

# **East Herts Council Report**

## **Council**

**Date of meeting: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 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 Council 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 COUNCIL:**

- a) That Members review performance over the 2024/25 year
- b) That Council adopt the amended LEAF priorities for 2025/26

## **1.0 Proposals**

- 1.1 That Council review progress against last year's LEAF priorities and adopt the amended LEAF priorities for 2025/26 and beyond

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 On 28<sup>th</sup> 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 (eg. 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 presented below alongside the previous version to illustrate what has changed. Please note this request follows on from discussion at Overview and Scrutiny Committee where Members wanted to see the two iterations of LEAF, side by side.
- 2.7 Listening, Open and Transparent:

<b>Current LEAF objective:</b>	<b>Proposed LEAF objective:</b>
Listen and be open and transparent in decision making and actions. We will prioritise improved consultation, engagement and conversation with our communities	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
Ensure that information on our website is as up to date as possible	<i>Add back in</i>
Provide full and timely publicity for all major Council decisions	<i>Removed</i>
Evaluate the impact of our communications to understand how we can do better	<i>Added to objective above</i>
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.	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 with residents through new Community Forum events, to enhance planning outcomes at strategic sites.	Engage with residents through Community Forums and the Development Management Forum, to enhance planning outcomes at strategic sites
	Strive to achieve excellent customer service ( <i>new</i> )
	Engage the community in Local Government reorganisation ( <i>new</i> )

## 2.8 Environmentally Focused:

<b>Current LEAF objective:</b>	<b>Proposed LEAF objective:</b>
Develop and implement our new Air Quality Action Plan to cut pollution and improve health	Implement our Air Quality Action Plan to cut pollution and improve health
Update our Parking Strategy to encourage sustainable travel	Implement our Parking Strategy and other options including the LCWIP to encourage active travel
Reduce carbon emissions from homes and businesses by creating “Energy Hubs” in towns and parishes that offer information on grants and other support to help residents save money and cut carbon	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	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.	Encourage residents to play their part in supporting local wildlife and improving our natural environment and support delivery of the Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Strategy
	Maximising the positive environmental impacts with the delivery of the new waste contract ( <i>new</i> )

## 2.9 Acting with the Community

<b>Current LEAF objective:</b>	<b>Proposed LEAF objective:</b>
--------------------------------	---------------------------------

Consult with communities to review and refresh our Local Plan, prioritising improved sustainability standards	Consult with communities to update our Local Plan, prioritising improved sustainability standards
Prioritise actions that can provide Housing which is truly affordable	Prioritise actions that can provide housing which is truly affordable
Help create thriving high streets, by encouraging local markets, and by delivering grants to support local businesses and enhance town and village centres	Help create thriving high streets, by encouraging local markets and by working positively with partners
Work with partners to help make town centres more attractive, safer and easier to navigate	
Actively encourage more communities to create or update their Neighbourhood Plans	Support communities to create or update their Neighbourhood Plans
Support voluntary sector groups to continue their work support the whole community.	Support voluntary sector groups to continue their work supporting the whole community.
	Create a long term asset management plan based on community values ( <i>new</i> )

## 2.10 Fair and Inclusive

<b>Current LEAF objective:</b>	<b>Proposed LEAF objective:</b>
Deliver the Cultural Strategy, with support for new events such as Pride, Herts inclusive	Deliver the Cultural Strategy, with support for art and cultural events

Theatre and the East Herts Arts Showcase	
Maintain and improve council services while making them more cost efficient through the “Transforming East Herts” programme	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 other measures that boost community wellbeing	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 and community activities	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	Improve our Council Tax Support scheme to make it fairer, simpler and more transparent
Explore replacing a “strong leader and cabinet” system with a committee system	<i>Removed</i>

2.11 These are proposed for adoption by Council, following consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive. Appendix B contains the amended plan.

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](mailto:ben.crystall@eastherts.gov.uk)

### Contact Officer

Benjamin Wood, Director for Regeneration,  
Customer and Commercial

Contact Tel No 01992 531699

[benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk)

### Report Author

Benjamin Wood, Director for Regeneration,  
Customer and Commercial

Contact Tel No 01992 531699

[benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk)