 2012 was at the same level as December 2011, maintaining the anticipated outturn at 459kgs per household per annum, which is slightly worse than the original expectation of 454kgs.	None

Trend Chart **Performance Gauge**



N/A

Environment Services																															
PI code	Short Name	Status	Current Value	Current target	Short term trend	Notes	Recommendations made during last Scrutiny meeting on 13 th November 2012.																								
NI 192	Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting		49.39%			The level of recycling/composting has fallen below 50% for the first time since April 2012, with both recycling and composting being at the lowest level this year. The overall level may continue to fall through the rest of the year whilst composting levels remain low.	None																								
Trend Chart						Performance Gauge																									
<p>NI 192 Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Chart Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>April 2012</td><td>48.75%</td></tr> <tr><td>May 2012</td><td>51.39%</td></tr> <tr><td>June 2012</td><td>52.20%</td></tr> <tr><td>July 2012</td><td>52.58%</td></tr> <tr><td>August 2012</td><td>52.61%</td></tr> <tr><td>September 2012</td><td>51.65%</td></tr> <tr><td>October 2012</td><td>50.93%</td></tr> <tr><td>November 2012</td><td>50.57%</td></tr> <tr><td>December 2012</td><td>49.39%</td></tr> <tr><td>January 2013</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>February 2013</td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>						Month	Percentage	April 2012	48.75%	May 2012	51.39%	June 2012	52.20%	July 2012	52.58%	August 2012	52.61%	September 2012	51.65%	October 2012	50.93%	November 2012	50.57%	December 2012	49.39%	January 2013		February 2013		N/A	
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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: 26 FEBRUARY 2013

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN OF ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

WARD(S) AFFECTED: *none*

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To review and determine Environment Scrutiny Committee's future work programme

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR DECISION:</u>	
(A)	the work programme shown in this report be agreed

1.0 Background

1.1 Items previously required, identified or suggested for the Environment Scrutiny work programme are set out in **Essential Reference Paper B**.

2.0 Report

2.1 An article explaining the role of scrutiny and inviting suggestions from residents was published in the spring 2012 'council tax' edition of LINK magazine. No new topics for scrutiny were received during the year from external sources. A new item for inclusion in spring 2013 is being drafted. Ideas for this draft from any member of the Committee can be given to the Scrutiny Officer.

2.2 There will be a workshop in April for all scrutiny members to evaluate the work of the scrutiny committees (and Health and Wellbeing Panel) during 2012/13 and to plan for the coming year. All topics proposed during this planning phase will be offered to the relevant scrutiny committee at their first meeting in the new civic year for consideration for the 2013/14 work programme.

- 2.3 At the time of writing this report, a decision on any changes to the council's recycling service is still to be made (at Executive on 6 March 2013). Depending on the scope of that decision, relevant update, progress and monitoring reports related to any planned implementation phase will be scheduled into the Environment Scrutiny Committee's work programme for 2013/14.
- 2.4 Members are informed that 'Climate Week' is taking place from 4 to 10 March 2013. Although not a government organised initiative it is growing in popularity and is supported by an increasing number of businesses, local authorities, government departments and third sector organisations. It is used as a promotional tool, particularly amongst staff, to encourage local initiatives to highlight the need to reduce carbon emissions.
- 2.5 In East Herts it is intended to promote a different issue each day during Climate Week on the staff intranet – eg: energy efficiency, car sharing, waste minimisation/recycling, local food and water efficiency issues.
- 2.6 Additionally, although just outside the official week, a major summit looking at 'Water Efficiency in Hertfordshire' is taking place on 14 March 2013 at the Fielder Centre in Hatfield which will bring together key stakeholders from across the county.
- 2.7 Hertfordshire has the highest per capita use of water in the UK and the need to reduce water consumption across the county is becoming of increasing importance, both in terms of improving low river flows as well as in reducing the large amount of energy (and hence carbon emissions) required to process and pump water to where it is required. The Hertfordshire Sustainability Forum is organising the event and East Herts, as an active member of the Forum, is joining with partners to help plan and facilitate future action in respect of water efficiency.
- 2.8 More general information is available on the Climate Week website <http://www.climateweek.com/>
- 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'**.

