

# DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR CIVIC YEAR APRIL 2020 TO MARCH 2021

**Here are a few highlights of reports over the past year from a County and District Perspective**

### **Hertfordshire News around Covid response**

#### **Volunteer and People Assistance Cell**

The (VAPC) is set up under the Strategic Co-ordinating Group to organise the humanitarian and volunteering response to coronavirus.

Work commenced to contact those residents that are identified as 'shielded' but have yet to respond to the letter from Government; this is around 8000 individuals, but more data continues to be provided by Government. Hertfordshire District and Borough Councils will be contacting these residents to ensure they are well supported and are able to continue to self-isolate for the 12 weeks as advised. If residents do require support the necessary arrangements will be made.

#### **Organisations who need to increase the support from local volunteers**

As of 14 April, over 9,000 volunteers had been recruited to the three key voluntary sector organisations working collaboratively on this task: #TeamHerts, Watford3RT and Communities 1st. The number of volunteers deployed to date was over 2,500. There is, understandably some frustration from those volunteers awaiting a role. Volunteers have been kept informed and work is underway to process and match volunteers with appropriate voluntary and community groups; we have streamlined processes where we can.

Organisations who need to increase the support from local volunteers were asked to register with #TeamHerts Volunteering, visit [www.thvolunteering.org.uk/organisations](http://www.thvolunteering.org.uk/organisations) and complete the online form. Community groups and Parish and Town Councils who are all working to bridge any gaps in support for their communities were invited to utilise the online helpful resources and guidelines on the [#TeamHerts website](#).

#### **For those residents who need support this remains the point of contact**

Residents who are self-isolating and in [need of support from volunteers](#) can visit [www.hertshelp.net](http://www.hertshelp.net), email [info@hertshelp.net](mailto:info@hertshelp.net) or [phone](#) HertsHelp on 0300 123 4044.

#### **Public Health Services update**

- 70 public health clinicians, who were working as school nurses, health visitors, in drug and alcohol services and in sexual health clinics, commissioned by Public Health, have been seconded to help the NHS around the county. This is 54% of the clinical public health workforce.
- A number of public health initiatives have also been put in place to help free up doctors and pharmacists so that they can provide vital medication and support for those most vulnerable within our communities. Despite this, much of the health improvement work and vital services that the Public Health Team usually deliver continues.
- Essential Public Health services have moved online; many consultations are taking place virtually;.

## Highways

We reviewed our work programmes to identify what could be resumed safely by altering our usual methods of delivery, to ones that comply with the government requirements on social distancing. In these ever changing circumstances we have decided it prudent to take the opportunity to resume the following activities whilst the necessary resources are available. All these activities will help to ensure the highway network remains safe and operational for the vital services that need to use it and for the general public.

### Variable Message Signs – Support the NHS and Care Workers

We have now added a new message to our VMS to show thanks to the NHS and Care Workers. The message shown below was displayed last night (Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April) and will be displayed every Thursday (7pm-9pm) for the next 3 weeks. This is also being shared across our social media.



## Countryside and Rights of Way

Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) staff produce a monthly eNews bulletin, Walking in Hertfordshire, which forms part of the Update Me stream. It focussed on keeping active locally. In particular it has promoted the key Government messages regarding social distancing, reducing unnecessary journeys and taking exercise outdoors through walking and cycling on the 3000km of Hertfordshire's Rights of Way network – footpaths and bridleways.

### Support for care homes

The Minister of State for Care had [written to council leaders supporting](#) care homes. Council chief executives were being asked to lead a process to develop care home support plans by 29 May, working with CCGs and taking into account the views of health and care providers. These plans were published on council websites and were subject to a regional and national review process.

The letter also included further information on the new Adult Social Care Infection Control and Workforce Resilience Fund. This follows the announcement from the Prime Minister yesterday of £600 million in additional funding for COVID-19 pressures in care homes. This funding supported adult social care providers to reduce the rate of transmission in, and between, care homes and support wider workforce resilience.

### Hertfordshire Crowdfunding webpage launched to help local charities and businesses

Hertfordshire County Council has joined with partners to launch a new Hertfordshire wide crowdfunding platform this week giving local groups and organisations an opportunity to secure funds in a new way.

Crowdfunding is a digital method of raising finance by asking a large number of people to each give a small amount of money. Organisations and individuals can add their projects onto a crowdfunding webpage and use social media and their networks to build support and enthusiasm for their ideas, amassing pledges from the community, public and private organisations to achieve their funding target.

### **Hertfordshire Libraries launched a new “Ready Reads” lending service.**

Ready Reads rolled out across 10 sites from Monday 6 July 2020, the service allowed users to collect a pre-selected book pack to read at home.

Customers will be notified when their books are ready for collection from the door or lobby of the library while observing social distancing guidelines. All returned items will be placed in quarantine for 72 hours before going back into circulation.

### **Stay Safe Hertfordshire Summer 2020**

A campaign to support the safe re-opening of Hertfordshire’s high streets

Hertfordshire County Council worked with district and borough councils and other organisations across the county to launch a new ‘Stay Safe Hertfordshire’ campaign, which supports the safe re-opening of Hertfordshire’s town centres.

As part of the campaign, Hertfordshire’s Behaviour Change Unit has developed a toolkit for businesses to provide advice and resources that will help them re-open their premises safely. [The toolkit for businesses is available to view and download here.](#) The toolkit includes a suite of posters that can be displayed in the premises to encourage social distancing and other behaviours that will help to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Changes were made to road layouts in town centres, which have been put in place to allow for safer social distancing for pedestrians and to make it easier for active travel.

### **Nine Herts councils received housing support for vulnerable people**

Vulnerable people who were housed during the pandemic were helped to stay in accommodation thanks to the allocations of funding announced by the Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick. [£91.5 million allocated to 274 councils in England to help vulnerable people housed during the pandemic,](#)

### **How should speed limits be set in Hertfordshire?**

A consultation on the draft plan was open until 12 September 2020. Hertfordshire County Council consulted on a new strategy for setting speed limits on the county’s roads, including clearer guidance on introducing 20mph speed limits to protect pedestrians and cyclists.

### **Reviewing our plans for the county’s waste**

**Hertfordshire County Council reviewed its Waste Local Plan to ensure that the county has the right mix of facilities to deal with the waste produced by residents and businesses.**

Hertfordshire is projected to be producing 4.4 million tonnes of waste a year by 2033 – an increase of almost 1m tonnes a year from current levels.

Hertfordshire already produces more waste than it can manage locally, and with the county’s population expected to rise by up to 175,000 by 2031, and up to 100,000 new homes and 100,000 new jobs being created over the same period, we will need significantly more capacity to recycle, recover and dispose of our waste in future.

As the Waste Planning Authority for Hertfordshire, the county council needs to set out strategic policies for managing the county’s waste, and identify the types of facilities needed. These could include recycling centres, transfer stations, composting facilities or disposal facilities.

### **East Hertfordshire Growth and Transport Plan**

The draft East, and South East Growth & Transport Plan (GTP), covering the towns of Bishop’s Stortford and Sawbridgeworth, down to Hertford, Ware, Hoddesdon, Broxbourne, Cheshunt and Waltham Cross, and the key transport links between these towns and to surrounding areas, went to public consultation in October to December 2020. The aim was to refine the initial schemes and

packages that considers the key problems and opportunities which currently exist or may in the future on the transport network and identifies what types of interventions are needed to improve the transport network.

The East Hertfordshire GTP has been developed at the same time as the South East Hertfordshire GTP due to the number of linked trips between the areas.

**Local Outbreak Plan. The Hertfordshire Approach.** In the autumn the Government asked every Council to create a Local Outbreak Plan, with an officer Board, called the Health Protection Board, overseen by a Board of elected members. In Hertfordshire the Elected Member Board is chaired by David Williams, Leader of the County Council, with Tim Hutchings the Executive Member for Public Health and Prevention as Deputy Chair, and comprises the leaders of the County Council, the District and Borough Councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner. The published outbreak plan can be found at this link [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/outbreakplan](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/outbreakplan) and is a live document. The Health Protection Board is a multi-agency board of partners working together to reduce and manage outbreaks of infection.

The Elected Member Board agreed the creation of a countywide approach to events, within the framework of legislation and guidance.

The Hertfordshire approach, overseen by the Health Protection Board in partnership with all relevant agencies is in short:

1. To enable events which are lawfully and safely planned to proceed lawfully and safely, and ensure they are COVID-19 secure
2. To ensure that events can remain dignified while being safe
3. To use existing event notification systems to do this
4. To require everyone organising an event to undertake a suitable COVID risk assessment, to ensure that the event happens safely
5. Maintain social distancing for all gatherings in accordance with current government guidance
6. To work cooperatively with organisers, including (i) seeking to agree any necessary measures with organisers if possible, (ii) applying restrictions rather than prohibitions where practical, and (ii) using enforcement powers only where this is necessary.

## **Sustainable Hertfordshire**

**In 2019 the County Council declared a climate emergency.** The public engagement was open from **02 November 2020**

The county council's ambitions for leading in our own operations are:

- **Carbon neutral for our own operations by 2030**
- All operations and services are ready for future climates
- **Improve biodiversity on our land by 20% by 2030**
- Reduce what we throw away. Send nothing to landfill by 2030

The county council's ambitions for enabling and inspiring a sustainable county are:

- **Net zero greenhouse gas county before 2050**
- Our communities are ready for future climates
- **Improve wildlife in our land and water by 20% by 2050**
- **Clean air for all by 2030**

- **Increase resource efficiency threefold in the County by 2050**

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/consultations/environment/sustainable-hertfordshire-strategy.aspx#>

## **Diversity & inclusion Strategy**

This consultation opened on **21 October 2020**

The council's current Diversity & inclusion Strategy was due to end in 2020. This survey asked residents to inform how we deliver a new strategy that:

- Works with communities to ensure that our services are responsive to our diverse population
- Works in partnership across all sectors to make Hertfordshire a safe and inclusive County of Opportunity for all its residents.

Hertfordshire County Council provides a number of services. This includes; Adult Social Services, Children's Services, Education, Libraries, Roads, Fire and Rescue, Citizenship Services and Public Health. A full list of services can be found here. To help us understand both the needs of our communities and how we can work better together, we would be grateful if you could complete the short set of questions below.

The Equality and Diversity team has worked with a number of stakeholders over the last year to identify how to develop the new strategy that meets the needs of Hertfordshire's diverse population.

### **School Holiday food vouchers press release**

Hertfordshire received nearly £2.5 million pounds which would fund up until the end of this financial year to April County Council's Conservative administration has moved quickly to provide food vouchers during the school holidays following the Government's grant of nearly £2.5m to Hertfordshire.

The Council extended it and will be providing food vouchers to the value of £15 per week for each child in the County that receives free school meals during the school holidays from Christmas 2020 to Summer Half Term 2021, inclusive.

HCC have commissioned Family Fund Trust (FFT) to manage the process of buying and sharing digital vouchers,

### **Hertfordshire schools come top of the class in national performance tables**

The Sunday Times singled out the nation's top 500 secondary schools in its recently published 2020 guide and 25 Hertfordshire schools were included, an impressive five per cent of the UK total. The schools were ranked by performance according to the results of their A'Level and GCSE examinations taken in the summer of 2019.

The 25 Hertfordshire schools ranked within the top 500 state secondary schools are (position in brackets):

- Dame Alice Owen's School, Potters Bar (33)
- **Hockerill Anglo-European College, Bishop's Stortford (41=)**
- Watford Grammar School for Girls, Watford (73)
- Watford Grammar School for Boys, Watford (119)
- St George's School, Harpenden (139)
- **The Herts and Essex High School, Bishop's Stortford (153)**
- Beaumont School, St Albans (170)
- Sandringham School, St Albans (171)
- St Albans Girls' School, St Albans (172)

- The Broxbourne School, Broxbourne (235)
- Hitchin Girls' School, Hitchin (238)
- Presdales, Ware (259)
- Roundwood Park School, Harpenden (276)
- The Bishop's Stortford High School, Bishop's Stortford (321)
- The John Henry Newman RC School, Stevenage (326)
- Rickmansworth School, Rickmansworth (336=)
- Queen's School, Bushey (339)
- The Hemel Hempstead School, Hemel Hempstead (351=)
- Loreto College, St Albans (389)
- St Joan of Arc RC School, Rickmansworth (417)
- Richard Hale School, Hertford (457)
- The Highfield School, Letchworth Garden City (459)
- Stanborough School, Welwyn Garden City (480)
- The Priory School, Hitchin (490)
- The Leventhorpe School, Sawbridgeworth (495)

### **Police and Crime Commissioner plans for Hertfordshire's largest ever police force**

Hertfordshire is set for its largest ever police force, funded by a planned a £1.25 a month Council Tax increase.(£15) Police and Crime Commissioner David Lloyd is aiming to fund extra frontline officers as part of a £14.1m budget increase, on top of the number provided by the government national uplift programme.

- The Commissioner's budget proposal would increase the total number in the ranks to 2,267 in the next financial year, with a total of 167 new officers joining. The government is funding 90 officers to be in post by April 2022, while the Commissioner's planned precept rise would pay for another 77 officers.

### **Locality Grant awards made by Cllr Eric Buckmaster**

#### **Applicant organisation**

Sawbridgeworth Evangelical Congregational Ch	1000
CAB/CAS	500
Sawbridgeworth town Council	1000
Friends of Sawbridgeworth Neuro Centres	750
Isabel Hospice	500
Herts Vision Loss	1000
Make Lunch Charity Sawbridgeworth	500
Red Balloon family educational boxes	150
Herts Young Homeless	500
Aspects	500
Carers in Herts	300
CHIPS	150

Sawbridgeworth Bowling Club	750
Hunsdon Parish Council	239.50
Sawbridgeworth Young Peoples Recreation centre	1,000
Grove Cottage BS Mencap	500
Sawbridgeworth Congregational food boxes	1100
Gt St Marys PCC community hall	750
Widford Play area and field	350
Wareside	450
Sawbridgeworth Cricket club	750
Stanstead St Margarets + Benefice	500
East Herts	500
Gilston Parish Council	1000
Kit out volunteers for vaccinations	260.5

**Total £15,000**

**East Herts Cultural Strategy.** In my Wellbeing Portfolio at East Herts I am introducing a Cultural Strategy for the District. The purpose is to increase participation and access to the arts and culture for all but particularly for those in more disadvantaged circumstances. The intention is to encourage providers and volunteers to come together to share the gifts of our arts, culture, heritage and our creative industries with established and new audiences alike. We know the potential of arts, culture and creativity in enriching people's lives and we all have our part to play to ensure everyone can enjoy and be inspired by the exciting and unexpected cultural opportunities on offer. I see this as very much connecting with the Social Prescribing Service I introduced a couple of years ago and the Healthy Hubs launched just before the first lockdown as a means of accessing lifestyle support and advice.

**New Homes Bonus Change** New awards of the New Homes Bonus (NHB) were due to have ended but this was given a one year reprieve by

government. Given the pressures on the overall budget and the need to protect the council's cash flow it is proposed to end the

automatic payment of NHB resources to Town and Parish Councils. Instead an amount equivalent to the 25% normally paid over to Town and Parish Councils will be held in reserves for eligible Town and Parish Councils to bid for. The payments will be conditional on the Town and Parish Council: having local Member endorsement of the bid; that the bid amount is capped at the amount they would have received under the previous arrangement; that they have spent all New Homes Bonus previously received and that the scheme being bid for meets one or more of the council's SEED priorities.

**County Budget. Investment to support those in need, protect the environment and make Hertfordshire more sustainable are the key priorities in the council's spending and budget plans for the year ahead**

Councillors today (Tuesday 23 February) agreed the budget for 2021/22, which includes an increase of 2% for the adult social care precept and an additional 1.99% for general council tax, meaning a total increase to council tax of 3.99%. This works out at an extra £1.08 a week for average Band D households.

The county council has decided to not take up the option of increasing the adult social care precept to 3% this year and will instead collect the remaining 1% next year in 2022/23.

The key areas highlighted within the budget are:

- Supporting the vulnerable and COVID recovery: This includes funding for additional numbers of people needing support and increases in the National Living Wage, in addition to providing the Voluntary Sector with an enhanced package to support COVID recovery. This will be broadly met by the extra 2% in social care precept. Investment will also be made in safeguarding to support vulnerable individuals in care. This is on top of further investment to enable care worker pay increases and funding for the Domestic Violence Service, and to provide support for the future transformation of disability services;

## **Hertfordshire County Council secures £23.5m to combat Climate Change**

Hertfordshire County Council has successfully secured a further £8.5m of funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, managed by Salix Finance, to help fight the climate change emergency in the county.

The county council's success in securing a second and third application from this scheme brings its total funding to £23.5m. In January it successfully secured £15m of funding from its first application.

The Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme enables public sector organisations to tackle climate change by delivering capital energy efficiency schemes and heating decarbonisation projects. This funding means the county council can now deliver several sustainability led projects at a number of its sites including its school estate, fire stations, libraries and main office buildings.

Some of the many projects include the installation of solar panels across 128 council owned buildings, the installation of an air source heat pump across our Mundell's estate and the delivery of improved cavity wall insulation across a further 15 school sites.

## **East Herts Council**

### **Loan scheme for large businesses expanded**

[The Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme was launched](#). All viable businesses with turnover of more than £45m were able to apply for government-backed support. Firms with turnover of more than £250 million can borrow up to £50 million from lenders. The scheme complemented existing support including the Covid Corporate Financing Facility and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

### **East Herts [Covid19 Business Grant - update on payments page](#).**

Around 80pc of eligible business fall below the Business Rate Threshold so East Herts District Council does not have data on these businesses including bank account details etc. Therefore much of the work is handled manually and takes time. It was important that businesses go online at East Herts and complete the necessary application form. The Government funding for business interruption has continued and which East Herts issues to applicable businesses and premises such as community halls.

## **Leisure Centres and Parks**

All of our existing leisure centres closed owing to Covid lockdown and are now opening according to the timetable of easing restrictions

**Grange Paddocks new Leisure Centre.** The contractor proceeded with the construction at an appropriate pace subject to any restrictions and ability to receive supplies etc. I had a tour of the construction site on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2021 and laid the final tile in the wall of the 25mtr pool. Great progress has been made and opening is expected by the end of September.

**Hartham Leisure Centre expansion and upgrade received** planning permission and a contractor Cadman has been appointed. Work will take place over the next 18 months and arrangements will be made to limit disruption to users.

**Hertford Theatre** Also closed during lockdowns. The Theatre is currently open but is expected to close in June to decant following planning approval for the expansion of the auditorium, addition of 3 cinemas, studio theatre and café.

**Council Operation.** Council business continued but in a different form but face to face meetings are now replaced by Zoom meetings including any Board meetings associated with council major projects. Members had been trained on Zoom so that committee meetings such as Development Management may resume. Waste Collection continues to work well. The brown bin/garden collections are now an optional chargeable service at £49 per annum. Take up of the service has so far achieved to target of 45%.

### **Revised Gilston applications**

#### **PfP Villages 1-6 and CPP village 7**

Consultations were originally expected to take place in Autumn 2020 with a target committee meeting in December. These were delayed. The Development Management Committee at East Herts is now expected to consider the applications in June.

#### **Use of Compulsory Purchase powers in the gilston area**

It was resolved in principle, (and subject to Harlow District Council resolving to follow the same course of action) the Council be prepared to use powers available to it under section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to compulsorily purchase land in the Gilston area, as generally shown on the plans at Appendix 1 to the report, to enable the construction of transport infrastructure to support the delivery of the Gilston Area allocation in the East Herts District Plan (The Gilston Area Allocation) and the achievement of the wider strategic planning benefits referred to in the report;

(B) that the Executive delegates authority to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Head of Planning, to enter into a Compulsory Purchase Order Indemnity Agreement (CPO IA) in relation to this matter, on behalf of the Council; and

(C) that the Executive and Council note that Officers will undertake the work needed to prepare for a possible Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) together with the associated documentation and, if necessary, will bring a further report back to the Executive and Council seeking authority to make a CPO.

Eric Buckmaster April 2021