

East Herts Council Report

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 10th June 2025

Report by: Councillor Ben Crystall, Leader of the Council

Report title: Refreshed LEAF Priorities and Annual Report
for 2024/25

Ward(s) affected: All

Summary

- This report provides Committee Members with an update on performance against LEAF priorities over the 2024/25 year and proposed amended LEAF priorities for the 2025/26 year onwards.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- (A) That Committee Members review performance over the 2024/25 year; and**
- (B) That Committee Members review the proposed amended LEAF priorities for 2025/26 and make any recommendations for Executive or Council to consider.**

1.0 Proposals

- 1.1 That Committee Members review progress against last year's LEAF priorities and consider the amended LEAF priorities before adoption by Council in July.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 28th February 2024, Council approved its new “LEAF” corporate priorities. These set out the strategic priorities of the Council and were grouped under the following four headings:
- Listening, Open and Transparent
 - Environmentally Focused
 - Acting with the Community
 - Fair and Inclusive
- 2.2 Under each of these headings are a series of sub objectives and actions which officers were tasked with delivering. The paper to Council can be found here:
[democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/documents/s65262/East Herts Council Corporate Plan.pdf?J=3](https://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/documents/s65262/East%20Herts%20Council%20Corporate%20Plan.pdf?J=3)
- 2.3 A further, more detailed set of actions, projects and measures were then implemented at an operational level. This framework helped inform the delivery plans for services, teams and individual staff performance goals. In theory, every member of East Herts Council staff should be able to relate their day-to-day actions to strategic delivery of LEAF priorities agreed by Members.
- 2.4 With the 2024/25 year completed, progress against the LEAF priorities can be found in Appendix A, which sets out updates against each area in detail.
- 2.5 The LEAF priorities are kept under review by Executive on an annual basis and adjusted/ amended as required. This enables The Council to change priorities to accommodate new challenges (e.g. in national legislation) and local issues.
- 2.6 For 2025/26 Executive are keen to stay with the LEAF framework with an update to some of the sub-objectives. These reflect the fact that progress has been made in some areas but also that new challenges have arisen which need to be accommodated. The proposed new LEAF framework is as follows:

2.7 Listening, Open and Transparent. Sub objectives as follows:

- Listen and be open and transparent in decision making and actions. We will prioritise improved consultation, engagement and conversation with our communities and evaluate the impact
- Strive to achieve excellent customer service **(new)**
- Encourage residents to use our digital communication channels so those who are not digitally able can easily talk to us by phone or in person
- Engage the community in Local Government reorganisation **(new)**
- Engage with residents through Community Forums and the Development Management Forum, to enhance planning outcomes at strategic sites

2.8 Environmentally Focused. Sub objectives as follows:

- Implement our new Air Quality Action Plan to cut pollution and improve health
- Implement our Parking Strategy and other options including the LCWIP to encourage active travel
- Encourage the reduction of carbon emissions from homes and businesses through training and by supporting "Energy Hubs" in towns and parishes
- Roll out more EV chargers in urban and rural locations across the district
- Encourage residents to play their part in supporting local wildlife and improving our natural environment and support delivery of the Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Strategy **(new)**
- Maximising the positive environmental impacts with the delivery of the new waste contract **(new)**

2.9 Acting with the Community

- Consult with communities to update our Local Plan, prioritising improved sustainability standards

- Prioritise actions that can provide housing which is truly affordable
- Help create thriving high streets, by encouraging local markets and by working positively with partners
- Create a long term asset management plan based on community values **(new)**
- Support communities to create or update their Neighbourhood Plans
- Support voluntary sector groups to continue their work supporting the whole community

2.10 Fair and Inclusive

- Deliver the Cultural Strategy, with support for art and cultural events
- Maintain and improve council services while making them more cost efficient through the "Transforming East Herts" programme
- Deliver our Thriving Together Plan to promote physical exercise, healthy lifestyles and support other measures including healthy hubs that boost community wellbeing
- Support those facing homelessness or recovering from it, and include them in consultations
- Improve our Council Tax Support scheme to make it fairer, simpler and more transparent

2.11 These are proposed for adoption by Executive to Council, via the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.12 After adoption, Council officers will identify any additional actions or measures that need to be implemented in order to deliver the priorities. These will then filter into service, team and individual performance plans.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 The LEAF Corporate Plan helps residents understand the priorities

of the Council and how resources are used to achieve them. The plan also drives service, team and individual performance goals.

4.0 Options

4.1 The new priorities have been developed by the Joint Administration with support and advice from officers on deliverability, risks and financial implications. No alternatives are currently being considered, as to do so would disregard the development process which has been undertaken.

5.0 Risks

5.1 There is no legal requirement for councils to develop a corporate plan, however, should the Council fail to refresh priorities there may be a risk that resources are not directed towards achieving key priorities.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 The new Corporate Plan priorities will guide the organisation's work over the coming years. They will be reviewed on an annual basis and agreed at Council. A key priority is to ensure that consultation is carried out effectively.

Community Safety

Not directly however some of the priorities and subsequent actions will be focused on supporting community safety

Data Protection

No

Equalities

As the Corporate Plan is translated into operational priorities, individual equalities impact assessments will be undertaken where there is a change to service delivery

Environmental Sustainability

Actions under the Environmentally Focused section of the Corporate Plan will address issues around Sustainability

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

Background papers, appendices and other relevant material:

Appendix A – Annual Plan for 2024/25

Contact Member

Ben Crystall, Leader of the Council. ben.crystall@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer

Benjamin Wood, Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services, Tel: 01992 531699. benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author

Benjamin Wood, Director for Regeneration, Customer and Commercial Services, Tel: 01992 531699. benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk