



MEETING : OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
VENUE : COUNCIL CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
DATE : TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2026
TIME : 7.00 PM

PLEASE NOTE TIME AND VENUE

This meeting will be live streamed on the Council's Youtube page:

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

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Councillor David Jacobs (Chair)

Councillors D Andrews, E Buckmaster, R Carter, N Clements, N Cox,
T Deffley, C Horner, S Marlow, S Nicholls, T Smith, M Swainston,
G Williams and J Wyllie

Substitutes

Conservative Group: Councillors A Holt and I Devonshire
Green Group: Councillors V Burt, V Smith and S Watson
Labour Group: Councillor C Redfern
Liberal Democrat Group: Councillor R Townsend
Reform: Councillor G McAndrew

(Note: Substitution arrangements must be notified by the absent Member to Democratic Services 7 hours before the meeting, i.e. by midday on the day of the meeting).

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Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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.

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AGENDA

1. Appointment of Vice-Chair for the 2026/27 civic year

2. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

3. Minutes - 10 March 2026 (Pages 6 - 17)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2026.

4. Chair's Announcements

5. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Members' Declarations of Interest.

6. Sewage Discharge and Cumulative Impacts on East Hertfordshire's Rivers
(Pages 18 - 26)

(A) Presentation from Thames Water (Jake Morley)

(B) Presentation from the Environment Agency - Chris Wilson (Area Director) and ManFai Tang (Leadership Team)

7. Emerging Proposals to Establish an Arts-focused Charity (Pages 27 - 40)

8. Housing Strategy Action Plan Update (Pages 41 - 62)

9. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-31 (Pages 63 - 98)

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-31

10. Annual Report for 25 26 and refresh of LEAF priorities (Pages 99 - 114)

11. Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Draft Work Programme
(Pages 115 - 120)
12. Feedback from the Executive
13. 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.

Agenda Item 3

OS

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY
10 MARCH 2026, AT 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Jacobs (Chair)
Councillors D Andrews, E Buckmaster,
R Carter, A Holt, C Horner, S Marlow,
S Nicholls, T Smith, M Swainston, G Williams
and J Wyllie

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors B Crystall, B Deering, D Hollebon
and T Hoskin

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Erica Carter	- Committee Support Officer
James Ellis	- Director for Legal, Policy and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Jonathan Geall	- Director for Communities
Peter Mannings	- Committee Support Officer
Ben Wood	- Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services

375 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillor P Boylan and N Clements. It was noted that Councillor Holt was substituting for Councillor Boylan.

376 MINUTES - 20 JANUARY 2026

Councillor Nicholls proposed, and Councillor Wyllie seconded, a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2026 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 20 January 2026, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

377 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no chair's announcements.

378 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

379 PRESENTATION BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY (CLLR HOSKIN) - THE COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO ACHIEVING NET ZERO CARBON BY 2030: SCRUTINY OF EAST HERTS COUNCIL'S 2025 CARBON EMISSIONS REPORT

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability submitted a presentation that updated Members in respect of the council's progress in moving towards net zero carbon. He set out of the context and referred to the UK government's legally binding target of reaching net zero emissions by 2050 and the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2022-2026.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability reminded Members of the council's aim to become a net zero carbon council by 2030, and he reminded Members of the climate change declaration that had been recently restated and reinforced by the council.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability set out the 2025 figure for the council's gross emissions in tonnes and the figures each year since a baseline figure in 2019. He set out details behind the 2025 figure and summarised the actions that were completed or underway.

Members were advised of the actions undertaken since the 2025 emissions report was published and the Executive Member presented a series of slides and graphs detailing the council's performance in terms of emissions and the sequestration of green assets in the context of research by the University of Hertfordshire and the English and Welsh LGA.

The Executive Member for Environment Sustainability presented a graph of net emissions projected to 2027 in the context of a gap of 335 tonnes of carbon to be reduced to a net zero position by 2030. He also referred to a table containing a list of actions aimed at eliminating residual carbon.

Members asked a number of questions, and these were answered by the Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability.

Members received the presentation.

RESOLVED – that the presentation be received.

380 PROGRESS ON THE PARKING STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability submitted a report that summarised the progress on the East Herts Parking Strategy, which had been adopted in January 2025. He said that there had been extensive consultation in 2024, and the aim of the strategy was to make parking rules simpler and more consistent whilst supporting longer term sustainability and behaviour change.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the strategy was not solely focussed on parking services, and it brought together actions and resources from across the council and different partners.

Members were advised that the strategy was underpinned by three objectives, which were (A) support the take up of environmentally friendly vehicles and sustainable alternatives to driving, (B) take a balanced approach to parking to make it fairer, easier and more consistent across East Herts and (C) adopting a more considerate approach to managing parking services throughout East Herts.

Members were advised that each of the objectives was underpinned by several individual actions. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that Appendix A detailed a number of strategic objectives and progress had been made in several areas. A number of the objectives were strategic in nature and were designed to encourage long term behaviour change and modal shift.

Members mentioned parking tariff reviews and car park capacity, relating to BA4 and CA3, and whether there would be a period of monitoring after the prices increases in April to how this had impacted on dwell time, car capacity and behaviour change as well as monitoring of the impact of increases in parking on residential roads in town centres.

The Committee also mentioned CA5 in the context of a review of parking enforcement in terms of whether this would include on street parking. The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability touched on the limited Civic Enforcement Officer (CEO) resource and said that the council used this APCOA resource as efficiently as possible. Requests for ad hoc inspections were accommodated where possible and the aim was to ensure a visible presence when CEOs were out on site and there was an impact.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that the council needed to reinstate the footfall reports that related to town centres so that there was a before and after comparison. He said that questions around modal shift were extraordinarily difficult to answer and there were initiatives whereby people were rewarded for using alternative modes of transport. Members were advised that a couple of schemes were being explored for secure electric bike stores where expensive bikes could be stored securely.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that dwell times had reduced dramatically in Apton Road and Basbow Lane car parks in Bishop's Stortford, and the dwell time in Northgate End had increased. He said that a third phase of the strategy was charging on an emissions-based tariff structure.

Members commented on the responsiveness of the parking team in the context of requests from councillors or residents for support across East Herts. Some concerns had been expressed by sports clubs and community organisations which were located adjacent to car parks. A concern was expressed about a counterproductive situation where people discouraged from using car parks and then parking on street causing complaints from residents. There was a need for a significant review in that regard.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability talked about the impact of any action having unplanned consequences and there was no parking policy that could affect or prevent inconsiderate parking by the public. He said policies were in place to police inconsiderate parking.

A question was asked about BA1 and a review of the all-day parking tariffs option for some town centre car parks to better utilize car parking spaces for shoppers. Comments were made about consultation with the workers in the town who would find it more difficult if all day parking charges were reviewed and was the council

going to talk consulting with town centre workers or their representatives.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability said that reduced charges had been extended for town centre workers in Bishop's Stortford and charges had been reduced in Northgate End for all residents using that facility. A similar approach had been taken in Old London Road in Hertford and there were ongoing discussions with the BID and active engagement to explore the option of residential and business permits.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability confirmed that as regards emissions-based parking, this had worked elsewhere, and the issue was the pay and display machines were not new and whilst we recognize that they are they served a really useful purpose as not everyone used electronic payments. He said that a more limited number of more modern payment machines which were capable of linking to the DVLA databases allowing the rate to be set automatically based upon the car type.

The Chair reminded the committee that it was for the committee to shape recommendations for future priorities for the Executive to consider. He said that first one he had noted down was for emissions-based car parking rates.

A question was asked about car clubs and where the council was in that regard and could this be taken forward in collaboration with other companies. The Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services said that the previous car club operated from Wallfields, supported by a central government grant, had not worked financially as the demand from private users was insufficient to cover the cost of the extra insurance and maintenance. He also mentioned the logistical challenges for residents using the cars in an out-of-town location. Members were advised that this was an option that could be explored going forward for Old River Lane or Northgate End in Bishop's Stortford.

The Executive Member for Environmental Sustainability commented on the possibility of a mechanism within an RPZ where there were discounted spaces on offer for a car share scheme. A number of houses could club together and there would one vehicle for which there would be a reserved space at a reduced rate within the RPZ.

There was a discussion around the future impact of significant expansion of Stansted Airport and the current signage and parking monitoring in Bishop's Stortford and Sawbridgeworth. The Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services said that discussions were ongoing with MAG about recognising this issue and whether funding could be forthcoming about residents permit zones and the forward plan for new permit zones.

The Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services commented the future options for the top floor of the Northgate End Car Park, as this had been closed for a while. Members were advised that RPZs had to be hyper local and there had to be consultation and there was a threshold for future considerations of an RPZ, and there also had to be consideration of the knock-on impacts in terms of the displacement of parking.

Members discussed the possibility of single hours being permitted on single yellow lines, and the enforcement officers knowing when this was across the district. A concern was expressed about badly maintained cars causing a lot of emissions.

Councillor Nicholls proposed and Councillor Swainston seconded, a motion that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have reviewed progress made to date in respect of the Parking Strategy and the Executive be asked to consider the following:

- emissions-based car parking rates.
- impact and monitoring of unintended consequences of the proposed changes

- single yellow line restrictions changed from all day to a single specific hour
- promote resident and business permits more to help increase uptake of the scheme and to help reduce parking costs for regular users of the car parks.

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

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have reviewed the progress made to date in respect of the Parking Strategy and the Executive be asked to consider the following:

- emissions-based car parking rates.
- impact and monitoring of unintended consequences of the proposed changes
- single yellow line restrictions changed from all day to a single specific hour
- promote resident and business permits more to help increase uptake of the scheme and to help reduce parking costs for regular users of the car parks.

381 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA) POLICY REVIEW

The Director for Legal, Policy and Governance submitted a report that updated the Committee on the Council's recent IPCO inspection. The report sought Member approval of the RIPA policy.

Members were advised that the Regulation of the Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) was a piece of legislation that allowed local authorities to make use of covert surveillance for the purposes of investigations. The Director for Legal, Policy and Governance said that in reality the council did not use this legislation and neither did most other local authorities.

Members were advised that irrespective of the above reality; it was important that robust policies and

procedures were in place and that both officers and members were aware of the powers and that they could be used at some point.

The Director for Legal, Policy and Governance advised that the Investigatory Powers Commissioners Office (IPCO) inspects local authorities every three years, and with the last review being in 2022 the next scheduled inspection had taken place in 2025 on the 12 September. He said that the IPCO was generally happy that the council's RIPA policy was up to date but noted that it had not been before members for a number of years. The IPCO also remarked that Authorising Officers had not undergone RIPA training for a while and that this should be addressed at the earliest opportunity.

Members were invited to review appendix B and were advised that the report would also go forward to the Executive on 24th March 2026. Authorising Officers had also been booked in for specific RIPA training on the 30 June 2026.

The Director for Legal, Policy and Governance answered a number of questions from the committee.

The Director for Legal, Policy and Governance said that there were forms and links to forms whereby the council had to set out the case for using RIPA powers.

Councillor Andrews proposed and Councillor Williams seconded, a motion that the report be received and any observations from Members be forwarded to the Executive by the Director of Legal, Policy and Governance.

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

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

(B) any observations from Members be forwarded to the Executive by the Director of Legal, Policy and Governance.

382 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee Support Officer submitted the work programme report and Members were invited to consider and determine the work programme going forward. He referred to the workshop held on 5 March 2026 and said that the topic of Sustainable Development might not now come forward for scrutiny and that the AI topic would now be discussed on 9 June 2026.

Members were advised that the matter of sewage discharge into rivers could come before the committee in June or September. The Committee Support Officer said that the members present at the workshop mentioned receiving an update on BEAM. He reiterated that the Chief Executive had confirmed that it would be premature for Overview and Scrutiny to consider local government reform before January 2027.

The Committee Support Officer summarised the other topics that had been mentioned during the workshop including the council being a listening council, the consultation around the new Community Governance Reviews in Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford and the assets held by the council.

The Committee Support Officer said that the Director for Communities had said that a topic for consideration for adding to the work programme, following a discussion he had with the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, was the consideration of progress against the Housing Strategy action plan. The Committee could consider the 2025/26 end of year position, which would be known by the end of April, and the committee could consider this matter after that.

The Director for Communities had also mentioned that East Herts was looking to establish a charity regarding external funding towards arts and cultural activities in East Herts, and he had requested that this matter be added to the work programme.

The Committee discussed the work programme and the future topics. Councillor Andrews proposed, and Councillor Holt seconded a motion that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme, as amended, be agreed. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme, as amended, be agreed.

383 FEEDBACK FROM THE EXECUTIVE

There were no items for Executive feedback. The Leader said that there would be presentations in more detail at future meetings.

384 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (IF REQUIRED)

There was no urgent part two business.

385 URGENT ITEMS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting closed at 8.51 pm

Chairman
Date

Agenda Item 6

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: Tuesday 9 June 2026

Report by: Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward – Executive Member for Planning and Growth and
Councillor Sarah Hopewell – Executive Member for Wellbeing

Report title: Sewage Discharge and Cumulative Impacts on East Hertfordshire's Rivers

Ward(s) affected: All Wards

Summary

- This report supports the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's consideration of concerns about the cumulative impact of sewage discharge on rivers in East Hertfordshire, following a Motion agreed by Council on 22 October 2025.
- The report provides context for scrutiny by bringing together background information and the actions resolved by Council, and it facilitates an information gathering session through the attendance of senior representatives from Thames Water and the Environment Agency.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION: That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- A) Welcomes the attendance of representatives from Thames Water and the Environment Agency; and**
- B) Notes the presentations delivered, acknowledging the information and evidence presented and the responses provided to Members' questions.**

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to support the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in considering the cumulative impact of sewage

discharge on rivers within East Hertfordshire, following the Motion agreed by Council on 22 October 2025¹. The report provides context for the Committee's consideration of further evidence presented by representatives from Thames Water and the Environment Agency.

- 1.2 The recommendations reflect the information gathering nature of this item, with the Committee being asked to welcome the attendance of external representatives and to note the presentations delivered. Any further conclusions, observations or recommendations arising from the evidence presented may be considered by the Committee as part of its future work programme and, where appropriate, reported to Executive or Council.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Concerns have been raised by local residents and community groups regarding declining water quality across East Hertfordshire and the frequency of wastewater discharges, including untreated sewage, into local rivers.
- 2.2 Data published by the Environment Agency indicates that Thames Water released wastewater into the River Lee and its tributaries on 1,060 occasions during 2023. The total duration of discharge events across the catchment amounted to 11,501.7 hours, almost double the recorded figure for 2022 (5,891.3 hours).
- 2.3 In Cottered, sewage discharge into the River Beane reached 2,222.25 hours in 2023, compared with 1,010 hours in 2022, representing a significant year-on-year increase.
- 2.4 Members have expressed concern that sewage discharges are no longer confined to exceptional storm events but are occurring frequently during normal rainfall conditions, suggesting a cumulative overload of sewage and wastewater infrastructure.

¹ [Agenda item - Motion to protect our rivers by taking into account the cumulative impact of sewage discharge - East Herts District Council](#)

2.5 In light of these concerns a Motion was presented to Council on 22 October 2025 where it was resolved to:

1. Recognise this Council's obligation to protect its rivers in line with its local planning policy, and the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. Recognise that there is clear evidence of deterioration of water quality due to cumulative impact of multiple sewage discharge events or 'sewage overload'.
3. Ensure the evidence base being compiled for the new District Plan fully assesses the cumulative impact of sewage discharge so that this is factored into decisions made in the new local plan, including the overall level of future development.
4. Seek to better understand the cumulative impact of wastewater discharge including untreated sewage and misconnections on the district's rivers, wildlife and the health of residents.
5. Continue to take a lead on addressing this issue, working constructively with other agencies.
6. Write to the Environment Agency asking for a position statement in relation to East Herts District, which sets out its understanding of the cumulative impact of 1,060 + sewage discharges per annum into our rivers, or if it is not willing to do so, the reasons why.
7. Ask Natural England when it plans to update its assessment of the Lee Valley Ramsar Sites, Special Protection Areas, and SSSIs, especially Hunsdon and Eastwick Meads.
8. Ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to invite senior representatives from Thames Water, the Environment Agency and Natural England to attend an East Herts District Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to answer questions on sewage discharge.
9. Declare support for River Action's Charter for Rivers.

2.6 A copy of the Motion is attached at **Appendix A**.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 There are a number of actions arising from the Motion, several of which have already been progressed or completed.

3.2 In respect of point 8. above, officers wrote to senior representatives from Thames Water, the Environment Agency and Natural England asking them to attend a meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The invitation was accepted by Thames Water and the Environment Agency who will be in attendance at the meeting scheduled for the 9 June 2026. No one from Natural England was available.

3.3 The attendance of representatives from Thames Water and the Environment Agency provides an opportunity for the Committee to scrutinise the evidence on sewage discharge, understand the respective roles and responsibilities of these key agencies, and explore how cumulative impacts on the district's rivers and communities are being assessed and addressed.

4.0 Options

4.1 The Council has the option to consider, partially consider, or not consider the requests set out in the Motion. Considering the request to invite representatives from Thames Water, the Environment Agency and Natural England allows the Council to respond to Member and public concerns, improve understanding of environmental impacts, and use scrutiny to engage constructively with responsible agencies.

5.0 Risks

5.1 If the cumulative impacts of sewage discharge are not adequately understood or addressed, the Council may be exposed to risk, particularly where environmental protection duties are engaged. Continued public concern may also impact community confidence. Scrutiny and effective engagement with responsible agencies will help mitigate these risks.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 The attendance of Thames Water and the Environment Agency at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting is intended to facilitate informed dialogue, evidence-gathering and accountability, rather than formal consultation.

Community Safety

There are no direct community safety implications arising from this report. However, concerns around sewage discharge and declining water quality may have indirect impacts on public wellbeing, amenity use of rivers and open spaces, and public confidence in environmental protection. Scrutiny of these issues supports the Council's wider role in safeguarding communities and ensuring that risks to residents are appropriately understood and managed by responsible agencies.

Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising from this report. No personal data is processed as part of the recommendations or the proposed scrutiny activity.

Equalities

The issues addressed in this report apply district-wide and do not disproportionately affect any protected group as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

Environmental Sustainability

This report directly relates to environmental sustainability, specifically water quality. Scrutiny of sewage discharge and cumulative environmental impacts supports the Council's climate and environmental objectives and its statutory duties to protect and enhance the natural environment.

Financial

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Health and Safety

There are no direct health and safety implications arising from this report.

Human Resources

There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report. Officer input to support the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be provided within existing staffing arrangements.

Human Rights

There are no direct human rights implications arising from this report.

Legal

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Specific Wards

All

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Appendix A: Motion to protect our rivers by taking into account the cumulative impact of sewage discharge

Contact Members Councillor Vicky Glover-Ward
Executive Member for Planning and Growth.
vicky.glover-ward@eastherts.gov.uk

Councillor Sarah Hopewell
Executive Member for Wellbeing.
sarah.hopewell@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer Sara Saunders, Director for Place, Tel: 01992 531656. sara.saunders@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author Claire Sime, Assistant Director for Place Shaping, Tel: 01992 531626.
claire.sime@eastherts.gov.uk

EHDC Motion to protect our rivers by taking into account the cumulative impact of sewage discharge

Proposed by: Councillor Nicholas Cox

Seconded by: Councillor Rachel Carter

East Herts District Council notes that:

- Local residents are deeply concerned about water quality and the impact of regular wastewater discharge, which includes untreated sewage, into our rivers and the impact on wildlife and on human health.¹
- Thames Water released sewage into the River Lee and its tributaries 1,060 times in 2023.
- Environment Agency figures reveal wastewater from toilets, sinks and drains spilt out of storm overflows into the waterway for an equivalent 11,501.7 hours last year.
- This figure is almost double the previous year (2022) when the number of spill hours stood at 5,891.3.
- At Cottered in Buntingford, Hertfordshire, sewage spilled into River Beane for 2222.25 hours in 2023. Discharge hours at Cottered have more than doubled on 2022, when the total number of spill hours was 1,010.²

Releasing sewage into rivers is no longer an emergency-only situation occurring as a result of severe storms, but an everyday occurrence even in 'normal' rainfall, and that we are in a situation of cumulative overload on the sewage and wastewater system.

Not one of the rivers in East Herts District is classed as 'Good' for Ecological or Chemical Status under the Water Framework Directive. The UK has the dirtiest rivers in Europe.³

¹ See <https://www.sas.org.uk/water-quality/the-risks-of-mixing-with-sewage/> and House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee 2022 quality in rivers report pages 23-25

² <https://www.bishopsstortfordindependent.co.uk/news/hatfield-heath-takeley-little-hallingbury-and-stansted-in-9360170/>

³ See <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/sep/17/rivers-in-england-fail-pollution-tests-due-to-sewage-and-chemicals>. Note that the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee Water quality in rivers in January 2022 stated "The most recent figures published by the Environment Agency, under obligations originally established by the EU

Affected local wildlife habitats include the Lee Valley Ramsar Sites, Special Protection Areas, and SSSIs, especially Hunsdon and Eastwick Meads.⁴

Whilst there are long term commitments, there are no plans in place which will address the immediate unacceptable situation either locally by Thames Water or by national government.⁵

Additionally, there is no clear statement of position by the Environment Agency, who has overall responsibility, to clarify the cumulative impact of sewage overload on our wildlife and habitats. In Cambridgeshire it has issued position statements on the separate but related area of water neutrality⁶ which have directly led to a pause in development; why not sewage overload?

Both local and national planning policy requires a robust approach to both water quality and pollution and a recent legal opinion from the Environmental Law Firm suggests that cumulative impact should be considered. Thames Water does not currently provide information on cumulative impact to local planning authorities.

East Herts District Council resolves to:

1. Recognise this Council's obligation to protect its rivers in line with its local planning policy, and the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. Recognise that there is clear evidence of deterioration of water quality due to cumulative impact of multiple sewage discharge events or 'sewage overload'.
3. Ensure the evidence base being compiled for the new District

Water Framework Directive, show that only 14% of English rivers met good ecological status and no river met good chemical status. [...] Water pollution remains a major impediment to achieving targets established under the Directive (requiring all European surface water to reach 'good ecological status' by 2015 with a maximum deadline of 2027). The report also warns of plastics, 'forever chemicals' and points out (p.15) that "The presence in rivers of a number of so-called emerging pollutants—such as microplastics, and a range of chemicals, such as pharmaceuticals and narcotics—is not being systematically measured."

⁴ <https://www.hertswildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-reserves/hunsdon-and-eastwick-meads>

⁵ Govt commitments (all long-term solutions) are at <https://deframedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/09/18/latest-water-classifications- results-published/>

⁶ <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/topics/environment/nutrient-neutrality-and-planning-system>

Plan fully assesses the cumulative impact of sewage discharge so that this is factored into decisions made in the new local plan, including the overall level of future development.

4. Seek to better understand the cumulative impact of wastewater discharge including untreated sewage and misconnections on the district's rivers, wildlife and the health of residents
5. Continue to take a lead on addressing this issue, working constructively with other agencies.
6. Write to the Environment Agency asking for a position statement in relation to East Herts District, which sets out its understanding of the cumulative impact of 1,060 + sewage discharges per annum into our rivers, or if it is not willing to do so, the reasons why.
7. Ask Natural England when it plans to update its assessment of the Lee Valley Ramsar Sites, Special Protection Areas, and SSSIs, especially Hunsdon and Eastwick Meads.
8. Ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to invite senior representatives from Thames Water, the Environment Agency and Natural England to attend an East Herts District Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to answer questions on sewage discharge.
9. Declare support for River Action's Charter for Rivers⁷

⁷ River Action is a UK organisation which has campaigns against river pollution. Its Charter for Rivers sets out a ten-point plan to restore our rivers by 2030. <https://riveractionuk.com/charter-for-rivers/>

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: Tuesday 9 June 2026

Report by: Councillor Alex Daar – Executive Member for Communities

Report title: Emerging Proposals to Establish an Arts-focused Charity

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

- Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to review and input to emerging plans to establish an arts-focused charity that would enable, fund and support delivery of arts and cultural activities primarily within the boundaries of the current district of East Hertfordshire, though potentially beyond this area following local government reorganisation.

RECOMMENDATION FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

A) Members Review and provide feedback to the Executive Member for Communities on the emerging proposals to establish an arts-focused charity to enable arts and cultural endeavours primarily within the boundary of the current district of East Hertfordshire.

1.0 Proposal

1.1 Proposals are being drawn up to establish an arts-focused charity that would enable, fund and support delivery of arts and cultural activities primarily within the boundaries of the current district of East Hertfordshire, though potentially beyond this area following local government reorganisation. External legal advice has been sought on how best to do this. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are now invited to offer their views and insights at this early stage of plan development.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 East Herts Council launched its Cultural Strategy in 2021. Although it was originally envisaged that the strategy would run until 2025, given the local government reorganisation (LGR) timetable arguably mitigates against updating council's strategies which remain highly relevant, it is felt the 2021-2025 is still an important reference document. The strategy recognises that arts and cultural activities contribute to tangible gains in health and wellbeing outcomes, economic resilience and environmental sustainability. The Cultural Strategy, when coupled with the council's current vision and corporate priorities, demonstrates the significance the council places on the arts.
- 2.2 As a practical demonstration of the council's focus on expanding local engagement in arts and cultural activities, in 2024 the council used UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) resources to run its first arts showcase event, called Arts in East Herts. This was repeated in 2025 using monies from the council's second UKSPF allocation. The events, which both ran over the months of September and October, achieved substantial levels of engagement as shown the table below.

	2024	2025
Arts sessions delivered	200	298
Members of the public taking part	5,406	4,225
<i>Of whom were new to arts activities</i>	<i>1,732</i>	<i>1,684</i>
Volunteers supporting the delivery	213	198

- 2.3 Of note, unlike some council-led initiatives, Arts in East Herts was not delivered primarily in the district's five main towns. On the contrary, there were artists setting up in village church halls, opening their village studios to run workshops and running free sessions in community halls throughout the district.
- 2.4 The council's appetite to see the cultural offer diversified in the district is further evidenced by donation-led activity by BEAM, the council-owned, redesigned Hertford Theatre, focused beyond their Hertford base.
- 2.5 With the government's UKSPF programme having now ended and the council continuing to face financial pressures, the Executive Member for Communities has asked officers to identify

and explore a suitable way to build on the track record of arts engagement fostered by Arts in East Herts and BEAM's outreach remit without reliance of council funding.

3.0 Reasons

3.1 Officers from BEAM and the Communities directorate have identified that support for arts and cultural activities through a charitable entity could have significant benefits over the council continuing to try to do this. Notably an arts-focused charity:

- could enhance revenue income for charitable uses through access to gift aid donations, something the council can't utilise. For example, BEAM's current passive fundraising (that is, money raised without constant direct requests, campaigns or proactive officer involvement) totals around £10,000 a year. The ability to utilise gift aid would mean that 25% tax could be reclaimed on this amount, thus in this example, if BEAM's fundraising was via a charity, the £10,000 would be boosted by another £2,500. These donations sit outside of the revenue stream to the council and thus if the charity were to benefit from such donations in the future this would not deprive the council of a revenue income stream it currently enjoys
- would be able to bid for a far wider range of external funding than can the council. For example, certain Arts Council and Lottery funding streams are only available to charities or favour non-local authority bidders
- may be better placed to access more local grant-making bodies such as the Hertfordshire Community Foundation, Stansted Airport's Community Fund, Clarion Futures and even some public health bodies
- could prove to be a more attractive recipient of donations for local arts than the council itself
- could avail itself, through careful selection of its trustees, of a wider range of relevant experience, expertise and skills regarding arts and cultural endeavours than the council could.

3.2 Officers have noted that it is becoming increasingly common for local authorities to establish arts charities, generally in the form of leisure and culture charities. In East Herts for example, the council was instrumental in setting up the Scott's Grotto

Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in 2018 and Southern Maltings in Ware is a charity that frequently partners with Ware Town Council to deliver arts programmes.

Legal advice

3.3 Given the distinct benefits of providing local arts and cultural activities through a charity, officers sought independent legal advice on how best to establish a charity, including its form, function and structure. To this end, expert advice was procured from Browne Jacobson, a leading legal practice with considerable expertise regarding the not-for-profit and charitable sectors. The discussion below on the legal aspects of establishing an arts-focused charity in East Herts is based on their advice.

Structure

3.4 Browne Jacobson set out four possible structures for a charity. These are summarised in the table below.

Legal structure	Description	Pros	Cons	Suitability
Unincorporated association	Informal grouping of individuals with no separate legal personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple to set up • Minimal administration • Flexible governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No separate legal identity • Trustees/members may have personal liability for debts and obligations • Harder to enter contracts or own property 	Not recommended for the council's purposes
Charitable trust	Charity established via a trust deed, run by trustees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straightforward structure • Suitable for holding assets for charitable purposes • Relatively simple governance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No separate legal personality • Trustees may have personal liability • Limited flexibility for trading or operational complexity 	Not recommended for this purpose
Charitable company limited by guarantee (CLG)	Incorporated company with charitable status, governed by company and charity law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate legal personality • Limited liability for trustees/members • Well-understood legal structure • Can enter contracts and employ staff easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual regulation (Charity Commission and Companies House) • More administrative burden • Company reporting requirements (accounts, filings) 	Potential alternative to CIO
Charitable Incorporated	Charity-specific incorporated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate legal personality • Limited liability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slightly less flexible than a company in 	Often preferred

Organisation (CIO)	legal structure registered only with the Charity Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simpler than CLG (single regulator) • Designed specifically for charities • Easier governance and compliance than CLG model 	some corporate contexts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still relatively new compared with older structures (less familiarity for some stakeholders) 	modern model for charities
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3.5 The recommended structure for a new art-focused charity in East Herts would be the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) model. As noted above, the council has previously used this model with regard to Scott’s Grotto in Ware.

Charitable objectives

3.6 Any charity’s purpose(s) must align to at least one of the thirteen specific categories identified as having charitable status in the Charities Act 2011. In the case of an arts-focused charity in East Herts, the most relevant objective would be the ‘*advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science*’. Browne Jacobson have advised that the Charity Commission favours more tightly defined descriptions and business plans related to precisely what the charity is aiming to achieve. At this stage, it is anticipated that the charity would seek to:

- secure and pass on funding to the providers and purveyors of arts and cultural endeavours
- enable participation in the arts, including among groups who are typically underrepresented in the provision of and participation in arts and cultural activities
- focus its endeavours within the boundaries of (the former) district of East Hertfordshire while enabling some flexibility within the new unitary geography.

3.7 The council would seek to benefit from further expert advice on how best to craft and explain these aims so as to secure Charity Commission approval as quickly as possible.

CIO governance

- 3.8 If the CIO model were to be adopted (as is considered the most appropriate model), the council would need to choose between the 'foundation' model (where the trustees are also the members) and the 'association' model (where there is a separate membership body).
- 3.9 Browne Jacobson have pointed out that the association model is often applied by large charities with large numbers of individual members, for example, professional membership organisations, although it is also available to small charities whenever there is a desire for the trustees and the members to be different people.
- 3.10 It is worth noting here that in a CIO, the trustees are responsible for the strategy, finances, policies and administration of the charity, with the possibility of delegating functions to an executive team/chief executive or committees of the board of trustees. The members in a CIO have more limited rights, including the right to amend the governing document of the CIO, decide the use of any net assets on winding down of the CIO (within certain constraints) and any rights which are reserved to them under the CIO's governing document which could include, for example, the right to appoint/remove all/some trustees.
- 3.11 The choice between these two models will depend on the degree of influence the council ultimately wishes to retain and the Charity Commission's likely reception of the chosen approach, such that they tend to favour the maximum possible independence of charities from the councils establishing them.
- 3.12 Officers suggest further expert advice is sought on whether the foundation or association model is better suited to the council's objectives in establishing a charity.

Trustees

- 3.13 Browne Jacobson suggest that for a new arts charity operating across East Herts, the board should contain between five and nine trustees. This, they argue, would give the board sufficient breadth of skills and experience while remaining manageable. They go on to suggest three trustees being present to achieve a quorum.

3.14 Browne Jacobson's views were specifically sought on how the council could, should it wish, exert legitimate influence over who form the trustees, bearing in mind that at all times the trustees would have to act in the best interests of the charity. Their views are summarised in the table below.

Option	Structure	Council role	Trustee composition	Charity Commission's likely position
Sole corporate trustee	Council acts as sole trustee of the charity	Council holds all assets and exercises all trustee powers	Council only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permitted in principle but closely scrutinised • Strong governance and conflict-of-interest controls required
Majority trustee appointer	Council appoints majority of trustees	Appoints majority	Majority council-appointed, minority independent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to be cautious • Requires strong evidence of independence and oversight of council–charity transactions
Minority trustee appointer	Council appoints minority of trustees	Appoints up to, say, one third 1/3 of board	Majority independent trustees with sector expertise, with possibility of co-option by board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally favourable if independence and sustainability demonstrated
Nominator only with no appointment role	Council does not appoint	May nominate some candidates	Fully independently recruited/co-opted board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very favourable

	trustees directly	for consideration only		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongest independence model
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3.15 Browne Jacobson recommend that the council acts as the ‘minority trustee appointer’ because this affords a degree of legitimate control over who some of the trustees are while being able to clearly demonstrate to the Charity Commission that the new charity is independent of the council. While officers can see the benefit of this approach, no recommendation has yet been formalised on this point and further views will be sought.

Day-to-day running of the charity

3.16 The charity would require day-to-day management. This could in theory be provided by the trustees but it is likely to prove more effective for the charity to pay for such services. Depending on the size of the charity, in terms of financial resources and activities, it could directly employ an officer or officers. It appears more likely, however that at least in its early years it would be expedient to buy in these services.

3.17 Specific advice was sought from Browne Jacobson on the ability of the council (including BEAM) to offer services to the charity and the charity to pay for services from the council They have advised that the council may provide services to the charity, however, the following requirements must be observed:

- all service provision must be governed by a written service-level agreement, setting out the nature of the services, the charges, the standard to be achieved and the duration and termination rights
- if the council provides services to the charity at a higher price than cost, the trustees of the charity will need to be satisfied that the terms and conditions offered by the council are the best that the charity can find in the market to ensure best value. Browne Jacobson have added that if the charity was to be controlled at trustee or members level by the council, it might fall within the public procurement regulations
- unless the council only has a minority of trustees, if the council were to provide services to charity other than at cost, it is likely that the Charity Commission would need to approve the arrangement

- any council-appointed trustee who is also an officer or elected member of the Council involved in the provision of council services to the charity must normally declare a conflict of interest in relation to any decision about whether to engage the council to provide services and must withdraw from the vote
- independent trustees must assure themselves, and be able to evidence to the Charity Commission, that engaging the council to provide services represents good value for money for the charity.

Summary of the emerging potential model for an arts-focused charity

3.18 To summarise the above discussion, the emerging potential model for a charity is as follows:

- it would be a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to enable charitable purposes to be furthered while limiting trustees' exposure to liabilities and risk
- the CIO's charitable purposes, subject to further refinement, would be to (a) secure and pass on funding regarding of arts and cultural endeavours, (b) enable participation in the arts and (c) focus on (the former) district of East Hertfordshire while enabling some flexibility within the new unitary geography
- either a foundation or association model for the charity would be adopted following further consideration of the relative merits of each
- the charity would have between five and nine trustees, subject to further consideration
- the council would appoint a minority of trustees, although this would be subject to greater consideration
- the charity could pay for services provided by the council subject to best value consideration and transparency of the arrangement.

4.0 Next steps

Short term

4.1 The views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will help shape the emerging proposals. The establishment of a charity is

subject to an Executive decision to do so. Thus, it is envisaged at this stage that a report will be brought to the Executive by the Executive Member for Communities at its meeting on 14th July recommending 'in principle' support for the establishment of an arts-focused charity primarily focused on East Hertfordshire, at least in the first instance. The same report is likely to recommend that authority be delegated to the Director for Communities, acting in consultation with the Executive Member for Communities, to complete the necessary work and due diligence to submit an application to the Charity Commission for registration of the charity. The report will include the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4.2 Browne Jacobson have brought to the council's attention that the process to register a new charity can take between six weeks and six months, or longer if the Charity Commission raises queries. It is perhaps prudent, therefore, to set the end of this financial year as a long-stop timeline for registration.

4.3 At the same time, even if registration were achieved at the lower end of the anticipated timescale, it would not be possible to establish the charity in time to oversee an Arts in East Herts showcase in September and October (or similar dates) this year. Officers thus propose that:

- the council administers this year's Arts in East Herts event with grants payable from the council's resources already allocated for community grants
- officers establish a 'steering group' to assist in bringing forward this year's event, some members of which could potentially become trustees of the new charity. This approach has the benefit of a phased handover should the charity proceed.

4.4 At the same time, of course, work would progress on defining the structure of the new charity and securing Charity Commission registration as soon as possible.

Medium term

4.5 As discussed earlier in this report, it is felt that a new charity would be better placed to raise funds for arts and cultural endeavours than the council. That said, a new charity is unlikely

to have access to funding immediately on forming, therefore, subject to future member decisions, it is envisaged that the fledgling charity could receive:

- gift donations made to BEAM which – for avoidance of doubt – sit entirely outside of BEAM’s business plan and revenue income to the council
- ‘seed funding’ from East Herts Lottery resources held by the council for use at its discretion on community-focused activities.

4.6 The charity would in time, it is envisaged, make applications for its own funding from external bodies and embark on other fundraising activities.

5.0 Options

5.1 Do not pursue work with the aim of establishing an arts-focused charity. NOT RECOMMENDED as the council does not have resources to continue and build on the UKSPF-funded Arts in East Herts programme in which so many local people have participated. Furthermore, the full potential of BEAM’s donation-funded activity could be compromised by fettering the ability to access funding for which local authorities are not eligible, such as gift aid and some external grants. In combination, this would vastly reduce previous years’ efforts widen access to arts and culture in the district.

5.2 Support an alternative charity model to the emerging approach outlined in this report. NOT RECOMMENDED as the emerging proposals discussed in this report have been informed by expert independent legal advice.

6.0 Risks

6.1 Whilst relatively straightforward, establishing a charity is a legal process with its own complexities, especially in regard to its relationship with the council setting it up. There is a risk that the council is not able to satisfy the Charity Commission of the charity’s feasibility and/or distance from the council. This risk is being mitigated by having already sought expert legal advice and being prepared to do so again to assist in the drafting of

registration documentation should this appear necessary.

- 6.2 There is a risk that the establishment of a steering group to oversee this year's proposed Arts in East Herts showcase could prove difficult, suggesting limited appetite locally for people to put themselves forward as trustees. This risk is being mitigated in two ways; first, officers have already begun to seek views via existing arts-related networks and there appears to be some appetite for greater direct involvement and second, a model which limits trustees' liability (the CIO) is likely to be pursued.

7.0 Implications/Consultations

- 7.1 Thus far, discussions have been largely internal involving officers from BEAM and the Communities directorate and the Executive Member for Communities.
- 7.2 As noted above, independent legal advice on the setting up a charity has been sought.

Community Safety

None arising directly from this report.

Data Protection

None arising directly from this report, although it is noted that a new charity would need to ensure the collecting and storing of personal data relating to artists and attendees on their programmes complies with the Data Protection Act.

Equalities

Should the emerging proposal to establish an arts-focused charity progress, the documents governing the charity's purpose, business plan and so on would need to be subject to an equalities impact assessment. This would be carried out at the time.

Environmental Sustainability

None arising directly from this report.

Financial

The independent legal advice was funded with UKSPF resources and further legal advice would be subject to resources being identified. No decisions have yet been made regarding any 'seed funding' that could be passed to a new charity.

Health and Safety

None arising directly from this report.

Human Resources

None arising directly from this report.

Human Rights

None arising directly from this report.

Legal

A legal review on the establishment of a charitable organisation by a local authority has been undertaken by Browne Jacobson legal consultants. Their advice is underpinning the emerging proposals, as noted throughout the report. Should matters progress to seeking registration with the Charity Commission, further legal advice will be sought internally and possibility externally too.

Specific Wards

No.

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Browne Jacobson's legal advice.

7.2 There are no appendices.

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East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: Tuesday 9 June 2026

Report by: Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Report title: Housing Strategy Action Plan Update 2025/26

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

- This report is provided to Overview and Scrutiny Committee to share the delivery progress of actions outlined in the Housing Strategy in 2025/26.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- A) Undertake a review into the progress of actions to deliver the priorities of the Housing Strategy 2022-27; and**
- B) Make any recommendations regarding performance against these actions to the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods.**

1.0 Background

1.1 The East Herts Housing Strategy for the period 2022-27 sets out four strategic priorities:

- deliver more affordable housing
- enable a wider range of accommodation
- support for the most vulnerable residents
- provide high quality housing options for older people which are better suited to their needs, and improve the sustainability and quality of homes

1.2 Specific actions under each of these priorities were agreed during the development of the strategy and have been monitored on a quarterly basis.

1.3 The Strategy is entering the final stages of delivery which provides a good opportunity for review.

2.0 Review of Progress of Housing Strategy Actions

2.1 **Appendix A** provides details of the specific actions for Housing under each of the strategic priorities and the progress in 2025/26 against these actions.

2.4 This scrutiny exercise seeks to examine the progress of these actions.

2.5 The findings and any recommendations will be presented to the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods for consideration.

4.0 Reason(s)

4.1 This scrutiny exercise seeks to examine the progress of the actions outlined to deliver the priorities in the Housing Strategy 2022-27. The aim of this scrutiny is to provide feedback to be considered in the last year of delivery of this strategy.

5.0 Options

4.1 To not undertake a review of the progress of the actions to deliver the Housing Strategy– NOT RECOMMENDED. The review into the progress of the Housing Strategy is within the remit of Overview and Scrutiny, in line with their role to represent the interests of residents.

4.2 To undertake a review of the progress of actions to deliver the Housing Strategy 2022-27- RECOMMENDED

5.0 Risks

5.1 The remit of Overview and Scrutiny is to help review and improve services and functions run by the council and its local partners. Therefore, there is no risk associated with this review.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 Community Safety
a) None arising directly from this report.

Data Protection

a) None arising directly from this report.

Equalities

a) None arising directly from this report.

Environmental Sustainability

a) None arising directly from this report.

Financial

a) None arising directly from this report.

Health and Safety

a) None arising directly from this report.

Human Resources

a) None arising directly from this report.

Human Rights

a) None arising directly from this report.

Legal

a) None arising directly from this report.

Specific Wards

a) None arising directly from this report.

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Background Information: None

7.2 Appendices

Appendix A - Update on Housing Strategy 2022-27 actions

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Appendix A Update on Housing Strategy Actions 2025/26

Housing Strategy Action Plan Strategic Priority 1: Deliver more affordable homes

Increase the supply of new homes offered with (a) social rents or (b) affordable rents at or very near to between 50 per cent and 60 per cent of market rents.

Strategic Objective	Proposed Outcome	Agreed Actions	Update 2025/26
1.1 To produce a Statement of Housing Affordability to support the aims of the Tenancy Strategy and improve affordability of the Social Housing being developed.	Maximisation of the number of genuinely affordable homes for households in East Herts and reducing the number of households that fail the RP affordability assessments for homes for affordable rent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate data on what constitutes affordability in the East Herts District. • Present statement to the East Herts Housing Forum. • Obtain approval from the Executive member for Neighbourhoods. • Publish Statement. 	<p>Data collated and shared. Understanding of affordability agreed.</p> <p>Statement has been communicated as per action 1.4 via redrafted nominations agreement. This has been shared with registered providers and currently receiving and responding to comments.</p>

	in the East Herts District.		
<p>1.2 To increase the amount of affordable housing at a) social rents or b) affordable rents at or very near to between 50% and 60% of market rents.</p>	<p>More affordable rented properties with lower rents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify potential to secure lower rents on new build schemes 	<p>The council provided funding to Paradigm HA to enable a lower rent on four new build four bed houses in Bishop' Stortford to be let to tenants from the housing register. The dwellings have been let at the LHA rate for a three-bed house rather than a four-bed house.</p> <p>Paradigm HA secured Homes England funding to change the tenure on 15 new build dwellings in Bishop's Stortford from Affordable Rent to Social Rent. A further 6 units now being considered.</p> <p>With support from the council Anchor HA secured funding from Homes England to deliver 25 x 1 bed older person supported living dwellings for social rent on the East of Stevenage Development. This is in addition to the S.106 affordable housing contribution for the development. 25 social rent and 39 shared ownership units to be ready by March 2026. Anchor</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess feasibility of development for social rent on council owned land. 	<p>currently considering if they can transfer a further 6 of the 39 shared ownership properties to social rent which will all be 2-bed units</p> <p>1-15 Limekiln Lane- 15 units provided at social rent, including gifted white goods.</p> <p>Direct development not feasible due to timescale and LGR. MOU testing principle of contribution of land for greater proportion of social housing which is covered further in 1.3</p>
1.3 To produce and publish a statement/policy on the use of the council's capital contributions to affordable housing development including	Ability to select the most productive uses of council resources in order to produce genuinely affordable homes for rent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out research into a comprehensive range of uses to which council resources can be put to increase supply and/or the affordability of rent levels. Publish and consult on options. Develop policies 	<p>S.106 Payments in lieu are being used for rent reduction from affordable rent to social rent as described in 1.2 In addition this approach has been used to support the conversion of market rate, shared ownership and affordable rent units (15 total) to social rent at Limekiln Lane let April 2026.</p> <p>Work commenced on how the Council can support the increased supply of</p>

<p>commuted sums and land to increase the supply of affordable homes and increase affordability of rent levels.</p>	<p>at or around Social Rent level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with RPs to put into practice and monitor 	<p>affordable homes through a joint endeavour. A memorandum of understanding is being developed to provide guiding principles.</p>
<p>1.4 To review the Section 106 agreement template and standardise the document for housing development to provide clarity to RPs on key expectations for development including rent levels and</p>	<p>Minimising the number of affordable homes for rent which are not genuinely affordable to low-income households in East Herts. Providing greater clarity to developers and registered</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse recent problems encountered with Section 106 agreements. • Identify sections within recent Section 106 agreements which require improvement and standardisation. 	<p>Analysis and work to identify necessary changes complete . New s.106 template drafted but delays in completing this work due to legal resource which have now been resolved. Nominations Agreement has been redrafted and final version now with registered providers for comment. Draft includes affordable level being at LHA rate as this is a published figure. Few comments have been received to date and responses to these returned. Go live Autumn 2026.</p>

nominations agreements.	providers on the expectations of East Herts Council in terms of the affordability and quality of housing.		
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Improve the focus on housing needs in our rural communities

Strategic Objective	Proposed Outcome	Agreed Actions	Update Q3 2025/26
1.5 To research the need for smaller affordable homes in rural areas to estimate the level of need among	Support development of Rural Exception sites and other rural sites under Policy HOU4 and guidance for registered providers who wish to develop/acquire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Community Development Action (CDA) Herts' bid for external funding to employ a Rural Enabler to work with parish councils on rural exception sites. 	<p>Action complete- CDA have funding to work with Parish Councils to identify rural housing needs. CDA currently in the process of consulting with Parish Councils.</p> <p>CDA have been contacted seeking a meeting to discuss their work and views on anything more which can be done to support them increase rural housing provision.</p>

<p>younger people/first time buyers using a variety of desktop evidence sources to inform future development expectations.</p>	<p>affordable homes in rural areas.</p>		
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Gather and publish up to date housing need and supply data

Strategic Objective	Proposed Outcome	Agreed Actions	Update Q3 2025/26
<p>1.6 To contribute to the review of the council's District Plan with a view to maximising opportunities for</p>	<p>Detailed, up-to-date guidance is provided to maximise affordable housing outputs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in data gathering and drafting in line with Planning timescales. 	<p>Work on-going. Completed redrafting of nominations agreement in terms of the definition of affordable contributing to this work.</p>

affordable housing development			
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Housing Strategy Action Plan Strategic Priority 2: Enable a wider range of accommodation and support for our most vulnerable residents

Work collaboratively with partners to maximise housing and support for rough sleepers

Strategic Objective	Proposed Outcome	Agreed Actions	Update 2025/26
2.1 Devise, consult and adopt a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy and associated Action Plan 2024-2029	Strategy and monitoring plan in place to ensure actions are managed and the council has a high-quality response to homelessness across the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a review of homelessness trends using a wide range of sources • Carry out a consultation exercise with stakeholders in East Herts in order to devise a set of actions to meet existing and future challenges 	Review of trends and data complete. Strategy in draft and to be shared with Executive Lead Member February 2026. Proposed timetable is for this to be considered by Council in July 2026 which will allow time for fuller partnership consultation including inclusion of lived experience.

	district and with partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a new homelessness action plan and monitoring framework 	
2.2 Relaunch the Homelessness Reduction Board for the East Herts District to monitor joint working, develop initiatives and monitor outcomes for homeless households	A multi-Agency Forum in place to play an effective advisory role in developing initiatives, devising action plans and monitoring outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree and terms of Reference for the Board • Develop an agreed set of priorities for the Board • The Board participates in the development and monitor of the Homelessness Action plan 	To be established following adoption of the strategy.
2.3 Maximise temporary accommodation options for all homelessness households, in	Provision of more self-contained council owned or leased temporary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter private sector lease arrangement for properties in Hertford • Redevelop the council's property at Queens Road, 	5 units of leased self-contained accommodation in Hertford operational since Q2 2025/26. 3 more units through the same supplier in progress.

<p>preference to using bed and breakfast</p>	<p>accommodation to reduce the use of bed and breakfast accommodation homeless households</p>	<p>Ware as two units of temporary accommodation</p>	<p>Queens Rd sold and commuted sums being considered for refurbishment of a larger council asset. This is more suitable for temporary accommodation as would provide around 10-12 units.</p> <p>LAHF4 funding expression of interest submitted for the provision of at least 2 temporary accommodation units to be supplied through an identified registered provider partner.</p>
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Explore the provision of supported accommodation for single people with complex needs

Strategic Objective	Proposed Outcome	Agreed Actions	Update 2025/26
<p>2.3 Work with Hertfordshire County Council and Homes England to review the aims and outcomes for Cedar Cottage to ensure accommodation meets the needs of rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping in East Herts</p>	<p>Effective and resilient support delivered to residents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Housing Benefit Service and Hertfordshire County Council Commissioning Team to maximise the support provision available to residents • Review the model of support provision commissioned considering the needs of residents and resilience of service • Remodel and deliver model of support agreed 	<p>Work on-going with HCC and One YMCA about pathway. Model reviewed and more capacity identified as required. Identified location to provide a more intensive supported housing option and on-going work with partners to explore the feasibility of this.</p>

Further develop services for households affected by domestic abuse

Strategic Objective	Proposed Outcome	Agreed Actions	Update 2025/26
<p>2.4 Participate and input into the monitoring of Hertfordshire County Council’s Housing Navigators pilot project providing support to households experiencing or survivors of Domestic Abuse</p>	<p>Pilot evaluated and outcomes agreed. Actions for post pilot phased are agreed between HCC and East Herts</p> <p>The needs of East Herts residents are reflected in the procurement of services and accommodation for residents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with HCC in the review and evaluation of the Navigator project • Identify findings and actions for East Herts Council as part of the post pilot phase 	<p>Completed. Following evaluation of the pilot and consultation with key agencies, a revised service specification was put out to tender, and a provider appointed. The Housing Advocacy Service is now up and running supported by funding from all Hertfordshire local authorities.</p> <p>Advocacy staff and homeless staff to start co-location to further build relationships and offer improved services to customers from March 2026.</p>

	affected by Domestic Abuse		
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Housing Strategy Action Plan Strategic Priority 3: Enable high quality housing options for older people, better suited to their needs

Work with partners to bring forward high quality downsizing options

Strategic Objective	Proposed Outcome	Agreed Actions	Update 2025/26
3.1 To work with registered providers in East Herts on planning accommodation options for older people who wish to	A wider range of affordable, suitable, and accessible accommodation options for older people to meet their changing needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the research and consultation exercise being carried out by Network Homes into housing aspirations among older people 	Scope and purpose of the consultation agreed with council. Non-personal data from housing register shared with SNG (previously Network Homes) to inform consultation and engagement strategy. SNG have commissioned a specialist consultant to commence work. Scheduled completion summer 2026.

<p>downsize. Explore with partners what makes a property attractive to existing tenants to downsize during the planning and re development of new affordable homes</p>			
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Work with Hertfordshire County Council and other partners on expanding the range of housing options for older residents

Strategic Objective	Proposed Outcome	Agreed Actions	Update 2025/26
3.2 To explore the feasibility of an affordable home	Assessment of whether affordable home ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the range of older persons' affordable home ownership options 	39 x 2 bed supported living Older Persons Shared Ownership dwellings delivered on the East of Stevenage development. Currently reviewing

<p>ownership option for older people in East Herts and whether it is an option we wish to support</p>	<p>options would have a market among, and meet needs and aspirations among, older people</p>	<p>available across the country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the feasibility and desirability of options in the East Herts context 	<p>interest with the registered provider which will inform future strategies around affordable home ownership options, as interest has been limited. Provider considering transferring some of these units to affordable housing to match demand.</p> <p>SNG commissioned specialist consultation with older residents to be concluded September 2026 to identify housing aspirations and inform future housing strategy.</p>
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Housing Strategy Action Plan Strategic Priority 4: Improve the sustainability and quality of homes

Promote maintenance, insulation and energy efficiency of homes of all tenures

Strategic Objective	Proposed Outcome	Agreed Actions	Update 2025/26
<p>4.1 Work with local registered providers to maximise the energy</p>	<p>Improved energy efficiency across the social housing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor RPs’ use of social housing decarbonisation grant and other resources to improve energy efficiency of their stock 	<p>Achieved visibility of Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund allocation amounts to RPs in the District and their subsequent approach to and priorities for spending these funds. The Local Area</p>

<p>efficiency of their properties</p>	<p>stock and demonstrate domestic energy efficiency options available across tenures</p>		<p>Retrofit Accelerator (LARA) Strategy working well to drive the retrofit agenda.</p> <p>Opportunities for individual social housing tenant grant funding will continue to be shared through partnership and communications.</p>
<p>4.2 Work with partners, including the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, to maximise the energy efficiency of private sector dwellings</p>	<p>Improved domestic energy efficiency and reduced carbon emissions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted promotion to accelerate uptake of HUG2 • Engage the National Energy Foundation to maximise domestic energy efficiency scheme uptake and provide advice to residents 	<p>Considerable activity including, but not limited to, the creation of Energy Hubs (energy saving signposting at local events run by volunteers) the creation and publication of the Hertfordshire retrofit guide, information on planning considerations on our website, East Herts specific and regional/central government grant promotion (HERO decarbonisation plans, solar and battery storage match funding, Solar Together, HUG2, ECO4), provision of the East Herts Energy Advice Helpline, active feedback on approach and opportunities via the Sustainability Forum, creation of a local communications network via Town and</p>

			Parish Councils and Sustainability Groups and active participation in the LARA pilot.
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Promote sustainable construction of new homes

Strategic Objective	Proposed Outcome	Agreed Actions	Update 2025/26
4.3 To explore the development of a Passivhaus standard scheme/enhanced sustainable housing model in East Herts by publicising and promoting the council's support for schemes	Promotion of Passivhaus as a viable means of development in the district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicise the council's interest in such schemes being developed through for example the Housing Forum Work with registered providers on Passivhaus development as opportunities arise 	<p>Work on-going and being promoted with partners in terms of new development discussions.</p> <p>Redevelopment using Passivhaus principals completed by registered provider on 6 homes which will be used to promote further interest in this approach.</p>

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Promote good quality accommodation and standards of management in the private rented sector

Strategic Objective	Proposed Outcome	Agreed Actions	Update 2025/26
4.4 To explore comparable local authority best practice and guidance for private landlords including experience of Landlord Accreditation Schemes	Report on options for improving standards in the private Rented Sector in East Herts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research successful examples of good practice from other comparable local authorities in considering the setting quality standards, including, if appropriate, options for a Landlord Accreditation Scheme 	Previously put on hold pending outcome of Renters' Rights Bill, now Act. Majority of duties under new legislation come into force on 1 May 2026. Currently reviewing information, advice and guidance for tenants and landlords and ensuring staff are trained and ready for new legislation. New legislation includes increased fines which are anticipated to improve standards with multiple breaches leading to landlord banning orders.

Encourage owners to bring their empty homes back into use

Strategic Objective	Proposed Outcome	Agreed Actions	Update 2025/26

<p>4.5 To review the Council Tax records for the changing numbers of empty homes and the reasons why they are empty homes and analyse the impact of applying the Council Tax disincentives to inform policy</p>	<p>Reduction in empty properties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To obtain from the Revenues Team a list of East Herts homes which have been empty for more than 2 years since April 2019 • To produce a profile of the number, types, and locations of empty homes in East Herts to which Council Tax disincentives have applied • Consider options for reviewing the council tax regime for empty properties 	<p>Comparison of empty homes rates compared for 2024/25 and 2025/26 do not show any variance in rate.</p>
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East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: Tuesday 9 June 2026

Report by: Councillor Mione Goldspink, Executive Member for Communities

Report title: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2026-2031

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

- This report presents the draft version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2026-31 and recommends it to Executive for approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

- A. To consider the content of the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2026-31; and**
- B. Overview and Scrutiny Committee raise any further points for consideration for inclusion by the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods before a revised version is brought to the Executive for consideration on 14th July 2026.**

1.0 Background

1.1 Under the Homelessness Act 2002 all local authorities are required to carry out a homelessness review and to develop and publish a strategy based on the review every five years.

1.2 East Herts published its first Homelessness Strategy in July 2003. This is the fifth Strategy and is due to run from 2026 to March 2031.

2.0 Report

2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 placed enhanced duties on local authorities to assist homeless and potentially homeless people. One of the key aims of the Act was to ensure that housing

authorities take a comprehensive and strategic approach to managing and preventing homelessness in their districts.

- 2.2 The council's last Homelessness Strategy was adopted and published in 2019, and the council and its partners have made significant progress on providing and improving services to those people that are homeless or potentially homeless. The Strategy includes a section on the achievements by the council and its partners to improve the homeless services provided, since the last Strategy was adopted.
- 2.3 The previous Strategy covered the period 2019-2024. Delivery of review of the strategy was delayed as the post responsible for this work was not in place until September 2025.
- 2.4 Much has changed both locally and nationally since the last Homelessness Strategy was adopted. The most significant recent changes include the Renters' Rights Act 2025 and A National Plan to end Homelessness published in December 2025. The latter includes an outcomes framework for local authorities and the requirement for areas to have local targets to move from a crisis response to one focused on prevention.
- 2.5 A draft Strategy has been developed. This has 5 objectives around which the Housing Service will build its Delivery Plan. The Delivery Plan will shape the emphasis of the Housing Options Team's work for the next five years.
- 2.6 The strategic priorities in the strategy are:
 - Continue to prevent and relieve homelessness at the earliest opportunity
 - Increase temporary accommodation options to improve suitability and sustainability, reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation
 - Continue to improve the pathways in and out of supported housing and the support available to vulnerable single people
 - Maximise the availability of affordable housing
 - Continue to provide support to reduce rough sleeping and where this occurs, ensure it is brief and not re-occurring
- 2.7 The draft Strategy was published for consultation. Customers of the homeless service were specifically asked to contribute as they had insight into any gaps in service provision they experienced

and what could have been done which may have prevented their homelessness.

2.8 All the responses to the consultation were considered.

2.9 A copy of the updated Strategy is attached at **Appendix A**. An Equalities Impact assessment has also been prepared for the Strategy and included at **Appendix B**.

2.10 Executive Members are now asked if there any further points they wish to raise or be considered for inclusion in the draft Strategy, particularly regarding the actions outlined under each of the four Strategy Objectives, which will form the basis of the first year's Delivery Plan.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 Executive are asked to consider the draft strategy and subject to any points raised, recommend this to Council.

4.0 Options

4.1 Accept the recommendations- RECOMMENDED for the reasons outlined above.

4.2 Not to accept the recommendations- NOT RECOMMENDED. As explained in 5.1 there is currently no strategy which is a statutory requirement

5.0 Risks

5.1 The council currently does not have a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which is a statutory requirement and necessary to provide the strategic direction of the service. Recommending the Strategy to Council would mitigate this risk.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 Community Safety

a) Yes – preventing and relieving homelessness, positively contributes to community safety.

6.2 Data Protection

a) None arising directly from this report.

- 6.3 Equalities
a) Yes – the purpose of the strategy is to prevent and relieve homelessness, which has implications in terms of equalities. An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken and is shown at **Appendix B**.
- 6.4 Environmental Sustainability
a) None arising directly from this report.
- 6.5 Financial
a) None arising directly from this report.
- 6.6 Health and Safety
a) None arising directly from this report.
- 6.7 Human Resources
a) None arising directly from this report.
- 6.8 Human Rights
a) None arising directly from this report.
- 6.9 Legal
a) None arising directly from this report.
- 6.10 Specific Wards
a) None arising directly from this report.

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 Background Information

None

7.2 **Appendices**

Appendix A - draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

Appendix B - equalities impact assessment

Contact Member

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East Herts District Council

Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy

2026-2031

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Section 1 – Foreword

Welcome to the Council’s new Preventing Homelessness Strategy for 2026-2031. This is East Herts’ fifth Homelessness Strategy, setting out our approach for tackling homelessness and rough sleeping within the district.

Homelessness and poor housing conditions blight lives, damage health, and reduce opportunities. This Strategy aims to continue the work to prevent and relieve homelessness as early as possible, ensure suitable and sustainable temporary accommodation is available to meet emergency needs and that the needs of our most vulnerable customers are met. Underpinning this work is a continued drive to maximise the availability of affordable housing in our district as the most sustainable way of supporting our current residents and future generations.

I am confident that this Strategy establishes key objectives and provides a comprehensive framework, clearly outlining the Council's approach and commitment to addressing homelessness over the next five years.

The Strategy will concentrate on 5 key objectives:

1. Continue to prevent and relieve homelessness at the earliest opportunity
2. Increase temporary accommodation options to improve suitability and sustainability, reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation
3. Continue to improve the pathways in and out of supported housing and the support available to vulnerable single people
4. Maximise the availability of affordable housing
5. Continue to provide support to reduce rough sleeping and where this occurs, ensure it is brief and not re-occurring

I would like to extend my thanks on behalf of the Council to everyone who has been involved in developing this Strategy. Your dedication and hard work are greatly appreciated as we strive to make East Herts a place where everyone has the opportunity for safe, stable housing.

Section 2 - Executive Summary

The objective of this Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy is to enable early intervention to prevent homelessness and, when prevention is not feasible, to assist homeless households and those in housing need obtain appropriate help. The data and research enables understanding of the scale of the problem and the specific drivers for homelessness in the district, which is crucial for tailoring our response.

The data between 2020/21-2024/25 show an increase in homeless households approaching the council for help, with 2023/24 representing the highest level of homeless approaches since the adoption of the Homeless Reduction Act in 2018. This increase related to in households being made homeless due to their private sector tenancy ending by way of a 'no fault eviction' and an increase in households fleeing their previous home due to domestic abuse.

Since 2020/21 there have been increases in the support needs of homeless households. Nearly half of the households approaching for homelessness assistance have support needs and 90% of those households have support needs in more than one area. This tells us that homeless households are more vulnerable than ever and providing a 'bricks and mortar' solution alone is not enough. To address this, we need to focus on supported housing pathways and how specialist support can be provided in a coordinated way for these clients.

Our response needs to address these challenges, and therefore the following priorities have been identified for the period 2026-31:

- Continue to prevent and relieve homelessness at the earliest opportunity
- Increase temporary accommodation options to improve suitability and sustainability, reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation
- Continue to improve the pathways in and out of supported housing and the support available to vulnerable single people
- Maximise the availability of affordable housing
- Continue to provide support to reduce rough sleeping and where this occurs, ensure it is brief and not re-occurring

An action plan has been developed to address these strategic aims.

It is recognised that much of this work needs to take place in partnership with others; other services, the Voluntary and Community Sector and our customers. Consultation has taken place with these partners to ensure this is a strategy which reflects the views of partners and provides a shared vision to respond to homelessness in East Herts.

Section 3 – Review of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024

The council's previous Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy set out the following priorities:

- Strong and effective partnership working
- Early targeted intervention and advice to prevent the loss of accommodation
- Effective action to relieve homelessness and sustain tenancies to prevent repeat homelessness
- Protect and increase local housing options

It is important to recognise the achievements of the previous strategy so that these are factored into work in the upcoming period. The key accomplishments of the previous strategy include:

- Successfully secured funding through the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative to provide a full-time Rough Sleeping Coordinator to assist clients with securing long-term accommodation
- The development of 1,130 affordable new homes for rent and 525 for shared ownership, totalling 1,655 new affordable homes
- Secured Next Steps Accommodation Programme funding to convert two council-owned properties into six self-contained units for rough sleepers.
- Additional revenue funding enabled the employment of a Single Person Support Officer to help residents develop independent living skills
- Developed a "Duty to Refer" portal on the East Herts website, allowing partners to easily alert the Housing Options Team about customers at risk of homelessness
- Created a single pathway for residents and support agencies to request housing advice and assistance via the East Herts Council website
- Agreed on a county-wide protocol to assist homeless 16/17-year-olds, care leavers, and intentionally homeless families, ensuring consistent support across the region

- The Council procured new temporary, self-contained accommodation for 16 households, reducing reliance on Bed and Breakfast options.
- Increased the staff resource to support residents in temporary accommodations and facilitate their transition to permanent housing
- Collaborated with partners, including Hertfordshire County Council, Change Grow Live (CGL), Probation, Registered Providers, and MIND, in monthly MDT meetings to support single residents at risk of homelessness.

Section 4 – Review of Homelessness Data 2020-2025

To identify the priorities for 2025-2030, data from 2020-2025 has been examined to understand:

- the demand for homelessness support
- the customer profile in terms of age and household composition
- the support needs of households and how these impact on priority need
- the reasons for homelessness
- the households placed in temporary accommodation, and the type of accommodation used
- the outcomes for the households supported

Definition of Homeless Duties

When examining homelessness data between 2020-2025 terminology taken from homelessness legislation is used. An explanation of these terms is shown below:

Prevention Duty: Owed to individuals and households who are threatened with homelessness within 56 days. The local authority must take reasonable steps to help them remain in their current accommodation or secure alternative accommodation for at least six months.

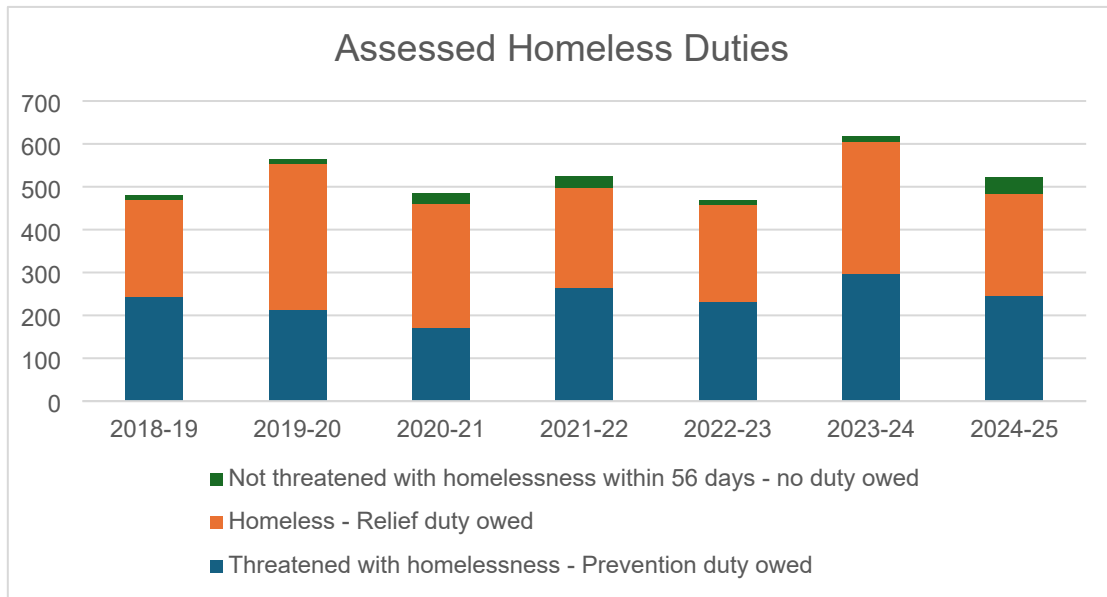
Relief Duty: Owed to individuals and households who are already homeless. The local authority must take reasonable steps to help them secure accommodation for at least six months.

Main Housing Duty: Owed to households in priority need and unintentionally homeless after the relief duty has ended without securing accommodation. The local authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the household until the duty ends under specified conditions.

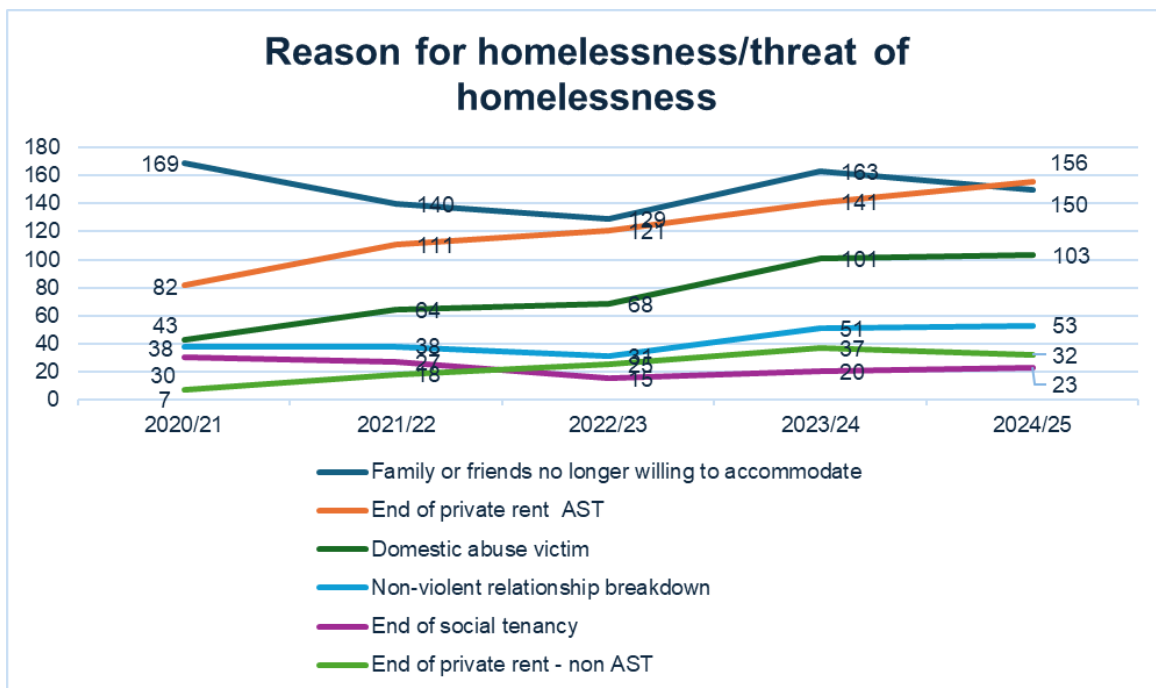
Priority Need: In homelessness law, a priority need determines the legal obligation for emergency accommodation, while a support need (or vulnerability) is a factor used to determine if a priority status may exist. Priority need mandates immediate interim housing. Priority need groups include households with dependent children, pregnant women, and individuals vulnerable due to old age, mental illness, or physical disability. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 provided that those fleeing domestic abuse would have priority need.

Demand for Homelessness Support

The year 2020/21 saw a reduction in homeless approaches due to measures introduced during the coronavirus pandemic which prevented evictions from social and private sector tenancies. Figures for 2023/24 show a considerable increase presentations, higher than pre-pandemic levels. The percentage of customers presenting at the 'relief stage' (already homeless) in 2023-24 was 52% so also higher than previous years outside of the pandemic period. 2024-25 saw a reduction in approaches but a continuation of a higher percentage of approaches at the relief stage.



Reasons for Homelessness



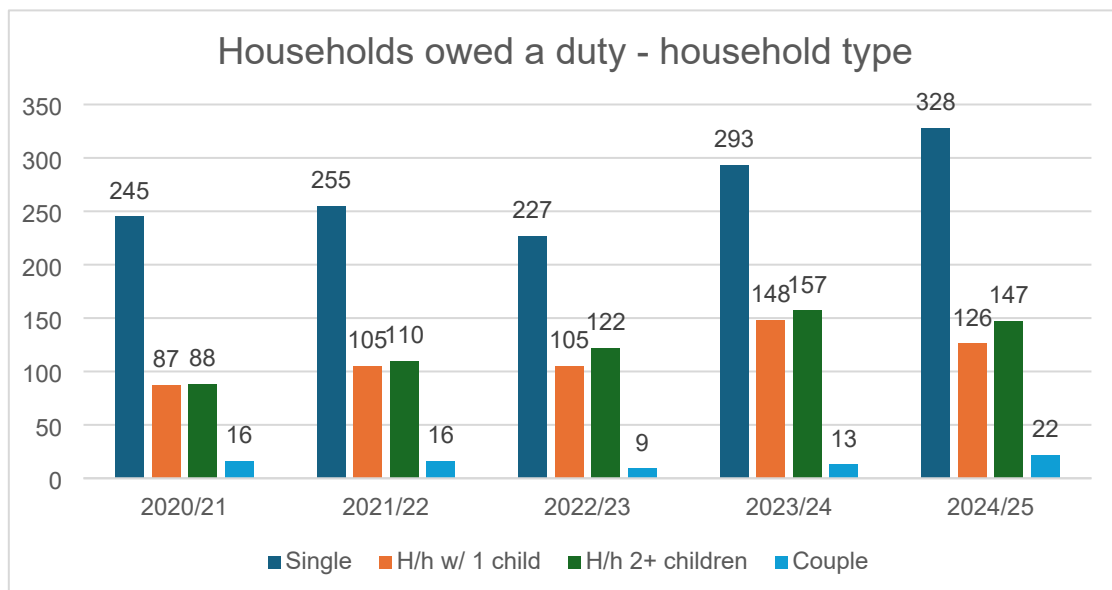
The primary reasons for homelessness or the threat of homelessness in 2024/25 were:

- End of a private rented tenancy AST (30%)
- Family or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate (29%)
- Domestic abuse (20%)
- Non-violent relationship breakdown (10%)
- End of a non-assured shorthold rented tenancy (6%)

Presentations from households due to their private rented tenancy coming to an end was the single highest reason for homelessness in 2024/25 and on a steady upward trajectory since 2020/21, with 74 more presentations in 2024/25, representing an increase of 90%. This increase was related to instability in the private rented sector caused by interest rate increases and concerns about legislative changes (including Renters Rights) resulting in landlords leaving the sector. This resulted in the supply of private rented accommodation reducing and rental prices increasing sharply.

The highest percentage increase in presentations in this period was from households homeless due to domestic abuse which increased 139.5% between 2020/21 and 2024/25. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 was enacted in April 2021. This legislation provided that those fleeing domestic abuse had priority need and introduced a range of other protections around security of tenure and removing local connection requirements.

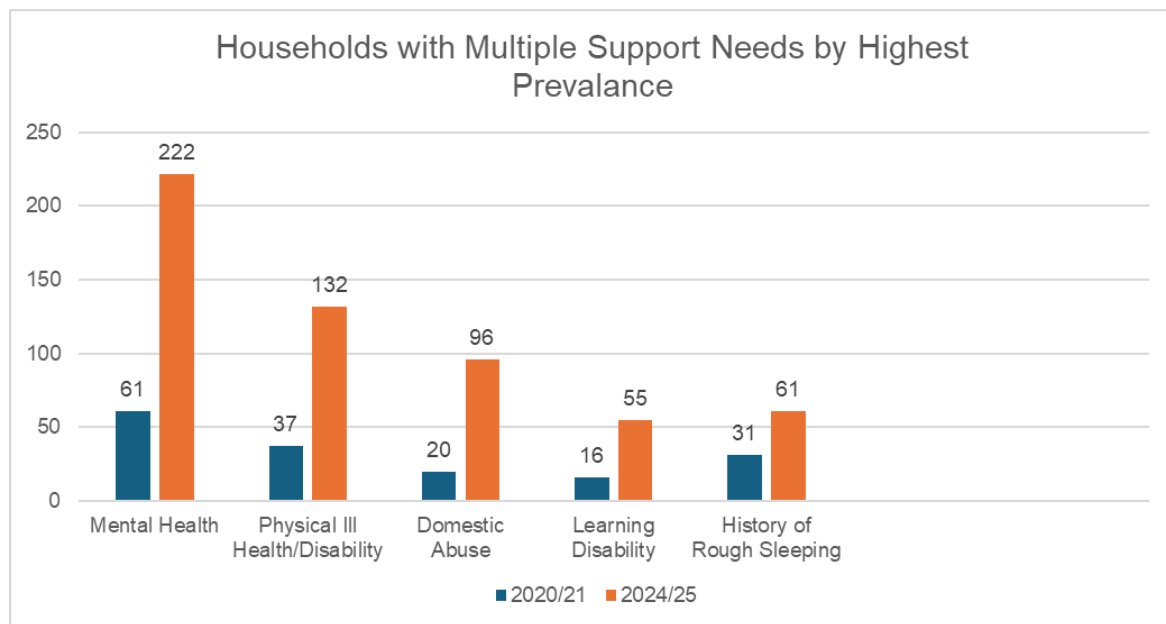
Customer Profile



Almost half (48%) of households owed a duty are single person households (33% male and 15% female) a further 33% are single parent households (2% male and 31% female). While the largest cohort is single males (33%), single females with or without children account for 46% of all households owed a duty.

Homeless households are far less likely to be in employment than other households. The employment rate for East Herts in June 2023 was 81.9%. By contrast, only 30% of main applicants owed a duty in 2022/23 were in employment and 19% were unemployed. 55% of applicants owed a duty are between the ages of 25 and 44

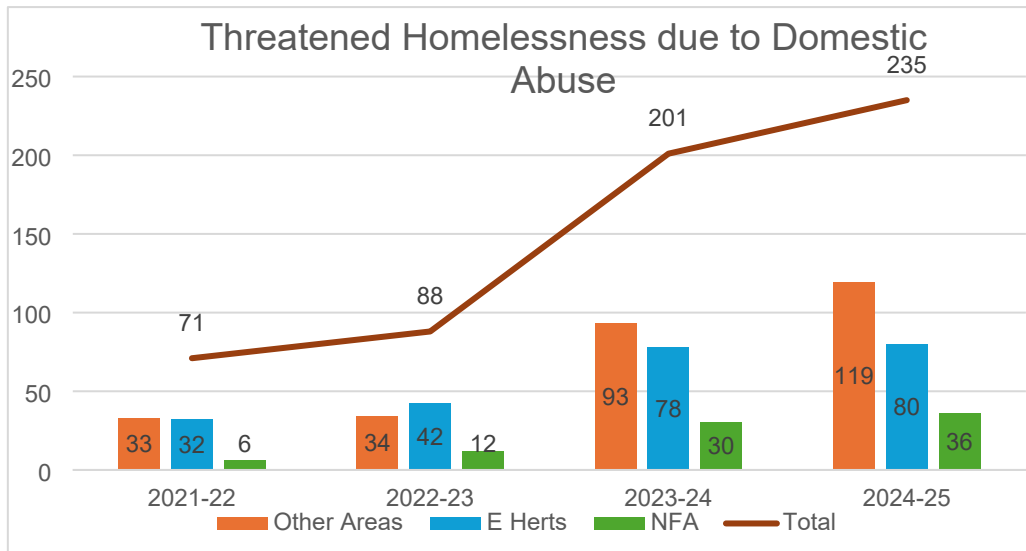
Support Needs



An increasing proportion of households are presenting with support needs. Around 19% of homeless households in 2020/21 had support needs, which increased to 49% of applicants in 2024/25. Alongside this, there is significant growth in the number of households with more than one support need. 90% of homeless households with support needs in 2024/25 had needs in more than 1 area.

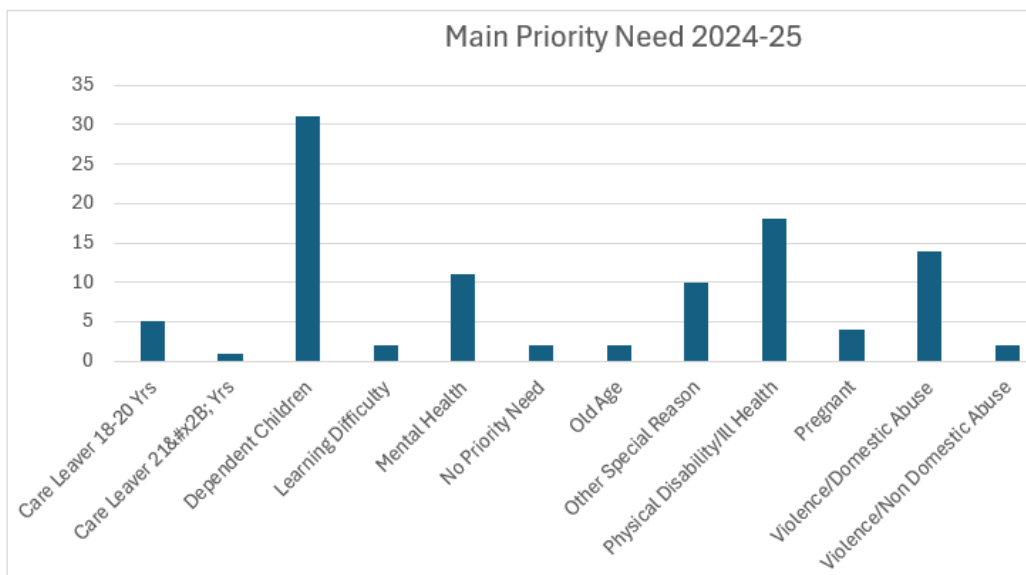
The most prevalent support needs were mental health problems, physical ill health and disability and domestic abuse. The most significant percentage increase between 2020/21-2024/25 was for support needs due to domestic abuse which increased by 380%, but there were also substantial increases in all support needs with mental health increasing by 264%, physical ill health and disability increasing by 257%, learning disabilities increasing by 243% and a history of rough sleeping increasing by 97%.

The increase in domestic abuse is more significant when examining all cases where domestic abuse was a feature of the case, not just the principal cause of homelessness. When looking at all cases where domestic abuse was a feature shows a 231% increase in homelessness where domestic abuse as the primary or secondary cause in the period between 2021/22 and 2024/25. The most substantial increases were from applicant households who were either not previously living in East Herts (260% increase) or those who were previously of no fixed abode (500% increase) usually customers leaving refuge.



Priority Need

As explained previously, support needs are not exactly the same as a priority need but can indicate that a priority need should be considered. When looking at those provided with temporary accommodation in 2024-25 the main priority need categories were:

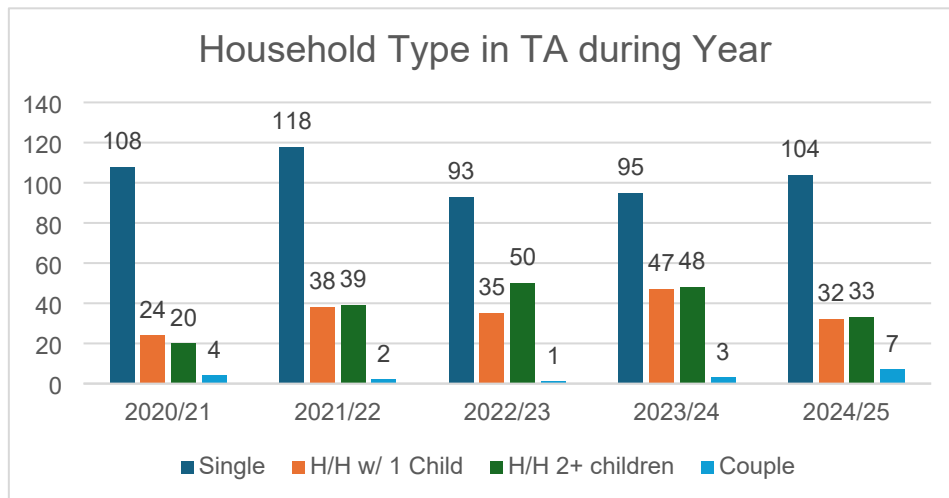


As can be seen from this data most household's primary priority need in this period were dependent children (30%), physical disability (18%), domestic abuse (14%) and mental health (11%). 70% of homeless households had a priority need other than dependant children, which translates into a high homeless need from single homeless households.

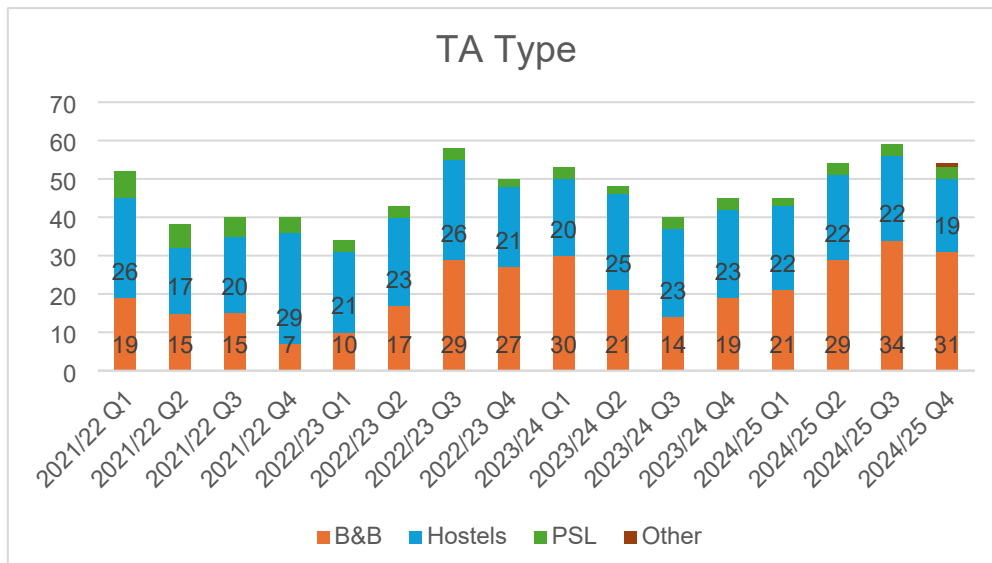
Temporary Accommodation

If prevention efforts for households who are eligible for assistance and in priority need fail and the household becomes homeless, the council has a statutory duty provide temporary accommodation. The average number of households requiring temporary accommodation per year since 2020/21 is 180, with 156 households accommodated in 2020/21 and 176 households accommodated in 2024/25. The highest number of households in temporary

accommodation was 2021/22 when 197 households were accommodated. Most households in temporary accommodation are single person households.



The below chart shows a snapshot of the number of people in temporary accommodation and the type of accommodation they were in at the end of the quarter since 2021/22. As can be seen from this data East Herts is heavily reliant on bed and breakfast accommodation, usually commercial hotels, to meet its accommodation duties. This 'gap' in accommodation is an average of 21 units of temporary accommodation per quarter, as can be seen from the below:



Rough Sleeping

In 2022 the previous government published a cross-party Rough Sleeping Strategy. The Strategy set out a vision for ending rough sleeping, which is that it is prevented wherever possible, and where it does occur it is rare, brief and non-recurrent. It emphasised three aspects of its approach:

- Prevention
- Intervention
- Recovery

In March 2020 the government launched the 'Everyone In' initiative, to house rough sleepers in response to the pandemic. Over 35 people were accommodated by East Herts in this period primarily in a hotel procured with two other local authorities. When the initiative ended in June 2020 most applicants were enabled to move into more settled accommodation.

Every year local authorities report the number of people rough sleeping in their area on a typical night. This is a chosen night between 1 October and 30th November. Each year the date is coordinated with the 9 other districts in Hertfordshire.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number of people recorded by East Herts & partners	9	15	6	5	5	7	7	5

Significant efforts have been made to ensure rough sleeping in the district is kept to a minimum as can be seen from the annual snapshot data.

Homelessness Outcomes

Between 2018 and 2025, 46% of households who were owed the prevention duty had their homelessness prevented with 37% of applicants continuing to the relief stage, so becoming homeless and requiring further support.

Of those owed the relief duty 43% had their homelessness relieved and 57% remained homeless after 56 days.

The prevention or relief of homelessness is predominantly achieved through an offer of social housing. This can be shown by the below:

Accommodation secured at end of prevention duty

Year	Social rented sector	Private rented sector	Staying with family
2018-19	74	12	4
2019-20	54	15	4
2020-21	31	17	3
2021-22	110	28	12
2022-23	269	72	23
2023-24	122	27	1
2024-25	126	23	10
All	786	194	57
	75.79%	18.71%	5.5%

Accommodation secured at end of relief duty

Year	Social rented sector	Private rented sector	Other
2018-19	68	8	15
2019-20	153	19	12
2020-21	109	48	10
2021-22	68	22	33

2022-23	110	26	7
2023-24	129	23	12
2024-25	109	20	10
All	617	143	87
	72.85%	16.88%	10.27%

Section 5 – Our Priorities 2026-2031

Priority 1: Continue to prevent and relieve homelessness at the earliest opportunity

Preventing homelessness as early as possible continues to be a priority, as this provides the best outcomes for homeless households and the council. The council aims to prevent homelessness by ensuring that households at risk are identified as soon as possible and that high quality help and advice is deployed to maximum effect. When a homeless application is made the council will draw on partners to provide specialist support to customers, to aid this. We have identified that to meet the demands of our customers we need to support more customers to access accommodation in the private sector and will work with our customers and the private sector to ensure this is an affordable and sustainable option.

To continue to prevent and relieve homelessness at the earliest opportunity the council will:

- work with key partners to ensure there is an effective early intervention service and referral pathway for households at risk of homelessness. This work will be concentrated on the areas which result in the most homelessness in the district, so those leaving private rented tenancies and those who have experienced domestic abuse
- refine and improve the approach to Personal Housing Plans, including developing effective multi-agency interventions with the full participation of key partners
- work to ensure an ongoing supply of private sector accommodation is available for customers
- review the housing and homelessness information, advice and guidance available to local people making sure that applicants have information to help themselves and retain their independence

This will be measured by monitoring the:

- Homeless presentations by duty owed
- Homeless prevention case outcomes
- Homeless relief case outcomes

Priority 2: Increase temporary accommodation options to improve suitability and sustainability, reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation

The council wants to ensure that where temporary accommodation is necessary this is of an acceptable standard and, wherever possible, is within the district, or as near as possible. The costs of procuring temporary accommodation will be reduced to provide maximum value for money to local taxpayers.

The council will achieve this by:

- minimising the use of bed and breakfast and spot purchased nightly-paid accommodation
increasing the level of hostel and other in-house temporary accommodation provision, developing a range of solutions including hostels, modular homes, self-contained units and leased properties to meet demand
- maximising the collection of rents, and maintaining adequate controls in arrears cases
- maximising the throughput into permanent accommodation by ensuring that where suitable accommodation is available for a homeless household this is offered
- maximising and optimising the use of specialist accommodation such as refuge and other supported housing for customers who need this support

This will be measured by monitoring:

- Total net cost of temporary accommodation
- Total number of households in temporary accommodation
- If the temporary accommodation is in or outside East Herts

Priority 3: Continue to improve the pathways in and out of supported housing and the support available to vulnerable single people

It is clear from our analysis of homelessness data that East Herts has high numbers of homeless approaches from single adult households with multiple support needs, particularly mental and physical ill-health, disabilities and life experiences that have caused trauma. The council will seek to ensure that there are clear pathways into and out of supported housing and that this support prepares residents for independence.

The council will achieve this by:

- improving the supported housing options available for customers who require this
- increasing support delivered through partnership work reflected in Personal Housing Plans
- creating a clear pathway which provides intensive and step-down support for the most vulnerable customers, to decrease repeat homeless presentations
- assist customers with engagement with partner agencies to help them sustain this engagement
- provide tailored personal support to the most vulnerable applicants

This will be measured by recording:

- repeat homeless presentations
- the number of households moving to independent living

Priority 4: Maximise the availability of affordable housing

The council will maximise the delivery of affordable homes and ensure that these are available for local people to meet local housing need.

The council will achieve this through:

- work with providers to deliver more housing at social rent level, particularly larger homes where affordability is the most challenging for customers
- ensuring the new District Plan reflects the needs and challenges faced by homeless households by considering options for affordable housing as 40% of habitable rooms rather than of units, to encourage the provision of more family sized homes
- continuing the work with providers to deliver homes that meet local housing needs in terms of design
- reviewing the Housing Register and Allocations Policy to ensure that local housing needs are met, specifically those of homeless households in the district
- work with Environmental Health, Trading Standards and others to ensure that East Herts has a private rented sector which is legally compliant and provides a viable housing option

This will be measured by:

- recording the number of new affordable homes per quarter, including those let at social rent

Priority 5: Continue to provide support to reduce rough sleeping and where this occurs ensure it is brief and not re-occurring

The council remains committed to ending rough sleeping but where this occurs ensures this is brief and not repeated. The council will maintain effective support and continue to improve rehousing pathways for rough sleepers. Single homeless people will be able to access the advice and support they need and have viable rehousing options which do not require individuals to sleep rough to receive support.

The council will achieve this by:

- continuing to fund the winter night shelter and support their work through the development of Personal Housing Plans which aid the rehousing of night shelter guests
- ensuring that all partner agencies and other stakeholders understand and use the 'duty to refer'
- continuing to provide bespoke services to those rough sleeping to ensure sleeping rough occurs for as short a time as possible
- support the implementation of a countywide approach to rough sleeping including information exchange protocols and severe weather protocol activations to ensure consistency of service offer
- maintaining relationships with external providers to ensure single homeless cases can access move-on support, so do not have to start rough sleeping

This will be measured by recording:

- the number of rough sleepers who have been supported on a quarterly basis
- the number of 'long term' rough sleepers not in accommodation

Section 7 – Action Plan and Monitoring

Priority	Actions	Key Performance Indicators
Continue to maximise homeless prevention and relief	Collocate with a specialist domestic abuse service to provide good quality support at point of homeless approach	Homeless prevention case outcomes- % increase at those successfully closed at prevention
	Work with Environmental Health, Trading Standards and others to ensure tenants and landlords are compliant with the Renters' Rights Act and opportunities under this legislation are used to prevent homelessness	
	Make best use of Personal Housing Plans to encourage engagement with support services at the earliest opportunity	Homeless relief case outcomes- % increase in those successfully closed at relief
	Increase the opportunities to get housing advice and assistance through Healthy Hubs and other	
	Work with colleagues across Hertfordshire to develop eviction protocols to ensure that all opportunities are taken to prevent eviction, particularly from supported accommodation	
	Review homelessness IAG on website to include changes under RRA and to enable residents to get tailored advice as early as possible	

	<p>Establish project to expand private rented sector supply</p> <p>Work with Healthy Hubs to improve the partnership response to homeless prevention</p> <p>Establish the Renters Rights Coordination Group to provide a partnership response focused on improvement to sector driven by RRA</p>	
Increase temporary accommodation options	<p>Work with registered providers to identify TA opportunities</p> <p>Apply to LAHF4 for provision of additional TA units</p> <p>Change of use of council asset for further hostel accommodation</p> <p>Develop further leased accommodation options</p>	<p>Total net cost of TA</p> <p>Total number of households in temporary accommodation</p> <p>Temporary accommodation in/outside East Herts- reduction in out of area TA</p>
Continue to improve the pathways in and out of supported housing and the support available to vulnerable single people	<p>Develop a Local Supported Housing Strategy, needs assessment and delivery plan</p> <p>Develop intensive supported accommodation offer for customers with complex needs</p> <p>Encourage partner engagement through the re-establishment of an East Herts Homeless Strategy Monitoring group focused on reducing homelessness</p> <p>Encourage partner engagement in supporting homeless applicants through Personal Housing Plans, with issues around engagement and support fed into East Herts Homeless Strategy Group</p> <p>Review the staffing resource for hostels, to ensure this is sufficient to meet the needs of customers with more complex needs</p>	<p>Reduction in repeat homeless presentations- % decrease</p> <p>The number of households moving to independent living- % increase</p>
Maximise the availability of affordable housing	<p>Contribute to the development of the new Local Plan, to ensure that the needs of homeless households are reflected specifically in terms increasing the supply of social rent level properties of the required size to meet need</p> <p>Review the Housing Register and Allocations Policy to ensure this addresses local housing need, balancing the need to prevent and respond to homelessness</p> <p>Continue to deliver against the Housing Strategy Action Plan</p> <p>Continue to use the planning process to ensure that this is effective in ensuring new developments address local housing needs</p>	<p>The number of new affordable homes per quarter</p> <p>Number let at social rent</p>

Continue to provide support to reduce rough sleeping	Establish mechanisms to identify any long-term rough sleepers to provide intensive support for this cohort	The number of rough sleepers who have been supported on a quarterly basis
	Work at a Hertfordshire level to establish consistent practices around SWEP activation	
	Work at a Hertfordshire level on the eviction protocol and referral process, to reduce those entering rough sleeping via eviction	The number of 'long term' rough sleepers not in accommodation
	Continue to support the Voluntary and Community Sector to deliver services to ensure support is available across the district and reflects the needs of local people	
	Ensure VCS organisations providing direct support to rough sleepers are included in the East Herts Homeless Strategy Monitoring Group and have opportunities to inform strategy	
	Contribute to providing a Hertfordshire wide Accommodation for Offenders Programme to ensure there are robust plans around those who are most likely to sleep rough	

Section 8 – Consultation

Consultation on this strategy has been undertaken in 2 ways:

- Consultation with partners, residents and businesses through East Herts consultation portal in May 2026
- Consultation with customers of the homeless service in May 2026 to discuss their experience and to identify any changes to service provision would have had a positive impact on their experience and feedback on the actions proposed in the plan

Feedback

14 responses to the online consultation were received, with the highest respondents being from residents who live in East Herts who had not personally experienced homelessness and those from community and voluntary sector organisations.

86% of those who responded agreed with the priorities to reduce homelessness. A range of suggestions were made to improve interventions and the supply of temporary accommodation, and these have been considered when developing the actions outlined in the plan.

Consultation with homeless customers took place through telephone and face-to face contact and was more focused on the specific actions which they felt would have either made their experience better or would have resulted in their homelessness being prevented or relieved sooner. This feedback identified that customers agreed with the priorities proposed. The issues which impacted customers most were the location and type of temporary accommodation available and the supply of affordable housing. Customers were also asked to identify if there were interventions which could have prevented their homelessness. Customers identified that services to support their wellbeing, particularly around mental health may have prevented homelessness as would services to support with benefits and financial management. This feedback has been included when developing the actions around improving prevention, specifically around improving the homelessness advice available through Healthy Hubs.

Section 9 – Links to Other Strategies and Frameworks

Under the Homelessness Act 2002, all housing authorities must have a homelessness strategy renewed at least every five years. East Herts District Council operates alongside many strategies, policies, and frameworks nationally and locally which have been considered when developing this strategy:

- A National Plan to End Homelessness (December 2025): the strategy outlines 5 pillars- universal prevention, targeted prevention, preventing crisis, improving emergency responses and recovery and preventing repeat homelessness
- The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023): The framework emphasises sustainable development, ensuring sufficient affordable housing supply, and promoting efficient land use. It mandates up-to-date local plans that address housing needs, encourages healthy and safe communities, and prioritises climate change mitigation. These principles guide local authorities in creating strategies to prevent homelessness, increase housing availability, and foster sustainable, inclusive communities.
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017: Ensures that all homeless people receive advice and assistance from their council, with a focus on preventing homelessness.
- Health and Social Care Act 2012: Obligates local authorities to take steps to improve the health of people in their area, including those experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- Homes England Strategic Plan 2023-28: Ensures affordable and sustainable homes are built in areas of greatest need and supports broader regeneration and community well-being
- Renters' Rights Act 2025-

East Herts District Council specific strategies:

- **Corporate Plan 2024-2027:** Focuses on themes of transparency, environmental focus, community engagement, and inclusivity.
- **Climate Change Strategy 2022-2026:** Addresses reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, and enhancing the natural environment.
- **Local Plan 2018-2033:** Guides development and land use in the district. Review getting under way.
- **Annual Plan 2023-2024:** 2024-25 Outlines specific initiatives and goals for the year.
- **Vision and Corporate Priorities:** Updated periodically to reflect current objectives and community needs.

Hertfordshire County Council's influencing Strategies and Policies:

- **Corporate Plan 2022-2025:** This outlines the council's vision for creating a cleaner, greener, and healthier Hertfordshire, focusing on environmental leadership, healthy lifestyles, and inclusive communities.
- **Healthy Housing Strategy:** Part of their broader health initiatives to ensure residents live in safe, secure, and healthy environments.
- **Climate Change Strategy:** Embedded in various plans, including the Corporate Plan, which aims for carbon neutrality in council operations by 2030 and promotes sustainability throughout the county.
- **Economic Growth and Development:** Plans like the Integrated Plan (budget) 2024-2025 detail the financial strategies to support sustainable growth, infrastructure investment, and economic development.
- **Digital and Technology Strategy 2023-2027:** Focuses on leveraging digital technologies to improve council services and resident engagement.
- **Local Transport Plan 2018-2031:** A comprehensive plan for improving transport infrastructure to support economic growth and meet housing needs.
- **Live Well Strategy:** Initiatives under the Healthy and Fulfilling Lives priority aim to promote healthy lifestyles and support for those in need, aligning with a broader "Live Well" ethos.

- **Housing Strategies and Policies:** These include the Market Sustainability Plan and the Adult Disability Service Accommodation Strategy, which ensure that housing needs are met, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Equality Impact Analysis Form

1. Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) Form

Title of EIA (policy/change it relates to)	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2026-2031	Date	11/5/2026
Team/Department	Housing Service, Housing and Health		
Focus of EIA What are the aims of the new initiative? Who implements it? Define the user group impacted? How will they be impacted?	<p>The overall purpose of the Homeless Strategy (Strategy) is to ensure that as a Council we address homelessness strategically by ensuring suitable accommodation, support and advice is available and accessible to all client groups and to encourage a multi-agency approach to preventing homelessness.</p> <p>Aim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet the Council's statutory duty to produce a homelessness review and strategy once every five years. • To present a full picture of the reasons for homelessness and the groups of people most likely to become homeless. • To define strategic priorities local to East Herts for homelessness and the prevention of homelessness and actions for the council and its partners. To prioritise resources for the groups most in need of assistance. • To produce better outcomes for homeless households, enabling them to live in accommodation suitable for their needs with appropriate support if required. <p>Implementation</p> <p>The Strategy is implemented and monitored by the council's Housing Service with assistance from the council's internal and external partners.</p> <p>The council has a duty to provide housing advice and assistance to all those that are eligible, i.e. the applicant meets immigration criteria as defined by the Government.</p> <p>For Service users that approach the council an assessment will be carried out regarding their current housing situation and advice and assistance offered according to current legislation and best practice to</p>		

	prevent or relieve homelessness.
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Please note: Prepopulated data for protected categories other than Age and Gender come from 2021 census results¹. If the service has specific demographic data for service users/residents than this should be used instead.

¹ [How life has changed in East Hertfordshire: Census 2021](#)

2. Review of information, equality analysis and potential actions

Please fill in when appropriate to the change. If it does not, please put N/A

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff		What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
Age	16-17 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 Over 75	0% 17% 31% 27% 14% 6% 4% 1%	Younger age groups remain the most susceptible to homelessness. Those between 18 and 54 are 75% of homeless applicants. This is in line with national trends	The homelessness legislation defines which groups have a priority for housing, a key group is households with children. Younger people are also less likely to be home-owners and more likely to be living with family or renting privately, which have limited security	Legislation to promote stability in the private sector may help the insecurity faced by those renting privately. Continuing work with families/friends to prevent homelessness and prioritising those threatened with homelessness through the housing register and private sector offers
Disability	29% of the households accepted under the homelessness legislation in 2023/24 (last full year) disclosed they had a disability. This is higher than the 2021 Census figures for East Herts which recorded 4.9% of the population who stated that they were disabled and limited a lot in their daily lives		Applicants with a registered disability are likely to be given a higher priority for rehousing or be accepted as vulnerable as defined under the	Legislation and policy are designed to give certain groups who are less able to access suitable accommodation a higher priority for housing and applicants with a	The legislation framework promotes discrimination. However the higher percentage of homeless service users who describe themselves as disabled identifies that

Essential Reference Paper B

EIA updated as of 2026

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
		homelessness legislation.	disability are one of these groups.	the service is accessible and supporting those most in need.
Gender	1.9% of homeless applicants in 2023/24 recorded a different gender to the sex they were registered at birth. This is slightly above the 2021 census information for East Herts which estimates that locally around 0.04% of residents identify as a different gender to the sex they were registered as at birth.	Gender does not impact priority for housing	The higher rate of applications from those who identify as a different gender to the sex assigned to them at birth indicates that there is equitable access to service which would be expected to improve outcomes for underrepresented and vulnerable groups	No action required
Pregnancy and Maternity	There is no reporting around pregnancy or maternity in statutory homelessness reporting, but pregnancy is considered as a priority need for housing and recorded on the case management system. The data on household composition for 2023/24 (last full year) showed 31.6% of homeless households had children. Of households with children, 23.3% were single parent female headed	Applicants who are pregnant or have a child are likely to be given a higher priority for rehousing or be accepted as vulnerable as	Female applicants are more likely to be single parent households and the most likely group to be homeless with children.	The Homeless legislation confers an additional priority for rehousing an applicant that is pregnant or has a child above someone that is not pregnant or does not

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations																																				
	households, 4.8% were headed by couples and 1.3% were single parent male headed households with 0.6% were households with children headed by 3 adults or households which identified as 'other' in terms of gender. The council's case management system recorded 123 pregnant applicants in 2023/24, which was around 8.4% of total applications.	defined under the homelessness legislation.		have a child. This would be expected to improve outcomes for vulnerable groups																																				
Ethnicity	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>White</td> <td>85%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>English/Welsh/Scottish/N.Irish/British</td> <td>73%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Irish</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gypsy or Irish Traveller</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other White</td> <td>10%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mixed/multiple ethnic groups</td> <td>4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White and Black Caribbean</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White and Black African</td> <td>0.45%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>White and Asian</td> <td>0.55%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Mixed</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Asian/Asian British</td> <td>1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Indian</td> <td>0.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pakistani</td> <td>0.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bangladeshi</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chinese</td> <td>0.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Asian</td> <td>0.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Black/African/Caribbean/British</td> <td>6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>African</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> </table>	White	85%	English/Welsh/Scottish/N.Irish/British	73%	Irish	1%	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	1%	Other White	10%	Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	4%	White and Black Caribbean	2%	White and Black African	0.45%	White and Asian	0.55%	Other Mixed	1%	Asian/Asian British	1%	Indian	0.3%	Pakistani	0.3%	Bangladeshi	0%	Chinese	0.2%	Other Asian	0.2%	Black/African/Caribbean/British	6%	African	3%	The 2021 census recorded approximately 92.2% of the population in East Herts as White British, in comparison with 73% of homeless applicants. This suggests that homeless households are more diverse in terms of ethnicity than the population as a whole in East	The data suggests that there is equitable access to service which would be expected to improve outcomes for underrepresented groups	No action required
White	85%																																							
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	<p>Other ethnic group</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Caribbean</td> <td>2.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Black</td> <td>0.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Arab</td> <td>0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Any other ethnic group</td> <td>2%</td> </tr> </table>	Caribbean	2.5%	Other Black	0.5%	2%		Arab	0%	Any other ethnic group	2%	Herts		
Caribbean	2.5%													
Other Black	0.5%													
2%														
Arab	0%													
Any other ethnic group	2%													
Religion or belief	<p>2021 Census religious data for East Hertfordshire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christian: 49.1% (down from 62.7% in 2011) • No Religion: 41.8% (up from 27.7% in 2011) • Not Stated: 6.0% (down from 7.3% in 2011) • Muslim: 1.2% • Other religions: Other religions comprised 7.9% of the population, which may include Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, or other religious affiliations. <p>Religion is a question on housing register applications. 43% of live housing applicants declined to answer this question. From the applications who did answer the question 39.9% of respondents described themselves as Christian, 31.9% as having no religion, 19.2% 'prefer not to say', 3.9% Muslim and 5.1% stated they were either Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish, Zoroastrian or Baha'i</p>	Religion is not monitored under homelessness.	From the housing register data held it appears that applicants are broadly similar in terms of religion to the general population of East Herts according to the 2021 Census.	No action required										
Page 93	The district is 51% female and 49% male. The homeless applicants in 2023/24 were 56% female and 44% male.	There are more women than men recorded as having an accepted	Households defined as having a priority need include those with dependent children or a pregnant woman. In	No action required										

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
		homeless application.	In addition, a significant number of households with dependent children are headed by single women. The discrepancies between the census data and housing register figures can therefore be explained by the legislation governing how homeless applications are assessed.	
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual/straight- 82.7% Homosexual/gay- 1.97% Bisexual- 1.97% Other- 0.33% Prefer not to say- 13.77%	The sexual orientation of homeless applicants broadly matches that recorded by the population in East Herts in the 2021 census	The data suggests that the homelessness service contributes positively to reducing barriers based on sexual orientation	No action required

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
Marriage and civil partnership	Census data from 2021 shows the marriage and civil partnership status of residents in East Herts as:	Marriage and civil partnership is not monitored under homelessness. However as shown under Pregnancy and Maternity in terms of households with children, these are most likely to be single parent female headed households. Couples were 7% of homeless households in 2023/24, 4.8% of these with children and 2.2% without.	Households defined as having a priority need include those with dependent children or a pregnant woman. In addition, a significant number of households with dependent children are headed by single women. The lower % of homeless couples could be impacted by the higher household income expected in a household with 2 (or more) adults	No action required

Assessment of overall impacts and any further recommendations

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? Summary of data about your service-users and/or staff	What do people tell you? Summary of service-user and/or staff feedback	What does this mean? Impacts (actual and potential, positive and negative. Clearly state each)	What can you do? All potential actions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advance equality of opportunity, • eliminate discrimination, and • foster good relations
<p>The Government's homeless legislation defines who should be owed a housing duty or assisted under homelessness. The legislation and associated case law is specifically designed to ensure those less able to access their own housing solutions are assisted – i.e. those that are considered vulnerable are more likely to ask for assistance and be assisted under Homelessness legislation. The government has carried out its own Equalities Impact assessment during the legislative process. Equalities monitoring data for all Local Authorities is available as part of the statutory returns and publicly available at Tables on homelessness - GOV.UK This impact assessment has identified that the homelessness service strengthens equitable access and is expected to improve outcomes for underrepresented and vulnerable groups</p>				

3. List detailed data and/or community feedback which informed your EqIA (If applicable)

Title (of data, research or engagement)	Date	Gaps in data	Actions to fill these gaps: who else do you need to engage with? (add these to the Action Plan below, with a timeframe)
Data from Council's own monitoring systems, which is publicly available at Tables on homelessness - GOV.UK	11/5/2026	Marital/Civil partnership data and religion do not form part of statutory reporting. This data is collected during case management, but customers are not	While these areas are protected characteristics the statutory reporting was devised following a robust equalities impact process and the

Essential Reference Paper B

EIA updated as of **2026**

		required to provide this.	decision reached not to make questions on marital status or religion mandatory. Therefore, it is not proposed further action is taken.

4. Prioritised Action Plan (If applicable)

Impact identified and group(s) affected	Action planned	Expected outcome	Measure of success	Timeframe
NB: These actions must now be transferred to service or business plans and monitored to ensure they achieve the outcomes identified.				

EqIA sign-off: (for the EQIA to be final an email must sent from the relevant people agreeing it or this section must be signed)

Lead Equality Impact Assessment officer:	Vacant post	Date:	
Directorate Management Team rep or Head of Service:	Ben Woods	Date:	
Author of Equality Impact Analysis:	Katherine Gilcreest	Date:	13/5/2026

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 9 June 2026

Report by: Councillor Ben Crystall, Leader of the Council

Report title: Annual Report for 2025/26 and refresh of LEAF Priorities

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

- This report provides Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members with an update on performance against LEAF priorities over the 2025/26 year and invites comments from Committee Members for refreshed LEAF priorities going forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: that

- A) Members review performance over the 2025/26 year; and**
- B) Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend any refreshed or amended LEAF priorities to Executive.**

1.0 Proposals

- 1.1 That Committee Members review progress against last year's LEAF priorities and recommend any changes to these priorities going forward

2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 28th February 2024, Council approved its new "LEAF" corporate priorities. These set out the strategic priorities of the Council and were grouped under the following four headings:

- Listening, Open and Transparent
- Environmentally Focused

- Acting with the Community
- Fair and Inclusive

2.2 Under each of these headings are a series of sub objectives and actions which officers were tasked with delivering. The paper to Council can be found here:

[democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/documents/s65262/East Herts Council Corporate Plan.pdf?J=3](https://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/documents/s65262/East%20Herts%20Council%20Corporate%20Plan.pdf?J=3)

2.3 A further, more detailed set of actions, projects and measures were then implemented at an operational level. This framework helped inform the delivery plans for services, teams and individual staff performance goals. In theory, every member of East Herts Council staff should be able to relate their day to day actions to strategic delivery of LEAF priorities agreed by Members.

2.4 The LEAF priorities are kept under review by Executive on an annual basis and adjusted/ amended as required. This enables The Council to change priorities to accommodate new challenges (eg. in national legislation) and local issues as well as progress against key objectives.

2.5 Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an update in 2025 on progress over the 2024/25 year and made recommendations to Executive. These were considered by Executive and Full Council and refreshed priorities were adopted. The same process is being followed this year with progress being reported to Executive on 14th July and then Full Council on 22 July, where comments and recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny will be considered.

2.6 **Appendix A** sets out updates against each area over the 2025/26 year in detail.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 The LEAF Corporate Plan helps residents understand the priorities of the Council and how resources are used to achieve them. The plan also drives service, team and individual performance goals.

4.0 Options

4.1 LEAF priorities have been developed by the Joint Administration

with support and advice from officers on deliverability, risks and financial implications. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members are able to recommend changes to priorities following an assessment of progress to date.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 There is no legal requirement for councils to develop a corporate plan, however, should the Council fail to refresh priorities there may be a risk that resources are not directed towards achieving key priorities.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

- 6.1 The new Corporate Plan priorities will guide the organisation's work over the coming years. They will be reviewed on an annual basis and agreed at Council. A key priority is to ensure that consultation is carried out effectively.

Community Safety

Not directly however some of the priorities and subsequent actions will be focused on supporting community safety

Data Protection

No

Equalities

As the Corporate Plan is translated into operational priorities, individual equalities impact assessments will be undertaken where there is a change to service delivery

Environmental Sustainability

Actions under the Environmentally Focused section of the Corporate Plan will address issues around Sustainability

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 – Annual Plan for 2024/25****Contact Member**

Councillor Ben Crystall, Leader of the Council.

ben.crystall@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer

Benjamin Wood, Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial,

Tel: 01992 531699. benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk

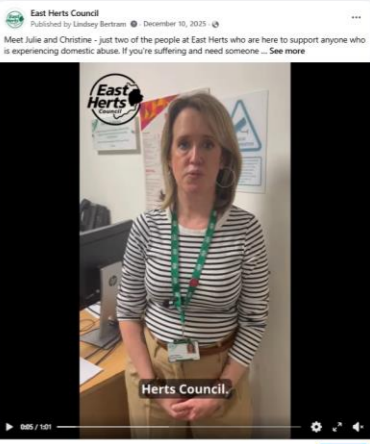
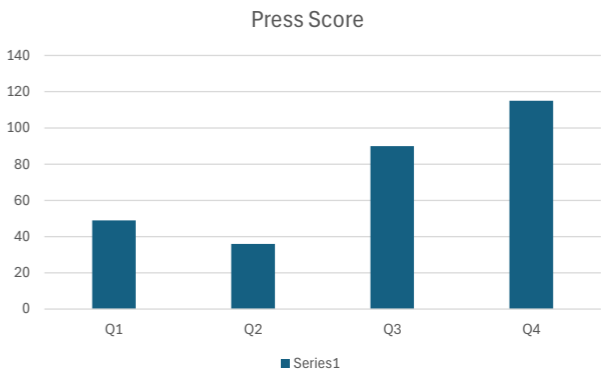
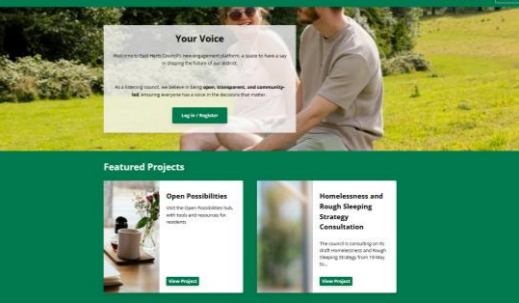
Report Author


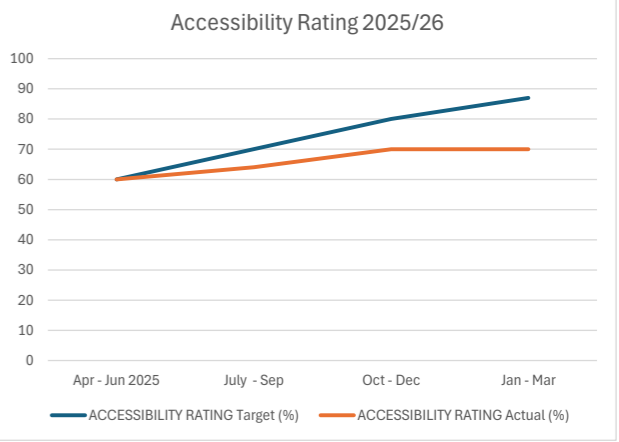
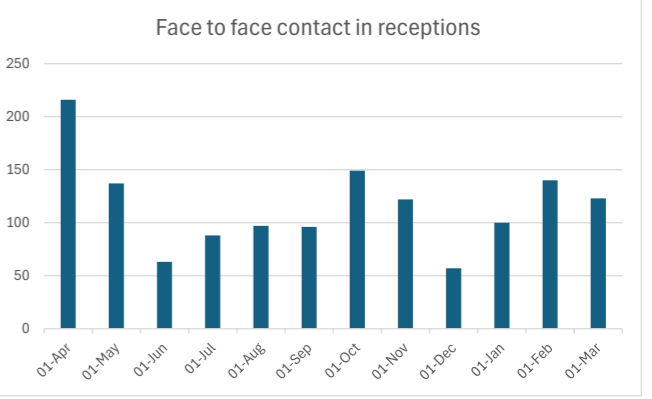
Lindsey Creed, Head of Communications and Digital Media, Tel: 01992

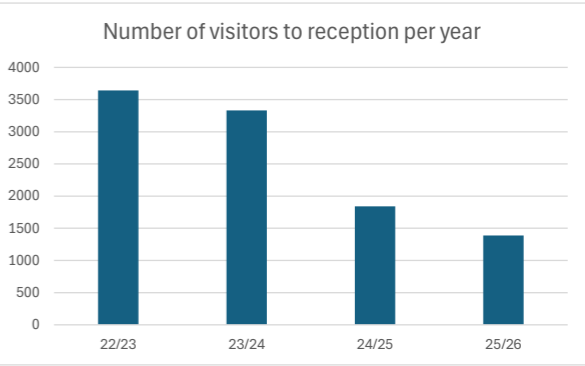
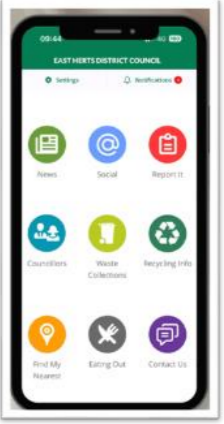
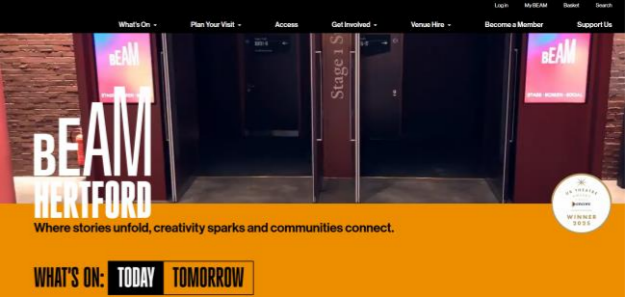
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Listening, Open and Transparent

	Objective	Actions	Measure	Update for 2025/26										
				Progress and measure/ results										
1	Listen and be open and transparent in decision making and actions. We will prioritise improved consultation, engagement and conversation with our communities and evaluate the impact	Promote the council's key messages priorities through campaigns including 16 Days of Action, Arts in East Herts and Explore East Herts	Reach on social media (per campaign/ post)	<p>More than 35,000 people saw or engaged with our campaign calling for an end to violence against women and girls. This ran for 16 days in mid December. Nearly 90,000 people saw our campaign promoting rural businesses across the district. This ran from October to the end of March. Our Arts in East Herts promotion drove over 5,000 hits to the campaign page</p> 										
			Keep press favourability score above 0	<p>Our average press score for the year has been 58, meaning we have had more positive coverage than negative coverage over the year. This is a testament to the team's efforts to publicise as much positive news about the council as possible. This includes coverage on key council updates such as the reduction in household waste being sent to landfill, successful council prosecutions, Arts in East Herts and Love Parks Week.</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Press Score</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>Score</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Q1</td> <td>50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q2</td> <td>40</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q3</td> <td>90</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Q4</td> <td>115</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	Score	Q1	50	Q2	40	Q3	90	Q4	115
		Quarter	Score											
		Q1	50											
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Q3	90													
Q4	115													
	Followers (insta, fb, twitter, network, nextdoor)	<p>We have increased our Facebook followers this year from 7,123 to 9,967, representing a 39% uplift. Strategically, this is our most important channel and this success reflects its prioritisation in our work. We have increased our Instagram followers this year from 3,160 to 3,650. Whilst this is slower growth than Facebook, it still represents a 15% jump. We have increased our LinkedIn followers this year from 3,202 to 3,728 - an uplift of 16%</p>												
	Launch "Your Voice" consultation tool and Nextdoor as a new social channel	Increased response rates to consultations	<p>The parking consultation which ran in October generated 643 responses online. We also drove a higher number of responses to more localised consultations, including on Burley Road play area which generated nearly 40 responses. We also used Your Voice to spark engagement on some more light-hearted topics, including choosing names for the bin trucks. This generated more than 700 suggestions and helped create positive community PR for the crews as the new service bedded in.</p> 											

	<p>Undertake consultations key proposals including Water Lane Hall, Old River Lane and Housing</p>	<p>Number of responses</p>	<p>Face to face consultation took place for Water Lane Hall over the summer of 2025, focusing on two face to face sessions with residents. A further online survey, with a third party undertaking face to face consultation in the town centre took place in February/ March 2026. The Old River Lane masterplan formed the basis of two sets of consultations with residents (online and face to face) in the Autumn of 2025 to agree the details and principles behind the planning application which was submitted by Cityheart in December.</p>																											
	<p>Collect customer feedback in BEAM</p>	<p>Net Promoter Scores</p>	<p>BEAM is averaging 73.41 for NPS over 2025/26 showing very high level of customer service compared to industry benchmarks (typically anything about 70 is vert good). Emails are sent to all ticket purchasers after the event to ask for feedback and QR codes also placed around the building. Response rates tend to be higher from email follow ups. QR code response rate is much lower.</p>																											
<p>Ensure information on our website is as up to date as possible</p>	<p>Ensure Forward Plan is up to date</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>The Forward Plan is published on a monthly basis. The calendar of meetings for the whole year in advance has been published.</p>																											
		<p>Feedback rating for website</p>	<p>We have introduced a new feedback mechanism for the website (using the Your Voice platform). This has generated 60 responses where we have taken direct action to improve the content. 13% of respondents have found the content useful or very useful. The negative feedback is predominantly from Veolia's collection look up tool being down every Tuesday for routine maintenance We have undertaken a review of the Revs and Bens, Housing and Environmental Health (particularly in view of the Renters' Rights Bill) and waste pages. Reviews of the planning, parks and parking pages are underway.</p>																											
	<p>Regularly review web content to ensure it is accurate</p>	<p>Maintain accessibility standards (against WCAG 2.2 standards)</p>	<p>Our web accessibility rating is 70%, lower than we would aim for. An action plan has been developed and is underway to ensure the score is brought up to indutry average (around 85%).</p>	 <table border="1"> <caption>Accessibility Rating 2025/26</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Quarter</th> <th>ACCESSIBILITY RATING Target (%)</th> <th>ACCESSIBILITY RATING Actual (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Apr - Jun 2025</td> <td>60</td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>July - Sep</td> <td>70</td> <td>65</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oct - Dec</td> <td>80</td> <td>70</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jan - Mar</td> <td>85</td> <td>70</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Quarter	ACCESSIBILITY RATING Target (%)	ACCESSIBILITY RATING Actual (%)	Apr - Jun 2025	60	60	July - Sep	70	65	Oct - Dec	80	70	Jan - Mar	85	70											
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		<p>Number of people visiting reception</p>	<p>Over the year we had 1380 visitors to our receptions, down from 1840 last year. This is consistent with a downward trajectory of residents seeking face to face contact. However we also know that most of the residents that do visit receptions have more complex needs and require assistance. This is fundamentally we why have a walk in reception service and although numbers are going down,</p>	 <table border="1"> <caption>Face to face contact in receptions</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>Number of visitors</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>01-Apr</td><td>215</td></tr> <tr><td>01-May</td><td>135</td></tr> <tr><td>01-Jun</td><td>60</td></tr> <tr><td>01-Jul</td><td>85</td></tr> <tr><td>01-Aug</td><td>95</td></tr> <tr><td>01-Sep</td><td>95</td></tr> <tr><td>01-Oct</td><td>145</td></tr> <tr><td>01-Nov</td><td>120</td></tr> <tr><td>01-Dec</td><td>55</td></tr> <tr><td>01-Jan</td><td>95</td></tr> <tr><td>01-Feb</td><td>135</td></tr> <tr><td>01-Mar</td><td>120</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Month	Number of visitors	01-Apr	215	01-May	135	01-Jun	60	01-Jul	85	01-Aug	95	01-Sep	95	01-Oct	145	01-Nov	120	01-Dec	55	01-Jan	95	01-Feb	135	01-Mar	120
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<p>Maintain a front of house/ walk in offer for those customers who need it, alongside a "call back" option for housing, benefits and planning enquiries</p>		<p>the overall time needed to assist individuals has stayed constant. The vast majority of visits (1003) are for council tax or benefits related enquiries, usually support with council tax payments/ arrears and discounts along with housing benefit applications and amendments.</p>	 <table border="1"> <caption>Number of visitors to reception per year</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of visitors</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>22/23</td> <td>3600</td> </tr> <tr> <td>23/24</td> <td>3300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>24/25</td> <td>1800</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25/26</td> <td>1400</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Number of visitors	22/23	3600	23/24	3300	24/25	1800	25/26	1400
Year	Number of visitors												
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	<p>Number of "call backs"</p>	<p>Planning advice - 859 Housing call backs – 126 Benefits call back - 29</p> <p>A total of 1014 call backs over the year is less than last year (1300 in 2024/25). The benefits call back option has had a very low take up and customer services have been encouraging this route for customers who require more complex support. We expect this number of call backs to increase in 2026/27</p>											
<p>Launch new engagement tools including Cloud 9 App and Customer Services chat bot</p>	<p>Number of downloads for Cloud 9 app</p>	<p>12,300 residents have downloaded the East Herts App since launch in November. Anecdotally, it has also received very positive feedback from residents.</p>											
	<p>Number of chatbot conversations</p>	<p>1490 requests received in the first month since launch Respondents have rated 88% of chats as successful, which means it has given residents an accurate and useable response</p>											
<p>Launch new website for BEAM</p>	<p>Conversation rate for bookings/ net promoter scores</p>	<p>A new website launched on March 18th. We have seen improvements since then of: Global conversion rate of 21.5% compared to 12% previously. In terms of visitor growth: – 34% increase in total visitors since launch – 42% of users being new visitors In terms of revenue impact: – 7.5% increase in e commerce revenue since launch – 2,600% increase in membership uptake – 145% increase in donations In terms of checkout behaviour: – Checkout abandonment rate at 6.8% – A strong proportion of customers return to complete purchase within 2.5 days</p>											

Encourage residents to use our digital communication channels, so those who are not digitally able, can contact us by phone or in person

	<p>Proportion of overall contact by channel (Digital/ F2F/ telephony/ appointment)</p>	<p>East Herts residents have a preference for contacting the council via telephony. In recent years we have invested in other channels including chat bots, call backs, and website forms to nudge people on to these platforms. There has been a steady increase in the proportion of people contacting us via digital routes as a result and over 24/25 telephony represented around half of all contacts - down considerably from 75-80% in previous years. However 25/26 has been disappointed with telephony contact rates as a proportion of overall contact rates reducing slightly, to between 40% - 50% (annual average of 45%). This is largely down to the new waste contract which created a lot of additional pressures over the year. Looking at the numbers, there were 48,888 calls into customer services in 24/25 and just over 47,000 digital contacts. Over 25/26 this increased to 109,314 calls and 89,905 digital contacts. Thus more people contacted us via digital channels however it is clear that residents default to calling us when they are concerned. Due to the additional pressures we know that many of these residents chose to call after making digital contact about the bin changes/ deliveries as they had not heard back in sufficient time.</p>	
<p>Increase the proportion of digital contacts</p>	<p>Increase % of residents who have online accounts for council tax</p>	<p>Steady trend continues of nudging households towards having online accounts. Typical we are able to increase the take up by around 5% of this year and this has been consistent over the past few years (24/25 it increased from 35% to just under 40%)</p>	
	<p>Increase % of businesses that have online NNDR accounts</p>	<p>Steady trend continues of nudging business owners to online accounts however this is harder than with council tax accounts. A few % point increases amounts to around 150 - 200 businesses per year</p>	
	<p>Email rating feedback</p>	<p>578 responses were received between 1 April - 30 November 2025. Just under 59% of these rated the interaction as "good" with 12% as "average" and 29% as "poor". In order to make savings and increase feedback we switched from govmetric to a locally designed feedback widget (please note this was primarily as a response to poor website engagement rather than over email). From November to end of March we had 89 instances of feedback which is less than we would have expected based on the trend up until that point. In addition feedback from the new system has indicated a more even spread on customer experiences.</p> <p>Very happy – 29 – (36.3%) Happy – 12 – (15%) Neutral – 3 (3.8%) Unhappy – 4 (5%) Very unhappy – 32 (40%)</p>	

			<p>Planning services feedback</p> <p>Low response rate meaning not enough information to actively use to drive service improvement</p>																				
	Monitor customer feedback and implement any learning	<p>Number of Stage 1 complaints dealt with in timescales (10 working days)</p> <p>Over the year we dealt with 242 Stage 1 complaints. Of these, 135 were resolved within 10 working days (equivalent to 55%). The most complained about service was Operations/ Waste, with 136 formal complaints. The majority of these relate to the roll out of the new contract. Please note we received many more "complaints" from residents about waste services however in the vast majority of these cases residents simply wanted their new bins delivered or their bins emptied and were recorded as service requests as opposed to formal complaints. Formal complaints were only recorded where there had been serious or repeated failures and required investigation.</p>	<table border="1"> <caption>Number of stage 1 complaints dealt with</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of complaints</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>17/18</td><td>100</td></tr> <tr><td>18/19</td><td>105</td></tr> <tr><td>19/20</td><td>70</td></tr> <tr><td>20/21</td><td>60</td></tr> <tr><td>21/22</td><td>160</td></tr> <tr><td>22/23</td><td>165</td></tr> <tr><td>23/24</td><td>185</td></tr> <tr><td>24/25</td><td>160</td></tr> <tr><td>25/26</td><td>240</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Number of complaints	17/18	100	18/19	105	19/20	70	20/21	60	21/22	160	22/23	165	23/24	185	24/25	160	25/26	240
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		<p>Number of stage 2 complaints dealt with</p> <p>43 stage 2 complaints were dealt with over 25/26. Of these, 14 were partially upheld and 3 were fully upheld. All of these complaints related to waste services where we accepted the service was not good enough and issued an apology and where appropriate, remedial action.</p>	<table border="1"> <caption>Number of stage 2 complaints dealt with</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of complaints</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>17/18</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>18/19</td><td>15</td></tr> <tr><td>19/20</td><td>16</td></tr> <tr><td>20/21</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>21/22</td><td>38</td></tr> <tr><td>22/23</td><td>45</td></tr> <tr><td>23/24</td><td>32</td></tr> <tr><td>24/25</td><td>25</td></tr> <tr><td>25/26</td><td>43</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Number of complaints	17/18	15	18/19	15	19/20	16	20/21	12	21/22	38	22/23	45	23/24	32	24/25	25	25/26	43
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4	Engage with residents through Community Forums and the Development Management Forum, to enhance planning outcomes at strategic sites	N/A	<p>N/A</p> <p>Gilston Area Community Forum - 27 Feb 25, 13 May 25, 14 Oct 25, 18 Feb 26. Stortford Fields Community Forum - 25 Jun 25, 18 Feb 26. Development Management Forum - March/April 2026 (previous meetings held in July & September 2024)</p>																				
5	Strive to achieve customer service excellence	Achieve accreditation through CSE framework	<p>Compliance in CSE assessment areas</p> <p>CSE Assessment took place February and March following self assessment in the Autumn. We are compliant in 46 of the 57 key lines of enquiry. Action plan to be implemented in 2026 to achieve accreditation. We will be undertaking another assessment in October 2026 and will aim to be fully compliant by then</p>																				

6	Engage the community in Local Government Re-organisation	Full engagement programme developed including face-to-face engagement at market stalls in each of the five towns.	Number of responses	We generated 600 responses to Hertfordshire's LGR consultation, which represented 10% of the total response rate across Hertfordshire. A detailed engagement report was compiled and used as part of the submission to government
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Environmentally Focused

	Objective	Actions	Measure	Update for 2025/26 Progress and measure/ results
7	Implement our Parking Strategy and other options including the LCWIP to encourage active travel	Implement more Resident's Permit Zones where there is local support	Number of RPZs in consideration	<p>New RPZ policy was adopted by Council in October 2025. This follows on from a review conducted by a Citisense to look at possible changes and ways of making it easier to implement schemes. As a result of this we have been able to unlock appetite to progress some schemes. Currently the roadmap for considering new schemes is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gladstone Road, Ware: scheme about to be formally launched through creation of new traffic regulation order (will also include some changes to yellow lines). Likely implementation in 2-5 months (depending on time to seal order following statutory consultation and implementation of signage, etc) - New Road, Ware: survey completed. Consultation with residents due to begin. If this is supported, likely implementation to be 12 months - Tamworth Road and/ or Currie Street. Public petition received expressing an interest, supported by Ward Members. Survey will begin as soon as Gladstone Road scheme is implemented. Section 106 funding in place to support this. - Woodlands and/ or Stortford Hall Park (Stortford). Residents gathering evidence of issues caused by airport parking. Parking Team in consultation with MAG about funding to support moving to consultation stage. - Park Street, Hertford. Residents have expressed interest and supported by Ward Members. Survey timescales not yet defined. - West Street, Hertford. Survey timescales not yet defined.
		Encourage use of cheaper, town centre periphery car parks such as Northgate End (Stortford) and away from premium priced town centre car parks	Car park usage trends	<p>Focus has largely been on Bishop's Stortford as the pricing policy was explicit about making Northgate End cheaper (£4.40 for a whole day) and the other town centre car parks priced at a more premium level. Trend data indicates this strategy is working albeit incrementally rather than a sudden shift in driver behaviours. Overall in the town, there have been an increased number of parking transactions in recent years however dwell times are also generally reducing. In short, more people are parking but spending less time in town is the general trend. Specifically, Northgate End has moved from an average dwell time of 5hrs when it first opened to over 6.5hrs in the last 12 months. The number of users has also increased from around 2800 p/m to 3200 p/m from 2024/25 to 2025/26. Interestingly however, some other car parks have also grown by number of transactions but at a faster rate. Basbow Lane and Link Road have seen a 16% and 22% increase respectively over the same period. However dwell times in both have also reduced from 5.1 hrs to 3.1 hrs and 4.3 hrs to 2.7 hrs respectively. In terms of policy objectives, it seems clear that more people are opting to use Northgate End for longer term parking however that is in the context of more parking transactions generally.</p>
		Implement the Active Travel app	N/A	<p>The Active Travel App is a digital behaviour change platform to support a shift toward active and sustainable travel in line with the Council's climate and sustainability objectives. The platform and associated promotional services will incentivise active travel by enabling users to earn points redeemable for rewards, predominantly from local businesses. It will provide measurable and verifiable travel data to evidence modal shift and long-term behaviour change.</p>
		Support production of the LCWIP		<p>The East Herts LCWIP has been completed and is awaiting adoption through East Herts' Executive 02 06 2026 and Hertfordshire County Council's Cabinet 17 06 2026. Once adopted, the LCWIP will be used to inform future planning policy and planning application decisions involving the provision and enhancement of walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure and measures as part of development and other proposals in East Herts, including S.106 funding. It may also open up greater access to potential funding streams and application opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable.</p>

8	Implement our Air Quality Action Plan to cut pollution and improve health		Reduction in NO2 levels across the 3 AQMAs in East Hertfordshire	<p>While the Council has not had any dedicated resources to implement the air quality action plan, a number of actions have taken place, both by East Herts Council and our key partners (HCC for example). Additional resources will be needed to implement more East Herts Council led projects.</p> <p>All our waste collection vehicles now use Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) instead of diesel. This cuts carbon emissions by 90% and also reduces other air pollutants.</p> <p>The new waste management contract came into operation in May 2025. The new contractor is using electric vehicles for lighter duties, such as road sweeping and the switch from diesel to hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) is also now operational.</p> <p>This results in 5% of emissions from the waste management service being removed by a switch to e-vehicles powered by a carbon free tariff and 75% of the remaining 95% of emissions from diesel use subject to a 90% reduction due to a switch to HVO (which has 90% lower emissions than diesel), using the 2024/25 nationally defined diesel conversion to carbon emissions factor. Note, all figures from last audit 25_26)</p> <p>Data and local knowledge (from consultation concluding Nov 25) has been used to identify routes with the greatest potential demand, and where changes would most benefit local people to form a 'priority network'. All priority routes have now been assessed, and changes suggested to make them better for walking and cycling. At this stage, all suggested improvements are concepts. All routes will now undergo further design, feasibility work and public engagement after the plan is adopted later in 2026.</p>
9	Roll out more EV chargers in urban and rural locations across the district.	Implement EV contract	Number of EV chargers installed	<p>Contract now signed. Mobilisation started.</p> <p>EV Concession will ensure 10% of all spaces in EH car parks (collectively for those car parks in scope) will become EV. Roll out will begin in priority areas, following in phases to other areas. The project will initially deliver 193 live chargers over three years with 44 more made ready for future demand.</p> <p>The Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) tender is also now awarded and will deliver a proposed 478 onstreet chargers, again over three years, throughout the district.</p> <p>Both projects have used commercial leverage to ensure rural areas with less demand will also be well served with charging provision.</p> <p>The council is confident that the EV bays will be well utilised to ensure car parks operate at the optimum in terms of supply and demand to support local businesses, residents and visitors. Officers will closely monitor usage.</p> <p>Installation completed of 11 new Podpoint EV chargers at Wallfields for staff and fleet vehicles, which enables tracking of usage, consumption and charging for private use.</p> <p>14 EV chargers installed at Buntingford depot for Shared Service vehicles and Waste Fleet vehicles</p>
10	Encourage the reduction of carbon emissions from homes and businesses through training and by supporting "Energy Hubs" in towns and parishes	N/A		<p>The Energy Hubs created using UKSPF 23_25 funding and now established and events are ongoing year on year</p> <p>£1.5m has been awarded to East Herts via Warm Homes:Local Grant (DESNZ) over three years. National Energy Foundation have been procured as our delivery agent and, while challenging, is performing well</p> <p>The ECO4/Flex scheme (OFGEM) has now closed and resulting in 21 vulnerable homes receiving measures with annual cost and carbon savings of £10,300 and 16,118kgCO2 annually, respectively</p> <p>Cllr Tim Hospkin, Linda Meehan and Jenny Foster are members of Hertfordshire Retrofit Steering Group which brings together organisations, experts, and community representatives involved in Hertfordshire's retrofit system. Its purpose is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Connect people, ideas and initiatives •Inspire behaviour change and collective action through stewardship of the Retrofit System •Coordinate and prioritise funding and initiatives to influence the System •Support shared learning, expert insight and lived experience •Influence wider decision-making through system-wide perspectives <p>BEAM has achieved basic Green Book accreditation and is almost at intermediate, which will be achieved in the coming months.</p>






































11	Encourage residents to play their part in supporting local wildlife and improving our natural environment and support delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy	Promote the county's work on the LNRS	Reach, engagement and responses	We drove 108 responses to the county's consultation on the LNRS. This represented 27% of their total response rate - the most of any district/borough. Parks teams have continued to support habitat improvements, reduced mowing initiatives and natural environment projects across a number of open spaces in support of wider biodiversity objectives. Engagement with local Friends Groups and volunteers has helped support environmental stewardship and community understanding of nature recovery initiatives.
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Acting with the Community

	Objective	Actions	Measure	Update for 2025/26 Progress and measure/ results
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12	Consult with communities to review and refresh our Local Plan, prioritising improved sustainability standards.	N/A	N/A	<p>Updated Statement of Community Involvement published in July 2025. Call for Sites process and extensive programme of site visits underway. 283 site submissions were received. This year saw the completion of several studies including the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy and Buntingford Employment Study, while also progressing an ambitious programme of other ongoing evidence base work, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Green Belt Assessment - LCWIP - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment - Open Space Assessment - Indoor Sports Needs Assessment and Strategy - Retail and Town Centres Study - District-Wide Employment Land Review, and - Employment Studies for Bishop's Stortford, Hertford, Ware and Sawbridgeworth <p>Work has also commenced on a District Design Code. A draft Strategic Vision for the new Local Plan has been agreed. Notice of Intent to Commence Local Plan Making will be given in June 2026. A Scoping Consultation will take place from 11 June to 10 July 2026. This is the first stage of engagement in the preparation of the new Local Plan. Its purpose is to provide meaningful early engagement with stakeholders and the local community, including residents, businesses, infrastructure providers, and other organisations, to help shape the direction of the Local Plan. A Planning Newsletter keeps stakeholders and communities up to date with the latest news.</p>
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		Updated market policy and regular promotion of Trader offers.	Number of traders on the Charter Market	A total of 22 traders covering 35 pitches are on the Charter Markets and 5 traders on the Hertford Farmer's Market. Local markets has a regular feature of the councils communications programme, receiving a mention at least monthly on all the council's major platforms.
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		Encouraging further spending in Hertford through BEAM visits	Number of events/ screenings and attendance	<table border="0"> <tr> <td> Stage Performances 321</td> <td> F&B Income (net) £620,123</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Stage Attendance 75,331</td> <td> Spend Per Head (net) £4.85</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Stage Occupancy% 62%</td> <td> Booking and Transaction Fees (net) £255,090</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Stage ATP (net) £18.38</td> <td> Net promoter Score 73.41</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Cinema Screenings 2,849</td> <td rowspan="4">We don't have a full year of comparable data from 24.25. But some key areas of growth from Q3 & Q4 are: Booking and Transaction Fees +73.7% Stage ATP +10.7% SPH +19% Stage Occupancy% +17.5% Screen Occupancy% +26%</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Cinema Attendance 53,028</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Cinema Occupancy% 25%</td> </tr> <tr> <td> Cinema ATP (net) £8.77</td> </tr> </table> 	 Stage Performances 321	 F&B Income (net) £620,123	 Stage Attendance 75,331	 Spend Per Head (net) £4.85	 Stage Occupancy% 62%	 Booking and Transaction Fees (net) £255,090	 Stage ATP (net) £18.38	 Net promoter Score 73.41	 Cinema Screenings 2,849	We don't have a full year of comparable data from 24.25. But some key areas of growth from Q3 & Q4 are: Booking and Transaction Fees +73.7% Stage ATP +10.7% SPH +19% Stage Occupancy% +17.5% Screen Occupancy% +26%	 Cinema Attendance 53,028	 Cinema Occupancy% 25%	 Cinema ATP (net) £8.77
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	<p>13 Help create thriving high streets, by encouraging local markets and by working positively with partners - JG note: add in somewhere the Highoak business units enabled at Wallfields - XXX local businesses</p>			<p>45% of audiences for BEAM travel from outside of Hertford. A growing % of tickets are being bought from outside of EHC district generally, with audiences travelling from Broxbourne and North London. We are currently developing a tool to measure the wider economic impact of the theatre on the town. BEAM also launched its food offer in September. Over 2025/26, there were 321 stage performances at BEAM and attendance of 75,331.</p>	
		<p>Careers fairs in Hertford and Stortford</p>	<p>Number of businesses and young people engaged</p>	<p>Two careers fairs took place. One in BEAM focused on secondary schools from Hertford and Ware and a second fair focused on schools from Bishop's Stortford, Sawbridgeworth and Buntingford. 11 secondary schools took part and both sessions also included "twilight" opening (after 3pm) for the general public. Over 50 businesses took part with 1400 young people from schools and a further 200 in the twilight sessions.</p>	
		<p>Visit East Herts campaign to promote rural businesses and activities</p>	<p>Reach and engagement</p>	<p>Explore East Herts reached over 90,000 people and generated over 700 engagements (likes, comments, shares)</p>	
		<p>Create a campaign for skills promotion to residents and businesses, including SEEDL, HOP and the Careers Fairs</p>	<p>Reach and engagement</p>		<p>Open Possibilities reached over 90,000 people and generated 3,404 engagements (likes, comments, shares and click-throughs)</p>
<p>14</p>	<p>Support communities to create or update their Neighbourhood Plans.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>		<p>The Stocking Pelham Neighbourhood Area was designated on the 8 July 2025. The Stanstead Abbots and St Margarets Neighbourhood Plan was adopted by the Council on 4 March 2026. Ongoing support is being provided to Hertford Castle Plus (Castle Ward, Kingsmead West Ward and Bengoe South Ward).</p>

15	Prioritise actions that can provide Housing which is truly affordable.	Housing - working to change housing from affordable rent to social rent. Pushing the amount of affordable housing as part of developments.	Number of affordable homes delivered	287 affordable homes delivered over the year (166 for rent, 121 for shared ownership)	<table border="1"> <caption>Number of affordable homes delivered per year</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Number of homes</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2022/23</td> <td>300</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023/24</td> <td>370</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2024/25</td> <td>440</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2025/26</td> <td>280</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Number of homes	2022/23	300	2023/24	370	2024/25	440	2025/26	280
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Disposal of Lime Kiln Place	N/A	15 units disposed of to Hightown to let at social rent. Transaction completed end of March and units let to tenants almost immediately providing accommodation in the town													
Deliver the rent reduction scheme	N/A	The council provided funding to reduce the rents of four newly built four-bedroom houses in Bishop's Stortford to the three-bedroom local housing allowance level making the rents truly affordable as they are now less than 60% of the private rent for an equivalent property.													
17	Support voluntary sector groups to continue their work supporting the whole community	Encouraging volunteering at BEAM to help run the business and allow people to build up skills and experience	Number of volunteers and work experience programmes delivered.	100+ volunteers working at BEAM, with impactful work experience programme being developed for 26/27.											
		New strategic partnership to be established and co-location of community services	N/A	Community Alliance now co-located at Jackson Square with Customer Services, initially focusing on Healthy Hub delivery. Citizens Advice will be co-located at Hertford											
18	Create a long term asset management plan based on community values		Review ongoing	Work ongoing with other Local Authorities to create a joint community lettings policy, incorporating Assets of Community Value and Community Asset Transfer policy all to be set out in the new Asset Management plan for the new unitary authority as part of LGR											

Fair and Inclusive

Objective	Actions	Measure	Update for 2025/26	
			Progress and measure/ results	
	BEAM Cultural Outreach work	Number of participants	nearly 700 Participants took part in Learning & Wellbeing workshops at BEAM and nearly 200 people are now signed up to BEAMs Local Creative Network.	

<p>19</p>	<p>Deliver the Cultural Strategy, with support for new events</p>	<p>Delive the River Lea Towpath project</p>	<p>Number of benches improved</p>	<p>10 benches located along the river Lea between Ware and Hertford painted with designs created by local artists under the theme of nature. This was community collaboration with local artists and project manager, support from Ware Men's Shed to restore benches to ensure their suitability for painting.</p>	
		<p>Deliver Arts in East Herts</p>	<p>Number of participants / number of projects supported</p>	<p>Delivered 'Arts in East Herts' 2025 - evaluation report being finalised (JG & OR). Hilary now has the final report. 46 local artists were supported with small grants to deliver workshops and performances throughout September and October 2025. Activities ran across the district with a good take up in villages. The council dispersed over £36.5k of grants with plans to establish an Arts based charity to align with Beam's outreach work and to secure the future of Arts in East Herts.</p>	
<p>20</p>	<p>Deliver our Thriving Together Plan to promote physical exercise, healthy lifestyles and support other measures including healthy hubs that boost community wellbeing</p>	<p>Regular health & wellbeing content in network</p>	<p>Referrals to Healthy Hub / outcomes from HH</p>	<p>1108 clients engaged with Healthy Hub services across our Hertford Fore Street, Hertford Sele Farm and Bishop's Stortford locations.</p>	
<p>21</p>	<p>Improve our Council Tax Support scheme to make it fairer, simpler and more transparent.</p>			<p>Changes put on hold pending Local Government Re-organisation</p>	

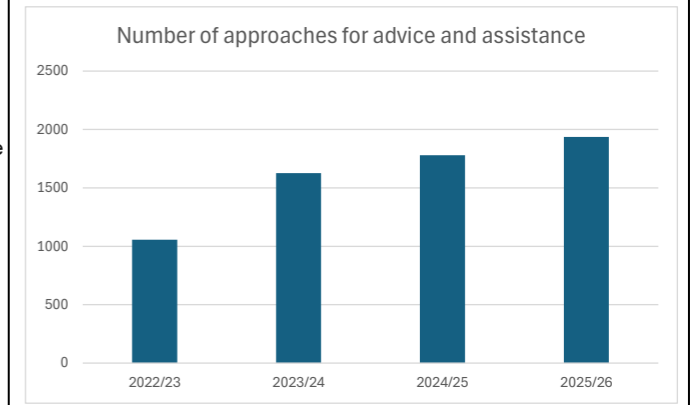
22

Support those facing homelessness or recovering from it, and include them in consultations

Review Housing Register and Allocations Policy, to ensure this contributes to reducing homelessness.
Use Renters Rights to improve PRS (Private Rented Sector) as sustainable housing option.

Number of approaches for advice and assistance

Continued economic uncertainty coupled with some private landlords existing the market following the introduction of the Renters' Right Act 2025 have combined to see increases in the number of people approaching the council for housing advice.



23

Maintain and improve council services while making them more cost efficient through the "Transforming East Herts" programme

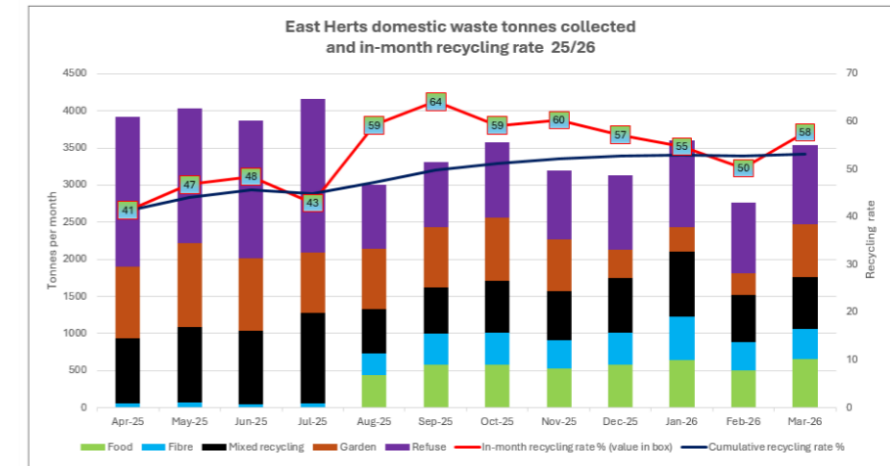
Deliver Transforming East Herts

Savings delivered

Moving into LGR means that the transformation agenda has different requirements, essentially less focused on existing systems and processes as these will be fully redesigned when mergers with other authorities occur. As a result the Transformation Team has been re-structured to a smaller team of two people focused on improving the customer experience particularly through the website, CRM, cloud 9 and BEAM

Maximise benefits from the new Waste Contract

Tonnes of waste collected/ tonnes of food waste collected/ kg per household waste collected/ tonnes of plastic waste collected



3867 tonnes of food waste collected since the weekly service launched

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: Tuesday 9 June 2026

Report By: Chair 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 list of topics is detailed in **Appendix A**.

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, and 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 below and are also set out in Appendix 1.

- 15 September 2026
- 10 November 2026
- 19 January 2027
- 9 March 2027

- 2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met for a workshop on Thursday 5 March 2026, to discuss potential topics for scrutiny on the work programme for 2026/27. The Executive were 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 scrutiny in 2025/26, some of these topics need to be refined via a scrutiny proposal form:

- Sustainable Transport – to be defined by a Scrutiny Proposal Form
- AI in Local Government and at East Herts – 15 September 2026, delayed from the 10 March 2026 meeting
- Local Government Reform – meeting in early 2027 following advice from Helen Standen (Chief Executive)
- BEAM Update (Audit and Governance Committee are considering a report on the BEAM business plan in a meeting on 30 June 2026)
- Annual Report on Council complaints
- Listening Council

- Council Tax Support Scheme 2027/28

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

3.1 Members are welcome, and are 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

Contact Member: Councillor David Jacobs, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
david.jacobs@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author: Peter Mannings, Committee Support Officer,
Tel: 01279 502174.
peter.mannings@eastherts.gov.uk

Programme of Proposed Scrutiny Topics

Topic	Corporate Objectives (LEAF)	Scrutiny Approach (Summary Bulletin, Report, rapid review or task and finish group)	Background Notes / Officers' comments	Lead Officer(s)	Reporting timeframe
Annual Report on Council Complaints		Report by Ben Wood	Email sent to the Chair from Ben Wood, Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services on 16 April 2026.	Ben Wood, Director for Regeneration, Customer and Community Services	15 September 2026
AI in Local Government and at East Herts		Report by Matt Canterford	Suggested as a topic by Executive Member for Corporate Services (Cllr Dumont).	Matt Canterford, Director, Chief Technology Officer (CTO)	15 September 2026
Council Tax Support Scheme 2027/28		Report by Carol Bulloch		Carol Bulloch, Assistant Director (Revenues and Benefits)	10 November 2026
Listening Council			Suggested at Scrutiny Committee workshop on 5 March 2026		To be discussed and agreed
BEAM Update			Suggested at Scrutiny Committee workshop on 5 March 2026 – Audit Governance Committee are considering a report the BEAM business plan on 30 June 2026.	Ben Wood, Director for Regeneration, Customer and Community Services	To be discussed and agreed
Local Government Reform		Report by Helen Standen	Scrutiny Proposal Forms submitted by Cllrs E Buckmaster and G McAndrew	Helen Standen, CEO	O&S meeting date in 2027, based upon advice from Helen Standen (CEO)