



MEETING : EXECUTIVE
VENUE : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE : TUESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2013
TIME : 7.00 PM

MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Councillor Tony Jackson	- Leader of the Council
Councillor Malcolm Alexander	- Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Community Safety and Environment
Councillor Mike Carver	- Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport
Councillor Linda Haysey	- Executive Member for Health, Housing and Community Support
Councillor Paul Phillips	- Executive Member for Economic Development
Councillor Suzanne Rutland-Barsby	- Executive Member for Community & Partnership Liaison
Councillor Michael Tindale	- Executive Member for Finance

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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

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2013 (previously circulated in the agenda for the Council meeting of 24 July 2013.)

3. Leader's Announcements

4. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Member(s) declaration(s) of interest.

5. Issues Arising From Scrutiny

To follow

6. Corporate Annual Report 2012/13 (Pages 7 - 40)

7. 4 year Corporate Strategic Plan (2014/15 to 2017/18) (Pages 41 - 68)

8. Financial Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan to 2017/18 (Pages 69 - 102)

9. Annual Governance Statement 2012/13 and Action Plan 2013/14 (Pages 103 - 138)

10. Widford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Pages 139 - 188)

11. District Plan Executive Panel: Minutes - 25 July 2013 (Pages 189 - 196)

To consider recommendations arising as follows:

- (A) Statement of Community Involvement (SCI): Proposed Adoption of Document Following Public Consultation

Minute 4 refers

- (B) District Plan - Update Report

Minute 5 refers

- (C) Duty to Co-Operate – Update Report

Minute 6 refers

- (D) Population and Household Projections – Update Report

Minute 7 refers

- (E) Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) – Round 3 – Update Report

Minute 8 refers

- (F) Town Wide Employment Study for Bishop's Stortford (June 2013)

Minute 9 refers

12. Monthly Corporate Healthcheck - June/July 2013

To follow

13. 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.

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 27 AUGUST 2013

EXECUTIVE – 3 SEPTEMBER 2013

REPORT BY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

2012/13 CORPORATE ANNUAL REPORT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report:

- This report provides a draft of the council's Annual Report for 2012/13.

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY:</u>	
That:	
(A)	The 2012/13 Corporate Annual Report be recommended to Executive for approval.

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR EXECUTIVE:</u> That:	
(A)	The 2012/13 Corporate Annual Report be approved.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Annual Report documents the council's key achievements for each of the corporate priorities over the last financial year. It also contains financial information which provides an overview of the council's financial position and performance and a statement on contracts.
- 1.2 The Annual Report complements and mirrors the 2012 – 2016 Corporate Plan but looks back on performance rather than offering any forward looking planning.
- 1.3 This is the sixth year the Annual Report has been produced, as a single document that covers Strategic, Financial and Performance issues as recommended by external auditors.

- 1.4 The achievements within in the report have primarily been sourced from Team Update, Service Plan Progress Reports and Link Magazine.
- 2.0 Report
- 2.1 This report provides a draft of the Annual Report for 2012/13 for comment and approval.
- 2.2 The report allows residents to judge the effectiveness and contribution of the council to the district and local communities as well as enabling councillors and employees to reflect on performance.
- 2.3 The Annual Report will be designed and published on the internet via the council's website. A small number of copies will be printed for distribution.
- 2.4 The Annual Report is attached as **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**. Performance information which compliments the Annual Report has already been presented so has not been included at this stage.
- 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: Ceri Pettit – Corporate Planning and Performance Manager, Extn: 2240. ceri.pettit@eastherts.gov.uk

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS:

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives (delete as appropriate):	<p>People</p> <p>This priority focuses on enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing, particularly for those who are vulnerable, and delivering strong services.</p> <p>Place</p> <p>This priority focuses on sustainability, the built environment and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.</p> <p>Prosperity</p> <p>This priority focuses on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic and social opportunities.</p>
Consultation:	The senior management team were consulted on the draft 2012/13 Annual Report.
Legal:	There are no legal implications.
Financial:	There are no financial implications.
Human Resource:	There are no human resources implications.
Risk Management:	There are no direct risk management implications.

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Annual Report

2012/13

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Section 1: Introduction

Message from the Leader and the Chief Executive

East Herts Council can look back on a year of achievement, in the face of some big financial challenges.

We've continued to provide good front line services and improve performance across key services.

Our successes have been recognised nationally with a number of awards including Market Team of the Year from the National Association of British Markets Authorities.

Judges renewed our Green Flag awards for The Ridgeway park in Hertford - for the fifth year running - and Southern Country Park in Bishop's Stortford - for the fourth year running.

The Local Government Association Peer Challenge team, which was with us in December 2012, said East Herts is a sound council. The team said we were delivering good services and they found a high level of satisfaction from residents. This was underpinned by a healthy financial base.

Nevertheless, stretched resources meant that we had to make sure we met our savings targets for 2012/13.

2012 saw the deletion of a top-tier post. This was replaced by combining the Chief Executive function with that of an existing director, saving around £100k annually.

In addition we had to make some difficult service decisions including the implementation of Government changes to council tax and welfare benefits

On a more positive note, we've agreed changes to our recycling services, so that householders can mix their recyclable cans, glass, plastics and cardboard into one wheeled bin under a new straightforward scheme. The new service will allow people to recycle more materials with less sorting.

Going forward we will have a challenging role in relation to balancing the planning needs of the district, ensuring that we have

sufficient homes for the longer term while at the same time looking after our countryside.

We will need to respond to the major planning applications which were received in-year to develop a large site on the A120 on the edge of Bishop's Stortford.

We will maintain high quality services by focusing on what matters most to you – keeping East Herts clean, tidy and safe.

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Section 2: Profile of the District

The Area

East Herts is the largest of the 10 districts in Hertfordshire. It covers 47, 568.68 hectares, around a third of the county, and offers a blend of rural and town living. The benefits of this mixture are greatly appreciated by the 137, 687¹ people who live in the district.

The majority of the people who live in the district live in one of the five towns. Bishop's Stortford has the largest population at 37,800, followed by Hertford (26,800), Ware (18,800), Sawbridgeworth (8,500) and Buntingford (5,400).²

Although the district is mainly comprised of farmland, five busy market towns (Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford, Hertford, Sawbridgeworth and Ware) and more than 100 villages and hamlets are scattered across the area.

East Herts is a beautiful and historic area. It has 42 conservation areas, over 4,000 listed buildings (including curtilage listed buildings), 31 scheduled monuments, 450 sites of archaeological significance and 11 registered historic parks and gardens.

Areas of nature conservation are equally abundant. Rye Meads and woodland in the south of the district at Wormley West End and Brickendon are internationally recognised, and there are a further 16 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and 582 Wildlife Sites.

East Herts is regarded as an attractive rural location for those moving out from (and commuting into) London because of its excellent transport links.

The Economy

The people of East Herts are predominantly employed and enjoy higher than average earnings (£630.10 gross weekly pay for full-

¹ 2011 Census - Usual Resident Population (KS101EW), NOMIS

² 2011 Census - Population estimates from the 2011 Census using whole MSOAs (produced by Community Information and Intelligence Unit, Hertfordshire County Council)

time workers compared to £506 for the whole of the country³). Unemployment is very low (1.8%⁴).

Over 50% of people travel to work by car and 12% travel by train. Less than 2% of people travel by bus/coach. 12% of people work at or from home⁵.

House prices are among the highest in the country; in 2012 for the period April to June the average property price was £311,300⁶ while the average salary was £32,496⁷. 29.9% of properties are semi-detached in East Herts, followed by 27.9% which are detached⁸. There is a shortage of affordable housing.

The People

A fifth of people are under 16 or and a fifth of people are over 60. The average age in the district is 39.5⁹.

More than half of people (aged 16 and over) are married and over a quarter are single. 10% of people are separated or divorced and 6% are widowed¹⁰.

Over 89% of people were born in England, 3% were born in other countries in the European Union and 4% in other countries¹¹. The main religion is Christianity but almost a fifth of people have no religion¹².

East Herts has a low ethnic minority population of just 4.5%. The largest ethnic minority group is Asian/Asian British at 1.9% with Indian being the highest within that group. The second largest minority group is mixed/multiple ethnic groups at 1.6%¹³.

The people of East Herts enjoy very good health and 9% provide unpaid care¹⁴.

³ 2012 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings - Resident Analysis, NOMIS, ONS

⁴ April 2013, Total Claimant Count, NOMIS, ONS

⁵ 2011 Census - Method of travel to work, Table CT0015EW, Hertfordshire Local Information System Atlas (Herts LIS)

⁶ Average Property Price for all house types, Quarter 1 2012, Hertfordshire Local Information System Atlas (Herts LIS)

⁷ Average full-time annual pay (£s Gross) of residents, Hertfordshire Local Information System Atlas (Herts LIS)

⁸ 2011 Census - Dwellings, Household spaces and Accommodation type (KS401EW), NOMIS

⁹ 2011 Census - Age Structure (KS102EW), NOMIS

¹⁰ 2011 Census - Marital and Civil Partnership Status (KS103EW), NOMIS

¹¹ 2011 Census - Country of Birth (KS204EW), NOMIS

¹² 2011 Census - Religion (KS209EW), NOMIS

¹³ 2011 Census - Ethnic Group (KS201EW), NOMIS

¹⁴ 2011 Census - Health and Provision of Unpaid Care (KS301EW), NOMIS

Over a third of people are educated to level 4 or higher e.g. Bachelor's degree (33.5%, 36,867). But under a fifth of the population have no qualifications (17.2%, 18,959)¹⁵.

Car ownership is high, with 46.5% of households owning two or more cars or vans and 40.8% of households owning one car or van¹⁶. 44.4% of people travel to work by car or van and 9.6% travel by train. Less than 2% of people travel by bus. 5% of people work from home¹⁷. However the rural nature of the district means that those that do not have access to a car or other means of transport face difficulty accessing services.

Did you know?

East Herts Council in 2012/13:

- Cleaned 36,849.876 linear kilometres of roads and streets – That's 196 times round the M25 motorway.
- Cleaned 36,849.876 linear kilometres of roads and streets – That's 196 times round the M25 motorway.
- Emptied approximately 5 million bins and recycling boxes.
- Cut 294 hectares of grass – That's the same as cutting approximately 400 football pitches.
- Processed 2,153 planning and related applications.
- Carried out 12,618 building control inspections – That's 242 inspections (on average) every week of the year.
- Processed 2,348 land charge search enquiries.
- Processed 30,475 new housing and council tax benefit claims and changes in circumstances – That's 586 cases processed (on average) every week of the year.
- Carried out 477 food inspections.
- Recorded 687,887 leisure users – That's just about enough to fill the Centre Court at Wimbledon 45 times over.

¹⁵ 2011 Census - Qualifications and Students (KS501EW), NOMIS

¹⁶ 2011 Census - Car or Van availability (KS404EW), NOMIS

¹⁷ 2011 Census - Method of travel to work (QS701EW), NOMIS

Section 3: Our Vision for the District

East Herts Council's vision for the district is:

To improve the quality of people's lives and preserve all that is best in East Herts

This overriding aim was underpinned in 2011/12 by three corporate priorities which reflected local needs as identified through public consultation and feedback.

These priorities in 2012/13 were:

<u>People</u> – Fair and accessible services for those that use them and opportunities for everyone to contribute
<u>Place</u> – Safe and Clean
<u>Prosperity</u> – Improving the economic and social opportunities available to our communities

Each priority was further defined by a series of objectives which were set out in our four year Corporate Strategic Plan for 2012 - 2016. These priorities and objectives were shared with many of our partner organisations to enable a joined-up approach in service delivery, helping to eliminate service gaps and duplication whilst promoting efficiency.

This annual report cannot include everything we have achieved. However, it does identify those achievements which we believe will be of most community interest due to their impact and benefits.

Section 4: Progress against 2012/13 Corporate Priorities

PEOPLE – Fair and accessible services for those that use them and opportunities for everyone to contribute

Our priority is to focus on enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing, particularly those who are vulnerable and deliver strong services

What we wanted to achieve	What we have done
<p>Objective: Enhance our local community engagement by working together with our partners such as Parish and Town Councils, for the benefit of our communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcomed the Olympic torch in East Herts, which came through Hertford, Ware and Bishop's Stortford. • Held a successful and well attended annual Parish conference in Much Hadham for all parishes. • Joined Twitter and re-launched our Facebook page with usage growing and member social media training delivered. Currently over 2,000 people living or working in East Herts are connecting with us through our Twitter and Facebook pages. • Provided £17,790 in grants for 67 Jubilee Street parties. The grants were given towards the costs of organising events that would bring people together in a fun, friendly way, and contribute to a sense of community and neighbourliness. Groups ranged from community centres, residents' associations, village hall committees and parish councils to groups. • Subsidised 55 Christmas Parties organised by groups that serve senior citizens, vulnerable people and people with disabilities (£3,264). Feedback was positive and showed how the events help combat loneliness and social isolation by providing mental stimulation and a rare opportunity to meet up with friends for good food, singing and dancing. • Awarded 19 community capital grants. The grants ranged from £1,000 to £12,000 and were awarded to parish councils, village halls, and sports clubs to improve community facilities, green spaces and purchase equipment in rural East Herts. Some of the projects that were grant aided: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Replaced 20-year old, redundant play equipment on village green at Bramfield ○ Purchased recreational and sports equipment for successful youth club in Little Munden ○ Purchased IT equipment for popular Internet café at High Wych Memorial Hall ○ Contributed to build of new annex at Benington Village Hall which hosts monthly lunch club for elderly residents

- Supported towns and parishes to fund projects that directly help residents, through the new home bonus grant. Some of the areas in East Herts that have been helped are:
 - **Little Berkamsted** - a film club has been established as the parish council was able to purchase a new projector; replacement wooden foundations for the log play frame was paid for and the village hall was redecorated.
 - **Hertingfordbury** - new swings and a see-saw were paid for; repairs have been scheduled for the East End Green track and the parish council was able to award a grant to the Greens Residents Association to fight an appeal against refusal of planning permission for a traveller camp.
 - **High Wych** - funds were put towards the resurfacing of the village car park.
 - **Datchworth** - the majority of the funds have been put aside to contribute to the costs of creating a Neighbourhood Plan, however a small part has been used to pay the first year's rent for two outreach post office services in Datchworth and Burnham Green village halls.
 - **Furneux Pelham** - two standpipes and taps to help allotment holders have been paid for, as well as fencing to go round the site. The rest of the funds are going towards a wooden bus shelter.
 - **Buntingford** - the funds were put towards refurbishing the Christmas lights and future community projects.
- In partnership with art centres in East Herts and Inspirational Arts, we have launched the Arty Bus to take an interactive journey through the wide and varied arts scene that East Herts has to offer. The 39-seater bus transported participants of all ages between locations, where they could get off and enjoy some fun and educational activities, before getting back on the bus and heading off to the next adventure. The bus went from Hertford Theatre to Rhodes one day and from Rhodes to Hertford Theatre the next; feedback was very positive.

- Invited an independent team facilitated by the LGA to give an objective view, share thinking and to help the council ensure it's heading in the right direction. The team concluded that the council was 'delivering good services with a high level of satisfaction from residents underpinned by a healthy financial base'.
- Launched a new option on the council's website to make it easier and simpler for people to submit their comments for and against current planning applications. Using the new feature people can go directly to the application they wish to comment on and click a link allowing them to submit comments. There is also an option of adding attachments, such as supporting documents and photographs. This has proved a popular method of communicating with the Council in relation to planning applications.
- As a member of the Local Strategic Partnership led by the council, funding was granted to work clubs at NextStep, Bishop's Stortford and the Selections Children's Centre in Hertford to help people living in East Herts to get into work. So far 64 work experience placements have resulted in 35 permanent offers of work. Work clubs help people with careers advice, skills development and recruitment opportunities. They also offer advice on CVs, job searching, job applications and computer skills.
- Received a good external audit report on the adequacy of the Council's anti-fraud arrangements, which demonstrates strong corporate governance.
- 50% of performance measures improved during the year despite the economic downturn (compared to 39% the year before), with 69% meeting their targets compared to 49% in 2012/13 - **Ceri** to update as outstanding outturns come in.
- Customer satisfaction with face to face contact continues to improve, with 77.2% of customers rating the contact as 'Good' compared to 75.9% in 2010/11. The most cited reason for this was the response time, with four in ten customers choosing this option. **Neil** - can you provide updated figures for 2012/13 so we can compare, along with reasons.

Objective: Provide support for the vulnerable by working with our partners to increase the number of social and affordable homes, increasing the number of supported housing units and ensuring those in need access the benefits and support they are entitled to

- Worked with Hertfordshire County Council, voluntary and community sector services to develop an integrated approach to engage more with older people forums to help strengthen their preventive role and achieve a wider range of health and wellbeing outcomes for this older community.
- In partnership with small business Skill Ltd, hosted Shopmobility in the Jackson Square car park. As of March 2013, the charity has 533 registered users, which includes clients that are temporarily disabled. The service averaged 24 hires of electric scooters, manual and powered wheelchairs per week during the winter months. All trips are free to registered members who come from Bishops Stortford and surrounding villages.
- Joined an online system making it easier for households wishing to join the East Herts Council Housing Register to apply for accommodation to do so, to view their assessment in more detail and update changes. A link at [HomeOption](#) takes applicants straight to the online form. It also explains what information they will need in order to register and how to contact the Council if they want advice in completing the form.
- Agreed a new Housing Strategy at full Council on 26 September 2012. The strategy is now published.
- Approved a new housing register policy which sets out how homes will be allocated to applicants. Council approved the strategy on 6 March. The policy went live on 1 May 2013 for all new applicants and current applicants whose circumstances have changed.
- Teamed up with Hertfordshire County Council, other districts in Hertfordshire, NHS Hertfordshire and voluntary organisations to win a £395,000 share of the Department of Health's Warm Homes Healthy People Fund. The fund was used to support vulnerable Hertfordshire residents to give them extra support to keep their homes warm and stay healthy during the winter by enhancing current schemes like improving insulation in homes, providing emergency heaters and providing extra services for homeless people.
- Facilitated 175 new affordable homes of which approximately 75% will be for rent and 25% for shared ownership. This is an increase of 33% when compared to 2011/12. The majority of these properties are acquired and managed by housing associations from planning obligations on new private developments via S106 agreements where the council currently requests up to 40% affordable homes. Further developments are planned for 2013/14.

Objective: Address health inequalities and continue to ensure public health safety.

- Extended the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) on Gascoyne Way to include Ware Road and the Old Cross area in Hertford, as part of ongoing work to reduce pollution. An action plan to improve air quality within the AQMA has been put together and aims to improve air quality through traffic management and reducing congestion. To date there are 2 AQMAs in East Herts. The Local Air Quality Management Review and Assessment Process identified that the annual mean objective for nitrogen dioxide is likely to be exceeded alongside the London Road and Cambridge Road, and a small section of Station Road and West Road in Sawbridgeworth. The report will be submitted to DEFRA for appraisal and should they agree with the report's conclusions an AQMA will be declared in this area.

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Place – Safe and Clean

Our priority is to focus on sustainability, the built environment and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.

What we wanted to achieve	What we have done
Objective: Continue to review the council's assets and the best way to manage them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed ownership and management arrangements for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ware Drill Hall – asset transferred to a community group Scotts Grotto – retained current arrangements with Ware Society as this was the best management option Hornsmill Community Centre – provided support
Objective: Ensure the sustainability of Hertford Theatre and explore possibilities for the theatre to be administered through a community trust.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hertford Theatre completed its first full year since re-opening (previously Castle Hall). The Theatre has quickly become a vibrant and successful artistic and community hub. Success against the business plan and its growing cultural offer was acknowledged by the council's Scrutiny Committee in August 2012.
Objective: Reduce waste sent to landfill by increasing our recycling rate to more than 50%.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched SURGE – a promotion scheme designed to improve the amount of waste recycled and a decrease the amount sent to landfill, the campaign particularly targeted low performing areas based on the average amount recycled per round. In the first three weeks of the campaign the council received 230 requests for more containers. The post scheme appraisal showed a significant increase in recycling levels in the areas covered and income from sale of extra material collected funded the cost of the project, which is now being extended to other areas. Phase 2 of the project (the next lowest performing recycling rounds) will take place in early April 2013 and results should be available in September.

<p>Objective: Reducing the carbon dioxide emissions from our own operations by 25% by 2020.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herts Sustainability Forum (HSF) has been established and has set up a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) which has been accredited by the Government. The HSF has also set up a Member working group to look at how to progress the Governments new framework for dealing with fuel poverty (known as the 'Green Deal'). Officers will report to East Herts Council's members once this work has been completed. The HSF is currently reviewing its priorities and has agreed to fund an awareness campaign covering a range of environmental matters. • Continued to implement the Council's Climate Change Action Plan and a number of actions have been successfully completed. A report on progress will be presented to Environment Scrutiny Committee in June 2013.
<p>Objective: Sustain the percentage of residents who are satisfied with our parks and open spaces.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised awareness and use of open spaces by holding a 'Love Parks' week, at Southern Country Park which had an Olympics theme and 'Meet the Animals' events at Pishiobury Park. The Get Park Active events are designed to promote outdoor leisure and healthy lifestyles. These events attracted around 1000 visitors and positive feedback was received. Other activities have included 'The Big Dig' and a 'History Walk' with Friends of Pishiobury Park and Foxholes (Hertford) woodland walk. • Retained our two 'green flags' for The Ridgeway in Hertford (for the fifth year running) and Southern Country Park in Bishop's Stortford (for the fourth year running). • Worked in partnership with the Environment Agency, Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and Countryside Management Service to restore a quiet corner of Hartham Common in Hertford, back to a wetland habitat. As part of the partnership the council set up a new walking route around the field to provide views of the ponds and the river. The Environment Agency funded the project to create a series of ponds across the site that naturally fills from water sitting close to the surface. The habitat will be especially beneficial to damsels and dragonflies. The agency also paid for fencing and gates so that cattle can be introduced onto the site. This will help to improve biodiversity by reducing nitrogen levels in the soil and by keeping the grass to a level that will naturally encourage wild flowers.

<p>Objective: Sustain the percentage of residents satisfied with street and environmental cleanliness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Won the bronze footprint RSPCA award, which is a national scheme that recognises local authorities that have clear procedures and policy on stray dogs. This year the council received 301 reports of stray dogs (both lost and found). 126 were collected by the Council of which 90 were reunited with their owners. The remainder were rehomed. • Held roadshows in Bishop's Stortford, Hertford and Ware to raise awareness of littering and in particular two of the biggest litter problems in East Herts – fast food packaging and cigarette litter, with local residents. The council is also encouraging local businesses to join the Tidy Business Scheme and help reduce litter as part of the 'Love where you live' campaign. 90 local businesses were visited and information packs circulated. 23 local businesses have applied to join at the end of February 2013. Visible enforcement activity has led to 10 fixed penalty notices being issued for litter and four relating to throwing cigarette butts from cars. • Maintained performance in the quality of the street scene in relation to litter and graffiti and improved performance in fly-posting and the removal of abandoned vehicles.
<p>Objective: Uphold the safety of our communities and seek to reduce the fear of crime by supporting neighbourhood policing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributed, as part of the East Herts Community Safety Partnership to the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Reduction of crime levels across the district. Recorded crime in East Herts has fallen by 15% from 6,130 in 2011/12 to 5,210 in 2012/13. ➢ Hosting FREE activities for young people aged 11-19 during the summer holidays, including zumba, canoeing and go-karting. Since 2009, 3075 young people have attended these summer activities and just under 10% have achieved an accredited outcome from Youth Connexions and crime during these activities has fallen. • Launched Operation Panther to combat anti-social behaviour and criminal damage across the whole of the area. The special operation, aims to deter young people from engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour, initially just operated in Bishop's Stortford, Sawbridgeworth, Buntingford and the surrounding rural areas. It now covers the whole of East Herts. Working in partnership with the local

	<p>police and housing associations the Council is able to take positive action against anti social behaviour, criminal damage and repeat offenders. Overall anti social behaviour has reduced by 35% in East Herts in the last year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Issued all our Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) with bodycam. The bodycams will not be used as part of the ordinary parking management and enforcement process. Instead where there has been a verbal or physical attack on a CEO, footage may be used for evidential purposes and also where it may help in resolving a complaint from a member of the public.• Removed over 100 graffiti tags in Hertford in partnership with the Probation Service Community Payback scheme, whose teams have helped us remove the graffiti.
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Prosperity – Improving the economic and social opportunities available to our communities

Our priority is to focus on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic opportunities and delivering cost effective services.

What we wanted to achieve	What we have done
Objective: Continue the streamlining of back office functions in order to ensure an efficient and sustainable Council for the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved a senior management restructure of three full-time Directors and the deletion of the Chief Executive post, to provide a more streamlined corporate team. An existing Director post has been redesignated to include many of the Chief Executive's previous functions and therefore by combining the two roles will save more than £100,000 annually.• Took robust action against fraud and during 2012/13 have prosecuted 8 people, issued 19 administration penalties and 38 cautions. This means that the council is recovering a combined total of Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit overpayments of £288, 462.28 against these 65 sanctions and other overpayments determined as fraudulent. A further £13,154.28 in overpayments of Department for Work & Pensions benefits was also identified.• Developing collaborative arrangements with other authorities on key areas of procurement activity such as office cleaning and the East of England Postal project, to provide greater resilience and optimise the use of resources. Both projects are in development and the office cleaning contract has recently been advertised in the Official Journal of European Union (OJEU). The postal project is at project board stage and is now waiting for the GPS (Government Procurement Service) to complete their tender process for their postal tender before the collaborative tender can take place.

Objective: Develop a practicable and pragmatic Parking and Transport Strategy and action plan which delivers integrated and value for money policies in respect to car parking, walking, cycling routes and vital bus routes.

- Gave Apton Road car park a £100,000 makeover. The new design of the lower level makes it easier for motorists to circulate within the car park. The old surface, which was loose and prone to potholes, now has a smooth Tarmac topping, while new white lines clearly mark out the spaces and indicate entrance and exit routes.
- Gave Hertford town centre car park a £600,000 revamp to make it more updated modern car park. Improvements included re-tiling, re-painting and the installation of anti-pigeon measures, as well as resurfacing. Also more spaces were created for blue badge holders.
- Approved the district's first Parking and Transport Strategy on 4 July 2012. The strategy provides a position statement and a strategic framework to enable specific proposals to come forward later recognising the variety of transport and park challenges that the district is faced with.
- Joined up with Sawbridgeworth Town Council to offer a free hour of parking, with the town council agreeing to underwrite the trial up to a maximum of £10,000. For an initial period of six months, until February 6 next year, motorists can park without charge for the first hour of their stay. In addition the cost of longer stays has been cut. It is hoped that this will encourage shoppers to the town and support local businesses.
- Expanded RingGo to enable motorists to top up their car park ticket by phone without having to pay the 20p transaction fee. The service was introduced last year to allow motorists to pay for their parking by phone using a credit and debit card, to solve the problem of having no change. Since the expansion of Ringo, usage has more than doubled with 41,716 transactions taking place in 2012/13, compared to 17,347 in 2011/12.
- Granted the Park Mark Safer Parking Award for the Old London Road car park in Hertford bringing the total number of Safer Parking car parks in East Herts to seven. The Park Mark Safer Parking Award is given to parking facilities that have achieved the requirements of a risk assessment conducted by the Police and the British Parking Association. The Safer Parking Scheme is an initiative of the Associations of Chief Police Officers (ACPOS), aimed at reducing crime and the fear of crime in parking areas. The council has recently put in place measures to help deter criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.

<p>Objective: Increase the economic resilience of the market towns working with the local business community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded Markets Team of the Year award by the National Association of British Markets (NAMBA). Over the past year the team have introduced a range of new systems for the markets in Stortford, Hertford and Ware, including trader incentives and farmers' market. • Hertford Farmers' Market was shortlisted to be a finalist in the Certified Farmers' Market of the Year award by Farma, the national Farmers' Retail and Markets Association. It was shortlisted as it recognised Hertford farmers' market for its fantastic range of local and home grown produce, friendly and knowledgeable traders, and dedication to supporting all things Hertford. • Supported the exploration of a combined scheme for time limited pedestrianisation of South Street/Potter Street and creation of Shared Space focused around the South Street/ Station in Bishop's Stortford. The proposals were put forward by the Bishop's Stortford 2020 Group, as it was felt they could bring a number of benefits to the town, such as, improved pedestrian environment, improved street scene and walking opportunities and regeneration of the area in particular retail and commercial facilities. It was agreed further consultation be undertaken before it is recommended for inclusion in the Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth Urban Transport Strategy.
<p>Objective: Ensure enhanced broadband throughout the district and enable residents and business in rural communities to have access to broadband provision comparable with urban settings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hertfordshire County Council have recently signed a contract with BT to provide improved broadband. Subject to survey, 12,000 homes and businesses in Hertfordshire (which will include East Herts) should benefit from faster broadband. More information on the implementation of the contract can be found on www.superfastforherts.org.
<p>Objective: To freeze Council Tax for 2011/12 and 2012/13 and aspire to a zero percent increase in the following years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council tax was frozen at the 2010/11 level for the financial year of 2011/12 and 2012/13. Further more the Council agreed a 1% drop in council tax from 1 April 2013 for the financial year 2013/14. The drop was due to a government grant given to the council for freezing its precept and it was decided to pass on the savings to residents.

<p>Objective: Ensure, in partnership with the community, that new and existing housing and commercial development meet East Herts priorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Made additional resources available to ensure feedback from residents in relation to the significant development proposals at Bishop's Stortford North can be thoroughly assessed. The Council has formulated an initial Site Issues and Development Brief document. This is now being updated with partners to ensure that development proposals meet East Herts priorities. A first application has now been submitted and further ones are likely to follow. The Council will continue to ensure that these are widely publicised.
<p>Objective: Review employment land and look at different opportunities for example office space and industrial space to support business.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruited a temporary officer to report on the stock of employment land in East Herts to replace the last one undertaken in 2008. The outcome of the Employment Land Review was reported to Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee on 2 July 2013 and identified areas and projects that might be appropriate for Council investment.
<p>Objective: Create a vision document to guide future development in Hertford and Ware towns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established a Hertford Futures group to look at creating a vision document to guide future development in the town. Chaired by the Portfolio Holder of Economic Development, key participants include Hertford Town Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Transition Hertford.
<p>Objective: Deliver the five year rural land based business development programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to lead the bid, in partnership with North Herts and Uttlesford District Councils and Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils, for £2.1 million funding to help rural enterprises. Since the start of the programme 17 projects in East Herts have been allocated funding (32 across the programme), totalling £1,212,009 (£1, 654,196 across the programme) and 30 new jobs have been created or forecasted to be created to date in East Herts.
<p>Objective: Establish a sound planning framework for the District through the implementation of the Local Development Framework (LDF).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progressing well with the production of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy (now identified as the District Plan). Consultation has been delayed but this is necessary to ensure that the Plan is based on the most robust background information and will stand the test of challenge in the future. Whilst a precise date cannot be identified at present, it is now anticipated that a draft will be available for consultation later in 2013/14.

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Section 5: Consultation

The council is committed to engaging with local people directly about key issues so they can help shape the future of the district. During 2012/13 the council consulted for example on the:

- Council Tax Support Scheme
- Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy
- Housing Register Policy
- Parks & Open Spaces Strategy 2013-18
- Pishiobury Park Greenspace Action Plan 2012-17

During 2013/14 the council will be undertaking its biennial Residents Survey.

To view all our current open consultations and results of closed consultations go to www.eastherts.gov.uk.

Section 6: Equalities

The Public Sector Equality Duty, part of the Equality Act 2010, places an obligation on the council to meet the needs of all individuals in the way we work, when shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to our own employees. The Equality Act 2010 states that the Council must have due regard to:

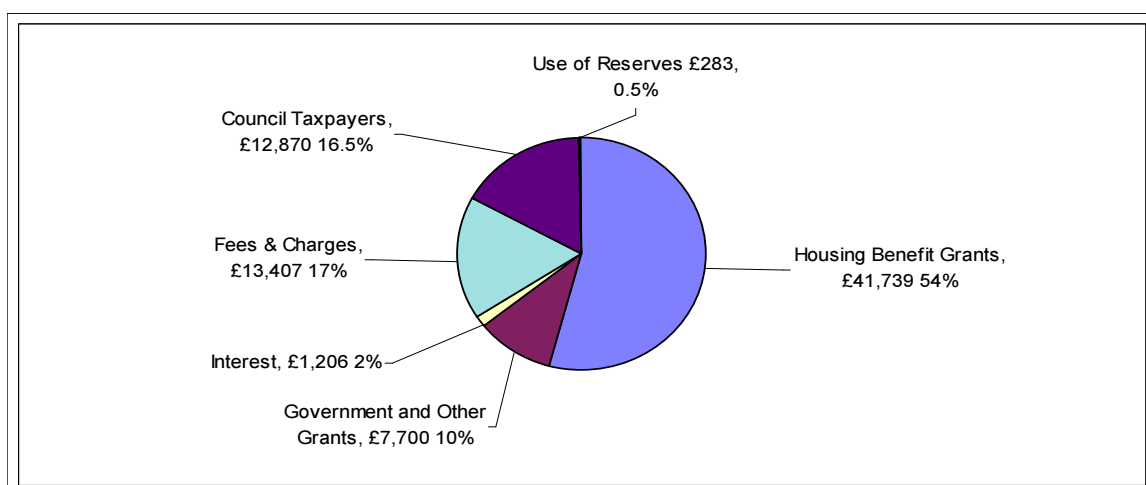
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics set out in the Act are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership. The East Herts Council Comprehensive Corporate Equality Policy 2012-2015 supports and drives the Council's commitment to better meeting the needs of the district's diverse communities and delivering better services for our customers and ensuring access is fair and reasonable for all.

Section 7: Financial Information

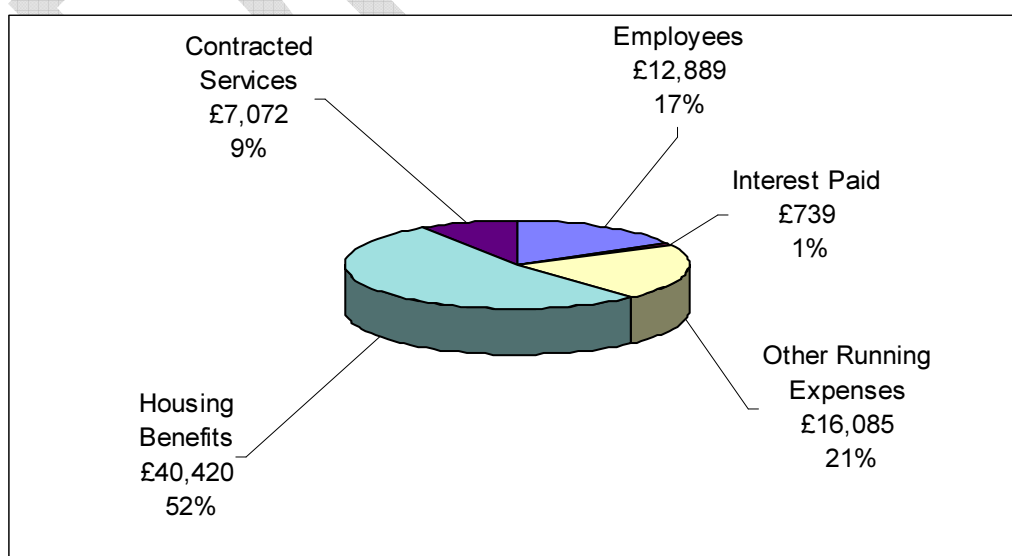
The following summarises East Herts Council's statement of accounts for the financial year from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013¹⁸.

Where the money comes from Sources of income to the council £000



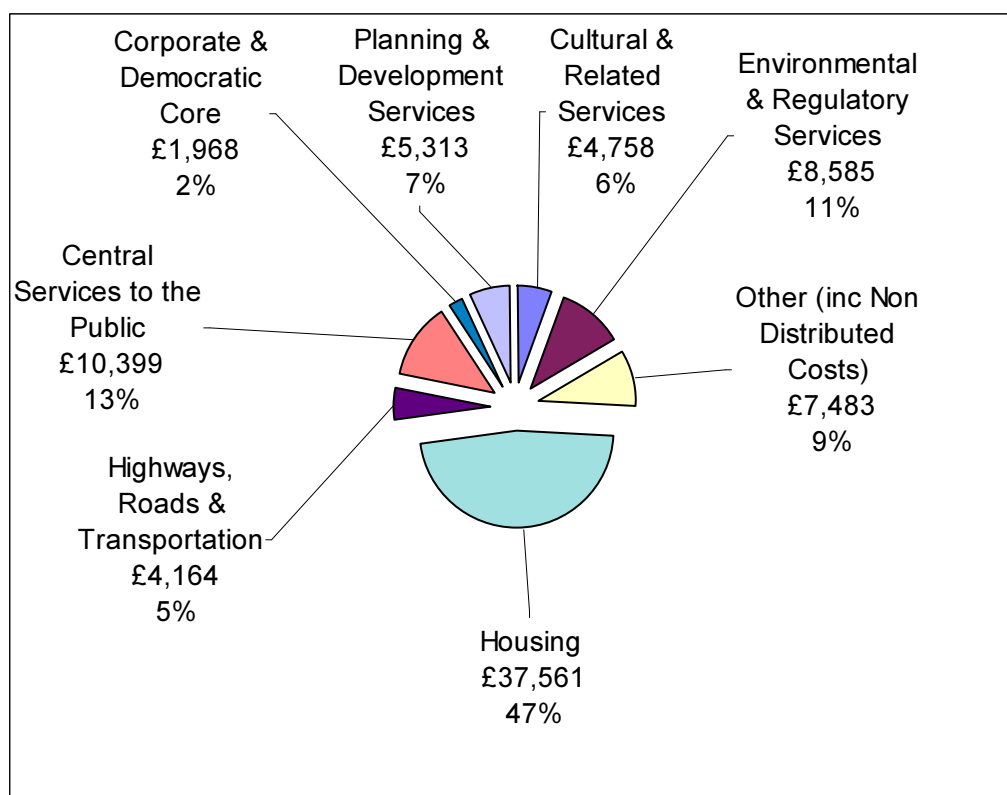
It can be seen that the largest source of the Council's income is from Housing Benefit Grants.

How the money is spent £000



¹⁸ Draft accounts prior to audit

The services provided £000



The cost of "The Services Provided" includes capital charges, impairments, revenue funded from capital under statute and capital government grants totalling £3,027k which have been excluded from the chart "How the money is spent". It also includes expenditure on investment properties not included in the "Net Cost Of Services" shown in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure statement.

The full statement of account can be found at www.eastherts.gov.uk along with a full set of previous years audited accounts.

Section 8: Statement on Contracts

In making changes to the way in which services are delivered, there will be times when the council awards contracts that involve the transfer of employees out of council employment. In 2012/13 there were no transfers of employees.

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Section 9: Performance Indicators

Corporate priority performance measures for 2012/13.

For information the following data will be provided:

Code	Indicator	Past performance	Current performance				Lead Service
		2011/12	2012/13		Performance		
		Outturn	Target 2012/13	Outturn	Short term trend	Status	
Indicators then sorted by priority							

Appendix A Contact your councillor

Contact details for all 50 councillors can be found on the council's website - www.eastherts.gov.uk or by contacting Democratic Services on 01279 655261.

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Inserted on the back of the report

We welcome your feedback on this Annual Report.

Getting in Touch

Telephone: 01279 655261

Email: performance@eastherts.gov.uk

Bishops Stortford Office: Charringtons House, The Causeway,
Bishop's Stortford, Herts, CM23 2EN

Hertford Office: Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford, SG13 8EQ

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 27 AUGUST 2013

EXECUTIVE – 3 SEPTEMBER 2013

REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN 2014/15 – 2017/18

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To present a draft of the council's four-year Corporate Strategic Plan which outlines its priorities for the next four years and the key outcomes it is looking to achieve.

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY:</u>	
That:	
(A)	The 2014/15 – 2017/18 Corporate Strategic Plan be recommended to Executive for approval.

<u>RECOMMENDATION FOR EXECUTIVE: That:</u>	
(A)	The 2014/15 – 2017/18 Corporate Strategic Plan be approved.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The council is required to produce details in the public domain of what it plans to do and this is achieved by publishing a four year Corporate Strategic Plan.
- 1.2 The Corporate Strategic Plan play's a key role in the council's performance management framework. It feeds into the council's four-year budget-planning model, to ensure expenditure is planned effectively and that financial resources are available to fund actions in priority areas.
- 1.3 The Corporate Strategic Plan is a forward-looking document. Details of how the Council has performed against its proposed

outcomes will continue to be reported through the Annual Report published every September.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 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 and identifies the key outcomes that will be achieved.
- 2.2 The draft 2014/15 - 2017/18 Corporate Strategic Plan is attached in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**. Changes are highlighted in 'green'.
- 2.3 The Corporate Strategic Plan will be updated each year to include new service developments planned for the fourth year, and to remove outcomes once they are completed and refine outcomes where changes occur. It should therefore be seen as a rolling document.
- 2.4 Once agreed the Plan will be used to support the development of the 2014/15 Service Plans. A working paper has been attached in **Essential Reference Paper 'C'** to illustrate some of the planned service activity that will be undertaken in support of the draft 2014/15 - 2017/18 Corporate Strategic Plan.
- 2.5 In conclusion members are asked to review the draft of the 2014/15 - 2017/18 and recommend it to the Executive.

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.

Contact Member: Councillor A P Jackson – Leader of the Council.

Contact Officer: Simon Chancellor – Head of Finance and Performance, Extn: 2050.
simon.chancellor@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author:

Ceri Pettit – Corporate Planning and Performance
Manager, Extn: 2240. ceri.pettit@eastherts.gov.uk

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS:

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives (delete as appropriate):	<p>People</p> <p>This priority focuses on enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing, particularly for those who are vulnerable, and delivering strong services.</p> <p>Place</p> <p>This priority focuses on sustainability, the built environment and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.</p> <p>Prosperity</p> <p>This priority focuses on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic and social opportunities.</p>
Consultation:	The senior management team were consulted on the draft 2014/15 – 2017/18 Corporate Strategic Plan.
Legal:	There are no legal implications. Specific legal implications relating to actions set out in the plan will be considered as part of their implementation.
Financial:	There are no financial implications at this stage, but will be considered as actions are brought forward.
Human Resource:	There are no human resources implications.
Risk Management:	There are no direct risk management implications. Specific risk management implications relating to actions set out in the plan will be considered as part of their implementation.

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

East Herts Council Corporate Strategic Plan 2014/15 – 2017/18

	Page Number
1. Introduction	2
2. East Herts Council – Context and Summary	3
3. Organisation and Culture – Here to Help You	5
4. Delivering Your Priorities	7
5. Measuring Success – How we plan and manage what we do	10

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1. Introduction

This is East Herts' Corporate Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018.

East Herts is 'Here to Help' you with good quality services focused on the areas that you've said are important to you.

The weekly waste and recycling collections are probably the most visible and well-known of the services we provide. But this is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of what we do.

Residents and businesses want quick and easy access to a broad range of support and advice from planning applications to housing benefit. We're also beginning to play a bigger role in working with local health services to improve facilities for residents.

At the same time local government faces ever increasing challenges and demands requiring more efficiencies and cuts. We know that local authorities will be facing further significant reductions in the funding we receive from central Government.

So we'll need to become more creative and innovative around the way we use our resources.

Our financial ethos is about getting the best from the income that we receive so that we can generate the greatest overall benefit for our residents. For example we'll be looking at ways to improve returns on our investment portfolio through longer-term projects.

Your councillors have been developing their leadership skills so that they are better placed to take on a more central role in improving the communities where we live.

Working together we will continue to shape East Herts and deliver better outcomes for everyone.

Councillor Anthony Jackson

Leader of the Council

George A Robertson

***Chief Executive and Director
of Customer & Community
Services***

2. East Herts Council in Context and Summary

Our Vision:

To improve the quality of people's lives and preserve all that's best in East Herts

Our Strategic Priorities:

East Herts Council is here to help you. We are committed to the communities we serve and delivering good quality services that reflect local priorities and resources. In pursuit of that vision your elected councillors have identified three **PRIORITIES** to provide focus in those endeavours.

They are:

People – Fair and accessible services for those that use them and opportunities for everyone to contribute

Place – Safe and Clean

Prosperity – Improving the economic and social opportunities available to our communities

The relevance of our priorities has been tested through regular formal and informal consultation with local residents, businesses and partners. Importantly, our priorities are informed by the vision and priority themes of the East Herts Local Strategic Partnership, which brings together the views and talents of a wide range of groups and organisations.

The council's District Plan provides the framework to shape the district's built environment. It supports the council's and the Local Strategic Partnership priorities, whilst at the same time balancing the many external pressures that impact on the plan.

The Council's Developing Roles: Here to help you

Supporting residents and communities to get the best access to the services and advice that they need means the council's role is much more than a service provider.

We realise that *how* we will make a difference to the communities we serve, will be by fulfilling a mix of any of the five main roles we have identified:

Community Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• inspiring and coordinating others' efforts with us and whichever partners can best help; helping communities to achieve their local ambitions
Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• actively engaging with others and jointly committing time, money, intelligence and resources
Service Provider / Commissioner / Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ensuring the delivery of good quality services that reflect local priorities and resources; having responsibility and resources for consistent delivery will provide the bedrock for an organisation that continues to be here to help you
Influencer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lobbying, listening, communicating and campaigning
Enabler	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• making connections and removing barriers

3. Organisation and Culture - Here to Help You

Our organisation:

We are 'Here to help you' our residents and to make a difference. We want to deliver the outcomes that local residents and communities want, so we will always endeavour to:

- Provide efficient and joined-up services, easily accessible to you the customer
- Be a gateway for access. If you need help and don't know who to ask, we will try to help you or put you in touch with someone else who can
- Provide excellent customer service ensuring that our customers get the services or support they need whether provided directly by us or through our partners
- Work in partnership with others across the district through the East Herts Local Strategic Partnership
- Create an environment where communities feel empowered and supported to provide their own solutions

Our Culture:

Our culture focuses on the ethos of being 'Here to help you'. This lies at the root of our organisational values and behaviours demonstrated by the actions of councillors and staff.

The councillors' roles:

Your local councillors are elected to make council policy, take up issues and represent their ward and district communities. The role of councillors has been changing, with more emphasis placed on greater community engagement and stronger local advocacy. We see our councillors being **Strong Community Leaders** who:

- Are in touch with their local community
- Understand what the local issues are
- Support and champion their local issues by seeking to balance conflicting needs or providing the conduit to get things delivered, without losing sight of the strategic context of the district as a whole.

Every district councillor plays a role in ensuring this plan is delivered, whether they are an Executive, scrutiny or regulatory committee member and of course as an elected ward member.

Democratic Representation and Decision Making

East Herts has 50 councillors representing 30 wards and each councillor serves for four years. Following the district council elections in May 2011 and four by-elections in 2013 the breakdown of the political representation is:

Conservative: 45

Independent: 3

Liberal Democrat: 2

The council operates a Leader and Executive model, with key executive decisions taken by an Executive of seven councillors with decisions and other issues reviewed by three scrutiny committees. Separate committees undertake other specific functions, for example, in relation to Planning and Licensing. Full details of the council's decision making process are available at: www.eastherts.gov.uk.

Our People:

The council knows that its most important asset is its people. Our workforce planning has a central role in delivering improved services and has been developed to:

- Help colleagues meet customer and service needs and continue to develop the skills required to deliver them
- Support the council's integrated service and financial planning framework
- Support colleagues to be flexible and resilient; able to respond to service changes and developments
- Support management information

4. Delivering Your Priorities

The priorities and objectives recognise the challenges faced by residents and the council. They reflect the high level outcomes we and our partners want to deliver for the district and its residents.

<i>People</i> – Fair and accessible services for those that use them and opportunities for everyone to contribute	
This priority focuses on delivering strong services and seeking to enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing, particularly for those who are vulnerable.	
Therefore we want to:	Our role will be as a:
Reduce health inequalities, for example, by addressing obesity, smoking and physical inactivity	Community Leader, Influencer, Partner and Enabler
Reduce fuel poverty	Community Leader, Influencer, Partner and Enabler
Increase community engagement	Community Leader, Partner and Enabler
Deliver strong and relevant services	Provider/Commissioner /Manager
Improve outcomes for vulnerable families and individuals	Community Leader, Influencer, Partner and Provider / Commissioner / Manager

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

Place – Safe and Clean	
This priority focuses on sustainability, the built environment and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.	
Therefore we want to:	Our role will be as a:
Reduce residual waste and increase our recycling rate	Community Leader, Influencer and Provider / Commissioner / Manager
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	Community Leader, Influencer and Provider / Commissioner / Manager
Maintain our clean streets and reduce litter	Community Leader and Provider / Commissioner / Manager
Maintain our parks, play areas and open spaces in good order	Community Leader, Partner and Provider / Commissioner / Manager
Reduce anti social behaviour and the fear of crime	Community Leader, Partner and Enabler
Ensure future development best meets the need of the district and its residents	Community Leader, Influencer and Provider / Commissioner / Manager

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

***Prosperity* – Improving the economic and social opportunities available to our communities**

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

Therefore we want to:	Our role will be as a:
Deliver value for money and reduce our reliance on central government funding	Partner and Provider / Commissioner / Manager
Enhance the economic well being of East Herts	Community Leader, Influencer and Enabler
Deliver sustainable rural business growth	Community Leader, Influencer and Enabler
Protect the environment	Community Leader, Influencer and Provider / Commissioner / Manager

5. Measuring Success – a golden thread – How we plan, manage and deliver what we do

- **East Herts Local Strategic Partnership** developed and agreed a Sustainable Community Strategy as the overarching partnership plan for East Herts. Informed by the community it serves, it articulates shared aims and aspirations for the district. For 2012/13 East Herts Local Strategic Partnership reviewed and revised its priorities to three priority outcomes –

- community safety
- promoting economic well being
- supporting the vulnerable

Working groups supporting the original themes have been brought together and partnership actions have been agreed for each priority theme.

- **East Herts Council's Corporate Strategic Plan** (this plan) sets out the overall vision and direction for the council. Refreshed annually it looks forward over the next four years and links to the shared priorities of the Local Strategic Partnership. The Strategic Plan highlights the high level priorities for the council and identifies some of the key outcomes that will to be achieved. The plan sets the direction for the organisation and forms the basis for the council's performance management activities and steers the distribution of resources.
- **Service Plans** are produced every year by Heads of Service, agreed by the council's elected members. They set out what key development type actions need to be undertaken to deliver the outcomes contained in the Corporate Strategic Plan. These actions are linked to key performance indicators, so achievement can be measured and tracked.
- The **Medium Term Financial Plan** considers the resources needed to deliver the council's priorities and ambitions. Development of service plans and a challenge process with elected members feeds into a four-year budget-planning model. The council uses the model to plan its expenditure

and make sure that financial resources are available to fund actions in priority areas.

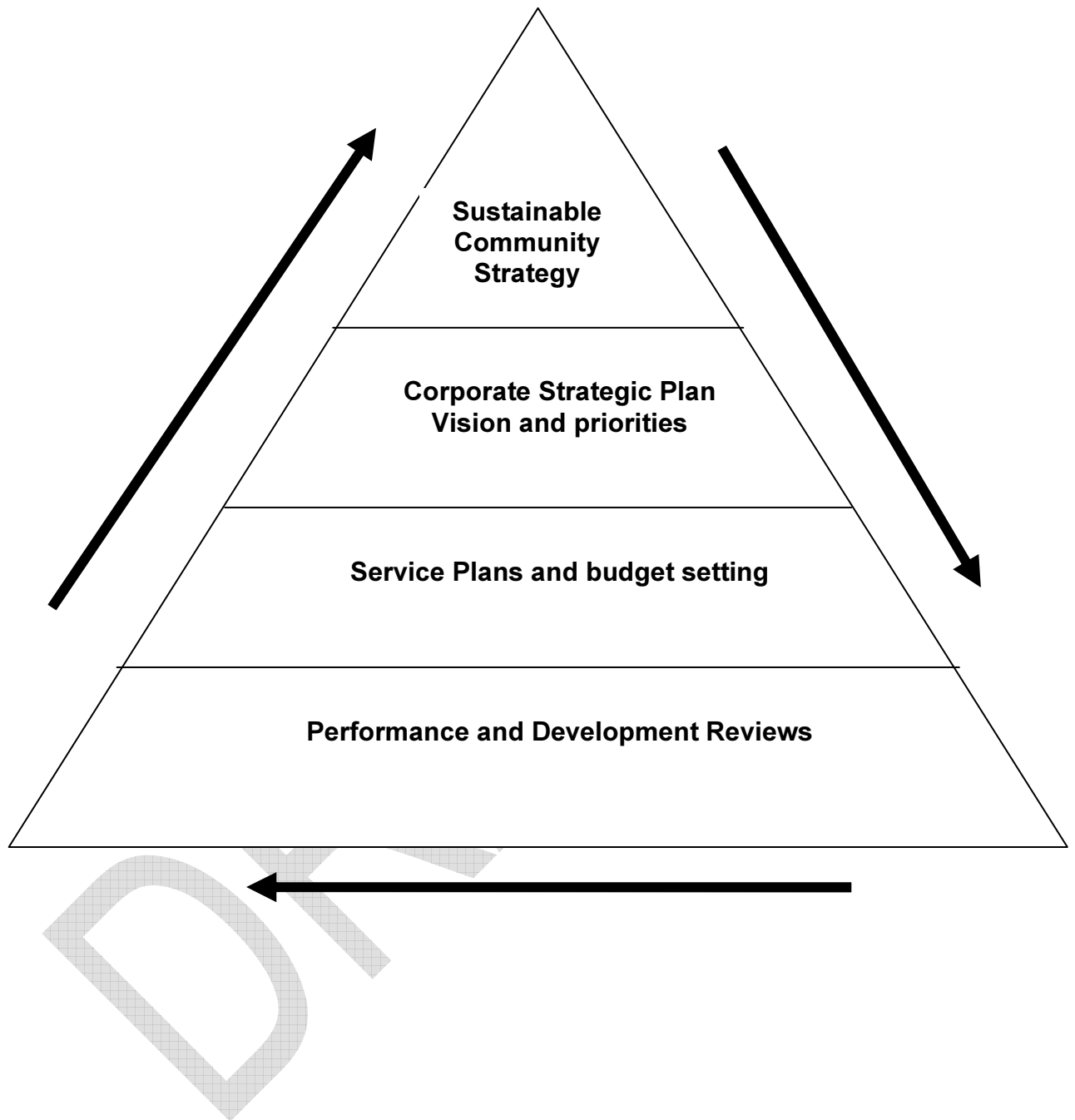
- The **People Strategy** is the council's framework for the delivery of people management, ensuring the council has a high quality workforce delivering good quality services. The strategy contains seven key people objectives, which are aligned to the council's priorities. They are:

- Organisational development
- Learning and development
- Resourcing
- Equality and diversity
- Employee relations and reward
- Health and safety
- HR and payroll service

Overarching these is the organisation's commitment to the 'Here to Help' ethos and behaviours.

- **Performance and Development Reviews** set out individual's personal objectives that a member of staff needs to achieve to deliver their Service Plan and which contribute to the achievement of the council's priorities. This process helps ensure every member of staff has the opportunity to develop their learning and personal development plan.
- The **Performance Management Framework** delivers timely monitoring of the council's priorities and delivery of outcomes. Financial and performance information and analysis is made available in the form of a regular **Corporate Healthcheck** and half yearly **Service Plan Monitoring Reports**. They are considered both by the **Corporate Management Team** and reported formally to the council's **Executive Committee** and **Scrutiny Committees**. Scrutiny meetings are open to all and we strongly encourage the public to attend.

East Herts Performance Management Framework:



NOTE: This is a working paper only, it will not form part of the published Corporate Strategic Plan

Service planning – People, Place and Prosperity

<i>People</i>		
This priority focuses on delivering strong services and seeking to enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing, particularly for those who are vulnerable.		
Therefore we want to:	Our role will be as a:	2014/15 Service plan activity needs to cover the following issues
Reduce health inequalities , for example, tackling obesity, smoking and physical inactivity	Community Leader, Influencer, Partner and Enabler	<p>Projects and initiatives as part of the East Herts Public Health Action Plan.</p> <p>Leisure services supporting and encouraging physical activity through its varied operations. Ongoing sustained approach.</p> <p>Enabling and supporting our Community Sports Network.</p> <p>Delivering grants programmes.</p>

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'C'

Therefore we want to:	Our role will be as a:	2014/15 Service plan activity needs to cover the following issues
Reduce fuel poverty	Community Leader, Influencer, Partner and Enabler	Working to reduce fuel poverty (e.g. the 'Green Deal')
Increase community engagement	Community Leader, Partner and Enabler	<p>Delivering member training on engagement and providing support services</p> <p>Administering Community Capital Grants to support community projects</p> <p>Administering of new homes bonus grant to support community projects</p> <p>Corporate communication</p>

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'C'

Therefore we want to:	Our role will be as a:	2014/15 Service plan activity needs to cover the following issues
Deliver strong and relevant services	Provider, Commissioner and Manager	<p>Sustaining leisure services.</p> <p>Sustaining statutory services (where no specific objective) e.g. EH inspections, DC processing of applications, BC inspections</p> <p>Implementing shared services, improving resilience, providing efficient and value for money services</p> <p>Ensuring that appropriate governance arrangements and internal controls are in place particularly in relation to shared services and partnerships</p> <p>Ensuring that due consideration is given to all risks</p> <p>Compiling the Annual Governance Statement & Action Plan to address any identified control weaknesses across the Council as well as the future monitoring</p> <p>Updating the Business Continuity Plan</p>

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'C'

Therefore we want to:	Our role will be as a:	2014/15 Service plan activity needs to cover the following issues
<p>Improve outcomes for vulnerable families and individuals</p>	<p>Community Leader, Influencer, Partner and Provider/Commissioner</p>	<p>Securing 200 new affordable homes per year.</p> <p>Processing Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support claims and change events within an average of 15 days.</p> <p>Commissioning more advice from CAB and debt advice to support people.</p> <p>Sustaining homelessness service and adapt advice and service to changes with the benefit system.</p> <p>Engaging private landlords to house people on benefits.</p> <p>Delivering the grants scheme</p> <p>Providing leadership for the LSP to deliver projects aimed at the vulnerable e.g. transport, mental health, community safety and 'getting people back to work'</p> <p>Embracing the 'Ageing Well' agenda e.g. housing for older people.</p> <p>Support the Thriving Families programme.</p>

<i>Place</i>		
This priority focuses on sustainability, the built environment and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.		
Therefore we want to:	Our role will be as a:	2014/15 Service plan activity needs to cover the following issues
Reduce residual waste and increase our recycling rate	Community Leader, Influencer and Provider/Commissioner	Increasing recycling rate - removing cardboard from the organic waste stream Reducing residual waste
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	Community Leader, Influencer and Provider/Commissioner	Implementing the East Herts Climate Change Action Plan
Maintain our clean streets and reduce litter	Community Leader and Provider/Commissioner	Sustaining environmental cleanliness e.g. littering, graffiti, fly posting, abandoned vehicles, abandoned dogs

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'C'

Therefore we want to:	Our role will be as a:	2014/15 Service plan activity needs to cover the following issues
Maintain our parks, play areas and open spaces in good order	Community Leader, Partner and Provide/Commissioner	Encouraging participation in outdoor sports and healthier lifestyles Sustaining two Green Flag awards Sustaining current standards of parks and open spaces
Reduce anti social behaviour and the fear of crime	Community Leader, Partner and Enabler	Continue to work with the Community Safety Partnership and the Police and Crime Commissioner - in particular tackling anti social behaviour
Ensure future development best meets the need of the district and its residents	Community Leader, Influencer and Provider / Commissioner / Manager	Programme and completion of the District Plan.

<i>Prosperity</i>		
This priority focuses on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic opportunities and delivering cost effective services.		
Therefore we want to:	Our role will be as a:	2014/15 Service plan activity needs to cover the following issues
Deliver value for money and reduce our reliance on central government funding	Partner and Provider/Commissioner	<div>Delivering planned efficiency savings</div> <div>Re-tendering of key contracts that are due for renewal</div> <div>Facilitating the delivery of a sustainable and balanced MTFP</div> <div>Supporting the effective management and monitoring of the Council's Revenue and Capital budgets to ensure that scarce resources are directed in line with Council priorities</div> <div>Developing a strategy to significantly improve investment returns</div>

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'C'

Therefore we want to:	Our role will be as a:	2014/15 Service plan activity needs to cover the following issues
Enhance the economic well being of East Herts	Community Leader, Influencer and Enabler	<p>Implementing the industrial estates modernisation programme</p> <p>Providing/facilitating business advice</p> <p>Providing advice on procurement regulations in respect to possible initiatives to promote small and medium enterprises (SMEs)</p> <p>Establish another "My incubator" a business start up facility</p> <p>Car Parking improvements</p>
Deliver sustainable rural business growth	Community Leader, Influencer and Enabler	Implementing the Eastern Plateau Rural Development Programme.

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'C'

Therefore we want to:	Our role will be as a:	2014/15 Service plan activity needs to cover the following issues
Protect the environment	Community Leader, Influencer and Provider/Commissioner	Targeting campaigns to encourage resident participation on improving the local environment e.g. green travel

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 3 SEPTEMBER 2013

REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE

FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN TO 2017/18

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

To consider revisions to the Financial Strategy including policy on reserves and the proposed planning assumptions to be used to update the Medium Term Financial Plan and to make recommendations to Council.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL:</u> that:	
(A)	the proposed Financial Strategy be adopted;
(B)	the planning assumptions set out in this report be adopted by the Council as the basis for framing the 2014/15 budget and Medium Term Financial Plan to 2017/18.
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE:</u> that:	
(A)	Executive consider any revisions to the Medium Term Financial Plan from 2014/15 to 2017/18 arising from Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 This report sets the context for the future financial position at East Herts Council. The Financial Strategy is a statement on the Council's approach to management of its financial resources to meet its priority delivery areas. The strategy also considers the appropriate level of reserves that the Council holds to mitigate current and longer term risks.

1.2 Medium term financial planning must make assumptions about the future course of demand and cost pressures on spending and on the factors which affect future income. In June 2013, announcements were made from the Comprehensive Spending Review that impact on the levels of Government funding that change some of the previous assumptions that were in the medium term financial plan from 2015/16 onwards. This plan addresses the outcomes of those announcements.

1.3 In 2013/14, the way in which Local Government is funded has fundamentally changed. This was reflected in the Medium Term financial plan considered in February 2013 and continues to be reflected here.

2.0 Report

2.1 This report considers and outlines the underlying assumptions within the Medium Term Financial plan (MTFP) and addresses the following key areas:

1. Identification of the impact of funding changes and identifies the risks with some assessment of sensitivity analysis

2. Review of the financial strategy including the current level of reserves

3. Considers underlying assumptions around inflation, savings and growth

4. Other factors that need to be considered

Funding Changes

2.2 In 2013/14 the way that Local Government is funded has fundamentally changed, with the introduction of the “Retention of Business Rates” scheme whereby the Business rates that we collect in as a Council are now shared between us and Central Government. If the Council is able to grow business rate yield above the rate that Government assume we will collect, then we will be able to retain 50% of that growth. If we do not collect as much as they anticipate, then this impacts upon our funding until a safety net kicks in at 7.5%.

2.3 The actual rate that is charged is set by Central Government and the Valuation Office determines how much each business must

pay. We do not have influence over these amounts but some businesses may be eligible for discounts and exemptions that reduce their burden. Any discounts awarded, impact upon our funding levels as do any revaluations that businesses are awarded on appeal. The rate of tax is indexed to each September's RPI.

- 2.4 The scheme has been running since 1 April 2013 and at this stage we are assuming that the predictions made by Central Government are accurate and have reflected this in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The monitoring of levels of business rate collection and the forecast of future levels is in early stages this year, but forms part of the monthly Healthcheck budget monitoring process. Significant deviations will be reported.
- 2.5 From 1 April 2013, Council Tax Benefit was replaced with a Council Tax support scheme that was consulted on during 2012/13. The shared Revenues and Benefits service has been administering this scheme since that time. The scheme was devised so that for non-pensioners (who were protected from the changes in the scheme), all recipients of Council Tax support had to pay at least 8.5% of their liability.
- 2.6 Any increase in the cost of discounts above our original estimates would impact upon our funding. A 1% increase in the cost would cost us in the region of £7k. At this stage of the financial year, we are not anticipating additional burdens and have not reflected this in the MTFP but we continue to consider this risk through the monthly Health Check process.
- 2.7 In June 2013, there were announcements around the funding for Local Government in the Comprehensive Spending review. The key points from those announcements are as follows:
- 10% funding reduction in 15/16 with notes that similar reductions expected in future years. This is on our total funding and not just the grant element that we receive from Central Government
 - Up to 40% top-slice from our New Homes Bonus Grant although it is unclear on how this will be calculated or how this will be administered as this is subject to consultation.
 - An overall Welfare spending cap for all of Government. At this stage it is unclear what impact this could have on East

Herts directly.

- 2.8 The impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review has been included in the MTFP and so our overall funding levels have been reduced in each year from 2015/16 onwards as part of our planning assumptions.
- 2.9 The funding levels for 2014/15 were announced in December 2012 as part of the 2013/14 settlement. The funding that we are due to receive is an indicative amount and could be subject to change later this year.
- 2.10 The proposed MTFP includes a specific contingency item of £200k in 2014/15 to meet any changes in funding should these be forthcoming.

Review of the financial strategy and current level of reserves

- 2.11 **Essential Reference Paper C** is the current Financial Strategy which has been refreshed to reflect the changes in Central Government funding.
- 2.12 The financial strategy and the MTFP have a 5 year focus and for the purposes of the Strategy this remains sound. However, modelling on a longer term basis, considering potential scenarios around further changes in the scope and amount of Central Government funding are being developed to assist with longer term planning. The types of scenario include:
- Changes in population numbers
 - Potential changes in Household numbers
 - Potential changes in Business growth
 - Sustainability of other Government grants such as New Homes Bonus
 - Longer term investment decisions
- 2.13 A review of the level of reserves has been carried out as at 31st March 2013 based on the draft final accounts (Essential Reference Paper D refers). This indicates that reserves are above the ceiling set out in the strategy by £805k. Consideration does need to be given to the potential release of reserves to reduce the overall general reserve which will be reviewed as part of the integrated resource and service planning currently underway.

- 2.14 At 31 March 2013 earmarked reserves totalled £6.052m. Additions to Earmarked reserves in 2012/13 totalled £2.692m. A number of these will be released in year for specific purposes.
- 2.15 There was an underspend in the financial year 2012/13 which meant that resources could be set aside for earmarked purposes. To ensure that any ongoing financial implications are identified early, a specific “Budget Challenge” session is being run examining financial trends in all budget areas to identify any resource that can be reallocated to priority areas. The results of these challenge sessions will assist with identifying new savings plans necessary to meet the new savings requirements identified in this MTFP when setting the budget for 2014/15 in January 2014.

Underlying Assumptions around Inflation, Savings and Growth

- 2.16 **Essential Reference C** refers to the underlying assumptions that have been made in terms of inflation and other price increases during the medium term planning and the summary model of the MTFP shows how these have been included in the plan.
- 2.17 The model assumes that all savings and growth that have previously been identified are all delivered, and this is included within the detail sheets behind the summary model.
- 2.18 The MTFP also indicates that there are new savings that have to be identified, specifically for 2016/17 and 2017/18. To be able to deliver this level of savings planning needs to be underway to ensure that these can be fully met in those years.
- 2.19 During this planning round, further review needs to be undertaken to ensure that the assumptions around the Localisation of Council Tax Support and Business Rate growth are valid and especially understanding the impact on the Council Tax Base. Given the fact that both of these schemes are new from 1 April 2013, detailed modelling is already being considered but with only a few months’ data available on which to forecast, this is an area that needs to be kept under detailed review.
- 2.20 Recent decisions on the Shared Service for ICT, Print and Design and Business Improvement which indicated significant savings from 2014/15 have also been included in this refreshed model.

Other factors that need to be considered

- 2.21 There will be a triennial review of Pensions that will report in November 2013. At this stage no assumptions have been made about potential increase in contributions above and beyond those already included in the model after the last review. However, there is a risk that further contributions will need to be made. Once the review has been undertaken, the Council will need to consider the best way of funding any additional contributions, either through additional revenue funding, or where appropriate, through a one-off payment to protect on-going revenue commitments. Decisions will have to be made by the Council once detailed information is available to assess the best way of dealing with this issue.
- 2.22 The Council had no unused capital receipts at 31 March 2013. Significant Capital development would be a cost to investment income and the Council needs to consider any additional Capital proposals and the total cost of any decisions. Invest to save proposals and externally funded projects need to take into account total costs to the Council as and when decisions are made on whether to undertake these projects.

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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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives	The budget and MTFP apply resources to achieve all the Council's priorities
Consultation:	Corporate Business Scrutiny are contributing to consultation on the budget with further contribution planned when setting the budget.
Legal:	None at this stage but there are legal implications when the Council sets its budget for 2014/15
Financial:	This report does not propose any spending or income but establishes priorities for future budgets from 2014/15
Human Resource:	Where savings options may cause redundancy the relevant HR policies will apply and those savings remain subject to the outcome of the application of those policies.
Risk Management:	<p>Financial forecasts are inherently uncertain particularly given uncertainty around future funding.</p> <p>Risks around sensitivity of the information used has been identified and risk management includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making best estimates on the most relevant and up to date information• Adoption of the financial strategy• Proposed contingency sums• Adequate levels of earmarked and general reserve• Clearly defining assumptions made

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER B

Planning assumptions for August 2013 MTFP update

Factor	Note	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Council Tax Increase		0%	0%	2.00%	2.00%
Pay settlement (including allowance for increments and local award)	1	1.75%	1.75%	3.25%	3.25%
Members allowances	2	1%	1%	2.5%	2.5%
Price Inflation	3	2.3%	2.1%	2.00%	2.00%
Contract Inflation (general)	4	2.3%	2.1%	2.00%	2.00%
Council Tax Base	5	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Pension Contributions	6	+1%	+1%	+1%	+1%

Notes

1. Based on pay restraint ceilings to 2015/16 then average earnings less 2%. Includes an annual 0.75% increase to take account of increments and local award
2. Members allowances are set by Independent remuneration Panel but for planning purposes only, have included up rating in line with assumptions around pay.
3. Price inflation is based upon OBR predictions around inflation in future years
4. Contract inflation is based upon OBR predictions around inflation in future years
5. Council Tax base increases have been calculated using trend information. Further revisions may apply once more data on the impact of Council Tax support has been analysed.
6. Currently using assumptions from the last triennial review in 2010. Review results are due in November 2013 which may revise assumptions for final budget setting.

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THE FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2014/15 TO 2017/18

What is it and why is it important?

The medium term financial strategy is a statement of the objectives and principles that underpin the Council's approach to managing its resources looking ahead over a period of three years or more. It sets out the framework within which the Medium Term Financial Plan is developed and reviewed.

The strategy is important because the council must ensure that its plans for services are affordable and sustainable in the light of the resources it can reasonably expect to be available. This allows the Council to take decisions about prioritising the resources it has. Included in those resources is income from council tax as well as funding from Business rates, grants and other income streams from fees and charges. The future is inherently uncertain and the strategy considers that uncertainty and how the council can mitigate the risks.

Business rates retention and local council tax support were introduced from April 2013 and the risk profile of our funding changed. In the medium term the pace and strength of economic recovery, indicate a longer period of spending restraint. In this context the proposed strategy is to maximise the Council's financial resilience and consider ways to become more self sufficient where possible.

What outcomes is the strategy designed to achieve?

The objectives of the strategy are

- To ensure the Council is well placed to meet uncertainty about the level of funding that the government will be able to provide acknowledging that such funding will be constrained.
- To ensure that tax payers, service users, partner agencies and Council employees are aware of the funding issues faced by the council and are given the opportunity to help

shape the Council's planning.

- To ensure that funding is available to meet the highest priority future revenue and capital needs of the Council as they arise
- To maximise the effective use of resources by annual review of the Council's resources corporately and by redirecting funding to higher priority areas as identified in the Corporate Plan and service plans.
- To ensure funding is available for priority service improvements.
- To inform service planning and ensure that the immediate and future financial implications of all decisions are taken into account in a timely manner and in the context of the Council's overall financial situation.
- To minimise volatility of council tax and ensure that increases are within any limits set by the government, and at least consistent with, and ideally lower than, those of similarly placed authorities
- To manage risks including keeping adequate reserves to ensure so far as is reasonably possible that service delivery is not disturbed by calls on funding from short term unforeseeable events
- To achieve value for money from all spending
- To be aware of and take up funding opportunities where these are consistent with the Council's objectives and where the obligations taken on are manageable by the council and commensurate with the sums received. In particular consider options that enable a greater self-reliance on our own funding and reduce the reliance on Central Government funding.
- To achieve efficiency in the use of resources including invest to save opportunities by taking into consideration relevant life cycle costs

- To secure, maintain and renew a stock of physical assets consistent with the Council's corporate priorities as detailed in the Asset Management Strategy
- To ensure the Financial Strategy and all the Council's other strategies are consistent.

What principles underpin the strategy?

The principles underlying the strategy are those of sustainability, transparency and consistency as evidenced by :

- The Council will adopt a prudent approach to assumptions and forecasts of its income and spending including assessment of:
 - the resources available to it from government and other external sources
 - changes in in-put prices both generally - including pay and specific price changes where these have significant impact on individual services by means of indexation clauses in contracts
 - interest rates and the growth of the wider economy so far as these affect the Council's ability to generate income from charges
 - the council tax base and rates of council tax collection and of other incomes.
 - investment returns and other factors as advised by the scheme's actuary, such as longevity, affecting pension costs
 - its ability to generate cashable efficiency gains
 - exposure to VAT and other tax liabilities
 - exposure to uninsured risks
- The council will establish spending plans consistent with its forecast of income other than where existing reserves are planned to be used
- The council will not commit to ongoing spending from incomes of a one off nature without a clear exit strategy in the absence of alternative funding

- The council will limit its borrowing by reference to CIPFA's prudential code and will make a prudent provision for repayment in accordance with that code.
- The council has adopted and will keep under review a policy on the level of reserves to ensure adequate but not excessive reserves.
- The council has adopted and will review a charging policy that is fair in terms of:
 - different service users,
 - the call on the tax payer as against the service user
 - competition with other providers
- The council will maintain sound financial management practices set out in Financial Regulations and Financial Procedure Rules
- The Council will maintain the accounts in accordance with relevant codes of accounting practice and in particular CIPFA's BVACOP and financial planning will be consistent with those requirements.
- The strategy will be reviewed annually.

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER D

Reserves Policy

Why is a policy on reserves needed?

1. A policy is needed to satisfy statutory requirements (Sections 32 and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992) in connection with the calculation of the budget requirement when setting the council tax. The Local Government Act 2003 also requires the chief finance officer to review and report on the adequacy of reserves when a council sets its budget. The same Act empowers the government to set minimum levels of reserves in the event an authority fails to act prudently.
2. More generally, an agreed policy on reserves assists in medium term planning. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy issued guidance on reserves and balances in February 2003 and November 2008; this policy is consistent with that guidance.
3. The format of the accounts introduced by the application of International Financial Reporting Standards gives more prominence to the movement of and balances held in reserves which are a key indicator of an organisation's financial health and resilience.

What are reserves?

4. Reserves are the accumulated surplus of income over expenditure on an accruals rather than cash basis of accounting. There can be, and usually is, a difference between the total of reserves and accumulated cash balances.
5. Reserves can be usable or unusable. Usable reserves represent resources that are available to meet future liabilities. Unusable reserves are those which arise from accounting regulations – capital revaluations and pensions for example – and which relate to transactions which by statute cannot be put to or taken from the general reserve.

