

**East Herts Council Corporate Strategic Plan 2015/16 – 2018/19**

		<b>Page Number</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>East Herts Council – Context and Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Organisation and Culture – Here to Help</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Delivering Your Priorities</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Measuring Success – How we plan and manage what we do</b>	<b>19</b>

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## 1. Introduction

This is East Herts' Corporate Strategic Plan 2015 – 2019.

The Plan sets out what East Herts Council aims to achieve over the next four years for the people of East Herts.

Our vision is to **improve the quality of peoples' lives and preserve all that's best in East Herts**. We know from our recent residents' survey that you share this ambition and feel that key factors such as more affordable housing, clean streets, better shopping facilities and job prospects and good quality recycling and waste services are important.

We are also aware that you would like to see service improvement in priority areas such as road and pavement repairs, traffic congestion, public transport and health services.

The government's reduction in funding and changes in existing funding streams means that we need to become more creative and innovative in the way we deliver services, so we can maximise what we can do with the limited resources we have. For example this might be achieved by developing more shared service models with other local authorities.

Our partners are also facing financial pressure with reduction in their funding and we need to consider how we can pool our resources together to better support you.

Coupled with this we have seen demand in some key services grow, linked closely to the welfare reforms that have been introduced and further changes are still to come with the introduction of Universal Credit.

The next four years is not just about changing the way we deliver services but is also about creatively building capacity within our workforce to be able to respond to the challenges we face, so we can continue to be 'here to help'.

Councillor Anthony Jackson

***Leader of the Council***

George A Robertson

***Chief Executive and Director of  
Customer & Community Services***

## 2. East Herts Council in Context and Summary

### Our Vision:

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

### Our Strategic Priorities:

Being **Here to Help** is central to the Council's purpose and ethos:-.

- It is central to the services and support that we provide to residents and businesses and how we provide them.
- It is the main driver that underlies the Community Leadership role of our elected Members.
- It underpins the purpose of the Here to Help staff discussions and activities

We are committed to the communities we serve and delivering good quality services that reflect local priorities and resources. In pursuit of that vision your elected councillors have identified three **PRIORITIES** to provide focus in those endeavours.

They are:

**People – Fair and accessible services for those who use them and opportunities for everyone to contribute**

**Place – Safe and Clean**

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

The relevance of our priorities has been tested through regular formal and informal consultation with local residents, businesses and partners. Importantly, our priorities are informed by the vision and priority themes of the East Herts Local Strategic Partnership, which brings together the views and talents of a wide range of groups and organisations.

The council's District Plan provides the framework to shape the district's built environment – houses and related infrastructure. It supports the council's and the Local Strategic Partnership's

priorities, whilst at the same time balancing the many external pressures that impact on the plan.

## The Council’s Developing Roles: Here to Help

Those priorities begin to express the council’s purpose and start to show that being **Here to Help** is central to the work and ethos here at East Herts Council.

- It is central to the services and support that we provide to residents and businesses and how we provide them.
- It is the main driver that underlies the Community Leadership role of our elected Members.
- It underpins the purpose of the Here to Help staff engagement and organisation improvement activities

Supporting residents and communities to get the best access to the services and advice that they need means the council’s role is much more than a service provider.

We realise that *how* we will make a difference to the communities we serve, will be by fulfilling a mix of any of the five main roles we have identified:

<p><b>Community Leadership</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inspiring and coordinating others’ efforts with us and whichever partners can best help; helping communities to achieve their local ambitions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Partner</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• actively engaging with others and jointly committing time, money, intelligence and resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Service Provider / Commissioner / Manager</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring the delivery of good quality services that reflect local priorities and resources; having responsibility and resources for consistent delivery will</li> </ul>

	provide the bedrock for an organisation that continues to be here to help.
<b>Influencer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lobbying, listening, communicating and campaigning</li></ul>
<b>Enabler</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• making connections and removing barriers</li></ul>

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### 3. Organisation and Culture - Here to Help

#### Our organisation:

Our message to our residents is that we are 'Here to help' and to make a difference. We want to deliver the outcomes that local residents and communities want, so we will always endeavour to:

- Provide efficient and joined-up services, easily accessible to you the customer
- Be a gateway for access. If you need help and don't know who to ask, we will try to help you or put you in touch with someone else who can
- Provide excellent customer service ensuring that our customers get the services or support they need whether provided directly by us or through our partners
- Work in partnership with others across the district through the East Herts Local Strategic Partnership
- Create an environment where communities feel empowered and supported to provide their own solutions

#### Our Culture:

Our culture focuses on the ethos of being 'Here to help'. This lies at the root of our organisational values and behaviours demonstrated by the actions of councillors and staff.

Our three core values are:

- Here to help
- We work together to support each other
- We aim high to make a difference

#### The councillors' roles:

Your local councillors are elected to make council policy, take up issues and represent their communities. The role of councillors has been changing, with more emphasis placed on greater community engagement and stronger local advocacy. We see our councillors being **Strong Community Leaders** who:

- Are in touch with their local community

- Understand what the local issues are
- Support and champion their local issues by seeking to balance conflicting needs or providing the conduit to get things delivered, without losing sight of the strategic context of the district as a whole.

Every district councillor plays a role in ensuring this plan is delivered, whether they are an Executive, scrutiny or regulatory committee member and of course as an elected ward member.

### **Democratic Representation and Decision Making**

East Herts has 50 councillors representing 30 wards and each councillor serves for four years. Following the district council elections in May 2011 and four by-elections in 2013 and one by-election in 2014 the breakdown of the political representation is:

Conservative: 45

Independent: 3

Liberal Democrat: 2

The council operates a Leader and Executive model, with key executive decisions taken by an Executive of seven councillors (which includes the Leader) with decisions and other issues reviewed by three scrutiny committees. Separate committees undertake other specific functions, for example, in relation to Planning and Licensing. Full details of the council's decision making process are available at: [www.eastherts.gov.uk](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk).

### **Our People:**

The council knows that its most important asset is its people. Our workforce planning has a central role in delivering improved services and has been developed to:

- Help colleagues meet customer and service needs and continue to develop the skills and behaviours required to deliver them
- Ensure the council's values and behaviours are at the heart of everything we do
- Support the council's integrated service and financial planning framework

- Support colleagues to be flexible and resilient; able to respond to service changes and developments
- Support management information

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#### 4. Delivering Your Priorities

The priorities and objectives recognise the challenges faced by residents and the council. They reflect the high level outcomes we and our partners want to deliver for the district and its residents.

<b><i>People – Fair and accessible services for those that use them and opportunities for everyone to contribute</i></b>
This priority focuses on delivering strong services and seeking to enhance the quality of life, health and wellbeing, particularly for those who are vulnerable.

<b>Therefore we want to:</b>	<b>Why:</b>	<b>Our role will be as a:</b>
Improve the health and well-being of our residents	The health of people in East Herts is generally better than the England average. For example the estimated levels of adult smoking, adults who are obese and hospital stays for alcohol related harm are all better than the England average. We want to ensure this continues to be the case by focusing on providing early support and joined up services with our partners. Priorities in East Herts include addressing obesity and promoting increased physical activity levels, helping	Community Leader, Influencer, Partner and Enabler

	the expanding older population maintain their health and continuing to reduce the levels of smoking <sup>1</sup> .	
Reduce fuel poverty	National surveys have suggested that because of the range of factors affecting fuel poverty, households most affected can be spread throughout the community, often as isolated pockets within relatively affluent areas. Across the UK there is a significant proportion of the fuel poor in more rural communities, off mains gas and living in “hard to treat” properties. The council’s House Condition Survey in 2009 found that 24.4% of households in social housing were in fuel poverty, compared with 35.5% of owner-occupiers. Rural housing was found to be less energy efficient than housing in our towns. Improving energy efficiency is an important priority for us.	Community Leader, Influencer, Partner and Provider / Commissioner / Manager
Increase community engagement	Effective engagement with local residents, partners and the voluntary and community sector is key for East Herts. Reductions in public sector spending has meant that we have had to make spending reductions in some service areas. Our partners have also been affected by savings requirements. Therefore it is important we work with our communities and partners, which may	Community Leader, Partner and Enabler

<sup>1</sup> East Hertfordshire Health Profile 2014 – Public Health England.

	include enabling services to be delivered by others.	
Deliver customer focused services	<p>Providing good customer service is important to us. We need to understand what services our residents and customers want and how they would like them to be provided. Our recent residents' survey showed that telephone was residents preferred contact channel, with the preference for email contact increasing. Our Customer Services Strategy plays a key role at setting out our approach to customer service and the range of access routes available. We will be revisiting our strategy during 2014/15 which will look at our residents' needs now and in the future so we can continuously improve and shape the services we provide.</p> <p>Our 'Here to Help' programme supports the Customer Service Strategy. It is about celebrating what is good, sharing good practice, making things better and unlocking barriers to change.</p>	Provider / Commissioner / Manager
Improve outcomes for vulnerable families and individuals	<p>Significant welfare reform has meant that we have experienced an increase in the demand for support across a range of services particularly with households with lower incomes. We want to achieve improved life chances for vulnerable families and individuals by continuing to provide good quality services from Housing and Benefit advice to the provision of</p>	Community Leader, Influencer, Partner and Provider / Commissioner / Manager

	<p>Disabled Facilities Grants.</p> <p>We need to ensure targeted affordable housing is delivered, empty homes and Houses in Multiple Occupation are dealt with so our residents can continue to live in their local area.<sup>2</sup></p>	
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<sup>2</sup> 2007 – 2014 Economic Development Strategy

## **Place – Safe and Clean**

This priority focuses on sustainability, the built environment and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.

<b>Therefore we want to:</b>	<b>Why:</b>	<b>Our role will be as a:</b>
Reduce residual waste and increase our recycling rate	Sending waste to landfill is not sustainable for a number of environmental, financial and practical reasons and we believe that it is better to minimise the amount of waste being produced. Our 2013 residents' survey showed that our residents had high levels of satisfaction with our waste and collection services and we wish to maintain this and seek opportunities to develop services even further <sup>3</sup> .	Community Leader, Influencer and Provider / Commissioner / Manager
Reduce the carbon dioxide emissions from our own operations by 25% by 2020 and work with partners to reduce the emissions of households and businesses	One of the major contributors to climate change is carbon dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ). Increasing the energy efficiency of our buildings, reducing the impact of environmental pollution and working with our partners to reduce their emissions will help us reduce CO <sub>2</sub> and to improve the air quality we live in.	Community Leader, Influencer and Provider / Commissioner / Manager

<sup>3</sup> 2013 East Herts Residents Survey

<p>Maintain our clean streets and reduce litter</p>	<p>The appearance of the local environment is a major factor for residents in determining what makes somewhere a good place to live. Well maintained and clean streets and green spaces, free from litter, graffiti, fly tips and abandoned vehicles are ranked as important to our residents<sup>4</sup>. Working with our partners and the local community will help us to ensure we continue to achieve this.</p>	<p>Community Leader and Provider / Commissioner / Manager</p>
<p>Maintain our parks, play areas and open spaces in good order</p>	<p>Parks and open spaces are invaluable natural resources which help to provide space to relax and to exercise, as well as understand nature. An audit and assessment of public open space provision by all providers identified 566 open spaces and outdoor sports facilities that are either owned by the council, parish or town councils, private landowners, housing associations or community groups in East Herts. Of these, 312 are considered parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural green space, amenity green space and provision for children and young people<sup>5</sup>.</p> <p>It is important that we make sure they are managed and developed in a responsible and effective way to be welcoming places for leisure time.</p>	<p>Community Leader, Partner and Provider / Commissioner / Manager</p>

<sup>4</sup> 2013 East Herts Residents Survey

<sup>5</sup> Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2013 – 2018

<p>Reduce anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime</p>	<p>Hertfordshire is one of the safest counties in the country, and East Herts is amongst the safest districts within it. It has the second best lowest recorded crime figures (RAG report - All crime 1st April 2013 – 6th July 2014 10.91 crimes per person per 1,000 population).</p> <p>Since 2008, there has been a significant fall for 'all crime'. Burglary reduced around 40%, similarly personal robbery and thefts from cars and damage to vehicles. Holding the Chair of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP), East Herts Council has been a significant partner in helping the police achieve these reductions. We work closely together on joint operations, such as huge multi agency cross border stop and search events where rogue taxis, unlicensed trade waste carriers and benefits fraudsters are the focus. We join the police to conduct drugs raids, where pubs are involved, and this contributes to excellent detection rates. Our first rate CCTV network is so successful that it is becoming a council run 'arms-length' company to maximise business opportunities.</p> <p>The start of 2014 has seen an emerging increase in some crime types which the CSP is working on. Some of this can be explained by more rigorous crime recording but in-line with the upturn in the economy we</p>	<p>Community Leader, Partner and Enabler</p>
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	<p>are starting to see an increase in acquisitive crime.</p> <p>Seven in ten residents report that they feel safe in their local area after dark, while around a fifth said they feel unsafe. However three of the four main neighbourhood issues reported by residents as being a fairly or very big problem in their local area were people drunk or rowdy in public places (23%), people using or dealing drugs (22%) and groups/teenagers hanging around streets (22%)<sup>6</sup>.</p> <p>The council and police work side by side to target persons responsible for anti-social behaviour whilst at the same time facilitating youth diversionary activities to keep those who might be at the fringe of anti-social behaviour occupied.</p>	
<p>Ensure future development best meets the need of the district and its residents</p>	<p>Nine in ten residents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live<sup>7</sup> and East Herts is ranked fifth out of the top 50 Local Authority Districts in the UK to live<sup>8</sup>. We want to ensure that new development continues to achieve outcomes that are positive for our residents, the local economy and the environment. Our Local Plan which is currently being updated in 2014/15 to</p>	<p>Community Leader, Influencer and Provider / Commissioner / Manager</p>

<sup>6</sup> 2013 East Herts Residents Survey

<sup>7</sup> 2013 East Herts Residents Survey

<sup>8</sup> Halifax Quality of Life Rankings, 2013 Annual Quality of Life Survey by Halifax



	become the district plan provides the framework to shape the district's built environment for the future.	
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**Prosperity – Improving the economic and social opportunities available to our communities**

This priority focuses on safeguarding and enhancing our unique mix of rural and urban communities, promoting sustainable, economic opportunities and delivering cost effective services.

<b>Therefore we want to:</b>	<b>Why:</b>	<b>Our role will be as a:</b>
<p>Deliver value for money and reduce our reliance on central government funding</p>	<p>Central government funding for local authorities is on a downward trend. In both the short and medium term there is a growing need for us to identify new and/or additional sources of income.</p> <p>While we will continue to find new efficiencies and more joined up and innovative ways of working for example in 2013/14 we met our savings target, however greater self-reliance in funding will be required. Therefore we need to plan for and manage this.</p> <p>Alongside this we also need to support our staff in managing these service challenges and developing their skills and capacity and ensuring that infrastructure in terms of ICT needs is robust and fit purpose.</p>	<p>Partner and Provider / Commissioner / Manager</p>
<p>Enhance the economic well-being of East Herts</p>	<p>We want to create a more business friendly environment in our towns so they become more</p>	<p>Community Leader, Influencer and Enabler</p>

	<p>vibrant.</p> <p>A thriving knowledge based economy is at the heart of economic success – in the sense of skills levels of residents and the nature of businesses. Therefore we want to ensure our residents are able to access appropriate education, employment and training opportunities and that we seek to attract new high-tech niche industries into appropriate existing or new locations.</p>	
<p>Deliver sustainable rural business growth</p>	<p>East Herts has a significant rural economy compared to other authorities within Hertfordshire. We want to prioritise the economic and social inclusivity of our rural communities by retaining local rural employment and services<sup>9</sup>.</p>	<p>Community Leader, Influencer and Enabler</p>
<p>Protect the environment</p>	<p>We want to ensure that our environment is protected and safe. This ranges from us ensuring that the food we eat is safe, managing the licensing of taxi vehicles and the regulation of licensing regimes to the protection of conservation areas and listed buildings.</p>	<p>Community Leader, Influencer and Provider / Commissioner / Manager</p>

<sup>9</sup> 2007 – 2014 Economic Development Strategy

## 5. Measuring Success – a golden thread – How we plan, manage and deliver what we do

- **East Herts Local Strategic Partnership** developed and agreed a Sustainable Community Strategy as the overarching partnership plan for East Herts. Informed by the community it serves, it articulates shared aims and aspirations for the district. In 2012/13 East Herts Local Strategic Partnership reviewed and revised its priorities to three priority outcomes –

- community safety
- promoting economic well being
- supporting the vulnerable

Working groups supporting the original themes have been brought together and partnership actions have been agreed for each priority theme.

- **East Herts Council's Corporate Strategic Plan** (this plan) sets out the overall vision and direction for the council. Refreshed annually it looks forward over the next four years and links to the shared priorities of the Local Strategic Partnership. The plan highlights the high level priorities for the council and identifies some of the key outcomes that will to be achieved. It sets the direction for the organisation and forms the basis for the council's performance management activities and steers the distribution of resources.
- **Service Plans** are produced every year by Heads of Service, agreed by the council's elected members. They set out what key development type actions need to be undertaken to deliver the outcomes contained in the Corporate Strategic Plan. These actions are linked to key performance indicators, so achievement can be measured and tracked.
- The **Medium Term Financial Plan** considers the resources needed to deliver the council's priorities and ambitions. Development of service plans and a challenge process with elected members feeds into a four-year budget-planning model. The council uses the model to plan its expenditure

and make sure that financial resources are available to fund actions in priority areas.

➤ The **People Strategy** is the council's framework for the delivery of people management, ensuring the council has a high quality workforce delivering good quality services. The strategy contains seven key people strands, which are aligned to the council's priorities. They are:

- Organisational development
- Learning and development
- Resourcing
- Equality and diversity
- Employee relations and reward
- Health and safety
- HR and payroll service

Overarching these is the organisation's commitment to the 'Here to Help' values and behaviours.

➤ **Performance and Development Reviews** set out individual's personal objectives that a member of staff needs to achieve to deliver their Service Plan and which contribute to the achievement of the council's priorities, values and behaviours. This process helps ensure every member of staff has the opportunity to develop their learning and personal development plan.

➤ The **Performance Management Framework** delivers timely monitoring of the council's priorities and delivery of outcomes. Financial and performance information and analysis is made available in the form of a regular **Corporate Healthcheck** and half yearly **Service Plan Monitoring Reports**. They are considered both by the **Corporate Management Team** and reported formally to the council's **Executive Committee** and **Scrutiny Committees**. Scrutiny meetings are open to all and we strongly encourage the public to attend.

## East Herts Performance Management Framework:

