



James Ellis
Head of Legal and
Democratic Services

MEETING : OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
VENUE : VIRTUAL MEETING - ZOOM
DATE : TUESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2020
TIME : 7.00 PM

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor J Wyllie (Chairman)
Councillors S Bell, M Brady, R Buckmaster, A Curtis, I Devonshire,
H Drake, J Frecknall, M Goldspink (Vice-Chairman), D Hollebon, J Kaye,
D Snowdon, M Stevenson and N Symonds

Substitutes

Conservative Group: Councillors D Andrews, I Kemp and
A Ward-Booth
Green: Councillor B Crystall
Labour: Councillor C Redfern

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

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DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

1. A Member, present at a meeting of the Authority, or any committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee of the Authority, with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in any matter to be considered or being considered at a meeting:
 - must not participate in any discussion of the matter at the meeting;
 - must not participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting;
 - must disclose the interest to the meeting, whether registered or not, subject to the provisions of section 32 of the Localism Act 2011;
 - if the interest is not registered and is not the subject of a pending notification, must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days;
 - must leave the room while any discussion or voting takes place.
2. A DPI is an interest of a Member or their partner (which means spouse or civil partner, a person with whom they are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom they are living as if they were civil partners) within the descriptions as defined in the Localism Act 2011.
3. The Authority may grant a Member dispensation, but only in limited circumstances, to enable him/her to participate and vote on a matter in which they have a DPI.
4. It is a criminal offence to:

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

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AGENDA

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Minutes - 15 September 2020 (Pages 7 - 26)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020.

3. Chairman's Announcements

4. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Members' Declarations of Interest.

5. Presentation by the Leader and Chief Executive - How the Council reacted to the Corona Virus

6. Revenues and Benefits Annual Report (Pages 27 - 48)

7. Update on Sustainability Action Plan (Pages 49 - 60)

8. East Herts Council Complaints 2019-20 (Pages 61 - 80)

9. Corporate Plan Update (Pages 81 - 112)

10. Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Draft Work Programme (Pages 113 - 128)

11. Urgent Items

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

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE THIS MEETING WILL BE HELD
VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM ON TUESDAY 15
SEPTEMBER 2020, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J Wyllie (Chairman)
Councillors M Brady, R Buckmaster,
A Curtis, I Devonshire, H Drake, J Frecknall,
M Goldspink, D Hollebon, D Snowdon,
M Stevenson, N Symonds and A Ward-
Booth

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors P Ruffles

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Lorraine Blackburn	- Scrutiny Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Head of Housing and Health
Helen George	- Housing Development and Strategy Manager
Theresa Mortimer	- Benefits Manager
Peter Mannings	- Democratic Services Officer
Jane O'Brien	- Senior Environmental Health Officer (Residential)
Graeme Reid	- Revenues Manager

Paul Thomas-Jones - Environmental
Health Manager -
Commercial
William Troop - Democratic
Services Officer

159 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Kaye. It was noted that Councillor Ward-Booth was substituting for Councillor Kaye.

160 MINUTES - 16 JUNE 2020

Councillor Hollebon asked that the report of the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) be presented to the next meeting of the Committee it was available.

The Scrutiny Officer said that a draft version of the report had been received but that the final version had not been sent to Officers yet. She said that the Chief Executive and Leader had commented on the draft report. Members were advised that the final report would be available shortly.

Councillor Hollebon said that Members should have had the opportunity to review the draft and final reports. The Scrutiny Officer said that she would pass on her comments to the Monitoring Officer.

It was moved by Councillor Goldspink and seconded by Councillor Devonshire that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. After being put to the

meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

161 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded Members to use the blue hand function in Zoom to indicate that they wished to speak.

162 ENHANCING THE COUNCIL'S WORKING ARRANGEMENTS WITH REGISTERED PROVIDERS - REPORT OF THE SOCIAL HOUSING TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Head of Housing and Health, on behalf of the Social Housing Task and Finish Group, presented a report that made a series of recommendations for how East Herts Council could enhance the way it works with local registered providers of affordable housing to maximise the quality of housing services for those wishing or needing to rent or buy an affordable home or who were already an affordable housing tenant in East Herts.

Members were reminded that the Social Housing Task and Finish Group had been established in November 2019 to investigate the working arrangements between the East Herts Council and registered providers. Members were advised that the aim of the group had been to explore how the working relationship could be enhanced for tenants and those

seeking affordable housing in East Herts.

The Head of Housing and Health said that much ground had been covered in a focus group with tenants of Network Homes and Clarion Housing. Meetings with senior representatives of both organisations were also held and Members were advised that the notes of those meetings and focus groups were appended to the report and a number of very specific issues were being followed up by the housing team.

Members were advised that the report presented a series of recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for improved joint working being recommended to the Executive.

The Head of Housing and Health referred to the recommendations and the suggestions of the Task and Finish Group. He said that a key finding of the Task and Finish Group was that Housing Officers should be involved at an earlier stage in the planning process for new housing developments.

The Head of Housing and Health said that it was for Housing and Planning Officers to determine how best to incorporate the in depth knowledge of Housing Officers regarding East Herts housing need at the crucial pre application stage.

A number of Members expressed thanks to Officers and the Task and Finish Group Members for what was an excellent report. Councillor Goldspink said that she fully supported all of the recommendations as they

would help Councillors and the housing associations to better understand each other and she hoped that the recommendations would benefit tenants.

Councillor Goldspink said that paragraph 5.1 which related to “risks” could be amended to read “that the Scrutiny Committee could choose not to recommend any actions”. She expressed a hope that the recommendations could be implemented as soon possible and before the end of 2021/22.

Councillor Devonshire asked whether an interim report could come before Members before the end of 2021/22. The Chairman said that he understood that the Executive Members would be joining Members of this Committee at meetings more regularly and the Executive Member could update Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress.

Councillor Frecknall said it would be good to see the early involvement of the Executive Member with the short term actions as part of this ongoing process.

Councillor Curtis said that it would be helpful to have regular updates, perhaps every 6 months. Following a comment from the Chairman about ensuring that Members were able to do justice to agenda items at meetings, Councillor Curtis said that these regular updates could be submitted by email rather than taking up space on agendas of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of Housing Health confirmed that the work of the Task and Finish Group had now concluded and

the next stage was that, on presentation of the recommendations to Executive, part of the decision to be taken was establishing a timetable for implementing the recommendations.

The Head of Housing and Health said that housing forum meetings would be reintroduced again with housing management concerns being added to their remit. He said that a particular area of focus had been making the bidding process easier, especially regarding the lead in time for new build properties. He mentioned the need to have “welcome visits” for those moving into a new home.

Councillor Goldspink suggested an update every 12 months subject to the ongoing content of the work programme.

Councillor Goldspink proposed and Councillor Devonshire seconded, a motion that the recommendations detailed in the report be supported, subject to more regular updates from the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods being submitted to the Committee by email. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) the recommendations for how the Council can enhance its working arrangements with registered providers, as presented at paragraph 2.6, be recommended to the Executive;

(B) a recommendation be made to the Executive that the Executive Member for

Neighbourhoods works with the Head of Housing and Health to implement the recommendations before the end of 2021/22; and

(C) should the Executive approve the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommended actions, the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods be invited to report on progress to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee towards the end of 2021/22, and more regularly by email to the Members of the Committee.

163 COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2021/22

The Executive Member for Financial Sustainability submitted a report that allowed Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members to consider the latest available information around the current local Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme at East Herts and whether any changes to the scheme should be considered for 2021/22.

The Shared Service Manager said that Members were being asked to support the approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2021/22. The scheme had been operated since April 2013 and replaced Council Tax benefit under the provisions of the local government finance bill. The scheme was required to be confirmed by Council by the 11 March in the preceding financial year.

Members were advised that since the scheme had

been introduced in 2013, various changes had been considered although the scheme had remained the same. The Shared Service Manager said that Appendix A set out the history of the scheme and she advised the Committee that modelling had proved that a banded scheme would be unviable. She said many processes in respect of universal credit had been automated following changes in circumstances for customers on Council Tax Support.

The Shared Service Manager said that the current economic impact on residents due to Covid-19 was uncertain and due to the changes to the furlough scheme and employment uncertainty, the report recommended that the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme remain the same for the new financial year. She said that after further consideration, Officers might come back to Members next year with a possible change to the scheme. She said in conclusion that Members were invited to support the use of the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme into 2021/22.

Councillor Snowden asked for clarity as to the changes that could be made next year. Members were advised that Officers felt that the changes that had been considered would not be beneficial and that the current scheme, which had been in place for the last 8 years, should continue.

The Shared Service Manager said that one option that had been considered was a change to a banded scheme. She advised that this scheme would have to be subject to a full public consultation and would require changes to software; there would be cost

implications with no benefits to the Council.

Councillor Goldspink said that previously, the Council had been reimbursed for the cost of Council Tax Support Schemes and she wished to know if the Council received any reimbursement towards the cost of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The Shared Service Manager confirmed that the Council received no direct funding for the scheme. Councillor Goldspink asked for clarity as to eligibility for universal credit as there were some many variables to be taken into account.

The Shared Service Manager said that housing benefit was included in universal credit in a majority of cases. She said it was imperative that customers tell the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about housing costs when claiming universal credit. She said that it was also important that claims were submitted online at the appropriate time.

Councillor Symonds asked whether the public still struggled with understanding the way the system worked in terms of Council Tax and Universal Credit. The Shared Service Manager confirmed that Officers were working with other agencies to ensure consistency of message in terms of the advice that was being given out.

Councillor Frecknall said that he agreed that it was prudent not to make any wholesale changes given the challenges everyone was facing at the current time. He asked for and was given clarity by the Shared Services

Manager on the aims of a banded scheme for Council Tax Reduction beyond 2021/22.

The Democratic Services Officer and the Shared Services Manager explained that the recommendation was for the current scheme to continue for 2021/22 and for other options to be explored for the future in 2022/23 and beyond.

Councillor Goldspink and Councillor Devonshire seconded, a motion that the Executive be advised that the Council should continue with the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2021/22 and Officers investigate the possibilities for alternative schemes beyond 2021/22. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that the Council should continue with the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2021/22 and Officers investigate the possibilities for alternative schemes beyond 2021/22.

164 POLICY FOR ENFORCING STANDARDS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR LANDLORDS

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods submitted a report that presented a policy regarding the enforcement of standards for private sector landlords in East Herts. The Service Manager (Environmental Health) said that the Housing and Planning Act 2016 gave the Council some new enforcement powers for dealing with landlords and property agents.

The Service Manager (Environmental Health) advised that the Council needed to have documented policies to make the council's use of these powers lawful and to provide transparency and consistency in respect of civil penalties. He listed the policies included.

Members were advised that a 10 week consultation was still ongoing and the results of this would feed into the report to the Executive.

Councillor Goldspink asked how judgements would be reached in a consistent and transparent way in terms of Officers deciding on the use of civil penalties on a case by case basis. She referred to banning orders and sought clarification of the phrase "at a time when they were a landlord or property agent".

The Senior Officer Environmental Health (Residential) said that each potential civil penalty case differed, and depended on the offence committed, the circumstances of the landlord and the tenant. She said that the offences covered were not directly related to the landlord or agent role and hence the qualification that such offences could only be taken into account while the person was a landlord or agent. She said that the matrix allowed Officers to take into account a series of factors in each case and this included the culpability of the landlord and other factors specified in the guidance, this is similar to the matters a magistrate may take into account when determining a fine on prosecution.

Councillor Goldspink said that if the wording included a reference to the matrix then it would be clearer than

just saying that each instance was assessed on a case by case basis. Members were advised that this suggestion was certainly something could take forward when making a recommendation to the Executive. The Senior Officer Environmental Health (Residential) acknowledged the Member's suggestion and explained that in developing the Council's guidance, Officers were adhering as closely as possible to the original wording within legislation to ensure that the Council was complying with the law.

Members were advised that Officers had discretion to not apply for a banning order and' even where applied for, not to force a landlord to give up rental properties immediately. Officers could still put that landlord onto the database of rogue landlords so that other local authorities were aware of that landlord.

The Head of Housing and Health said that the wording might appear a bit cumbersome but given that it relates to significant actions with serious implications the policies needed to fit within the wording of the legislation itself.

Councillor Drake asked whether the banning orders would be UK wide or would only apply in a district or county and she also wished to know how the database was used in terms of who had access to it and whether letting agents had access to it in terms letting other properties. Councillor Drake also questioned the reasoning for not having the consultation information included in the report.

The Senior Officer said that the banning orders would

be UK wide and the database was developed and maintained by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. She said that ministerial consideration was being given to allowing a wider access to this database but that it was currently limited to the Secretary of State and to local housing authorities for specific uses.

The Head of Housing and Health agreed with the point made by Councillor Drake in terms of timescales and the inclusion of consultation responses. Officers could take forward the points raised by Members and draw those together with the consultation responses received.

Councillor Frecknall mentioned a minor inaccuracy in terms of a date in the consultation document not matching the phrasing detailed at paragraph 6.1 of the report.

Councillor Goldspink referred to policy 2 and rent repayments and the ability of the Council or the tenant to make the application and asked whether it would be the Council or the tenant that would receive the repayment.

The Senior Officer Environmental Health (Residential) provided clarification in response to a question from Cllr Goldspink as to whether it would be the Council or tenant who would receive payment.

Councillor Goldspink asked what would happen to tenants where a landlord was in receipt of a banning order. The Senior Officer explained that properties

could either be sold with sitting tenants or managed more appropriately. She said that if tenants were to be evicted then her team would work with housing options colleagues to see if tenants were eligible for re housing.

Councillor Ward-Booth proposed and Councillor Goldspink seconded, a motion that the proposed new policies relating to housing standards enforcement and the adoption of the powers introduced in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 (the Act), be supported. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, this motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Executive be advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee supports the proposed new policies relating to housing standards enforcement and the adoption of the powers introduced in the Housing and Planning Act 2016 (the Act).

165 ENVIRONMENTAL CLIMATE CHANGE FORUM UPDATE

The Head of Housing and Health gave a verbal update in respect of the Environmental Climate Change Forum. He reminded Members that the forum arose from a recommendation of the Task and Finish Group set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explore this topic.

The Head of Housing and Health explained that much of the work of the Task and Finish Group had been incorporated into both the climate change declaration that had been made at Full Council in July 2019 and the

commitments and action flowing from the declaration.

Members were advised that the Forum had held its first conference style meeting at Fletchers Lea in Ware in January 2020. The Head of Housing and Health explained that a virtual video conference was scheduled to take place at 3 pm on Monday 21 September 2020 and he hoped that a greater number of people could participate virtually. He detailed what he anticipated would be the primary topics of focus for this conference and he referred to the Council's action plan following the Council's climate change declaration.

The Head of Housing and Health summarised the broad headline categories of the action plan and said that the Environmental Sustainability Co-ordinator would present a detailed report to the 3 November 2020 meeting of the Committee.

The Head of Housing and Health concluded by referring to the proactive role of East Herts Council in the establishment of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership.

The Head of Housing and Health explained that he was happy to incorporate the wider actions and priorities of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership into regular updates for the Committee.

The Chairman said that a written update would be beneficial and did not have to wait until the next meeting as updates could be submitted by email.

Councillor Frecknall said that he had not heard about the virtual forum meeting on 21 September 2020 and said that more communication would be beneficial going forward as would a written update for the Committee.

The Chairman asked for an email invite to be sent to Members for the meeting due to be held on 21 September 2020. The Head of Housing and Health responded to a number of other queries from the Committee. Members received the update on the Environmental Climate Change Forum.

RESOLVED – that (A) the update on the Environmental Climate Change Forum be received

(B) Members be provide with a detailed written updated at the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

166 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer submitted a report that reviewed the actions included in the Committee's existing work programme and proposed amendments to the ongoing work programme.

The Scrutiny Officer advised Members of the changes in format to the work programmes for both Overview and Scrutiny and Audit and Governance and the Committee was reminded that an updated version had been forwarded to Members on 9 September 2020.

Members were advised that these work programmes had been consolidated as it was felt that this would provide a better overall advanced perspective of what was coming forward for consideration by both Committees.

The Scrutiny Officer said that paragraph 3.1 provided an update in relation to the review of East Herts Parking Policy and the report of the Task and Finish Group, which had been considered by the Executive on 11 February 2020. Members were reminded of the significant loss of income in relation to parking and the impact of this on the Council and the Medium Term Financial Plan and that this was under constant review by the Executive Member and Key Officers.

The Committee was referred to the updated appendix to the work programme for the November meeting, which included a number of new issues, including the Cultural Strategy, Performance Report Quarters 1 and possibly 2 and the Revenues and Benefits Annual report.

The Scrutiny Officer said that Overview and Scrutiny Committee was the Crime and Disorder Committee for the purposes of Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act and that Members might wish to invite the Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire to a future meeting. This was supported. She also explained that Members might also be aware that the Executive had asked Project Managers to review Business Cases to support a review of its capital projects given the impact that Covid-19 has had on the Council's income

streams.

Finally, the Scrutiny Officer said that the Council was statutorily required to produce an Annual Scrutiny Report and this document would be submitted to this Committee before being presented to Council. She said that she had noted the request from Councillor Hollebon regarding the Committee having sight of the draft Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) report before the final version was received, perhaps in November.

Councillor Curtis commented on the climate change action plan and having sight of this so that Members could see which actions had been met and those that were yet to be met. He said that it would be good if the Committee could review the impact on town centres of work that was being undertaken, especially in light of the impact of Covid-19.

The Scrutiny Officer said that the thread coming through from the draft report of the scrutiny review was that Members should be very specific as to what they wanted to scrutinise and ask the question “what value could scrutiny add” before the Committee agreed to spend any time on a given topic. She said that, to that end, she would send a scoping document to Councillor Curtis for him to think through and complete in relation to his earlier request.

Councillor Frecknall said that if the option was there to invite David Lloyd, the Police and Crime Commissioner, to the November meeting of the Committee then this would be a very good and worthwhile idea. He asked whether it would also be possible to have a 15 minute

section on each agenda for the attendance of the Executive Members, perhaps as part of a rolling programme of attendance.

The Chairman said it was his understanding that the Leader and the Chief Executive would be attending the next meeting to discuss how the Council had dealt with the impact of COVID-19. He reiterated the importance of having Executive Members present updates on their portfolios.

The Scrutiny Officer said that Members could agree at the November meeting which Executive Members could attend future meetings on a rolling rotational basis. Councillor Hollebon said that Members should perhaps offer 2 dates to David Lloyd and also a specific topic to allow him to get a confirmed date in his diary and to prepare for the meeting.

The Chairman said that questions could be sent in advance to allow David Lloyd time to prepare and he could be offered the November date or if that was not possible, the meeting after that. He said the overall topic could be policing in East Herts whilst keeping in mind that there many strands to that topic. The Scrutiny Officer said that she had been trying to get Chief Inspector Orton to present to Members regarding knife crime across county lines. She asked whether this was a potential suggestion for a topic. This was also supported.

Councillor Curtis said that he had regular contact with David Lloyd and Members could email him questions of a strategic nature which he could then pass onto the

Police and Crime Commissioner. He said operational matters would have to put to the local police for a specific area in East Herts.

It was moved by Councillor Goldspink and seconded by Councillor Symonds that the draft Work Programme, as amended, be approved, subject to the matters noted above. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the draft work programme, as amended, be approved, subject to the matters noted above.

The meeting closed at 8.48 pm

Chairman
Date

Meeting **East Herts Council and
Stevenage Borough Council Joint
Revenues and Benefits
Committee**

Portfolio Area Resources

Date 25 June 2020



ANNUAL UPDATE

NON KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

To report to committee the position in the following areas.

- 1.1 Performance reporting
- 1.2 Other challenges
- 1.3 Budget outturn

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The report be noted.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The shared service has been in operation since August 2011.
- 3.2 This report includes an overview of performance in 2019/20 of the Revenues & Benefits shared service and details future objectives and challenges.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Housing Benefit

- 4.1.1 **Housing Benefit processing. (N181)**-This performance indicator measures the average processing time for new claims and changes in circumstances.
- 4.1.2 Stevenage N181 was 5.98 days (2018/19: 5.96 days) the second best result since at least 2009/10. With East Herts N181 of 6.60 days which was the best result since 2008/9.
- 4.1.3 The objective of minimising processing time is twofold. Firstly to provide a good service to our customers, but also to avoid any subsidy penalties incurred if processing delays create overpayments for the customer. These are called 'admin delays', and when combined with any LA error overpayments can result in the loss of significant subsidy. If the total value is less than 0.48% of total eligible expenditure, 100% subsidy can be claimed. If between 0.48% and 0.54% the level of subsidy falls to 40%, and anything above 0.54% would mean a loss of all subsidy on these costs. These are monitored closely throughout the year. For 2019/20 pre audit the figures are demonstrated below, and demonstrate that 100% subsidy (pre audit) will be claimed.

Table 1 LA error and admin delay

LA Error/Admin delay 2019/20. Pre audit	SBC	EHC
Eligible Expenditure	£ 25,267,737	£ 28,154,873
0.48%	£ 121,285	£ 135,143
0.54%	£ 136,446	£ 152,036
Actual	£ 108,041	£ 70,533

- 4.1.4 The N181 core indicator represents a significant achievement for the shared service. The level of work received by the Housing Benefit team reduced in 2019/20 following the reducing caseload. The overall level of HB post received in 2019/20 reduced by 6155 items compared to 2018/19, a reduction of 5.2%. The total post received was 113821 items. (EHC 53246 & SBC 60575) . Two Assessment Officer posts were deleted during the year reflecting this reduced workload. The following graphs demonstrate the changes.

Table 2: SBC Housing Benefit work received.

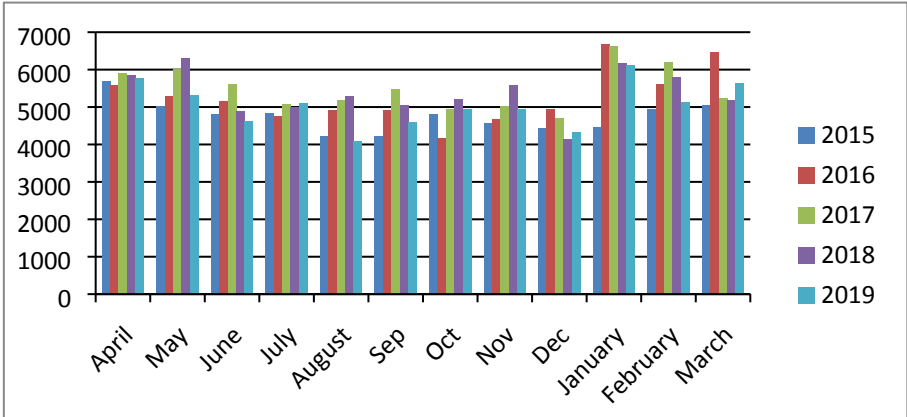
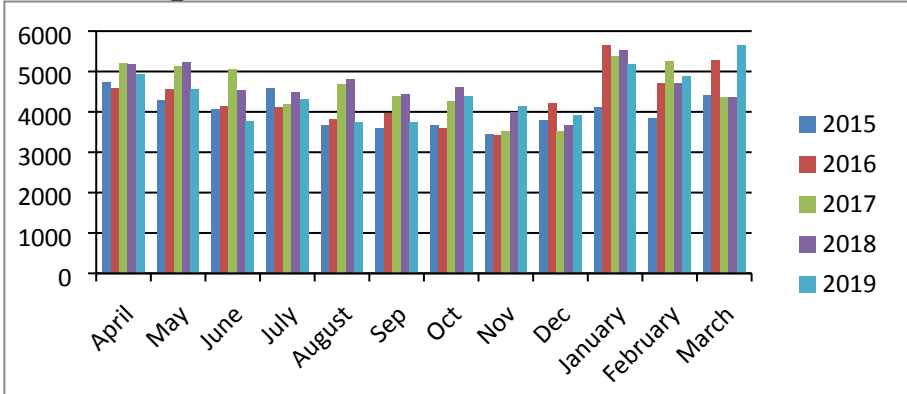
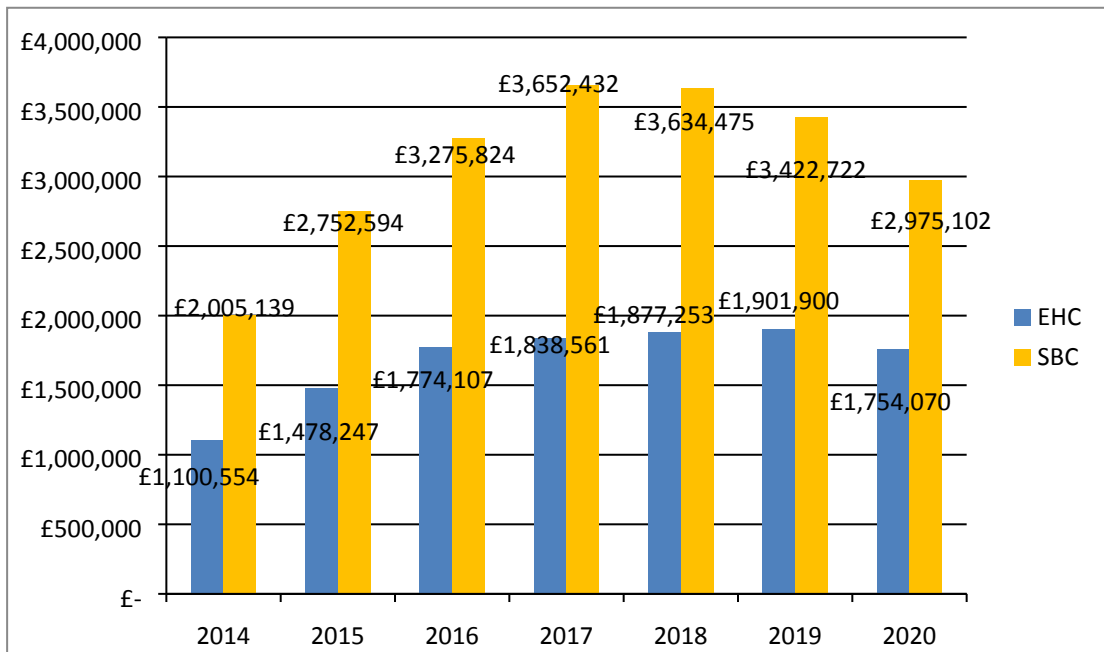


Table 3: EHC Housing Benefit work received.



- 4.1.5 Post received includes new claims as well as change in circumstances. These include things like changes in earnings, tax credits, household composition etc. In 2019/20 each SBC claim experienced on average 11.7 changes per claim, and EHC 10.9 changes per claim, a marginal increase in year.
- 4.1.6 **Housing Benefit subsidy-** The level of Housing Benefit claimed in subsidy reached £54.7m in 2019/20 (subject to audit), less than in 2018/19 (£ 63.7m) and reflecting the lower caseload, the restrictions on benefit entitlements, and universal credit.
- 4.1.7 **HB Overpayments-**With the level of awards outlined above the value/level of overpayments is a constant pressure.

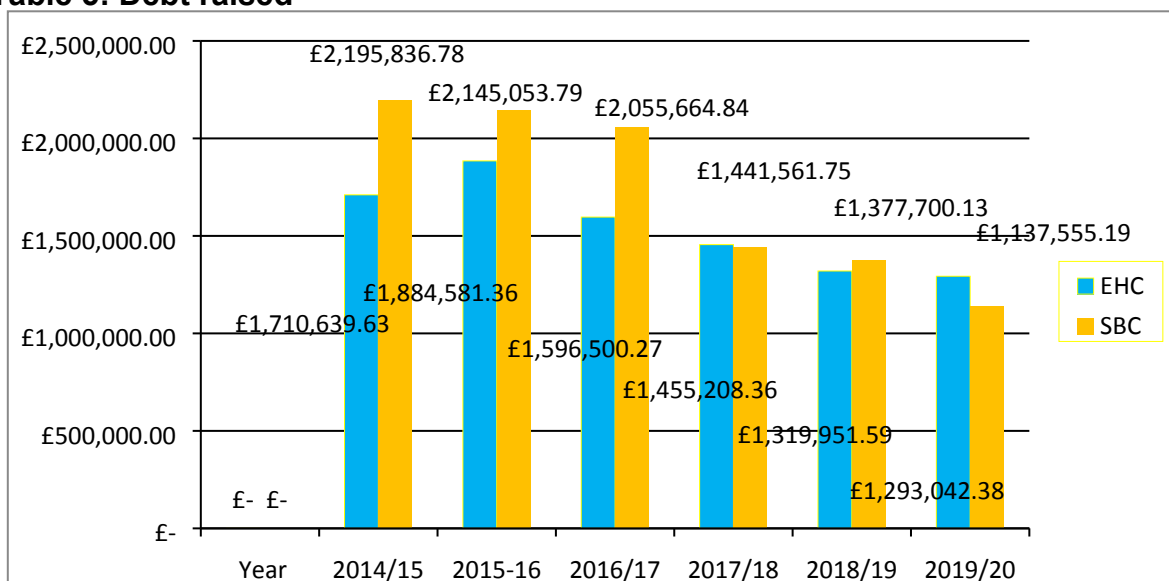
Table 4: Overpayments outstanding at 1 April each year



4.1.8 For the third year running the closing value of outstanding debts in Stevenage was less than at the beginning of the year. In contrast EHC has just started to see a reduction in the level of debt outstanding.

4.1.9 There is a significant difference in the level of outstanding debt at each LA. Looking at the value of debt raised in the last five years (below) demonstrates these differences. This period alone accounts for £1.09 million additional debt raised on SBC accounts. This can be attributed to a number of factors including the impact of the DWP's anti-fraud and error drive (see 4.3 below)

Table 5: Debt raised



4.1.10 Looking at the debt outstanding by the date invoices were raised shows that this differential has been in place for many years.

Table 6: Debt outstanding by number of invoices

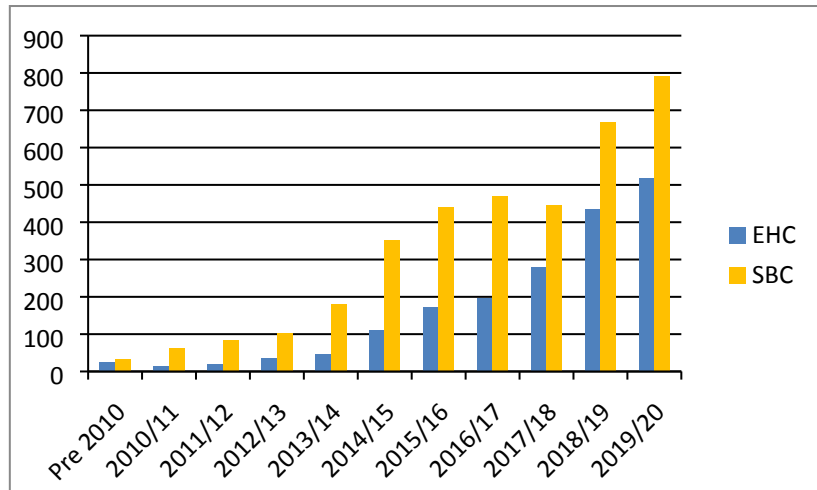
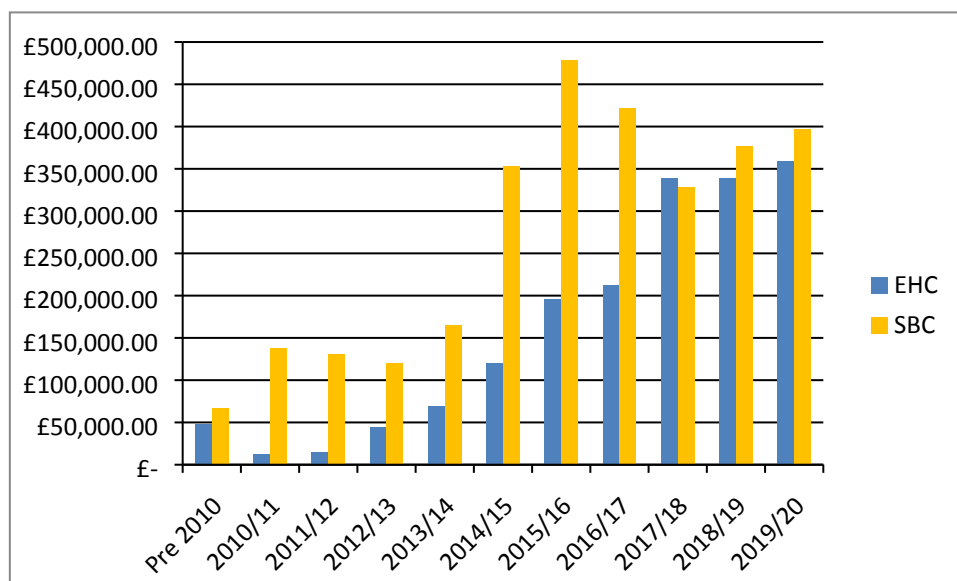


Table 7: Debt outstanding by value based on date invoice is raised.



4.1.11 In theory the Council should be able to claim 40% in subsidy for each overpayment, and then recover 100% of the debt. The subsidy plus recovery should cover the costs of the initial payment of benefit, costs of collection and bad debt provision. However less than 17% (14.96% SBC & 22.26% EHC) are live claims, enabling recovery to be made from ongoing entitlement. The more significant proportion of debt has to be actively chased and monitored, and is resource intensive.

- 4.1.12 The rates of recovery for those who remain in receipt of Housing Benefit are capped and accordingly many debts will not be repaid for significant periods. The focus is to maximise the number of debts with active recovery action in place recognising the timeframes for full recovery.
- 4.1.13 A review of the overpayment collection processes has been carried out and has improved working procedures. This has included the use of enhanced data extract programmes, and new access to HMRC data via the DWP to trace debtors and secure attachments to earnings. However even the DWP/HMRC route requires considerable resources to manage, and customers are allowed to offer arrangements outside of attachment to earnings which again need careful monitoring.

Table 8: Overview of debt status at 31 March 2020

		Stevenage		East Herts	
ALL at 31.3.20	%	Number	Value	%	Value
Total		3636	£ 2,975,102		1,754,070
LIVE	14.96%	544	£ 523,599	22.26%	335,253
DORMANT	85.04%	3092	£ 2,451,503	77.74%	1,418,817
			£ 295		
LIVE AND CT		295	£ 343,036		
LIVE & PT		249	£ 180,563		
LIVE & FRAUD	4.41%	24	£ 78,714	5.81%	48,008
LIVE/FRAUD CT		21	£ 71,791		
LIVE /FRAUD PT		3	£ 6,923		
DORMANT CT		1647	£ 1,126,761		
DORMANT PT		1445	£ 1,324,742		
DORMANT FRAUD	5.34%	165	£ 497,427	8.64%	347,164
DORMANT/FRAUD CT		84	£ 231,742		
DORMANT FRAUD PT		81	£ 265,685		

Note: Dormant means that the debtor is currently not in receipt of Housing Benefit

CT = Council Tenant
PT = Private tenant

- 4.1.14 The maximum rates of recovery set by the DWP, are often reduced following negotiations with customers and their representatives where there are hardship issues.
- 4.1.15 There are a number of significant risks in relation to the collectability of these overpayments and they include;
- The majority are not in receipt of Housing Benefit following the overpayment being accrued, and recovery is therefore more complex.
 - The transfer of working age claims to Universal Credit will reduce

further the shared service's ability to recover from ongoing benefit deduction, as this form of recovery will no longer be available to the service.

4.1.16 The following tables demonstrate the overpayment trends in recent years. It is worth noting that (Table 10) for the first time both Councils, are recovering more than is being raised, and accordingly the debt outstanding is reducing.

Table 9: Overpayments trends EHC

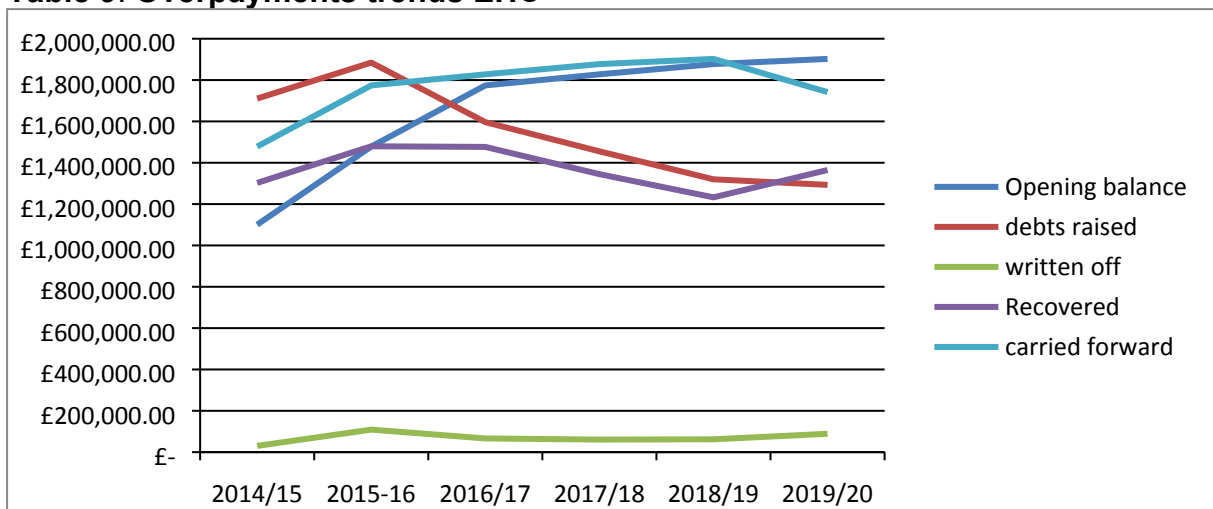
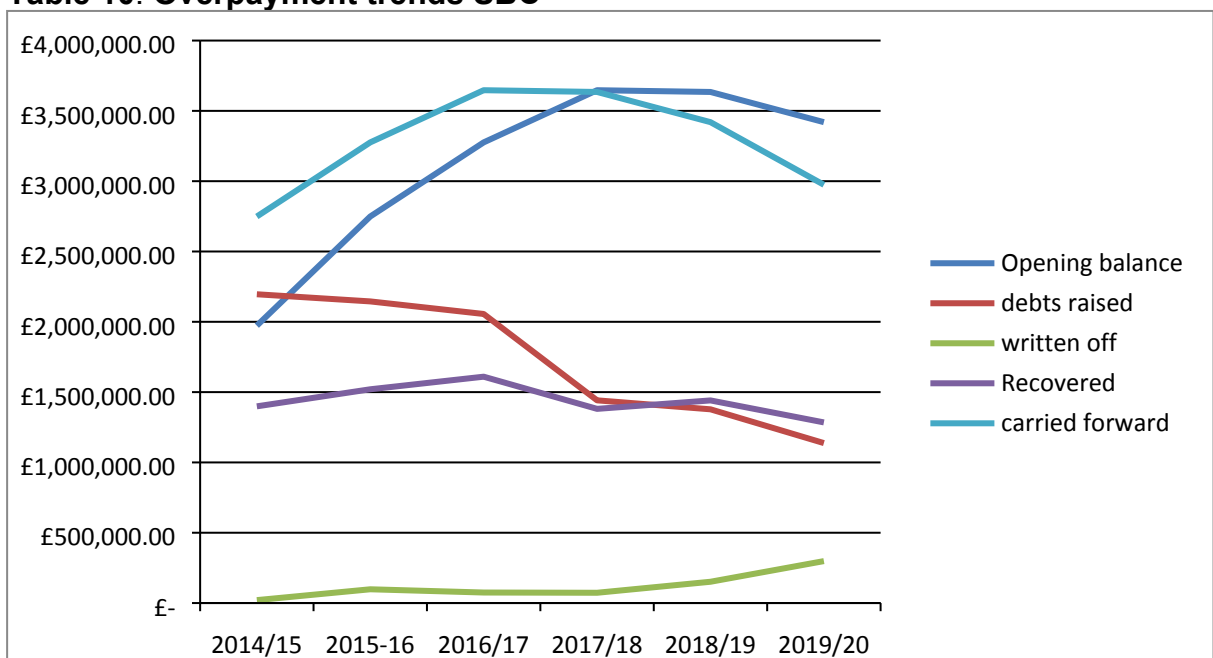


Table 10: Overpayment trends SBC

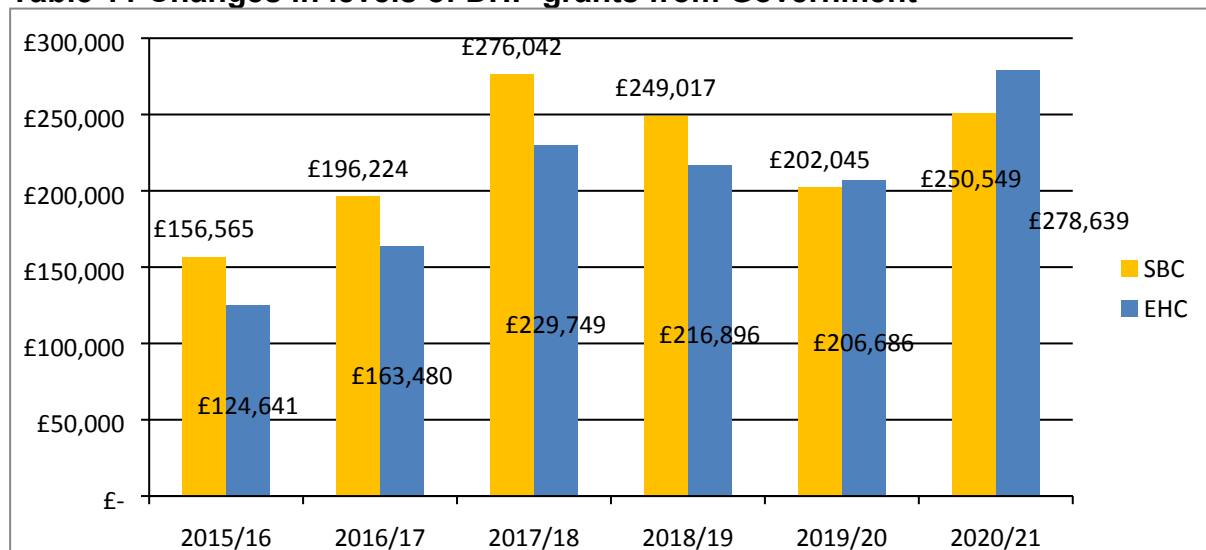


4.1.17 Further to paragraph 4.1.11 above bad debt provisions are also made on the balances outstanding and these represent 91.2% at Stevenage and 50.57% at East Herts. The less provision has to be made, the less the burden on the revenue budgets.

4.1.18 The Government has recognised that its focus in recent years on data matching to identify fraud and error is increasing the level of overpayments that local authorities are carrying. To support recovery of these debts they launched a new facility for LA's to access HMRC data to enable recovery by attachment to earnings.

4.1.19 **DHP-** The amount of Discretionary Housing Payments grant from the DWP received each year changes, reflecting the priorities that it considers need supporting. There is no restriction on how much of the total grant is spent on each of these priorities. The award for 2020/21 reflects an increase in the Governments overall grant to support private tenants, which is why the EHC allocation exceeds that for SBC. There is an increasing pressure on the funds from customers on universal credit (housing costs) to apply for DHP, and whilst enabling more support to be offered to customers this also puts additional administrative pressure on the officers processing these awards.

Table 11 Changes in levels of DHP grants from Government



4.1.20 The majority of successful awards in 2019/20 reflected pressure on households affected by the spare room subsidy restriction & Benefit Cap. A similar pattern is expected in 2020/21 with additional claims expected for customers on universal credit.

Table 12: DHP applications

2019/20	SBC	EHC
Received	688	690
Rejected	256	209
Benefit Cap	30	32
Under occupation subsidy	159	97
Universal credit	114	95

4.1.21 Housing Benefit caseload-The following tables demonstrate the changes in Housing Benefit caseload. The number of claimants varies daily with changes in customers' employment status. These demonstrate a reduction in 2019/20 of 20.1% (SBC) and 16% (EHC) respectively.

Table 13: SBC Housing Benefit caseload movements

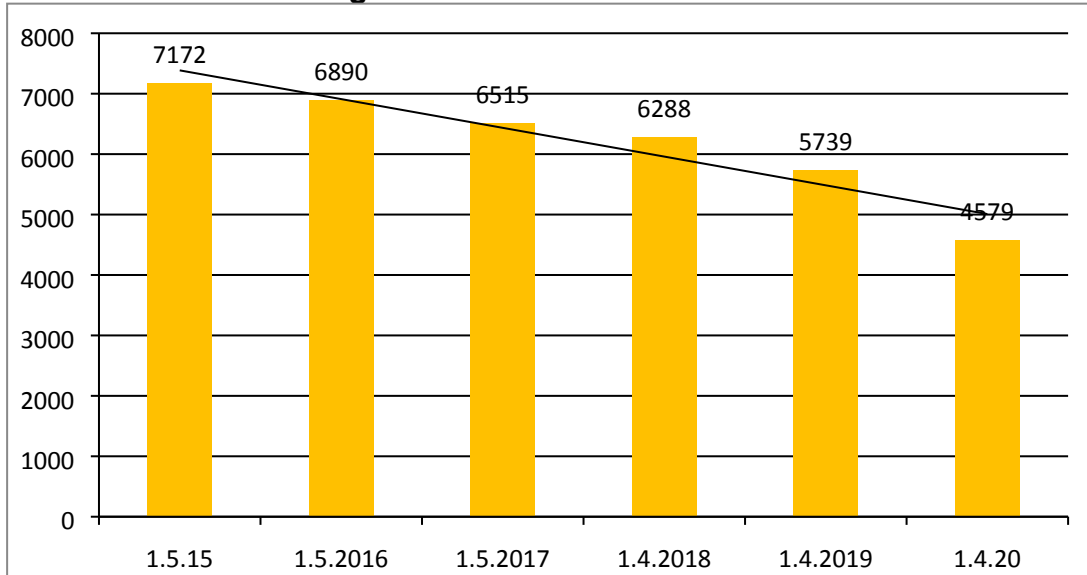
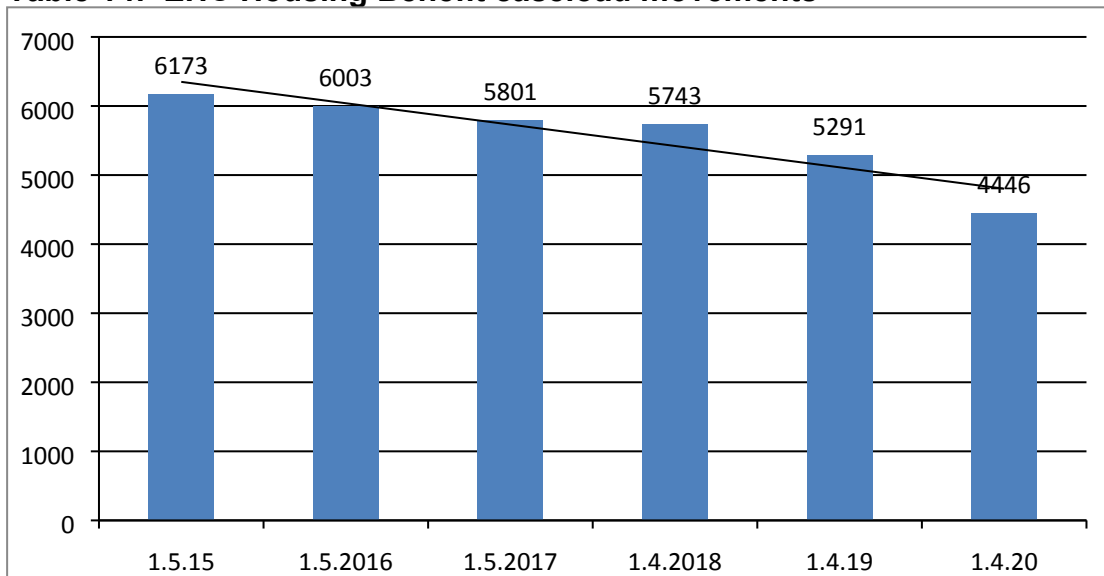


Table 14: EHC Housing Benefit caseload movements



4.2 Council Tax Support

4.2.1 Reductions in caseload have been experienced in CTS, although there are variations, and have slowed considerably since last year. An increase is expected during 20/21 in response the covid-19 pandemic. The elderly caseload has reduced and the likely cause is the increasing age to achieve

that status. SBC seeing a reduction over this period of 5.8% and EHC 3.9%. Whilst working age caseload reductions are shown with SBC 3.7% and EHC 2.21%. The cost of support in 2019/20 was £ 5.84m for SBC and £6.05M for EHC, both lower than in 2018/19.

Table 15: SBC CTS Caseload

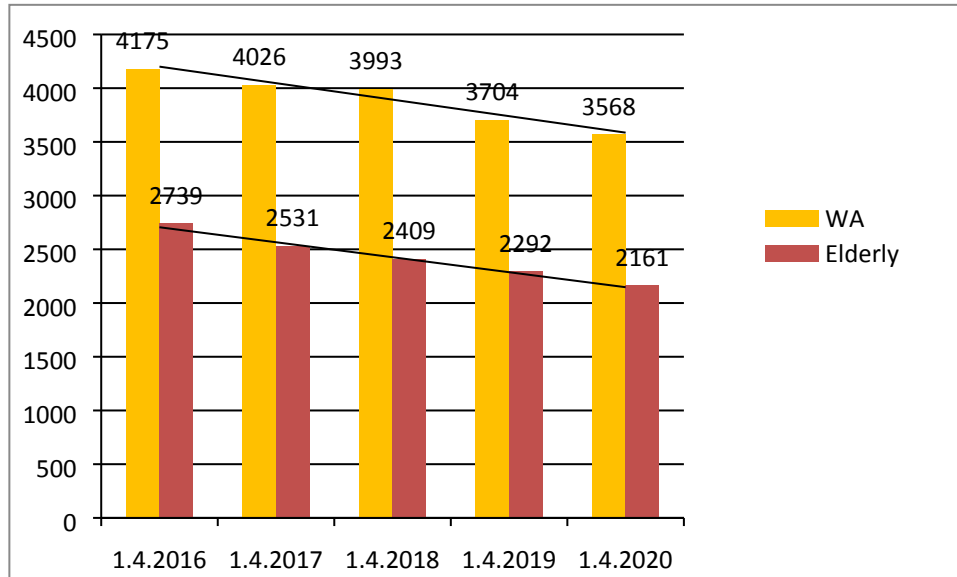
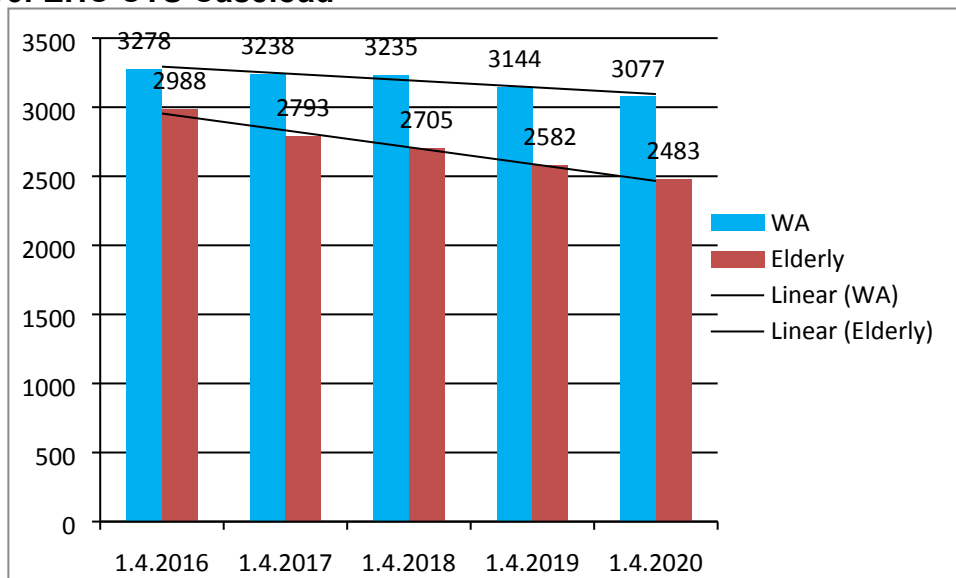


Table 16: EHC CTS Caseload



4.2.2 The collection of Council Tax Liability for CTS cases is more complex. Variations in awards generate new bills and revise collection arrangements.

4.4.3 Collection rates for CTS are calculated on live claims only, and accordingly are indicative of the overall position. The in-year collection rates for working age live CTS claims are shown below, compared with the overall collection rate and comparative positions in recent years.

4.2.4 All WA CTS reflects the overall working age CTS collection rate for live CTS claims, and MAX WA CTS, reflects the collection rate for that subgroup who only pay the 8.5% liability. 2019/20 saw a reduction in the collection of CTS case council tax, this mirrors the downward pressure on the main Council Tax collection rates. For 20/21 working age CTS customers will receive up to £150.00 additional benefit as part of the Governments Covid-19 response and this will impact on the level due to be recovered.

Table 17: Working Age CTS collection rates

EHC		All WA CTS	Max WA CTS	General
2015/16		80.00%	71.40%	98.40%
2016/17		79.95%	73.18%	98.40%
2017/18		78.66%	70.49%	98.30%
2018/19		78.61%	73.70%	98.10%
2019/20		77.95%	72.42%	97.80%
SBC		All WA CTS	Max WA CTS	General
2015/16		73.13%	67.35%	96.30%
2016/17		76.50%	73.69%	96.60%
2017/18		75.39%	71.27%	96.40%
2018/19		76.69%	74.11%	96.20%
2019/20		74.04%	69.67%	96.00%

4.2.5 The level of arrears from this group are consequently proportionately higher per household than from that not in receipt of CTS, and accordingly collection is more challenging.

4.2.6 Consideration has been given in recent years to changing the CTS scheme. This has included changing various aspects of the scheme, and more recently whether a banded scheme would maintain the principles originally agreed but make the scheme simpler to understand and administer. The overriding objective has been to avoid any unintended consequences from changing the scheme, and members will receive a separate report on progress and options for 2021 shortly

4.3 Verification of Earnings and Pensions (VEP)

4.3.1 The government's anti-fraud agenda continues to impact on the workload of the service. Data matching is received in various forms, including the National Fraud initiative, and the DWP's Real Time data Information scheme (RTI).

4.3.2 The newest iteration, following on from FERIS (Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Scheme) and RTI (Real Time information) and WURTI (Wider use of real time information) is called VEP.

- 4.3.3 VEP provides the service with access to earnings and pensions details on line and enables verification. This latest initiative is developing so that every time a customer has a change in earnings etc. the service will receive an 'alert' and be required to amend the customers claim.
- 4.3.4 Once again funding has been received to support LA's in obtaining resources to carry out VEP work. For 2019/20 this amounted to £82.5k, however for 2020/21 this is reduced to £56.1k.
- 4.3.5 This activity inevitably identifies overpayments of Housing Benefit and Council Tax support which need to be recovered. (See 4.1.7 above)
- 4.3.6 The DWP are also requiring Councils to do ad hoc targeted work when they consider there is a high risk of fraud and error

4.4 Universal Credit

- 4.4.1 Universal Credit went 'full service' from October 2018 for Stevenage and East Herts residents. This means that with only a few exceptions all new claims for support for working age customers will go to UC, and customers experiencing a relevant change in circumstances will transfer from HB to UC. Bulk transfer of the remaining working age HB cases to UC has not yet been scheduled by the DWP. Their pilot activity in 2019 was not considered successful, so further delays are expected. This level of uncertainty impacts on service design, resources and future planning for LA's.
- 4.4.2 There are still some working age client groups who will not move onto universal credit, including those in temporary accommodation. There remains no indication of any scheme for pensioners who will until further notice remain eligible for Housing Benefit.

4.5 Council Tax.

- 4.5.1 The performance measure looks at the proportion of the current years liability collected in that year. For 2019/20 Stevenage collection rate was 96%, and East Herts 97.8%. SBC 0.2% lower than 2018/19 and EHC 0.3% less, consideration of this is discussed below.
- 4.5.2 In 2019/20 the combined collectable debit for EHC & SBC increased by over £8.8m. (EHC £6.2m & SBC £2.6m). For Stevenage the collectable debit was £49.3m and EHC £109.5m. Customers are now experiencing ongoing increases in council tax after a few years of minimal increases. The additional adult social care charge levied by HCC adds to the cost of this tax for each household.
- 4.5.3 The number of actual properties in the tax base also increased by 1293 between 1.4.19 and 1.4.20, the second year running where there has been growth in excess of 1000 properties. One pressure is that the Valuation office Agency who band the properties are taking over 90 working days to advise of the correct band on which the service can bill.

Occupiers of new properties are often waiting up to 6 months before getting a bill, and accordingly there are challenges in getting these accounts up to date within a financial year.

- 4.5.4. Analysis of multiple year indebtedness is carried out to see if there are issues with mounting multi-year debts compared with limitations on attachments to earnings and benefits recovery rates.
- 4.5.5 Whilst in year collection is the prime performance indicator, considerable work goes into collecting prior year arrears. The table below demonstrates the position for each Council.

Table 18: Stevenage Council Tax arrears

SBC	31.3.20	31.3.19	prior year change
Pre 2003	£ 699	£ 645	£ 55
2003-2007	£ 57,831	£ 80,331	-£ 22,501
2008-2012	£ 316,413	£ 429,376	-£ 112,964
2013-2019	£ 2,227,070	£ 3,635,241	-£ 1,408,171
Pre 1.4.2019	£ 2,602,013	£ 4,145,594	-£ 1,543,581
2019/20	£ 1,902,286		
at 31.3.2018	£ 4,504,299	£ 3,696,290	£ 808,010

Before adding the 2019/20 arrears, £1,543,581 of prior year debt has been recovered.

Table 19: East Herts Council Tax arrears

EHC	31.3.20	31.3.19	prior year change
Pre 2003	£ 5,269	£ 8,251	-£ 2,982
2003-2007	£ 100,371	£ 129,798	-£ 29,427
2008-2012	£ 287,148	£ 376,342	-£ 89,194
2013-2019	£ 2,127,193	£ 3,647,684	-£ 1,520,491
Pre 1.4.2018	£ 2,519,981	£ 4,162,075	-£ 1,642,094
2018/19	£ 2,157,432		
at 31.3.2017	£ 4,677,413	£ 4,162,075	£ 515,338

Before adding the 2019/20 arrears, £1,642,094 of prior year debt has been recovered.

- 4.5.6 The tables demonstrate that significant inroads into prior year arrears were achieved in 2019/20, and whilst some of these were deemed non recoverable and written off, the overall level of pre 2019/20 debt was reduced.
- 4.5.7 The taxbases for each council also produced surpluses for each preceptor as the spend on Council Tax Support was less than expected and a successful review of single person discounts reduce the cost of this mandatory relief. The surplus after Bad Debt provision is SBC £902k and

EHC £634k.

- 4.5.8 Both Councils have now removed the relief given for properties left empty and substantially unfurnished, and those properties empty and uninhabitable.
- 4.5.9 Both Councils applied the 50% premium to properties which have been empty for more than two years. EHC has increased this to 100% premium from 1 April 2020. At 31.3.20 SBC charged the premium on 34 properties and EHC 139.
- 4.5.10 The service also carried out an in-house review of empty homes, identifying 68 (SBC 25, 43 EHC) which were in fact occupied. The review was carried out in house and a share of the costs, in proportion to the New Homes Bonus award was recharged to Herts County Council (20%). The review also increased the number of properties on which New Homes Bonus would be eligible.
- 4.5.11 The service in conjunction with Capacity Grid carried out a review of recipients of Single Person Discounts. Almost 32,000 properties were screened to confirm entitlement. (EHC 19.1k, SBC 12.9k). Those cases which were of high risk were then sent letters to complete an online review form.

Table 20: SPD removals and penalties

SPD	Stevenage	East Herts
Removed	301	340
Penalties £	£15,400	£9940
Penalties - No.	220	142

4.6 Business Rates

- 4.6.1 The performance measure looks at the proportion of the current years liability collected in that year. Stevenage collection rate was 98.87% the same as in 2018/19 and the highest since before 2010/11, and East Herts 98.64, the highest since 2007.

- 4.6.2 The tables below shows some of the headline values at 31.3.2020

Table 21: Business Rates liabilities and reliefs

	SBC	EHC
Gross rates	£ 53,096,894	£ 56,036,909
Transitional reliefs	£ 341,712	-£ 268,289
Mandatory relief	-£ 4,197,379	-£ 11,382,241
Discretionary relief	-£ 152,645	-£ 269,205
Government funded specific relief	-£ 611,125	-£ 1,446,693
Net yield to collect	£ 48,477,458	£ 42,670,481

Table 22: Mandatory reliefs granted

Mandatory Relief	Explanation	SBC 2019/20	EHC 2019/20
Empty (sec 45)	A Mandatory Relief applied to properties which are empty – 3 months for Shop & Offices etc and 6 months for Industrial type properties	£ 867,955	£ 1,723,258
Small Business Additional yield	The additional amount paid by any business not eligible for Small Business Rate Relief (i.e. they pay the higher multiplier)	-£ 1,148,992	-£ 897,557
Small Business rates relief	A Mandatory Relief for Small Businesses under £12,000 rateable value	£ 1,963,373	£ 5,801,281
Charitable (Sec 43(5))	A Mandatory Relief where the organisation is a charity or would be considered to be a charity	£ 2,510,607	£ 4,639,444
Sports Clubs (sec 43(5))	A Mandatory Relief (43(5)) for registered Community Amateur Sport Clubs	£ 4,435	£ 84,012
Village Shops	A Mandatory relief to a Post Office or the only General Store, Pub or Petrol Station in a Rural Settlement with a population not exceeding 3,000		£ 31,802

4.6.3 In addition to the collection of current year liabilities the Business rates team continue to focus on old year debts. Many of these accrued prior to the localisation of business rates when the impact of non-collection was less significant than currently. This year despite having the highest in year collection rates, the level of outstanding debt has increased. This is attributed to retrospective adjustments by the valuation office to rateable values and a challenging last month of the financial year due to the pandemic.

4.6.4 The focus on this area has produced significant results over the last few years, as demonstrated below.

Table 23 Changes in prior year arrears.

Opening balance of all -year arrears	East Herts	Stevenage	Total	Change
1.4.2015	£ 1,872,516	£ 2,928,693	£ 4,801,210	
1.4.2016	£ 1,919,025	£ 1,736,090	£ 3,655,115	-£ 1,146,095
1.4.2017	£ 1,788,800	£ 1,178,938	£ 2,967,738	-£ 687,377
1.4.2018	£ 1,364,742	£ 871,897	£ 2,236,639	-£ 731,099
1.4.2019	£ 1,260,096	£ 710,443	£ 1,970,539	-£ 266,100
1.4.2020	£ 1,476,560	£ 770,102	£ 2,246,662	£ 276,123

Arrears at 1.4.2020	East Herts	Stevenage	Total
pre 1.4.2019	£ 834,605	£ 250,597	£ 1,085,202
in year 2019-20	£ 641,955	£ 519,505	£ 1,161,460
Total	£ 1,476,560	£ 770,102	£ 2,246,662

4.7 Discretionary Rate relief & Other Reviews

4.7.1 The Government announced in the March 2018 budget, further schemes to support business. These are all administered by local authorities using our discretionary relief powers, but are fully funded by central government.

4.7.2 The revaluation relief finishes its four years of relief package in 20/21, and new for 2019/20 was the introduction of retail relief which reduces bills for qualifying business by one third.

4.7.3 Already in 2020/21a raft of reliefs have been announced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. These include the small business grant scheme, the retail, hospitality and leisure grant scheme, the expanded retail relief scheme, and a 'discretionary' grant scheme.

4.8 RV Finder

4.8.1 The importance of identifying the correct rateable values (RV) to maximise the revenue streams to the councils is taken very seriously, and will continue to be a focus as the reliance on this income grows.

4.8.2 The Service is currently under contract with a company who use national data sources to identify changes and potential changes in rateable value in the area. Herts County Council contribute to the cost of both the core information system and towards each rateable value identified.

4.8.3 However there are increasing pressures on the RV across the country.

4.8.4 Issues with avoidance and evasion continue, and the shared anti-fraud service support our work in data matching on both LA's data, which can

identify useful leads.

4.8.5 The Government Covid – 19 grant scheme is helping to identify a number of properties previously not registered for business rates, and other circumstances that require investigation.

4.9 **Other activity**

4.9.1 The BID for Bishop’s Stortford went live in October 2018. This has been an intensive activity but the steep learning curve will support other BIDS which may come forward. Charges are levied on the BID company for this service.

4.9.2 The team continues to develop and enhance the quality of the service provided. One route supporting this is academic study. Three team members are studying for their professional exams. This ensures that this complex and demanding area is best served by qualified and knowledgeable officers.

4.10 **Digital**

4.10.1 The service is focused on responding to the need to offer digital solutions for customers engaging with the service. This provides opportunities for 24/7 service delivery and efficiencies.

4.10.2 Currently East Herts and Stevenage customers can self-serve a range of services for Housing Benefit, Council Tax and Business rates, these include;

- On line claim for Housing Benefit and Council Tax support
- E- billing Council Tax
- E-billing Business Rates
- Change of address
- Online direct debits
- *Arrangement Manager- This module provides recovery staff with the tools to create special payment arrangements quickly and easily in line with our local policies and procedures, Customers can set up arrangements to pay (within parameters)24/7*
- *Arrangements e-notifications -A taxpayer or ratepayer entering into a special payment arrangement can be offered the option of receiving all associated documentation electronically*
- *Digital Discounts and Exemptions-This module allows us to replace all of our Council Tax forms and it is envisaged that it will dramatically reduce manual updates and customer queries with a single integration*

4.10.3 During the coming year, the service intends to expand this on-line service to all customers to include;

- The **Recovery Incidence Score Calculator - (R.I.S.C.)** is essentially an internal 'credit rating' system based on a taxpayer's recovery history. A score value will be assigned for each element of recovery, this score is then captured for each bill year the taxpayer is liable and an overall RISC average score calculated. The scores will then be put into a RISC group or status (a range of scores e.g. 0 to 5 Excellent Payers). This RISC score may then be used by various recovery batch programs to target recovery more effectively, and to generate specific recovery letters dependant on the score.

4.10.4 In addition to these modules, a number of other on-line forms have been e-enabled to assist customers. Back office integration with these forms will be a further project.

4.10.5 The take up of self service options is slow, and accordingly both Councils are working together to devise a strategy to increase use of these services. Channel shift from traditional service options to digital routes will be necessary to ensure that these new ways of working become the default. The table below demonstrates some of the movement in take up between July 2017 and March 2020.

Table 25: Take up of digital options

	EHC				SBC			
	Jul-17	Mar-18	Mar-19	Mar-20	Jul-17	Mar-18	Mar-19	Mar-20
Registered accounts	3100	5586	10563	15480	164	1226	3437	5725
Council Tax: Online DD's	351	2384	6324	10637	60	726	2234	4137
Online CoA	454	2695	7237	11572	76	492	1570	2840
E Billing	378	726	1393	2152	8	116	410	770
Benefits :	112	185	296	432	4	43	114	192
Landlords	25	34	47	53	1	4	13	20
Business Rates	24	45	74	117	0	4	8	62

4.10.6 Good clear communication with our customers is essential to both encourage and support them through the transition to greater digital interaction. A range of activities have commenced including both Councils communications teams working together on a series of promotional material, raising awareness of what is available and what is 'coming soon'.

4.10.7 All front line staff have to be committed to channel shift and to engage customers at first point of contact to move to digital services where they are able to. Delays have been experienced as this approach requires new ways of working and corporate support is required to engage other service areas in this objective. The objective is to be *digital by default* and accordingly considerable efforts will be made to engage both staff and customers in the coming year.

4.11 **Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS)**

- 4.11.1 The DWP's single fraud investigation service subsumed the Benefits fraud team from the 1 May 2015 for both Stevenage and East Herts.
- 4.11.2 New procedures for referring cases to the DWP are in place, but the service remains responsible for providing relevant information, carrying out adjudications and the collection of any overpayments generated.
- 4.11.3 The DWP appear to be improving in some areas, and are now carrying out prosecutions in high value cases. Administrative penalties of 50% can be applied to lower value cases, but this is an addition to the value of any overpayment that is to be recovered. This increases the debt that the Council has to recover. The DWP confirm that both Councils are referring above the national level of suspected fraud cases.
- 4.11.4 East Herts, Stevenage and North Herts, in conjunction with the shared anti-fraud service (SAFS) are part of a national pilot for joint working with the DWP, for the joint investigation of Housing Benefit fraud where there is also a claim for Council Tax support. This places all three LAs in a greatly improved position in relation to HB fraud over the majority of LA's administering HB, and will allow SAFS to access DWP data on housing & tenancy matters (including homelessness/housing applications) where there is suspicion of fraud.

4.12 Service plan objectives 2020/21

- 4.12.1 The agreed service plan focuses on collection rates and performance in processing Benefit claims, whilst reviewing the access and support offered to customers as discussed above.

4.13. Print & post contract

- 4.13.1 The cross council corporate digital print & post contract is now live, and the shared service is leading on the roll out. The service successfully used the new company for the annual billing in March 2020, as well as all outgoing daily post. A handful of letters are still processed in house for specific reasons. Savings have already been realised following a reduction in staff. This activity contributed to the service being able to transition seamlessly into operating in a pandemic lockdown.

4.14 Supporting customers

- 4.14.1 The service continues to exploring support for customers in financial difficulty, with a view to early intervention preventing the additional costs of enforcement action being necessary.

4.15 Freedom of information requests

- 4.15.1. The service continues to be a focus for many FOI requests, these are time consuming and expensive to respond to. Many of these are Business

Rates related, where private companies seek information for their business activities.

4.16 Audits

The service is subject to audit both internally and externally. The results of the audits are shown below. The three categories for internal audit are Limited, Satisfactory and Good.

Table 27: Audit results

	SBC	EHC
Internal: Council Tax	GOOD	GOOD
Internal: Business Rates	GOOD	GOOD
Internal: Housing Benefit	GOOD	GOOD
External : HB subsidy claim	No change to claim	No change to claim

4.17 Outturn budget for 2019/20

4.17.1 The table below shows the outturn for both 2018/19 and 2019/20, and the initial budget for 2020/21.

Table 28: Shared service budgets

REVENUES & HOUSING BENEFITS	2018/19 Outturn	2019-20 Outturn	Original Budget 2020/21
	£	£	£
- SHARED SERVICE			
EXPENDITURE			
Employees	3,148,440	3,206,152	3,299,190
Transport Related Expenses	17,488	17,935	16,350
Supplies & Services	217,429	215,587	241,450
Support Services & Divisional Costs	1,168,060	834,150	859,750
Expenditure Total	4,551,417	4,273,824	4,416,740
Income From Other Authorities	1,679,128	1,815,525	1,873,360
Section Recharge	2,872,289	2,458,299	2,543,380
Income Total	4,551,417	4,273,824	4,416,740

4.18.2 A review of the costs of the shared service was completed during the year, introducing various activity measures to apportion costs against. The service continues to look for savings and efficiencies.

4.18.3 The following table demonstrates the distribution of the underspend between each Council. In addition to these underspend each Council received new burdens funding that was not pulled in to the shared service during the year and accordingly is in addition to the underspends.

Table 29: Distribution of underspends.

2019/20	In year underspend (overspend)
SBC contribution	£60,053
EHC contribution	£60,053
Total	£120,107

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

5.1 None

Legal Implications

5.2 None

Risk Implications

5.3 None

6. Background Papers None

Contact Member: Geoffrey Williamson, Executive Member for Financial sustainability, East Herts Council.

Joan Lloyd, Executive Member for Resources and Deputy Leader, Stevenage Borough Council.

Contact Officer: Su Tarran, Head of Revenues & Benefits Shared service
Contact Tel No 01279 502075

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East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 3 November 2020

Report by: Head of Housing and Health

Report title: Update on Sustainability Action Plan

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

- This report presents to Members the latest version of the East Herts Sustainability Action Plan, which is a working document that is to be kept under review and updated as required. This action plan has been prepared in order to respond to the carbon neutrality commitments agreed in the Council's Climate Change Motion of July 2019.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

COMMITTEE: That

- a) The Committee reviews the current actions included in the initial iteration of the Sustainability Action Plan with a view to confirming that the actions developed so far meet the broad objectives of the Climate Change Motion;
- b) Officers be asked to provide written progress reports to the Committee on a twice yearly basis to add to any views members may wish to make on the monthly updated published on the council's website; and,
- c) Officers be asked to provide the Committee with an update on the reduction in carbon against target on an annual basis,

both in relation the council's activities and across the whole district.

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 This report presents to Members the latest version of the East Herts Sustainability Action Plan, which is a working document that is to be kept under review and updated as required. This action plan has been prepared in order to respond to the carbon neutrality commitments agreed in the Council's Climate Change Motion of July 2019.

1.2 The report recommends that twice yearly update reports are provided to Overview and Scrutiny Committee to enable the Committee to monitor progress in terms of action planning. In addition it is suggested that on an annual basis, data demonstrating the carbon reduction achieved through actions within the Plan is presented to Members to enable monitoring by the Committee to track progress to 2030.

2.0 Background

2.1 Members will recall that at the meeting of Council on 24 July 2019 a detailed Climate Change Motion was agreed. In summary the Motion committed the council to the following nine objectives:

- Join with other councils in recognising and declaring formally the necessity to do everything within the authority's power to reduce its impact on the climate and moreover do everything we can in supporting the whole of East Herts District to become carbon neutral by 2030
- Develop an ambitious sustainability strategy for reducing the council's own emissions, with an objective that the council becomes carbon neutral by 2030

- Work with national and regional partners to ensure that where at all possible we support climate friendly planning and building control regulations and seek where possible to include the very best measures into the Local Plan to minimise any negative impact on the environment
- Call on National Government for more powers and resources to make this pledge possible, and ask the council's Leader to write to the Secretary of state for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to this effect
- Continue to work with partners across the district, county and region to deliver this new goal, through all relevant strategies and plans
- Take account of climate impacts within existing decision-making processes
- Set up an Environmental and Climate Forum, in line with the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group, which were approved by this Council on 5th March, 2019
- The Environmental Forum to monitor progress regularly, and to report back
- Commit to making available the appropriate training to members and officers to promote carbon neutral policies in order to achieve these aims.

2.2 The majority of the above commitments will be achieved by way of specific actions within the Action Plan (see Appendix A). The intention is that the majority of actions will be those that seek to demonstrate a real and sustained cut in carbon emissions. The Plan aims to cross reference individual actions with each commitment.

2.3 Most actions will be carbon “accounted”. This is to help ensure that a carbon reduction trajectory to achieve the 2030 neutrality target is established and monitored using “carbon milestones”.

- 2.4 The Action Plan is further split into three main sections namely:
- actions which aim to make changes to the council's own premises, people and services;
 - actions which use our regulatory powers to promote action by others; and
 - those actions that influence and encourage others to do things.
- 2.5 The plan is a working document reviewed on a monthly basis by a corporate officer group. As the Plan develops the next phase will include further initiatives covering the wider district. Of course, such district-wide actions will be harder to achieve not least because the council will have less direct control. Instead, more reliance will need to be placed on influencing and facilitating behaviour change. It is further likely that actions will need to be ambitious and bold in order to help to achieve the district wide 2030 target.
- 2.6 The development of the Plan is being significantly aided by active community involvement. The council held an initial meeting of the East Herts Environmental and Climate Forum in January to engage interested community members in the identification of local climate issues and actions. Over 120 people attended including local residents, businesses, third sector organisations and local environmental groups.
- 2.7 Further meetings were delayed due to Covid-19 but in September a virtual meeting of the Forum was held via zoom focusing on the new draft Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document. Plans are now in place to hold meetings every two months with the next meeting on 25 November. Meetings are being scheduled for a range of times during the day and evening to facilitate maximum attendance. Each

session will be topic-based and will aim to encourage development of actions involving the community.

- 2.8 The Sustainability Action Plan has been placed on the council's website and feedback is encouraged.
- 2.9 East Herts has developed a strong role in the establishment earlier this year of the Herts Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP). This is a group of all the district authorities along with the County Council and the LEP. It comprises a high level member steering group meeting every six weeks, working on cross cutting and bigger picture carbon reduction initiatives across the county. Four theme groups have been established so far. These cover water, biodiversity, carbon assessment & reduction, and transport. Each is developing specific action plans to develop initiatives to contribute towards carbon reduction and environmental improvement across Hertfordshire. A community stakeholder conference is being planned for December to highlight the work of the HCCSP.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 The purpose of developing a Sustainability Action Plan is to facilitate carbon reduction arising from both the council's own emissions as well as helping to reduce those from the wider district. This is to help meet our 2030 climate objectives.
- 3.2 The Action Plan in Appendix A to this report is the first iteration of a range of actions which will be developed and refined over time to seek to achieve the council's carbon neutrality aspirations.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 Note the actions set out in the draft Sustainability Action Plan but not to receive further reports on progress. NOT RECOMMENDED as it is suggested that it will be important to continue to monitor and track progress of the council's progress to achieve its 2030 carbon neutral target for its own emissions along with seeking to do all it can to reduce carbon emissions in the wider district.
- 4.2 Receive update reports monitoring progress in development of the action plan every six months, along with an annual report presenting carbon reduction data for the council's own attributed emissions, as well as those arising from the wider district. RECOMMENDED as this will help to ensure effective monitoring of progress to achieve the delivery of the aspirations within the Climate Change Motion.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 There could be both moderate reputational and political risks should the Sustainability Action Plan not be sufficiently progressed over time to meet the objectives established in the Climate Change Motion.
- 5.2 In addition there are longer term possible cumulative climate change risks, some potentially significant in nature, should local carbon mitigation and adaptation measures not be developed over the timescales set out in the Climate Change Motion.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 Members along with the local community have been actively participating in climate change planning through the East Herts Environment and Climate Change Forum. In addition specific consultation exercises have been undertaken such as

that related to the new draft Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document and a survey of local developers to assess issues relating to energy efficiency enhancements of new developments.

Community Safety

None arising directly from this report

Data Protection

None arising directly from this report

Equalities

None arising directly from this report

Environmental Sustainability

Yes - The entire purpose of the preparation of a sustainability action plan is to deliver carbon emission savings in order to meet the council's Climate Change Motion objectives.

Financial

None at this stage, the recommendations of the report can be undertaken within existing budgets. All proposed actions will be thoroughly reviewed by individual services before implementation not only for their carbon benefits but also from a financial business case to ensure that appropriate funding and value for money is achieved.

Health and Safety

None arising directly from this report

Human Resources

None arising directly from this report

Human Rights

None directly arising from this report

Legal

None directly arising from this report

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A - Initial Draft Sustainability Action Plan

Contact Member

Councillor Graham McAndrew – Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability. graham.mcandrew@eastherts.gov.uk

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Report Author

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Action	Commencement date			Carbon reduction potential, with estimates of carbon reduction where calculated	Progress at October 2020	Contribution to the following East Herts Council's Climate Change Commitments									
	2020/21	2021/22 - 2023/24	2024/25 - 2030/31			Support the whole of East Herts District to become carbon neutral by 2030	Council becomes carbon neutral by 2030	Climate friendly planning and building control regulations	Call on National Government for more powers and resources	Work with partners across the District, County and Region	Take account of climate impacts within existing decision-making processes	Set up an Environmental and Climate Forum	Environmental Forum to monitor progress	Appropriate training to members and officers to promote carbon neutral policies	
						Carbon Reduction required: 674ktCO2	Carbon Reduction required: 2.8ktCO2								
1. Make changes to the council's own premises, people and services we deliver															
1.1	Draw up carbon assessment tool to assess all major council projects	✓			Indirect	Tool developed. Being trialled	✓	✓							
1.2	Develop and deliver programme of training on carbon neutrality / sustainability to council officers and partners	✓			Indirect	Training programme on track to be in place by January 2021					✓				✓
1.3	Incorporate sustainability outcomes into the council's budget-setting process from the 2020/21 budget onwards	✓			Indirect	COMPLETED, now standard element of council's budget planning						✓			
1.4	Build the consideration of the carbon footprint into the council's procurement processes	✓			Direct	COMPLETED, contract procedure rules amended	✓	✓							
1.5	Carry out a staff survey to gather ideas for environmental sustainability	✓			Indirect	COMPLETED, next step to evaluation suggestions not already included in the Sustainability Action Plan	✓	✓							
1.6	Increase the energy efficiency ratings of our buildings over the next three years	✓			Direct	Programme to replace lighting at Wallfields with LED lighting to be completed by Nov. This will trigger (a) revised carbon assessment for the building and (b) energy efficiency re-audit to determine further energy efficiency works. Works currently being carried out at Buntingford Depot	✓	✓							
1.7	Audit all our buildings to inform retrofit / re-fit programme	✓			Direct	As above	✓	✓							
1.8	Audit current numbers of / need for e-vehicle chargers on council premises and install more	✓			Indirect	Audit COMPLETED. Programme to install more chargers to be drawn up	✓	✓							
1.9	Incentivise use of the council-run e-car pool by council officers	✓			Direct. Note: current saving by EV pool car scheme vehicles: 14tCO2e pa	Incentives identified. Full roll-out once Covid 19 agile working fully in place	✓	✓							
1.10	Audit the council's vehicles with a view to replacing them with e-vehicles	✓			Direct. Note: conversion of all council vans to EV would save approx. 49tCO2 pa	Trial of an e-vans pending revised work patterns	✓	✓							
1.11	Explore the development of a higher energy efficiency homes through the council's housing company, Millstream Property Investments Ltd		✓		Avoidance of increase	To be investigated once Millstream new build schemes come forward	✓				✓				
1.12	Assess feasibility of becoming a 'white label' supplier of renewable energy		✓		Direct	Assessment not yet commenced	✓								
1.13	Assess options for work in partnership to operate an energy services company - potential carbon offset opportunity		✓		Direct	Assessment not yet commenced	✓				✓				
1.14	Work with Hertfordshire Waste Partnership partners and others to explore synergies of working across administrative boundaries	✓			Direct	Waste composition analysis project commenced in September 2020 to inform work towards this goal. Outcomes of the analysis anticipated in early 2021	✓								
1.15	Maximise environmental sustainability opportunities through the upgrade of Hertford Theatre	✓			Direct	Work ongoing - seeking BREEAM excellent		✓							

1.16	Maximise environmental sustainability through the upgrade/redevelopment of Hartham and Grange Paddocks Leisure Centres	✓			Direct	Grange Paddocks CO2 data for new build in sust. statement & part of the planning app. Hartham Under OJEU tender tenderers will state sustainability issues & path to BREEAM excellent. BREEAM tracker in place. Looking at reduced thermal gain, lighting (LEDs), PVs and air source heat pumps.		✓							
1.17	Assess evidence-base for benefits of green walls	✓			Mitigation	COMPLETED, incorporated into the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document - see below	✓								
1.18	Work with HCC and others to identify options for tree planting		✓		Mitigation	Assessment not yet commenced	✓	✓		✓					
1.19	Undertake initial review of current EH sustainability purchasing statements included within existing service contracts to determine effectiveness and relevance.	✓			Direct	Assessment to commence shortly	✓	✓		✓	✓				
1.20	Procurement of 100% renewable electricity		✓		Direct	Opportunity to progress this as part of existing contract break point in January 2021	✓	✓							
1.21	Maximise environmental sustainability opportunities through Hertford Hydro		✓		Direct. Note: estimated reduction of 21tCO2	Finalising further monitoring required by the Environment Agency. On track for planning application by January 2021	✓	✓							
2. Use our regulatory powers to promote action by others															
2.1	Publish a Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document	✓			Direct / indirect / avoidance of increase / mitigation	Draft completed and out to consultation. On track to adopt in 2020/21	✓		✓						
2.2	Develop sustainability advice geared towards listed buildings / conservation areas	✓			Indirect	Incorporated into the Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document - see above	✓		✓						
2.3	Survey locally active residential developers to better understand the barriers to increased delivery of more highly energy efficient homes	✓			Indirect	COMPLETED, work now taking place to commence dialogue with developers on the scheme points raised	✓		✓	✓					
2.4	Identify environmental sustainability interventions that could be funded with planning gain s106 contributions	✓			Direct	List being drawn up - on track	✓		✓	✓					
2.5	Maximise environmental sustainability through the Harlow Gilston Garden Town Development	✓			Direct / indirect / avoidance of increase / mitigation	Work ongoing	✓		✓	✓					
2.6	Work with HCC on introducing anti-idling signage and fines	✓			Direct	Issues requiring national intervention identified. Meeting held with local MPs to secure support. Anti-idling message promoted via Clean Air Day, 8th October 2020 and Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership future actions.				✓					
2.7	Install rapid e-chargers in support of move to more e-taxis		✓		Direct	Awaiting update from partner, Electric Blue, leading this scheme on behalf of Defra	✓			✓					
2.8	Review and update taxi vehicle policies to further strengthen incentives/requirements for low emission taxis		✓		Indirect	East Herts is particularly strong on this issue. Will participate in county-wide standard raising exercise via the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership	✓			✓					
2.9	Consider promoting improved EPC ratings through HMO licensing powers and policies		✓		Direct	Work on this not yet commenced	✓		✓	✓					
3. Influence and encourage others to do things															
3.1	Provide and promote energy efficiency grants/support	✓			Direct. Note: estimated at up to 800 tCO2 saving if move from oil to gas. Home insulation measures can be assessed for carbon benefits and will be positive benefit	Work paused earlier this year due to Covid 19. Five installs completed. Strong pipeline of interest following home surveys restart although may halt due to Covid.	✓		✓	✓					
3.2	Establish and run a multi-agency/stakeholder Environmental and Climate Change Forum	✓			Indirect	COMPLETED				✓		✓	✓		

3.3	Write to minister to initiate dialogue about powers and freedoms to support delivery of climate change commitments	✓			Indirect	COMPLETED				✓					
3.4	Work with local MPs to promote the case for investment in sustainability interventions in East Herts	✓			Direct / indirect	Positive first meeting held	✓	✓		✓	✓				
3.5	Run electric vehicle roadshows and demonstrations - at least one a year	✓			Indirect	Paused due to Covid 19 but planning to hold events later in 2020/21	✓				✓				
3.6	Run two climate change film festivals (Hertford and Bishop's Stortford)	✓			Indirect	Paused due to Covid 19 but now planning to hold festival later in 2021					✓				
3.7	Install more bicycle racks in the five market towns	✓			Indirect	Work on track - sites identified and bicycle racks ordered	✓				✓				
3.8	Incentivise the public to make more use of the council e-car pool	✓			Direct	Publicity planned for later in 2020/21	✓				✓				
3.9	Hold a Schools Climate Conference		✓		Indirect	Work paused due to Covid 19					✓			✓	
3.10	Work with Bishop's Stortford BID and other business groups to promote sustainability		✓		Indirect	Work paused due to Covid 19	✓				✓				
3.11	Consider creation of East Herts awards scheme to encourage local organisations to implement sustainable activities		✓		Indirect	Work paused due to Covid 19	✓				✓				
3.12	Actively implement and encourage waste minimisation initiatives	✓			Indirect	Social media continues to be used to promote waste minimisation messages coinciding with WasteAware current campaigns. Seasonal messages will go out for Halloween and Christmas	✓								
3.13	Use social media more effectively to encourage behaviour change	✓			Indirect	Work ongoing/social media plan/specific seasonal messages/enhanced web pages	✓				✓				
3.14	Complete the Hertford subways AQMA project	✓			Indirect	Phase one completed with opening of supermarket subway ahead of time in August. Refurb of London Road subway completed for 8 oct 2020 opening. Hertford-wide pedestrian/cycle re-signing strategy being investigated as part of extension to project	✓				✓				

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East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 3 November 2020

Report by: Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy

Report title: East Herts Council Complaints 2019-20

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

This report provides a summary of customer complaints made to the Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- (a) The issues in the report and progress made to date on addressing them be noted.**
- (b) The Unreasonable and Persistent Behaviour Policy be recommended to Council for approval.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 That a new Unreasonable and Persistent Behaviour Policy replaces the Vexatious Complainant Policy

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Every year Scrutiny receive a report on customer complaints made to the council. This details trends around performance and the nature of complaints the council receives. This report covers the 2019/20 year and also contains information for the April – September 2020 period. The following points are worth noting:

- 2.2 Performance against the main measure of complaints is a

concern (% dealt with in 10 working days). The number of complaints in the past two years have been less than 100 which does skew a % calculation however some service areas have struggled to meet the target. There has been improvement in the last 6 months however.

- 2.3 The volume of complaints made has dropped off in the past two years. This is perhaps an indication that complaints are not being recorded properly on the system (infreemation) as opposed to customers not needing to complain. Benchmarking against Stevenage Borough Council would indicate this is the case – in 2018/19 for example 318 complaints were submitted via the East Herts council website but only 85 logged. In the same year Stevenage logged 531 complaints. All the complaints received have been followed up with customers however in many cases staff haven't logged these on infreemation.
- 2.4 There has been a spike in the number of complaints sent to the Local Government Ombudsman. Typically we only have a handful per year and none have ever been upheld. However over the 2019/20 year the ombudsman contacted us about 8 separate complaints and a further three since April. It is logical to assume that a stronger response in the first place may lead to less complaints being reported to the ombudsman.
- 2.5 Natural turnover of staff has meant that knowledge around the complaints process, use of infreemation and where to get support has been lost. No training and development has taken place on complaints handling for some time which is in part evident by the widely different tone, style and degree of empathy displayed in correspondence with complainants.
- 2.6 In addition an informal peer review was undertaken on our approach in late 2019. This was conducted by the complaints lead for Stevenage Borough Council who was invited by the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy to provide some

critical friend challenge. A number of excellent recommendations were made including:

- As the complaints and feedback service is dispersed with no central person or team, it appears that there aren't consistent reports being run on trends. Statistics are run for KPI monitoring, but they don't fully show trends in certain areas.
- There is no 'Learning' captured as a result of dealing with complaints, which could mean customers are complaining about the same things again and again, one after another, without previous upheld complaints driving service changes.
- You may wish to consider quality checking a random sample of responses to ensure that officers are taking complaints seriously and responding to all the issues customers raise.
- Complaints/Compliments are a valid source of intelligence and show what is going well and not so well in the service areas. Less emphasis on volumes could mean more cases are logged, which adds to the organisation's intelligence.
- MP/Cllr Enquiries are not logged on infreemation. They are dealt with by service areas but no central record is kept. This means that East Herts do not know what issues Councillors are raising on their ward members behalf. If these were logged reports could be run to show the full picture detailing what customers are reporting/the current issues with services

2.7 The complaints "champions" (leads in service areas) were gathered in late December to discuss these challenges and any areas of improvement. The following points were made during discussion

- Customers contact staff across different services on a regular basis to complain or raise concerns. In many cases these are responded to as soon as possible rather than escalating it to a full complaint. This explains the disparity outlined in (2.3) above. Arguably this provides a better service to the customer if it means they get the outcome they want more quickly but equally means we are not accurately recording the amount of time spent on customer concerns.
- Need to have some more guidance around distinguishing genuine complaints from a customer just wanting to get their point across that they are unhappy about something (ie. when is a complaint a complaint?)
- Need a standard response for complaints that are about adopted policy or legislation (ie. where their recourse is to the democratic process and no investigation is needed). Examples would include a complaint about why waste is only collected fortnightly
- Training would be helpful for Stage 1 and Stage 2 responders, primarily focused on internal processes such as standard templates and wording, processes to follow in terms of logging and using information, style, tone and language of responses
- Targets – general feeling that targets are less important provided there is a mechanism to incorporate learning from complaints

3.0 Improvements made:

- 3.1 Following on from the work above the following actions have been undertaken:

- 3.2 A dedicated Customer Services Team Leader is now the central point for complaints handling. This enables us to keep consistent oversight for performance, trends and quality control (including random checks and wider trend analysis). In recognition of these extra duties the Team Leader is no longer involved in day to day customer services work including rota planning and line management providing the necessary capacity to lead the complaints process.
- 3.3 A number of training sessions with staff have been run over Zoom in April – June focusing on the complaints process and use of infreemation. These have been refresher sessions and around 60 minutes in length.
- 3.4 Two training sessions were run in March looking at style and tone for replying to complaints. These were led by a colleague from Stevenage Borough Council who provides complaint handling training for housing staff.
- 3.5 A new member query case management system was launched in June.
- 3.6 All complaints literature including the web form and printed leaflets were reviewed and condensed to bring them up to date, using guidance from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- 3.7 Leadership Team receives a weekly report on outstanding complaints and every quarter the performance data is discussed in a meeting, including learning and trends.
- 3.8 These interventions have had an impact in the first six months of 2020/21. 66 stage 1 complaints were logged between 1st April – 30th September and of these 48 (73%) were dealt within 10 working days. Hopefully this trend of increased reporting and timeliness of responses will be sustained.

4.0 Performance data

4.1 The main performance measure of complaints handling is “% of stage 1 complaints resolved within 10 working days” for which the target is 70%. This has been an area of underperformance in the past and has been the subject of previous reports. The following table shows performance data for the last 4 years:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Apr - Sep 20
Total Number of Complaints	97	105	68	59	66
Total Number Dealt with in 10 working days	60	72	52	38	48
% Dealt with in 10 working days	62%	69%	76%	64%	73%

4.2 In the 19/20 year performance unfortunately slipped to well below target. In addition the overall complaint numbers for 18/19 and 19/20 have dropped significantly from previous years as referred to in (2.3). However performance has since improved.

4.3 The following table shows data for the previous four years by service. Generally speaking Planning and Operations are most complained about service areas followed by Revenues and Benefits and Health and Housing:

	16/17		17/18		18/19		19/20		APR - SEP 2020	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Comms, Strategy & Policy	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	3	5%	1	2%
Democratic and Legal Services	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%
Health and Housing	23	24%	10	10%	8	12%	8	14%	9	14%
Human Resources and Organisational Development	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Operations	23	24%	27	26%	30	44%	24	41%	19	29%
Planning and Building Control	34	35%	36	34%	19	28%	13	22%	9	14%
Revenues and Benefits	14	14%	30	29%	9	13%	9	15%	27	41%
Strategic Finance and Property	2	2%	1	1%	2	3%	2	3%	0	0%
Total	97	100%	105	100%	68	100%	59	100%	66	100%

4.4 The types of complaints in 19/20 and April – September this year related to the Operations Service were:

- Missed bins – dispute that bin was placed at boundary/ dispute over contamination
- Inner paper boxes going missing
- Grass cutting not being done properly and often enough

- Scheduled street cleaning not frequent enough
- Crew behaviour – not putting bins back on resident's boundary
- Suspension of green waste collection during the early phases of lockdown

4.5 Our contractor will take picture evidence of contamination and there is often CCTV footage which can be used to ascertain whether a bin was placed at a boundary. Where this evidence isn't available however we will often give customers the benefit of the doubt. It should be noted that the volume of formal complaints we received for missed bins is a very small proportion of the overall number of bin collections. Where complaints are about frequency of grass cutting and street cleansing we are unable to adjust this without changing the contract with Urbaser. The joint waste team review complaints received and this forms part of any discussion with Urbaser regarding performance concerns or changes to the contract.

4.6 Types of complaints related to Planning and Building Control were:

- Objections to planning applications: largely from stakeholders/ neighbours where minor residential applications have gone ahead.
- Enforcement – largely that enforcement against perceived planning breaches are not pursued or in some instances where a customer is unhappy enforcement action is being taken against them

4.7 Planning complaints are by the far the most complex and time consuming part of our overall complaints process. Often customers assume that it is a mechanism to review planning decisions and this is not the case. However most planning complaints will cite other reasons for not being happy with any planning decisions including lack of communication, failure and quality of process. Where complainants raise these issues,

often in specific detail and against individual officers, they are logged as complaints and investigated.

4.8 Typical complaints in relation to Housing and the Revenues and Benefits services include:

- Delays in dealing with a benefits claim/ processing refunds/ reliefs
- Communication styles (formal letters)
- Delays in processing housing needs applications
- Please note there is a large spike in the number of complaints to Revenues and Benefits in the last six months. The majority of these relate to the cash grants of either £10,000 or £25,000 awarded to businesses as part of the Chancellor's support package to deal with Covid-19 restrictions. Businesses were entitled to ask for a review a decision not to award via the complaints process. Of the 27 complaints received by Revenues and Benefits, 22 related to not being awarded a grant. Given almost 2500 individual grants were awarded however this is a relatively small number.

4.9 The data below shows how many complaints in those four service areas missed the 10 day target:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Apr - Sep 20
Health and Housing	23	10	8	8	9
of which missed 10 day target	4	3	3	3	6
Operations	23	27	30	24	19
of which missed 10 day target	7	4	5	8	3
Planning and Building Control	34	36	19	13	9
of which missed 10 day target	26	23	8	6	7
Revenues and Benefits	14	30	9	9	27
of which missed 10 day target	0	2	0	2	2

4.10 Planning and Building Control tends to be the area in which response times exceed the 10 day target. This is largely down to the fact that planning complaints are more complex and require more time to investigate.

4.11 A further measure of performance is the “% of stage 1 complaints upheld or partially upheld” (or in other words where the council accepts we are at fault or partially at fault). Performance data for the last four years is shown below. The target is 25% to be upheld/ partially upheld.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Apr - Sep 20
Total number of complaints	97	105	68	59	66
Number upheld/ partially upheld	30	20	24	20	21
% upheld/ partially upheld	31%	19%	35%	34%	32%

4.12 We have missed the target for the past three years albeit the low numbers can cause large percentage swings. The following table shows the data broken down by the four service areas:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Apr - Sep 20
Health and Housing	23	10	8	8	9
of which were upheld/ partially upheld	4	2	3	3	1
Operations	23	27	30	24	19
of which were upheld/ partially upheld	15	8	14	10	11
Planning and Building Control	34	36	19	13	9
of which were upheld/ partially upheld	4	3	4	4	5
Revenues and Benefits	14	30	9	9	27
of which were upheld/ partially upheld	5	6	3	3	4

4.13 Operations tends to be the area in which most complaints are upheld partially upheld. In most cases this is an apology from the council and an offer to rectify the situation. Examples include:

- Complaint about waste crews moving waste between bins to avoid having to drag half empty bins to the vehicle. An apology was given for the additional mess this caused in a customer’s bin and crew instructed not to do this in future
- Complaint about not replacing bins at a boundary property. Apology given and as the customer was vulnerable an assisted collection service was offered
- Complaint about boundary property and where a bin needs to be left. There was some confusion as the bin

area was a communal property. An apology was given and agreement reached on where bins should be left in future

4.14 Examples of complaints that were upheld/ partially upheld in Planning, Housing and Revenues and Benefits include:

- Complaint about a letter threatening legal action if a council tax balance was not settled. It was acknowledged that the letter was sent in error and a full apology was given.
- Complaint about registering an empty home which was mistakenly directed to Herts County Council. An apology was given.
- Complaint about lack of planning enforcement action. There was no basis for enforcement but the case officer apologised to the customer for not keeping them informed of this decision.

4.15 A further measure of performance is the number of stage 2 complaints received and “% of stage 2 complaints upheld”. Complaints escalate to this level when a customer is not happy with the outcome of a stage 1 investigation. Usually a stage 2 complaint will be investigated by a Head of Service. Data for the last few years is shown below:

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Apr - Sep 20
Total	16	16	17	12	16
of which were upheld/ partially upheld	4	3	3	2	4

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Apr - Sep 20
Health and Housing	4	1	1	4	1
of which were upheld/ partially upheld	1	1	0	0	1
Operations	1	5	3	2	1
of which were upheld/ partially upheld	0	1	1	1	0
Planning and Building Control	10	9	10	3	6
of which were upheld/ partially upheld	3	1	2	1	1
Revenues and Benefits	0	1	2	0	8
of which were upheld/ partially upheld	0	0	0	0	2

4.16 The two complaints upheld/ partially upheld in 2019/20 and

four in April – September of this year were as follows:

- Request from a customer to review a TPO and complaint when the TPO wasn't removed. After extensive investigation it was concluded that the TPO is valid however an apology was given regarding missed communication and correspondence over email
- Complaint from a customer about a refusal for their application for an extension. Investigation acknowledged that the 20 day deadline for responding to pre-application submissions was missed and the case officer's line manager did not return a call when they have offered to do so. An apology was provided.
- Complaint from a customer regarding a planning appeal and the processes surrounding it. The investigation revealed no failings in the process but an apology was given for not acknowledging a document which had been provided as part of the appeal.
- Complaint around dealing with a nuisance case, the process and the behaviour of staff. The investigation concluded the processes were consistent with our policy, staff had acted professionally however it was acknowledged a diary sheet had not been sent out when it should have been. An apology was given.
- Complaints from two business owners that they were not eligible for a grant when they should have been. After reviewing the cases and allowing the business owners to resubmit evidence that they were in occupancy of the building at the required time both grants were awarded.

4.17 Where customers remain unhappy after a stage 2 investigation they are able to contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. In 2019/20 eight customers contacted the ombudsman and the following conclusions were made. In addition the Ombudsman has taken up a further three cases since April this year. One of those has concluded and details are below. The remaining two are still being investigated.

Summary of Complaint	Ombudsman's Decision
<p>Mr X complains the Council wrongly issued a summons and took him to court for not paying his council tax. Mrs Y had paid the council tax but the Council had not allocated the payment to the account. Mr X says the Council should pay compensation for his time, loss of earnings and the experience of attending court, including how the Council's officer spoke to him.</p>	<p><i>Not investigated</i></p> <p>The Ombudsman will not investigate Mr X's complaint that the Council wrongly took legal action against him when he had paid his council tax. The Council has apologised for its fault and cancelled the costs of the court summons. There is no remaining injustice.</p>
<p>'Miss C'. She complains the Council did not give proper priority to her application for re-housing, considered under its housing allocation policy.</p> <p>Miss C says because of this she had to maintain the tenancy of a property that was unsuitable for her and her son because of disrepair, which worsened their health.</p>	<p><i>Complaint upheld – although the council had already agreed to compensate the complainant so no further action was needed</i></p> <p>Summary: Miss C complains about the priority the Council gave to her housing application. We uphold the complaint, finding fault in how the Council considered Miss C's medical priority and how it responded to reports of disrepair in her flat. We consider this has caused distress to Miss C. The Council has agreed</p>

	proposals to remedy the complaint set out at the end of this statement.
Mrs X complains that the Council will not take enforcement action over a raised platform built by a neighbour.	<i>Not investigated</i> The Ombudsman will not investigate this complaint because there is no evidence of fault by the Council causing injustice
Mrs X complained the Council failed to consider enforcement reports properly and did not consider the impact of a planning application correctly. She also felt the Council was biased in favour of the developer and failed to communicate with her.	<i>Partially upheld – although no action needed as apology already given</i> There was no fault in the Council’s planning decisions. However, its communication with Mrs X was lacking. The Council apologised to Mrs X in its response to her complaint to remedy this fault.
The complainant, Mr X, complains about the Council’s handling of his neighbour’s planning application. He says he was not consulted on the application and is not happy with its decision.	<i>Not investigated</i> The Ombudsman will not investigate Mr X’s complaint about the Council’s handling of his neighbour’s planning application. This is because it is unlikely we would find fault affecting the decision.
Mrs C complains the Council failed to take timely and effective action in response to her reports	<i>Upheld – but no action needed as remedy already provided</i>

<p>about the removal of a mature ash tree and several mature beech trees in a conservation area. Mrs C also complains the Council has wrongly allowed a new licensed garden area and has not enforced the timely removal of decking at the nearby public house which is the same site as the tree removal.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman has found fault by the Council as it has no record of its reasons for not acting earlier about the tree removal. The Ombudsman considers the action the Council has already taken in requiring a replacement tree and issuing a planning enforcement notice with some agreed follow up actions and improvements to its record keeping are enough to remedy Mrs C's injustice.</p>
<p>Mr Y, complains that the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Failed to enforce against the developer's non-compliance with the approved plans and conditions attached to the permission granted; b) Failed to advise residents that the condition regarding the landscaping had been discharged without prior consultation; and c) Provided inaccurate and misleading comments to a Planning Committee about the status of the road. 	<p><i>Partially upheld – instruction given to apologise</i></p> <p>On the evidence seen, the Ombudsman does not find procedural fault in the Council's decision to invite retrospective applications to rectify the planning breaches. However, there is some drift in the Council's contact with the developer to obtain the application. The Council also failed to provide a timely update to Mr Y about the outcome of the application, which it will apologise for.</p>
<p>Mr X, has complained</p>	<p><i>Not investigated.</i></p>

<p>about how the Council has dealt with planning applications for developments near his home. He has raised concerns about highway safety and the implications of construction vehicles using the road where he lives.</p> <p>Mr X has also complained about a possible breach of planning control.</p>	<p>The Ombudsman also should not investigate how the Council dealt with complaints about a possible breach of planning control. This is because he is unlikely to find fault by the Council and the complainant has not been caused significant injustice</p>
<p>Mr Y complained the Council failed to review or update a Tree Preservation Order covering his property. Mr Y said the Council did not know what trees remained on his property when it carried out a site visit. He said he felt the Council had wasted his time and warned about enforcement action causing him upset and worry.</p>	<p><i>Council not at fault.</i></p> <p>Councils can vary TPOs but are not under an obligation to amend TPOs when work is completed on trees. The Council has kept records of applications Mr Y has made to complete work on the trees on his land over a number of years. The Council has considered the TPO each time and has a record of applications made and agreed to add the site visit notes to update the TPO records. Consequently, there is no injustice to Mr Y and any potential future injustice has been prevented.</p>

- 4.18 The council complies with all rulings by the Ombudsman and their decisions are published on their website. Their findings are helpful in terms of service development – be it challenging us where the Council may have got it wrong and thus leading us to review our approach or independently validating our decisions to customers.

5.0 Vexatious Complainant Policy

- 5.1 The Council's current vexatious complainant policy can be found here:
<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/documents/s47827/Complainant%20Policy%20ERP%20B%20D.pdf>
- 5.2 The vexatious complainant policy is essentially too narrow as it can only be applied to people who have been through the complaints process and only in regard to a specific complaint/ issue/ FOI (ie. the fact that the requester is vexatious doesn't automatically make further requests vexatious). If an individual has been declared vexatious they are still entitled to contact us regarding any new issues, service requests or an FOI. Arguably the vexatious policy doesn't deliver any additional value above and beyond the council's right to not engage with someone. At 6 pages in length it also unnecessarily long.
- 5.3 Once someone has been through the complaints process if they continue to contact us about the same issue their only recourse is to the ombudsman (or ICO in the case of FOIs) and we are not obliged to continue correspondence (regardless of being declared vexatious or not). In the last 5 years only two individuals have been declared vexatious however many others have simply been informed that we will keep all their correspondence on record but will no longer respond to them as we have been through our complaints process.
- 5.4 We do however need a definition of unreasonable or

persistent contact from customers (often when they have been directed to the complaints process but refuse to engage with it). It is legitimate to disengage with customers who become aggressive or abusive, provided we are clear about what constitutes such behaviour. It should be noted that where such behaviour is deemed to constitute a threat to staff wellbeing the cautionary person's register (maintained by the Health and Safety Officer) captures any details. This register is shared with all relevant staff and reviewed every year and provides stronger safeguards for staff than the vexatious complainant policy.

- 5.5 A new, shorter, "Unreasonable and Persistent Behaviour" policy has been drafted and it is recommended this replaces the vexatious complainant policy (see Appendix A).

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

Yes – use of information

Equalities

Yes – EQIA needed on new policy

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

The costs of dealing with complaints and compliments are contained within existing budget resources. A robust complaints policy and handling should prevent cases being referred to the Local Government Ombudsman which can result in additional administration cost burdens and the risk of compensation payments outside of normal budgeted amounts as well as reputational damage and increased reactive communication costs from adverse Ombudsman decisions. The learning points from complaints are taken into consideration and changes made in processes to prevent

future occurrences.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Yes – new policy drafted in conjunction with data protection colleagues. Complaints policies are named within the constitution under the policy framework and therefore require approval at Full Council.

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A – Unreasonable and Persistent Behaviour Policy

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EAST HERTS COUNCIL

POLICY FOR DEALING WITH PERSISTENT AND UNREASONABLE CUSTOMER CONTACT

The following types of behaviour could fall under the definition of unreasonable:

- Use of hostile, abusive or offensive language causing distress to staff (in person, over the phone or face to face)
- An unreasonable fixation on an individual member of staff
- Refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of assistance
- Changing the basis of the complaint/request/ FOI as the matter proceeds
- Denying or changing statements made at an earlier stage
- Covertly recording meetings and conversations
- Submitting falsified documents from themselves or others
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff with lengthy phone calls, emails to numerous council staff, FOI requests or detailed letters every few days, and expecting immediate responses
- Refusing to accept a decision; refusing to accept that an adequate response has been given
- Persistently approaching the council through different routes about the same issue
- Persistently seeking an outcome which the council has already explained is unrealistic for policy, legal or other valid reasons
- Refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process.
- Raising numerous, detailed but unimportant questions; insisting they are all answered
- Adopting a 'scatter gun' approach: pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue with a variety of organisations
- Repeatedly arguing points with no new evidence

In the case of unreasonable customer contact the Council may wish to consider taking action. This will be appropriate and proportionate to the nature and frequency of the customer's contacts with the Council. If the unreasonable contact adversely affects the Council's ability to do its work, is disproportionately resource intensive and/or adversely affects the Council's ability to provide a service to another one of more of the following may be considered:

- If the Council's complaint process has been followed but, we may end all communication with the complainant on the issue and advise them of their rights to refer the matter to the Ombudsman.

- Limiting the number of telephone calls/personal contacts that will be taken from the person in a given time period, or only on specified days.
- Limiting the time spent on telephone calls/personal contacts with that person.
- Declining any contact (in person, by telephone email, letter, or any combination of those) with the person except through a single point of contact (which could be a designated person or team).
- Restricting access to Council premises
- Informing the complainant in writing that the Council will not respond to any further contact with regard to a specific issue. The complainant will be informed that any correspondence will be read and placed on file by a designated officer but no reply or acknowledgement will be given
- Placing the person's details on the Cautionary Person's Database (this will only be the case if the complainant is considered to be a threat to the wellbeing of any staff member)

The staff member who has been in contact with the complainant is best placed to judge at what point behaviour becomes unreasonable. They will consult with the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy before a response is agreed. In doing so both the member of staff and Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy will be mindful of:

- Ensuring that, where relevant, the complaints procedure or FOI procedure has been implemented as far as reasonably possible. Even with the most unreasonable complainants, there may be some substance to a part of their complaint which will still need to be addressed. It is important that the Council learns from complaints and uses any findings to improve services.
- The personal circumstances of the customer and whether any reasonable adjustments should be considered or whether any organisations/support agencies e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau, MIND, advocacy service etc. can provide advice and assistance to the customer complainant in accessing services/pursuing their complaint in a reasonable manner.

Any decision to designate a customer as unreasonable should be recorded in writing setting out what information has been considered and the reasons for making the decision. This record is important so that the Council can evidence that it has acted in a fair and proportionate way if this later scrutinised e.g. by the Ombudsman.

This record will be kept within the Customer Services Team and owned by the Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy.

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 3 November 2020

Report by: Councillor Geoff Williamson, Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

Report title: Corporate Plan Update

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary – This report provides an update on progress towards meeting the actions and targets set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan, “East Herts: A Place to Grow”.

RECOMMENDATION FOR Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

a) That the progress to date be noted.

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 N/A

2.0 Background

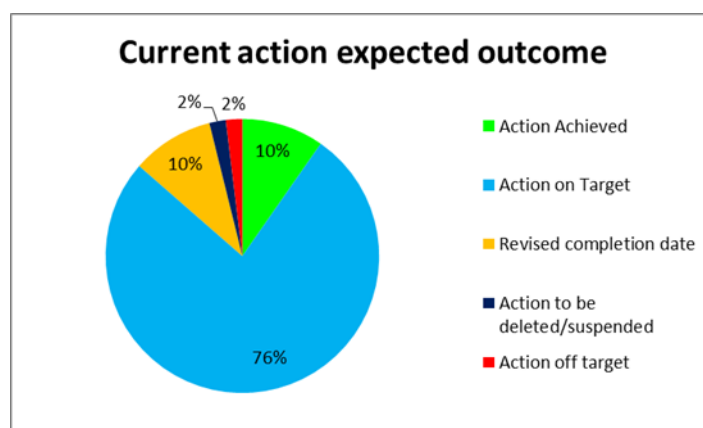
2.1 The Corporate Plan, “East Herts: A Place to Grow” sets out the priorities East Herts Council wants to achieve between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2023. The plan contains four themes:

- Sustainability at the heart of everything we do
- Enabling communities
- Encouraging economic growth
- Digital by design

- 2.2 Under each theme is a set of actions and performance measures outlining how the vision will be achieved full details of which can be found here:
<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/about-east-herts-0/vision-and-corporate-priorities>
- 2.3 This report details progress made over the period 1st April – 30th September 2020. Appendix A contains a progress update on each of the actions and Appendix B contains a progress update on each of the performance indicators.
- 2.4 It is worth noting that the impact of Covid-19 has been significant in terms of council actions and priorities. Since the plan was agreed in early 2020 new and unforeseen challenges and issues have arisen. Where possible the council has continued to deliver against original priorities but in some instances these have had to be reconsidered. As part of the overall budget setting process the corporate plan will be refreshed to reflect the new reality.

3.0 Summary of progress against actions

3.1 The following table gives a summary of expected outcomes against all the actions in the corporate plan:



3.2 The below is an overview of actions that have progressed well or have been completed up to the end of quarter 2.

- **Enabling communities: grow the East Herts Lottery.** Despite the district response to COVID19, the projected income for the Lottery has increased steadily over quarter 2. From July to September 2020, the 12 month forecast has increased from £37 034 to £41, 464. Over Quarter 2 2020/21, the number of supporters has increased from 635 to 689 and the number of good causes that have signed up to the lottery has increased from 90 to 93.
- **Enabling communities: grow our digital communication channels.** There has been a steady increase in the number of followers/subscribers to our social media accounts. The increase in following is hopefully due to more engaging/interactive content as well the public being more interested in council services since Covid-19 restrictions were imposed. Generally speaking digital engagement has increased significantly across the whole population since the end of March (in terms of on-line retail and communication) and this is reflected in our social media followings.
- **Enabling communities: deliver the £20m investment in Hertford Theatre.** The project has just completed RIBA stage 3. Consultation took place in September and a planning application is due to be submitted in November. Construction is scheduled to commence in August 2021.
- **Sustainability at the heart of everything we do: draw up a carbon assessment tool** to be used to assess all council projects. This action is complete and the tool will be used to assess the carbon impact of council projects.
- **Sustainability at the heart of everything we do: amend procurement regulations to explicitly include consideration of carbon footprint.** Amendments to the council's procurement regulations have been approved and implemented.
- **Digital by design: undertake training on complaints handling.** Training with champions and other members of

staff has been undertaken over zoom. Quarter 2 performance data indicates there has been improvement in both the recording and timeliness of complaint handling

3.3 The below is an overview of some actions that have not progressed as well up to the end of quarter 2.

- **Encourage economic growth: Launchpad.** As the Launchpad was closed for 4 months we did not receive any income from the facility nor we able to market the service to new users. However since we re-opening in July use has been steadily increasing and we expect October income to be similar to pre Covid levels. There has been an increase in enquiries from start-up businesses and people who are no longer able to travel into London to work
- **Sustainability at the heart of everything we do: run electric vehicle roadshows and demonstrations** and two climate change film festivals in Hertford and Bishops Stortford. The Bishops Stortford event is not achievable for 2020 due to ongoing Covid 19 restrictions. This has been moved to early spring 2021 with a date to be confirmed by the local group leading on the Eco Festival. Hertford Arts Hub have expressed interest in looking at running a similar Hertford event also in 2021.
- **Digital by design: improve customer journey and self-service in Wallfields reception.** Design work was commissioned in February for this project however as receptions have been closed this work has been put on hold. Although receptions are now partially re-open we are assessing the overall office and front of house requirements for the 'new normal' and it is unlikely we will return to the old operating model of a walk-in service. In the meantime we have put an appointment booking service in place for customers to either receive a call back from a council officer or use a PC/ phone where they do

not have access to one themselves.

4.0 Summary of performance

4.1 Below is an overview of some indicators that have performed well up to the end of quarter 2.

- **Encouraging economic growth: percentage of planning applications that were processed and dealt with in a timely manner.** Although there was a minor decrease in performance from quarter 1 due to additional applications, both major and minor planning applications were dealt with in a timely manner and this PI sits well above target. Three out of four major planning applications were dealt with in less than thirteen weeks and 28 out of 30 minor planning applications were dealt with in less than 8 weeks.
- **Enabling communities: number of social media followers and likes;** email subscribers to network and press favourability score. Our number of followers and likes on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram has steadily increased over the last quarter with more customers using these platforms for updates and information. It is likely that this is partially the result of many residents moving to greater use of digital platforms as part of the Covid-19 restrictions. Quarter 2 has also seen a steady increase in the number of email subscribers to our network. Our press favourability score has increased this quarter following positive coverage on the council's major projects, sustainability initiatives and coronavirus service updates.
- **Enabling communities: number of unique clients supported through the East Herts Social Prescribing Service.** Despite the lockdown, and with the majority of patient appointments now restricted to mainly telephone calls, the number of GP/Health Professional referrals sent

to our social prescribing service continues to be received and supported at a steady pace.

- **Digital by design: percentage of stage 1 complaints resolved within 10 working days or less.** There were 66 stage one complaints out of a total of 48 resolved within 10 working days over quarter 2 which keeps this above the performance target of 70%. As mentioned above the actions taken to improve our complaints performance is making a difference. A full report on complaints will be considered by Overview and Scrutiny on 3rd November.
- **Digital by design: percentage of good satisfaction through GovMetric emails.** There was a total of 119 ratings over quarter 2, of which 94 were green, 9 amber and 16 red. This service was only launched in April and the target was set at 80% so it is encouraging to see are within target, particularly when no face to face services have been available. Although emails and webforms as a proportion of contact has dipped slightly since the start of the year it is positive to know that customers generally rate their interaction with the council as positive.

4.2 Below is an overview of some indicators that did not perform to target over quarter 2

- **Enabling Communities: Time taken to process housing benefit new claims and change events.** The time taken to process claims has gradually increased over the last quarter. COVID 19 actions (including awarding £29m in grants and £18m in business rate reliefs) have meant additional, unplanned work for the revenues and benefits service which has contributed to this slight decline in performance. However it remains well within target
- **Digital by design: percentage of Govmetric good satisfaction ratings on website.** Website satisfaction dropped to 18% in September and only 11 ratings were received. This is incredibly disappointing. Over previous

quarters, we achieved on average over 100 ratings which are usually in the region of 50% satisfaction. We have implemented changes to the Govmetric widget so it is more visible to users to try and encourage feedback. Of the 9 poor ratings, 7 were given during a short period in which the revenue and benefits system was down and these related to not being able to access accounts. The system is hosted externally and we have no control over its downtime.

- **Digital by Design: percentage of member enquiries responded to within 10 working days.** 40% (19 of 48) of member enquiries were responded to within 10 working days. This is a recently launched service however performance is poor. This has been discussed at Leadership Team and all managers reminded of the importance of responding to Member queries in a timely manner.

4.3 As well as the appendices all latest data can be found at <https://eastherts.covalentcpm.com/login> and can be accessed at any point. All Members have a shared read only account. Log in details can be found via the [members section of the intranet](#)

5.0 Risks

5.1 N/A

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 N/A

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A – actions

7.2 Appendix B – performance indicators

Contact Member

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
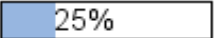

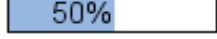



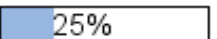

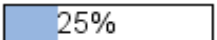



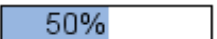





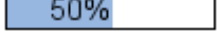
Contact Officer

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Report Author




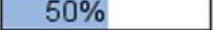

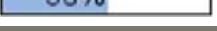



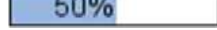







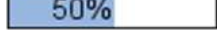



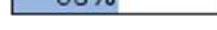


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Action code and title	Expected Outcome	Progress Bar	Latest update
Encouraging Economic Growth			
E CSP Adopt a policy on viability and intervention on commercial schemes on new developments including BS South, BS North, Caxton Hill, NE of Ware			Commercial property market is still very uncertain and therefore establishing a policy is challenging. The planning white paper also suggests many changes to planning legislation including PDR in town centres. All of this will need to be considered in terms setting a policy. In the meantime we continue to work on individual sites such as BSN and Caxton Hill in terms of what is realistic for commercial development.
E CSP Begin construction of the multi-story car park on the Old River Lane site (72 week building)			Rydons on site and construction work is in progress. Concrete frame due to be delivered in November subject to Sn278 agreement being in place.
E CSP Deliver the 3 year ERDF Funded SME Competitiveness project focusing on expanding the Stortford and Ware Launchpads and supporting the bio-science, social enterprise and Airport MRO sectors			Paper going to Exec 9th November 2020 with details on project. Agreement has been signed and tender process for delivery partner commences 19th October.
E CSP Ensure Section 106 contributions are allocated in accordance with agreements			Covid situation has impacted on the allocation and transfer of S106 contributions to identified projects and on the numbers of funding application bids received. A proactive approach is being taken to ensure that all interested parties are aware of the potential for S106 funding in their area.
E CSP Grow revenues from trading companies			Covid -19 has impacted on income of CCTV and Building Control companies. At this stage there is a lot of uncertainty around overall trading environment so unable to predict revenues for this year
E CSP Implement Article 4 Directions on designated employment sites			No further progress. Still awaiting response from MHCLG. Likely that they will fail to respond given this isn't a priority for MHCLG and the Art 4 will expire without confirmation.
E CSP Provide a programme of business networking and support activities			Programmes were meant to be face to face so this work has been put on hold. However significant work has taken place in town centres in partnership with HCC, town councils and business rep organisations to create a safe environment.
E CSP Provide discretionary business rate grants to incentivise new businesses to set up/ existing businesses to expand			The scheme was made redundant following the covid-19 restrictions and government support for businesses. East Herts administered £18m in rate reliefs and £31m in grants to 2500 businesses in the district between April 0 June 2020
E CSP Provide support for local business representative organisations including Chambers of Commerce and the Bishop's Stortford BID			Continuing to work with the BID, Hertford Hub and local Chamber of Commerce
E CSP Undertake a pilot project with stakeholders on Hertford Town Centre to get a vision and strategy in place			RHSS funds will be used to cover cost of hand sanitizers and planters in Hertford along Fore Street. We also tendering for comms work to ensure public safety messages are delivered. This work is being undertaken in conjunction with the Town Council, Police and Hertford Hub




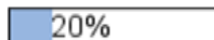













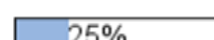


E CSP Work in partnership with the LSCC (Innovation Corridor) and Central Zone Alliance to lobby for inward investment		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	CZA advisor is in post and a work programme has been agreed, focusing on raising the profile of the area within the LSCC.
E CSP Work with Visit Herts to ensure local businesses and venues are supported		<input type="text" value="30%"/>	VH continuing support for tourist and leisure businesses with advice and schemes re COVID. EHC signposting companies and advertising where appropriate.
E CX Support the Herts Growth Board with presenting a case for additional infrastructure investment in Hertfordshire		<input type="text" value="30%"/>	Work continues on this project led by HCC. All Councils due to agree signing up to a joint committee on growth in late 2020.
E HH Deliver the Millstream Property Investment Ltd's Business plan		<input type="text" value="25%"/>	The Rectory Hall acquisition is not now proceeding as a Millstream scheme; the council has decided to purchase the property directly. There will be no substitute for this scheme within the business plan as the council has vired the monies to fund its own acquisition. The business plan included plans to acquire 10 individual properties. In response to Covid 19, the directors have decided to proceed with purchasing five properties, while keeping market conditions under review. To date, two of the five have been acquired, with an offer accepted on a third. The business plan also included the Watton-at-Stone development scheme. Initial works are timetabled to commence in quarter 3. This is on track
E HH Grow the East Herts Lottery		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Projected income for the Lottery has increased steadily over Q2. From July to September 2020, the 12 month forecast has increased from £37 034 to £41 464, however, this is an optimistic projection and cannot be guaranteed. Over Q2 2020/21, the number of supporters has increased from 635 to 689 and the number of good causes that have signed up to the lottery has increased from 90 to 93.
E HH Potential for charging for regulatory advice		<input type="text" value="0%"/>	No progress to date
E HH Provision of advice and support around licensing function - alcohol, food, noise - and compliance.		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	The team have been helping and advising businesses throughout the pandemic. Pavement licensing procedure and process in place for new legislation
E HH Support the Better Business for All Partnership		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Funding agreed by CE for one year rather than proposed 5 years. Both Licensing & Eh irregular contact and helping with business advice.
E HH Supporting the crowdfunding platform for community causes		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Criteria amended to increase engagement with EH Crowdfunding, based on feedback from Crowdfunder. EH Crowdfunding officially launched in September 2020 as planned.
E OPS Introduce parking permits for town centre business employees		<input type="text" value="10%"/>	Parking permits for town centre workers is being explored. Currently there are no capacity issue within long stay car parks following lockdown
E PBC Agree masterplans on: the Gilston Area Villages 1-7; NE of Ware; East of Welwyn Garden City; significant windfall development sites through collaborative process with developers and Members		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Ongoing






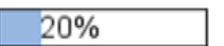



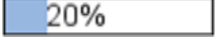









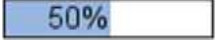


E PBC Delivery of the strategic sites allocated in the District Plan		<input type="text" value="10%"/>	Ongoing delivery is in accordance with the district plan
E PBC Undertake planning enforcement activity where required in keeping with the district plan and NPPF		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Site visits were suspended for the early part of lockdown which has meant some enforcement cases are still on-going. Site visits have now resumed
E RB Ensure all business rate reliefs are applied in a timely manner		<input type="text" value="100%"/>	Completed. £18m of reliefs granted
E SFP Develop financial Sustainability Group acquisitions/ investments		<input type="text" value="10%"/>	Financial Sustainability Committee hosted on Zoom in August. Committee agreed latest investment criteria, which again confirmed that no investment properties should be acquired with an EPC score of E, F or G.
Enabling Communities			
C CSP Evaluate the impact of any comms and campaigns		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Communications campaigns are now being evaluated. Communications activity for the consultations for Hertford Theatre and Hartham Leisure Centre have also been evaluated to see the impact social media/press activity had on people completing the consultations.
C CSP Grow our digital communication channels		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	There has been a steady increase in the number of followers/subscribers to our social media accounts. The increase in following is because of more engaging/interactive content as well the coronavirus pandemic which led to more interest in any changes to council services.
C CSP Maintain the register of community assets		<input type="text" value="30%"/>	Officer responsible for this has been on long term sick for 4 months which has meant we are behind with some registrations. In the past 3 months there have been a number of requests to be considered including Boxwood, Millenium Wood, 4 venues in Hertford Heath and on-going challenges with disposal of some assets such as the Rose and Crown in Aston.
C CSP Trial new communication and engagement tools with different audiences		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Development of a new webchat function for the council's website is underway. This will be a trial to begin with and will be promoted to residents as a quick and effective way to get in touch with the council.
C HH Continue to deliver social prescribing project and launch the Hertford and Bishop's Stortford Healthy Hubs		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Launch of Virtual Healthy Hub took place 29th September. a Programme of 24 virtual sessions has been published and promoted. Healthy Hubs sign ups have doubled since relaunch. EHSPS referrals are continuing to be received in similar numbers to Autumn 2019.
C HH Deliver the community grants scheme		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Large community grants (capital and revenue) - next funding round set to open on 15/10/2020 and close on 04/01/2021. Promotion has begun. Webpage has been updated and policy is accessible as is the application form. Grant Application Workshop has been set for 04/11/2020. Small grants - Another application has been received and is being assessed
C HH Develop a cultural strategy for East Herts		<input type="text" value="75%"/>	Strategy presented to LT 14th September. Latest feedback collated and strategy updated. Strategy to go to council 2nd March 2021
C HH Manage the SLA with the Citizens Advice Service		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Citizens Advice East Herts have all had their quarterly monitoring meeting and are on target against expectations. Q3 monitoring meetings booked for December.




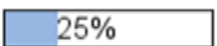





C HH Manage the SLA with the CVS to deliver support to voluntary and community organisations and community transport			CVS BEH quarterly monitoring meeting completed. Currently over achieving against expectations. Q3 monitoring meetings booked for December.
C HH Provide temporary accommodation to those in need			At the end of September 2020 the council was providing 35 households with temporary accommodation under statutory homeless duties.
C HH Review CCTV provision and management arrangements			Follow up meeting booked between town councils, EHC and Stevenage CCTV for 19th October to discuss future arrangements of CCTV
C HH Support community safety			At the September CSP Board a health check was conducted of the eight actions within the Action Plan. All actions were rated Green or Amber. The ones that were Amber were typically in their infancy of delivery or had been affected by the pandemic.
C HH Support delivery of chatter tables			Chatter Tables currently still on hold due to Covid-19. Conversations have taken place with all 5 venues to establish a return. Hertford, Ware and Bishop Stortford are keen to restart as soon as possible, pending a completed risk assessment. Sawbridgeworth are not keen to revisit until January 2021 and Buntingford would like to hold off until Spring 2021.
C HH Support the East Herts Dementia Friendly Action Group			Meeting via zoom every 6-8 weeks. Most agencies are now delivering their sessions on line or via one to one phone calls. The next meeting of the group will focus on reviewing the current action plan reflecting the impact of the pandemic. The group is also looking to develop a digital inclusion project.
C HH Support the Herts 2020 Year of Culture with HCC			The delivery of the majority of events continues to be impacted by Covid-19. A number of virtual events are continuing to be delivered online by East Herts organisations and are being promoted through the central year of culture website.
C HH Undertake Active Local initiative based on Asset Community Development			Work on-going. Herts Sports Partnership and Active In CIC are exploring whether they could lease the former Scout Hut from EHC and turn it into a sports and community hub. A small group of residents have expressed interest in creating a community garden alongside a footpath.
C OPS Deliver £20m investment in Hertford Theatre			The project has just completed RIBA stage 3. Consultation took place is due to commence in September and a followed by planning application is due to be submitted in October/ November. Construction is scheduled to commence in August 2021.
C OPS Deliver parks and open spaces strategy			Quotes are being sought to commission this work externally.
C OPS Deliver the Castle Park Heritage Lottery Funded project			All design work completed including modification to building for sustainable air heat source pumps to replace traditional heating. Minor adjustments made to landscape designs to satisfy planning condition. Construction due to commence Spring 21 pending successful tender award.
C OPS Maintain street cleanliness			Roads included in the contract currently under review, in advance of a review of schedules. Performance data to be included in monthly Exec Member briefing.

C OPS Respond to fly-tipping in a timely manner			Related PI QC OP 2.4 indicates collection times well under target of 2 days at 0.44 days.
C PBC Complete construction of a refurbished and extended Hartham Leisure Centre			The project completed stakeholder engagement on the RIBA stage 3 designs in Q2 (consultation closed 7 September). The project currently remains on budget and programme. Sign-off of stage 3 in Sep/ Oct to allow the project to progress to RIBA stage 4.
C PBC Complete construction of new Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre			Project still on track to deliver on time and in budget. Wilmott Dixon took possession of the site in March and work has continued at pace. Project completion due October 2021
C PBC Support local communities with the neighbourhood planning process			Ongoing - 4 neighbourhood plans. Thunderidge, Bengoe & Sele and Gilston
C RB Ensure all new applications for Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax support are processed on average within 10 days			Work on-going.
Sustainability			
S CSP Creation of East Herts awards scheme to encourage local organisations to implement sustainable activities			Several options identified in terms of running an award ceremony including setting up our own panel and judging or taking part in wider award ceremonies (eg. BS Independent Community Awards). This would require a budget however to cover costs. Business case being prepared however proposals for growth unlikely to fit easily into the MTFP.
S CSP Implement a smart approach to publicity			Sustainability comms plan moving ahead with sustainability template agreed. Currently, seasonal messages will go out for Halloween and Christmas.
S CSP Maximise environmental sustainability efforts through upgrade of Hertford Theatre			Working on assessing the carbon footprint of the proposals and will update with these as soon as the work is complete.
S CSP Work with Bishop's Stortford BID and other business groups to promote sustainability			We have been working with the BID on various town centre initiatives. In addition to this have done the videos for Buntingford and Sawbridgeworth businesses to get people back into the town centres.
S HH Audit of council's vehicles			Normal working still on hold and will trial vans immediately once return to normal working.
S HH Determine the feasibility of becoming a white label supplier of renewable energy			Awaiting next steps advice from Scheme lead still awaited expected end September. Need to allocate staff time to achieve match fund element from end September.
S HH Draw up carbon assessment tool to be used to assess all council projects			Completed
S HH Establish and run a multi-agency/stakeholder Environmental and Climate Change Forum			Meeting to be held via Zoom on 21 September. Main topic for discussion was Env Sust SPD to link with formal consultation period Sept/Oct 2020, plus initial high level presentation on Climate Action Plan and also update on cross Hertfordshire working.
S HH Hold a Schools Climate Conference			On Hold at current time due to COVID19
S HH Identify benefits of green walls			Completed and included in draft SPD. Opportunity to identify possible EHC exemplar sites for green walls
S HH Identify options for Millstream to build to a higher energy efficiency standard			This is dependent on the council requesting Millstream to cost up development to a higher standard. Millstream will seek the council's views on this when work commences on the Watton-at-Stone scheme in quarter 3

S HH Install rapid e-chargers in support of move to more e-taxis		<input type="text" value="30%"/>	Electric Blue back from furlough. EB in liason with Highways to expedite planning agreement & works
S HH Provide and promote energy efficiency grants/support		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Three installs completed. Potential 29 in pipeline with home surveys just restarting following halt due to Covid19.
S HH Run EV roadshows and demonstrations		<input type="text" value="10%"/>	B/S event not achievable for 2020 due to ongoing Covid 19 restrictions. Moving to early Spring 2021 with date to be confirmed by local group leading on the Eco Festival and which this is part of. Hertford Arts Hub have expressed interest in looking at running similar Hertford event also in 2021.
S HH Run two climate change film festivals (Hertford and Stortford)		<input type="text" value="10%"/>	B/S event not achievable for 2020 due to on-going Covid 19 restrictions. Moving to early Spring 2021 with date to be confirmed by local group leading on the Eco Festival and which this is part of. Hertford Arts Hub have expressed interest in looking at running similar Hertford event also in 2021.
S HH Site Visits to Council Premises		<input type="text" value="10%"/>	On hold due to COVID19
S HH Survey locally active residential developers to better understand barriers to higher energy efficiency/Passivhaus development		<input type="text" value="80%"/>	Final draft survey amended as per JG amendments. Awaiting final approval
S HH Work with HCC on introducing anti-idling signage and fines		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Clr McAndrew has selected winning entry to be announced on CAD. Series of social media out for CAD. Issue of anti-idling raised at meeting with local East Herts MPs. Anti idling also part of HCCSP Transport action plan. Anti-idling also part of proposed Herts wide Defra AQ bid.
S HH Working in partnership to operate an energy services company		<input type="text" value="50%"/>	Formal sign off achieved. Awaiting next steps advice from Scheme lead expected October 2020. Anticipated that this project element is in phase 2 ie 2021
S HROD Deliver programme of training on carbon neutrality/sustainability		<input type="text" value="40%"/>	APSE are working on a face to face and e-learning training that could be delivered at East Herts. Once we see what is on offer from APSE then we can devise a delivery programme.
S HROD Draw up, maintain and use a list of environmental sustainability interventions that could be funded with s106 contributions		<input type="text" value="30%"/>	Meeting held. No single list currently. Aim to commence production of "shopping list" for use in readiness for future S106 as and when these arise. Have a draft list by January 2021
S HROD Use of e-car pool by officers		<input type="text" value="90%"/>	Incentives approved by LT
S IT Installation of video conferencing in council buildings		<input type="text" value="100%"/>	There may be requirement for more meeting rooms in the future but the all the work requested has been completed.
S OPS Actively implement and encourage waste minimisation initiatives		<input type="text" value="10%"/>	Social media continues to be used to promote waste minimisation messages coinciding with WasteAware current campaigns. Seasonal messages will go out for Halloween and Christmas.
S OPS Identify options for tree planting		<input type="text" value="10%"/>	

<p>S OPS Maximise sustainability opportunities through development of Grange Paddocks Leisure Centre</p>			<p>Work on site continues to be delivered on programme. Works are just over 6 months complete of an 18 month construction programme.</p> <p>Willmott Dixon are operating the considerate contractor's scheme on site and have positively been scored of their environmental impact. Some examples include using Solar PV to power their site cabins and rainwater recycling for their toilets.</p>
<p>S OPS Maximise sustainability opportunities through development of Hartham Leisure Centre</p>			<p>Planning application has been submitted and OJEU notice has gone live for construction contract. Qualitative assessment criteria for the tender includes reference to sustainability and BREEAM excellent.</p> <p>The team are working through RIBA Stage 4 (technical design) where further BREEAM credits will be sought (5 achieved so far).</p> <p>The sustainability appraisal can be found on the planning pages and further information in the Design and Access Statement under the planning reference 3/20/1814/FUL.</p>
<p>S OPS Reduce domestic residual waste bins to 140 Litre capacity</p>			<p>Discussion has commenced with members re: introduction of 140 litre bins. Discussion with Planning re: introduce of 140 bins for new build one and two beds. Jess K-M and Chloe H to consider timetable for this. Need to determine carbon reduction of smaller bins. Note: potential carbon cost of new bins</p>
<p>S OPS Work with Hertfordshire Waste Partnership partners and others to explore synergies of working across administrative boundaries</p>			<p>The WasteAware partnership provides ongoing waste related campaign material which is used by EHC to promote sustainability messages in particular waste prevention & minimisation messages. Waste composition analysis commenced 08.09.20. Results due early in 2021</p>
<p>S PBC Develop sustainability advice geared towards listed buildings / conservation areas</p>			<p>This is included in the draft Environmental Sustainability SPD. SPD currently out for formal public consultation. Presentation and discussion held at East Herts Environment and Climate Forum</p>
<p>S PBC Maximise environmental sustainability through the Harlow Gilston Garden Town Development</p>			<p>The outline planning applications are still be considered by officers with a decision anticipated by the end of the year. Sustainability guidance is also being prepared for the HGGT</p>
<p>S PBC Publish an Environmental Sustainability SPD</p>			<p>SPD currently out for formal public consultation. Presentation and discussion held at East Herts Environment and Climate Forum</p>
<p>S SFP Amend procurement regulations to explicitly include consideration of the carbon footprint</p>			<p>CPR's have been approved and Head of Service has confirmed the amendment.</p>
<p>S SFP Audit of Council buildings</p>			<p>Baseline of Energy Performance for the Key Corporate Buildings achieved. Wallfields, Buntingford Depot, Charingtons, and Hertford Theatre. Works ongoing to improve energy efficiency mainly at Wallfields and Buntingford Depot as the pay back for the investment is the improvement is achievable. Any improvements at Charingtons House and Hertford Theatre would not be economical with the future of buildings due for full or partial demolitions within 12 -18 months.</p>
<p>S SFP Develop a programme to increase minimum EPC rating over the next three years</p>			<p>Energy Efficiency baselined for Wallfields. Current Assessment in February 2020 set the building at a score of 92 (Grade D) on the scale. This had improved from 115 (grade E) from Sept 2018. This improvement related to LED light fitting replacement on parts of the second floor. Since February we have completed the LED lighting replacement of the whole second and ground floors, with the 1st floor to be undertaken next financial year.</p>

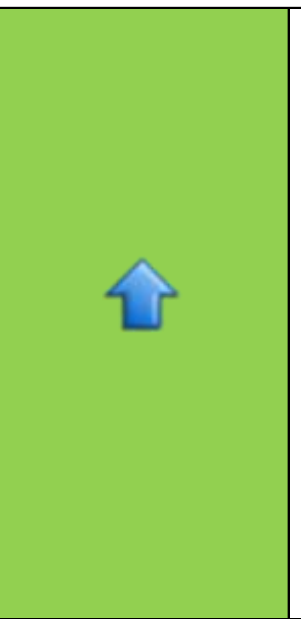
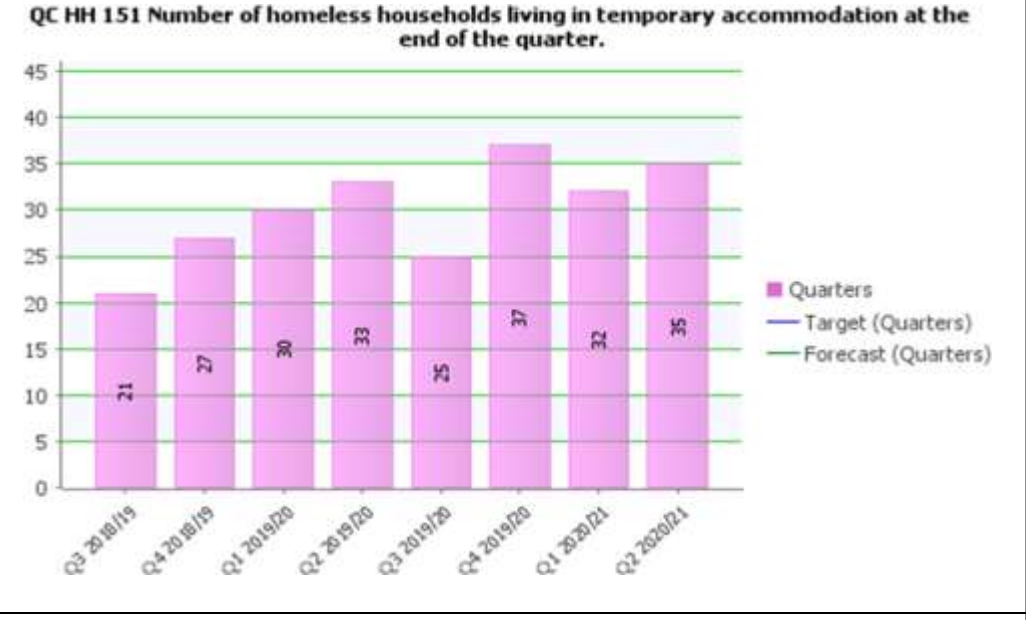

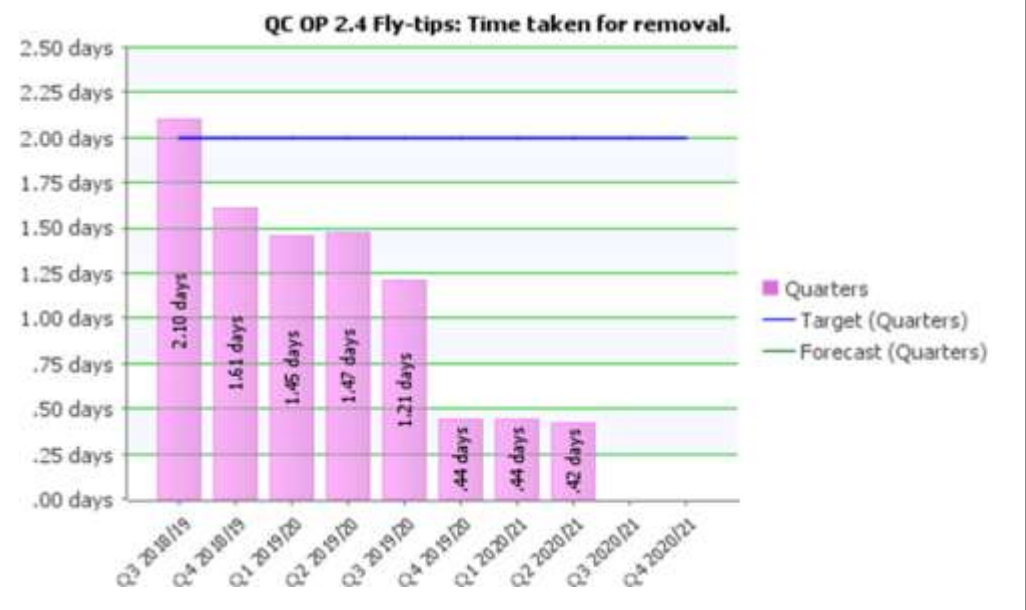
S SFP Explicitly refer to sustainability outcomes in MTFP from 2021/22 budget onwards			Action achieved in 2019/20
Digital By Desgn			
D CSP Implement new conditions of contract for customer services team			Work continues to be put on hold pending agreement of new business model for customer services. Reception/ front of house services partially reopened 5th October. We will review demand and footfall over the next few months with a view to agreeing the operating model by Q4
D CSP Improve website accessibility			Final fixes identified by the audit have been tested and our statement has been updated: https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/accessibility-statement We are still partially compliant – this is due to the presence of inaccessible PDFs and the Gov Metric widget.
D CSP Launch new Member case management system			The new system was launched on 29 June in conjunction with the portfolio holder for Corporate Services. However there is more work to do with Leadership Team to improve response times.
D CSP Provide a programme of business networking and awareness raising on GDPR and cyber-security			Workshops etc suspended due to Covid. GDPR and Cyber security advice available on the via the Growth Hub Website signposted by our Business webpage.
D CSP Undertake training on complaints handling			Training with champions and other members of staff has been undertaken over zoom. We hope this will assist with addressing performance issues around timeliness of complaints responses and data indicates some improvement have been made
D DCX Sign up to the MHCLG Digital Declaration			East Herts signed up to the MHCLG Digital Declaration on 8th July - Action Complete
D DCX Support the Digital Innovation Zone to lobby for investment in our towns and villages			The £1.7m project led by the DIZ to ensure patients in GP practices across East Hertfordshire and West Essex benefit from even better quality online care has now launched. Funds were successfully obtained from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) programme will enable GPs in Broxbourne, East Herts, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford districts, to potentially deliver more healthcare remotely, online and through digital applications
D HROD Develop and implement customer service standards/behaviours as part of core competency behavioural development			This action will be taken forward under the East Herts Together workstream
D PBC Ensure fibre to the premise (FTTP) is provided on all new developments			Ongoing action - taking forward approval of the planning applications
D PBC Support joint delivery of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town as a fully sustainable and digital 'place'			Ongoing - HGGT has prepared draft sustainable check list


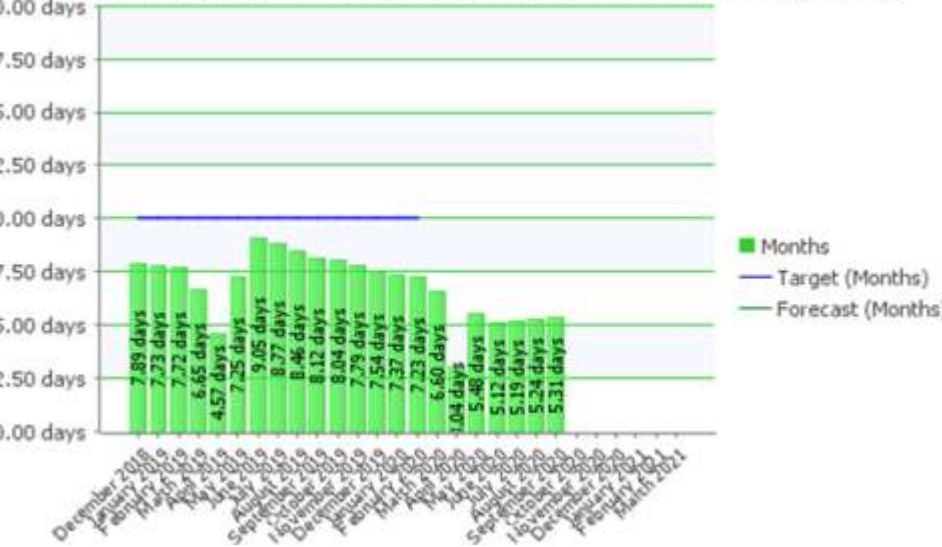

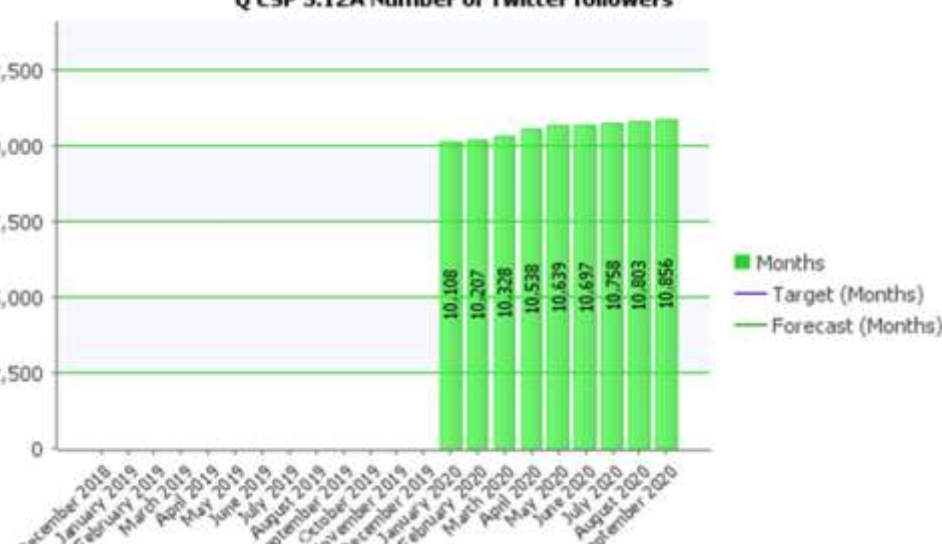

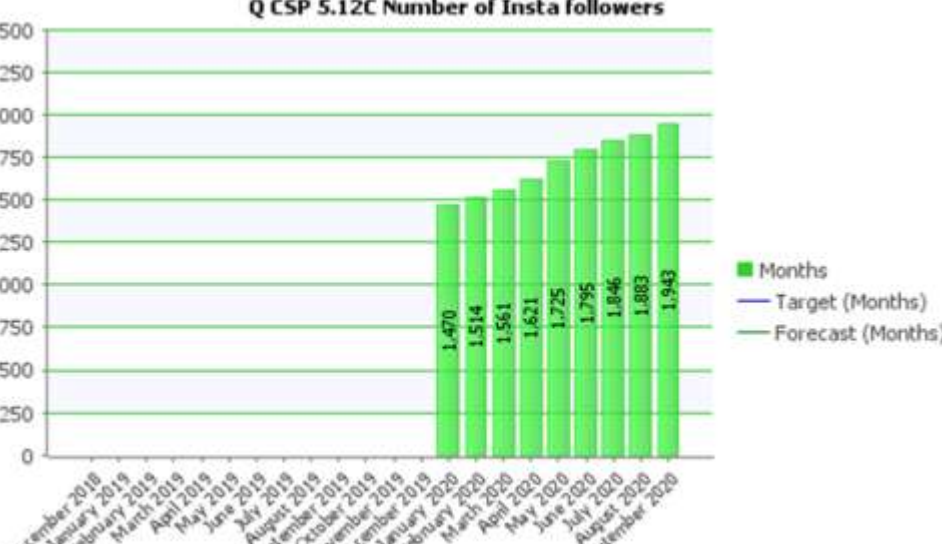

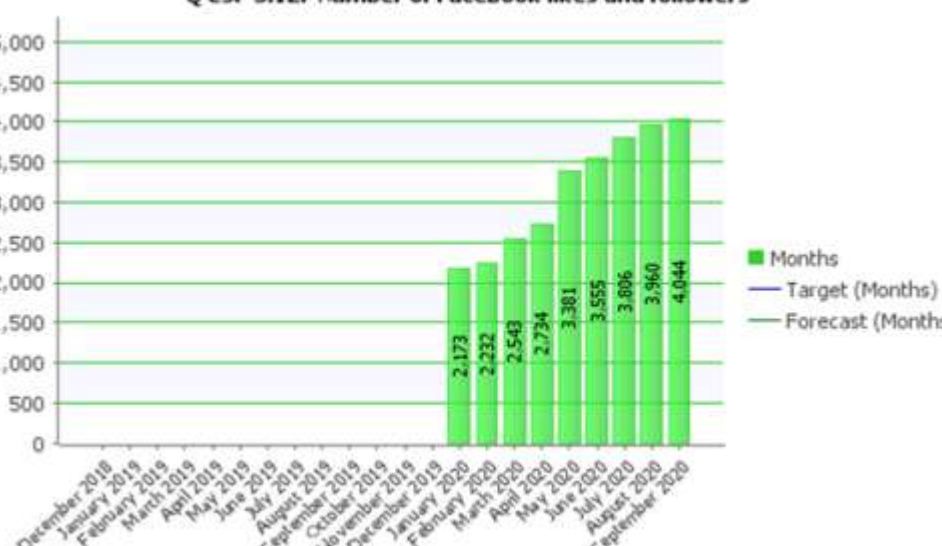
D RB Develop and publish the East Herts Customer Charter			Completed and cleared for publication 20.7.20
D SFP Improve customer journey and self- service in Wallfields reception			Receptions are partially reopen from 5th oct with appointment booking software in place. Customers can arrange an appointment to use our PCs and telephones if they are otherwise unable to access our services but no face-to-face contact is available to the public
KEY Action Expected Outcome			
Action achieved			
Action on target			
Revised completion date			
Action to be deleted/suspended			
Action off target			

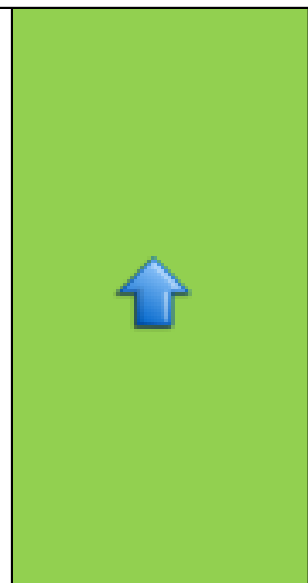
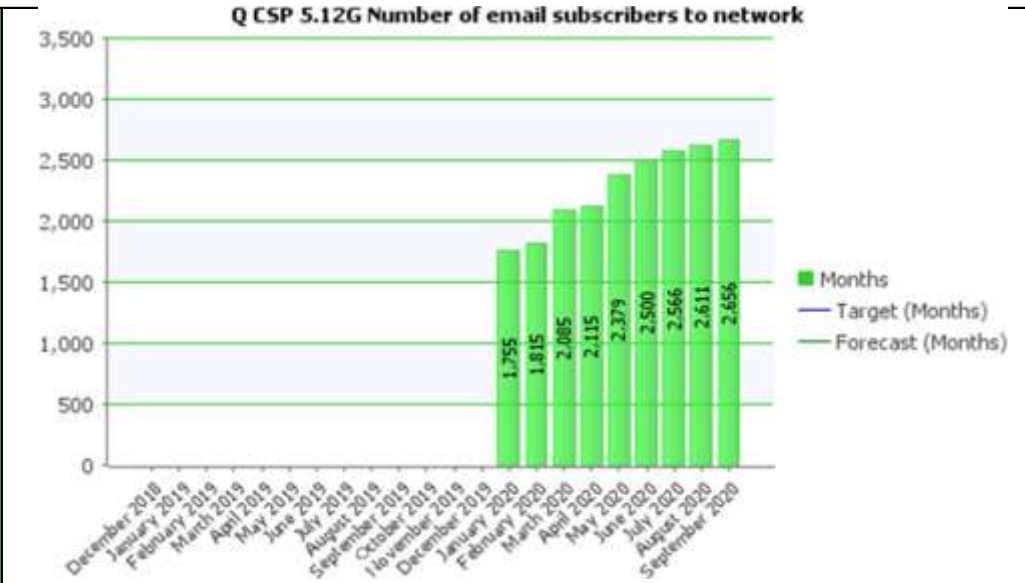
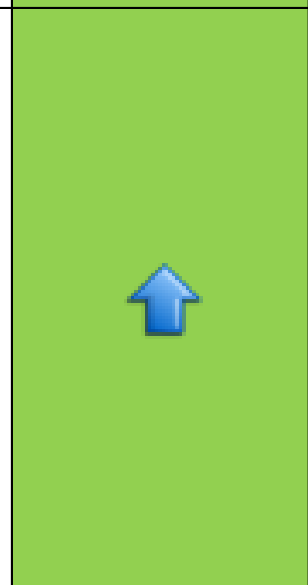

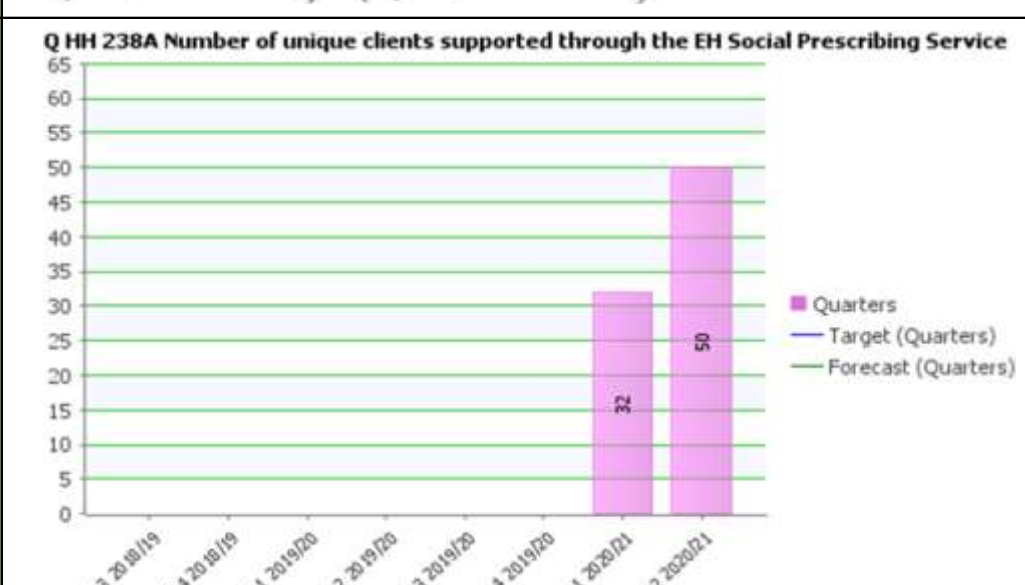
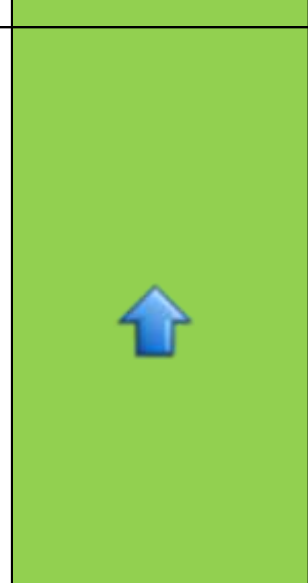
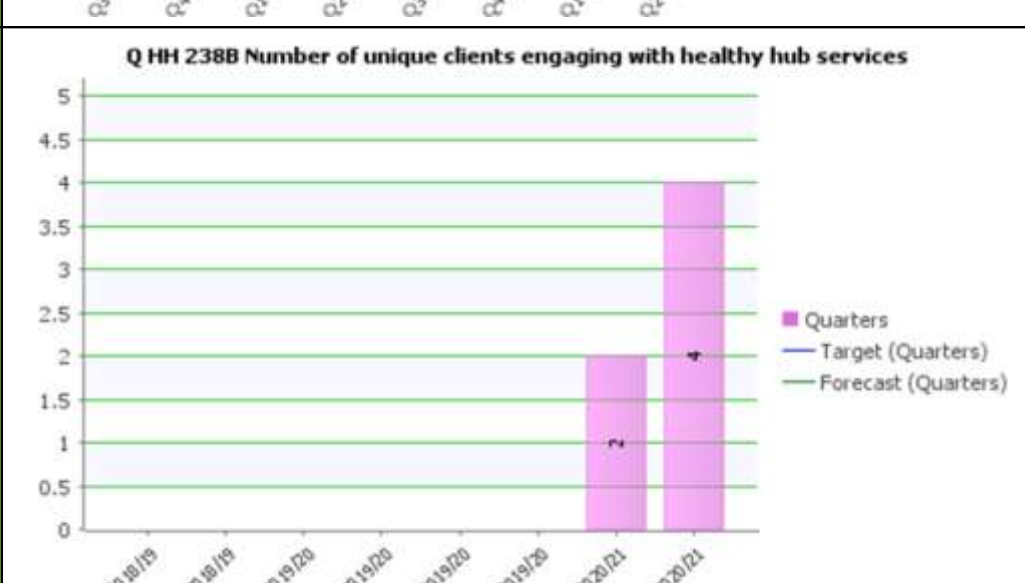

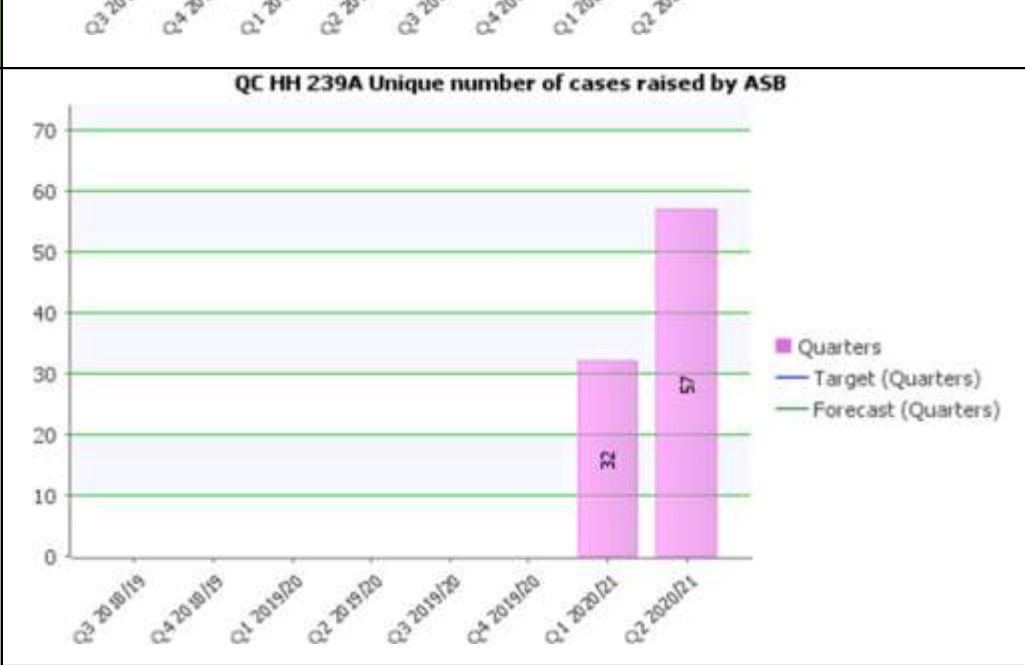
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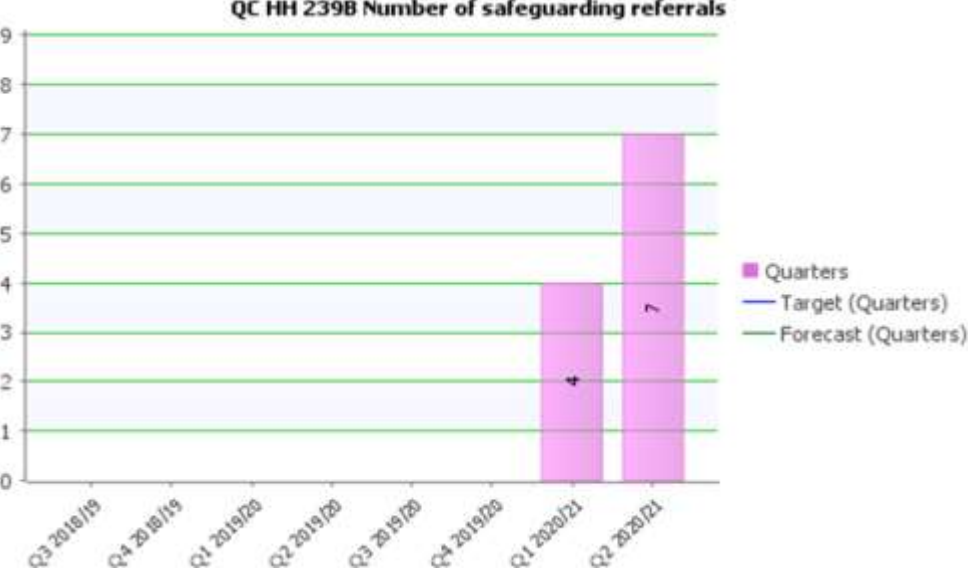

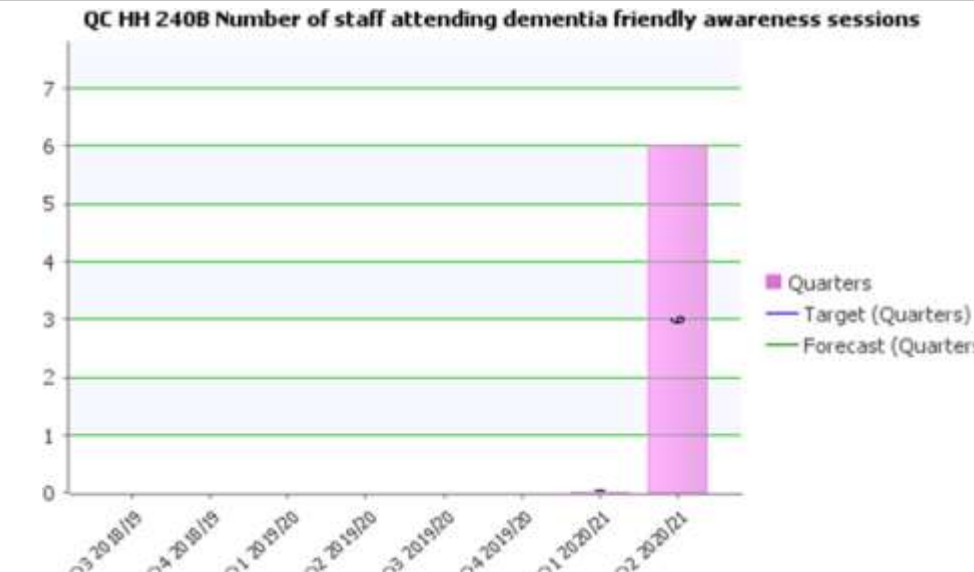
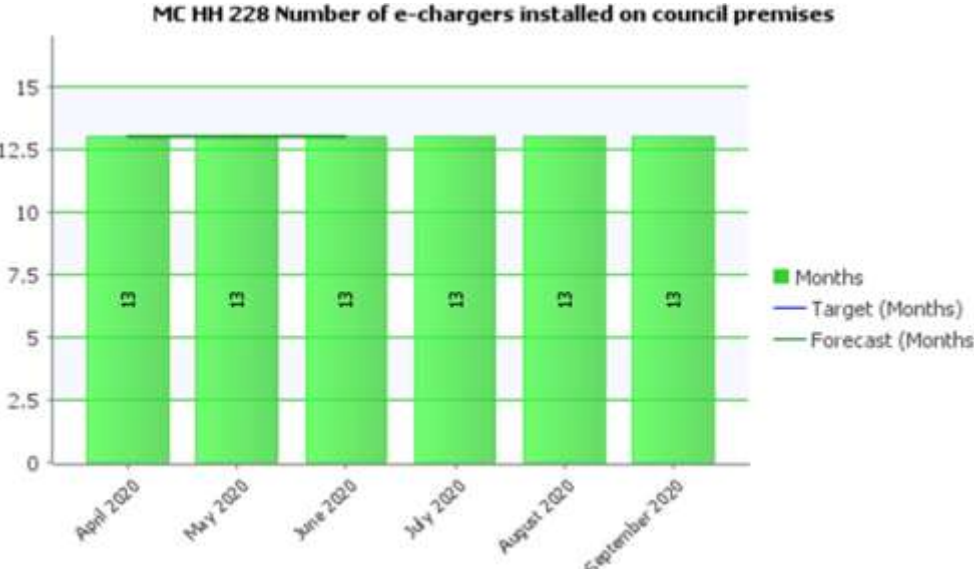

Performance Indicator	Previous quarter performance value	Latest quarterly performance value	Performance target	Increase/Decrease from last quarter	Performance Data Trend	Notes														
Encouraging Economic Growth																				
AC CSP 111 Vacancy Rates in Town Centres	8.18%	7.53%	N/A	↓	<p>AC CSP 111 Vacancy Rates in Town Centres</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Vacancy Rate (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q1 20/20</td> <td>8.18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 20/20</td> <td>8.18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1 20/21</td> <td>8.18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 20/21</td> <td>7.53%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Vacancy Rate (%)	Q1 20/20	8.18%	Q2 20/20	8.18%	Q1 20/21	8.18%	Q2 20/21	7.53%	Town Centre vacancy rates not unduly changed since the start of Covid. It appears that businesses that have closed are largely being replaced by new tenants. NB of the 50 vacant premises in Hertford TC 19 are 'under conversion' although whether this involved change of use is unclear at this stage. Please note this measure includes officer as well as retail units which is why figures tend to be slightly higher than measures used by other organisations				
Quarter	Vacancy Rate (%)																			
Q1 20/20	8.18%																			
Q2 20/20	8.18%																			
Q1 20/21	8.18%																			
Q2 20/21	7.53%																			
AC CSP 13.1 Total number of businesses using the Launchpad facility	0	37	N/A	↑	<p>AC CSP 13.1 Total number of businesses using the Launchpad facility</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Number of Businesses</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q1 20/20</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 20/20</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 20/20</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q4 20/20</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1 20/21</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 20/21</td> <td>37</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Number of Businesses	Q1 20/20	0	Q2 20/20	0	Q3 20/20	0	Q4 20/20	0	Q1 20/21	0	Q2 20/21	37	Figures for Q1 were at zero as Launchpad was shut. This saw an improvement in Q2 with reopening as restrictions eased and more businesses made use of the facilities. There are currently 117 members/dormant members/users.
Quarter	Number of Businesses																			
Q1 20/20	0																			
Q2 20/20	0																			
Q3 20/20	0																			
Q4 20/20	0																			
Q1 20/21	0																			
Q2 20/21	37																			
AC CSP 13.2 Number of businesses using the Launchpad facility after expiry of free trial	0	6	20	↑	<p>AC CSP 13.2 Number of businesses using the Launchpad facility after expiry of free trial</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Number of Businesses</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q1 20/20</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 20/20</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 20/20</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q4 20/20</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1 20/21</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 20/21</td> <td>6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Number of Businesses	Q1 20/20	0	Q2 20/20	0	Q3 20/20	0	Q4 20/20	0	Q1 20/21	0	Q2 20/21	6	Figures for Q1 were at zero as there were no businesses using Launchpad facilities after expiry of free trial due to COVID 19. This saw an improvement in Q2 as restrictions eased and more businesses made use of the facilities and continued to do so after expiry of the free trial.
Quarter	Number of Businesses																			
Q1 20/20	0																			
Q2 20/20	0																			
Q3 20/20	0																			
Q4 20/20	0																			
Q1 20/21	0																			
Q2 20/21	6																			
AC CSP 13.3 Total income from businesses using the Launchpad facility	£0	£13,241.99	N/A	↑	<p>AC CSP 13.3 Total income from businesses using the Launchpad facility</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Total Income (£)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q1 20/20</td> <td>£0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 20/20</td> <td>£0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3 20/20</td> <td>£0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q4 20/20</td> <td>£0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q1 20/21</td> <td>£0.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2 20/21</td> <td>£13,241.99</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Total Income (£)	Q1 20/20	£0.00	Q2 20/20	£0.00	Q3 20/20	£0.00	Q4 20/20	£0.00	Q1 20/21	£0.00	Q2 20/21	£13,241.99	First 3 months of 20/21 financial year revenues have been £0 due to Covid 19 closure but there has been an increase in income over Q2 as more businesses use facilities
Quarter	Total Income (£)																			
Q1 20/20	£0.00																			
Q2 20/20	£0.00																			
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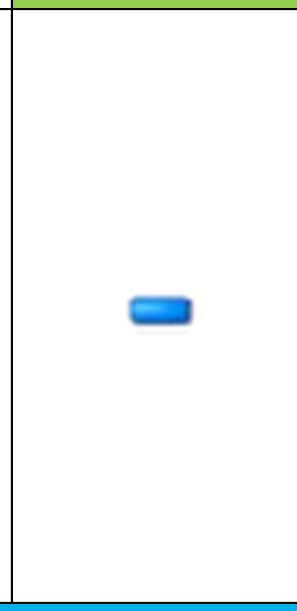
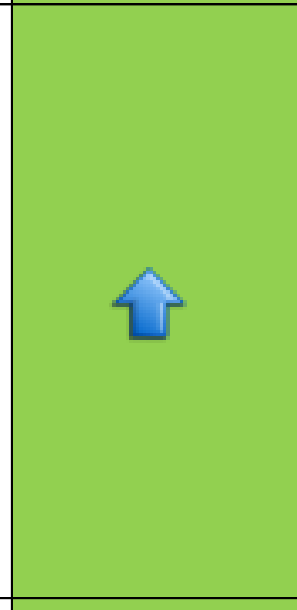
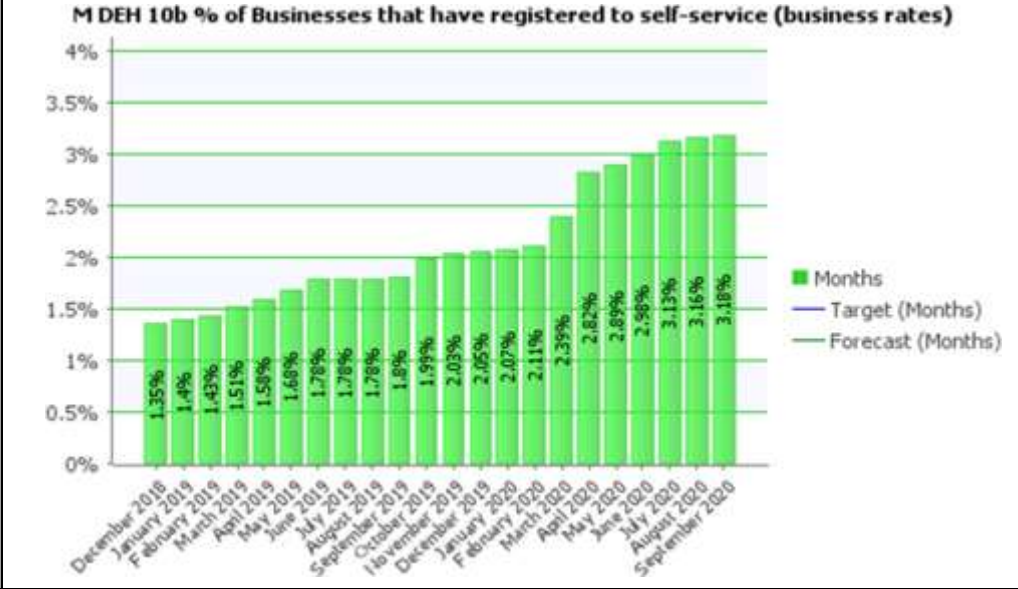
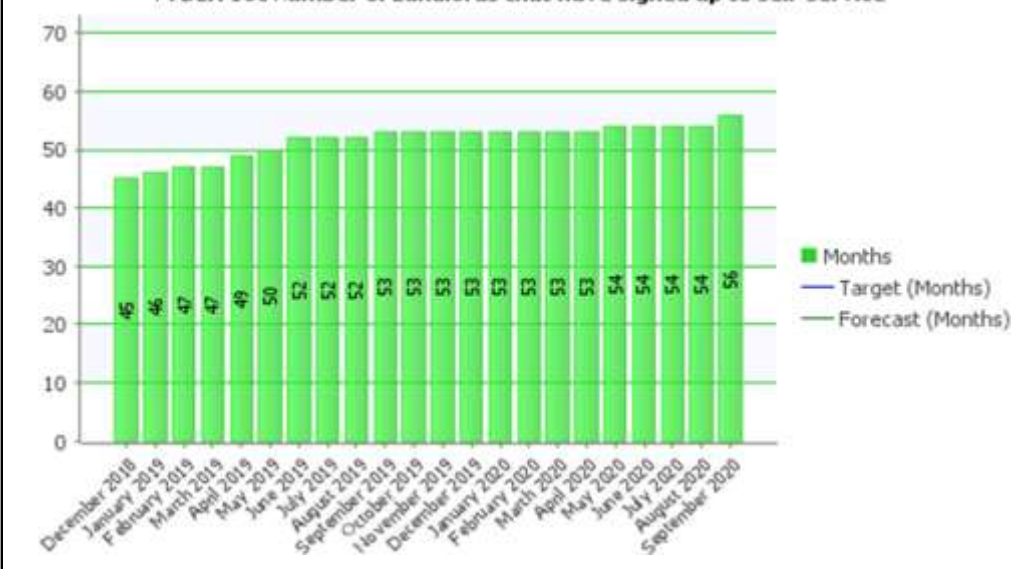
<p>AC CSP 217 Amount of section 106 contributions awarded (£)</p>	<p>£0</p>	<p>£0</p>	<p>N/A</p>			<p>Covid has had an impact on the organisations bidding for S106 funding, but funding is currently being agreed for two community projects (Stanstead Abbots Play Area - c£40k & High Wych Play Area - c£75k), and the transfer of contribution for a named allocation (£110,211.00 to BCAT Trust for funding of the Buntingford Hopper Bus) is currently being arranged.</p>
<p>MC RB 10.4: NNDR (Business rates) collection, % of current year liability collected</p>	<p>20.60%</p>	<p>55.80%</p>	<p>56.00%</p>			<p>Business rates collection percentage decreased in April due to Covid 19 pandemic but this has seen a steady increase over quarter 2 as businesses start to reopen</p>
<p>MC PB 157A: % Processing of planning applications dealt with in timely manner - Major applications (Majors under 13 weeks)</p>	<p>100.00%</p>	<p>75.00%</p>	<p>60.00%</p>			<p>3 out of 4 major planning applications were dealt with in under 13 weeks. There was an additional application this quarter that caused a decrease in performance but the PI still remains well above the target.</p>
<p>MC PB 157B: % Processing of planning applications dealt with in timely manner - Minor applications (Minors under 8 weeks)</p>	<p>92.00%</p>	<p>93.00%</p>	<p>80.00%</p>			<p>28 out of 30 minor planning applications were dealt with in under 8 weeks in September. This PI is measured monthly and performance has been within target consistently</p>
<p>M PB 206: % of site visits undertaken in relation to all other cases within 15 workings days of 'start date'</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>90%</p>	<p>N/A</p>		<p>Site visits have not been achievable due to Covid 19 restrictions</p>

QC PB 216: Number of strategic sites approved	N/A	3	N/A			Since the last update the following District Plan Strategic Sites have been granted planning permission subject to S106: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BISH6 - Bishop's Stortford High School Site, London Road • BISH9 - East of Manor Links • SAWB4 - Land to the North of Sawbridgeworth
HC CSP 213 Number of discretionary business rate grants awarded	N/A					Action removed as business rates reliefs were granted under the Chancellor's business support programme for Covid-19 making this scheme redundant
HC CSP 214 Amount of discretionary business rate grants awarded (£) (max value £65,000)	N/A					As above, action removed
Enabling Communities						
QC HH 151: Number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation at the end of the quarter	32	35	N/A		 <p>QC HH 151 Number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation at the end of the quarter.</p>	At the end of September 2020 the council had 35 households in temporary accommodation. Eight were accommodated in the council's hostel accommodation, 3 were in private sector leased accommodation and a further 24 were in B&B accommodation. In addition 9 households were being accommodated under the governments rough sleeper 'Everyone In' initiative due to their vulnerabilities to COVID 19.
QC OP 2.4 Fly-tips: Time taken for removal.	0.44 days	0.42 days	2.00 days		 <p>QC OP 2.4 Fly-tips: Time taken for removal.</p>	

<p>MC RB 181: Time taken to process Housing Benefit new claims and change events</p>	<p>3.88 days</p>	<p>5.31 days</p>	<p>N/A</p>		<p>MC RB 181 Time taken to process Housing Benefit new claims and change events.</p> 	<p>Performance has slipped although remains well within target</p>
<p>Q CSP 5.12A: Number of Twitter followers</p>	<p>10 697</p>	<p>10 856</p>	<p>N/A</p>		<p>Q CSP 5.12A Number of Twitter followers</p> 	<p>The number of Twitter followers has increased steadily over the last quarter from 10 697 (Q1) to 10 856 (Q2) reflecting a general trend in people becoming more digitally engaged during lockdown</p>
<p>Q CSP 5.12C: Number of Instagram followers</p>	<p>1 795</p>	<p>1 943</p>	<p>N/A</p>		<p>Q CSP 5.12C Number of Insta followers</p> 	<p>The number of Instagram followers has increased steadily over the last quarter from 1 795 (Q1) to 1 943 (Q2)</p>
<p>Q CSP 5.12D: Press favourability score</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>67</p>	<p>N/A</p>		<p>Q CSP 5.12D Press favourability score</p> 	<p>Press score increased this quarter thanks to positive coverage on the council's major projects, sustainability initiatives and coronavirus service updates. This PI follows the calendar year so Q3 data is the latest.</p>
<p>Q CSP 5.12F: Number of Facebook likes and followers</p>	<p>3 555</p>	<p>4 044</p>	<p>N/A</p>		<p>Q CSP 5.12F Number of Facebook likes and followers</p> 	<p>The number of Facebook likes and followers has increased steadily over the last quarter from 3 555 at the end of Q1 to 4044 at the end of Q2.</p>

<p>Q CSP 5.12G: Number of email subscribers to network</p>	<p>2 500</p>	<p>2 656</p>	<p>N/A</p>			<p>The number of email subscribers to the network increased steadily over the last quarter, from 2 500 at the end of Q1 to 2 656 at the end of Q2.</p>
<p>Q CSP 5.12H: Number of LinkedIn Followers</p>	<p>936</p>	<p>1 081</p>	<p>N/A</p>			<p>LinkedIn followers have increased steadily over the last quarter, from 936 at the end of Q1 to 1 081 at the end of Q2.</p>
<p>Q HH 238A: Number of unique clients supported through the EH Social Prescribing Service</p>	<p>32</p>	<p>50</p>	<p>N/A</p>			<p>Despite the lockdown, and with the majority of patient appointments now restricted to mainly telephone calls, the number of GP/Health Professional referrals sent to our EHSPS continue to be received at a steady pace</p>
<p>Q HH 238B: Number of unique clients engaging with healthy hub services</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>N/A</p>			<p>Healthy Hubs delivery impacted by Covid-19. Virtual Healthy Hubs launched 29th September has seen an instant increase in clients engaging with Healthy Hub services.</p>
<p>QC HH 239A: Unique number of cases raised by antisocial behaviour</p>	<p>32</p>	<p>57</p>	<p>N/A</p>			

<p>QC HH 239B: Number of safeguarding referrals</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>↑</p>	 <p>A bar chart showing the number of safeguarding referrals per quarter from Q1 2019/20 to Q2 2020/21. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 9. The x-axis shows quarters from Q1 2019/20 to Q2 2020/21. Data points: Q1 2019/20: 0, Q2 2019/20: 0, Q3 2019/20: 0, Q4 2019/20: 0, Q1 2020/21: 4, Q2 2020/21: 7. A target line is at 7 and a forecast line is at 7.</p>	<p>Referrals from 1st April - 30th September, include child neglect, physical, psychological, mental health and financial abuse. Eight of the referrals resulted in an onward referral to HCC Safeguarding. The remaining referrals were given advice on where they could seek advice or report their concerns.</p>
<p>QC HH 240A: Number of agencies trained/signed up to the Dementia Friendly pledge</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>↑</p>	 <p>A bar chart showing the number of agencies trained/signed up to the Dementia Friendly pledge per quarter from Q1 2019/20 to Q2 2020/21. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 2.5. The x-axis shows quarters from Q1 2019/20 to Q2 2020/21. Data points: Q1 2019/20: 0, Q2 2019/20: 0, Q3 2019/20: 0, Q4 2019/20: 0, Q1 2020/21: 0, Q2 2020/21: 2. A target line is at 2 and a forecast line is at 2.</p>	<p>Alzheimer's Society training now up and running following on from Covid-19 delays.</p>
<p>QC HH 240B: Number of staff attending dementia friendly awareness sessions</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>↑</p>	 <p>A bar chart showing the number of staff attending dementia friendly awareness sessions per quarter from Q1 2019/20 to Q2 2020/21. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 7. The x-axis shows quarters from Q1 2019/20 to Q2 2020/21. Data points: Q1 2019/20: 0, Q2 2019/20: 0, Q3 2019/20: 0, Q4 2019/20: 0, Q1 2020/21: 0, Q2 2020/21: 6. A target line is at 6 and a forecast line is at 6.</p>	<p>Sessions now being delivered online due to Covid-19 and 6 staff members have attended sessions during Q2.</p>
<p>Sustainability</p>						
<p>MC HH 228: Number of e-chargers installed on council premises</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>↔</p>	 <p>A bar chart showing the number of e-chargers installed on council premises per month from April 2020 to September 2020. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 15. The x-axis shows months from April 2020 to September 2020. Data points: April 2020: 13, May 2020: 13, June 2020: 13, July 2020: 13, August 2020: 13, September 2020: 13. A target line is at 13 and a forecast line is at 13.</p>	<p>No new e-chargers have been installed over the quarter due to COVID 19. However, looking to the future a significant number of chargers will be installed as part of the Northgate End MSCP development (20 active /20 passive).</p>
<p>MC HH 232: Number of chargers installed in Bishop's Stortford and Hertford</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>↔</p>	 <p>A bar chart showing the number of chargers installed in Bishop's Stortford and Hertford per month from April 2020 to September 2020. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 15. The x-axis shows months from April 2020 to September 2020. Data points: April 2020: 13, May 2020: 13, June 2020: 13, July 2020: 13, August 2020: 13, September 2020: 13. A target line is at 13 and a forecast line is at 13.</p>	<p>No new e-chargers have been installed over the quarter due to COVID 19. Rapid chargers at sites in both Hertford and Stortford are currently being progressed, to primarily facilitate electric taxi recharging (having been delayed due to the extended furlough of the contractor partner). In addition a significant number of chargers will be installed as part of the Northgate End MSCP development (20 active /20 passive).</p>

<p>QC HH 234 Number of energy efficient grants made</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>N/A</p>			<p>First time central heating installations provided through Herts Warm Homes Fund. Aiming to award to 20 privately owned homes for vulnerable customers who are currently off the gas network and required first time central heating.</p>
<p>QC HROD 223: Attendance at carbon neutrality training</p>		<p>0%</p>	<p>0%</p>			<p>Training package is being drafted in conjunction with APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence) with an aim to commence training in January</p>
<p>Digital by Design</p>						
<p>M DEH 10a: % of households that have signed up to Council Tax Self Serve</p>	<p>12.01%</p>	<p>13.67%</p>	<p>N/A</p>			<p>The last quarter has seen a steady increase in the number of households accessing Council Tax Self Service as this may be attributed to the Council offices being closed and more people making use of our online services</p>
<p>M DEH 10b: % of Businesses that have registered to self-service (business rates)</p>	<p>2.90%</p>	<p>3.18%</p>	<p>N/A</p>			<p>The last quarter has seen a steady increase in the number of businesses accessing Self Service. This may be attributed to the Covid 19 response and businesses preferring online options</p>
<p>M DEH 10c: Number of Landlords that have signed up to self-service</p>	<p>54</p>	<p>56</p>	<p>N/A</p>			<p>The last quarter has seen an increase in the number of landlords that have signed up to self-service. This may be attributed to council offices being closed</p>

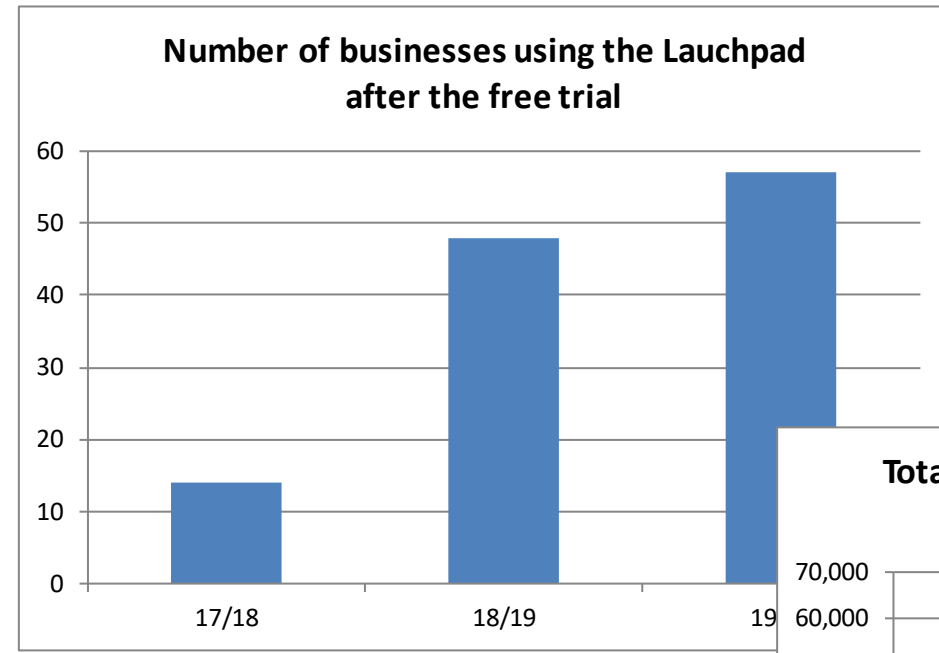
<p>QC CSP 5.1 : % of complaints resolved in 14 days (10 working days) or less (based on stage 1 complaints)</p>	84.00%	73.00%	70.00%	↓	<p>QC CSP 5.1 % of complaints resolved in 14 days (10 working days) or less (based on stage 1 complaints)</p>	<p>48 out of 66 Stage 1 complaints were resolved within 10 working days over the six months between April – September this year.</p>
<p>MC CSP 5.13A: % Good Satisfaction (GovMetric) – Face to Face</p>	86%	N/A	N/A	N/A	<p>MC CSP 5.13A % Good Satisfaction (GovMetric) – Face to Face.</p>	<p>There is no data available for this PI as receptions have been shut since late March</p>
<p>MC CSP 5.13C: % Good Satisfaction (GovMetric) – Website</p>	44.30%	18.00%	50%	↓	<p>MC CSP 5.13C % Good Satisfaction (GovMetric) – Website.</p>	<p>There were 2 green, 1 amber and 8 red ratings with 11 total for Q2. More details in covering report</p>
<p>MC CSP 5.13D % Good Satisfaction (GovMetric) – Email</p>	88.00%	79.00%	80.00%	↓	<p>MC CSP 5.13D % Good Satisfaction (GovMetric) – Email</p>	<p>There were 94 green, 9 amber and 16 red ratings with 119 total for Q2</p>
<p>QC CSP 5.2A: % of complaints about the Council and its services that are upheld: 1st stage</p>	11.62%	32.00%	30.00%	↓	<p>QC CSP 5.2A % of complaints about the Council and its services that are upheld: 1st stage</p>	<p>21 out of 66 stage 1 complaints upheld at stage 1 for the period April – September this year. O&S will be receiving a detailed report on complaints on 3rd november.</p>

QC CSP 5.2B: % of complaints about the Council and its services that are upheld: 2nd Stage - appeal	0.00%	18%	N/A	↓		Over the period April – September a total of 16 stage 2 complaints were received and 3 of these were upheld or partially upheld. The report to O&S Committee on 3rd November contains more details.
QC 1A – C Volume + Proportion of Contacts by Channel	F2F: 0.00% Email/ Webform: 32.93% Phone: 68.59%	F2F: 0.00% Email/Webform: 24.57% Phone: 75.43%	Trend only	↓	<p>Quarter 1 data by channel for 2020/21</p> <p>Quarter 1 data by channel for 2020/21</p>	This measure is designed to be a proxy for assessing how well channel shift is taking place in terms of how customers interact with us. There has been a decrease in the use of webforms and emails when compared to the previous quarter. F2F contact (ie. visits to reception) has remained at 0% but may change with the partial reopening of reception areas. Telephony remains the contact channel of choice in the district and has seen an increase since the last quarter. Proportion of contacts doesn't provide the whole story as total numbers of customer contacts are still relevant. We plan to launch a webchat function in mid November as a trial to see if this channel reduces phone contact.
QC CSP 243: % of member enquiries responded to within 10 working days	0.00%	39.58%	N/A	↑	<p>QC CSP 243 % of member enquiries responded to within 10 working days</p>	19 out of 48 members enquiries responded to within 10 working days. This is new PI for the 2020/21 year and the poor performance has been discussed at Leadership Team. All managers have been reminded of the importance of responding to member queries in a timely manner.

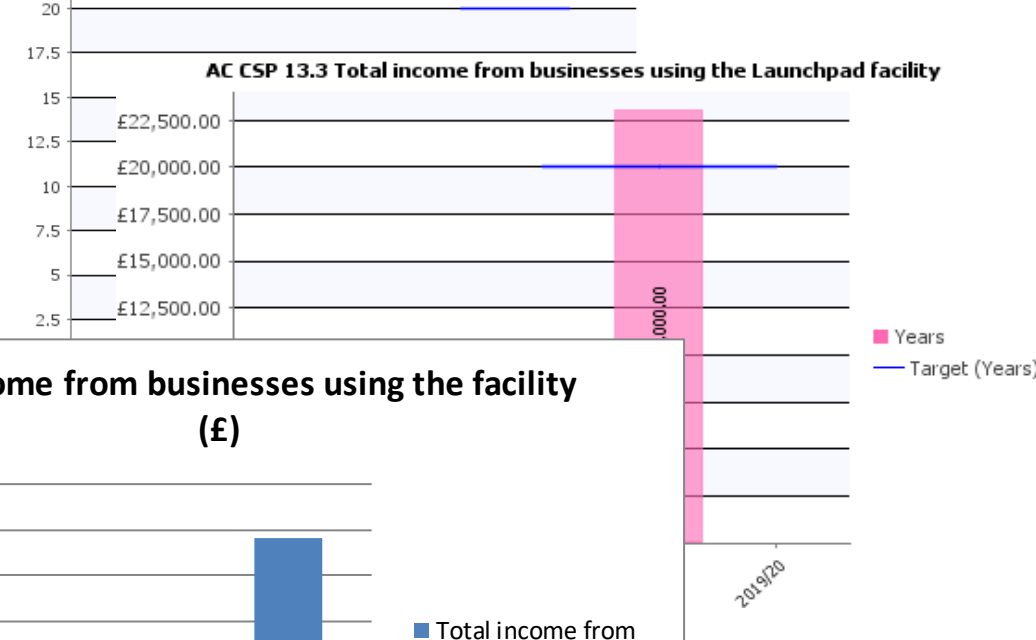
KEY PI Status	
Performance is 6% or more off target	
Performance is less than 6% or more off target	
Performance is on target or exceeding target	
No target to set performance against	Trend Only
Monthly/Q4/Annual data unavailable	

Movement since last period	
Value is higher than previous period & this is positive movement	↑
Value is higher than previous period but this is negative movement	↑
Value is lower than previous period but this is positive movement	↓
Value is lower than previous period & this is negative movement	↓
Value is the same as previous period	↔
N/A - Cumulative so will always be above previous period	n/a

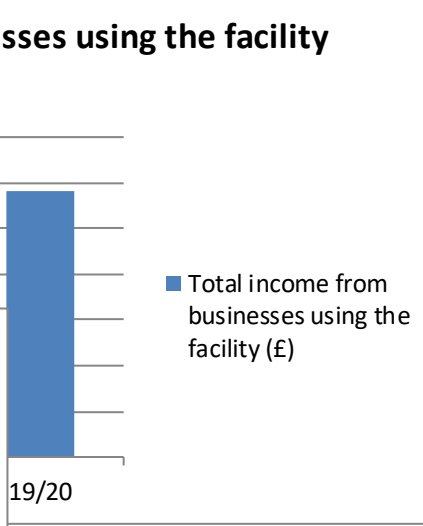
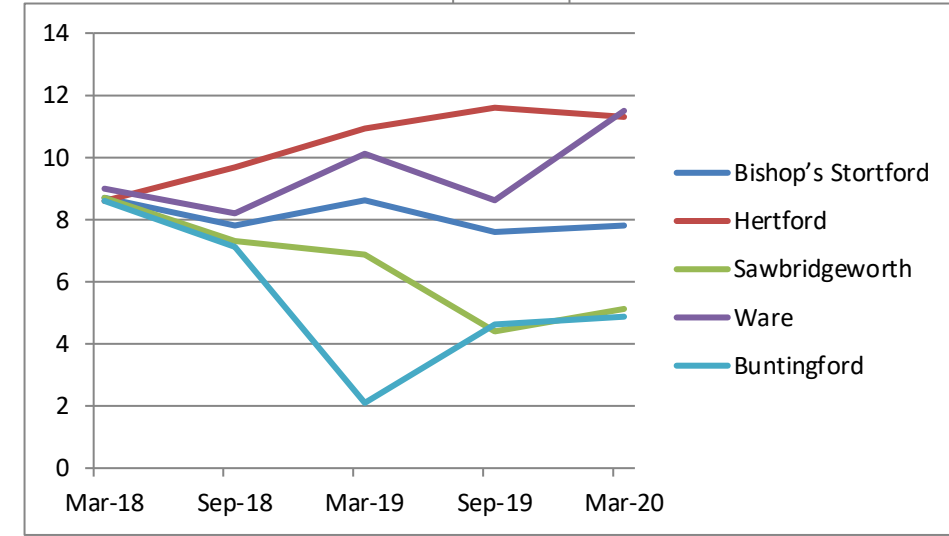
	17/18	18/19	19/20
Number of businesses using	14	48	57
Total income from	3,155	20,243	58,000



AC CSP 13.2 Number of businesses using the Launchpad facility after expiry of free trial

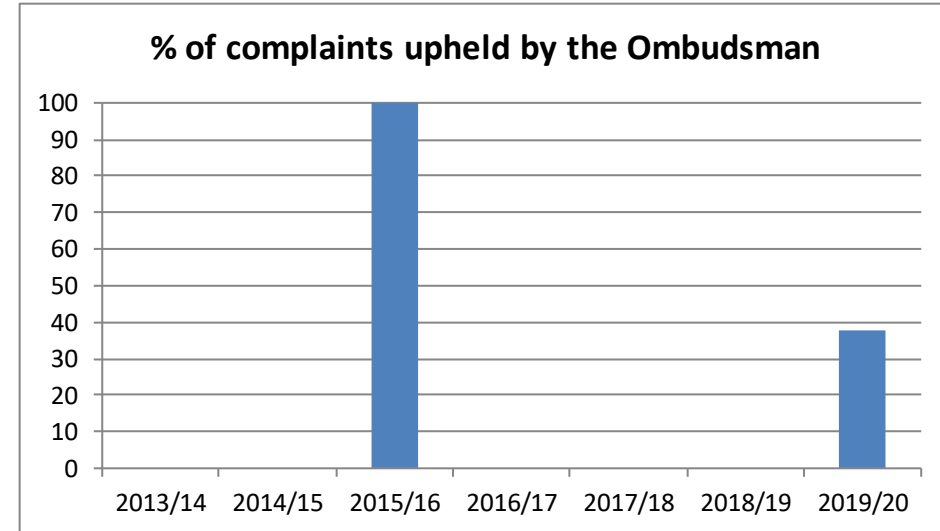


	Sep-17	Mar-18	Sep-18	Mar-19	Sep-19	Mar-20
Bishop's Stortford	11	8.7	7.8	8.6	7.6	7.8
Hertford	8.5	8.6	9.7	10.9	11.6	11.3
Sawbridgeworth	8.6	8.7	7.3	6.9	4.4	5.1
Ware	10.6	9	8.2	10.1	8.6	11.5
Buntingford	7.4	8.6	7.1	2.1	4.6	4.9



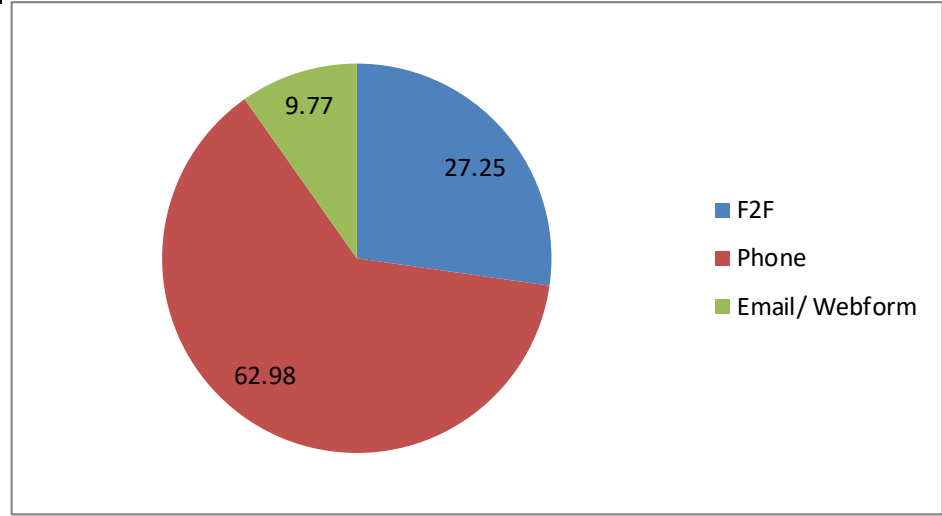
Bishops St Buntingfo Hertford Sawbridge Ware
7.847534 4.819277 11.32075 5.147059 11.47541

Year	% of complaints upheld
2013/14	0
2014/15	0
2015/16	100
2016/17	0
2017/18	0
2018/19	0
2019/20	38



Measure	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
No. of day trips	3,698,000	3,573,000	4,280,000
No. of overnight trips	224,000	236,000	250,000
Total number of nights	1,298,000	1,371,000	1,369,000
Total value of visits (£)	252,560,000	262,007,000	275,354,000

RDP Measures	
Number of successful grant applications	25
Total value of grants awarded (£)	2,236,000
Number of East Herts businesses that have successfully applied	8
Total amount invested in East Herts including match funding from the private sector (£)	801,000



3.75
0.31147541

14 28 65.55
31 30 64.35
46 27 60.67
48 24 61.36
34.75 27.25 62.9825

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East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 3 November 2020

Report by: Scrutiny Officer

Report title: Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Draft Work Programme

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

- This report reviews actions included in the committee's existing Work Programme and seeks Members' views on any proposed amendments to the ongoing Work Programme.

RECOMMENDATION FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, that:

(A) The proposed Work Programme, as included in Appendix A, be approved.

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 Items previously required, identified or suggested for the Overview and Scrutiny (OS) Work Programme as set out in **Appendix A**. The Appendix is now presented as a consolidated report to include those issues for consideration by Audit and Governance Committee. It was felt that consolidating the work of both Committees in one report would give all Members of both committees a better perspective from the viewpoint of scrutiny.

1.2 Scrutiny committees have the power of influence and are

entitled to review and scrutinise the functions of the Council and the decisions of the Executive. The Committee serves as a 'critical friend' and is not a decision-making body but can make recommendations to the Executive and who must respond formally to recommendations within a given timeframe.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The draft agenda for 2020/21 meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Governance Committee is shown in **Appendix A**. The timing of some items shown may have to change depending on availability of essential data (e.g. from central government) external sources and officers.
- 2.2 Members are reminded that for a topic to be valid for Scrutiny it needs to be relevant to the work of the council and impact on a number of residents / or the wider area. In addition, there needs to be evidence, whether readily quantifiable or anecdotal, that this is an issue requiring investigation.
- 2.1 Members are welcome to submit a scrutiny proposal at any time by completing a Scrutiny Proposal Form (Available from the Scrutiny Officer) which will provide officers with sufficient information to assess if it is appropriate for Scrutiny and to ensure their specific questions are addressed. The Scrutiny Officer will then liaise with officers and the Scrutiny Chairman to consider the best way to address the subject and complete a scoping document.
- 2.2 Members are also asked whether there is any training relevant to scrutiny or to the function and remit of the OS Committee that they wish to suggest.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 4.1 This report provides an update on the current situation in relation to issues raised by Members.

4.0 Options

- 5.1 The Work Programme will be kept under review by the committee throughout the coming year.

5.0 Risks

- 6.1 The establishment of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee is enshrined in the Local Government Act 2000 (section 9). The 2000 Act obliges local authorities to adopt political management systems with a separate Executive. Various sub sections (of the 2000 Act), set out the powers and duties for Overview and Scrutiny Committees including the right to investigate and make recommendations on anything which is the responsibility of the Executive. Legislative provisions can also be found in the Localism Act 2011 (Schedule 2) with options to retain or re-adopt a “committee system” (section 9B).
- 6.2 Potential risks arise for the council if policies and strategies are developed and/or enacted without sufficient scrutiny. Approval of an updated Work Programme contributes to the mitigation of this risk by ensuring key activities of the council are scrutinised.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 7.1 Scrutiny is an important part of the local democratic process and represents the interests of residents. It holds the Executive to account on behalf of residents and helps review and improve services and functions run by the Council and its local partners.
- 7.2 The proposed Work Programme has implications for Members’ time and the resources of the council devoted to scrutinizing the issues included.

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

Yes – scrutiny of the services provided eg by registered providers of social housing will investigate how some of the most vulnerable people in the district, including those with protected characteristics, receive housing services.

Environmental Sustainability

Yes – although not subject to a further Task and Finish Group, the proposed Work Programme envisages the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receiving reports on the progress of the council's Environmental and Climate Forum.

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Yes - scrutiny is enshrined in Statute (the Local Government Act 2000) as amended by the Localism Act 2011.

Specific Wards

No

8.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

8.1 Appendix A – Draft Work Programme

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Governance Committee - Consolidated Work Programmes 2020/21

(this is a working document and is subject to regular amendment)

Meeting Date Overview and scrutiny	Topic and Notes	Lead Member and Officer	Meeting Date Audit and Governance	Topic and Notes	Lead Member and Officer
15 September 2020	<p>Update on the progress in relation to the Climate Change Action Plan and progress in relation to the 2030 Carbon neutrality aspirations.</p> <p><i>With the agreement of Members at the last (June 2020) meeting, updates would be presented prior to each meeting.</i></p>	<p>Executive Member for Environmental sustainability and David Thorogood</p>	22 September 2020	<p>External Audit Update</p>	<p>Suresh Patel, Ernst Young</p>

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Meeting Date Overview and scrutiny	Topic and Notes	Lead Member and Officer	Meeting Date Audit and Governance	Topic and Notes	Lead Member and Officer
	Social Housing – Report of the Task and Finish Group (see note below).	Head of Housing and Health		SIAS Update	Simon Martin SIAS Audit Manager
	Large Scale Projects – Project Management in terms of Expenditure Vs Budget, delivery timescales <i>Members' briefing provided on 16 July on Hertford Theatre.</i>	Respective Project Managers .		SAFs Update	Nick Jennings Head of Service (SAFs)

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Meeting Date Overview and scrutiny	Topic and Notes	Lead Member and Officer	Meeting Date Audit and Governance	Topic and Notes	Lead Member and Officer
	<i>Request by Councillor Goldspink for an update on Hartham Leisure (See note below re Submission of an update to Council October 2020)</i>				
	Policy for Enforcing Standards for Private Sector Landlords	Head of Housing and Health		Strategic Risk Register Quarterly Update	Graham Mulley Risk Assurance Manager
	Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2021/22	Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Services		Annual Governance Statement	Head of Strategic Finance and property

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Meeting Date Overview and scrutiny	Topic and Notes	Lead Member and Officer	Meeting Date Audit and Governance	Topic and Notes	Lead Member and Officer
				Statement of Accounts 2019/20	Head of Strategic Finance and Property
	Work Programme	Lorraine Blackburn, Scrutiny Officer		Financial Monitoring Quarter 1	Head of Strategic Finance and Property
3 Nov 2020	How the Council reacted to the Corona Virus	Invitation to the Leader and CE to present an interim report	17 November 2020	Section 106 Agreements: a) review of policy and also of the receipt and b) the utilisation of funds received	Helen Standen Dep CE and Jackie Bruce Infrastructure and Contributions Spend Manager
	Work Programme	Lorraine Blackburn, Scrutiny Officer		Corporate Budget Monitoring Quarter 1	Ben Wood, Head of Communications Strategy and Policy and Steven Linett

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Meeting Date Overview and scrutiny	Topic and Notes	Lead Member and Officer	Meeting Date Audit and Governance	Topic and Notes	Lead Member and Officer
					Head of Strategic Finance and Property
	Annual Complaints Report	Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy		Standards Update	James Ellis Head of Legal and Democratic Services
	Performance Report Quarters 1 and 2	Head of Communications Strategy and Policy		Work Programme	Lorraine Blackburn, Scrutiny Officer
	Revenues and Benefits Annual Report	Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Services		Data Retention	Head of Legal and Democratic Services
	Environmental Climate Change	Head of Housing and Health			
8 Dec 2020					

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Meeting Date Overview and scrutiny	Topic and Notes	Lead Member and Officer	Meeting Date Audit and Governance	Topic and Notes	Lead Member and Officer
	Presentation by the PCC Mr David Lloyd and CI Orton				

Updates

Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Audit and Governance
<p>Parking Policies – Report of the Task and Finish Group following consideration by the Executive: Update</p> <p>The Head of Operations continues to review the position with the portfolio holder weekly but fundamentally the landscape of parking has changed and Officers need to explore how best the Council can respond to that.</p>	<p>Complaints lodged with the Monitoring Officer (Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services). When there are updates.</p> <p>Changes to Constitution Review Update (Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services): When there are updates.</p> <p>Shared Anti-Fraud Service Report (SAFs). At every meeting.</p>

Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Governance Committee - Consolidated Work Programmes 2020/21
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Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Audit and Governance
	Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS). At every meeting.
<p>Enhancing the Council’s working arrangements with Social Housing providers (Report of the Task and Finish Group to the Executive)</p> <p>Update: Report and recommendations to the Executive (6 October) was “held over” at Executive Pre until a “bigger piece of work” had been carried out. Updates will follow as and when further information becomes available.</p>	

Looking Forward 2020/21

Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Due date	Audit and Governance	Due Date
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Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Governance Committee - Consolidated Work Programmes 2020/21
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Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Due date	Audit and Governance	Due Date
Review of capital projects in the Council's Capital Programme (Project Managers)	Council 24 October 2020		
Report by Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (formerly the CfPS) Review of East Herts Council	Work Shop to be provided to both O&S and A&G to be confirmed		
Annual Scrutiny Report (Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer)	3 November or 8 December 2020		
RIPA and Use of Social Media - report back (Head of Legal and Democratic Services)	June 2021		
Cultural Strategy	2 February 2021		

Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Governance Committee - Consolidated Work Programmes 2020/21
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Notes:

Members will note the new format of the Consolidated Work Programme. It was felt that by combining both work programmes might provide Members with a better insight into the issues to be considered by both committees and respective timeframes and so aid the process of scrutiny. Additionally, Members should note that the Chairman and Vice Chairman of both Committees are now meeting quarterly with the Leader and Deputy Leader to consider both work programmes in the context of the Council's Forward Plan to facilitate better scrutiny and review where necessary.

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