

East Herts Improvement Plan

This improvement plan has been developed to pull together the key areas of improvement to support the council in its delivery of its Corporate Strategic Plan. The actions have been developed following on from the feedback the council received after the Peer Challenge that took place in December 2012 and the Executive Awayday that took place in February 2013.

Theme	Area for Improvement	Action	Link to Council Priority	Completion Date	Lead Officer(s)	Progress up to 30 April 2013
Community Leadership	<i>The council needs to develop its own definition of community leadership and decide how far along the spectrum of community leadership it wishes to go.</i>	1. Hold an Executive Awayday to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a clear vision of what Community Leadership means to East Herts Council. Decide how far on the community leadership spectrum we will go. 	PEOPLE	February 2013	CMT	On Target. Awayday session held and improvement plan developed to take forward 'community leadership' and 'here to help' vision.
		2. Leader to give a presentation on the 'Future Councillor' setting out his vision for the shape of local government in the future and outline the key role that ward councillors have to play in that future.	PEOPLE	14 March 2013	Leader of the Council	Achieved. Presentation took place on 13 March 2013. 30% of serving councillors have already had a briefing and all members have been notified of the new publication from NLGN called 'The Road Not Taken'. Newly elected members in May 2013 will be given this information and this presentation, as part of their induction briefing.
		3. Leader to attend staff briefings to share views on the shape of local government and the key priorities for the council.	PEOPLE	April 2013 July 2013 October 2013	Leader of the Council invited Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services	On target. Leader to be invited to take part in one of the forthcoming staff briefings.
		4. Develop a Communication Plan to promote the council's community leadership role.	PEOPLE	June 2013	Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services	On target.

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Community Leadership	<i>Clarifying the process for handling local issues that come back into the organisation from members, aligning council resources to support the role and providing supporting officer capacity.</i>	5. Joint briefing held with the Executive and SMG to discuss the Community Leadership vision and the operational support required.	PEOPLE	30 April 2013	Executive SMG	Achieved. A joint meeting was held with the Executive and SMG on 30 April 2013 to take forward 'community leadership'. The discussion helped to define 'community leadership' for East Herts and identified a number of training and development suggestions. The outcomes from this session will feed into actions 4, 6 and 8.
	<i>The council will need to more effectively support members in embracing their community leadership role.</i>	6. Facilitate action learning sets (ALS) to support members in responding to community based issues and understanding their community leadership role.	PEOPLE	1 set held in 2012/13 2 sets held in 2013/14	Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services	On target. The first ALS session was held on 26 November 2012. Since then there have been three follow up ALS sessions for this initial group. There are plans to start another set with a new cohort in March/April 2013. After that the plan is to offer two sets a year with each set lasting approximately six months including evaluation and reflection.
		7. Relaunch the Community Engagement checklist to support members in developing their own profile of their ward.	PEOPLE	May 2013	Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services	On target. Checklist to be circulated electronically to all members.
		8. Review member training in light of the councillors' changing role to include "communication and consultation" skills and techniques needed to engage with their local communities are provided.	PEOPLE	Ongoing - Quarterly through the Member Development Charter Group	Head of Legal and Democratic Services	On target. The members training questionnaire, to inform the 2013/14 Member training & Development plan, was given to the members who attended the Leader's presentation on 13 March 2013 and was emailed to all members on 14 March 2013 for completion. Outline training and development programme approved by Charter Group. Programme to be reviewed following analysis of the returned questionnaires.

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Community Leadership	<i>The council will need to more effectively support members in embracing their community leadership role. (continued)</i>	9. In partnership with the Member Development Charter Group review role descriptions in light of the changing role of councillors.	PEOPLE	May 2013	Head of Legal and Democratic Services	On target. Leader requested to “kick start” the process. Awaiting input before the review is undertaken by the Charter Group.
		10. Include case studies of good examples of community leadership using a range of member communication channels to support members in their role.	PEOPLE	Regular articles circulated.	Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services	On target. Case studies being developed by the Corporate Planning and Performance Manager in partnership with members. Once ready the case studies will be passed to communications for promotion.

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Scrutiny	<i>Scrutiny members now need to set their own agenda for work programmes more assertively.</i>	11. Joint meeting to take place with Chief Executive and Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny, to discuss work programme development.	PEOPLE	23 May 2013	Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services Head of Legal and Democratic Services	On target. Meeting scheduled for 23 May 2013.
Organisational Culture	<i>A reappraisal of strategic HR policy and practice is needed to reflect the future challenges in particular how the council will adapt its corporate communication systems and staff support arrangements in the light of new ways of working such as homeworking.</i>	12. Review the council's People Strategy to reflect the council's future challenges and update policies accordingly.	PEOPLE	March 2014	Acting Head of HR, Payroll, FM and Estates	On target. The people strategy will be refreshed to address the cultural changes required to deliver 'here to help', and new ways of working.
	<i>Address some problems that have arisen relating to workforce corporate communications and support in the light of these recent changes.</i>	13. Implement the changes highlighted from the review of internal communications.	PEOPLE	July 2013	Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services	On target. Initial report will be presented to the Corporate Management Team on 28 March 2013.
	<i>There needs to be a greater focus on behaviours which will underpin the council in the future, including; building trust, flexibility, adaptability, enabling/empowering and innovation.</i>	14. Develop a behaviour framework, in partnership with staff, consistent with 'Here to Help' and the Council's Community Leadership role.	PEOPLE	April 2013 start - 1 year rolling programme	Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services	On target. Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services is currently developing a project plan, in consultation with the acting Head of HR, Payroll, FM and Estates.

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Finance	<i>The overall approach to financial monitoring including the monitoring of savings needs to be improved to ensure budgets and savings delivery are on track in year.</i>	15. In line with the external audit recommendation efficiency savings for 2013/14 will be RAG (Red, Amber and Green) assessed through the Corporate Healthcheck process.	PROSPERITY	Quarterly	Heads of Service	On target. RAG monitoring has been piloted in the last quarter against all 2012/13 efficiency savings. Formal quarterly reporting to be rolled out for 2013/14.
		16. Review the overall approach to finance and consider changes to the financial regulations. (Links to action 27)	PROSPERITY	December 2013	Director of Finance and Support Services	On target. Early stages of planning underway. Discussion with key officers and members will be need to be undertaken as part of the development process once further detail formulated.
	<i>In reviewing future priorities and budgets it will be important to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>continue to test resource allocations against your priority outcomes</i> • <i>consider pump priming new methods of early intervention to change demand for services in future</i> • <i>ensure value for money through on-going effective contract monitoring of major contracted services like waste collection</i> • <i>explore future opportunities for asset rationalisation, customer service channel shift and greater agile working</i> 	17. Test resource allocations against priority outcomes through the budget setting process for 2014/15 (Follows on from action 16)	PROSPERITY	March 2014	Director of Finance and Support Services	On target. Plan to deliver the budget for 2014/15 is being considered currently. Consideration needs to be given to how to formally test resource allocation against priorities as part of any new finance process.
		18. Consider new methods of pump priming to change demand in services as new methods and opportunities arise.	PROSPERITY	Ongoing	Director of Finance and Support Services	On target. Early stages of planning underway. All links to the review of the overall approach to finance.
		19. Continue to produce the monthly Corporate Healthcheck to ensure ongoing effective monitoring of all revenue and capital budgets, including major contracted services.	PROSPERITY	Monthly	Director of Finance and Support Services	On target. The Corporate Healthcheck is reported monthly for the Corporate Management Team and the Executive, containing analysis on revenue and capital expenditure.
20. Future opportunities regarding service delivery addressed annually through the Executive awayday and rolled out through the Council's Corporate Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy.	PROSPERITY	Annual (next one due March 2014 in preparation for 2015/16)	CMT	Not started. Work on this will commence from January 2014, when the 2015/16 Integrated Financial and Service Planning timetable is produced.		

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Finance	<p><i>Decreasing reliance on Whitehall funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Explore opportunities for investing council capital in properties which will generate income greater than is currently being achieved from investments in the money market.</i> 	21. Write a brief for a property investment advisor to explore opportunities.	PROSPERITY	31 March 2013 - Brief completed	Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services	Achieved. Outline brief completed and expressions of interest will be sort.
				September 2013 - opportunities finalised		On Target. See above.
'Here to Help'	<p><i>There is a need to define the concept of 'Here to Help' more sharply. This includes outlining the stages by which it will be implemented.</i></p>	22. Hold an Executive Awayday to establish a clear definition of what this means to East Herts Council.	PEOPLE	February 2013	CMT	Achieved. Awayday session held and improvement plan developed to take forward 'community leadership' and 'here to help' vision.
		23. Develop a programme to explore different facets of 'Here to Help' as they apply to each area/section. The Programme will need to embed the value, beliefs and behaviours which underpin this. (Links to Action 14)	PEOPLE	April 2013 start - 1 year rolling programme	Chief Executive and Director of Customer and Community Services Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services	On target. Head of Information, Customer and Parking Services is currently developing a project plan, in consultation with the acting Head of HR, Payroll, FM and Estates.
		24. Develop a Communication Plan to promote the council's 'Here to help' concept.	PEOPLE	June 2013	Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services	On target.
IT	<p><i>There is a need to develop a clear IT strategy which would include, how IT will be used to shift service channels, support the back office, co-ordinate information in a joined up way across the organisation, enable different services and sites to work together seamlessly.</i></p>	25. Produce an IT Strategy and action plan improving resilience, response times & IT is fit for purpose.	PEOPLE PROSPERITY	Autumn 2013	Acting Head of IT Director of Finance and Support Services	On target. A decision on IT Shared Services is scheduled early in Summer 2013. A new ICT Strategy will be produced to coincide with the shared services proposals.

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Economic wellbeing	<i>The council will need to more effectively support members in embracing their knowledge and understanding of the planning process.</i>	26. Hold an Open Day in the Planning department to raise members' awareness of the planning process.	PLACE	May / June 2013	Head of Planning and Building Control	On target. Arrangements currently being formulated with regard to the content and timing of the Open Day event. Three possible dates for the event in June identified and anticipated that it will take place, as planned, prior to the end of June 2013.
Governance	<i>Continue to ensure that the council's constitution reflects the council's priorities and structure to facilitate the smooth running of the organisation.</i>	27. Set up a member and officer working group to discuss changes to the council's constitution/financial regulations.	PROSPERITY	Annually (May each year)	Director of Neighbourhood Services and Monitoring Officer Director of Finance and Support Services	On target. Member and officer working party will be set up after the May election to review the constitution. A separate group will review the financial regulations and procurement rules. A report on minor amendments to the constitution will go to the Council meeting on 15 May 2013.