



# **OVERVIEW and SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16**



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

**Contents**

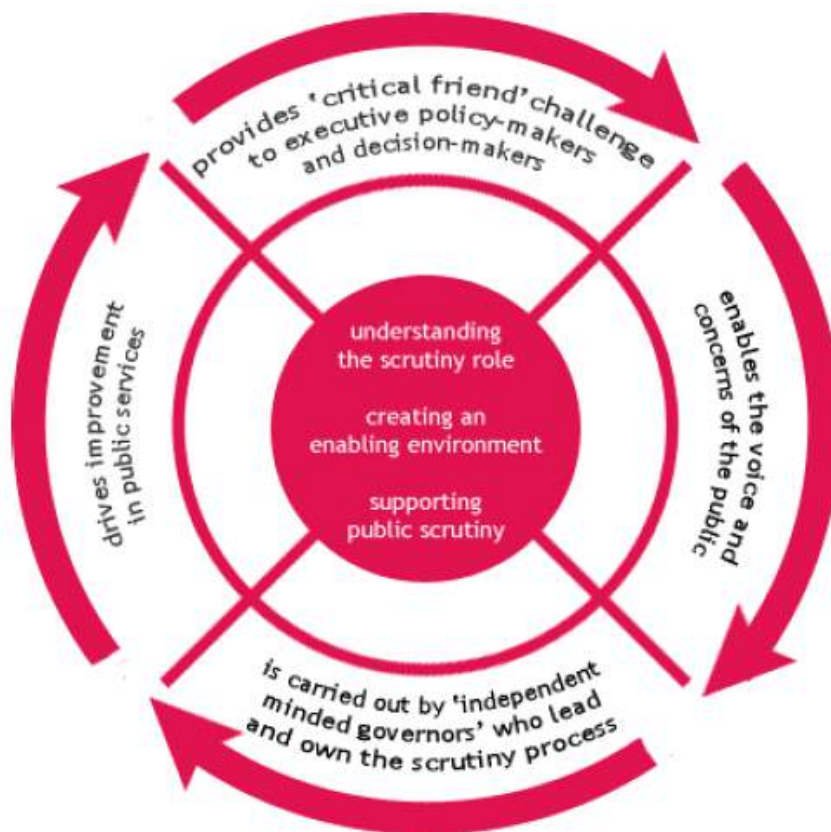
	Page
Scrutiny – what is it?	3
How do we organise Scrutiny at East Herts	4
Looking Back .....	7
Looking Forward .....	14
Looking Out .....	21
Evaluating Overview And Scrutiny	25
Plans for 2015/16	27
Evolving Role of Scrutiny	30
Training	32
... and finally	33



## 1. SCRUTINY – what is it?

Scrutiny is designed to provide an open and transparent setting in which your elected councillors, sitting in public, can review the work of the council to check that policies and services are meeting the priorities and the needs of local people. Scrutiny committees don't make final decisions themselves, but they have the power of influence. Following a discussion, they make recommendations (usually to the Executive – but could be to another committee or partner agency) based on public and partner opinions, performance data, examples of best practice, expert advice and research/evidence.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) sets out the 'four principles of good scrutiny' which should apply in the scrutiny cycle. These are supported and have been adopted by East Herts:




A total of 35 councillors have served on the scrutiny committees and review (Task and Finish) groups during 2015/16.


This annual report gives an summary of their key activities (it does not attempt to list every discussion or decision) and sets out the plans we have for the coming year.


## 2. How do we organise scrutiny at East Herts?


During 2015/16, scrutiny was supported by two part-time officers whose role is to provide support to the councillors and undertake research and information analysis in relation to reviews set up by the main committees. Another important strand of the officer's role is to ensure external witnesses, experts, partners and local residents are invited to be involved in the scrutiny activity within East Herts.

East Herts now has four 'topic specific' scrutiny committees.

<b>Corporate Business Scrutiny (CBS):</b> meets 6 times per year												
They keep a close eye on .....	Regular performance monitoring											
	Budget setting proposals and strategies											
	Comments, Compliments and Complaints											
	Scrutiny and policy development of the 'business' side of the council including: finance, ICT, facilities, legal, procurement and reviewing plans for shared services											
 Chairman: Councillor Paul Phillips	Membership: Councillors											
	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>M Allen</td> <td>R Henson</td> </tr> <tr> <td>R Brunton</td> <td>J Jones (from Mar 2016)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>S Bull</td> <td>P Phillips (Chairman)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>J Cartwright (to Mar 2016)</td> <td>M Pope (ViceChair)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>M Casey</td> <td>M Stevenson</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>J Wyllie</td> </tr> </table>	M Allen	R Henson	R Brunton	J Jones (from Mar 2016)	S Bull	P Phillips (Chairman)	J Cartwright (to Mar 2016)	M Pope (ViceChair)	M Casey	M Stevenson	
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J Cartwright (to Mar 2016)	M Pope (ViceChair)											
M Casey	M Stevenson											
	J Wyllie											

<b>Environment Scrutiny:</b> meets 4 times per year										
Their focus is on .....	Planning Policy and Transport									
	Waste Management and Environmental Quality									
	Conservation and Climate Change									
	Parks and Open Spaces									
 Chairman: Councillor John Wyllie	Membership: Councillors									
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<b>Community Scrutiny: meets 4 times per year</b>												
They focus on .....	Community Safety and Protection											
	Community Development, Leisure & Culture											
	Health and Housing											
	Licensing and Environmental Health											
 <p>Chairman: Councillor Diane Hollebon</p>	<b>Membership: Councillors</b>											
	<table> <tr> <td>G Cutting (ViceChair)</td> <td>A McNeece (to Oct 2015)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>J Goodeve</td> <td>D Oldridge</td> </tr> <tr> <td>R Henson</td> <td>M Pope</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D Hollebon (Chairman)</td> <td>C Snowdon (from Dec '15)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>J Jones</td> <td>R Standley</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>K Warnell</td> </tr> </table>	G Cutting (ViceChair)	A McNeece (to Oct 2015)	J Goodeve	D Oldridge	R Henson	M Pope	D Hollebon (Chairman)	C Snowdon (from Dec '15)	J Jones	R Standley	
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	K Warnell											

<b>Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny: meets 4 times per year</b>										
This committee has an outward-facing focus and works closely with local partners across the health, public health and wellbeing agenda .....	Our Health and Wellbeing strategy and action plan									
	Fuel Poverty and our 'Ageing Well' agenda									
	Relationships and partnership working with health and social care agencies important to the district including:									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local NHS trusts and services</li> <li>• Hertfordshire County Council</li> <li>• The Director of Public Health and our local public health agencies</li> <li>• Voluntary and third sector organisations</li> <li>• Healthwatch Hertfordshire</li> </ul>									
 <p>Chairman: Councillor Norma Symonds</p>	<b>Membership: Councillors</b>									
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During the year, two **Joint Scrutiny** sessions are held to allow members from all the committees to come together to discuss significant financial and business planning issues. It is cost effective and more time efficient to hold a single meeting rather than four separate ones.

### 3. How do the committees decide what to scrutinise?

There are just a few things that local government scrutiny has a statutory duty to look at – such as reviewing at least one Crime and Disorder topic annually and supporting the budget setting process – but after that councillors can ask to examine any issue that they believe to be:

- Of local public concern
- Linked to the council's vision and priorities
- Capable of being influenced
- Not being scrutinised by another body

At East Herts we think it is important to spend time scrutinising issues that

- allow us to reduce risk for residents and the council,
- might incur significant costs or
- could bring substantial savings to the council

....and during 2015/16 we have tackled topics under all three of those headings.

Scrutiny uses the council's corporate priorities to focus its work. As the economic environment and local issues change these are reviewed annually to keep them relevant. During 2015/16 we were working with **PEOPLE, PLACE and PROSPERITY** as our three priorities.

### 4. How to get involved

Scrutiny is strengthened by involving partners and residents. They bring expertise, local knowledge, fresh ideas and external challenge.

If you would like to know more, ring the Scrutiny Officer on 01992 531612 or e-mail [scrutiny@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@eastherts.gov.uk)

You can access full details on any item or outcome mentioned in the following pages of this report via our website. Agendas, reports and minutes of every council committee are posted and regularly updated – and meetings are open to the public:

<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/committees>

If you ever take part in one of our scrutiny reviews and every time you attend as an observer, we would value your feedback to help us improve the process. An on-line feedback form is available at

<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/scrutinyfeedback>

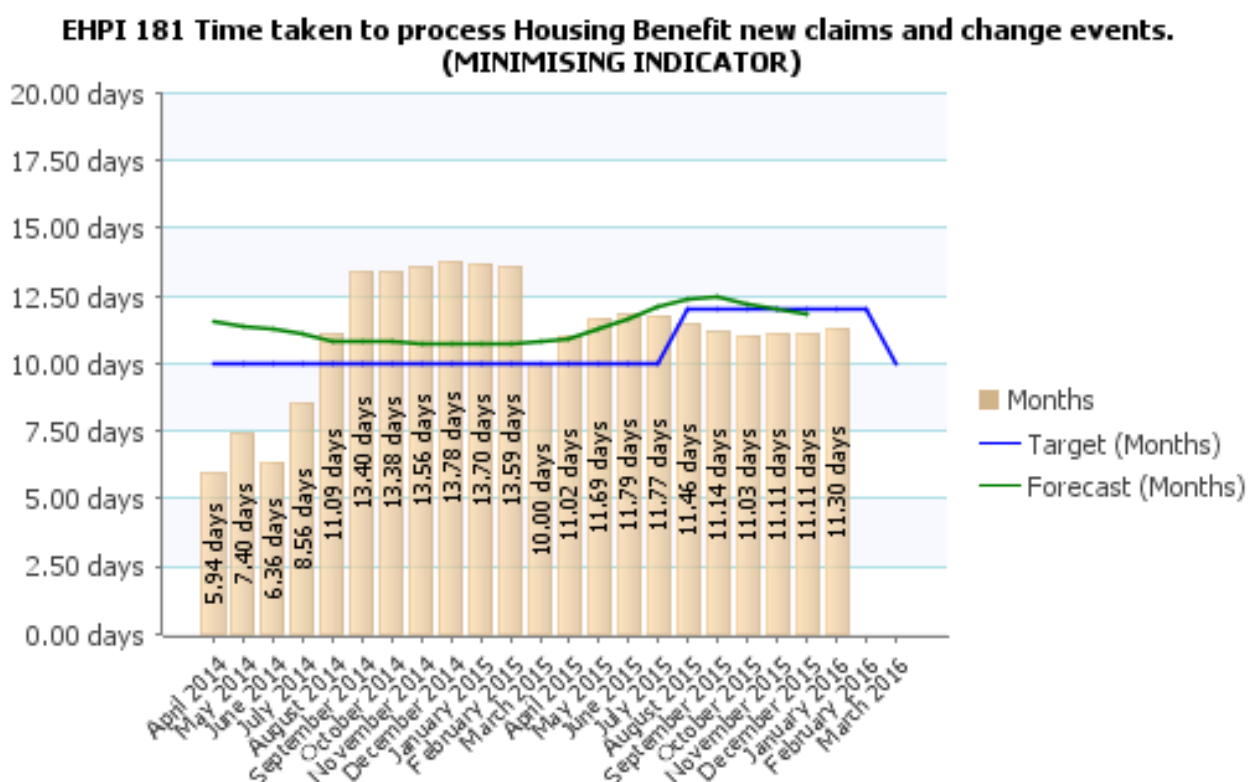


## 5. LOOKING BACK:

Scrutiny is part of a continuous process to improve or maintain quality and service delivery for our residents. There is no point setting up something new or changing the way we do things without checking things are working well and delivering all the benefits to the public (and to the council) that scrutiny members hoped to see. Consequently, some of the work of scrutiny is to review results, performance figures, outcomes and feedback and make those important checks.

### Performance monitoring:

- When funding is tight, it is particularly important for the council to make every penny count and make a measurable difference to residents. Scrutiny councillors receive regular reports showing how well services are performing against target levels. These are known as the 'Healthcheck' reports and it is one way of 'taking the temperature' of the council and checking it is functioning well. For CBS this report also includes financial information so that scrutiny gets an holistic view across the council's business functions.
- Taken from the March 2016 meeting of Community Scrutiny the chart below shows the time taken to process new claims and change events for Housing Benefit for every month since April 2014.



- The increase in processing times in 2014 was caused by a significant increase in workload as the government's changes to welfare and benefits system came into effect. The use of zero hours work contracts also increased meaning people's income could vary widely from week to week – and every one of these 'change events' had to be notified to the council, adding to the workload.

- Performance monitoring offers an ‘early warning system’ for problems and in 2014 scrutiny became concerned and , along with others, recommended additional resources be put into the team. It took time to recruit and train staff but records show our residents are now having their claims processed more promptly.
- Scrutiny cannot prevent external changes or fluctuations in demand for the council’s services, but it is their role to check that measures are in place to identify and rectify any issues and minimise the impact on residents.

### Service Plan Monitoring:

- At the start of the year every area of the council sets out the new projects it plans to tackle during the next 12 months. As part of the budget setting process councillors agree (or not) to fund these and every project has a completion date set against it. Halfway through the year the scrutiny committees get a report on the progress of each of the projects – with another report coming to them at year end.
- One mid year report which came to Community Scrutiny in November 2015 began by stating:
 

*In total, there are 34 actions in the 2015/16 Service Plans relevant to Community Scrutiny Committee, of which:*

  - 15% (5) have already been achieved*
  - 75% (25) are on target*
  - 06% (2) are off target*
  - 03% (1) proposed for deletion*
  - 03% (1) proposed for suspension*
- A good start – but scrutiny is more interested in the projects which have not gone fully to plan as these might lead to problems further down the line. Each hold up or change is explained and councillors check to see whether they are satisfied that enough is being done to remedy the situation. Sometimes it is another agency outside the council that might be taking longer than expected to act or make a decision – but if it is internal, then we have to find a solution and learn from the situation.



As all the ‘Healthchecks’ and service plan monitoring reports are available on line, residents (and the press) can act as ‘**public scrutineers**’ at any time by checking up on how well the council is doing against its performance targets.

Data for 2015/16 and earlier can be found under each separate scrutiny committee and for 2016/17 all this this information will appear under Corporate Business Scrutiny  
Just click onto the council website to find the latest information

<http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

## What else did scrutiny look back over and review during 2015/16?

CBS	
 <p><a href="#">Ctrl and Click</a> for Corporate Annual report</p>	<p><b>Corporate Annual Report 2014/15.</b> As with any large organisation, East Herts publishes an annual report every year. This document covers the council's key achievements over the previous financial year for each of the corporate priorities, provides an overview of the council's financial position and performance and ends with a statement on contracts. The early draft of the document seen by scrutiny gives an opportunity to comment on and shape the final report. Councillors said there was not enough detail in the pie charts that showed the income and expenditure of the authority. The section labelled 'other' was too large and vague to be useful to the public or partners wanting to understand a bit more about our financial management. It was public money and should be set out in a way which made it clearer. These changes, along with a request to be more open with regard to projects which had not been completed/successful, were made and the final report (with these changes incorporated) is now available on the website for all residents to see:</p>
	<p><b>Comments! Compliments! Complaints! 2014/15</b> To put things in perspective, this Council receives over two million contacts a year – and no organisation of our size and complexity is going to get everything right every time. The number of formal complaints received in a year is low – but they all need to be taken seriously and investigated. Scrutiny was informed that a total of 95 formal complaints were made in 2014/15 – down from 120 the year before. We work to investigate quickly, but some cases are very complex and in order to do a thorough job, these will take longer than our target of under 14 days to complete. However, we did manage over 75% of cases within this time frame. Scrutiny is keen to check that there are no patterns to the complaints or cases where we find an error has occurred as this would suggest there was an underlying, systemic problem with a policy or service. No pattern was identified. Every year some residents choose to escalate their case up to the Local Government Ombudsman and during the 2014/15 period, 6 cases were sent to the LGO, only one was adjudicated on at this level and, as in previous years, no cases of maladministration or fault were identified.</p>
	<p><b>Data Protection Annual Review:</b> After receiving some training for their Data Protection Governance role, CBS Members then considered a report updating them on the implementation of the council's Data Protection Action Plan. The council generates, receives and stores so many documents every year – many of which include some personal data supplied by our residents – that the management, handing and security of the material is of critical importance. The council works hard to ensure that all staff quickly identify and address any breach of data protection, no matter how small. CBS accepted that it is a reality that all organisations have data</p>

breaches. The Council does not view any breach as acceptable but it is right to understand that mistakes inevitably occur, and to have in place measures to respond with when they do so. The breaches that had occurred in 2014/15 were listed in the report. All were deemed as 'minor' and the IOC did not issue any sanctions against the council. Scrutiny agreed that the risk-driven action plan should remain in place for the coming year.

**ENVIRONMENT**

**Did you know? – last year we collected over 53,941,000Kg of waste in the district.**



**That's around 904Kg of waste per household**






**The recycling rate last year was 49.6%**

**Contract Performance – environmental operations 2014/15:** With a combined value of £5.4 million the refuse, recycling, street cleansing and grounds' maintenance contracts cover the largest area of service expenditure across the council – so residents should rightly expect both performance and value for money to be closely monitored and scrutinised. As well as receiving performance data for every month, an annual report is brought to scrutiny for each financial year. Members were very pleased with the performance of both contractors with verified complaints, rectification notices and default notices continuing to run at very low levels when compared to the scale of the activity undertaken annually across the district. With five newly elected members on the committee, there were challenging questions raised about fly-tipping, abandoned cars, litter on rural roads and what was being done to encourage residents to increase the recycling rate. Members were disappointed to learn that the quality of the recycling material collected from households had recently reduced due to contamination. As well as some soft plastics, more extreme contaminants such as used cat litter and even dead animals has led to the authority receiving a reduced price for the material and some loads having to be diverted to landfill. Members were pleased to support the main initiative for 2015/16 which is to be a programme of public awareness, specifically designed to reduce contamination and increase recycling rates. If successful, this should increase income for the recycled material and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill – and so saving those disposal costs too.



**Climate Change Action Plan – review of progress.** Since the baseline figures were established in 2008/9, energy efficient measures put in as part of the action plan have reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions overall by 7% (against a target of 25% by 2020) however, the 2014/15 year has seen an increase in emissions when compared to 2013/14. Members were made aware that this was due to a variety of reasons:

- First the average minimum temperature for 2014/15 was approximately 2 degrees Celsius lower, which impacts significantly on the overall heating demand for the council's buildings.
- Secondly, there has been an increase in staff occupation in the office as additional shared service officers moved in, which gave rise to greater electricity consumption.
- Thirdly the carbon factor of the energy supplied by the utility companies has a slight bearing on emissions if less "renewably sourced" energy is supplied to us
- Finally, visitor numbers at the leisure centres has increased,

	<p>leading to greater energy use (despite significant energy saving measures being put in place)</p> <p>Members voiced their disappointment and frustration that the high profile project – of a Micro Hydro unit in the river alongside Hertford Theatre - had been delayed for so long by complex negotiations with the Environment Agency (EA). Members were advised that the council’s negotiations were continuing and the latest piece of work being undertaken was acting on the EA’s requirement to re-model the flood risk following some maintenance work on the weir gates</p> <p>Research showed that similar projects elsewhere in the UK had taken 5 to 6 years to set up, so East Herts’ experience in dealing with the EA was typical. Scrutiny asked to be kept up-to-date with progress.</p> <p>Although pleased with the overall progress so far, members felt that the original action plan needed to be reviewed, rationalised and refreshed. Members recommended that a Task and Finish group be set up during next year to develop a new plan and bring a report back for consideration by the committee.</p>
	<p><b>Outcome of the off-street car park fees and charges trial.</b></p> <p>A two year trial of new car park ‘pay and display’ charges in Hertford, Bishop’s Stortford and Ware began on 8 Sept 2014. The modified charges and charging structure set out to promote the economic wellbeing of the three towns.</p> <p>The principal elements of the trial were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An initial 30 minutes free parking</li> <li>• 50% additional parking time for the same charge on ‘short stay’ tariffs</li> <li>• A flat rate parking charge of £1 between 16:00 and 18:30</li> </ul> <p>Scrutiny was shown the car park usage and income figures for the period before and during the trial. These showed an increase of 23% in parking activity and an increase of 10% in parking hours purchased. Scrutiny agreed that the change in tariffs and tariff structures introduced in Sept 2014 has generated a change in use of most East Herts car parks which can be regarded as evidence of success of the trial’s primary objective – to promote the economic wellbeing of our main towns. With this in mind, Scrutiny recommended that the trial arrangements be extended through to March 2017 (when a permanent change can be formalised).</p>
<p><b>COMMUNITY</b></p>	
	<p><b>End of year report for Hertford Theatre.</b></p> <p>After a significant financial outlay in 2010 to modernise and relaunch the theatre in Hertford, scrutiny is keen to see continuing evidence of a return on that investment. There was a positive theme to the report outlining activity at the venue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>estimated footfall was 172,757 (up from 156,245)</i></li> <li>• <i>income from 58 live shows was £198,775 (up from 54 shows last year and an income of £154,320)</i></li> <li>• <i>tickets sold for the Panto of 11,866 (up from 9,047)</i></li> <li>• <i>190 cinema screenings with 20,560 tickets sold (down from 283 screenings and 22,051 tickets)</i></li> </ul> <p>Members were made aware of a six-week closure for seating and floor refurbishments had impacted on the cinema data. There were also positive results from room hires, the café and</p>

**Box office:  
01992 531500**

the gallery and new initiatives such as the Book Festival. Scrutiny was pleased to support the plans for the coming year. A volunteers' scheme which was launched in July 2011 is now established as a key element of the successful front of house operation. Members agree that the current cohort of 70 volunteers is a great asset to the theatre and has made a huge contribution to the welcome and the community feel of the venue and the committee gave them a sincere vote of thanks.



A full list of grants and supported projects is available on [www.eastherts.gov.uk/grants](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/grants)

**Community Grants: applications and allocations.**

Scrutiny is keen to ensure that grants are made available to as wide a range of eligible groups as possible, with a focus on reaching out to smaller community groups who have not had funding from us before. They were pleased to hear just how many residents derived benefit from projects receiving our grant funding. The 63 Community Activity Grants had supported an estimated 16,930 individuals and the 16 Summer Activities Grants had chalked up 7,607 attendances over the holiday period.

In respect of the Performance to Excellence (Sports and Arts) grants, members were told that last year saw 26 grants being awarded to young people aged 11 to 18 achieving excellence in their chosen area for such sports as athletics, canoeing, fencing, martial arts, triathlon and snowboarding and the entire budget of £4,100 was allocated. This part of the grant scheme was oversubscribed and £1,150 from Community Activities and £500 from an Olympic Legacy pot was used to ensure all applicants who were eligible received funding. The total of 26 is the highest number of grants ever awarded and 57% were first-time applicants.

Scrutiny then reviewed some proposed changes to eligibility criteria and to the grant application process following feedback from community groups. These changes are designed to widen the take-up of the scheme and promote applications from 'hard to reach' groups. All the changes were supported.

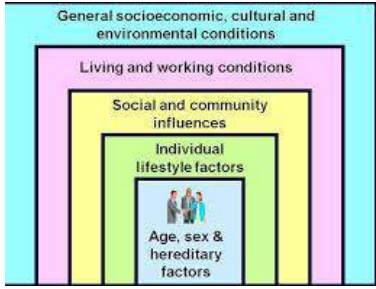


**Annual Leisure contract performance report for 2015:**

On 1 January 2009, following a competitive tender process, the council entered into a ten year fixed fee contract with the leisure provider SLM, trading as Everyone Active. This was the seventh annual report on their performance.

One key measure for the council to assess the performance of the contractor in providing services that are attractive to local residents is the number of customers using the facilities. At the five sites in the district there were 733,672 recorded visits in 2015 attending the gym, group exercise classes, casual swimming, pool parties, school, private and Everyone Active swim lessons and outdoor activities including; tennis, bowls and football. This figure does not include swim spectators; school swims and lessons or football spectators.

Scrutiny was pleased with the continuing investment being made in the facilities and with the general customer satisfaction levels from exits surveys. One site (Fanshawe) was of concern to scrutiny with its 'Fair' satisfaction grade but members were told of the work which had been undertaken since that exit survey (Sept 2015) and officers were confident that the next survey (due this month) would show an improvement. Scrutiny asked that at the next annual report they would like to see the satisfaction figures in more detail.

HWSC	
 <p data-bbox="252 600 596 672"><b>wider determinants of health</b></p>	<p data-bbox="657 174 1407 206"><b>Full Year report on 2014/15 Public Health action plan:</b></p> <p data-bbox="657 210 1471 340">Following the adoption of the new East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-2018 in October 2013 the committee had asked to receive annual reports on the progress of the projects.</p> <p data-bbox="657 344 1487 577">Scrutiny was pleased to hear that, in 2014/15, we were able to complete 94% of projects (33 out of 35). These projects are estimated to have benefitted 15,128 adults and children across East Herts. Projects ranged from smoking education to a drug and alcohol prevention project and allocation of small grants via the Public Health Partnership Fund (formerly LSP Health Inequalities Fund).</p> <p data-bbox="657 582 1487 712">A shortfall in partner resources and a lack of volunteers resulted in two projects not being achieved within the year – but the situation will be reviewed to see if any support can be given to them to allow these to move forward.</p>


## 6. LOOKING FORWARD:

Scrutiny has an important role to play in answering the key questions “can we improve the service we offer residents and ensure we are getting the best balance between high quality and value-for-money”?

During 2015/16 most topics Members wanted to review could be covered in a single report to a scheduled committee meeting – but three needed a much more detailed level of work. These topics were commissioned as Task and Finish (T&F) Groups.

- Review of Planning Enforcement T&F Group (Oct 2015 – Feb 2016)
- Developing a Leisure Strategy for East Herts T&F Group (Jan – Jun 2016)
- Waste and Street Cleansing Contract T&F Group (Mar – Jun 2016)

### What changes and future actions did scrutiny support and recommend during 2015/16?

CBS	
 <p><a href="#">Ctrl + CLICK HERE</a> for more information on Housing and Council Tax Support benefits at East Herts</p>	<p><b>Local Scheme for Council Tax Support (for 2016/17 year)</b> Along with every other council in the country, East Herts had to devise a local scheme of council tax support (CTS) when the national scheme of council tax benefits came to an end on 1 April 2013. Central government now funds only 90% of the old levels and expects local authorities to fund or find the other 10%. In 2013 scrutiny recommended an option that sought to share the funding burden across all working age claimants rather than target certain specified groups for complete exemption leaving others to share a higher cost to make up the shortfall. This year, when it came up for revision and renewal (an annual requirement), Members felt that public and officers alike had now got to grips with the new scheme. With no compelling evidence of problems or inconsistencies arising from the current arrangements, scrutiny recommended keeping the arrangements for CTS the same for the coming 2016/17 year. This was agreed by Executive and adopted by Council in March 2016.</p> <p><b>Options for changes to Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18 year)</b> Scrutiny started looking at this very early (in March 2016) to allow adequate time for careful consideration, financial modelling and, where necessary, consultation. Councillors were keen to maintain the continuity of the present Council Tax Reduction Scheme as applied to working age claimants and recommended no change at this time. However, the Council Tax discounts allowed against ‘empty and unfurnished’ and empty-uninhabitable’ houses were considered to be out of step with other local authorities and work against our own Empty Homes Policy. On this matter they did ask for these discounts to be reduced in a staged way. They asked for options based on discouraging and reducing the number of homes left empty and the length of time they are left empty for to be brought to the Executive for consideration later in the year.</p>





### Customer Service Strategy – project plan

Scrutiny received a report setting out how the council would implement the new Customer Service Strategy (originally recommended by CBS in March 2015). During the discussion, members were reminded of the increased demand for council services due to demographic changes, economic challenges and major government initiatives such as Welfare Reform combined with the financial pressures of reduced government grant and the currently fixed (or reduced) Council Tax. They were also made aware of the significant increase in the use of email (by the public) since 2010 and of how 70% of the website interaction is focused on matters concerning Development Management. Members were content to recommend the project plan and understood the need for the use of modern media – but they gave a strong message that resources should still be provided which allow residents to speak direct to an officer of the council if they needed help or information.

## ENVIRONMENT



### Procurement of car park management system:

Most 'pay and display' machines in East Herts Council car parks were purchased in 2004 and they are now fully written down in the Council's accounts. As the machines are nearing the end of their operational life it is time to procure one or more replacement systems during 2016/17. Scrutiny was able to see the findings of a recent consultants' report and assess the possible options for the future. The main focus of debate was around balancing the wishes voiced by the public and local businesses with what was both technically feasible and affordable. After a long discussion, the Committee finally recommended that 'pay and display' was the only practical option for the smaller car parks but a 'pay on exit/foot' system should be explored further and adopted for the two largest, multi-storey car parks.

After scrutiny, the extra work requested was carried out and was included in the report that went on to the Executive (on 3 Nov 2015):

- *The additional research identifies **significant structural impediments** to the successful introduction and operation of a 'pay on exit' system in both multi-storey car parks. Both car parks would require significant and costly building works. The Council's Property Manager has identified that these works are unlikely to be technically feasible for Jackson's Square.*
- *Informal consultation has been undertaken with the highways authority, Hertfordshire County Council, a statutory consultee in the Traffic Regulation Order process to establish 'pay on exit' operation. It has been stipulated that **formal objections would be made** on the grounds of impact on traffic management at both sites. The roads around both car parks being identified as key traffic management black spots.*

Based on the evidence presented, the Executive decided that East Herts Council would have to continue to manage its car parks on a solely 'pay and display' basis.



Anti-social Behaviour,  
Crime and Policing  
Act 2014

**Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 – Environmental Crime enforcement implications:**

The authority's current Environmental Crime Policy was agreed in 2006 and since then there has been a number of minor amendments but the introduction of the new 2014 Act brings a significant overhaul of legislation covering

- Littering from cars
- Clearing litter and waste on land
- Controlling dogs
- Graffiti and other defacement

Scrutiny was able to review the range of new powers and sanctions now available and how they might be introduced locally. After a discussion, the committee recommended the new draft control and protection orders to go out for public consultation before being incorporated into the new policy.






**Resident parking permit scheme – policy review:**



The current policy can be summarised as follows; *“the highest priority for parking in residential areas where pressure on parking is extreme should be given to residents of that area.”* There have been 12 schemes (zones) set up in the district since the policy was introduced in 2003. With recent building developments, changing patterns of car usage and business/retail activity all impacting on on-street parking it was time to ask scrutiny to contribute to a review of the policy. There was a recognition that there are competing needs for limited space and each zone needs to be considered on its own merits, including the possibility of 'shared use' parking which could be used by businesses during the working day and by residents in the evenings and at weekends. Following an extensive discussion, the committee recommended that existing zones should continue but work on requests for new schemes should be put on hold until completion of a clear parking policy for the future which takes these competing demands into account.







**Footway and Grassed Verge Parking: enforcement policy:**

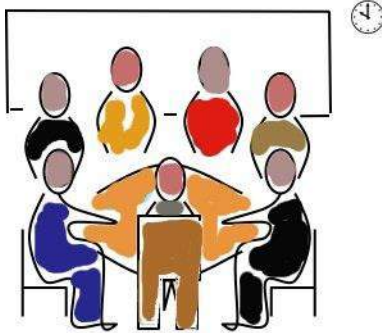
Consultation originally undertaken in 2011 to inform the development of East Herts' Parking and Transport Strategy showed resident support for the implementation of some footway and grassed verge parking controls in the district. Councillors and the council's parking service continue to receive complaints and calls on a frequent basis requesting enforcement against vehicles parked on footways and grassed verges (for both obstruction and damage). Scrutiny heard detailed information regarding legislation on this issue and how some enforcement lies with the Police Service and some with local authorities. Scrutiny was also able to review the results of a comprehensive study into the potential adoption of relevant controls in East Herts (and outline costs) which had been undertaken during 2015. There was a range of views expressed by scrutiny members and it was clear that with the mix of urban and rural situations across the district each would need to be considered individually. Scrutiny concluded by making a recommendation that a few 'hot spots' should be identified across the district and controls introduced through an Experimental Traffic Order to run for 18 months so the impact could be assessed before embarking on anything more extensive or expensive.

<b>COMMUNITY</b>	
	<p><b>Updating the ‘Shared Ownership’ local priorities cascade:</b></p> <p>After recommending changes to the Housing Allocations policy last year, the committee had the opportunity to comment on reforms to the Shared Ownership scheme to bring them both in line. Changes had already been brought in to ensure military personnel were put on the priority lists and these new changes, supported by members, were designed to focus on prioritising people who live, work or who have close family links with the district.</p>
	<p><b>Review of Empty Homes strategy and action plan:</b></p> <p>The aim of the existing policy is “To bring empty homes back into use and tackle those that are long term, are problematic or could meet specific housing need.” In order to make targeted use of limited resources, the new policy for 2015-2020 seeks to introduce a priority scoring system based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of time empty</li> <li>• Number/spread of complaints received</li> <li>• Property condition and its visual and physical impact on the neighbourhood</li> <li>• Property location</li> <li>• Level of debt owed to the council</li> <li>• Level of formal action previous undertaken</li> <li>• Likelihood of return to use without our intervention</li> <li>• Strategic value, e.g., meeting local housing need.</li> </ul> <p>All these criteria gained scrutiny support but members voiced their concern that there were an estimated 534 long term empty homes still in the district. The committee strongly recommended that additional resources should be made available to work on the proposed action plan and bring the numbers down over the coming year. The case was well made and subsequently the Executive accepted the recommendation and additional resources have now been allocated to this service to tackle the issue.</p>
	<p><b>Draft Housing and Health Strategy 2016-2021:</b></p> <p>The draft strategy is a detailed 38 page document which lays out a vision for the next five years to ensure that a sustainable housing offer is available to residents through us working with partner organisations in the development and management of housing stock and the provision of advice, support and help. Scrutiny was able to review the four key objectives suggested for 2016-2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable affordable housing delivery through partnership working and maximising suitably located and constructed development opportunities, whilst ensuring the best use of existing stock.</li> <li>• Focus on meeting the housing needs of active and frail older persons.</li> <li>• Work to meet the needs of vulnerable people in the housing market.</li> <li>• Seek to support rural communities in meeting their local housing needs.</li> </ul> <p>The strategy is built on a range of legislation and supported by evidence of projected housing need in the district including the ageing population and changing</p>

	<p>demographics. The committee recommended the draft strategy should go out for consultation with the public and our partners.</p>
	<p><b>Town Centre Markets.</b>  Currently East Herts is responsible for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A retail market in Hertford every Saturday.</li> <li>• A retail market in Ware every Tuesday.</li> <li>• A farmers' market in Hertford on the second Saturday of every month.</li> <li>• A contract with Bishop's Stortford Town Council (which began 1 June 2015) to run a retail market every Thursday and Saturday, and an events programme which includes a producers and crafts market the first Saturday of every month.</li> <li>• Issuing licences for other operators to run car boot sales (including charity car boot sales on school premises) and other specialist markets (such as those run at Van Hages, Jackson Square Shopping Centre and Aston Village Hall).</li> </ul> <p>Councillors were told that East Herts has seen a pattern of declining income in the Bishop's Stortford and Hertford retail markets whilst Ware retail market and the farmers' markets have been relatively stable. This is in line with the mixed picture found in a countryside survey by the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) which has produced a helpful piece of research around this matter:  <a href="https://radicalantipode.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/traditional-markets-under-threat.pdf">https://radicalantipode.files.wordpress.com/2015/10/traditional-markets-under-threat.pdf</a></p> <p>The financial data in the report showed that the net cost to East Herts for running markets is likely to be £56,825 for 2015/16. This subsidy can be seen in the context of the council supporting priorities outlined in the new Economic Development Vision and Corporate Strategic Plan, namely to encourage 'vibrant town centres' by increasing footfall. Scrutiny recognises there are archaic laws restricting days and locations of Charter markets but asked officers to bring a further report in Nov 2016 which explores what flexibility there may be for making local markets more attractive.</p>
<p align="center"><b>HWSC</b></p>	
	<p><b>Integration of Public Health into the Council's core services - a debate in response to Health and Social Care Act 2012.</b></p> <p>Last year the core services of planning and building control, environmental services, community safety and housing were reviewed to see how they were taking the wider determinants of health into consideration. This year it was the turn of the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service to be asked the same question.</p> <p>Members heard from the Head of Service how vulnerable customers were supported and in some cases provided with home visits. Staff are trained to be non-judgemental and given the knowledge to signpost customers to appropriate agencies where additional help can be given. It was highlighted that last year the service sent out 300,000 letters to vulnerable customers and Members were pleased to hear that healthy lifestyle information from</p>

 <p><b>MAKING EVERY CONTACT COUNT</b></p> <p><a href="#">Click here</a> for a link to the free training.</p>	<p>national public health campaigns could be included in some of these mailings.</p> <p>It was stated that the service was always willing to work with voluntary groups who support people with learning difficulties.</p> <p>Scrutiny recommended that the NHS online training programme “Making Every Contact Count” be included on the Members Training Programme This proposal was later supported by the Members’ Development Group and was advertised to all councillors in the Members’ Information Bulletin on 27 Nov 2015.</p> <p>The progress made in integrating public health agenda into the council’s core services was supported by the HWSC but they felt it important enough to ask for a follow up report to be scheduled on their work programme for October 2017.</p>
 <p>** JSNA: Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – more information can be found at <a href="http://jsna.hertslls.org/">http://jsna.hertslls.org/</a></p>	<p><b>Work Plan for 2016/17 under the East Herts Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2013-2018)</b></p> <p>In December 2015, Members were invited to make suggestions for activities and projects to be included in the 2016/17 work plan. This work plan runs for 12 months and is reviewed after 6 months if required. Officers consulted with 140 internal and external partners and asked for project ideas for potential inclusion in the East Herts Health and Wellbeing work plan for 2016/17.</p> <p>Scrutiny members debated ideas and suggestions - in particular the benefits of healthy eating projects - and suggested improving the health and wellbeing webpages to include a range of recipes for families and individuals to access. A number of helpful partner project suggestions were also received and reflected in the work plan.</p> <p>Scrutiny is looking for ideas that are evidence-based and targeted at a particular community with a known health and wellbeing need. It was also agreed that JSNA** public health evidence, contribution and usage is an essential component of the new Action Plan.</p> <p>The final work plan was agreed by HWSC in February 2016. There are 19 core projects and 6 new or updated projects including Domestic Abuse workshop for secondary school pupils and “Ready and Fit Communities”.</p>
<p><b>JOINT</b></p>	
	<p><b>Corporate Strategic Plan 2016/17 to 2019/20.</b></p> <p>No complex organisation can operate without a clear idea of what it plans to do during the coming year and how it’s going to pay for everything. It is prudent to look several years ahead – at least in outline - to offer residents and local partners some continuity and confidence. We work with a rolling 4 year programme and scrutiny has the chance to review key documents which underpin this forward planning process.</p> <p>Following a councillor consultation event (on 20 Nov 2015), a new set of priorities and objectives has been proposed. The draft plan describes what we will do to ensure the best possible services are delivered for our residents, partners and businesses at a time of change for councils. Although the plan covers 4 years it will be refreshed annually to ensure it remains current and relevant.</p> <p>After some discussion, councillors supported the draft</p>

	<p>which will now go onto the Executive and then to Full Council. If the detail is unchanged, the new priorities listed at the end of Section 9 of this report will come into action for 2016/17.</p>
	<p><b>Budget Report and Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 – 2019/20 and Service Plans 2016/17 – 2019/20.</b> These reports are closely interlinked and are considered by all scrutiny members sitting together in committee in January and February every year as a crucial part of the annual budget setting cycle. This joint work is much more cost effective compared to all four committees sitting separately to consider just their allocated services. Also, as mentioned earlier in this report, it is important to get an holistic view and not look at aspects of the council in isolation. Full details of these papers and the scrutiny discussion can be obtained through the website under the link to Joint Scrutiny below: <a href="http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=184&amp;Year=0">http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=184&amp;Year=0</a></p>



### **TASK and FINISH Groups:**

- **Review of Planning Enforcement T&F Group (Oct 2015 – Feb 2016)**

This review was undertaken by Cllrs Ballam, Page (Chairman), Pope, Ruffles and Freeman and reported back to Environment Scrutiny on 23 Feb 2016 with a completely revised Planning Enforcement Plan, recommendations on using delegated powers and suggested timescales for inspection visits. There was also a discussion relating to the possibility of making pro-active inspection visits in future.

The full committee gave their support to the T&F documentation and their recommendations and asked the Executive Member to consider the business case for the broadening of the service.

The new Planning Enforcement Plan will be available on the council website and all Town and Parish Councils will be sent a copy.

- **Developing a Leisure Strategy for East Herts T&F Group (Jan – Jun 2016)**
- **Waste and Street Cleansing Contract T&F Group (Mar – Jun 2016)**

These two T&F Groups are currently working and will report back at the start of the 2016/17 civic year so will be reported in the next Scrutiny Annual Report.

## 7. LOOKING OUT:

The council does not exist or work in isolation and often delivers its services in parallel or in partnership with other local agencies. Earlier in this document (in Sections 5 and 6), we have already mentioned

- annual performance reports for our main external contractors
- matters relating to our local Housing Association partners
- 'Public health' projects undertaken by East Herts working alongside a wide range of local health and wellbeing providers

As a part of this wider picture, the council (including scrutiny) needs to

- keep a watching brief on some key services delivered by external agencies
- maintain an active dialogue with our immediate partners and
- review our own actions to engage with the public.

