

# **Annual Report**

**2012/13**

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## **Section 1: Introduction**

### **Message from the Leader and the Chief Executive**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **Section 2: Profile of the District**

### **The Area**

East Herts is the largest of the 10 districts in Hertfordshire. It covers 47,568.68 hectares, around a third of the county, and offers a blend of rural and town living. The benefits of this mixture are greatly appreciated by the 137,687<sup>1</sup> people who live in the district.

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

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

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

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

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

### **The Economy**

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

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<sup>1</sup> 2011 Census - Usual Resident Population (KS101EW), NOMIS

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

time workers compared to £506 for the whole of the country<sup>3</sup>). Unemployment is very low (1.8%<sup>4</sup>).

Over 50% of people travel to work by car and 12% travel by train. Less than 2% of people travel by bus/coach. 12% of people work at or from home<sup>5</sup>.

House prices are among the highest in the country; in 2012 for the period April to June the average property price was £311,300<sup>6</sup> while the average salary was £32,496<sup>7</sup>. 29.9% of properties are semi-detached in East Herts, followed by 27.9% which are detached<sup>8</sup>. There is a shortage of affordable housing.

## The People

A fifth of people are under 16 or and a fifth of people are over 60. The average age in the district is 39.5<sup>9</sup>.

More than half of people (aged 16 and over) are married and over a quarter are single. 10% of people are separated or divorced and 6% are widowed<sup>10</sup>.

Over 89% of people were born in England, 3% were born in other countries in the European Union and 4% in other countries<sup>11</sup>. The main religion is Christianity but almost a fifth of people have no religion<sup>12</sup>.

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

The people of East Herts enjoy very good health and 9% provide unpaid care<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> 2012 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings - Resident Analysis, NOMIS, ONS

<sup>4</sup> April 2013, Total Claimant Count, NOMIS, ONS

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

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

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

<sup>8</sup> 2011 Census - Dwellings, Household spaces and Accommodation type (KS401EW), NOMIS

<sup>9</sup> 2011 Census - Age Structure (KS102EW), NOMIS

<sup>10</sup> 2011 Census - Marital and Civil Partnership Status (KS103EW), NOMIS

<sup>11</sup> 2011 Census - Country of Birth (KS204EW), NOMIS

<sup>12</sup> 2011 Census - Religion (KS209EW), NOMIS

<sup>13</sup> 2011 Census - Ethnic Group (KS201EW), NOMIS

<sup>14</sup> 2011 Census - Health and Provision of Unpaid Care (KS301EW), NOMIS

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

Car ownership is high, with 46.5% of households owning two or more cars or vans and 40.8% of households owning one car or van<sup>16</sup>. 44.4% of people travel to work by car or van and 9.6% travel by train. Less than 2% of people travel by bus. 5% of people work from home<sup>17</sup>. However the rural nature of the district means that those that do not have access to a car or other means of transport face difficulty accessing services.

### **Did you know?**

#### **East Herts Council in 2012/13:**

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

<sup>15</sup> 2011 Census - Qualifications and Students (KS501EW), NOMIS

<sup>16</sup> 2011 Census - Car or Van availability (KS404EW), NOMIS

<sup>17</sup> 2011 Census - Method of travel to work (QS701EW), NOMIS

### **Section 3: Our Vision for the District**

East Herts Council's vision for the district is:

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

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

These priorities in 2012/13 were:

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| <b><u>People</u> – Fair and accessible services for those that use them and opportunities for everyone to contribute</b> |
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| <b><u>Place</u> – Safe and Clean</b> |
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| <b><u>Prosperity</u> – Improving the economic and social opportunities available to our communities</b> |
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Each priority was further defined by a series of objectives which were set out in our four year Corporate Strategic Plan for 2012 - 2016. These priorities and objectives were shared with many of our partner organisations to enable a joined-up approach in service delivery, helping to eliminate service gaps and duplication whilst promoting efficiency.

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



#### **Section 4: Progress against 2012/13 Corporate Priorities**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **Place – Safe and Clean**

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

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

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



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

police and housing associations the Council is able to take positive action against anti social behaviour, criminal damage and repeat offenders. Overall anti social behaviour has reduced by 35% in East Herts in the last year.

- Issued all our Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) with bodycam. The bodycams will not be used as part of the ordinary parking management and enforcement process. Instead where there has been a verbal or physical attack on a CEO, footage may be used for evidential purposes and also where it may help in resolving a complaint from a member of the public.
- Removed over 100 graffiti tags in Hertford in partnership with the Probation Service Community Payback scheme, whose teams have helped us remove the graffiti.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## **Section 5: Consultation**

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

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

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

To view all our current open consultations and results of closed consultations go to [www.eastherts.gov.uk](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk).

## **Section 6: Equalities**

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

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

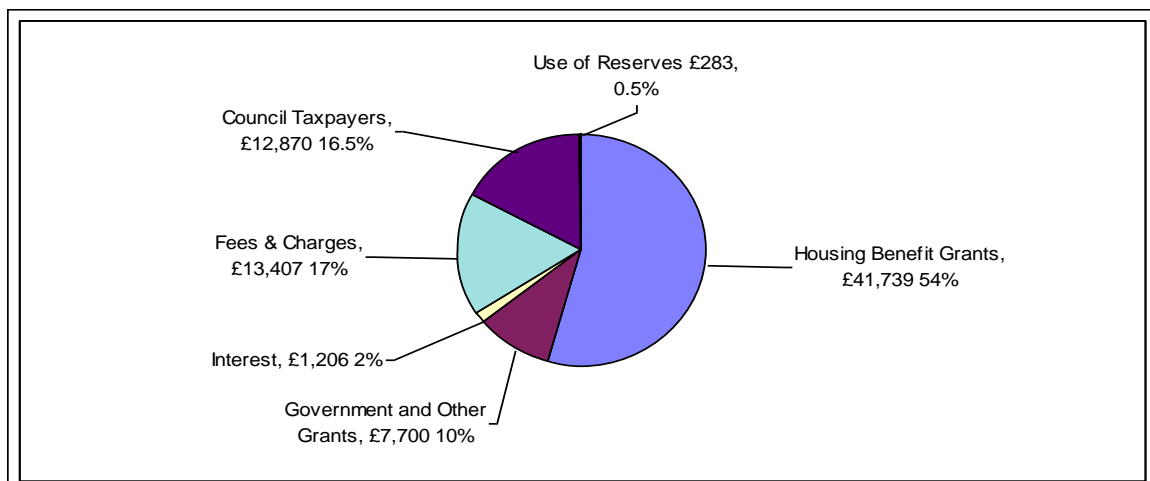
The protected characteristics set out in the Act are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership. The East Herts Council Comprehensive Corporate Equality Policy 2012-2015 supports and drives the Council's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



## **Section 7: Financial Information**

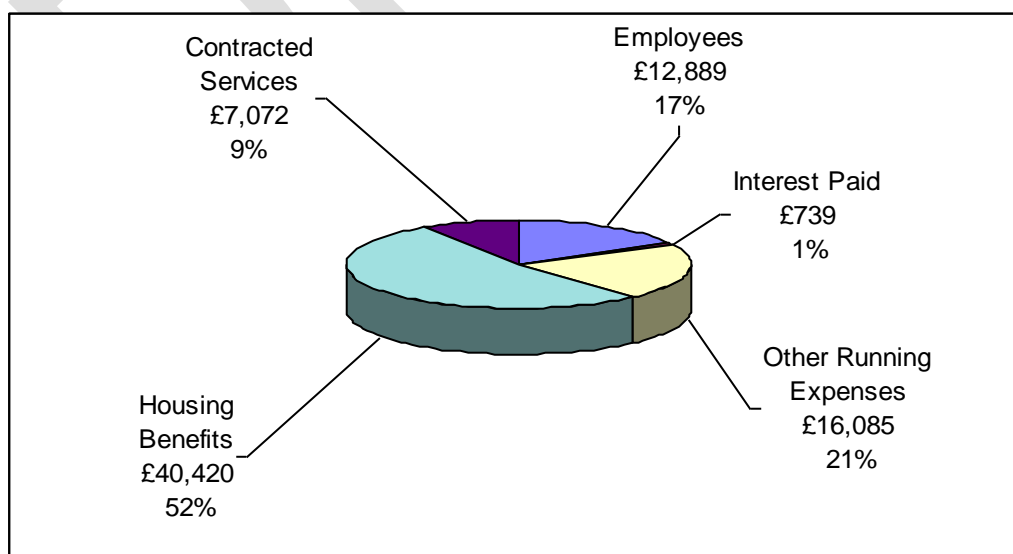
The following summarises East Herts Council's statement of accounts for the financial year from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013<sup>18</sup>.

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



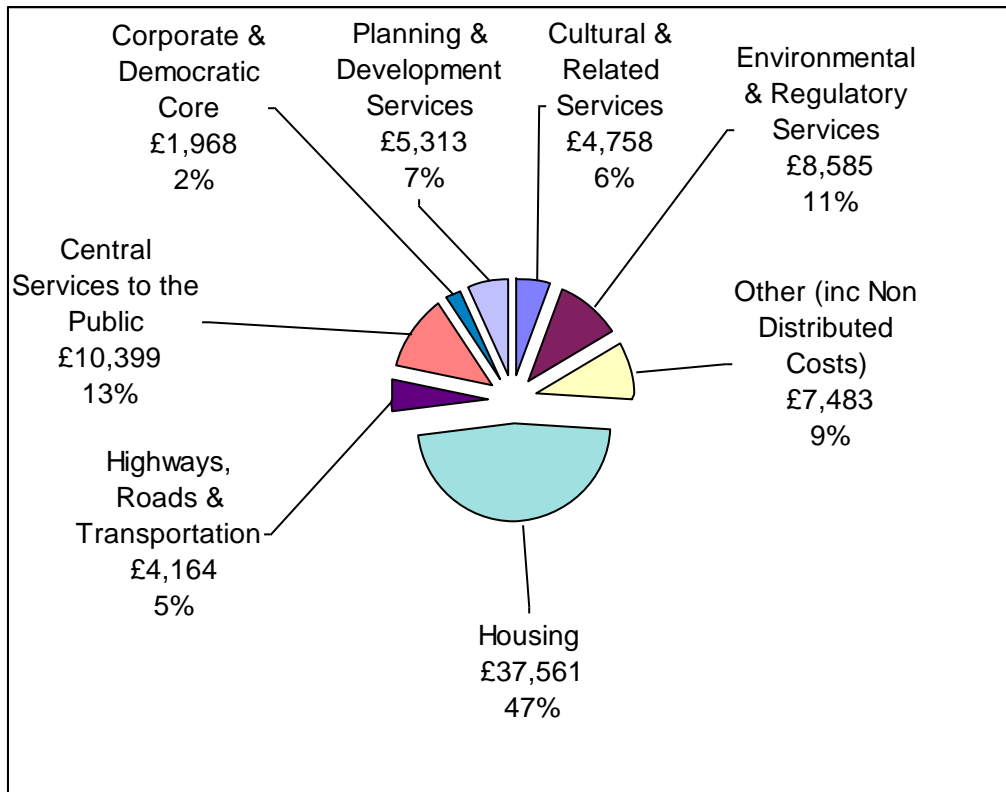
It can be seen that the largest source of the Council's income is from Housing Benefit Grants.

### **How the money is spent £000**



<sup>18</sup> Draft accounts prior to audit

## The services provided £000



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

The full statement of account can be found at [www.eastherts.gov.uk](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk) along with a full set of previous years audited accounts.

## **Section 8: Statement on Contracts**

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

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## **Section 9: Performance Indicators**

Corporate priority performance measures for 2012/13.

For information the following data will be provided:

| <b>Code</b>                               | <b>Indicator</b> | <b>Past performance</b> | <b>Current performance</b> |                |                         | <b>Lead Service</b> |
|---|------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
|   |                  | <b>2011/12</b>          | <b>2012/13</b>             |                | <b>Performance</b>      |                     |
|   |                  | <b>Outturn</b>          | <b>Target 2012/13</b>      | <b>Outturn</b> | <b>Short term trend</b> |                     |
| <b>Indicators then sorted by priority</b> |                  |                         |                            |                |                         |                     |

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## **Appendix A Contact your councillor**

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

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*Inserted on the back of the report*

**We welcome your feedback on this Annual Report.**

**Getting in Touch**

**Telephone:** 01279 655261

**Email:** [performance@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:performance@eastherts.gov.uk)

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

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

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