



MEETING : OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
VENUE : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE : TUESDAY 4 MARCH 2025
TIME : 7.00 PM

PLEASE NOTE TIME AND VENUE

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<https://www.youtube.com/user/EastHertsDistrict>

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor David Jacobs (Chair)

Councillors D Andrews, P Boylan, E Buckmaster, R Carter, N Clements,
N Cox, C Horner (Vice-Chairman), G McAndrew, S Nicholls, M Swainston,
J Thomas, G Williams and D Woollcombe

Substitutes

Conservative Group: Councillors A Holt and G Williamson
Green Group: Councillors V Burt, V Smith and S Watson
Labour Group: Councillor C Redfern
Liberal Democrat Group: Councillors S Marlow and R Townsend

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

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- 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;
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AGENDA

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

2. Minutes - 14 January 2025 (Pages 5 - 23)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2025.

3. Chairman's Announcements

4. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Members' Declarations of Interest.

5. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Pages 24 - 47)
6. East Herts Executive Scrutiny Protocol (Pages 48 - 65)
7. Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Draft Work Programme
(Pages 66 - 71)
8. 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 COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 14
JANUARY 2025, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Jacobs (Chair)
Councillors D Andrews, P Boylan,
E Buckmaster, R Carter, N Clements,
C Horner, G McAndrew, S Nicholls,
M Swainston, G Williams and D Woollcombe

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors B Crystall, B Deering, J Dumont,
T Hoskin and S Marlow

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Michele Aves	- Committee Support Officer
Alex Cook	- Customer Services Team Leader
Peter Mannings	- Committee Support Officer
Jess Khanom-Metaman	- Head of Operations
Dominique Kingsbury	- Parking Services Manager
Adam Staples	- Transformation Project Manager
Ben Wood	- Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy

286 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Thomas.

287 MINUTES - 5 NOVEMBER 2024

Councillor Nicholls proposed, and Councillor Clements seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2024, be confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

288 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reminded Members to use the microphones as the meeting was being webcast. He also reminded Members of the Joint Meeting of Scrutiny Committees scheduled for 29 January 2025, to consider and scrutinise the budget.

289 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

290 DRAFT PARKING STRATEGY 2025

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability submitted a report that presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the draft version of the Parking Strategy for East Hertfordshire following public consultation and engagement.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that this draft version of the strategy document was one that he would like to see challenged and thought through following the public consultation and engagement. He detailed the recommendations and set

out the background to the report in terms of the East Herts corporate plan and the climate emergency.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that in February 2024, Council had approved a £1.75m income target for parking for the financial years 2025/26 through to 2027/28 and this document set the strategic context and principles by which changes might be approved to support the achievement of income and the wider ambitions of the council.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability set out the process that had led to the development of the strategy and said that there had been just over 1,700 responses in autumn 2024. The Executive Member set out the three strategic aims of the parking strategy which were linked back to the corporate plan and the other associated strategies detailed on page 6 of the report.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that in a number of areas pricing had been used as a behavioural change tool and the strategic aims had guided the three key objectives which had determined the actions for delivery. He said that the three objectives for delivery actions were alternative, balanced, and considerate. He summarised these objectives and said that there were 22 actions that underpinned these objectives and they fell into short, medium, and long-term categories.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that to be successful in delivering these actions, the council recognised that it could not be the direct deliverer of change in all instances and could not operate alone. Members were advised that the council must work with partners to maximise its impact, and to this end the Executive Member set out the roles that the council would adopt. He invited Members to debate the 2025 draft parking strategy.

Councillor Buckmaster said that he had read through the sentiments around behaviour change and acknowledged that it was generally difficult to achieve. He said that he could see some of the thinking around some of the movement of people, for example to Northgate End. He acknowledged that this would potentially free up assets for sale.

Councillor Buckmaster referred to Sawbridgeworth and the change from long term to short term would lead to an increase of up to 55% on charges for people parking for 1 to 2 hours, which was a large jump. He talked about a reduction in long term commuter parking, and also touched upon the difficulties of balancing considerations. He referred to a resident having to drive to a GP appointment and paying a lot more than they were used to.

Councillor Boylan referred to the list of charges on page 118 of the report and asked for some clarity on the rationale for the charges. He said that there were no charges in Buntingford or Sawbridgeworth at weekends, yet in Stanstead Abbots village residents and visitors were charged to park there at weekends.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that charges had been reduced in Stanstead Abbots following a loss of sponsorship. Councillor Boylan said that this reduction had followed a new increase in fees in 2024.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that parking had never been free in Stanstead Abbots. He talked about short, medium, and longer-term implementation of the strategy. He said that some of the anomalies could not be ironed at this stage without traffic regulation orders. He said that the longer-term goal was better alignment across the smaller destinations.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that a key aim of the strategy was to close a significant gap in the council's finances. He said that there were very few options open to the authority, and raising car parking charges was one way to protect the financial sustainability of the council.

The Head of Operations explained that the council was seeking to streamline or align some of the car parking charges. She said that the council was seeking to redesignate the car parks and add a rationale as to why some areas had different prices. Members were advised that Buntingford, Sawbridgeworth and Stanstead Abbots were lower priced compared to the destination car parks.

Councillor Nicholls commented on the important part that the consultation process had played in the pricing strategy for the car parks in Buntingford. She was pleased to note the continuation of the current 90 minutes free parking in Buntingford. She said that there was no train station or adequate bus services meaning that there was a greater reliance on car journeys in Buntingford.

Councillor Andrews suggested the car park referred to as the library car park, be renamed Burgage Lane. The Parking Services Manager said that the name could be changed if software was reprogrammed, however there would be associated costs. Councillor Andrews commented on the possibility of confusion for the public or visitors.

Councillor Clements referred to behavioural changes and an overreliance on pricing rather than alternatives to influencing parking habits. He commented on improvements to Northgate End Car Park in respect of doors and lighting. He mentioned feedback from residents that the car park was closed from midnight to 6 am and

complaints regarding the road surface outside the front of the car park.

Councillor Clements said that some residents had mentioned the need for a greater provision of bike spaces. He said that some residents had said that routes and access into towns by bike could be quite difficult. He expressed a concern regarding the review of the provision of 30 minutes of free parking and noted that some feedback had indicated that was a valued option.

The Executive Member said that the opening hours at Northgate End was a good challenge and the council wanted to make that asset work as hard as it can. He referred to planning constraints in the form of conditions regarding the opening hours of the car park.

Councillor Clements stressed the importance of the work of Hertfordshire County Council and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) regarding the provision of alternative routes.

The Executive Member talked about the challenge posed by behaviour change and referred to the LCWIP in terms of work to remove some of the physical and attitudinal obstacles to behaviour change. He talked about looking at the 20 mph zones and tilting the balance in favour of pedestrians whilst not penalising other road users.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the matter of 30 free minutes parking had been the subject of research papers proving that it absolutely was essential or that if it was taken away people spent more time and therefore more money in town centres. He said that this matter would be subject to further consultation as part of the parking strategy.

Councillor Carter acknowledged the challenges of balancing factors such as driving behaviour change, fair

parking charges and cleaner air. She mentioned the ageing parking machines which sometimes did not work, and said that she was not sure that everyone was ready to use the parking payment app.

Councillor Carter asked for some clarification regarding the arrangement for parents using Old London Car Park for collecting children from Simon Balle School. She said that 30 minutes free parking for that purpose was not enough.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability acknowledged that the parking machines were far from perfect. He mentioned the costs procuring and maintaining the machines, and he said that there were also costs regarding the electronic handling of money which the council did not pass onto the customer in some instances.

The Executive Member mentioned the low take up of the use of Old London Road Car Park for school pick up. He talked about reengaging with schools in respect of active travel plans and making sure that these plans were substantial and were implemented.

Councillor Horner said that there was a lot of things in the strategy document that he would support at a strategic level. He said that an increase in charges, as proposed at the higher level than the new standard linear tariff, to encourage short stay parking did not work so well in Elm Road Car Park as it did in Apton Road and Basbow Lane, as Elm Road did not have any short stay car parking at present. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability agreed to review the proposed pricing.

Councillor Horner mentioned resident's parking zones (RPZs), as he had noted that there was a commitment in the strategy document for a review. He asked about the

timescale for this review, and whether the idea was to make the RPZ process easier than it was at present.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability acknowledged that there were inconsistencies with RPZs. He said that an overriding ambition was to make sure that the Northgate End Car Park was viable. He said that he recognised the anomaly of the Elm Road Car Park. He talked about the strategic use and impact of the Crown Terrace Car Park in terms of air quality initiatives.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability talked about the criteria for RPZs, and whether this needed challenging. He talked about opening up the ability for RPZs to form part of the parking strategy. The Head of Operations said that she had a piece of work to take forward in respect of a review of RPZs, and this would be reported to the Executive on 11 February 2025.

Councillor Williams talked about the equity and fairness between the car parking charge tariff regime in place at Kibes Lane in Ware when compared to shopping centre car parks such as Jackson Square in Bishop's Stortford.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the strategic review of car park usage should include consideration and discussion of how the council could best serve residents in terms of how car parks were being used. Councillor Swainston pointed out that the Jackson Square Car Park served as a lot more than just a car park for the attached shopping centre.

Councillor Woollcombe commented on the need to simplify the operation of the car parking payment machines. He said that the car parks were a great asset for the council, and that he would like to know whether any consideration had been given to selling the car parks to raise revenue.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the parking machines did need to be reviewed, and that maybe there did need to be a strategic view to be taken on the provision of the parking payment machines.

Members continued to discuss and debate the matter of RPZs and talked about high street prosperity, retaining control of the car parks, active travel and air quality, emissions, EV charging points and possible pedestrianisation initiatives with a particular reference to Bishop's Stortford. The possibility of a charge for blue badges used in car parks was also mentioned with these still being free for use on street.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability commented on future proofing and referred to the expansion of Stansted Airport. Members also briefly discussed the matter of car clubs.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that formal car clubs often-required capital investment. He talked about a less formal arrangement such as neighbours agreeing to share cars.

Councillor Nicholls proposed, and Councillor Carter seconded, a motion that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have considered and commented on the parking strategy prior to the strategy document being presenting to the Executive and Council, and that the Committee had commented on the proposed changes effective from April 2025 for consideration by the Executive, as described in paragraph 2 "proposals".

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that (A) Overview and Scrutiny Committee have considered and commented on

the parking strategy prior to the strategy document being presenting to the Executive and Council; and

(B) Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the proposed changes effective from April 2025 for consideration by the Executive as described in paragraph 2 "proposals".

291 DIGITAL EXCLUSION

The Executive Member for Corporate Services submitted a report that provided information on the council's approach to digital services and how it currently accommodated those who were digitally excluded.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services said that as the way in which the council worked changed, it was important that organisations such as East Herts Council reflected and made sure changes were being made in the right way. Members were advised that the council had made significant strides in respect of digital transformation.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services explained that the customers who accessed the council's services in person were often the ones with the most complex needs. He explained that this group of customers currently represented two to three percent of interactions with the public. Members were advised that the council's approach to customer services provision would continue to be driven by data to ensure that residents needs were being met.

The Executive Member said that approximately 80% of face-to-face contact which the council had with customers was related to council tax and benefits, and that this was quite a significant increase of around 50% from the

spring of 2023 when service contacts were more evenly spread across various departments and service areas.

The Executive Member said that to address digital exclusion, the council had kept its receptions open for walk ins, and residents could also book appointments if they found this to be convenient. The council had also held face to face consultations in public spaces in line with the corporate plan objective of being a listening council.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services said that the receptions had reopened for face-to-face services on a phased basis following the COVID-19 lockdowns, and he detailed the opening hours in Bishop's Stortford and Hertford.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services said that although face-to-face demand continued to decrease, the council had continued to provide access for those who needed to engage with the council face-to-face. He acknowledged that for a small number of customers, the online systems for Resident Parking Zones (RPZs) permits may not be ideal. Members were advised that the technology that was in place did not offer the flexibility that some residents would prefer.

The Executive Member said that the council continued to provide paper RPZ permits for residents that visited the council offices. He said that the council would continue to learn from best practice and digital exclusion was not something that was unique to local authorities. Members were advised that other forward-thinking councils had partnered with business and agencies to address any concerns.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services said that the council would continue to learn from the experiences of other businesses and agencies where possible. He said

that the council's commitment to inclusivity remained at the core of the approach to digital exclusion and that the council would ensure that residents who chose not to use digital services, or those who were not able to, were fully supported and that this work would be going.

Councillor Carter said that there was some anecdotal evidence to suggest that residents who were not able to use digital services were using other agencies such as the Citizens Advice, the tourist information centre, or Town Council receptions. She asked how much the council was working with other organisations to ensure that residents were signposted or could access the services they need.

Councillor Clements said that he was pleased to see the emphasis in the report on maintaining a face-to-face service for those who could not go fully digital in their interactions with the council. He asked if officers knew why customers were still choosing to phone the council when they had the option of dealing with a query online.

Councillor Clements asked if the council had put in place training for reception staff to take account of the changing needs of customers who were still coming into see the council face-to-face.

Councillor Dumont said that the council offered a similar assisted self-service provision for customers who had booked an appointment with a customer services officer. He said that customers not knowing which authority to contact for various services had been a long term and ongoing problem since he had been an elected member. Officers were very quick to highlight if an issue was not one that East Herts Council deal with and were very quick to provide the right information or signpost the customer to the correct council or agency which they needed to contact.

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy said the council had regular dialogue with Citizens Advice in respect of sharing information regarding any patterns or trends. He cited an example of when council tax letters went out, and where there was closer collaboration with some of the council's partners in libraries or, as now, in Jackson Square shopping centre Bishop's Stortford.

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy said that some of the changes alluded to by the Executive Member might force the council into more of that type of collaboration. He said that there was no structured way of sharing information, but the council did work with Citizens Advice and in an ad hoc way with other organisations.

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy said that there were always customers who wanted to ring the council, and that this would continue to be the case. He referred to the wide geographic spread of the district and the two reception centres. Members were advised that some customers would happily stay holding on the phone to speak to the council. He talked about the challenge of improving the digital offer and said that officers had received training in respect of safeguarding and mental health awareness. Customer Services staff had also been trained in personal safety following a spike in aggression towards public sector workers.

Councillor Marlow talked about the issue of broadband affordability and older people who used mobiles instead. He asked if the council was working with phone providers to address this issue and the matter of poor coverage in areas such as the Hadhams and Hunsdon.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services said that East Herts had one of the highest uptakes of digital usage in the country. The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy acknowledged that there were patches of the district that were not covered by broadband due to the

expense of the installation of fibre services and due to the poor mobile coverage. He said that the county council had a connecting counties programme that had delivered broadband to a lot of different villages in the district. He also mentioned the partnership known as the digital innovation zone and the work being done to talk about lobbying for more investment in masts and other similar infrastructure.

The Head of Customers Services confirmed to Councillor Swainston that both Bishop's Stortford and Hertford customers services centres had self-service PCs that could be utilised by the public during the opening hours, and Customer Services staff were available to help customers.

Councillor McAndrew commented on the different groups of people that the council had to cater for, i.e. those who did not want to talk on the phone and those that would only engage by digital means. He talked about the challenges of IT and referred to the waste services contract and the potential for a fully digital service. He mentioned that councils were in the hands of the providers in reference to the installation of full coverage of broadband services.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services said that the contract the council had with Stevenage did not hamper digital innovation and there had to be specific platforms and technologies to deliver specific services. Councillor McAndrew said that he believed there were some challenges.

The Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy said that the waste services contract was digitally automated in terms of requests to the contractor regarding missed collections or replacement bins.

Councillor Horner said that all aspects of the digital services needed to be brought together so that it should

be easier to use, and that this was very important. He referred to future budget constraints and said that self-service assisted appointments should continue as well as the open receptions in both of the main towns.

The Executive Member for Corporate Services said that the council had to provide the self-service assisted provision for the people that needed it. He was not aware of complaints or concerns in terms of data where customers had not been able access the council when they needed to.

Councillor Carter talked about improving services and how the council could survey users to find out what customers found difficult when accessing the council's services. The Executive Member for Corporate Services talked about his aspiration to get a customer service excellence certification. He acknowledged that getting customer feedback had been quite difficult.

Councillor Woolcombe proposed, and Councillor Clements seconded, a motion that Overview and Scrutiny Committee have considered information in respect of digital exclusion and have made comments to the Executive Member for Corporate Services.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that Overview and Scrutiny Committee have considered information in respect of digital exclusion and have made comments to the Executive Member for Corporate Services.

292 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair referenced an email from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services. The Chair and the Committee

Support Officer explained that the affordable housing scrutiny proposal form hadn't been received ahead of the meeting. The topic would therefore now be moved forward in the work programme to the meeting in June. The same rule would apply to other items in the work programme where a scrutiny proposal form was required.

Councillor Boylan said that scrutiny proposal forms should form part of the agenda of these meetings, and Overview and Scrutiny Members could then discuss and then agree the proposals. The Committee Support Officer explained why the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) had been moved to the meeting in March 2025 with the consent of the Chair.

The Head of Communication, Strategy and Policy briefly set out the themes of the item that would be coming to meeting on 4th March 2025 in respect of the UKSPF. The Chair explained that not every item on the work programme needed a scrutiny proposal form as some of the items were brought to the committee by the Executive.

Councillor Carter mentioned section 106 funding in terms of how this process worked and how section 106 monies were allocated. The Committee Support Officer invited the committee to consider the work programme well beyond March and June 2025. He referred to an action from November 2023 that the Committee review Development Management Forums within two years of when these were set up, subject to the when the Head of Planning and Building Control wished to present this matter back to the Committee.

Members were advised that a workshop was held on 11 June 2024 where the Committee got together to consider work programme topics. The Committee Support Officer said that another workshop could be arranged, or

Members could have proactive discussions offline about potential topics for the work programme going forward.

The Committee Support Officer reminded Members that the work programme should be Member led, subject to matters brought forward from the Executive. Councillor Andrews welcomed the helpful suggestion of short-timed workshop to discuss the work programme.

Councillor Carter said that it was important to refresh ideas and topics which were immediately important at a short workshop. Councillor Swainston said it was very reasonable to get the scrutiny proposal forms submitted in a timely manner to give officers time to respond. She said the committee should be scrutinising Executive decisions.

The Chair said that a consensus was emerging that a work programme workshop would be useful, and he said that would consult with the Vice-Chair and then consider whether this would be held in person or online.

The Committee Support encouraged any Member of the Committee to take the lead on completing the scrutiny proposal form in respect of affordable housing in discussion with other Members of the Committee.

Councillor Clements mentioned the possible discussion of BEAM around the end of 2025 once the theatre had been operation for a year. Councillor Nicholls concurred with the suggestion that the committee consider Section 106 matters.

Councillor Clements proposed and Councillor Swainston seconded a motion that the 2024/25 Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme in Appendix 1, be agreed subject to the following:

- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) be considered at the meeting on 4 March 2025;
- Affordable housing be considered at the meeting on 10 June 2025, subject to the submission of a scrutiny proposal form by the 4 March 2025;
- Section 106 be added to the programme subject to the completion of a scrutiny proposal form;
- Scrutiny Proposals Forms be included in the agenda for consideration by the Committee.

After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the 2024/25 Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme in Appendix 1, be agreed subject to the following:

- The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) be considered at the meeting on 4 March 2025;
- Affordable housing be considered at the meeting on 10 June 2025, subject to the submission of a scrutiny proposal form by the 4 March 2025;
- Section 106 be added to the programme subject to the completion of a scrutiny proposal form;
- Scrutiny Proposals Forms be included in the agenda for consideration by the Committee.

293 URGENT ITEMS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Chairman

Date

Agenda Item 5

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: Tuesday 4 March 2025

Report by: Councillor Alex Daar, Executive Member for Communities

Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward, Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Councillor Tim Hoskin, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

Report title: UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary

- This report updates Members on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), which is now approaching its close, having officially begun 1st April 2022 and due to cease 31st March 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND COMMITTEE:

(A) Members review progress to date; and

(B) Members review consider priorities for the 2025-26 year and make any recommendations to Executive in this regard (see section 2.17).

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 This paper updates Councillors on progress towards delivering East Herts' share of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund. This covers progress towards delivering the East Herts Cultural Strategy, the East Herts Climate Change Strategy, town and village centre improvements and business support.

2.0 Background

2.1 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is the domestic alternative to EU structural funding which the UK had access to whilst still part of the bloc. Full details were released in 2022 with funding following a "delivery geography" (essentially a district/ borough or unitary area). Each delivery geography in England was given an individual allocation from a total fund of 2.6bn over three years from 2022/23 to 2024/25. Funding followed a national formula whereby every area received some funds albeit with larger amounts directed towards areas of higher deprivation. East Herts is classed as a "priority 3" area out of scale of 1-3, meaning the district is in effect a low priority (1 being the most in need).

2.2 That said, East Herts allocation was £1,773,136 which was higher than most other districts in the county. This has been supplemented by a further £472,841 from the Rural Prosperity Fund (RPF), bringing the total amount to £2,245,976 over three years, with most of the funding weighted towards the 2024/25 year.

2.3 East Herts spending priorities were agreed by [Council in January 2023](#), and followed 4 broad areas identified as important for the district whilst also aligning with UKSPF and RPF objectives:

- Delivery of the Cultural Strategy 2021 – 25, adopted by Council on 2nd March 2021, including Arts in East Herts (AIEH)
- Delivery of the Climate Change Strategy 2022 – 26, adopted by Council on 27 July 2022.
- Town and village centre improvement, especially focused on smaller parishes and villages who may feel they have been overlooked in terms of investment.
- Business support, focusing on in house grant award schemes and 'top ups' to countywide support schemes through Hertfordshire Futures.

2.4 The prescribed UKSPF outputs and outcomes East Herts wanted to prioritise include:

- Increasing volunteering activity
 - Increasing participation in events
 - Decarbonisation activity and reducing emissions
 - Increasing m2 of community space
 - Increasing footfall to town/ village centres
 - Increasing m2 commercial space
 - Creating/ safeguarding jobs
- 2.5 Although other outputs and outcomes were also targeted, these were the main objectives East Herts prioritised when it submitted its investment plan to central government in late 2022.
- 2.6 Please note at the time of writing the scheme has not yet concluded. All funding and activity will cease on 31 March. Every organisation that has received funding was required to sign a grant funding agreement or contract agreement outlining which outputs and outcomes they would be responsible for delivering. When the scheme closes they will be required to submit an evaluation setting out achievements in detail. An overall evaluation of the scheme will be undertaken between April – May of this year and the results published, focusing on achievement against the outputs set out in (2.4).
- 2.7 The scheme has funded many successful projects and interventions across East Herts since it launched. It is also worth noting that funds have been dispersed to a wide range of public, private and voluntary organisations operating in different areas across the district with many residents and businesses directly benefitting. The full evaluation will capture these in more detail and include statistics as well as case studies.
- 2.8 **Appendix A** contains early highlights and sets out the breadth of activity and fantastic achievements made to date. This will form the basis of the full evaluation to be completed later in the year.
- 2.9 An important point to note is that East Herts opted to direct funding to different towns and villages across the district to support a large number of smaller scale projects. This is unlike many other areas who chose to direct UKSPF funding to support or supplement their own activities. The following table provides

details on the breakdown of spending across different areas in the district, as at the time of writing, according to the different strands of activities:

	Area of grant/ support and amount					%	Total
	AlEH	Business	Cultural	Climate	Town/ village		
Bishop's Stortford	£4,555	£42,957	£33,157	£5,359	£383,064	41.6%	£469,092
Buntingford	£2,356	£26,497	£3,450	£17,675	£87,847	12.2%	£137,825
Hertford	£5,680	£85,049	£41,500	£6,159	£67,500	18.3%	£205,888
Sawbridgeworth		£62,000		£8,845	£95,000	14.7%	£165,845
Ware	£5,715	£15,000	£7,545	£20,431	£100,000	13.2%	£148,691
Towns Total	£18,306	£231,503	£85,652	£58,469	£733,411		£1,127,341
Villages							
Albury					£38,194	8.9%	£38,194
Anstey				£3,000		0.7%	£3,000
Aston		£3,000				0.7%	£3,000
Birch Green		£3,000				0.7%	£3,000
Braughing				£980		0.2%	£980
Buckland & Chipping		£3,000			£9,678	2.9%	£12,678
Burnham Green				£2,500		0.6%	£2,500
Cottered	£411				£30,745	7.2%	£31,156
Datchworth					£51,690	12.0%	£51,690
Gilston				£1,011		0.2%	£1,011
Green Tye	£3,396					0.8%	£3,396
Hertford Heath				£2,958	£28,924	7.4%	£31,882
High Wych	£774					0.2%	£774
Hunsdon	£489			£6,264	£20,000	6.2%	£26,753
Little Berkhamsted	£1,492			£2,830	£19,619	5.6%	£23,941
Little Hadham	£1,000	£53,000			£13,200	15.6%	£67,200
Much Hadham	£2,300			£4,972		1.7%	£7,272
Little Munden				£2,500		0.6%	£2,500
Meesden				£3,753		0.9%	£3,753
Pelhams		£50,000				11.6%	£50,000
Stanstead Abbots		£3,000			£9,810	3.0%	£12,810
Tewin		£3,000				0.7%	£3,000
Tonwell					£30,000	7.0%	£30,000
Watton at Stone		£1,900		£604	£14,177	3.9%	£16,681
Westmill				£470		0.1%	470
Widford	£491			£2,450		0.7%	£2,941
Villages Total	£10,353	£119,900	£0	£34,292	£266,037		£430,582
GRAND TOTAL	£1,558,923						

- 2.10 Roughly 75% of the overall fund was directed to various towns and villages across the district, reflecting the Council's wish to disperse funds as widely as possible and ensure as many areas as possible benefitted. Please note the remaining balance of the overall fund was directed towards district wide projects and activities which were not targeted to any particular area. As per (2.6), the scheme is still running a full evaluation will be undertaken when it closes.
- 2.11 The process of allocating funds followed a lengthy engagement process through town and parish councils as well as other stakeholders including businesses and the voluntary sector. More details around this can be found in the [last update to Overview and Scrutiny](#) on 5th March 2024. Following that meeting, officers re-engaged with parish councils to ensure as many local projects as possible were being considered.
- 2.11 **Where next for the UKSPF?**
- 2.12 The new government have provided little detail about their plans for UKSPF longer term (perhaps understandable given their focus on devolution and reorganisation). However in December the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced one year's worth of funding for 2025-26. East Hertfordshire's allocation for is now confirmed as £580,075 (made up of £472,975 revenue and £107,100 capital). The same arrangements will be in place as per the current scheme in that East Herts Council is the accountable body for spending.
- 2.13 Government have also added that this is a "transitional" year, presumably on the assumption that the landscape of local government will look very different in 2026-27. They state, "*Whilst 2022-25 allocations are separate from 2025-26, this transitional year should be treated as a continuation of the Fund. With that in mind, you may continue to fund existing projects, deliver the same types of activity supported to date, shift to entirely different ones, or a combination of these options*".
- 2.14 Although the government have dropped the language of Levelling Up along with the associated missions (from which the original outcomes framework for the current UKSPF was designed), the

specific outcomes and outputs which the scheme is expected to deliver against is largely unchanged, save for some rationalisation, with a focus on community facilities/ buildings/ infrastructure and events, business support, decarbonisation and skills.

- 2.16 The only other spending requirements are that any projects have to be in addition to existing activity. This means we cannot use UKSPF to replace core spending or activity already budgeted for. This includes existing staff costs (however the fund can be used to cover additional hours of existing staff for new activity). Funds can also be used to deliver contracted works provided The Council's financial procedures are followed and can also be given out in grants provided the end recipient is a separate legal entity (ie. Not an individual or sole trader).
- 2.17 Executive are at the early stages of considering how the funding can be used to deliver LEAF priorities set out in the Corporate Plan, [which was adopted by Council](#) on 28th February, 2024, and meet UKSPF outputs.
- 2.18 More details will be shared at the 18th March Executive meeting. Committee Members are invited to submit any thoughts on priorities or activities to be considered.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 N/A

4.0 Options

4.1 N/A

5.0 Risks

5.1 All funds have to spent and outcomes delivered by 31 March 2025 with unspent monies being returned to government. The project is being managed to ensure this does not happen.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 N/A

Community Safety

Yes – some projects which have been funded support community safety (eg. town centre rangers in Bishop’s Stortford)

Data Protection

No

Equalities

Yes – an equalities impact assessment was undertaken when the scheme was agreed in January 2023. No issues were identified however as part of the evaluation we will consider whether any projects have had a disproportionate impact on any individuals or communities with protected characteristics.

Environmental Sustainability

Yes – many projects have been in support of achieving greater sustainability, as detailed in **Appendix A**.

Financial

Yes – all funding is allocated.

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** – highlight report.

Contact Members

Councillor Alex Daar, Executive Member for Communities

Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward, Executive Member for Planning and Growth

Councillor Tim Hoskin, Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability

Contact Officer

Ben Wood, Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy, Tel: 01992 531699. benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author

Ben Wood, Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy, Tel: 01992 531699. benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk

Appendix A – UKSPF Project Highlights

1. Cultural Strategy

Arts in East Herts Case Study

Arts and culture are the heart of an area's vibrancy. Having your bins collected and council tax queries dealt with take some of the stress out of our hectic lives but it's the sheer joy and excitement of painting your first picture in years, taking part in a live show or watching your kids throw themselves into a dance class which can remind us of why we love our local communities so much.

Nowhere is this outlook more passionately felt than in East Hertfordshire – the market towns of Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford, Hertford, Sawbridgeworth and Ware along with dozens of beautiful villages in between.

In 2024, we devoted £50,000 to run an Arts Trail in one or two locations. We soon realised that would dramatically undersell the breadth and depth of cultural talent across all 184 square miles of our district. So instead, we and key partners decided to run a two month showcase right across the district. We called it exactly what it would be – Arts in East Herts.



We asked professional organisations, individual artists and community groups to showcase their talents, open up their studios and run taster sessions during the months of September and October. We made available small grants of up to £500 to support groups and individuals. The level of local enthusiasm, however, meant that three-fifths of organisations and individuals taking part asked for no financial support from the council at all, beyond being included in our publicity and online showcase calendar.

Interest exceeded all expectations

The appetite for the Arts in East Herts Showcase from the cultural sector and residents alike outstripped our wildest imagination and we were able to offer participatory events every single day for the full two months, adding up to well over 300 individual events. This included over 50 individual artists and groups, with 20 of these supported by grants from the council.

Participation was phenomenal. Over 5,400 individuals attended the various taster sessions, artist-in-residence events and classes with more forming the audiences at various shows and exhibitions, giving a final estimate of 7,000+ beneficiaries.

Perhaps the most amazing outcome of all was that over 1,700 people reported that they were engaging with the organisations and their chosen cultural activities for the first time ever. Of these, just over 500 people have gone to sign up for further sessions, demonstrating that running taster events really worked in drawing in completely new audiences.

Furthermore, the showcase provided 213 volunteering opportunities for people to make connections, build their CVs or simply give back to their communities.



Figure 1 Bishop's Stortford Band



Figure 2 Cllr Daar and Julie Arnall launching AIEH

What did participants tell us?

As well as the statistics, feedback has demonstrated the range and impact of the showcase. Here are some examples.

A participant in the drawing from live circus performances event said:

"Yesterday I attended the circus drawing workshop held at the Drill Hall in Ware. It was a fantastic evening, the circus performers were wonderful models, who held poses for long periods of time and gave everyone the opportunity to draw characterful, interesting poses... fantastic! I hope that these drawing workshops will be repeated. Thank you for your hard work."

A parent of a young girl who took part in her first ever dance class said:

"I want to say thank you so much for the Musical Theatre class held at Pinehurst Community Centre. My daughter Kimberley [name changed] loved it and it was so lovely watching their performance. She is interested in joining a Sunday morning class in January at Pinehurst so hopefully there's enough interest. I can promote the class to her school friends too if you'd like more people signing up."

An officer from Hertford Regional College, which laid on taster sessions in diverse creative activities including heatpress printing, fabric dying and photography, told us:

"Our open event last night saw over 100 young people, adults and families view our art & design gallery / facilities at the Ware campus. All our free workshops, scheduled for early October 2024, are now completely full..."

"We have some good news stories linked to the sessions including the establishment of new partnerships with local companies and a potential new approach to providing bitesize taster sessions – leading to the availability of a fuller range of arts-based courses in the future."

A local business that specialises in finding opportunities to promote creativity wherever they can told us:

"I have now completed my "Rubbish Art" programme. Thank you for supporting my business. Everyone enjoyed their art experience... I have some wonderful photos. Once again thank you so much for the opportunity and for the grant."

Arts in East Herts isn't just a one-off. It's obvious that for many participants, taking part the showcase awakened a new interest in their creative side. That itself is a fitting legacy, however, it doesn't stop there!

We have commissioned Community Alliance Broxbourne and East Herts (CVBEH) – our community volunteer service – to support a group of energised local artists and creative organisations to establish the Arts in East Herts steering group, with aim of making this an annual event. In time, we envisage the group becoming a community interest company or similar to best position them to gain inward investment.



Figure 3 Hertfordshire Health Walks



Figure 4 Buntingford mosaic

2. Climate Change Strategy

Activities in this strand are based on aspirations in the Climate Change Strategy. They have engaged a wide variety of local and national stakeholders and, beyond the specified outcomes, have created valuable legacy relationships, ideas, learnings and frameworks. Here are some key highlights from the projects:

Residential Decarbonisation (£50k allocation)

- Partnership with National Energy Foundation (NEF)
- 42 residential decarbonisation plans/retrofit assessments delivered providing a path to decarbonisation through energy saving measures recommended for each home with projected carbon savings of 98 tCo2 annually
- 13 grant applications approved for solar and battery installations with projected carbon savings of 14 tCo2 annually
- Aiming to ensure low carbon or zero energy infrastructure impacts in residential properties of up to 150 sqm

Community Buildings (£60k)

- Partnership with CDA (Community Development Action) Hertfordshire and Utility-Aid
- Offer of remote discovery energy saving and decarbonisation plans made to 83 community and village halls
- 26 halls responded to the offer, ultimately taken up by 17
- Based on the discoveries, offers were made to each hall for simple, cost/carbon effective upgrades that could be completed by a local qualified electrician or plumber for a maximum budget of £2500 each.
- 10 halls took up the offer:
 - 14 electricians and 3 plumbers were employed
 - 1 hot water heat pump
 - 1 Destratification system
 - 3 for gas boiler efficiency improvements
 - 2 small ventilation with heat recovery systems
 - 2 upgrades to LED lights
 - 3 new smart systems (in addition to smart tech being used wherever possible)
 - 1 hot water heat pump cylinder
 - 2 Infrared heating systems for halls to replace 1 gas and 1 oil heating system.

- Of the remaining funding allocation for this project, 2 halls were granted additional funding for the measures that represented the best value for money carbon reduction from the list of all possible hall interventions.
- Aim for a carbon saving of 10.93 CO₂e t annually

Carbon Reduction Grants (£60k):

- Retrofit (mostly on community buildings)
- Local 'grass roots' grants of up to £3,000 for carbon reduction projects in East Herts.
- 30 applications received over two rounds of which 25 were successful. Measures include:
 - Decarbonisation plans
 - Community engagement events and activities
 - Community resources such as thermal imaging cameras
 - Sustainable travel such as bike racks.



Figure 5 Bike Racks installed at St Andrews Church, Hertford

Urban Tree Planting (£50k)

Partnership with HCC to plant all possible remaining ground tested tree locations in Urban locations across the District with a particular focus on Air Quality Zones and flood prone areas. Aim for carbon saving of 1000 CO₂e t annually

Town	Totals trees, of which:
Bishops Stortford	34
Buntingford	15
Hertford	30
Sawbridgeworth	8
Ware	13
	100

Energy Hubs Case Study

Introduction: Context and Challenges

Increasing extreme weather events underscore the urgent need for climate action. In East Hertfordshire, rising energy costs and resource constraints have further complicated the challenge of delivering net-zero initiatives. Recognising these pressing issues, East Herts Council made its Climate Declaration in 2019 and amplified it to an Emergency in 2024, committing to ambitious targets to reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change across the District.



Figure 6 Energy Hub in Sawbridgeworth

The Energy Hubs initiative was launched to address these challenges. These physical event stands, held year-round across the District, have the potential to engage tens of thousands of residents, offering advice on home retrofits, energy saving, and government grants. This community-led approach leverages behaviour change principles, empowering residents with tools and knowledge to reduce energy use and carbon emissions while encouraging peer-to-peer influence. Over the past year, the Energy Hubs have been hosted at 14 events, underscoring the Council's commitment to delivering impact at scale and pace.

Leadership and Vision

East Herts Council has provided vital leadership in establishing and supporting the Energy Hubs initiative. The Council's Environmental Sustainability Forum, formed in 2019, has been instrumental in uniting local Town and Parish Councils and Carbon and Sustainability Groups. The Forum fosters collaboration, enabling stakeholders to share knowledge, shape climate strategies, and steer initiatives like Energy Hubs.

Peer-to-peer training has been vital, with one Forum member, for example, sharing their experience installing an air-source heat pump and offering optimisation tips. This collaborative environment has amplified community capacity and fostered trust, ensuring sustainability and lasting impact.

The Council's leadership extends to providing funding, materials, and logistical support. Yet, some of the most impactful results have emerged from the passion and dedication of volunteers, demonstrating that community-led action thrives on collaboration and shared purpose.

Innovation in Action

The Energy Hubs represent an innovative solution designed to engage residents directly in climate action:

- **Pop-Up Stands:** Hosted at local events and staffed by trained volunteers, the Hubs provide practical advice on energy-saving practices, lowering household carbon footprints, and accessing grants. The branding and awareness potential of these events is significant, given they attract tens of thousands of residents annually.
- **Community-Driven Engagement:** Volunteers, drawn from the Environmental Sustainability Forum and local communities, adopt a trusted, peer-led approach to engagement. This behaviour change model fosters a cycle of participation, uptake, and influence, building momentum for broader climate action.

The Hubs have been instrumental in driving uptake of retrofit grants and schemes. They have helped East Herts consistently lead the County in engagement and participation, including:

- Topping the leader board for the Local Cycling and Infrastructure Plan consultation.
- Securing significant uptake of the Home Upgrade Grant.
- Encouraging over 200 residents and businesses to invest £2.2 million in solar panels through the Solar Together bulk purchasing scheme, installing 2,100 solar panels and saving 175,000kg CO2 to date.

Volunteer Training Programme: Embedding Sustainability

To sustain the Energy Hubs' impact, East Herts Council has partnered with the Energy Saving Trust to deliver Home Energy Training. New volunteers completing training and assisting at three Hub events gain CV endorsements, enhancing personal and professional growth. This programme focuses on embedding knowledge, amplifying impact, and building confidence and self-efficacy, ensuring that volunteers remain motivated and effective.

By equipping volunteers with the tools to become sustainability champions, the Council is building a foundation for long-term community involvement. This approach sustains the Hubs' legacy, creating a ripple effect that extends beyond individual events to foster enduring climate action.

Community Engagement and Inclusivity

Community involvement is central to the Energy Hubs' success:

- **Volunteer Network:** The initiative engages volunteers from Town and Parish Councils and local Carbon and Sustainability Groups, who act as trusted ambassadors within their communities.
- **Interactive Engagement:** Residents are encouraged to ask questions, share concerns, and receive tailored advice, fostering dialogue and trust.

- Ongoing Collaboration: The Environmental Sustainability Forum ensures continuous engagement, where participants help shape strategies and amplify outreach efforts.

This peer-to-peer approach has driven significant behaviour change, fostering a culture of shared responsibility and collective action. David Royle from community group Sustainable Sawbridgeworth remarked:

"The Energy Hubs initiative has been a game-changer for our community. Residents feel empowered to take action, and the volunteer network has been vital in spreading the message that we all have a role to play in tackling climate change."

Delivery and Impact: At Scale and Pace

The Energy Hubs have delivered measurable results at scale:

- Widespread Reach: Nearly one thousand residents engaged in conversation with Hub volunteers last year, gaining insights on reducing energy use and accessing grants.
- Empowered Residents: Feedback shows residents feel more informed and confident about implementing energy-saving measures.
- Boosted Uptake: The initiative has driven strong participation in key schemes, contributing to significant carbon reductions.
- Volunteer Growth: Training and endorsements have attracted new volunteers, sustaining long-term involvement and amplifying impact.
- Sustained Impact: Volunteers remain active and committed, serving as sustainability champions within their communities.

With funding, logistical support, and community leadership, the Energy Hubs are a scalable, replicable model for other communities. Success breeds success, inspiring further action and innovation.



Figure 7 Energy hub in Sawbridgeworth



Figure 8 Cllr Tim Hoskin at Abel Smith School, Hertford

3. Town and Village Centres

We have issued a number of grants to different towns and villages across the district. In most cases these projects have been match funded and delivered by the relevant town or parish council. It includes:

East Herts Council
28 Feb 2024 · 🌐

🌱 Recently, we awarded a grant of £9,810 to help improve the Meadows area in Stanstead Abbots to make it more usable to the local community!

🌸 This compliments the Section 106 Funding and Parish Council funding that was used to buy new equipment to improve the play area

😊 Stanstead Abbots is [#LevellingUp](#) thanks to the [#UKSPF](#) (UK Shared Prosperity Fund)!

📷 Pictured: Parish Cllr Mike Dormon, Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward (Executive Member for Planning and Growth), Cllr Peter Boylan, and Economic Development Officer Andrew Figgis

👍❤️ 22 2 comments 3 shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment 📧 Send ➦ Share



- Ware Town Council - £100k contribution towards the refurbishment of the WCs & a new 'Library of Things' to open in the summer
- Buntingford WCs - £10k towards their refurbishment to bring them up to a better condition
- Sawbridgeworth Memorial Hall - £45k contribution towards refurbishment, creating more space including commercial units
- Datchworth £30k towards outdoor play area improvements on Nutcroft play area and additional facilities at Turkey Farm
- Watton-at-Stone - £14k towards various improvements in the village, including new street furniture, planters and refurbishments to the Lammas common area
- Buntingford High Street, £75k for improvement works including replacing paving stones, planters, new bollards and repainting existing bollards
- Cottered & Throcking, £30k towards pathway improvements and a new pavilion

East Herts Council
16 Jan 2024 · 🌐

🏡 Little Hadham is a network of 8 hamlets, and we are set about making improvements to benefit the local community, including the refurbishment and renewal of various village landmarks, signs and features.

🌸 As such, East Herts has awarded £13,200 from the [#UKSPF](#) to carry out these improvements.

👍❤️ 23 3 comments 2 shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment 📧 Send ➦ Share



👍❤️ 2



East Herts Council

11 Jan 2024 · 🌐

🏡 East Herts has approved a grant of £21,198 to Albury Parish Council.

🏠 This will be a contribution towards replacing the patio area to increase the hall's usability for events, improve the public realm and increase footfall to the facility.

💡 The total cost of the project will be £25,000 with £21,198 of that coming from the #UKSPF.

Pictured here are the works in progress, featuring Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward (Executive Member for Planning and Growth) along with parish clerk and local resident, Jane Pettitt, who has been organising the project on behalf of the parish council.

👍❤️ 14

2 comments 1 share

👍 Like 💬 Comment 📧 Send ➦ Share



- Markets manager for Hertford and Ware – part time markets manager to increase number of traders at the charter markets and also monthly farmer’s market. Up to £15k over 6 months
- £9k contribution to the Bishop’s Stortford BID for provision of parking rangers

We also commissioned additional work on some of our own assets including:

- Northgate End Car Park: installation of accessible doors and 13 pieces of artwork in the lobby areas (around £13k)
- Remaining elements of the Castle Park Project which couldn’t be funded including pathway repairs and the installation of a new harness to enable repairs (£100k)

To date we have created or improved over 1000 sqm of public/ community space



East Herts Council

4 Mar 2024 · 🌐

🏡 We recently awarded Little Berkhamsted a grant of £9,157 to help improve the energy efficiency of the village hall!

👍 This means the building can be heated more affordably during the colder months, allowing more events to take place!

😊 Little Berkhamsted is #LevellingUp thanks to the #UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund)!

📷 Pictured: Parish Cllrs Penny Stokes and Derek Standbrook, Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward (Executive Member for Planning and Growth), Cllr Bob Deering, and Economic Development Officer Andrew Figgis.

👍❤️ 19

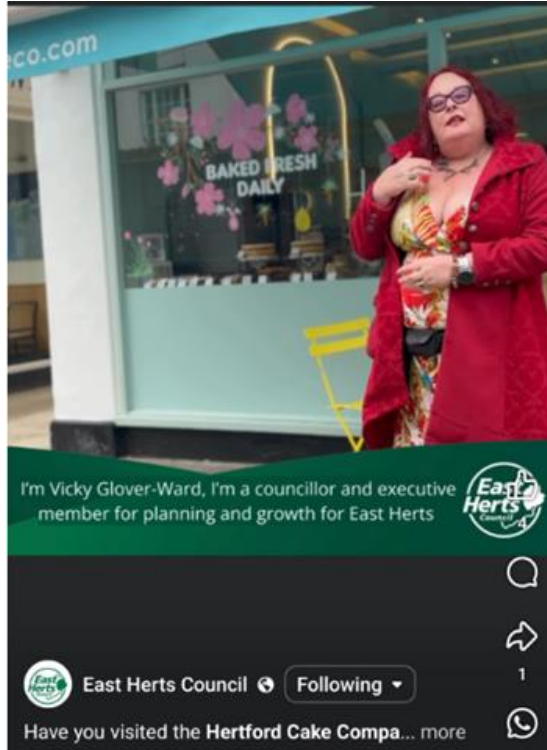
6 comments 1 share

👍 Like 💬 Comment 📧 Send ➦ Share



Business Support

Over the past year we have give out a number of small premises grants to businesses across the district, encouraging them to open up new premises or expand their existing ones, including:



- We heart pole/ Studio Fly (Ware)
- Thirteen Bakery (Hertford)
- My vintage market (Tewin)
- The Foley Barn (Aston)
- Countryman Inn (Buntingford)
- Le Peche Mignon (Stortford)
- Storm X recruitment (Ware)
- Gift Room (Sawbridgeworth)
- House Plants Express (Stortford)
- TDM (Stortford)
- The Deep House (Hertford)
- Hertford Cake Company (Hertford)
- Restless (Bishop's stortford)
- The Skin Lab (ware)





Figure 9 Le Peche Mignon



Figure 10 The Foley Barn



Figure 11 House Plants Express

To date, through all the grants given out we have leveraged around £750k in additional, private sector investment in the district and created or safeguarded 10 jobs

We have also given out larger grants to a small number of businesses who applied for funding. The criteria for award was for those businesses generating new employment, new products or services, diversifying income streams or creating new commercial space. Several hundred expressions of interest however only a handful were awarded



East Herts Council
 Meet Dom Hampton, owner of **Attend 2 IT - Event IT Solutions** based in #Buntingford, pictured with Cllr Vicky Glover-Ward. The company specialises in providing a wide range of IT services, including WI-FI, CCTV and event st... See more
 3 NOV 2023
 7
 6 shares

- Attend to IT (Buntingford), £17.5k towards costs of new equipment to allow them to support more events
- Hornbeck (Hertford), amount £17.5k towards cost of developing new products focused on sustainable materials for street lighting and signage.
- UKPN (Much Hadham), amount TBC towards developing new products which enable energy management
- Skill at arms (Sawbridgeworth), £50k towards costs of refurbishing and fitting out old, disused agricultural barns into 4 new commercial office spaces.
- Black Horse Pub (Brent Pelham), amount TBC towards to cost of creating 6 accommodation units/ rooms on site to help diversify income
- Air energy (Hertford), amount TBC towards expanding on site manufacturing and distribution capacity for air compressors and heating systems



Figure 12 Air Energy MD Mrk Asker hosting a visit



Figure 13 works taking place at the Black Horse



Figure 14 works in progress at Skill at Arms

In conjunction with Hertfordshire Futures we have also delivered the following:



Figure 15 Launch of Generation Stortford

- Growth hub – over 2000 enquiries from East Herts based businesses, 42 businesses provided with direct support (classed as over 6 hours) and 7 jobs created.
- Get Enterprising – 24 jobs created, 12 new business started
- Film office – 40 businesses supported, 7 jobs created
- We also ran 2x careers fairs connecting businesses to young people not considering university (one in BEAM and another at the Herts and Essex High School). Around 70 businesses took part along with 1300 year 10 & year 13s from 6 schools



Today myself Sue Farrugia and Clare Savage are at BEAM Hertford for the Generation Hertford Careers Fair... more

Agenda Item 6

East Herts Council Report

Executive pre-meeting

Date of Meeting: Tuesday 4 March 2025

Report by: Councillor Joseph Dumont – Executive Member for Corporate Services

Report title: East Herts Executive Scrutiny Protocol

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary

- This report presents the East Herts Executive Scrutiny Protocol following guidance issued by the government.

RECOMMENDATION FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

COMMITTEE THAT:

- (A)** Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider and provide comments on the East Herts Executive Scrutiny Protocol **(Appendix A)**;
- (B)** Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree to sign up to the protocol prior to approval of the protocol by the Executive.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Protocol has been drafted to ensure the council has an approved document that sets out the principles of the working arrangements between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, complementing the rules and procedures detailed in the Constitution and in the guidance issued by the government in April 2024.
- 1.2 The aim of the protocol is to ensure the smooth conduct of business and maintain effective communication between Scrutiny and Executive Members. This will promote an effective role for Scrutiny and foster a good working relationship between the Committee and the Executive that will ensure the Committee makes a valuable contribution to the effective running of the

Council.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The government issued statutory guidance in April 2024 to ensure that councils, combined authorities, and combined county authorities were aware of the purpose of overview and scrutiny and how to conduct it effectively.
- 2.2 [Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities - GOV.UK](#)
- 2.3 The purpose of the protocol is to set out the working arrangements between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, complementing the rules and procedures detailed in the Constitution and in the guidance issued by the government in April 2024.
- 2.4 [Section 5](#) of the constitution relates to the rules and procedures that cover the operation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.5 The protocol sets out the guiding principles of the expectations on the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The specific aims of the protocol are detailed in **Appendix A**.
- 2.6 Overview and Scrutiny Committee will expect the Executive to engage with the committee by identifying areas in work planning where scrutiny might add value.
- 2.7 The Executive will expect Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to maintain a constructive relationship with the Executive. The principles underpinning this relationship are set out in **Appendix A**.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 To ensure that there is a clearly defined set of principles that guide Members of the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in ensuring that there is an effective scrutiny function.

3.2 Effective overview and scrutiny is essential to enhance the accountability and transparency of the decision-making process.

4.0 Options

4.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee may choose not to approve the protocol, but this would risk not having a good working relationship with the Executive.

5.0 Risks

5.1 The effectiveness of the scrutiny function at East Herts will be at risk if the Executive and Members of Overview and Scrutiny do not have a clear set of guiding principles for the relationship between the Executive and Scrutiny.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 The Leader and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were consulted during the preparation of the Executive Scrutiny Protocol document.

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

Yes – ongoing Officer support for the Scrutiny function and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Human Rights

No

Legal

Yes - Overview and Scrutiny Committees are enshrined in law by virtue of the Local Government Act 2000 ([sections 9F to 9FI](#)) and the Localism Act 2011, as well as recent statutory guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in April 2024.

Specific Wards

No

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A – draft Executive Scrutiny Protocol document

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East Herts Council Executive Scrutiny Protocol

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This Protocol was agreed by the xxxx on 2025, and can be reviewed after xxxx.

The Committee Support Officers are responsible for overseeing compliance with the Protocol.

1.0 Purpose

To set out the working arrangements between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, complementing the rules and procedures detailed in the Constitution and in the guidance issued by

the government in April 2024. [Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

A separate Scrutiny webpage (for councillors and the public) explains how scrutiny works [Scrutiny | East Herts District Council](#). There is also a comprehensive section in the Constitution covering the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. [Overview and Scrutiny Committee.pdf \(eastherts.gov.uk\)](#)

2.0 The aims of the Protocol are to:

1. Set out good Scrutiny practice.
2. Describe the roles and responsibilities of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive.
3. Enable open, trusting relations between the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
4. Support focused, transparent, and timely scrutiny of council business.
5. Facilitate effective scrutiny work planning and objective setting.
6. Enable scrutiny committees to influence Council business in a meaningful way.

3.0 Context – roles and responsibilities

The Executive is the political leadership of the Council, sets policy and takes all significant decisions collectively or individually. Scrutiny provides a political check and balance on that authority. It helps ensure robust decision-making by examining the process and information that supports decisions. Scrutiny acts as a critical friend and is integral to democracy in ensuring the Council meets its priorities for the residents

of East Herts by influencing the planning and delivery of outcomes and by monitoring performance.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is politically balanced and meets in public. Scrutiny should be member-led and hold the Executive to account. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should see and comment on all significant proposals before they are finalised. Effective overview and scrutiny is essential to enhance the accountability and transparency of the decision-making process.

The Executive engages with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for work planning to identify where scrutiny might add value. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee exercises influence and persuasion but does not take decisions and cannot override the Executive.

Scrutiny should be open and transparent, but may decide to work in private, outside of the formal committee meetings when this helps address sensitive matters or enables more thorough analysis or a frank exchange of views. The scrutiny process should be informed and driven by members.

Whilst Scrutiny is political and led by councillors, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should aim for consensus in its work. National guidance defines effective scrutiny as:

1. Providing constructive 'critical friend' challenge
2. Amplifying the voices and concerns of the public
3. Being led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
4. Driving improvement in public services

To be effective Scrutiny needs an organisational culture which supports and recognises its value and purpose and a constructive relationship

with the Executive where roles and responsibilities are understood. Communication and engagement must work well. Areas of disagreement should be managed with respect and there should be a shared understanding of the principles underpinning the relationship and the ways of working that support it.

Principles underpinning the relationship:

a) Scrutiny should:

- i. Provide purposeful challenge to the Executive and service performance.
- ii. Be objective, evidence-based, and constructive.
- iii. Act as a critical friend to help sound decision-making.
- iv. Take a strategic perspective, focussing on the wider community outcomes.
- v. Aim for consensus, drawing on political insight.
- vi. Work collaboratively with the Executive and recognise that it will not always agree with scrutiny conclusions and recommendations.
- vii. Be well informed, members being fully prepared for meetings with a good understanding of the issues before them.

b) The Executive should:

- i. Recognise and value Scrutiny and be open to constructive challenge.
- ii. Respect the independence of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its chosen work programme.

- iii. Identify opportunities for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to support and influence the work of the Executive.
 - iv. Properly and fully consider Scrutiny conclusions and findings.
 - v. Feedback and explain its response to Scrutiny recommendations.
 - vi. Engage with Scrutiny early to enable it to add value in a timely way.
- c) Together, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the Executive should:
- i. Communicate and engage early on plans and activities.
 - ii. Foster a climate of trust, openness, honesty and integrity, sharing timely information including that which may be confidential or sensitive.
 - iii. Be positive and respectful in their interactions with each other.
 - iv. Manage any areas of disagreement in a constructive way.

4.0 Ways of working together

Communication and engagement:

- The Executive will engage with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee early on policy and plans, to enable meaningful and timely scrutiny input.
- The Executive and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny will liaise regularly to update on plans and activities.

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will communicate on its work and its work programme regularly to the Executive and all members.

Scrutiny work programme planning:

- The work programme will be in line with Council priorities and balanced between policy development, decision preview and performance monitoring.
- All Members of Overview and Scrutiny should take ownership of the work programme. The work programme will be approved at each committee meeting.
- Any councillor (not just O&S members) may raise issues for the scrutiny work programme. There is a Scrutiny Proposal Form so that clear proposals can be formed.
- They ensure effective work programme planning.
- Collectively, they monitor the overall Scrutiny function to ensure best practice and learning are embedded.

Task and finish groups:

- Task and Finish Groups enable flexibility, and the ability to 'deep dive' into topics and provide an opportunity for early engagement. They may meet in private or in public, as determined by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- They can assist policy development, including where informal early engagement is required.

- Executive Members may attend Task and Finish Group meetings to observe or contribute.
- Task and Finish Groups will report back to Overview and Scrutiny and provide recommendations about what to do moving forward.

Key decision review:

- The Executive will invite scrutiny of planned decisions and inform scrutiny of proposals before publication in the Forward Plan.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will examine the Forward Plan to identify priority proposals for scrutiny.
- Members and Officers will monitor the Plan between meetings to identify matters for timely scrutiny.

Policy development:

- Executive members and officers should draw to the attention of Overview and Scrutiny Committee any key policy plans at the earliest opportunity.
- The Executive should discuss with Overview and Scrutiny Committee how and when scrutiny can best influence policy development.
- The approach to scrutiny of policy development will be agreed by the relevant committee but may be carried out informally by a task and finish group.
- Sometimes internal or business sensitivities may require policy development scrutiny to take place in private sessions. Reasons for this will be clear.

Performance monitoring:

- Overview and Scrutiny Members will monitor performance and resources quarterly, their findings/recommendations to be reported to the Executive if possible.
- Scrutiny committees and Executive Members should share views about the usefulness of performance data.
- Scrutiny committees may use performance data to identify issues for further scrutiny.

Scrutiny meetings:

- The relevant Executive Member should aim to attend all relevant meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee where possible. Executive Members who attend Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be reporting back to the Executive.
- Questions will be directed to the Executive Members but may be referred to an officer for an answer if needs be.
- Members should be respectful of each other and of officers, and all those presenting at meetings.

Scrutiny recommendations:

- Scrutiny recommendations will be clear, reasoned and outcomes focused to assist response and monitoring and to help evidence the impact scrutiny has on Council business.
- Recommendations should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound.

- The Executive will give due consideration to Scrutiny recommendations and views.
- Executive responses to recommendations will be reported to the next meeting of the committee.
- Responses will include an explanation for why any recommendations have not been accepted.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair should attend meetings of the Executive to give feedback from the Committee on relevant matters.
- Scrutiny committees will record recommendations and responses for ongoing monitoring, to include assessment of Scrutiny impact.

Information:

- Scrutiny should have the information that underpins policy and decision-making to be able play its role and for assurance regarding the evidence used.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee should also be providing any scrutiny proposal forms in good time to allow for preparation of reports. This will help to ensure that information sharing works both ways.
- The Executive and Officers will be open and transparent and will provide the information scrutiny committees need to do their job effectively. Information will be provided in a timely way to enable meaningful input.
- Information may be shared informally with scrutiny committees, on a confidential basis (e.g. proposals not possible to be shared publicly). This may be prior to determining whether and how a

matter should be scrutinised or as part of scrutiny of policy development.

- Reports to scrutiny committees will include information on factors driving proposals, internal or external.
- Information will be provided in line with scrutiny committees' and members' rights of access to information.
- The overriding principle is transparency. When information cannot be made available the reasons should be clearly explained.
- Scrutiny committees will have background information on issues being scrutinised through pre-meetings, focused briefings and advice from Democratic Services or service leads.
- Where possible all members should have briefings on significant policies and proposals under development.
- Members will keep themselves informed through research and will prepare for meetings by reading papers in advance.

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee should ensure Scrutiny is member-led and independent, setting the tone for constructive challenge to the Executive. The Chair is responsible for managing meetings to enable debate and maintaining focus of Scrutiny.

5.0 Officer Support

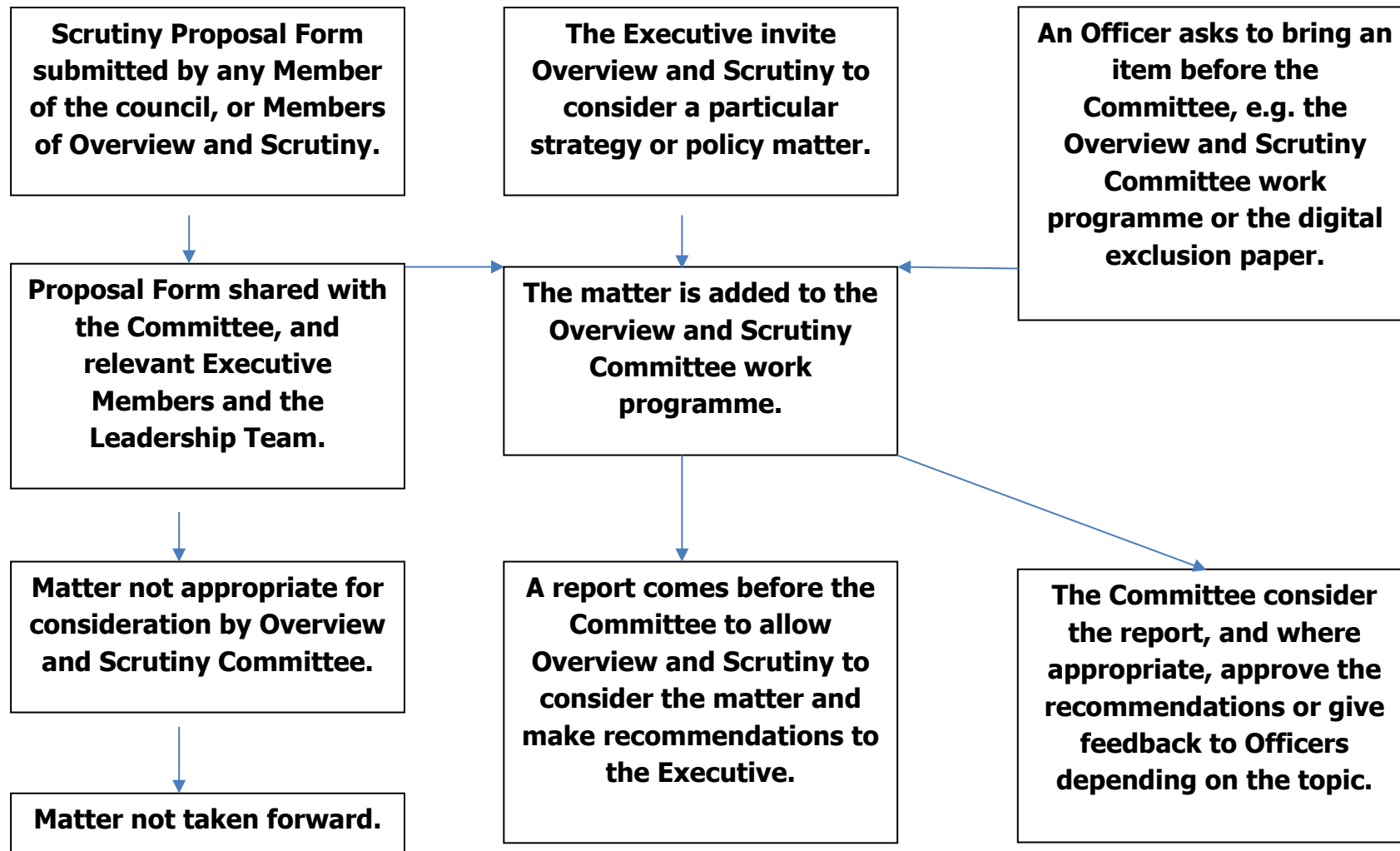
In order that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can perform its role properly, there is dedicated support within Democratic Services for the Scrutiny function and all officers of the Council are expected to provide impartial advice to Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Of particular importance is the role played by statutory officers. Committee Support Officers support the Statutory Scrutiny function, and should:

- promote the role of Scrutiny at the Council;
- provide support to scrutiny committees and its members; and
- provide support and guidance to members and officers relating to the functions of the scrutiny committee.

Appendix A: Comments from the Overview and Scrutiny/Audit and Governance/Other Committee

Comment from Committee	Reasons from the Committee	Executive Member/Officer Comment	Recommended Action
Comment/suggestion made by the Committee	Why the Committee made the suggestion	Response from the Exec Member following consultation after the meeting and any relevant response from Officers ie if the suggestion/comment has any legal or financial implications	Take no action OR List the suggested change

Appendix: Flow chart for the submission of issues for Overview and Scrutiny at East Herts Council



Agenda Item 7

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: Tuesday 4 March 2025

Report by: Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report title: Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Draft Work Programme

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary

- This report considers topics for inclusion in the Committee's Draft Work Programme. By establishing a work programme of topics for scrutiny Members are better able to plan their future workload, with an agenda which is focussed, maximising the efficacy of the scrutiny process by taking a longer term, strategic view of the issues facing the council.
- A suggested list of topics is detailed in **Appendix 1**.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Overview and Scrutiny Committee

(A) That the work Programme at Appendix 1, be agreed.

1.0 Background

1.1 **Appendix 1** sets out the Draft Work Programme which may be reviewed at any time. Members are reminded to complete the scrutiny proposal form when putting forward an item for the draft work programme.

1.2 A key function of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to hold the Executive to account for its decisions, to review existing policies and consider proposals for new policies. In doing so, it will act as the Executive's critical friend in the process. The principle power of scrutiny is to influence policies and decisions

made by the Council. Its aim should be to achieve positive outcomes for local people by undertaking a thorough targeted examination of the council's services and procedures and make recommendations for improvement.

- 1.3 It has no formal powers to make changes but where a recommendation is made to the Executive, the Executive is required to respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if it decides not to accept a recommendation and the rationale for that decision. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) recommends that the Executive has to respond to any recommendation within two months.

2.0 Update

- 2.1 Topics for scrutiny at the following meetings are detailed in Appendix 1.

- 10 June 2025
- 16 September 2025
- 4 November 2025
- 20 January 2026
- 10 March 2026

- 2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met for a workshop on Tuesday 11 June 2024, to discuss potential topics for scrutiny on the work programme for 2024/25. A further workshop is in Members' diaries for March 2025 and the Executive have been invited to attend to share any upcoming matters they may have that the Committee might like to scrutinise.

- 2.3 The following topics are in the work programme for possible scrutiny in 2025/26, albeit none have yet been fleshed out via a scrutiny proposal form:

- Affordable Housing

- Section 106
- Development Management and Community Forums
- Anti-Racism Charter and the Equalities Strategy

2.4 All new up and coming strategies and policies will automatically be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme, and Members of Overview and Scrutiny can then consider whether they wish to look at these as part of the work programme.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 Members are welcome, and encouraged, to submit a scrutiny proposal at any time. This form is available in the Microsoft Teams channel and provides Officers with sufficient information to assess if it is appropriate for scrutiny and to ensure that specific questions are addressed. A Scrutiny Flowchart is also available which explains the processes involved in submitting a Scrutiny Proposal Form. Democratic Services will then liaise with Officers and the Chairman to consider the best way forward to address the subject and complete the scoping document.

4.0 Options

4.1 The work programme will be kept under review by the Committee throughout the coming year.

5.0 Risks

5.1 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 Committee 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.

5.2 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 risk (and Call-Ins) by ensuring key activities of the council are scrutinised.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

Yes - the proposed Work Programme envisages the Overview and Scrutiny Committee receiving reports on the progress of the council's environmental strategies.

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

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 **Appendix 1** - Summary of Topics

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Programme of Proposed Scrutiny Topics

Topic	Corporate Objectives (LEAF)	Questions/concerns	Scrutiny Approach (Bulletin, Report, rapid review or task and finish group)	Background Notes / Officers' comments	Reporting timeframe
Affordable Housing			Report	Topic must be narrowed down via a scrutiny proposal form; the topic will be delayed to June 2025 if a form is not submitted by the 4 March meeting	June 2025
Development Management and Community Forums			Report	To be presented once there is a full year of DM Forum meetings	2025
Anti-Racism Charter and the Equalities Strategy					