Background Papers: none

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Report Author: Marian Langley – Scrutiny Officer
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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives <i>(delete as appropriate):</i>	<p>People This priority focuses on enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.</p> <p>Place This priority focuses on the standard of the built environment and our neighbourhoods and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.</p> <p>Prosperity This priority focuses on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic and social opportunities.</p> <p>Effective use of the scrutiny process contributes to the Council's ability to meet one or more of its corporate objectives:</p>
Consultation:	Potential topics for scrutiny are always invited from members of the public, the Executive and all Members.
Legal:	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.
Financial:	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.
Human Resource:	none
Risk Management:	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.

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Environment Scrutiny Committee work programme (provisional) 2013/14

****note: Env Crimes T&F** was deferred as central government announced further changes to anti-social behaviour legislation which would 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	Need to add in relevant update, progress and monitoring reports related to any changes to recycling services – subject to decision being made at Executive on 6 March 2013.		
1 in 2013/14	11 June 2013 Report deadline 29 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Reporting – Contract Performance 2012/13 - to include any further progress on Env Quality action plan • Climate Change – report on progress against action plan with data on savings from 2012/13 year. • Healthcheck through to March 2013 (which includes relevant 2012/13 Out turns and Targets) • Service Plan monitoring – Oct 2012 to March 2013 • Work Programme 2013/14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Environmental Services • Lead Officer and Head of Environmental Services • Lead Officer - Performance • Lead Officer – Corporate Planning • Scrutiny Officer 	2 July 2013 6 August 2013 3 Sept 2013
2 in 2013/14	17 Sept 2013 Report deadline 4 Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>vacancy</i> • <i>vacancy</i> • Healthcheck through to June 2013 • Work Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Officer - Performance • Scrutiny Officer 	1 Oct 2013 5 Nov 2013
3 in 2013/14	12 Nov 2013 Report deadline 30 Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>vacancy</i> • <i>vacancy</i> • Service Plans monitoring Apr 2013 – Sept 2013 (Environment only) • Healthcheck through to Sept 2013 • Work Programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Officer – Corporate Planning • Lead Officer - Performance • Scrutiny Officer 	3 Dec 2013 7 Jan 2014 4 Feb 2014

**Scrutiny work programme
Essential Reference Paper B**

Members information		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014/15 Proposed Service Options 		
JOINT SCRUTINY	14 Jan 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014/15 Budget items 		
JOINT SCRUTINY	11 Feb 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2014/15 Service Plans • 2013/14 Estimates and 2014/15 Future targets • Residents' Survey analysis and action plan 		
4 in 2013/14	25 Feb 2014 Report deadline 12 Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vacancy • Monitor implementation of Vehicle Removals - short report on implementation with data to 31/12/13 • Monitor implementation of ANPR mobile camera - short report on implementation with data to 31/12/13 • Healthcheck through to Jan 2014 • Work Programme 2014/15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services • Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services • Lead Officer - Performance • Scrutiny Officer 	4 Mar 2014 8 April 2014 6 May 2014 3 June 2014

The four principles of good public scrutiny:

- ***provides ‘critical friend’ challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers***
- ***enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities***
- ***is carried out by ‘independent-minded governors’ who lead and own the scrutiny role***
- ***drives improvement in public services***

Environment Scrutiny	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To develop policy options and to review and scrutinise the policies of the Council relating to planning policy, local development framework, Building Control, Planning Enforcement, Development Control, transport policy (concessionary fares and subsidised bus routes), Highways Partnership, parking and economic development, energy conservation, waste management, parks and open spaces, historic buildings, conservation – green agenda, Local Strategic Partnership and street scene. 2. To make recommendations to the Executive on matters within the remit of the Committee. 3. To take evidence from interested groups and individuals and make recommendations to the Executive and Council for policy change on matters within the remit of the Committee. 4. To consider issues referred by the Executive, or members of the Committee and where the views of outsiders may contribute, take evidence and report to the Executive and Council on matters within the remit of the Committee. 5. To consider any item referred to the Committee by any Member of the Council who is not a member of this Committee and decide whether that item should be pursued on matters within the remit of the Committee. 6. To appoint annually Standing Panels as may be determined which shall be given a brief to consider a specified service area relating to matters within the remit of the Committee and report back to the Committee on a regular basis as determined by the Committee. 7. To consider any item in the Forward Plan, within the remit of the Committee, to be considered by the Executive (except items of urgent business) before the item is considered by the Executive if requested by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee. The relevant report to the Executive will be made available to the scrutiny committee. 8. To consider matters referred to the Committee by the Executive/Portfolio Holder on matters within the remit of the Committee and refer the matter to the Executive following consideration of the matter.
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