

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 September 2013
<b>Community Leadership</b>	<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"> <li>Establish a clear vision of what Community Leadership means to East Herts Council.</li> <li>Decide how far on the community leadership spectrum we will go.</li> </ul>	PEOPLE	February 2013	CMT	<b>Achieved.</b> 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	<b>Achieved.</b> 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	<b>Achieved.</b> Leader attended the April 2013 staff briefings on the future role of councils and ward councillor roles. Follow up staff briefings have also received presentations from The Chairman of the Council and the Portfolio holder for Community and Partnership Liaison.

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<b>Community Leadership</b>	<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>	4. Develop a Communication Plan to promote the council's community leadership role.	PEOPLE	June 2013	Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services	<b>Achieved.</b> This has been incorporated within the corporate communications strategy and monitoring process.
	<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	<b>Achieved.</b> 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 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	<b>On target.</b> The ALSs are progressing well and the second cohort has been set up. Two sets a year are available 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	<b>Achieved.</b> Checklist has been 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	<b>Achieved and more planned.</b> The members training questionnaire, to inform the 2013/14 Member training & Development plan, was used as the basis for the training and development programme approved by the Charter Group. Programme monitored by Group and changed as necessary to meet Member needs.

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<b>Community Leadership</b>	<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	<b>Achieved.</b> A review was undertaken by the Charter Group of ward member role to better promote the or community leadership strands. An amended role description was considered and agreed by Council on 16 October 2013.
		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	<b>On target.</b> Case studies developed with members have been captured and written up and are to be available on the councils web site. A small number of members agreed to video record their case studies. These have been shared with staff at the October round of staff briefings and were well received.

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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 (DCCS) Head of Legal and Democratic Services	<b>Achieved.</b> Regular meetings of scrutiny chair and vice chairs taking place. Work programme discussion has now been moved to the start of the meeting each month to facilitate work programme discussion. The importance of developing the scrutiny agenda has a significantly raised profile and is receiving greater attention
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	<b>On Target.</b> Work in progress, completion due by the end of March 2014.
	<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	<b>Achieved.</b> A review of internal communications was approved by CMT in July 2013.

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Organisational Culture	<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 <b>Community Leadership role</b> .	PEOPLE	April 2013 start	Chief Executive and DCCS Head of Human Resources, Payroll, Facilities Management and Estates	<b>On target.</b> The ideas and values to underpin the philosophy of here to Help have been developed with staff through a range of media including staff briefings. Most recently, the October Staff briefings centred around presentations by the Chief Executive & Director of Customer and Community Services and the Portfolio Holder for Community and Partnership Liaison to tease out the similarities and dependencies between Here to Help and Community Leadership. The sessions included mini-workshops where staff were asked to capture some of the many good examples of Here to Help which are already found across the organisation and to suggest areas where we can do even better. The response from staff was most encouraging and a large number of good examples emerged which will be helpful to further developing and embedding the principles and values.  Further facilitated workshops are planned for the coming months to share the learning even more widely.

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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	<b>On target.</b> RAG monitoring was piloted in the last quarter against all 2012/13 efficiency savings. Formal quarterly reporting has been rolled out in 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	<b>On target.</b> New financial system which includes changes to the way procurement is undertaken at an operational level should be complete by October 2013. Following this, a review of the way finance is managed and subsequent financial regulations that need to be considered and a working group set up.
	<i>In reviewing future priorities and budgets it will be important to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continue to test resource allocations against your priority outcomes</li> <li>• consider pump priming new methods of early intervention to change demand for services in future</li> <li>• ensure value for money through on-going effective contract monitoring of major contracted services like waste collection</li> <li>• explore future opportunities for asset rationalisation, customer service channel shift and greater agile working</li> </ul>	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	<b>On target.</b> Integrated service planning is underway and this year a new "Budget Challenge" process has been set up to inform the budget setting process. Results will feed into the 2014/15 final budget that is set.
		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	<b>On target.</b> Opportunities will be examined as they arise.
		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	<b>On target.</b> 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	PROSPERITY	Annual (next one due March 2014 in preparation for 2015/16)	CMT	<b>Not started.</b> Work on this will commence from January 2014, when the 2015/16 Integrated Financial and Service Planning timetable is produced.

		Medium Term Financial Strategy.				
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Finance	<p><i>Decreasing reliance on Whitehall funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><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></li> </ul>	21. Write a brief for a property investment advisor to explore opportunities.	PROSPERITY	31 March 2013 - Brief completed	Chief Executive and DCCS	<b>Achieved.</b> Outline brief completed and expressions of interest are being sought from appropriate independent advisors.
				September 2013 - opportunities finalised		<b>Revised completion date from September 2013 to November 2013.</b> An externally prepared brief has been presented to Executive members who have provided guidance for a number of policy proposals to steer the development of a balanced investment portfolio. A policy / decision paper will be presented to Executive Committee 5 November 2013
'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	<b>Achieved.</b> 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 DCCS Head of Human Resources, Payroll, Facilities Management and Estates	<b>On target.</b> Please refer to action 14.
		24. Develop a Communication Plan to promote the council's 'Here to help' concept.	PEOPLE	June 2013	Head of Communications, Engagement and Cultural Services	<b>Achieved.</b> The concept will be communicated in line with the approved communications strategy and internal communication review – in a timely way as the process of staff development progresses.

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IT	<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>	25. Produce an IT Strategy and action plan improving resilience, response times & IT is fit for purpose.	PEOPLE PROSPERITY	Autumn 2013	Head of shared ICT, Business Improvement and Print and Design Services Director of Finance and Support Services	<b>Revised Completion Date from Autumn 2013 to December 2013.</b> Executive on 23 July 2013 approved a plan for East Herts Council to join forces with Stevenage Borough Council to provide ICT, Business Improvement, Print and Design Services in partnership. The plan was also approved by the Executive at Stevenage. As well as delivering financial savings, the shared service will strengthen resilience and improve the efficiency of the service.  The ICT strategy is currently in development, with input from members and Officers through an officer/member working group, chaired by the Portfolio Holder. It is anticipated that the strategy will be submitted to Executive in November or December 2013. Investment in the overall ICT infrastructure is in the planning stage with delivery expected during 2013



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<b>Economic wellbeing</b>	<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	<b>Not started.</b> A Planning Open Day event was organised for 21 June 2013. This was to comprise an overview of development management processes and the ability to see tasks being undertaken by the staff in the planning team. Input was also to be provided by planning policy and building control teams. Unfortunately there was limited interest expressed in the event and it was cancelled as a result.
<b>Governance</b>	<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	<b>On target.</b> The first meeting has been set for 25 September 2013. There will be regular meetings with a report to Council with the Group's recommendations.