

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'B'

Corporate Strategic Plan 2012/13 – 2015/16

	Page Number
1. Introduction	2
2. East Herts in context	4
3. Our Corporate Strategic Plan	6
4. Our Vision and Culture	8
5. Our Priorities	10

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1. Introduction

This is East Herts' Corporate Strategic Plan 2012 – 2016. The report sets out what we plan to achieve and how we will allocate the resources needed to get there. Over the next four years, it will be the priority and focus of all council staff to deliver these ambitions contained within this document. Working with our many partners we are committed to creating a future for East Herts residents and businesses that is prosperous and sustainable.

Financially public services are facing a testing time and demand for services continues to rise. Over the next few years, income from government fees and charges and investment will continue to be under great pressure, while factors such as inflation and our growing and aging population means that there will be pressure to spend more.

Over the next four years we will look at new ways to deliver council services. In the plans laid out in the February 2011 budget, we showed how we planned to save £1.1m in 2011/12 increasing to £2.9m by 2014/15. We've already enhanced our front line presence in Bishop's Stortford – offering more services to customers than before – and improved the customer service area in Hertford as well. Our transformation as an organisation includes bringing all our support service staff under one roof, and working in partnership. Agreements for how we provide Revenues and Benefits Services, plus Internal Audit, are already in place. Preliminary discussions on how we can work with others to provide some of our other services are also well advanced. And we will continue to search for further efficiencies to pass on to council tax payers.

We are undoubtedly entering a period of significant change which will require innovation, resilience and resourcefulness from all staff. We will have fewer resources and will need to use those we have creatively and wisely. We need clear priorities setting out our ambitions.

This change process is already well underway. We launched a council-wide transformation process to examine everything we did and how we did it. We put in place processes to drive out substantial cost savings to ensure that our limited resources were focussed on the things that really matter to East Hertfordshire's

residents. These changes are creating an organisation with a sharper focus on customer service and local priorities. You can see this in the streamlined priorities we now set out in this plan.

However, the financial challenges going forward, for the organisation, for elected members, staff and for communities and service-users are only part of the story: together with partners we continue to ensure our key services are undertaken to a good standard. Despite the great pressures we face and the great changes we have made and will continue to make, we are clear about our direction. To ensure this continues we have streamlined our priorities going forward.

These are challenging times but our guiding ambition is that East Herts will continue to be a place of which we can all be proud.

Councillor Anthony Jackson
Leader of the Council

Anne Freimanis
Chief Executive

2. East Herts in context

East Herts Council's vision:

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

Our Strategic Priorities:

We have adopted a new framework of priorities to ensure that we continue to provide high quality services and remain committed to the community we serve. As part of this we have reduced our priorities from six to three. They are:

People – Opportunities for everyone to contribute to and access the council's services

Place - Safe and Clean

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

These give us a great opportunity to maintain resilience in these turbulent times.

Our priorities have been determined by analysing a variety of data such as central government policy, results of community consultation, surveys and focus groups, local information and demographics

Members worked with officers to link this information to local, East Herts, national, regional and countywide priorities and the Council's known capacity and resources to deliver.

We know that even tougher financial times are ahead: We estimate that, in line with all UK local authorities, we will need to find significant savings. The coalition government's priority is to reduce the nation's debt; East Herts Council has its part to play.

With much of the money we spend coming directly from government, many of the savings made at national level will impact on our own income and local services. We do not want to simply pass that pressure onto local people and therefore we have already promised to freeze council tax for next two years and will look to keep increases as low as possible for the following two years. At the same time, cost pressures and demands are increasing for some of our biggest services.

We know that for many of our service users and staff the next few years will mean upheaval and uncertainty. Although we are not able to preclude this, we do promise to be honest and open about what we are doing. We believe that an adaptable, responsive council delivers better value and outcomes for local people and is a fulfilling place for staff to work.

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3. Our Corporate Strategic Plan

The **Sustainable Community Strategy** is the overarching plan for East Herts, driven by the community and which the council and key partners work towards delivering.

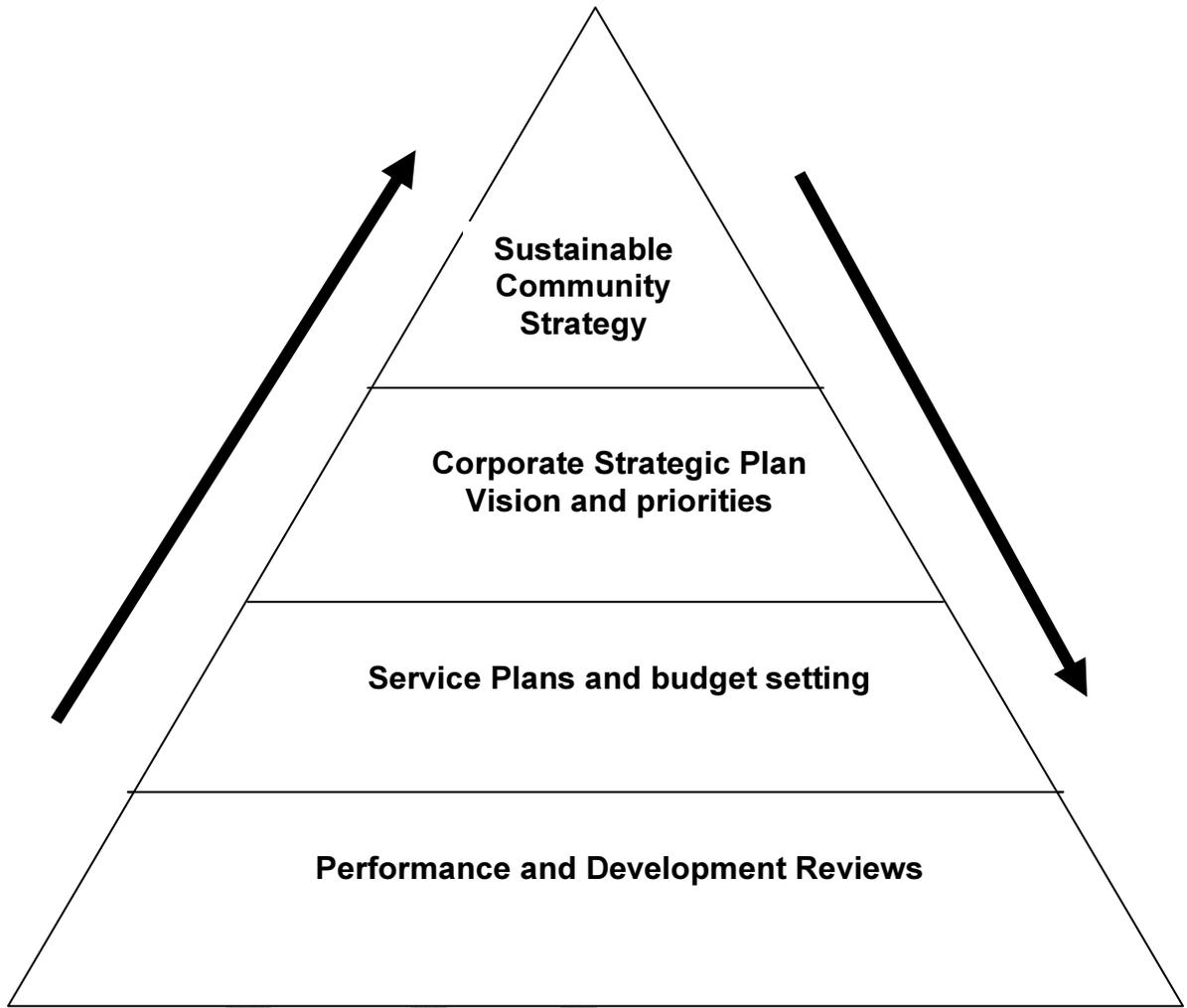
The Corporate Strategic Plan (this plan) sets out the overall vision and direction for the council over the next four years. It highlights the high level priorities for the council and identifies the key outcomes that will be achieved. The plan forms the basis for the council's performance management activities and will drive the distribution of resources.

Service Plans are produced every year by Heads of Service, agreed by the council's elected members and set out what key actions need to be undertaken to deliver the outcomes contained in the Corporate Strategic Plan. These actions are linked to key performance indicators, so achievement can be measured and tracked.

The Corporate Strategic Plan and Service Plans then feed into a four-year budget-planning model, which the council uses to plan its expenditure and make sure that financial resources are available to fund actions in priority areas.

Performance and Development Reviews set out individual objectives that staff need to achieve to deliver their Service Plan and which contribute to the achievement of the council's priorities and ensures every member of staff has a learning and development plan.

The council's **performance management framework** supports the monitoring of the council's priorities and delivery of outcomes through readily accessible information, such as the Corporate Healthcheck (which provides monthly finance and performance analysis) and the Service Plan monitoring reports. All of which are reported formally to the council's Executive and scrutiny committees. Scrutiny meetings are open to all and we strongly encourage the public to attend.



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4. Our Vision and Culture

Our vision is to:

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

Our Culture:

Our culture focuses on the service we provide to residents and businesses, ensuring that East Herts remains a thriving and prosperous community.

Our Staff:

The council is fully aware that its most important asset is its people. Therefore, it is essential that we have the right people with the right skills and knowledge in the right jobs, at the right time, to support the delivery of the Corporate Strategic Plan.

Our workforce planning will have a central role in delivering improved services as it has been developed to:

- Meet customer and service needs and continue to develop the skills required to deliver them
- Support the council's integrated service and financial planning framework
- Respond to service changes and developments
- Support management information

Thereby giving the council the flexibility it needs in its workforce to utilise staff resources.

The Councillors roles:

The local councillors are elected to make council policy, take up issues and represent the local community. They also play a role in ensuring this plan is delivered, whether that be as an Executive, scrutiny or regulatory Committee Member.

East Herts has 50 councillors and each councillor serves for four years. The district council elections were in May 2011.

The role of councillors is changing, with more emphasis placed on community engagement and stronger local advocacy.

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5. Our Priorities

People

This priority focuses on enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable.

What we want to achieve:

- Provide support for the vulnerable by working with our partners to increase the number of social and affordable homes, increasing the number of supported housing units and ensuring those in need access the benefits and support they are entitled to.
- Enhance our local community engagement by working together with our partners such as Parish and Town Councils, for the benefit of our communities.
- Address health inequalities and continue to ensure public health safety.
- Maintain our core services to a good standard and ensure high satisfaction with the council as measured through the biennial Residents Survey..

Place

This priority focuses on the standard of the built environment and our neighbourhoods and ensuring our towns and villages are safe and clean.

What we want to achieve:

- Reduce waste sent to landfill by increasing our recycling rate to more than 50%.
- Sustain the percentage of residents satisfied with street and environmental cleanliness.
- Sustain the percentage of residents who are satisfied with our parks and open spaces.
- Ensure the sustainability of Hertford Theatre and explore possibilities for the theatre to be administered through a community trust.
- Reducing the carbon dioxide emissions from our own operations by 25% by 2020.
- Continue to review the council's assets and the best way to manage them.
- Uphold the safety of our communities and seek to reduce the fear of crime by supporting neighbourhood policing

Prosperity

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

What we want to achieve:

- Develop a practicable and pragmatic Parking and Transport Strategy and action plan which delivers integrated and value for money policies in respect to car parking, walking, cycling routes and vital bus routes.
- Ensure enhanced broadband throughout the district and enable residents and business in rural communities to have access to broadband provision comparable with urban settings.
- To freeze Council Tax for 2011/12 and 2012/13 and aspire to a zero percent increase in the following years.
- Ensure, in partnership with the community, that new and existing housing and commercial development meet East Herts priorities.
- Continue the streamlining of back office functions in order to ensure an efficient and sustainable Council for the future.
- Review employment land and look at different opportunities for example office space and industrial space to support business.
 - Increase the economic resilience of the market towns working with the local business community.
 - Create a vision document to guide future development in Hertford and Ware towns.
 - Deliver the five year rural land based business development programme.
 - Establish a sound planning framework for the District through the implementation of the Local Development Framework (LDF).