CBS	
	<p><b>Partnership Register – risk monitoring:</b>            The Partnership Register was originally agreed (in 2010) when most partnership activity undertaken by the council focused on informal sharing of resources between two or more parties. That activity resulted in multiple arrangements with different levels of associated risk. The register was designed to help understand and manage those risks. Since then, the partnership working has changed significantly - with moves to formal contracted or commissioned services and joint working/shared services with other local councils. Where a partnership takes on more formal arrangements, checks and balances are written into legal agreements and applied as part of the council's overall governance standards – overseen by the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS). Consequently the usefulness of the informal Partnership Register has become an increasingly marginal as a tool to manage risk. At the committee's request, a new 'quick guide' approach was designed to strip out unnecessary bureaucracy for the few remaining informal partnerships (without increasing risk).</p>
ENVIRONMENT	
	<p><b>Community Energy update:</b>            Building on an introduction to Community Energy delivered last year and their request for ideas for practical ways forward, scrutiny received a report outlining options and opportunities that might be followed by the authority itself and across the district. Members did not support the idea of launching into large scale commercial projects but did feel that the council's own estate (and those community buildings we have influence over) should be used to demonstrate energy generation both to off-set costs and to act as a source of publicity, information and advice for other interested groups/individuals. The aspect that scrutiny was most keen to promote and recommend was the inclusion of community energy at the early stage of planning and building development. They asked for this issue to be considered as a 'requirement' within the council's District Plan.</p>
COMMUNITY	
	<p><b>Housing Stock transfer – residual undertakings annual statement.</b>            In March 2002 the council sold its stock of some 6,500</p>



dwellings to two housing associations - now known as Registered Providers (RPs). There are still three conditions attached to the sale of that stock which are on-going and are reported to scrutiny annually. Both RPs exceeded their requirements for the nominations to vacant homes, giving the authority access to 100% of vacancies through the local Choice Based Lettings scheme. Both RPs again reported a significant shortfall in homes sold under the preserved Right to Buy (RTB). This is a recognised issue related to the economic downturn and also the cap on permitted discount, high value of properties in East Herts and the fact that each year there are fewer RTB eligible tenants able to take up the offer.

The issue which concerned members this year was the shortfall by one RP of their expenditure on 'aids and adaptations'. The RP supplied the committee with a written statement:

*"The restructure led to the Asset Management Team function being centralised and loss of key personnel with local knowledge, therefore, the budget was not monitored to track spend against target. This is disappointing particularly as since 2005 our spend has exceeded target. (We) want to assure the council that no tenant was refused an adaptation last year unless it was because their property wasn't able to be adapted".*

Members are aware from feedback from residents that the re-organisation and centralisation of the RPs' management structure has also led to problems getting through to their customer service teams and property fault/repair lines. The committee recommended that both matters should be actively and closely monitored by the Executive Member for health and wellbeing over the coming months and the issue raised at his meetings with the senior managers of the Registered Providers.



**Report on meetings with all Registered Providers with (significant) housing stock in East Herts:**

Following disquiet raised last year by scrutiny in respect of RPs' response time to repairs and 'voids', the Director of Neighbourhood Services had undertaken to raise the matter with each Chief Officer during the next cycle of review meetings. This report to scrutiny summarised the responses from five local RPs and showed data from their most recent customer/tenant satisfaction surveys.

The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing was invited to make a contribution and stated he was aware of the issues, particularly with one of the main RPs and had expressed his concerns to their senior management regarding repairs and voids. He commented that a meeting had already been arranged to discuss a way forward.

Councillors discussed various issues which had been reported to them by residents in their wards that indicated there had been some improvement but there was still an on-going problem to address.

The Committee agreed that RPs' repair services continue to be monitored and supported a suggestion that this be reported back to them annually (and could be integrated within the Housing Stock Transfer Residual Undertakings Annual Statement report).

**Community Voluntary Services for Broxbourne and East Herts (CVSBEH) – Annual Report:**

In each of the years 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15, East Herts





Council has provided core funding of £15,000 for the delivery of core services which include:

- Support, advice and training for voluntary sector organisations
- Promotional events
- Community development initiatives
- Administration of council's summer activities grant fund
- Support to East Herts' Strategic Partnership

In addition to these core services the CVSBEH has carried out project work for the council and East Herts' Strategic Partnership. Funding in the past two years include:

- Community transport initiatives (£12,000 in 2013/14 and £11,000 for 2014/15)
- Dragons' Apprentice (£1,500)

After a presentation from the CVSBEH Chief Officer, members questioned him on details of some of the services/projects provided within and for East Herts. Following further discussions, scrutiny supported the recommendation that a more formal, written Service Level Agreement should be put in place between the authority and CVSBEH.



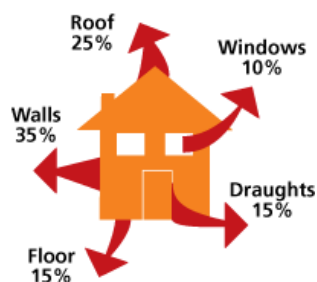
### Crime Trends in Rural East Herts.

With Inspector Chris Hunt in attendance, members were able to learn more about 'rural' crime – although there is no national recognised definition of this. However in East Herts resources are allocated to OWL (On-line Watch Link), Operation AGRARIAN (a 6-weekly overt multi-agency operation aimed at targeting criminality on the road network), use of moveable ANPR cameras (automatic number plate recognition), attending 'Barn Meets' organised by the local NFU and using All Terrain Vehicles to give access to remote locations.

The issue that raised most concern with scrutiny was that of fly-tipping and the increase in the number being seen in the district. If on public land, the collection of this material is the responsibility of the district council – and the cost borne by the local tax payers. Tipping on private land is the responsibility of the landowner.

There is currently some research being undertaken on the number and pattern of fly-tipping in the district and this information will come to Environment Scrutiny at their first meeting of 2016/17.

## HWSC



### Questions about Home Insulation Grants

[environmental.health@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:environmental.health@eastherts.gov.uk)  
tel: 01279 655261


### Update report on Fuel Poverty in East Herts.

This topic was moved from Community Scrutiny once the Health and Wellbeing Panel became a full scrutiny committee. The committee received an update and heard that the key to reducing fuel poverty was to 'insulate first'.

Councillors scrutinised the draft strategy and made one amend (asking officers to include information on oil buying clubs) and then recommended that the Fuel Poverty Strategy be disseminated to all Town and Parish councils.






Members also agreed to receive further reports on two specific measures:








- installation of solar panels and
- re-directing grants to those that were fuel poor.

	<p><b>Community Health and Wellbeing Fund 2014-2016 (£100K annually for 2 years) – previously known as the “District Offer”</b></p> <p>Scrutiny was able to see that 14 projects have been awarded grants ranging from £3,000 to £29,000. One of these is a Small Health and Wellbeing Grant Fund which had £15,000 to allocate – 11 organisations have now received a grant. A Members Working Group was set up in June 2015 to visit projects and bring them to “life” for the committee. As of February 2016, 6 projects had been visited and further visits are planned; all received a positive endorsement. Members recommended that GPs and Patient Participation Groups should be contacted to ensure patients/residents are made aware of funded projects which are relevant to their needs.</p>
	<p><b>Update on ‘Ageing Well’ initiative.</b></p> <p>This topic was moved from Community Scrutiny once the Health and Wellbeing Panel became a full scrutiny committee. Scrutiny received an update on this initiative and heard that the council was in the process of becoming part of the Dementia Action Alliance (details of this initiative can be found here <a href="http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=30985">http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=30985</a>) .</p> <p>Scrutiny was also made aware that 17 councillors attended the Forever Active Come and Try event and several expressed an interest in serving as ‘physical activity champions’. We also have 17 councillors who are already Dementia Friends plus 2 members actively supporting Time Banking. Members agreed to work within their own ward communities to identify residents to become additional physical activity champions, dementia friends or “Time Bankers.”</p>
<b>JOINT</b>	
	<p><b>Economic Development: vision and action plan 2016/17 – 2019/20</b></p> <p>Supported by a 31 page document of supporting evidence, councillors were given the opportunity to scrutinise the council’s vision for its contribution to economic development in the district over the next four year period. The resulting plan is based around six key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business friendly council</li> <li>• Enabling entrepreneurs and business start ups</li> <li>• Supporting the rural economy</li> <li>• Vibrant town centres</li> <li>• Supporting the visitor economy</li> <li>• Lobbying for the right infrastructure</li> </ul> <p>These were seen to be relevant and realistic in the context of available funding and resources so were supported by scrutiny. After being approved by the Executive, a more detailed action plan was then brought to CBS to get their support for key milestones and targets.</p>

## 8. EVALUATING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Scrutiny committee members were all offered the opportunity to evaluate their performance in 2015/16 at the final meeting of each of the separate committees. A written response form was also made available for further reflection and for to those councillors who could not attend the meeting. They assessed their performance against a list of objectives they had set a year earlier which are shown in the first column of the table below:

What we wanted to achieve during 2015/16	Some examples of what we did towards achieving this objective	How did we do?
<p><b>Actively look for ways to improve the level of community and public involvement in scrutiny</b></p>	<p><i>With 22 new district councillors elected in May 2015, this year had to focus on ‘engaging’ them in scrutiny through training, mentoring and gaining experience in committee – working towards understanding and appreciating the potential of scrutiny. We want councillors who can confidently deal with issues raised by the public.</i></p> <p><i>Some use of LINK magazine and social media to encourage public interest in scrutiny.</i></p>	
<p><b>Strengthen and highlight use of evidence from independent or outside sources.</b></p>	<p><i>External evidence was used to support recommendations relating to :</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• HWB projects (based on county/national JSNA data)</i></li> <li><i>• Town Centre Markets (drew on a NABMA report)</i></li> <li><i>• Procurement of car park management system (used an expert external consultant)</i></li> <li><i>• Footway and Grassed Verge Parking: enforcement policy (supported by a 36 page study)</i></li> <li><i>• Economic Development: vision and action plan 2016/17 – 2019/20 (supported by 31 page study)</i></li> <li><i>• Planning Enforcement (used benchmarking information against our ‘most similar group’ of councils and from a National Park Authority)</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Scrutiny members are asking directly for data to be collected and presented in more detail in future reports:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• SLM have been asked to supply more detailed breakdown of customer satisfaction feedback</i></li> <li><i>• Hertford Theatre has been asked to “look to match discrete strands of the business to bench mark against other providers” when they report next year.</i></li> </ul>	          
<p><b>Clearly identify the ‘value added’ which scrutiny can bring to a topic and ensure this is monitored and recognised</b></p>	<p><i>Recent positive changes to Licensing Policy have brought in measures originally recommended by an earlier scrutiny task and finish group.</i></p> <p><i>The Planning Enforcement task and finish group have suggested changes and written a clearer document which will go through Council in May 2016 – all</i></p>	  

	<p><i>designed to help the public with this complex matter.</i></p> <p><i>The two task and finish groups currently running will make a significant contribution to decisions on the long term future of leisure facilities and on waste collection and street cleansing in East Herts.</i></p> <p><i>We continued to bring monitoring reports on progress/outcomes from reviews to the Chairmen and ViceChairmen meeting (3xyear).</i></p> <p><i>There were no significant articles in publications or web items promoting the work of scrutiny this year.</i></p>	 
<p><b>Continue to keep scrutiny members informed and offer opportunities to develop skills needed</b></p>	<p><i>Following the elections in May 2015, induction training and information was offered to all newly elected members assigned to scrutiny and refresher and update scrutiny training for all members was on-going. (See Section11 of this report)</i></p> <p><i>We continued to publish the scrutiny e-Newsletter every 6 months and made use of weekly bulletin (MIB) to update councillors on significant issues, developments and scrutiny events.</i></p> <p><i>Councillors were sent 'pre briefing' material where relevant to widen knowledge on the context and background to topics. Scrutiny Chairmen and ViceChairmen were offered briefing clinics before critical budget meetings.</i></p>	  
<p><b>Strengthen scrutiny of external public bodies and partners</b></p>	<p>During the year, scrutiny committees looked at the local work of the Community Voluntary Services for Broxbourne and East Herts (CVSBEH), Everyone Active (SLM) and the registered providers (housing associations).</p> <p>Scrutiny also had the opportunity to consider the issue of Rural Crime with a representative from the police.</p>	 


Councillors were asked to look at how well the scrutiny activity in East Herts matches up to the four principles of good practice set out by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (refer back to CfPS diagram on page 1 of this report). Their responses mirrored previous views: it will always be 'a work in progress' and there are improvements and new approaches to be tried out with every new topic.

Executive Members were also canvassed for feedback on the scrutiny process in 2015/16 and asked for specific areas to strengthen during 2016/17. The Leader (Cllr Linda Haysey) responded on their behalf and expressed thanks for the useful contributions scrutiny had made in the past year – and agreed that the coming year was the right time to review the scrutiny structure and process at East Herts to ensure it stays effective and in step with both the internal changes to the organisation and the challenges coming from external pressures.

## 9. What are our plans for 2016/17?

Councillors have asked that we carry forward some of the same objectives into next year and add one new one to strengthen scrutiny by:

What we want to do?	How might we do this? – an action plan for 2016/17
<p><b>Actively look for ways to improve the level of community and public involvement in scrutiny</b></p>	<p><i>Research and review how other (similar) authorities involve and engage the public in their scrutiny process.</i></p> <p><i>Continue to invite topic suggestions from residents and explore idea of getting issues raised through existing channels/agencies (including town/parish councils, youth councils, community groups, partnership meetings etc).</i></p> <p><i>Develop the use of social media in respect of scrutiny</i></p> <p><i>Set out ways in which councillors should use their community links to directly engage the public in scrutiny.</i></p>
<p><b>Strengthen and highlight use of evidence from independent or outside sources.</b></p>	<p><i>Evaluate the outcomes from the Residents' Survey (due to report to CBS on 31 May 2016) to see if there are any issues which need to be taken up by scrutiny.</i></p> <p><i>Use cost effective and timely ways of bringing external evidence into any review where relevant or requested: through</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• expert (external) witnesses – in person or in writing,</i></li> <li><i>• visits,</i></li> <li><i>• surveys/questionnaires,</i></li> <li><i>• published documents/research and good practice examples from other (similar) authorities.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Clearly identify the 'value added' which scrutiny can bring to a topic and ensure this is monitored and recognised</b></p>	<p><i>Scrutiny to make a closer link with the Executive forward plan when considering topics for review, and have greater involvement in the development of policies and proposals before they are too far advanced.</i></p> <p><i>Scrutiny reports to make the 'impact' of any recommendation(s) clearer - beyond detail listed in Essential Reference Paper A</i></p> <p><i>Continue to bring monitoring reports on progress/outcomes from reviews to the Chairmen and ViceChairmen meeting (3xyear).</i></p> <p><i>Identify outcomes which can be used in council publications and on social media platforms to illustrate the positive impact of scrutiny to raise awareness (not just in the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report).</i></p>
<p><b>Strengthen scrutiny of external public bodies and partners</b></p>	<p><i>Where relevant, move from 'scrutiny of' to 'scrutiny with' partners when reviewing local services offered to residents.</i></p> <p><i>Identify opportunities (jointly with other councils where possible for efficiency) to scrutinise aspects of the East Herts Strategic Partnership, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Community Safety Partnership or any common issue.</i></p> <p><i>When invited, contribute (in person or in writing) to scrutiny reviews run by other authorities on issues which impact on this council's services and/or on East Herts residents.</i></p>
<p><b>Explore ways of</b></p>	<p><i>Scrutiny committee members to take up training opportunities (in-house training sessions, on-line activities, self-study workbooks,</i></p>

<p><b>strengthening, approaching and structuring scrutiny</b></p> 	<p><i>external events etc) when available in order to develop skills to make scrutiny more meaningful.</i></p> <p><i>Chairmen/ViceChairmen to take up the opportunity to visit (or observe on-line) scrutiny committee meetings in other authorities.</i></p> <p><i>Review the current scrutiny structure to see if it continues to meet the needs of East Herts in a changing environment for local government and make recommendations for changes to enable effective challenge.</i></p>
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## Work programmes

At the end of the year, councillors were asked to outline draft agendas for their 2016/17 meetings however all arrangements are subject to confirmation by the new committee members. At East Herts we look to have well programmed work plans for scrutiny to give partners and the public advance notice of topics - but there is always flexibility to review and amend them throughout the year as it is important to keep the work of scrutiny relevant and topical.

Topics in the draft work plans include:

<b>CBS has already agreed to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3Cs) 2015/16</li> <li>• Residents' Survey – results and analysis</li> <li>• 'Eastern Plateau' funding for local businesses</li> <li>• Council Tax Support Scheme review</li> </ul>
<b>Env Scrutiny has already agreed to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report back from Waste and Street Cleansing Contract Task and Finish Group</li> <li>• Task and Finish Group: Review of Climate Change action plan</li> <li>• Progress and problems relating to Conservation Area management plans</li> </ul>
<b>Community Scrutiny has already agreed to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report back from Leisure Facilities Strategy Task and Finish Group</li> <li>• Hertford Theatre – end of financial year report</li> <li>• Community Grants – review of applications and allocations</li> <li>• Leisure Contract – year 8</li> </ul>
<b>Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny has agreed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress and outcomes against HWB Strategy Action Plan</li> <li>• Dementia Friendly Homes</li> <li>• Rural Isolation</li> <li>• District Plan and implementation of health and wellbeing</li> </ul>

The most up to date versions of all the topics scheduled for each committee can be found under the papers published on the East Herts website (<http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1> will take you to the most recent 'Work Programme' report under each scrutiny meeting agenda).

The new 2016/17 scrutiny committee members will make the final decision as to which topics are added to their committee agenda or set up for more detailed review by a task and finish group.

Whatever is decided, all the work of the 2016/17 scrutiny committees will focus on helping to deliver the three new corporate priorities of East Herts Council. These are:

<b>Vision – To preserve the unique character of East Herts and ensure it remains one of the best places to live and work</b>	
<b>Priority and outcomes we want to see:</b>	
<b>Priority 1 – Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities</b>	Residents living active and healthy lives
	Support for our vulnerable families and individuals
	Communities engaged in local issues
<b>Priority 2 – Enhance the quality of people’s lives</b>	Attractive places
	Future development best meets the need of the district and its residents
<b>Priority 3 – Enable a flourishing local economy</b>	Support for our businesses and the local economy
	Vibrant town centres
	Working with others, to have achieved the right infrastructure for our businesses and communities

## 10. The evolving role of scrutiny



### Upgrade of a Panel to a full Scrutiny Committee.

Annual Council on 20 May 2015 agreed to establish a **Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee** (replacing the previous Health and Wellbeing Panel) in recognition of the importance placed by the council on the health and wellbeing of its residents. The Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference can be found in the council's (updated) constitution.

To consider matters relating to health in East Herts, in particular to:

- scrutinise local public health issues and initiatives in the East Herts area;
- scrutinise partner actions to reduce health inequalities in the East Herts area;
- Community Wellbeing, Ageing Well initiative, Fuel Poverty, East Herts Wellbeing Fund, disabled facilities grants and Dementia Friendly Homes
- make recommendations to the Executive on health and wellbeing issues; and
- consider matters referred to it by the Executive



In November 2012, the landscape of policing underwent its biggest change since the creation of police authorities in 1964. This change was the creation of the post of directly elected Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). In Hertfordshire the elected PCC is David Lloyd.

The Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, which brought in this change also created **Police and Crime Panels** (PCPs) – bodies made up of local elected councillors and independent members with the responsibility to **scrutinise and support** the work of the PCC. These Panels are not local government committees, but they are obliged to meet in public, to publish their agendas and minutes, and to fulfil certain key statutory responsibilities. During 2015/16, East Herts was represented on this scrutiny body by our CBS Chairman, Cllr Paul Phillips.



<http://www.hertspcp.org.uk/SitePages/Meetings.aspx>

In May 2016, David Lloyd was re-elected as Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire.



In June 2015, the CfPS published a report entitled **“The Change Game: How councils are using good governance as a way to navigate challenging times”**.

Councils across England and Wales have undergone major changes in the last couple of years. This is set to continue for the foreseeable future.

Some transformation of local government would have been inevitable even without the financial challenges facing councils. As demographics and society changes, residents’ needs are no longer the same.

Our understanding of how public services impact on outcomes has also improved. There is now a recognition that a whole system approach, which includes residents and communities, is needed to make a real difference to people’s lives.

The financial challenge has, however, been a powerful driver of change and has forced local authorities to consider how they can continue to meet residents’ needs in dramatically different ways.

Decisions taken during periods of major transformation often need to be taken quickly whilst still ensuring they are as robust as possible. Costs and benefits need to be analysed. Options need to be appraised and discarded, as appropriate. The needs of local people need to be collected, considered and taken into account. Alternative delivery models need to be designed and developed.

The report sets out that scrutiny has a key role to play:

- Scrutiny members should understand the rationale
- Scrutiny members should understand the change
- Scrutiny members should plan well, and stick to that plan
- Scrutiny members need to own the change
- Scrutiny members need to be prepared to change scrutiny

Both executive and non-executive councillors need to work together to make changes to the scrutiny function which will make it better able to engage constructively with plans to dramatically alter and improve the outcomes that local people can expect from the public services delivered to them.

In February 2016 they published a further document **“Social Return on Investment”** which is the first of three planned documents to help scrutiny understand and plan for major change.

The full reports are available on the CfPS website:



<http://www.cfps.org.uk/publications>



## 11. TRAINING

It is important for elected members to have the knowledge, understanding and skills to undertake their roles as both a ward councillor and as part of the council's decision making structure. The May 2015 elections returned 22 new councillors (out of 50), so we had to run an extensive induction programme during the start of the year.

However, councillors from East Herts were able to attend the following scrutiny related events during 2015/16:

Date	Scrutiny related event/session	Delivered by ...
May 2015	Induction to Scrutiny: Questioning Skills and Evaluating Evidence	Written guidance and workbooks
26-May-15	Data Protection Governance - role of CBS	Head of Service
04-Jun-15	(Advanced) Chairing Skills	External trainer
30-Jun-15	Developing the skills for scrutiny	External trainer
14-Jul-15	Where does Local Government Finance come from?	Director
25-Aug-15	Finance and Decision making - questions to ask when making the 'business case'	Head of Strategic Finance
06-Oct-15	Introduction to Local Government Finance	LGiU in London
20-Oct-15	Finance and Business Planning training	Director
12-Jan-16	Scrutiny - questioning skills and evaluating evidence: providing meaningful scrutiny in a single party authority	External Peer and trainer Local Gov Association
26-Jan-16	Procedural rules around debate: understanding the debating process in formal meetings to ensure clear decision making.	Head of Service
08-Feb-16	The Change Game: scrutiny and major change seminar	CfPS in London
08-Mar-16	Introduction to Local Government Finance	LGiU in London

Throughout the year, several members have also taken part in Member Support Groups (originally called Action Learning Sets). These were originally set up to support members in their Community Leadership and Engagement role but the questioning approach needed within the group has enhanced their confidence and skills within the scrutiny remit.

A continuing training programme will be needed to keep all councillors briefed on their developing role as described above in Section 10 and offer them the chance to strengthen their scrutiny skills.

Councillors have indicated an interest in some specific areas of scrutiny related training for the coming year:

- Advanced Chairing skills
- Scrutiny in a single party administration
- Questioning Skills

**12. AND FINALLY .....** a reminder that the scrutiny function is greatly enhanced by co-operative working between all parties – and that includes East Herts residents. All our committee meetings are open to the public and anyone can suggest a topic for scrutiny. Contact us directly or talk to your local district councillor and let us know what is concerning you.



Contact details for all our councillors are on the East Herts Council website <http://online.eastherts.gov.uk/moderngov/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>

Introduce yourself and get to know more about how we can work together to keep East Herts a great place to live, work and study in.

If you want more information on scrutiny in general, this can be found on the Centre for Public Scrutiny main website on <http://www.cfps.org.uk/>

#### **Call-In:**

- Whenever a key decision is made by the Executive it is publicised and open to scrutiny for five working days before the decision takes effect. During that time, if four or more councillors object to the decision, it can be 'called-in' and heard by the most appropriate scrutiny committee. ***During 2015/16 there were no 'call-ins' at East Herts.***

#### **Councillor Call for Action (CCfA):**

- Under section 119 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, councillors may call for debate and discussion at committee, on a topic of neighbourhood concern. These powers are limited to an issue which affects a single council ward and can only be brought when all other attempts at resolution have been exhausted. ***Since the introduction of CCfA, councillors at East Herts have never had cause to bring forward such a case.***

Scrutiny does not make final decisions – it makes recommendations to the Executive (and some then go onto full Council). Residents and the press are welcome to attend all these meetings and our Executive and Council are also webcast live on the evening. Access to the webcast service is through the button on the ‘Quick Links’ tab on the home page of our website and from there you can also get to the archive of previous recordings (held for 12 months).

All scrutiny reports and plans themselves are also readily available on the website at <http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=11547>

**There will be a limited print run of this document.**

Greater use will be made of signposting interested parties, partners and residents to the Council’s website to access the Scrutiny Annual Report. This will minimise use of material resources, distribution costs and gain potential CO<sub>2</sub> efficiencies from on-line provision.

<http://www.eastherts.gov.uk/scrutinyannualreports>

If you do require a paper copy, there will be a limited number available at the reception desk at Wallfields in Hertford and at our Customer Service Centre in Charringtons House, Bishop’s Stortford – or contact the Scrutiny Officer on 01992 531612 : e-mail [scrutiny@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@eastherts.gov.uk)

If you would like a translation of this document in another language, large print, Braille, audio or electronic, please contact Communications at East Herts Council on email [communications@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:communications@eastherts.gov.uk) or by calling 01279 655261.