6. Accounting conventions differentiate between reserves and provisions; provisions being amounts charged to the income and expenditure accounts in respect of liabilities likely to be incurred from past events and where a reliable estimate of the liability is possible but where the timing and/or precise value of that liability is uncertain. The reserves to be held and principles to assess the adequacy of balances.
7. The Council will hold two types of reserve
 - General reserves – by way of a working balance to manage cash flows and limit the need for temporary borrowing and to provide a contingency for unforeseeable events and emergency spending;
 - Earmarked reserves – reserves set aside for a defined purpose to meet known or predicted future liabilities.
8. The Council will adopt a risk based approach in considering the adequacy of individual reserves and the aggregate of all reserves. In reviewing reserves both immediate and the medium term requirements and risks will be considered; in general the longer the planning time frame the greater uncertainty to be applied to assumptions.

The general reserves:

9. The Council will maintain:-
 - a general reserve fund balance adequate to meet the needs of an in year working balance and as a second level of contingency; plus
 - a general reserve adequate to provide a reasonable level of contingency and manage differences between the timing of any significant charges to the income and expenditure account and MTFP assumptions .
10. There is no single formula by which all relevant considerations can be captured to work out any minimum, optimum or maximum level of general reserves or reserves in aggregate. Set out below are a minimum and maximum assessment that might be expected to apply in “normal”

times. In the event that the general reserve is likely to fall outside of these boundaries the Council will give consideration to the need for any corrective action.

11. Subject to the risk considerations set out below, the aggregate balance on these reserves, less the amount held in respect of the Building Control Account, should normally not be expected to fall below £3m. This minimum acknowledges the Council's exposure to variable interest rates, the degree to which services are bought in by contract, the dependency on income streams with an in year degree of uncertainty, the absence of any specific insurance reserve, risks associated with all regulatory services, the recent track record of spending within budget, plus the potential for error in any financial forecast. Since this minimum balance was set in 2010 the Council has accepted some additional risk in its treasury activity by placing a proportion of its investments for longer (4 years) to achieve an improved investment return. These and other factors will vary over time and so may cause the minimum level to vary.
12. In terms of a maximum level of reserve the maximum should not be expected to exceed the sum of:
 - (a) 40% of the budget requirement at the start of the year of account
 - (b) 2.5% of total assets in the last audited financial statements
 - (c) The sum of future planned withdrawals and/or contributions to the general reserve in the last approved MTFP
 - (d) Less any sum held as an insurance reserve

Note: at 31 March 2013 the above limit was as follows;

(a) 40% of £9.330m (2012/13) =	£ 3.732m
(b) 2.5% of £128.538m (31/3/2012) =	£ 3.213m
(c) Future withdrawals from the general reserve	£0.200m
(d) Final accounts 31 March 2012	<u>-£ 0.010m</u>
Total	£7.135m

The actual net aggregate balance March 2013 £7.940m

13. The primary risks to be considered are the assumptions used to underpin the budget and medium term financial strategy and the judgement of the risk that those assumptions may prove to be wrong and the potential impact of variance from the assumption. The key assumptions to be considered are:-
- the potential volatility of government general and specific grants
 - inflation and interest rates
 - amount and timing of capital receipts
 - delivery of planned efficiency and other savings
 - expected growth in activity from demand led or discretionary expansion of services
 - new partnerships and major capital schemes
 - current and future availability of alternative sources of funding

Earmarked Reserves

14. Earmarked reserves will be established only for well defined specific purposes and generally will be expected to be used within the period of the MTFP.
15. Where specific reserves are established to meet defined risks of indeterminate duration the need for and balance on the reserve will be reviewed and likelihood and impact assessment will be reassessed as part of the Council's strategic risk management processes.
16. At 31 March 2013 earmarked reserves totalled £6.052m. Additions to Earmarked reserves in 2012/13 totalled £2.692m

Reporting of reserves

17. As a minimum, the annual budget report and the final accounts report will set out opening balances, expected or actual transfers to and from reserves together with closing

balances. The Director of Finance and Support Services as S151 officer will comment on the adequacy of reserves in those reports.

18. During the year the adequacy of reserves will be reviewed as part of the health check monitoring in the light of any significant budget variances. If the balance on general reserves appears likely to move outside of the minimum/maximum boundary the need for corrective action will be considered in the next planned health check report or earlier if the Council's S151 officer so requires.

Governance arrangements in respect of reserves

19. Arrangements for the governance of the use of general and earmarked reserves will be set out in Financial Regulations. Planned contributions to and withdrawals from specific reserves will be set out in the MTFP approved by the Council.
20. The Council has delegated approval of the Final Accounts to the Audit Committee and as a result prior arrangements by which the Executive might approve at any time the establishment of an earmarked reserve and appropriations thereto from unused approved budgets have been revoked given that the full Council will no longer be able to ratify or amend those decisions. Such transactions now require the prior consent of full Council.

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GENERAL FUND - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN						
SUMMARY Model August 2013						
	2012/13 Actual	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Net Cost of Services	12,776	13,359	14,519	15,017	15,714	16,434
Interest Payments	660	662	662	662	662	662
Interest & Investment Income	-1,193	-996	-817	-670	-872	-1,302
Pensions Interest/Return on Assets	1,029	1,043	1,043	1,043	1,043	1,043
Fees & Charges			-118	-237	-352	-479
Growth Items			40	58	76	76
Special Items			122	2	3	1
Efficiency Savings - Existing plans			-492	-735	-883	-883
Efficiency Savings - New					-571	-1,512
One off Savings			-15			
Known Changes			766	1,297	1,021	1,149
Planning Contingency		590	692	34		
Funding change Contingency			200			
Council Tax Support Scheme: grants to town and parish		255				
RCCO/Internal Interest	25	25	25	25	25	25
Net Expenditure	13,297	14,938	16,629	16,495	15,865	15,214
Contribution to / from Earmarked Reserves	1,443	-166	-67	-361	39	89
Contribution to/ from Interest Equalisation reserve	1,249	600	-112	-195	-125	
Use of General Reserve	97		-200			
Movement on Pension Reserve	-911	-550	-550	-550	-550	-550
Net Expenditure after reserves	15,175	14,822	15,699	15,389	15,229	14,753
Formula Grant/NNDR	-5,537	-5,940	-5,174	-4,657	-4,191	-3,772
Council Tax Freeze Grant	-233	-94	-94	-94		
Other general grants	-13	-16	-16			
New Homes Bonus*			-1,693	-1,873	-2,053	-1,818
Transfer (from)/to Collection Fund	-62	-95				
Demand on Collection Fund	9,330	8,677	8,722	8,765	8,985	9,164
Council Taxbase	58,628	55,084	55,359	55,636	55,914	55,914
Council Tax at Band D	159.13	157.54	157.54	157.54	160.69	163.90

Sheet Reference

A

C

C

K

J

G

H

B

D

E

F

Percentage Increase -1.00% 0.00% 0.00% 2.00% 2.00%

*New Homes Bonus income of £840k for 2012/13 and £1,393k for 13/14 is already built into Net Cost of Services

GENERAL FUND - MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN
SHEET A
SUB - SUMMARY August 2013

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Director of Neighbourhood services	126	120	122	124	128	132
Corporate Support	99	104	105	107	111	114
Planning & Building Control	1,262	1,185	1,223	1,261	1,329	1,400
Housing Services	423	539	539	549	564	580
Community Safety & Health	1,361	1,530	1,506	1,540	1,595	1,652
Director of Customer & Community	142	134	136	139	143	148
Welfare Reform	2	170				
Environment	4,792	5,648	5,820	5,975	6,145	6,320
Customer & New Media	-706	-1,048	-981	-914	-832	-747
Economic Development	115	93	109	124	141	159
Community Engagement	746	741	716	730	749	767
Hertford Theatre	201	216	232	248	269	290
Director of Internal Services	142	132	134	137	141	145
Governance Support	351	605	622	639	666	694
People, ICT & Property Services	2,481	2,376	2,453	2,500	2,581	2,665
Financial Support Services	555	569	579	590	608	627
Revenues & Benefits	202	168	117	151	221	293
Corporate Risk	338	353	360	367	377	386
Other	327	-87	785	797	815	834
Non Distributed Costs						
Capital Salaries	-172	-188	-26	-26	-26	-26
Adjustment	-10		-33	-21	-11	
Net Cost of Services	12,776	13,359	14,519	15,017	15,714	16,434
Interest Payments	660	662	662	662	662	662
Interest & Investment Income	-1,193	-996	-817	-670	-872	-1,302
Pensions Interest/Return on Assets	1,029	1,043	1,043	1,043	1,043	1,043
Known Changes			766	1,297	1,021	1,149
Contribution to Earmarked Reserves	1,620	99	189	189	189	189
Contribution to/ from Interest Equalisation reserve	1,249	600	-112	-195	-125	
Contribution from Earmarked Reserves	-177	-265	-256	-550	-150	-100
Funding change Contingency			200			
Council Tax Support Scheme: grants to town and parish		255				
Planning Contingency		590	692	34		
Savings 2014/15			-492	-492	-492	-492
Savings 2015/16				-244	-244	-244
Savings 2016/17					-148	-148
Savings 2017/18						
Efficiency Savings - New					-571	-1,512
One Off Savings			-15			
Growth 2014/15			40	40	40	40
Growth 2015/16				18	18	18
Growth 2016/17					18	18
Growth 2017/18						
Special Item			122	2	3	1
RCCO/Internal Interest	25	25	25	25	25	25
Use of General Reserve	97		-200			
Movement on Pension Reserve	-911	-550	-550	-550	-550	-550
Car Parking Fees & Charges			-80	-160	-235	-321
Other fees & Charges			-38	-77	-117	-158
Net Expenditure	15,175	14,822	15,699	15,389	15,229	14,753

Formula Grant/NNDR	-5,537	-5,940	-5,174	-4,657	-4,191	-3,772
Council Tax Freeze Grant	-233	-94	-94	-94		
Other general grants	-13	-16	-16			
New Homes Bonus			-1,693	-1,873	-2,053	-1,818
Transfer (from)/to Collection Fund	-62	-95				
Demand on Collection Fund	9,330	8,677	8,722	8,765	8,985	9,164
Council Taxbase	58,628	55,084	55,359	55,636	55,914	55,914
Council Tax at Band D	159.13	157.54	157.54	157.54	160.69	163.90
Percentage Increase		-1.00%	0.00%	0.00%	2.00%	2.00%

Pay and Price Assumptions for Medium Term Financial Plan

Data Table	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Overall salary increase (Inclusive of everything)*	1.75%	1.75%	1.75%	3.25%	3.25%
Members Allowances	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	2.50%	2.50% **
Inflation	2.00%	2.30%	2.10%	2.00%	2.00%
NNDR	2.50%	2.80%	3.20%	3.60%	3.90%
Fuel	2.50%	2.30%	2.10%	2.00%	2.00%
Contract Index - All Contracts	3.20%	2.30%	2.10%	2.00%	2.00%
Contract Index - Street Cleansing	¹ 2.60%	2.30%	2.10%	2.00%	2.00%
Contract Index - Refuse Only	² 2.60%	2.30%	2.10%	2.00%	2.00%
Contract Index - Parking	³ 3.10%	2.30%	2.10%	2.00%	2.00%
Contract Index - Leisure	⁴ 3.10%	2.80%	3.20%	3.60%	3.90%
Income					
Increase for Fees & Charges	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%
Increase for car parks	0.00%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%

1. Street cleansing / Grounds Maintenance - CPI

2. Refuse & Recycling - CPI

3. Parking - April CPI applied in January

4. Leisure - January RPIx applied in January

*Salary Increase

Pay award	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.50	2.50
Pay allowance - increments and local award	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75
	1.75	1.75	1.75	3.25	3.25

** Subject to IRP recommendation

OTHER KNOWN REDUCTIONS AND INCREASES

SHEET B

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Increase in pension costs	97	194	291	388
Changes to Terms and Conditions	-258	-352	-352	-352
Hertford Theatre Hydro Income		-11	-11	-11
National Insurance rebate (exact date uncertain)			222	222
Waste: Alternate Financial Model (AFM) income reduction	32	32	32	32
Application of New Homes Bonus - 25% to parish and towns	423	468	513	454
Application of New Homes Bonus - priority spending capped at 2012/13	210	210	210	210
LDF Public exam/Green belt review	140	390	90	40
Housing Condition survey	50			
Future Council elections		100		
Reduction in housing benefit over recovery	61	122	183	244
Adjust council tax admin grant	79	158	237	316
Causeway lease reversal of accrual			-380	-380
Data Protection Officer - (Salaries - Customer Svs & NM)	-30	-30	-30	-30
Auto Enrolment (pensions)	77	77	77	77
DCLG New Burdens income (Revs & Bens)		53.5	53.5	53.5
New Recycling Scheme - Ongoing Annual operating savings	-25.8	-25.8	-25.8	-25.8
New Recycling scheme - Revenue cost from loss of investment interest	36.5	36.5	36.5	36.5
New Recycling scheme - Additional income from Recycling credits	-146.2	-146.2	-146.2	-146.2
New Recycling scheme - Loss of income from mixing material	20.9	20.9	20.9	20.9
Total	766	1,297	1,021	1,149

Investment Income

SHEET C

Investment Income - 12/12/2012

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
total cash	62	61	60	59
Fixed term				
Lloyds rate 3.72	10	10	10	10
	372	372		
rolled over rate 2.0			200	200
Natwest rate 2.25	5	5	5	5
to Apr 13				
rolled over rate 1.5	75	75		
rolled over rate 1.75			88	88
Lloyds rate 3%	10	10	10	10
Jul-13				
Income	87			
rolled over rate 1.55	103	155		
rolled over rate 1.8			180	180
Barclays	5	5	5	5
to Aug 14 rate 2%	100	30		
rolled over rate 1.5%		44	75	75
Investec	21.8	22	22	22
Rate 0.75%	164	165		
1.00%			220	
1.50%				330
Short term	10	9	8	7
rate	0.7	0.7	0.9	1.2
Income	70	63	72	84
In house cash flow	25	25	30	40
total	996	929	865	997

	£million		Maturity
Lloyds min return	10	3.72%	Apr-15
Nat west	5	2.25%	Apr-13
Lloyds	10	3%	Jul-13
Barclays	5	2%	Aug-14

Using Office Budget Responsibility (OBR)

13/14	0.70%
14/15	0.70%
15/16	0.90%
16/17	1.20%

Investment Income - 24/07/2013

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
total cash	64	63	62	61	61
Fixed term					
Lloyds rate 3.72	10	10	10	10	10

		372	372			
rolled over ra	rate 1.1			110		
rolled over ra	rate 1.4				140	
rolled over ra	rate 2.0					200
Natwest	rate 2.25	5	5	5	5	5
to Apr 13						
rolled over	rate 0.8	40				
rolled over	rate 0.7		35			
rolled over	rate 1.00			50		
rolled over	rate 1.4				70	
rolled over ra	rate 2.0					100
Lloyds	rate 3%	10	10	10	10	10
Jul-13						
	Income	75				
rolled over	rate 0.92	70				
rolled over	rate 0.75		75			
rolled over	rate 1.1			110		
rolled over	rate 1.4				140	
rolled over	rate 2.0					200
Barclays		5	5	5	5	5
to Aug 14	rate 2%	100	30			
rolled over	rate 0.7%		23			
rolled over	rate 1.1%			50		
rolled over	rate 1.4%				70	
rolled over	rate 2.0%					100
Barclays		5	5	5	5	5
Until April 14	rate 0.88%	40				
rolled over	rate 0.7%		35			
rolled over	rate 1.1%			50		
rolled over	rate 1.4%				70	
`	rate 2.0%					100
Investec		21.8	22	22	22	22
Rate	0.70%	114	165			
	1.00%			220		
	1.60%				352	
	2.10%					462
Short term		10	6	5	5	5
rate		0.7	0.7	0.9	1.2	1.9
Income		40	42	45	60	95
In house cash flow		45	40	35	40	45
Total		896	817	670	872	1302
Total - Feb 2012 MTFP		996	929	865	997	0
Difference (2014/15 - 2016/17 to be funded from Reserves)		100	112	195	125 0	-1302

	£million		Maturity
Lloyds	min return	10	3.72% Apr-15
Nat west		5	2.25% Apr-13
Lloyds		10	3% Jul-13
Barclays		5	2% Aug-14

Using Office Budget Responsibility (OBR)

13/14	0.70%
14/15	0.70%
15/16	0.95%
16/17	1.40%
17/18	2.05%

FORMULA GRANT AND RETAINED NNDR**SHEET D**

EHC Summary - Figures from AM 07/08/12

Like for like on formula grant basis

add council tax support grant

total = start up funding allocation

NNDR retained business rates = base line funding level

RSG and central share and ctax support

2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
5,537	5,321	4,851	4,678	4,678	
	674	674	674	674	
5,537	5,995	5,525	5,352	5,352	

2,637 2,430 2,354 2,354

3,358 3,095 2,998 2,998

Settlement December 2012

NNDR

RSG

note-totals include Council Tax Support grant for both EHC and Parishes

2,377 2,450

3,573 2,746

5,950 5,196

Indicative NNDR figures

Billing Authority Baseline

EHC Baseline (80%)

EHC Baseline Funding Level

Tariff

21,556

17,245

2,377 2,450

14,868 15,324 15,783 16,256

EHC NNDR 1

Billing Authority Baseline

EHC Baseline (80%)

EHC Baseline Funding Level - **Budget Figure**

Tariff (as above)

21,544 22,190 22,856 23,543

17,235 17,752 18,285 18,834

2,367 2,428 2,502 2,578

14,868 15,234 15,783 16,256

BUDGET TOTALS

RSG

NNDR

3,573 2,746 2,540 2,350

2,367 2,428 2,502 2,578

5,940 5,174 5,042 4,928 4,928

CSR 2013

Less 10% 15/16 onwards

5,174 4,657 4,191 3,772

- 385 737 £'000

New Homes bonus - Income (expenditure shown on known changes sheet)

SHEET E

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
New Homes Bonus 11/12 (to be received 11/12 to 16/17)	(415)	(415)	(415)	(415)	(415)	
New Homes Bonus 12/13 (to be received 12/13 to 17/18)	(425)	(425)	(425)	(425)	(425)	(425)
New Homes Bonus 13/14 (to be received 13/14 to 18/19)		(553)	(553)	(553)	(553)	(553)
New Homes Bonus 14/15 (to be received 14/15 to 19/20)			(300)	(300)	(300)	(300)
New Homes Bonus 15/16 (to be received 15/16 to 20/21)				(180)	(180)	(180)
New Homes Bonus 16/17 (to be received 16/17 to 21/22)					(180)	(180)
New Homes Bonus 17/18/ (to be received 17/18 to 22/23)						(180)
Built into Estimates	840	1,393				
	-	-	(1,693)	(1,873)	(2,053)	(1,818)

Revised tax base - AM 07/08/12		13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
Current		58,774	58,950	59,127	59,304
council tax support scheme		-4608	-4608	-4608	-4608
growth in cases 1% 2014/15			-46	-46	-46
Reduction in empty discounts		377	377	377	377
revised tax base		54,543	54,673	54,850	55,027
		13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
ST Figures 14/12/12					
Eligible chargeable properties		59,354			
Council tax benefit scheme		(4,639)			
Estimated growth	0.89%	487			
Non collection allowance	1.25%	(690)			
Increase - CT reduction scheme		175			
Increase - Wider CT reforms		397			
Assume increase of 0.5% per annum (SC 18/12/2012)			275	277	278
		55,084	55,359	55,636	55,914

Planning & Building Control

Reduction in budget		(61,000)		
Building control fees - Loss of Income				
Building Control Reduced Spending	(50,000)	(50,000)		
Development Control BPI led savings	(22,000)			
DC miscellaneous costs				
Planning administration	(34,000)	(34,000)		
LDF funding				
Planning policy resources				

Community Safety & Health

Set taxi licence fees to recover full costs	(5,000)			
Restructuring the services delivered by Licensing, Community Safety and Environmental Health leading to a reduction in resources	(106,000)			
Continuation of funding Housing Improvement Agency				

Environmental Services

Waste services contract transition	(100,000)			
Leisure Savings	155,000			
Grounds Maintenance Contract Extension	(12,500)	(37,500)		

Community Engagement

C&C - MOW				
Hertford Theatre - new business plan	(45,000)	(14,300)	(9,500)	

People, ICT & Property

Reduce HR support - Shared Support Services	(2,000)	(5,000)	(4,000)	
Reduction in corporate training budget pro rata to staff reduction	(3,000)			
ICT - Shared Services Savings				
Printing - Shared Services Savings				
FM - Shared Services Savings				
Phased reduction in hours of estates staffing	(14,000)			
Estimated Shared services Savings	(208,000)			
SBC Contribution to EHC retained recharges	(9,560)			

Revenues & Benefits

Shared service efficiencies		(15,000)		
Invest to save option				

Democratic & Legal Services

Reduction in Legal third party payments budget		(27,000)		
Land Charges - staffing reductions	(23,000)			
Efficiency measures for electoral canvass	(12,500)			

2016/17 Savings -			(134,500)	
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Total to be built into estimates

(491,560)	(243,800)	(148,000)	0
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One Off Savings

2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
£	£	£	£

SHEET H

Customer & Community**Community Engagement**

Public Consultation & Research

(14,700)

Total to be built in

(14,700)	0	0	0
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Already built in**Total already built in**

0	0	0	0
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Total One Off Savings

(14,700)	0	0	0
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Special Items

2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
£	£	£	

Welfare Reform

120,000

People, ICT & Property

EHC disturbance Costs (Less SBC contribution)

2200

2450

2700

1200

Total Special Items**122,200****2,450****2,700****1,200**

Growth

2014/15 £	2015/16 £	2016/17 £	2017/18
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Environment

Waste Services - Property Growth

22,000

Customer & New Media

Improved Cleansing of Multi Storey Car Parks

Locking of Grange Paddock Car Park

Revenue effect of new Parking vehicle (Net)

Parking - Pay by Phone

8,000

8,000

8,000

Parking - VMS Sign Maintenance

IT

Growth from IT Capital Programme

10,000

10,000

10,000

Communication, Engagement & Cultural Services

Govdelivery - coordinated digital communications tool

Total growth**40,000****18,000****18,000****0**

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 27 AUGUST 2013

EXECUTIVE – 3 SEPTEMBER 2013

AUDIT COMMITTEE – 18 SEPTEMBER 2013

REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2012/13

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report:

- This report presents the 2012/13 Annual Governance Statement at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'** and the 2013/14 Annual Governance Statement Action Plan at **Essential Reference Paper 'C'**.

RECOMMENDATION FOR CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY: that

(A)	The proposed Annual Governance Statement and Action Plan be scrutinised; and
(B)	The Executive be advised of any recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION FOR THE EXECUTIVE: that:

(A)	The comments of Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee be received; and
(B)	The Audit Committee be advised of any comments from the Executive.

RECOMMENDATION FOR AUDIT COMMITTEE: that

(A)	The comments of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee and the Executive be received; and
(B)	The Annual Governance Statement 2012/13 and Action Plan 2013/14 be approved.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Annual Governance Statement is necessary to meet the requirements set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011 that requires authorities to carry out an annual review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, used economically, efficiently and effectively.
- 2.2 The Council should undertake regular, at least annual, reviews of its governance arrangements by means of an Annual Governance Statement, to ensure continuing compliance with best practice. It is important that such reviews are reported both within the Council, to the Audit Committee and externally with the published accounts, to provide assurance that:
- governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively in practice, or
 - where reviews of the governance arrangements have revealed gaps, action is planned that will ensure effective governance in the future.
- 2.3 The process of preparing the governance statement should itself add value to the corporate governance and internal controls framework of the Council.
- 2.4 A governance statement should include the following information:
- an acknowledgement of responsibility for ensuring there is a sound system of governance (incorporating the system of internal control)
 - an indication of the level of assurance that the systems and processes that comprise the Council's governance arrangements can provide
 - a brief description of the key elements of the governance framework, including reference to group activities where those activities are significant.

- a brief description of the process that had been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance arrangements, including some comment on the role of:
 - ◇ the Council
 - ◇ the Executive
 - ◇ the Audit Committee/ overview and scrutiny function/ Standards Committee
 - ◇ Internal Audit
 - ◇ other explicit review/ assurance mechanisms.
- an outline of the actions taken, or proposed, to deal with significant governance issues.

2.5 It is important to recognise that the governance statement covers all significant corporate systems, processes and controls, spanning the whole range of the Council's activities, including in particular those designed to ensure that:

- the authority's policies are implemented in practice.
- high quality services are delivered efficiently and effectively.
- the authority's values and ethical standards are met.
- laws and regulations are complied with.
- required processes are adhered to.
- financial statements and other published performance information are accurate and reliable.
- human, financial, environmental and other resources are managed efficiently and effectively.

2.6 Grant Thornton, the Council's External Auditors, have previously highlighted that to add real value the Annual Governance Statement should:

- have greater status within the council's management and reporting processes as the key document that records the planned and obtained assurances around the achievement of the vision and strategic objectives.
- be owned from the top and used to plan and monitor internal and external assurance gathering throughout the year.
- be fundamentally reviewed each year so that it highlights what is significant and excludes what is not.
- have only significant weaknesses recorded with SMART action planning.

- provide a robust, transparent and honest assessment of the year's governance framework.
- 2.7 Those areas of the Annual Governance Statement that are considered to be static have been added to the Constitution as Part 8. The statement outlines the Governance Framework through the six core principles published by CIPFA.
- 2.8 In order to add real value to the Annual Governance Statement officers have considered the current Annual Governance Statement Action Plan, External and Internal Audit reports, Risk registers, Ombudsman reports, 3 C's reports, National Fraud Initiative reports and the Annual Report.
- 2.9 The Audit Committee has monitored the 2012/2013 Annual Governance Statement Action Plan throughout the year. At the Audit Committee on 10 July 2013, it was reported that six significant governance issues remained outstanding and showed their status as "Amber".
- 2.9.1 Two of these issues are now considered to be complete:
- CCTV governance issues are now in place following the Executive's approval of the incorporation of a new company to conduct the commercial trading affairs of the Hertfordshire CCTV Partnership.
 - Shared Support Services governance arrangements are now in place as a shared service partnership with Stevenage Borough Council to deliver ICT, Business Improvement, Print and Design services came into operation from 1 August 2013.
- 2.9.2 Some progress has been made during the period on the issue to "Improve arrangements for Members to report on their services on outside bodies" such that this is no longer considered significant enough to remain on the Action Plan and has therefore been removed.
- 2.9.3 The issue previously headed as "Pro-actively seek opportunities to improve performance" has now been revised to cover the one outstanding action from that issue as "Asset Management Plan".
- 2.9.4 The two outstanding issues carried forward from the 2012/13 Action Plan to the 2013/14 Action Plan are:

- Risk of failure to deliver an effective, efficient and economic IT service.
- Hertford Theatre future governance arrangements.

2.9.5 The following new issues have been identified and added to the Action Plan:

- IT Risk Diagnostic.
- Impact of Welfare Reform changes.
- Operating effectively in Shared Services.
- Risk that Section 106 Monies remain unspent.

2.10 Any items that are considered to be significant governance issues that have come to light in the past year have been discussed by the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Finance Officer and the Manager of Corporate Risk and an Annual Governance Statement and 2013/2014 Action Plan that identifies required enhancements to internal control arrangements has been drawn up.

2.11 The static part of the Annual Governance Statement can be found at **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**. This document shows tracked changes made to last year's statement. Changes have been made that update the Council's governance arrangements to ensure the current position is reflected.

2.12 The Annual Governance Statement Action Plan 2013/2014 can be found at **Essential Reference Paper 'C'**. The seven issues identified will continue to be monitored through Audit Committee. As in previous years, the final certificated Action Plan will not detail the current position or RAG status of each of the seven issues.

2.13 These documents will be considered by Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee on 27 August 2013 and the Executive on 3 September 2013. Responsibility for approval of the Annual Governance Statement rests with the Audit Committee, as part of the approval of the Annual Accounts. The results of on-going consultations will be reported verbally to each Committee as part of the process.

3.0 Implications/Consultations

3.1 Consultation documents were sent to the Leader and Executive Members, Chairmen of Committees, Directors and senior managers, the Shared Internal Audit Service and External Audit. Corporate

Management Team considered the Annual Governance Statement and Action Plan on 13 August 2013.

- 3.2 The Annual Governance Statement and Action Plan will be considered by Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee and the Executive, prior to approval by Audit Committee.
- 3.3 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

Annual Governance Statement 2012/13 – Audit Committee 10 July 2013.
<http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=2063&Ver=4>

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS:

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives	<p><i>People</i> This priority focuses on enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.</p> <p><i>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.</p> <p><i>Prosperity</i> This priority focuses on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic and social opportunities.</p>
Consultation:	Consultation has taken place with Councillors, Senior Management, Internal and External Audit.
Legal:	There are no additional legal implications to those already contained in this report.
Financial:	There are no additional financial implications to those already contained in this report.
Human Resource:	There are no additional human resource implications to those already contained in this report.
Risk Management:	There are no additional risk management implications to those already contained in this report.

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PART 8

**ANNUAL GOVERNANCE
STATEMENT**

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

Scope of responsibility

East Hertfordshire District Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010).

The Council has approved and adopted a local code of corporate governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' (CIPFA 2007).

This statement explains how the Council has complied with the code and also how it meets the requirements of regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011~~103 as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006 that requires authorities to carry out an annual review of the effectiveness of its system of in relation to the publication of a statement on~~ internal control.

~~Further copies of this statement are available on the Council's website www.eastherts.gov.uk/, alternatively paper copies can be obtained from:~~

~~East Hertfordshire District Council~~

The purpose of the governance framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and by which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. Controls cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify risks to the achievement of the council's policies, aims and objectives. It evaluates the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and it prioritises and manages them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The Governance Framework

The Council's governance framework derives from the six core principles identified by the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services – a commission set up by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), and the Office for Public Management. The Commission used work done by, amongst others, Cadbury (1992), Nolan (1995) and CIPFA/SOLACE (2001). These principles were adapted for application to local authorities and published by CIPFA in 2007.

The six core principles are:

- a. focusing on the purpose of the Council and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area;
- b. Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;
- c. promoting values for the Council and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;
- d. taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;
- e. developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective; and
- f. engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

The key elements of East Herts Council's application of each of these core principles are as follows:

a) Focusing on the purpose of the Council and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area

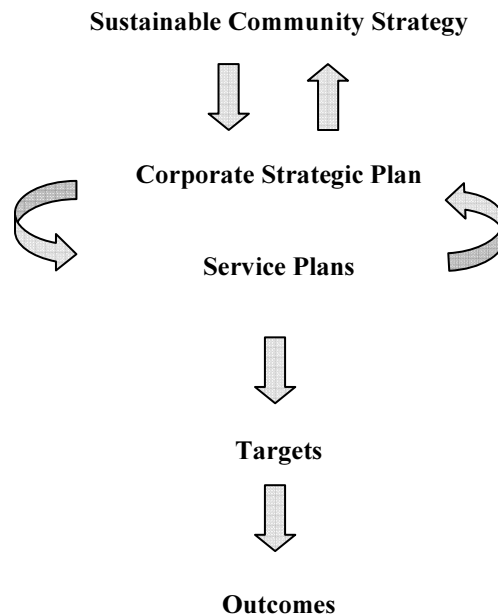
The Sustainable Community Strategy outlines the vision, aims and priority themes for the district. It was produced in conjunction with the East Hertfordshire Local Strategic Partnership, which brings together all relevant stakeholders, including those that deliver services in the area.

The Council's aims and objectives are set out in the annually updated Corporate Strategic Plan. This sets out what the Council expects to deliver over the next four years and, in many cases, beyond this timeframe. The details of how the Council will get there are incorporated in the individual service plans. The Plan will be updated each year to include new service developments and to remove outcomes once they are achieved. The Plan sets the direction for the financial planning of the Council based on the Council's priorities.

The Executive receives the Medium Term Financial Strategy covering a four-year period, which is used to set initial parameters for the

coming budget process to ensure that spending proposals are affordable and sustainable over the medium term.

The diagram below sets out the various links in the process of establishing and subsequently monitoring the achievement of the Council's ambitions. It shows the links between the Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Strategic Plan which then feed into, and are informed by, service plans, service targets and individual employees via specific areas of responsibility allocated to them.



The Council has an effective performance management framework using a dedicated IT system to record and report performance. The system is driven by the Service Plans which focus on activities that will deliver the Council's ambitions and priorities. This is cascaded through individual employee appraisals.

This process monitors how the Council is meeting its performance targets and triggers corrective actions where targets are proving

challenging, through the Corporate Healthcheck report and Service Plan monitoring reports.

The Council's Executive and its Scrutiny Committees monitor and scrutinise progress against targets and performance in priority areas affecting relevant service areas, and consider and approve corrective action where necessary. For ease of interpretation performance graphs are reported. There are reports which include the results of monthly and quarterly budget monitoring reports covering the revenue expenditure, capital projects, key performance indicators and absence monitoring.

The monitoring process has enabled the Council to concentrate on areas which require particular attention.

The Council is therefore able to monitor all key measures on a monthly basis and respond quickly and effectively to changes at an early stage.

The Council maintains an objective and professional relationship with external auditors and statutory inspectors, as evidenced by the Annual Audit Letter.

Through reviews by external auditors, external agencies, Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS), and internal review teams, the Council constantly seeks ways of securing continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources. The Council has regularly reviewed Financial Regulations and has ~~adopted Procurement~~adopted Procurement Regulations to ensure proper arrangements are in place for procurement of goods and services.

All budget cost centres are allocated to a named post holder, who is responsible for controlling spend against those budgets, and who is also responsible for maximising the benefits from assets used in the provision of their service.

b) Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles

The Council has adopted a constitution which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

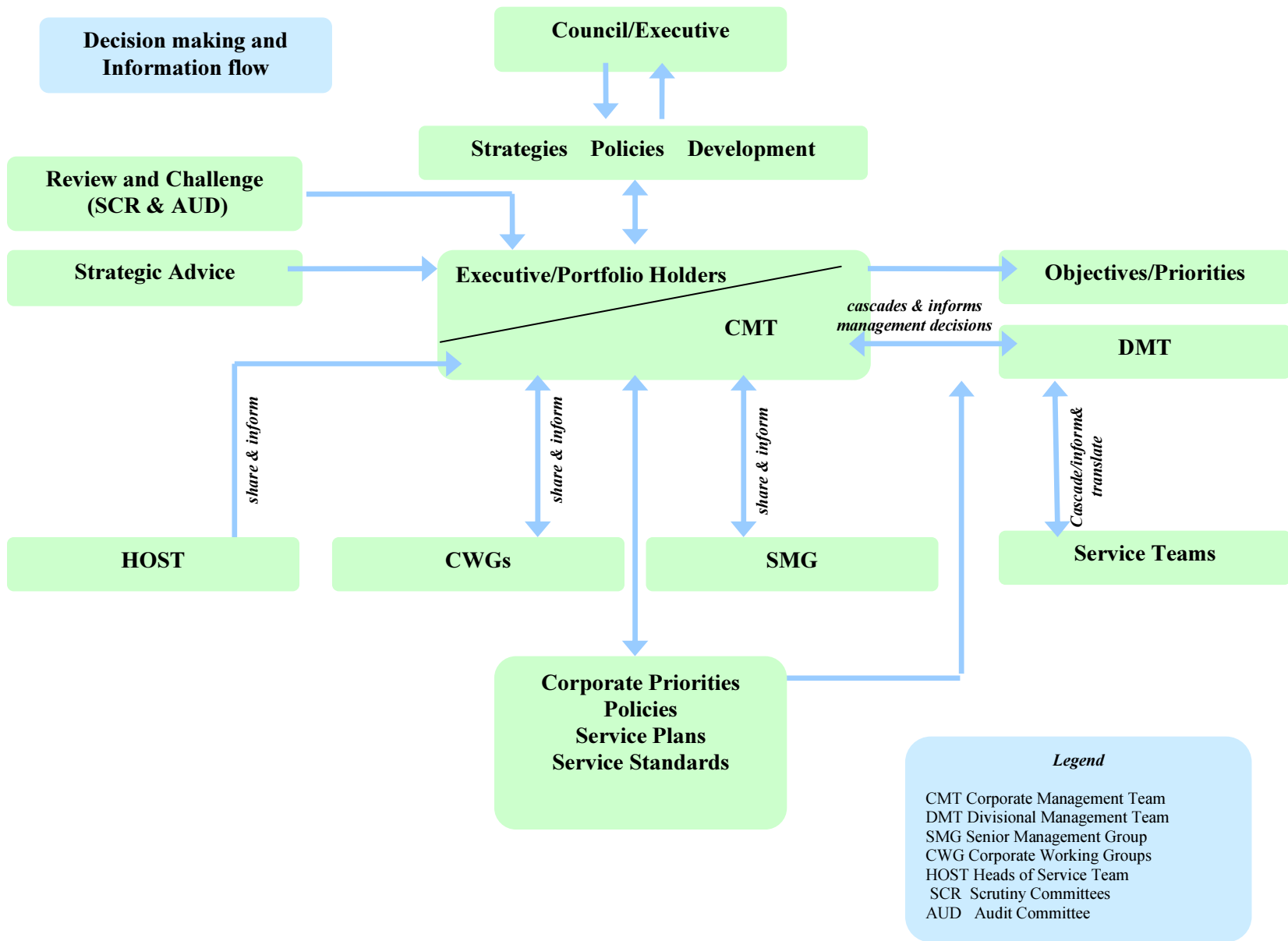
The Council adopted the Leader and Cabinet Executive model. The main features are:

- The Council's Executive consists of a Leader and between two and nine other Councillors.
- The Leader is elected by full Council and will hold office in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- The other Executive Members will be appointed by the Leader who will decide their portfolios and also which executive functions will be discharged by full Executive, any of its Committees or any individual Executive Member or officers.
- There are currently ~~seven~~^{ix} Councillors on the Executive.

The Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) consisting of the Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services, Directors and the Head of People, ~~ICT~~ and Property Services ~~Services~~ meets on a fortnightly basis to develop policy issues commensurate with the Council's aims, objectives and priorities. CMT also considers internal control issues, including risk management, performance management, compliances, efficiency and value for money, and financial management. Members of CMT meet with Portfolio Holders on a monthly basis to review progress in achieving the Council's ambitions, priorities for action, budget monitoring, performance management and forward planning for major issues. CMT has a corporate responsibility for the messages that the Council produces, both internally and externally.

~~During 2010/11 the Chief Executive had an extended period of absence and all her functions and responsibilities were shared between the three Directors, enabling strong governance arrangements to remain in place.~~

Below CMT the management structure is well defined. The chart below indicates how decisions are implemented and cascaded:



The Council has adopted a number of codes and protocols that will govern both Member and officer activities. These are:

- Members' Code of Conduct
- Officers' Code of Conduct
- Members' Planning Code of Good Practice
- Member/Officer Relations Protocol

c) Promoting values for the Council and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour

It is the function of the Monitoring Officer to ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations. After consulting the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer he will report to the full Council if he considers that any proposal, decision or omission would give rise to unlawfulness or maladministration. Such a report will have the effect of stopping the proposal or decision being implemented until the report has been considered.

Under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 it is the duty of the Council's Monitoring Officer to report to Council if it appears that the Authority, a Committee or Officer of the Authority has made a decision which is contrary to law.

The Council has responsibility for responding to Freedom of Information Requests (FOI) promptly and within 20 working days.

The Council has taken action to improve its speed of response to FOI's. An important element of that plan is to shift the Council from waiting for FOI requests to proactively reducing the need for individuals to request information by making a wider range of information more easily available through the Council's website.

The Council recognises that expenses of politicians have come under serious scrutiny. The current Members Allowances scheme is published in the Constitution.

All Council services are delivered by trained and experienced people. All posts have a detailed post profile and person specification. Training needs are identified through the Personal Development Review Scheme and addressed via the Human Resources service and/or individual services as appropriate.

The Council achieved re-accreditation for a further three years from April 2012 under the Investors in People Standard, which is a

quality framework to ensure that the Council's employees have the right knowledge, skills and motivation to work effectively.

The financial management of the Council is conducted in accordance with the Constitution and with Financial Regulations.

The Director of ~~Finance and Support~~Internal Services is the statutory Chief Finance Officer in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Council has a Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy in place. Investments are made in accordance with the Council's approved policy. All investment transactions and transfers undertaken in house are supported by appropriate documentation and are properly authorised. External fund managers are subject to strict regulation by the FSA. The Portfolio holder and the Leader of the Council receive regular updates from the Director of ~~Finance and Support~~Internal Services. The Chairman of the Audit Committee is invited to participate in review meetings with Fund Managers.

The Council shares an Internal Audit service with ~~seven~~five other Councils. This service operates to the standards set out in the CIPFA ~~Public Sector Code of Practice for Internal Audit~~ Standards which came into effect on 1 April 2013~~in Local Government in the United Kingdom 2006~~. An Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy and a Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Code are in place. A Whistleblowing hotline and email facility operates and has been well publicised. Each year all staff are required to complete Annual Declaration forms. The Council has adopted a policy on bribery. The Council does not tolerate bribery committed by Council employees or its contractors or partners and will take consistent and swift action against those persons committing bribery.

Individual services have produced Service Plans that are updated each year so that services know what they are required to do to achieve the Council's priorities and ambitions.

At individual employee level the Council has established a Personal Development Review Scheme so as to jointly agree individual employee objectives and identify training and development needs. The Scheme provides for a mid-year review as well as an annual appraisal at which past performance is reviewed.

d) Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.

The Council has several committees which carry out regulatory or scrutiny functions. These are:

- Overview and Scrutiny committees (Corporate Business Scrutiny, Community Scrutiny and Environment Scrutiny) review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions, developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective.
- Audit Committee provides assurance about the adequacy of internal controls, financial accounting and reporting arrangements, and that effective risk management is in place. Its work is intended to enhance public trust in the corporate and financial governance of the Council;
- Development Control Committee determines planning applications and related matters;
- Licensing Committee monitors and reviews the effectiveness of the Council's licensing policy and procedures;
- The Human Resources Committee's functions relate to all aspects of the Council's role as an employer. This includes the monitoring and strategic overview of Human Resources activities.
- Standards Committee promotes and maintains high standards of conduct for the Council's Members, and advises and assists Parish Councils and Councillors to maintain high standards of conduct;

The Council has data protection policies, [a Data Protection Action Plan](#) and a data sharing protocol in place to ensure that personal data is maintained securely and used correctly. [There is a Data Protection Compliance Governance Framework which involves the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee in the governance structure. The Committee will take a strategic oversight of the completion of the Data Protection Plan and Data Protection compliance through a formal annual report.](#)

The Risk Management Strategy defines risk management, explains the benefits of a strategic approach, outlines how it will be implemented, identifies roles and responsibilities and formalises the process. The Strategy sets out the links between risk management, emergency planning and business continuity. It recognises that risk management is a key part of the management

The Strategy highlights how risk management supports strategic planning, financial planning, policy making and review and performance management.

The Corporate Management Team is responsible for ensuring that the key risks on the strategic risk register are managed. Strategic and service risk registers are reviewed four times a year. Risks will be amended so that they reflect the current situation, obsolete risks deleted and new risks added. This will ensure that the risk register and the resulting risk mitigation measures are appropriate for corporate objectives and services.

Members have received risk management training.

The Council also has a Partnership Protocol in place. ~~The Council is one of four partners in the Stevenage CCTV Partnership.~~

The Council is represented on the Joint Committee and the Joint Management Board following the introduction of a shared Revenues and Benefits service with Stevenage Borough Council.

A shared service partnership with Stevenage Borough Council to deliver ICT, Business Improvement, Print and Design services came into operation on 1 August 2013. A Partnership Board with Director representation is responsible for making the key decisions about the way that the partnership operates.

The Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) ~~came into being in July 2011 and~~ is a partnership of ~~eight~~^{six} Hertfordshire Authorities. The Council is represented on the Board that provides strategic direction and oversight for the partnership. The ~~Manager~~^{Director} of Corporate Risk~~Internal Services~~ is the Audit Champion for the Council and has monitoring meetings every two months with the Director of Finance and Support Services and ~~Shared Internal Audit Service~~ managers. Progress reports are submitted to four Audit Committee meetings per year.

The Council is one of four partners in the Hertfordshire CCTV Partnership. Approval has been given for the incorporation of a new company to conduct the commercial trading affairs of the Hertfordshire CCTV Partnership.

e) Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective

The Council plans and provides training for members in carrying out their roles effectively including their responsibilities for governance, challenge, scrutiny and review. The Council holds accreditation for the Charter for Member Development.

The Council's vision is to empower Members to be more self sufficient, confident in their community leadership roles and responsive to local issues, problems and challenges in a variety of ways by drawing on existing skills, knowledge, strength, resources and expertise from within. This vision is being taken forward through Action Learning Sets.

The Council is taking forward the concept of 'Here to Help'. This includes outlining the stages by which it will be implemented. It will be shaped around the needs and demands of individual services. IT should be a significant enabler of this future approach.

The Council has an infrastructure in place to support members' needs in respect of ICT requirements and the Council's Democratic Services team provide advice and assistance.

Protocols have been adopted to ensure clarity of the respective roles of officers and members.

The Council's recruitment process is designed to ensure only well qualified applicants are employed and the subsequent induction process is robust so that employees are effective. The Performance Development Review process ensures individual contributions are effective in meeting corporate priorities and capability issues addressed by training. Internal communications methods and processes are reviewed to ensure staff remain well informed and their feed back is responded to. A biennial staff survey leads to action plans to improve effectiveness.

The Council reviews its organisation and capacity as part of its annual service planning to ensure its staffing is commensurate in both quantitative and qualitative terms with its business plans. The Council is committed to taking forward the shared services agenda which will ensure more effective use of scarce skills by sharing across boundaries.

The Council's HR People Strategy seeks to ensure its pay and terms and conditions are adequate to attract and retain sufficient staff and to encourage staff to invest in their own development.

The Council seeks to maintain effective ~~employee~~industrial relations to enable a high standard of service to the public to be maintained. Staff are fully consulted on proposed changes to terms and conditions. The Council engages with the trade union and staff to manage issues arising from pay settlements and changes to the organisation including the Local Joint Panel and the Human Resources Committee. The Council also utilises Staff Surveys.

~~Extensive~~Use is made of the Intranet to provide staff with ready access to learning material and best practice via a series of tool kits.

f) Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

The Council encourages all members of the local communities to contribute to, and participate in, the work of the Council. The Council achieves this through Residents' Surveys and budget consultation exercises, to ensure that what it is doing meets the needs of its residents. In 2012/ 2013 informal budget consultation took place with businesses. Engagement events around specific issues will be considered where they provide a proportionate and cost effective model for engagement.

The Council's Communications Strategy has identified a need to engage more through social media and reconfirmed the use of the LINK magazine quarterly as a communications and engagement tool.

Individual members are active in their localities and with local groups and serve on a number of external bodies.

The Hertfordshire County LSP and the East Herts District LSP are forums for active engagement with wider stakeholders and a mutual holding to account in delivering the Community Plans.

The Council publishes an Annual Report setting out progress on its priorities in the prior year. ~~Going forward there may be an opportunity to combine the Annual Report and the Annual Governance Statements and officers will look into the viability of this during 2012/13.~~

An Annual Report on Overview and Scrutiny is also presented to Council and published every year.

There is a strategic approach to consultation to ensure the information returned is reliable – the Council has adopted a Consultation Toolkit setting out best practice.

The Council's web site is under constant review to ensure it is of a good standard and that information is easily accessed. A consultation section has been introduced so members of the public can easily access open consultations and information on closed consultations.

The Council manages freedom of information requests effectively to ensure transparency including the corporate governance arrangements. Information is made available on the website to reduce the need for requests. The Council has procedures in place to engage with members of the public to receive Comments, Compliments and Complaints. The Local Government Ombudsman reported on complaints made about the authority for the year ended 31 March 2013³² that there were no concerns about response times and no issues arising from complaints.

As part of the Council's drive to increase the transparency of its spending, the Council publishes all payments on a weekly basis as opposed to the Government's expectation that spend over £500 is detailed.

The Council has approved a Pay Policy Statement as required under section 38 of the Localism Act. The statement follows three principles when publishing data; responding to public demand; releasing data in open formats available for re-use: and releasing data in a timely way.

Review of Effectiveness

This statement explains the Council's overall governance arrangements. Each year, the Council reviews its governance framework including the system of internal control. The Council produces and monitors an Action Plan each year. The process is detailed below:

- All Directors, Heads of Service, Members of the Executive and Chairmen of Committees given the opportunity to make contributions.
- Consideration by the Audit Committee.
- Production of a draft Annual Governance Statement.
- Consideration by Corporate Management Team
- ~~Consideration by the Audit Committee.~~

- Consideration by the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee.
- ~~Consideration by Corporate Management Team~~
- Consideration by the Executive
- Approval by the Audit Committee.

The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Directors within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the reports by the ~~Shared Internal Audit Service~~ and also by comments made by the Council's External Auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance framework includes:

The Monitoring Officer has a duty to monitor and review the operation of the Constitution to ensure its aims and principles are given full effect. The Council reviews the Constitution annually to incorporate any necessary changes.

The Council has three overview and scrutiny committees. The committees can establish 'task and finish' groups, which can look at particular issues in depth, taking evidence from internal and external sources, before making recommendations to their 'parent' Scrutiny Committee and on to the Executive. Four Members can "call-in" a decision which has been made by the Executive but not yet implemented, to enable it to consider whether the decision is appropriate. In addition the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee can exercise its scrutiny role in respect of Executive functions, Scrutiny Committees will conduct regular performance monitoring of all services, with particular attention to areas identified as under-performing.

The Council complies with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000:

The Audit Committee

Seven Councillors sit on the Audit Committee. The Committee's terms of reference are detailed below:

Audit Activity

1. To consider the Head of Internal Audit's annual report and opinion, and a summary of internal audit activity (actual and proposed) and the level of assurance it can give over the Council's corporate governance arrangements.

2. To consider summaries of specific Internal Audit reports as requested.
3. To consider reports dealing with the management and performance of the providers of Internal Audit services.
4. To consider reports from Internal Audit on agreed recommendations not implemented within a reasonable timescale.
5. To consider the External Auditor's annual letter, relevant reports and the report to those charged with governance.
6. To consider specific reports as agreed with the External Auditor.
7. To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.
8. To liaise with the Audit Commission over the appointment of the Council's External Auditor.
9. To commission work from internal and external audit.

Regulatory Framework

10. To maintain an overview of the Council's Constitution in respect of rules of procedure relating to contracts, financial regulations and financial procedures and codes of conduct and behaviour.
11. To review any issue referred to it by the Chief Executive or a Director or any Council body.
12. To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management and corporate governance in the Council.
13. To monitor Council policies on "Confidential Reporting" and the anti-fraud and anti-corruption strategy and the Council's complaints process.
14. To oversee the production of the Authority's Annual Governance Statement and to recommend its adoption.

15. To consider the Council's arrangements for corporate governance and agreeing necessary actions to ensure compliance with best practice.
16. To consider the Council's compliance with its own and other published standards and controls.
17. To review arrangements for delivering value for money.
18. To review the Council's finances including borrowing, loans, debts investments and banking arrangements.

Accounts

- To approve the annual statement of accounts. Specifically to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Council.
- To consider the External Auditors' report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

The Audit Committee's work programme and the minutes of its meetings are public documents and are published on the Council's web site.

The Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) has responsibility for delivery of the Internal Audit Plan at the Council. The SIAS also delivers a service to Hertfordshire County Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council. The three main drivers for this partnership are seen as providing greater resilience, higher levels of performance and greater efficiencies.

The ~~SIAS~~ ~~Internal Audit~~ is responsible for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of systems of internal control. A risk model is used to formulate an annual audit plan. A model for assessing risk against desirability of audit work is used across SIAS and allows for the prioritisation of potential audit projects. Future risks are identified as appropriate and a forward plan for future audit work is in operation.

The reporting process for ~~SIAS~~ ~~Internal Audit~~ requires a report of each audit to be submitted to the relevant chief officer and service manager. The report includes recommendations for improvements

that are included within an action plan (and graded as high, medium or merits attention). This requires agreement or rejection by relevant chief officer and/or service manager. The process includes follow-up reviews of high priority recommendations by SIAS and reports to the Audit Committee as part of the SIAS update report. The Audit Champion monitors all other recommendations which are also followed up by SIAS at the time of their next audit to ensure that they are acted upon, usually within six months. All ~~S~~Internal ~~A~~Sudit reports include an opinion on the quality and effectiveness of internal control within the Council's systems, and an assurance assessment.

All ~~S~~Internal ~~A~~Sudit reports are circulated to members of the Audit Committee. All reports for the key financial systems audits are also sent to ~~and the progress reports on the work of Internal Audit address issues arising from these ratings.~~

~~The Internal Audit service is subject to regular inspection by the Council's External Auditors who place reliance on the work carried out by SIAS the section. In order to comply with the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, SIAS will be required to have an independent external review of performance at least every five years.~~

~~The Hertfordshire Shared Internal Audit Service has responsibility for delivery of the Internal Audit Plan. The Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) also delivers a service to Hertfordshire County Council, Hertsmere Borough Council, North Hertfordshire District Council, Stevenage Borough Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. The three main drivers for this partnership are seen as providing greater resilience, higher levels of performance and greater efficiencies.~~

For performance management, a traffic light monitoring and reporting system is in place. Performance data is reported to the Scrutiny committees on a frequent basis, with corrective action plans put in place for any under-performing areas.

Significant governance issues are reviewed each year and required enhancements to internal control arrangements are identified. These required enhancements form an Action Plan that is monitored through the Audit Committee.

The Annual Governance Statement is certificated by the Council Leader and the Head of Paid Service.

Further copies of this Statement and the Action Plan are available within the Annual Statement of Accounts on the Council's website www.eastherts.gov.uk, alternatively paper copies can be obtained from:

East Hertfordshire District Council
Manager of Corporate Risk
Wallfields
Pegs Lane,
Hertford
SG13 8EQ

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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'C'

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN 2013/14

Significant governance issues

The following required enhancements to internal control arrangements were identified during 2012/13 as a result of the review of arrangements and by the work of external and internal audit:

Required enhancements to internal control arrangements:

Issue	Resp. Off.	Initial Target Date	Actions needed to achieve milestone	Current position	RAG status
Risk of failure to deliver an effective, efficient and economic IT service (from 2010/11 Action Plan)	Director of Finance and Support Services/ Head of ICT	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All outstanding high risk IT audit recommendations implemented.• Resilient IT business continuity arrangements in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SIAS continue to monitor.• IT business continuity arrangements will be picked up within the Shared Service.	AMBER

IT Risk Diagnostic (Highlighted by SIAS during 2012/13)	CMT	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an IT strategy which is aligned with the business objectives of the Council and sets out the vision and core priorities for ICT over the next 3 years. • Implement a governance committee to focus on strategic decision making and prioritisation within IT and assign the monitoring of ICT delivery to more operational committees. • Define performance indicators for ICT which are aligned with the business need and with ICT capacity to deliver. On a periodic basis, monitor and report them to business stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared ICT Service to take forward all actions. 	AMBER
Hertford Theatre future governance arrangements (from 2011/12)	CMT	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options to be developed to consider financial and other risks during a period of transition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Member and a relevant councillor met with officers and agreed that current business 	AMBER

Action Plan)				<p>plan was working well. Still only two full years into ten year plan and therefore no early decisions would be made to move to alternative governance arrangements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This position will be reviewed annually and is scheduled for Community Scrutiny Committee in September 2013. 	
<p>Asset Management Plan {formerly- Pro-actively seek opportunities to improve performance Plan} (from 2012/13 Action Plan)</p>	CMT	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review assets held by the Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Management Plan 2013-17 approved by CMT but has been put on hold pending senior management review of viability of investing in property to generate revenue for the Council. 	AMBER

Impact of Welfare Reform changes (Identified as a new strategic risk)	CMT	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Legislation will have an adverse financial impact on a significant number of residents. Provide residents more support for services across the Council to staffing levels, manage the budget and the public expectations. Implement Council policies effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The workload in Revenues and Benefits service continues to increase. Services across the Council including Housing and Customer Service continue to also experience an increase in demand. Services are working together to work efficiently and effectively to manage workload. 	AMBER
Operating effectively in Shared Services (taken forward from 2012/13 Action Plan)	CMT	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a review of the operation of all shared service partnership arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review planned. 	AMBER

Risk that S106 Monies remain unspent (Highlighted by SIAS during 2012/13)	Head of Comms, Engagement and Cultural Services/ Head of Planning and Building Control	March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that funds are spent on appropriate schemes in accordance with the terms of the Section 106 agreement which provide value for money for the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular reports are made to CMT identifying projects and tracking outstanding payments. 	AMBER
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We propose to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Certification by the Leader of the Council and the Head of Paid Service:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Signature</u>
Councillor A P Jackson	Leader of the Council		
George A Robertson	Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services		

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE - 3 SEPTEMBER 2013

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

WIDFORD CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

WARD(S) AFFECTED: HUNSDON

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To enable Members to consider the Widford Conservation Area Appraisal following public consultation.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE:</u> That	
(A)	the responses to the public consultation be noted and the Officer responses and proposed changes to the Widford Conservation Area Appraisal be supported;
(B)	authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, to make any further minor and consequential changes to the Appraisal which may be necessary; and
(C)	the Widford Conservation Area Appraisal be supported for adoption.
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL:</u> That:	
(A)	the responses to the public consultation be noted and the Officer responses and proposed changes to the Widford Conservation Area Appraisal be agreed;
(B)	the Widford Conservation Area Appraisal be adopted.

1.0 Background.

1.1 East Herts has a rich environmental heritage which includes 42 Conservation Areas. The East Herts Local Plan commits the Council to review its Conservation Areas, a requirement which is also set out in national legislation.

1.2 The review of Widford's Conservation Area is the first in a series of reviews undertaken in 2011/2012. These reviews can now be presented for Members consideration. In each case a report will be presented when a public consultation exercise has been undertaken in relation to each individual settlement.

1.3 Each document identifies the special character of the respective Conservation Area together with the elements that should be retained or enhanced and those which detract from the identified character. Existing boundaries will be reviewed and, where appropriate, practical enhancement proposals will be suggested.

1.4 Once Members have considered each Appraisal, and the document has been adopted by the Council, they will become a 'material consideration' in the process of determining planning applications.

2.0 Widford Conservation Area Appraisal

2.1 Widford's Conservation Area was first designated in 1968 and redesignated in 1981. The Widford Conservation Area Appraisal was completed in 2011. There was a period of public consultation during February and March 2012. A public meeting was held on 19 March 2012 at which about 30 members of the public were in attendance. Responses were received from the Parish Council and from 5 others and other points were raised at the public meeting. The headline issues are set out in the following paragraphs:

2.2 *General content of Appraisal:* The Appraisal sets out a revision to the Conservation Area boundary to exclude a property on the south side of Ware Road and properties at the corner of Abbots Lane and Hunsdon Road. It identifies the key environmental features and the manner in which they can be controlled. In relation to Widford the most relevant ones are: Listed Buildings including structures in their curtilages; non listed buildings of quality worthy of protection; other unlisted distinctive features worthy of protection and important open land and spaces.

- 2.3 *Listed buildings and structures in their curtilages:* These are protected by legislation and have been identified in the Appraisal. Some are in a poor condition and these have also been identified in the Council's recently updated Buildings at Risk Register. It is considered important their condition improves. Potentially this could occur through the planning process or possibly from grant assistance. Officers will approach owners as Members agreed when considering the Buildings at Risk Register in March 2013.
- 2.4 *Non listed buildings of quality worthy of protection:* A small number have been identified that make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and these should be retained through the planning process.
- 2.5 *Other unlisted distinctive features worthy of protection:* A number have been identified and include walls and railings. These are important to the rural qualities and character of Widford. Most are protected by virtue of being within the curtilages of Listed Buildings or above prescribed heights (which means that it is necessary to seek consent before demolition is undertaken). However some are unprotected in law from demolition. Protection could formally be achieved through the introduction of an Article 4 Direction. Prior to considering such a course of action, the Council will seek to establish ownership and discuss the matter further with respective owners.
- 2.6 *Important open land and spaces:* The Appraisal has identified a number of such important open spaces that materially contribute to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area that should be protected through the planning process.
- 2.7 *Enhancement proposals to deal with detracting elements:* A number have been identified and include untidy sites, discordant signage and structures in need of repair. It is accepted that such improvements will often only be carried out with the co-operation of owners and other local bodies and organisations. However the District Council may have a role to play in some instances, for example by offering technical advice; by determining applications and where appropriate offering grant assistance.

3.0 Consultation Feedback

- 3.1 The Parish Council 'is in agreement with the great majority of the draft document' and '*support the concept of such an appraisal and*

believe the final document when adopted will be of considerable value...and help to conserve the environment of the village’.

Furthermore the PC has expressed support for a number of suggested improvements proposed by the Appraisal and has already taken some action and promised other. The general support of the Parish Council is encouraging and the process of identifying and subsequently achieving physical improvements, implemented at local level, however small, is important,

- 3.2 Other comments received through the consultation process are set out in the table included as **Essential Reference Paper B** arranged in the subject order set out above.
- 3.3 **Essential Reference Paper C** is a copy of the Widford Conservation Appraisal and Management Plan as it appeared at the consultation draft stage with track changes to show how the final document will appear.
- 3.4 In summary it is recommended that the Widford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be adopted and be used in the process of determining planning applications.
- 4.0 Implications/Consultations 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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ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS

Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives	<p>Place</p> <p>This priority focuses on sustainability, the built environment and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.</p> <p>Prosperity</p> <p>This priority focuses on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic opportunities and delivering cost effective services.</p>
Consultation:	<i>Community consultation has been undertaken as set out in the report</i>
Legal:	<i>Preparation of the Appraisal fulfils statutory requirements.</i>
Financial:	<p><i>Costs associated with the preparation of the Appraisal are met from within existing staffing and operational budgets.</i></p> <p><i>The Appraisal suggests works and actions which could be undertaken to enhance the character and appearance of the conservation Area and remove detracting elements. The Council is not committed to undertaking these further actions. There will be potential revenue and capital costs associated with doing so – which can be further assessed on reaching a decision whether to undertake further action.</i></p>
Human Resource:	<i>No additional staffing implications</i>
Risk Management:	<i>No significant risk issues</i>

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Essential Reference Paper B

Issue	Representations made	Officer comment
Changes to the Conservation Area Boundary.	The Parish Council see no compelling reason and comments that the Conservation Area affords protection against unsuitable development. Similar views were shared by two other respondents, one of whom thought a case could be made to extend the boundaries elsewhere. Conversely the owners of one of the properties recommended to be excluded, agreed with the proposal.	Officers have carefully re-examined the proposed boundary changes but remain of the view that the properties on the edges of the village identified for exclusion are not 'areas of special architectural or historic interest' and as part of the required review process should properly be excluded from the Conservation Area.
Listed Buildings or buildings within their curtilages	The Owner of the farm buildings at Widfordbury acknowledged that <i>'these fine buildings are in need of repair'</i> and considered the best way to preserve them would be to find viable uses. He advised he continues to seek tenants and hopes that this Appraisal lends support to this approach. Another respondent with no direct association with the buildings expressed	There is no suggestion that owners would be forced to undertake such repairs. The Appraisal comments that the objective is to <i>'seek to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the long term future of the agricultural barns at Widfordbury farm through negotiation, possible grant assistance and /or through the planning process'</i> . Officers

Issue	Representations made	Officer comment
	<p>unease that <i>'substantial expenditure could be - in some way – forced on the owners to restore them to look as they would when farming, with horses and wains...'</i> The same respondent however supported officers concern for the Grade II* wall and archway to the west of the old churchyard. '</p> <p>Telephone Kiosk. A respondent raised the issue of the listed telephone kiosk advising it had become <i>'a useless relic'</i> and sought advice as to whether or not the Council could de-list it.</p>	<p>consider this to be an entirely proper and positive approach.</p> <p>The kiosk no longer functions for its original purpose. It is in good condition and its listing status is consistent with other kiosks of the same age and design elsewhere in the District.</p>
Important open land and spaces	Open land and paddocks at Abbots Lane. A question asked at the public meeting questioned why only part of the paddock was identified as being an important open space worthy of protection.	It was originally considered that the smaller area adjoining a public footpath was of greatest importance. However officers have revisited the site and accept it would be appropriate to extend the area.
Enhancement proposals to deal	A respondent advised of the poor appearance of a site called Long Meadow	It is agreed that the frontage to the Long Meadow site would be improved

Issue	Representations made	Officer comment
with detracting elements.	<p>which made unfavourable comparison when judged against a nearby close boarded fence that had been identified as detracting. The Parish Council and another did not agree the fence was not out of place.</p> <p>Proliferation of Highway signs. There was general support for comments regarding this issue. One respondent asked that comments be separated from similar references to the bus stop and associated furniture.</p>	<p>by additional planting and an amendment to the Appraisal has been made to this effect.</p> <p>Reference was originally made in relation to the close boarded fence in the context of an adjacent high quality wall and railings. Reference to it has now been removed.</p> <p>The references jointly appear in the same paragraph because they are all in one location. For information the Parish Council advise they have already approached HCC who <i>‘were not minded to change’</i>.</p>
Other minor points	Several detailed factual and grammatical points were identified by one respondent.	Appropriate changes have been made

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WIDFORD ~~DRAFT~~ CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

2013~~4~~

This ~~a~~Appraisal ~~has been~~~~was~~ ~~produced~~ ~~produced~~ by Officers of East Hertfordshire District Council to assess the current condition of the Widford Conservation Area, ~~and to identify~~ a number of suggested y ~~where~~ improvements ~~can be made~~ and ~~to advise of any~~ selected boundary changes, ~~that are appropriate.~~ The document ~~is in draft form and will~~ be ~~was~~ subject to public consultation in February/ March 2012 during which time a public meeting was held on 19 March 2012 and As a result of this consultation some alterations have been incorporated into this final version of the document. ~~agreement by District Council Members.~~

1. Introduction.

1.1. The historic environment cannot be replaced and is a resource that is both fragile and finite. Particularly in an age when society and its needs change with rapidity, the various historic and architectural elements of Conservation Areas can be perceived to interact in a complex manner and create a 'unique sense of place' that is appreciated by those lucky enough to reside in such special places and the many interested persons who appreciate and visit them.

1.2. East Hertfordshire District has a particularly rich and vibrant built heritage, featuring 42 Conservation Areas and approximately 4,000 fine listed buildings displaying a variety of styles representative of the best of architectural and historic designs from many centuries. Generally and very importantly the clear distinction between built form and open countryside has been maintained.

1.3. The District is situated in an economically buoyant region where an attractive environment, employment opportunities and excellent transport links, road rail and air, make it a popular destination to live and work. In addition to London a short commuting distance away, the District is influenced by other factors beyond its administrative area, such as Stansted Airport and the towns of Harlow and Stevenage. With such dynamics it is inevitable that the historic environment will be subject to pressures which emphasise the need to protect it.

1.4. The East Hertfordshire Local Plan Second Review, adopted in April 2007, recognises these facts and commits the Council to review its Conservation Areas and their boundaries. The production of this document is part of this process.

1.5. Conservation Areas are environments which are considered worthy of protection as a result of a combination of factors such as the quality of design and setting of the buildings or their historic significance. In addition to the individual qualities of the buildings themselves, there are other factors such as the relationships of the buildings with each other, the quality of the spaces between them and the vistas and views that unite or disrupt them. -The relationship with adjoining areas and landscape, the quality of trees, boundary treatments, advertisements, road signage, street furniture and hard surfaces, are also important features which can add to or detract from the Conservation Area.

1.6. This appraisal recognises the importance of these factors and ~~will~~ considers them carefully. ~~Once approved This document it will be regarded as~~ a 'material consideration' when determining planning applications. The document also puts forward simple practical management proposals that would improve the character of the Conservation Area and which are capable of being implemented as and when resources permit.

1.7. The recommendations concerning non-listed buildings and structures are normally formed by the field workers observations made from the public realm and seldom involve internal inspection or discussions with owners. - Thus such recommendations contained in this appraisal might be subject to reconsideration through the planning application process, where that is necessary, and which would involve the submission of additional information.

1.8. This Conservation Appraisal ~~will~~:

- Identif~~ies~~y the special character of Widford;
- Identif~~ies~~y elements that should be retained or enhanced;
- Identif~~ies~~y detracting elements;
- Review~~s~~ the existing boundary;
- Put~~s~~ forward practical enhancement proposals;

1.9. The document has been prepared in partnership with the local community and the Council would like to record its thanks to the Parish Council and to the members of the local community who provided useful information to officers when the survey was being

undertaken and for the responses to the consultation exercise that have been received.

1.10. This document is written in three parts: Part A - Legal and Policy Framework. Part B - Appraisal; Part C - Management Proposals.

PART A - LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

2. Legal and Policy framework.

2.1. The legal background for designating a Conservation Area is set out in Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This states that the Council shall from time to time designate Conservation Areas, which are defined as being 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to conserve or enhance'. The same section of the Act also requires that Councils undertake periodic reviews.

2.2. Section 71 of the Act requires Councils to '*formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement*' of Conservation Areas and hold a public meeting to consider them.

2.3. Within Conservation Areas there are additional planning controls and if these are to be supported it is important that the designated areas accord with the statutory definition and are not devalued by including land or buildings that lack special interest.

2.4. One of the most important additional planning controls that applies to Conservation Areas is set out at section 74 of the Act which states that '*a building in a conservation area shall not be demolished without the consent of the appropriate authority*'. This requirement is known as 'Conservation Area Consent' and is subject to certain exceptions. For example, it does not apply to Listed Buildings which are protected by their own legislation but is relevant to other non listed buildings in the Conservation Area above a threshold size set out in legislation. Another exception relates to certain ecclesiastical buildings which are not subject to local authority listed building and conservation area administration provided an equivalent approved system of control is operated by the church authority. This is known as the 'ecclesiastical exemption'. Importantly church authorities still need to obtain any necessary planning permissions from the Council.

2.5. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development Order) 1995 (as amended), defines the range of minor developments for which planning permission is not required ([PD rights](#)) and this range is more restricted in Conservation Areas. For example, the Order currently requires that the addition of dormer windows to roof slopes, various types of cladding, satellite dishes fronting a highway and a reduced size of extensions, all require planning permission in a Conservation Area, whereas they would not require permission beyond.

2.6. However, even within Conservation Areas there are many other minor developments that do not require planning permission. So as to provide further protection the law allows Councils to introduce additional controls if appropriate. Examples of such controls can include some developments fronting a highway or open space, such as an external porch, the painting of a house or the demolition of some gates, fences or walls. The removal of important architectural features that are important to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area or individual buildings within it such as distinctive porches, windows or walls or railings to non-listed properties can be subject to a more detailed assessment and if appropriate made subject to protection by a legal process known as an 'Article 4 Direction' ~~which withdraws 'Permitted Development Rights'~~. ~~The~~ use of such Directions can only be made in justified circumstances where a clear assessment of each Conservation Area has been made. In conducting this appraisal, consideration will be given as to whether or not such additional controls are necessary.

2.7. Works to Trees. Another additional planning control relates to trees located within Conservation Areas. Setting aside various exceptions principally relating to size and condition, any proposal to fell or carry out works to trees has to be 'notified' to the Council. The Council may then decide whether to make the tree/s subject to a Tree Preservation Order. ~~This appraisal diagrammatically identifies only the most significant trees or groups of trees that make a particularly important contribution to the character of the Conservation Area. Other trees not specifically identified may still be suitable for statutory protection.~~

2.8. Some hedges may be protected by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. This legislation is extremely complicated and only applies in certain situations that are determined by the location of the hedge, its age and or its historical importance, the wildlife it supports and its number of woody species.

~~2.9. Planning Policy Framework. National Policy – Planning Policy Statement 5, Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS 5) published in 2010, sets out the Government’s national policies on the conservation of the historic environment and its policies are a material consideration to be taken into account when determining whether development should proceed.~~

~~2.10. PPS 5 attaches importance to achieving good quality design of new development stating that new development should contribute positively to the character, distinctiveness and significance of the historic environment. Proposals to be successfully designed should take account of the significance of nearby assets and the contribution of their setting; the general character and distinctiveness of the local buildings, spaces and landscape; features that are a key to a sense of place; construction, materials and detailing of existing buildings and spaces; topography; views into and from the site; green landscaping and current uses and urban grain.~~

~~2.11. PPS 5 states that the ‘Government’s overarching aim is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations’.~~

~~2.12. PPS 5 also states that ‘the historic environment provides a tangible link with our past and contributes to our sense of national local and community identity. It also provides the character and distinctiveness that is so important to a positive sense of place...’~~

~~2.13. PPS 5 refers to Article 4 Directions previously mentioned, stating that if Permitted Development Rights would undermine the aims to protect the historic environment then Councils should consider the use of Article 4 Directions.~~

~~2.14. PPS 5 importantly states that ‘At local level plans should consider the qualities and local distinctiveness of the historic environment ...’ Such plans, the advice continues ‘should include consideration of how best to conserve individual, groups or types of heritage assets that are most at risk of loss through neglect, decay or other threats’.~~

~~2.159. Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Government is currently consulting on the NPPF which, it is anticipated, will replace the national policy framework referred to above and is an endeavour to clarify and simplify guidance overall. The content of the draft NPPF indicates that the Government~~

remains committed to protecting the environment and comments that Councils should have 'up to date evidence about the historic environment in their areas and use it to assess the significance of heritage assets....' Undertaking Conservation Area Appraisals such as this document is part of such a process. National Planning Policy Framework. Published in March 2012, this document replaces previous advice, including PPS 5, Planning for the Historic Environment. The principle emphasis of the new framework is to promote sustainable development. Economic, social and environmental roles should not be considered in isolation because they are mutually dependent and positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment should be sought, including replacing poor design with better design. Whilst architectural styles should not be imposed it is considered proper to reinforce local distinctiveness.

2.10. In relation to the historic environment the new National Planning Policy Framework advises as follows:

- There should be a positive strategy in the Local Plan for the conservation of the historic environment and up-to-date evidence used to assess the significance of heritage assets and the contribution they make.
- Conservation Areas. Such areas must justify such a status virtue of being of 'special architectural or historic interest'.
- Heritage assets. A Heritage asset is defined as 'a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage asset includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listings)'.
- Considerable weight should be given to conserving such heritage assets and the more important they are the greater the weight. For example the effect of a development proposal on a non- designated heritage asset should be taken into account and a balanced judgment reached. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II Listed Building should be exceptional whilst harm to heritage assets of higher status, e.g. a grade I or II* Listed Building should be wholly exceptional.
- Local Planning Authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas to enhance or

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better reveal their significance and proposals that preserve such elements should be approved.

- The use of Article 4 Directions to remove national permitted development rights should be limited to situations 'where this is necessary to protect local amenity or the well being of the area...'
- Green Areas. Such areas of particular importance can properly be identified for special protection as Local Green Spaces in selected situations.

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~~2.16. Regional Policy. The East of England Plan Policy ENV 6 offers similar advice for protecting and conserving the Region's historic environment, Conservation Areas and other heritage assets. It is likely that Regional Plans will be abolished in 2012.~~

2.17. East Hertfordshire's environmental initiatives and Local Plan Policies. East Hertfordshire is committed to protecting Conservation Areas and implementing policies which preserve and enhance them; to support their preservation through the publication of design and technical advice and to be pro-active by offering grants and administering an Historic Buildings Grant Service. With regard to the latter grants are awarded on a first come first served basis in relation to works which result in the maintenance of listed buildings and other unlisted buildings of architectural or historic interest. The maximum grant will not normally exceed £1,000.

2.18. In respect of the above the Council has produced a number of leaflets and guidance notes that are available on request. Further details are provided in Appendix 1.

2.19. The Council also has a 'Buildings at Risk Register', originally produced in 2006 ~~that shows there are over 100 Buildings at Risk in East Herts at that time together with a further 160 plus designated as being 'vulnerable' and updated in 2012/13.~~ In relation to Widford, farm buildings at Widfordbury Farm, ~~and~~ the mid 16th century western wall to churchyard and the south barn and adjacent stables at Priory Farm, High Street, are entered on the Register as being 'at risk' whilst the West Barn at Priory Farm, High Street is identified as a 'vulnerable' building. Grant assistance not exceeding £10,000 may be available for works that lead to such buildings' long term security.

2.1420. The East Herts Local Plan was adopted by the Council in 2007. Most of the policies set out in the plan remain in force and are relevant in relation to Conservation Area and Historic Building considerations. The Local Plan and its policies can be viewed on the Council's website or a copy can be obtained from the Council (contact details are set out in section 7).

2.1524. In accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Council is in the process of preparing a [Local Development Framework \(LDF\) planning policy document which will replace the 2007 East Herts Local Plan. This will be known as the East Herts District Plan. Once adopted, the LDF The District Plan](#) will contain the relevant Council planning policies.

2.1622. Widford Conservation Area was first designated in 1968 and most recently in [redesignated in](#) 1981.

Part B - APPRAISAL

3. Origins and Historical Development

3.1. The County Archeologist advises of some prehistoric flint finds beyond the village so it is likely the general area has been settled since early times.

3.2. Similarly there is evidence of limited Roman settlement in the area as crop marks, assessed as being Roman in origin, also lie beyond the village. Hertfordshire generally was settled extensively in Roman times.

3.3. Carbon dating to the 10th century of a burial outside the north wall of the church implies the possibility of an earlier church from late Saxon times.

3.4. As generally is the case, evidence of medieval occupation is more apparent. In this respect perhaps the most obvious representatives from this period are fine medieval wall paintings in the church dating from about 1300. Widfordsbury nearby was the manorial centre of an estate owned by Bermondsey Abbey until the Dissolution. Crop marks north of the church might indicate earthworks of a medieval pond or moated site.

3.5. Wideford (1086), Widiford (1205), Wedeford (1346) and Wydforde (1428) are different spellings identified in The Place

Names of Hertfordshire published by Cambridge University Press that states *'The village...must have taken its name from some ford...'* The Manor is referred to in Domesday Book as Wideford.

3.6. As set out above, the village expanded during the 17th and 18th centuries with more modest expansion occurring in the 19th century that saw the construction of a railway line built in 1859 that once traversed land to the north of the village. During all of these periods the economy of the village remained firmly based on agriculture.

3.7. Kelly's Post Office Directory of 1874 contains the following commercial entries: a commercial traveler, a shopkeeper, a grocer, three beer retailers, two publicans (White Swan and the Bell), a shoe maker, a cow keeper and a blacksmith. As entries in this Directory were subject to charge, those included may only have been partly representative of the full range of available local services at that time. Nevertheless they demonstrate that Widford was a small community within which a number of different trades were plied and where there was a degree of self sufficiency. The population in 1871 was 450, a total not dissimilar to that of today. ~~This is slightly more than that of the census of 2001 when the population was 438.~~

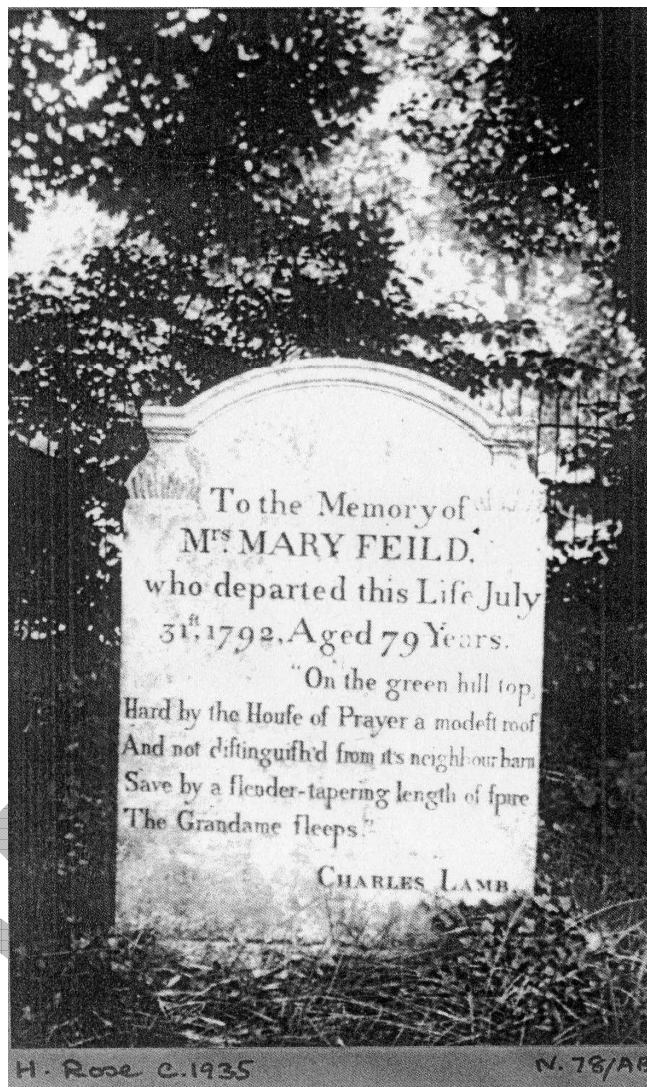
3.8. The early Ordnance Survey map dating from 1874 shows that the settlement pattern and road layout were very similar to those of today. In addition to the several pumps, pounds, wells, springs and troughs that were shown, a Smithy existed on the eastern side of the High Street and a Post Office at the junction of Hunsdon Road and Bell Lane. Interestingly this map shows allotment gardens to the south of Nether Street, no longer in evidence. ~~Greater tree cover existed at this time.~~ A map dating from 1897 showed there were then two Smithies ~~in the village.~~ Another map dating from the 1920's indicates a single Smithy only, shows the cricket field boundaries in their current configuration and indicates Allotment Gardens on the site of what is now the Lower Croft repair workshop. A map dating from 1963 indicates a Nursery with two large glass houses to the west of the High Street. By the 1960's ~~date,~~ the small estates at Bell Lane, Lamb's Gardens and Benningfield Road had been built.



Picture 1 - Widford Smithy, probably early 20th century (Reproduced courtesy of Hertfordshire Archives and Records).

3.9. For a small rural community, the village has several interesting associations. For example a certain John Eliot who was baptized in **Widford** in 1604, was known as the 'Apostle to the Red Indians' because following his emigration to America, he translated the Bible into the local Indian language **and undertook other evangelical work**. His descendants presented the east window to the church in the late 19th century.

3.10. Another interesting story relates to Charles Lamb, the 18th century poet and essayist whose works contain references to the village. He stayed with his grandmother, Mary Feild who is buried in the SW corner of the graveyard and whose headstone is individually listed. It is inscribed with words referring to his poem 'The Grandame'.



Picture 2 - Mary Feild's headstone, a Listed Building (Reproduced courtesy of Hertfordshire Archives and Records).

3.11. Plan 1 shows the existing Conservation Area boundary approximately imposed on mapping dating from 1874.

4. General Designations and criteria used to identify Important Features.

4.1. There are no designated Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the Conservation Area.

4.2. Areas of Archaeological Significance. There are four such designations in the Conservation Area and a number elsewhere in the Parish. Not all archeological sites are of equal importance and the Council will decide a course of action that may vary from recording any remains prior to development or protecting it from development, when determining planning applications. Much of the area around the Church, most of the centre of the village, most of land at Nether Street and Abbott's Farm is so designated.

4.3. Listed buildings. Individually listed buildings have been identified, plotted and very briefly described. Full descriptions can be obtained on line at English Heritage's web site or Heritage Gateway. Such listed buildings are protected from unauthorised demolition, alteration or extension. Structures, including railings and walls, within the curtilages of listed buildings, if they are pre-1948, are subject to the same controls as listed buildings. Importantly there are several listed properties with thatched roofs that are of particular architectural and historic significance.

4.4. Non listed buildings of quality and worthy of protection. There are also other non-listed buildings and structures that make an important architectural or historic contribution to the Conservation Area and these have been separately identified. The basic questions asked in identifying such buildings/structures are:

- (a) Is the non listed building/structure of sufficient architectural or historic interest whose general external form and appearance remains largely unaltered?**
- (b) Does the building contain a sufficient level of external original features and materials?**
- (c) Has the building retained its original scale without large inappropriate modern extensions that destroy the visual appearance particularly in respect of the front elevation?**
- (d) Is the building visually important in the street scene?**

4.5. Trees and Hedgerows. The basic criteria for identifying important trees and hedgerows are:-

- (a) They are in good condition.
- (b) They are visible at least in part from public view points.
- (c) ~~Do~~ they make a significant contribution to the street scene or other publicly accessible areas.

4.6. Open spaces or gaps of quality that contribute to the visual importance of the Conservation Area where development would be inappropriate have been identified. The basic question asked in identifying such areas is:

~~(a)~~ **does** the open space or gap **form** an important landscape feature contributing to the general spatial quality and visual importance of the Conservation Area? Private open spaces forming an important setting for an historic asset and unkempt spaces that have the potential to be enhanced are candidates for selection subject to complying with the principle question.

4.7. Other distinctive features that make an important visual or historic contribution are noted and shown diagrammatically. Of importance to Widford are a number of walls and railings. ~~Some are below specified heights (1m abutting a highway, which includes all public rights of way, and 2m elsewhere) Those above prescribed heights (1m fronting a highway including a footpath or bridleway, water course or public open space or 2m elsewhere) are protected and require prior consent for their demolition).~~

~~and not within the curtilage of a listed building and these could be demolished or removed with consent. This situation could be resolved by introducing an Article 4 Direction. The Council considers it may be appropriate to introduce such measures but on a very selective basis.~~

4.8. Article 4 – criterion for selecting unprotected walls or railings is as follows: those identified need to be below the prescribed height, be prominent in their location and make a positive architectural or historic contribution to its visual appearance.

4.9. Features that detract or are in poor repair have been identified.

4.10. Important views are identified. The most important of these is the view over the Ash Valley as seen from Ware Road from approximately at its junction with Abbott's Lane.

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4.11. In suggesting any revisions to the Conservation Area boundaries, consideration has been given as to whether or not the land or buildings in question form part of an area of special architectural or historic interest whose character or appearance should be conserved.

5. General Character and Setting of Widford.

5.1. In terms of its wider setting, Widford is situated on elevated land and principally within the Middle Ash Valley as defined in the Landscape Character Assessment produced on behalf of the Council in 2007.

5.2. The general character and plan form of the village has not changed a great deal from the settlement pattern that existed during the 19th century despite the presence of more recent limited expansion. Whilst the quality of these later developments varies, they do not detract significantly to the quality of the Conservation Area and its general form and structure.

5.3. There are about 40 listed buildings in the Parish, most of which are in the designated Conservation Area. All centuries between 14th and 20th are represented. The 17th century dominates with about 34% of this stock followed by the 18th century (26%); the 16th century (18%) and the 19th century (16%). In addition, the Church largely dating originating from the 14th century, is the earliest and the telephone kiosk designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott is the sole representative of the 20th century. The buildings are principally grade II with two being classified grade II*.

5.4. Throughout the Conservation Area, trees, either as groups or as individual specimens add to its quality. Elsewhere part of the charm of Widford is represented by fragmented pasture lands forming part of the village and different in character from more open countryside beyond. Narrow lanes with steep banks and hedgerows add to the diversity and charm.

5.5. In summary the designated Conservation Area contains a mixture of good quality buildings, trees and open spaces together with some interesting historical associations.

5.6 The village has developed as several clearly defined identity areas and consists of four main parts:-

5.7. Area A - the historic properties grouped around the Grade II* church that **largely originates** ~~dates~~ from the 14th century at Ware Road to the west of the settlement. This area is separated from the main part of the village by pasture land.

5.8. Area B is fragmented agricultural pasture land and associated buildings which together with the Cricket Ground to the north of Abbots Lane, contains the village in this location.

5.9. Area C - Nether Street to the north of the village is a narrow lane consisting of a rural grouping of historic buildings that forms a distinct area, largely separated from the main part of the village.

5.10. Area D consists of the remainder of the village with its existing and historic centre grouped around the junctions of Ware Road, Hunsdon Road and the High Street.

6. Detailed Character Analysis.

6.1. Area A - Ware Road. The historic properties grouped around the Grade II* church and land to the junction of Abbots Lane.

6.2. General over-view. The land rises from the collection of agricultural buildings at Widfordbury in the west to the elevated view point at the junction with Abbots Lane closer to the village, and overlooks the expansive countryside and the River Ash Valley beyond. The general picture is that of an agricultural landscape containing a picturesque group of buildings at the western extremity of the village. One modern building and other features detract.



Picture 3 – View of Church from Graveyard extension.

6.3. Archeological sites. The church, the former Rectory to its east and part of the Widfordbury farm complex to the west and extending beyond the Conservation Area boundary to the River Ash is so defined. As previously indicated Widfordbury was the manorial centre of an estate owned by Bermondsey Abbey until the Dissolution. In the churchyard there is a modern stone erected in 2005, inscribed with the word '*Disturbed during the archeological dig in 2004 the remains of a Saxon woman C10 and a man and infant of a later date were re-interred here in 2005.*'

6.4. Individually Listed Buildings. There are 4 separately listed buildings, 2 of which are listed Grade II*. The latter are the **Parish 14th century church** **mainly originating from the 14th century**, whose spire is a very prominent feature in the landscape and a mid 16th/early 17th century wall with classical gateway that forms the western boundary of the churchyard. The listed building description accurately describes the church as being '*a small medieval church, little altered, with many features of special interest and outstanding interest for its medieval wall paintings and literary associations*'.

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6.5. The District Council's Buildings at Risk Register ~~of 2006~~ identifies the Grade II* classical gateway as being 'at risk' and states the necessary action will be to (a) source the owner of the property; (b) undertake general repairs to brickwork and gate and (c) remove vegetation. Part of the brickwork collapsed in the late 20th century and some has been carefully rebuilt. There are many spalled bricks that need cutting out and replacing and this would be a specialist, time consuming and expensive job. Removal of limited vegetation growth would be a minor task.

6.6. The remaining listed buildings consist of the grade II Widfordbury Farm and Widfordbury House to the west of the church, 17th century in origin; the former Rectory, 18th century with its fine Georgian detailing and windows, particularly in the rear elevation, extended in the 19th century and the charming late 18th century Headstone monument to Mary Feild in the old churchyard. All form part of a picturesque grouping around the church.

6.7. *Other buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution.* Within the curtilage of Widfordbury Farm is a range of 19th century farm buildings varying in height, some weather boarded, principally with slate roofs or with missing roofs or with replacement corrugated asbestos. The buildings are in deteriorating condition and make a valuable architectural and historical contribution to the village approach. As they are within the curtilage of a Listed Building, they are protected and in law are viewed as if they were listed. The barns are currently being marketed 'to let subject to planning' Additionally these buildings are identified on the District Council's Buildings at Risk Register which recommends an action plan that includes general renovation and repairs.



Picture 4 – 19th century barns considered to be 'At Risk' at Widfordbury Farm.

6.8. Within the curtilage of the former Rectory referred to above and similarly protected by its listing status, is a modest 19th century outbuilding worthy of retention. This is single storey, of brick construction with hipped slate roof and 2 no. semi circular windows to west elevation.

6.9. *Other distinctive features that make an important architectural or historic contribution.* The wall defining the frontage to the Churchyard is 1m in height and constructed of brick and flint with decorative brick detailing, dating from the 19th century. ~~The Lynch Gate with tiled roof was erected in 1897 to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria.~~

6.10. Of similar date is a gault brick wall, 1.7 m in height and a brick and flint wall with decorative brick capping stones that forms an attractive continuous feature in this location to the curtilage of the former Rectory.

6.11. The wall defining the northern, southern and western boundaries of the private family graveyard of the Gosselin family is about 1.5 ms in height and of brick construction and probably dates from the late 19th century. The small burial ground contains fourteen graves and a central stone cross and is an interesting and unusual feature. Nearby and separating this burial ground from the farm complex, is a simple metal agricultural fence of similar date.

6.12. Another Lych Gate, commemorating those who gave their lives in two world wars, provides the entrance to the graveyard extension erected early in the 20th century and located south of Ware Road opposite the Church. Here there are an interesting range of gravestones including a central cross, the burial place of General Percival who surrendered Singapore during WWII and that of Robert Brickdale, Commander of the Royal Navy, who died in 1992.

6.13. Elsewhere further east is another metal agricultural fence about 1.2 m in height. This probably dates from early 20th century and its simple but elegant style is a good example of its type and the function it performs. In part it is in good condition but an eastern section extending to the property 'Wilmoor' is in need of repair.

6.14. These walls and railings and lych gate to the original graveyard are protected either by being within the curtilages of or attached to Listed Buildings or by exceeding the [specified prescribed](#) height.

6.15. *Important open land, open spaces and gaps.* The graveyard attached to the church is neat and well cared for with an interesting range of tombs, including the one individually listed referred to above. Many date from the 19th century and vary considerably in size and design. Together with its traditional mature trees and church spire, it dominates the local scene and represents the most important landscape feature of the village. The graveyard extension referred to at 6.12 is also an important open space.

6.16. The open agricultural land adjacent to Ware Road opposite Abbots Lane introduces expansive pasture land into the village scene and performs another important function by separating

distinct parts of the village and providing expansive views over the Ash Valley.

6.17. *Particularly important trees and hedgerows.* The native hedgerow fronting Widfordbury farm buildings, the trees in the churchyard and a spinney opposite 'Long Meadow' are important landscape features.

6.18. *Important views.* See above.

6.19. *Elements that are out of character with the Conservation Area:* The property known as 'Green Acres' is a modern bungalow whose design, set on an elevated position, is out of keeping with the picturesque historic grouping opposite. Its scalloped front boundary fence and decorative planting and the western boundary of tall Leylandii trees are inappropriate to this rural open area.

Adjacent to Green Acres is a field and small grouping of untidy buildings called Long Meadow. The site is obscured from view by a roadside hedge that varies in density. Access is gained from a narrow entrance of poor quality locked wooden gates. The buildings on site come into view when the gates are unlocked and appear to be poor quality and agricultural in nature. Near total screening would be achieved by additional roadside planting. To a lesser extent the 2 m boarded fence to the north of Ware Road that links the gault brick wall and simple agricultural railings detracts. The eastern section of railings extending to the property 'Wilmoor' on the opposite side of the road would be improved and benefit from simple repair work.

6.20. *Opportunities to secure improvements.* Retain through the planning process those properties, identified within the curtilage of a listed buildings and other distinctive features, trees, open spaces and views that have been identified as contributing to the quality of the area; seek to negotiate a rolling programme of repairs to the Grade II* western wall of the church; seek to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the long term future of the agricultural barns at Widfordbury farm through negotiation, possible grant assistance and /or through the planning process, seek to reduce the impact of the detracting elements through negotiation and repair. Seek additional roadside planting to the front of Long Meadow in selected roadside locations.

6.21. *Suggested boundary changes.* For reasons stated above the property it is proposed to remove Green Acres has been removed from the Conservation Area.

6.22. Area B - Fragmented agricultural land and cricket ground, principally to the north of Abbots Lane.

6.23. *General over-view.* Abbots Lane is a narrow lane linking Ware and Hunsdon roads. Use by local traffic has resulted in some damage to the roadside verges. The general picture is that of a fragmented landscape composed of pasture land and sports facilities, traversed by a well used public footpath where mature trees along existing boundaries contribute to this part of the Conservation Area. However, modern buildings at the junction of Abbots Lane and Hunsdon Road detract.

6.24. *Archeological sites.* Abbots Farm to the south of Abbots Lane is so designated. Information is limited and essentially restricted to the listed building description of that property. It may have been the house of a John Abbott, resident in the 15th century.

6.25. *Individually Listed Buildings (all are Grade II).* There are four such buildings namely the prominent Abbots Farm to the south of the Lane, possibly late medieval in origin; The Coach House also on the south side; Ashfield Nursing Home (formerly Walnut Tree House) on east corner with Abbots Lane dating from the early 18th century, extended in the 19th and Walnut Tree Lodge, late 19th century in date that the listed building description describes as being in 'a picturesque Arts and Crafts style...'

6.26. *Other buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution.* None have been identified.

6.27. *Other distinctive features that make an important architectural or historic contribution.* Part of the eastern boundary of the cricket pitch is defined by traditional railings 1 m in height, probably dating from the early 20th century. -These are in need of repair.

6.28. *Important open land, open spaces and gaps.* The quality of the fragmented pasture land, playing fields and quintessentially English cricket pitch with significant numbers of mature and maturing trees defining strong boundaries makes an important visual contribution to this part of the Conservation Area. The cricket ground was laid out in the late 19th century. The whole area is separate in character from the open arable farmland to the south.



Picture 5 – Cricket Ground, quintessentially English. Railings are in need of repair.

6.29. *Particularly important trees and hedgerows.* These are at varying stages of maturity, of different types but essentially all performing the task of defining existing boundaries and providing a pleasant and verdant environment, particularly for pedestrians using the footpath and persons participating in sporting activities. Those trees on the circular perimeter of the cricket pitch are particularly noteworthy for their contribution to the local scene.

6.30. *Important views.* Views of the cricket pitch particularly from the public footpath and views south west from Abbots Lane across open countryside are important.

6.31. *Detracting elements.* Land immediately west of the public footpath and south of the Cricket Pavilion appears unkempt and untidy. For example there is a large heap of builder's rubble that detracts and is visible from the public footpath.

6.32. Two modern properties, typical of standard mid/late 20th century architecture at the junction of Abbots Lane and Hunsdon road are not in keeping with the general surrounding architectural and historic quality of the Conservation Area. Their scale and form, including shallow pitched roofs make little contribution to the environment and are prominent when viewed from beyond the village further south on Hunsdon Road.

6.33. *Opportunities to secure improvements.* In association with the Parish Council, seek to identify additional planting particularly on verges and footpaths in the public realm; remove rubble near pavilion in public realm near footpath and consider possibly **providing** a seat; discuss the potential of repairs to the eastern boundary railings to the cricket pitch with the owner and consider potential of offering grant assistance and discuss untidy nature of site with owner in respect of land to the west of the public footpath.

6.34. *Suggested boundary changes.* **Redefine The** Conservation Area **has been redefined** by removing modern properties as previously described.

6.35. Area C - Nether Street.

6.36. *General over-view.* Nether Street is a narrow lane, characterized in part by steep banks and hedgerows and small paddocks. Interesting Listed Buildings are set in open settings contained by a strong tree boundary alongside a tributary to the River Ash that clearly defines the area and separates it from the larger field patterns in the countryside to the north.

6.37. *Archeological sites.* Most of the area is designated as being an Area of Archaeological Significance. However information is limited. Some documentary evidence exists of Common Land having existed but the historic period is uncertain. Nether Hall incorporates elements dating from about 1500.

6.38. *Individually Listed Buildings (all are Grade II).* As set out above Nether Hall is 16th century in origin, significantly extended in the 19th century. Other listed properties date from 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, are variously constructed with tiled, slate and thatched roofs that provide interest and variety in this rural setting.

6.39. *Other buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution.* Hawthorn Cottage is a two storey 19th century property in appearance with weather boarding and slate roof with modest central chimney. Despite modern windows its overall scale and appearance is pleasing and it adds historic and architectural diversity in the lane and is worthy of retention.

6.40. *Other distinctive features that make an important architectural or historic contribution.* Walls to the eastern end of Nether Street , probably 19th century in origin of varying heights constructed in various materials, brick , brick and flint, brick cappings, define the edge of the lane and property and are important features worthy of retention. They are protected in law virtue of being within the curtilage of a Listed Building.

6.41. *Open land, open spaces and gaps.* As referred to above, the general character of the whole area is open in nature and steeply sloping paddocks at the western end of Nether Street add to this general characteristic of the Conservation Area in this location.

6.42. *Trees and hedgerows.* The trees and hedgerows provide an essential and pleasing character to the rural qualities of this part of the Conservation Area. This is particularly the case in respect of the hedgerows of native species on steep banks at both ends of the lane and the strong landscape feature of the mature trees alongside the tributary brook in the valley bottom.

6.43. *Important views.* Views across open countryside from the central part of the lane, looking south, are particularly important.

6.44. *Detracting elements.* The site of the Lower Croft garage and repair workshops is untidy when viewed from within but is hidden from external view so its impact on the Conservation Area is limited.

6.45. *Opportunities to secure improvements.* Ensure that the elements that are identified as contributing to the quality of the area are retained.

6.46. B~~Suggested~~ *boundary changes.* None have been identified.

6.47. Area D – Remainder of village grouped around Ware Road, Hunsdon Road and High Street.

6.48. *General over-view.* The junction of these three streets is the centre of the village around which most of the Listed Buildings in the Parish are grouped and where the historic buildings are interspersed with modern buildings of limited architectural or historic value. South west of the school on Ware Road is more open in character.

6.49. *Archeological sites.* Most of the area is designated as being an Area of Archaeological Significance. However the information provided by the County Archeologist principally relates to the age of various Listed Buildings. A William Goddard was associated with 'Goddards', located on Hunsdon Road, in 1294.

6.50. *Individually Listed Buildings (all are Grade II).* These are grouped around the obvious centre of the village extending from the late 19th century Gothick School constructed of brick and slate on Ware Road to the thatched properties dating from the 17th century on their elevated position at the ~~north~~ end of High Street. The ~~east side of~~ High Street from its junction with Nether Street and extending along both sides of Hunsdon Road provides the greatest concentration of Listed Buildings. Within this group there is a mixture of ages, materials and styles including the telephone K6 type kiosk designed in 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Goddards on Hunsdon Road dates from the 18th century and was an academy for young gentlewomen in the early 19th century. Little Goddards Cottage dating from the 17th century with its distinctive design and parapet is a pleasing and dominant feature in the street scene.



Picture 6 – Little Goddards, Hunsdon Road.

6.51. Priory Farmhouse, tall with steeply sloping roof dating from the 17th century, is described in the Listed Building description as being ‘an historic small Queen Anne brick farmhouse little altered.’ Together with its barns, some of which are separately listed, it forms an important group in the centre of the Conservation Area. West Barn within its curtilage has ~~previously~~ been identified as being ‘vulnerable’. Subsequent updating of the Council’s ‘Buildings at Risk Register has identified This remains the case which is equally true in respect of South Barn and adjoining stables ~~that are located within~~ the same grouping as being ‘at risk’. South Barn is separately listed and dates from the 18th century. Both barns and stables are in a state of slow decay. Roofs may be leaking, some weatherboarding needs replacing and some vegetation needs removing. This is a key historic site in the centre of the village and it is most important that this issue is resolved and that the long term future of the barns is secured.

6.52. *Other buildings that make an important architectural or historic contribution.* Within Priory Farmhouse is another former agricultural building, single storey brick with slate roof and some original window features of architectural quality and merit dating from late 19th/early 20th century. Whilst being protected in law by virtue of its location within the curtilage of a Listed building, this

barn is worthy of identification for long term protection and retention.

6.53. Rose Cottage dates from the early late-19th century, is of brick construction with slate hipped roof and prominent chimney, partly rebuilt to front. Despite this and other additions, the building retains its essential character and especially because of the prominent site it occupies, is worthy of retention.

6.54. Elsewhere at the White's Farm site on Ware Road are an interesting group of buildings dating from the late 19th/early 20th century. The residence to the front is two storey, tiled roof with central chimney and decorative wooden barge board to front. To the rear is a group of farm buildings probably dating from the same period being weather boarded agricultural barns of varying heights and slate roofs, one with tall prominent agricultural door. Access to the site could not be obtained so their location and the description provided is limited to visual observations from the street.



Picture 7 – 19/20th century barns at White's Farm. Wall to front in need of repair. Dutch Barn and fence detract.

6.55. Wilmoor (former Victoria Inn) dates from the 19th century, is constructed of brick with slate roof. Vertical sliding sash windows exist and despite some modern additions this building is worthy of retention.

6.56. Other distinctive features that make an important architectural or historic contribution. Distinctive 19th/early 20th century metal railings forming boundary with road, south east end of High Street. The horizontal metal bars are supported by sturdy metal supports, pleasantly but simply constructed with rounded detailing. Less than a 1 m in height these railings are technically unprotected in law, but it is understood they are owned by Hertfordshire County Council, a responsible statutory undertaker. -They need repainting.



Picture 8 – Distinctive 19/20th century railings in need of repainting. See also Picture 1. Also photo shows thatched roof, an important characteristic to be retained.

6.57. Nearby is a simple 2 m brick wall protected by virtue of forming boundary to a Listed Building. Elsewhere walls forming the boundaries of several listed buildings add to the quality of the street scene and are important in defining and enclosing it. There are two stretches of modern wall, 2.5- 3m in height at Priory Farm and the 1 m brick wall with piers and rounded capping detail that forms the front boundary to the school on Ware Road.

6.58. Important open land, open spaces and gaps. Two small greens well maintained by the Parish Council with decorative trees form an important open space at the junction with Benningfield Road.

6.59. *Particularly important trees and hedgerows.* The trees on their steep banks with over arching canopies at the junction of High Street and Nether Street form an important environmental approach to the village. Elsewhere individual trees add to the quality of the street scene.

6.60. *Important views.* Of particular importance are views of the tree canopy from the south approaching Widford; view of Little Goddards Cottage on Hunsdon Road with its striking front elevation and views looking into the centre of the village.

6.61. *Detracting elements.* The simple bus shelter that also acts as an advertisement hoarding upon which private notices are pinned, together with road sign, directional sign, litterbin and timetable, all separate on individual supports, are located in a strategic visually central position to which the eye is drawn. Some modest rationalization could benefit the street scene.

6.62. The dwarf wall that forms the front boundary to White's Farm site is in a deteriorating condition and in need of repair. Together with the fence, it forms an untidy feature in this part of the Conservation Area. Also in this location, the Dutch barns in low key use detract when viewed from several locations, including the public footpath connecting with Abbots Lane.

6.63. *Opportunities to secure improvements.* Retain through the planning process those properties, identified within the curtilage of a listed building, unlisted properties, other distinctive features, trees, open spaces and views that have been identified as contributing to the quality of the area; seek to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the long term future of the agricultural barns at Priory Farm through negotiation, possible grant assistance and /or through the planning process, seek to reduce the impact of the detracting elements through negotiation.

6.64. *BSuggested boundary changes.* None are proposed.

6.65 Summary overview of whole Conservation Area. Widford Conservation Area is of sufficient architectural quality containing distinctive buildings and well documented historical associations to justify its continued designation. Several thatched roofs exist, the retentions of which are most important. A key quality is the number of important open spaces and the relationship the built

form enjoys with the surrounding countryside. Its historical association with agriculture is obvious and there are several good quality barns, previously used for agricultural purposes that are currently in a state of decline. A principle imperative of this appraisal has been to identify this situation and recommend resolutions to the problem through negotiation and the planning process.

PART C – MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

7. Management Proposals.

7.1. Revised Conservation Area Boundary. The revised boundary is shown on Plan 3 and includes the following amendments.

(a) ~~exclude~~ Green Acres on south side of Ware Road is excluded.

(b) ~~exclude~~ Home Field House, The Coppice and Little Goddards corner of Abbots Lane and Hunsdon Road is excluded.



Picture 9 – Properties at 7.1(b) above proposed to be excluded from the Conservation Area.

7.2. General Planning Control and Good Practice within the Conservation Area. All current planning policies are contained in the East Herts Local Plan Second Review adopted in April 2007. It is against this document that the District Council will process applications. As set out above, this will be superseded in due course by the [Councils LDF District Plan](#).

7.34. Applicants considering submitting any application should carefully consider the relevant policies and if necessary contact Council Officers to seek pre-application advice. For further details including advice on Planning Applications, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Landscaping and other general administrative advice, please contact the Planning Department for assistance.

Telephone no. 01279 655261

E-mail planning@eastherts.gov.uk

Or write to E.H.D.C. Wallfields, Pegs Lane, Hertford SG13 8EQ

7.45. Applicants may also wish to refer to one of the several Guidance Notes referred to in Appendix 1 below.

7.56. Planning Control - Potential need to undertake an Archeological Evaluation. Within the sites designated as being an Area of Archaeological Significance the contents of policies in the Local Plan which are relevant to this designation (~~policies BH1, BH2 and BH3~~) will need to be taken into account.

7.67. Listed Building Control and Good Practice. Those buildings that are individually listed and other buildings, structures or walls within the curtilage of a Listed Building are similarly protected in law.

7.78. The Listed Buildings and associated buildings within their curtilages are important and contribute to the quality of the built environment in Widford. It is essential that their architectural detailing is not eroded or their other qualities and settings not compromised. Of particular importance are properties with thatched roofs, the replacement of which by other materials would be entirely inappropriate. Good practice for applicants will be to

carefully consider the content of the policies set out in the Local Plan.

7.89. The Appraisal agrees with ~~previous other~~ findings that the very important listed western wall to the church and the 19th century barns in the curtilage of listed Widfordbury Farm are quality buildings at risk. Similarly ~~the individually listed West Barn and South Barn~~ and West Barn at Priors Farm in the centre of the village are respectively considered to be 'at risk' and 'vulnerable'. The District Council considers the resolution of these issues as being of paramount importance. In partnership with owners and within the limitations of existing staff and financial resources, it will seek a satisfactory solution that secures their long term future. The loss of these buildings would be entirely unacceptable.

7.940. *Planning Control – Other Unlisted Buildings that make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution.* Several such unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area have been identified. The Council will seek to ensure that these are retained. These are Hawthorn Cottage, Nether Street; Rose Cottage, Ware Road; White's Farm and outbuildings to rear, Ware Road and Wilmoor also on Ware Road.

7.104. *Planning Control – Other Unlisted distinctive features that make an Important Architectural or Historic Contribution.* In addition to the walls and railings already protected, by virtue of being within the curtilages of Listed Buildings or above the prescribed heights, there are others that are unprotected. ~~These are the railings to the south-east boundary of High Street. The ownership of these will be established prior to considering any formal means of protection. These which~~ can only be protected in law by the introduction of an Article 4 Direction. Prior to ~~considering pursuing~~ such a course of action, the Council will seek to establish ownership and discuss further with owners ~~and ensure notification.~~

7.112. *Planning Control – Important open land, open spaces and gaps.* This appraisal has identified the following important spaces: the churchyard; the churchyard extension south of Ware Road; land north of Ware Road overlooking the Ash Valley; the Cricket Pitch, playing fields and pasture land north of Abbots Lane (extended following representations during public consultation) and the formal open spaces junction of Ware Road / Benningfield Road.

7.1²³. These represent open spaces and other landscape features that materially contribute to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and will be protected.

7.1³⁴. *Planning Control – Particularly important trees and hedgerows.* Only the most significant trees are shown diagrammatically. Subject to certain exceptions all trees in a Conservation Area are afforded protection and a person wanting to carry out works has to notify the Council. Trees that have not been identified may still be considered suitable for protection by Tree Preservation Orders. Owners are advised to make regular inspections to check the health of trees in the interests of amenity and Health and Safety. As previously advised at paragraph 2.8 some hedges may be protected by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

7.1⁴⁵. *Planning Control – Important views.* The most important views within and out of the Conservation area are diagrammatically shown.

7.1⁵⁶. *Enhancement Proposals.* The Appraisal has identified a number of elements that detract that are summarised below together with a proposed course of action. Within the staff and financial resources available, Council Officers will be pro-active and provide assistance. It must be recognized that such improvements will frequently only be achieved with the owners co-operation.

Detracting element	Location	Proposed Action.
Landscaping/fencing.	Green Acres, south of Ware Road.	Seek to negotiate solution with owner.
Close boarded fence and Agricultural railings.	North of Ware Road.	Seek to reduce visual impact of fencing. Seek to negotiate repairs to agricultural railings.
Deteriorating listed wall and agricultural buildings in curtilage of a Listed Building.	Widfordbury farm and western wall of church.	Enter discussions with owners. Seek to initiate repairs. Without prejudice, consider possibility of grant aid. Seek satisfactory planning outcome in relation to future of barns.
Untidy site.	South of cricket pavilion and	Seek resolution following discussion with owner.

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	west of public footpath.	
Boundary railings in need of repair.	Cricket pitch.	Discuss with owner, seek repairs.
Boundary railings in need of repainting.	Northern end of High Street.	Establish ownership, seek repainting.
Small accumulation of debris.	Adjacent to public footpath/ near cricket pavilion.	Discuss modest environmental improvements, including possible provision of seat with Parish Council
Untidy site.	Lower Croft garage.	Discuss potential of initiating limited internal improvements with owner, commensurate with use of site.
<u>Untidy site</u>	<u>Long Meadow, Ware Road</u>	<u>Discuss potential of providing additional screening to roadside boundary.</u>
Discordant signage.	Bus shelter area.	Consider rationalization of discordant elements.
Dwarf wall / fencing/Dutch barns.	Whites Farm.	Discuss potential of repairs/ improvements with owner.
Deteriorating listed properties.	Priory Farm.	Enter discussions with owners. Seek to initiate repairs. Without prejudice, consider possibility of grant aid. Seek satisfactory planning outcome in relation to future of barns.





7.17. The features identified in paragraphs 7.1- 7.1~~5~~⁶ above are shown on Plan 3.

Appendix 1. Guidance notes produced by East Hertfordshire District Council. The following represent useful technical information and can be obtained via the details provided above.

- 1. Brick Repointing and Repair.**
- 2. Conservation Areas.**
- 3. Cleaning Historic Brickwork.**
- 4. Farm Buildings**
- 5. Flint and Flint Wall Repair.**
- 6. Hard Landscaping in Historic Areas.**
- 7. Listed Buildings.**
- 8. Rainwater Goods and Lead.**
- 9. Shopfronts.**

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Key to Plan 2

-  Existing conservation area boundary
-  Area proposed to be removed from conservation area
-  Areas of archeological significance
-  Individually Listed Buildings
- R V** Listed Buildings aid "curtilage". Listed buildings previously identified as being AT RISK or VULNERABLE
-  Other important "curtilage" Listed Building
-  Unlisted building that make an important architectural or historic contribution
-  Other distinctive features including walls and railings that make an important architectural or historic contribution
-  Important open land, open spaces and gaps
-  Particularly important trees and hedgerows
-  Important views
- D** Detracting elements













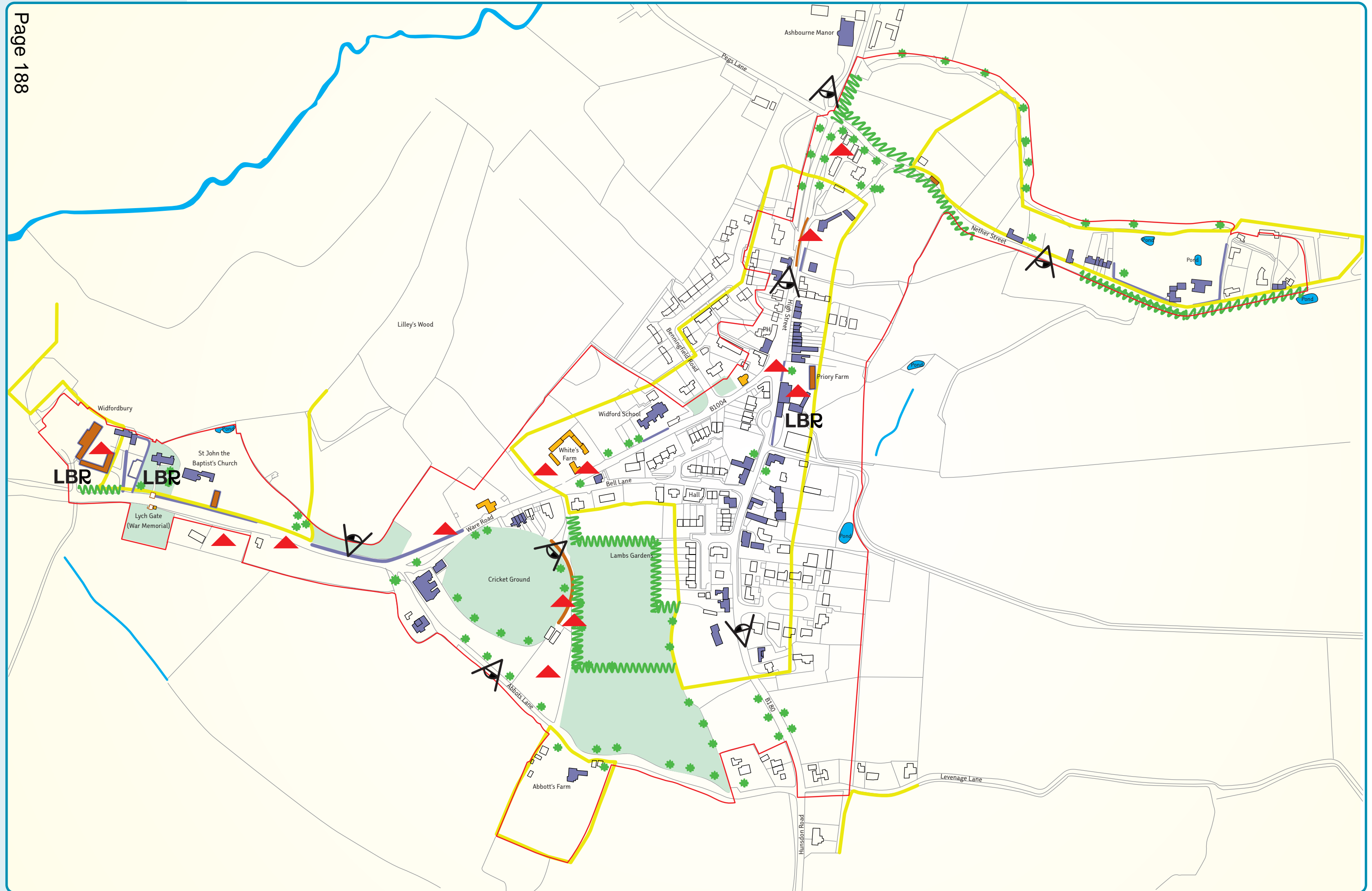
Widford Conservation Area Appraisal

Plan 2 - Character Analysis

Key to Plan 3

All District plan policies apply as appropriate

-  Existing conservation area boundary
-  Areas of archeological significance, policies BH1, BH2 & BH3 particularly apply
-  Listed Buildings and other important buildings within the curtilage of Listed buildings; policies BH9, BH10, BH11 & BH12 particularly apply
- LBR** Listed Buildings "AT RISK" or "VUNERABLE" where further repairs need to be undertaken
-  Non-listed buildings to be protected from demolition
-  Important walls and railings to be retained and protected by virtue of a) being within the curtilage of a Listed building and b) by virtue of being of the specified height (1 metre a building, a highway, 2 metres elsewhere)
-  Other walls and railings to be protected by Article 4 Directions or by agreement - to be determined following separate process of notification/discussion with others
-  Important open land, open spaces and gaps to be protected
-  Particularly important trees and hedgerows to be protected
-  Important views to be protected
-  Proposed enhancements



Widford Conservation Area Appraisal

Plan 3 - Management Plan

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
DISTRICT PLANNING EXECUTIVE PANEL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON THURSDAY
25 JULY 2013, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor M Carver (Chairman)
Councillors L Haysey and S Rutland-Barsby.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors W Ashley, R Beeching,
A Jackson, J Jones, M McMullen, T Page,
M Pope, J Ranger, J Thornton and
G Williamson.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Kay Mead	- Senior Planning Officer
Martin Paine	- Senior Planning Officer
Jenny Pierce	- Senior Planning Officer
Claire Sime	- Planning Policy Team Leader
Katie Simpson	- Assistant Planning Officer
Brendan Starkey	- Assistant Planning Officer
Kevin Steptoe	- Head of Planning and Building Control Services
Bryan Thomsett	- Planning Policy Manager

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Panel Chairman welcomed the press, public and Members and reminded them that the meeting was being webcast. He also welcomed Councillor S Rutland-Barsby to her first meeting as a Panel Member and Brendan Starkey, a new addition to the Planning Policy team.

The Chairman reminded Members of the training day that had been arranged in conjunction with the Planning Advisory Service, for 24 October 2013. This would be a very important session and all Members were urged to attend. He also referred to a meeting with the East Herts Association of Parish and Town Councils on 20 September 2013.

Finally, the Chairman commented that the informal group continued to look at emerging policies and reminded Members of the process, namely that, all proposals would be submitted to Council for decision, via the Executive and this Panel.

2 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Panel meeting held on 21 February 2013, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

In respect of Minute 8 – Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) – Round 3 – Update, the Panel Chairman declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in that he was Chairman of Hertford Regional College and would leave the room in the event of there being any substantial discussion of specific sites.

4 **STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI): PROPOSED ADOPTION OF DOCUMENT FOLLOWING PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport submitted a report detailing the results of the

Council's public consultation on its Draft Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which sought agreement to adopt a revised document.

The Panel noted that 23 responses had been received from 20 respondents in relation to the consultation. The matters raised in these submissions were detailed in the schedule attached to the report submitted at Essential Reference Paper 'B'. This included summaries of the main issues raised, the Officer responses to those issues, and proposed amendments to the SCI, where appropriate. Several representations had suggested amendments that would add value to the SCI either in terms of factual content or for clarification of the proposed text. For these cases, proposed amendments to the document had been suggested in the schedule. Additional to the issues raised during the consultation, one further suggested amendment was also made to the SCI document for consistency reasons.

The Panel recommended the proposed changes and the adoption of the SCI as now submitted.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the responses to the public consultation be noted and the Officer responses and proposed changes to the Draft East Herts Statement of Community Involvement be supported; and

(B) the East Herts Statement of Community Involvement, 2013 be supported for adoption.

5 DISTRICT PLAN - UPDATE REPORT

The Panel considered a report setting out the progress made towards finalisation of a development strategy for the District. Approval was sought towards consolidation of the two-part plan into a single District Plan, which provided for an early review of the plan to address long-term planning requirements. An updated stepped approach was set out at Essential Reference 'B' of the

report submitted.

The Panel also noted that there was an important gap in the Council's knowledge relating to infrastructure delivery considerations, notably in respect of the scope of evidence that might be required as part of the plan-making process, and the robustness of information that had to date been made available to the Council.

Therefore, Officers had requested support from the Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS), an independent advisory service available to support local authorities in dealing with complex and large scale development projects.

The Panel noted that, subject to unforeseen circumstances, it would be possible to present a draft District Plan to Members later this year, with consultation later this year/early next year.

Officers referred to paragraph 2.31 of the report submitted and asked the Panel to note an error, in that Uttlesford District Council were currently considering an application for 850 dwellings at Elsenham, and the matter was not subject to an appeal.

In response to various Members' comments and questions, Officers advised that further guidance from the Government on the interpretation of the Duty to Co-operate was expected imminently. In respect of infrastructure issues, the Panel was referred to ongoing correspondence with strategic partners as detailed in the report submitted. Overall, the Authority was well placed to deliver a robust and evidence-based Plan.

The Panel supported the recommendations now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) a change to the structure of the District Plan, to combine Strategic Policies, Development Management Policies, and Site Allocations, into a single District Plan, be supported;

(B) an early review of the District Plan, based on a 'plan-monitor-and-manage' approach particularly in respect of long-term planning, be supported; and

(C) the approach to obtaining critical delivery information, including ATLAS project support, be supported.

6 DUTY TO CO-OPERATE – UPDATE REPORT

The Panel received a report summarising relevant information related to the Duty to Co-Operate involving each of the seven adjoining Local Planning Authorities. The report also sought endorsement of the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership's Memorandum of Understanding, as detailed in the report submitted.

The Panel noted an error at paragraph 2.23 of the report submitted, in that Uttlesford District Council was currently considering an application for 850 dwellings at Elsenham and the matter was not subject of an appeal. Also the application had been submitted by Fairfield Partnership and not Fairview Homes.

The Panel supported the recommendations as now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the current main issues relating to the Duty to Co-Operate involving adjoining authorities, be noted; and

(B) the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Planning Partnership Memorandum of Understanding, be supported for use in planning policy and development management work.

7 POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD PROJECTIONS – UPDATE REPORT

The Executive Member for Strategic Planning and

Transport submitted a report updating Members on aspects of population and household projections. Recently published and emerging information, together with the ongoing interpretation by the Planning Inspectorate of 'objectively assessed housing need' in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), continued to indicate that East Herts Council might need to plan for the upper end of the range 10,000 to 17,000 dwellings over the 20 year period 2011 to 2031.

The Panel supported the recommendation now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that it be noted that recently published and emerging information, together with the ongoing interpretation by the Planning Inspectorate of 'objectively assessed housing need' in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), continues to indicate that East Herts Council may need to plan for the upper end of the range 10,000 to 17,000 dwellings over the 20 year period 2011 to 2031.

8 STRATEGIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT (SLAA) – ROUND 3 – UPDATE REPORT

The Panel considered a report which updated Members on the status of Round 3 of the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) and to provide an interim list of sites identified to date that will be considered for assessment in Round 3.

Officers advised that, for clarification purposes, site 20/010 in both Essential Reference Papers 'B' and 'C' had been renamed to 'Land to the north of the Turkey Farm Recreation Area'.

In response to Members' questions and comments, Officers reminded the Panel of the Call for Sites process and suggested that updates to the list could be reported as a regular item to the meetings with the East Herts Association of Parish and Town Councils.

The Panel supported the recommendations now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that (A) the list of identified sites, contained as Essential Reference Paper ‘B’ to the report submitted, which includes responses received to the Call for Sites, be noted and taken into account as part of the preparation of Round 3 of the East Herts Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA); and

(B) any future Call for Sites suggestions be included and assessed as part of the preparation of Round 3 of the SLAA, and subsequently as part of the annual monitoring and review of the SLAA.

9 **TOWN WIDE EMPLOYMENT STUDY FOR BISHOP’S STORTFORD (JUNE 2013)**

The Panel received a report summarising the findings of the Employment Study undertaken for Bishop’s Stortford by Wessex Economics, which sought endorsement to use the Study to inform the preparation of the East Herts District Plan.

The Panel supported the recommendation now detailed.

RECOMMENDED – that the Town Wide Employment Study of Bishop’s Stortford, June 2013, be supported as part of the evidence base to inform and support the East Herts District Plan and for Development Management purposes in the determination of planning applications.

The meeting closed at 7.53 pm

Chairman

Date

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