

13 November 2007

Our ref: Letchworth/Nov07
Contact: Susanne Gow
Direct Dial No: 01462 474648
Email address: Susanne.gow@north-herts.gov.uk

To: Members of the Letchworth Committee of North Hertfordshire District Council (Councillors D. Levett (Chairman), Melissa Davey (Vice-Chairman), S. Bloxham, John Booth, J.M. Cunningham, Allison Dear, Gary Grindal, T.W Hone, Arthur Jarman, David Kearns, Lorna Kercher, Ian Mantle and Mrs. L.A. Needham)

You are invited to attend a

MEETING OF THE LETCHWORTH COMMITTEE

to be held in

**COMMITTEE ROOM 1, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,
GERNON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY**

on

WEDNESDAY, 21 NOVEMBER 2007

at

7.30p.m.

Yours sincerely,



David Miley
Democratic Services Manager

8. **TREE STRATEGY** 15
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
For the Committee to make known their views on the adoption of a Tree Strategy that would ensure the future maintenance of the tree stock owned or managed by North Hertfordshire District Council.
9. **SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING 2008-2013 – EFFICIENCIES AND INVESTMENTS 2008-2009** 55
REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND REGULATORY SERVICES
To invite comments from the Baldock and District Committee on the proposed efficiencies and investment items in the financial year 2008-2009 that the Head of Financial Services could convey to Cabinet.

The dates of the remaining Letchworth Committee Meetings are:

- 23 January 2008
- 19 March 2008

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LETCWORTH COMMITTEE

21 November 2007

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

AGENDA ITEM No.

6

TITLE OF REPORT: LETCWORTH AREA COMMITTEE DEVELOPMENT & AREA VISIONING BUDGETS 2007/08

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL
SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To advise the Committee on the current expenditure and balances of the Area Committee delegated budgets.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee's attention details of recent requests received for Area Committee Development Discretionary Grant Funding made by community groups and local organisations.
- 1.3 To ask the Committee to consider projects for funding from the Area Committee delegated budgets.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Not applicable

4. ISSUES – FUNDING DECISIONS TO BE MADE

- 4.1 A spreadsheet showing detailed spend to date of the Area Development budget is enclosed as Appendix 1.
- 4.2 One grant request has been made for the Area Committee to consider:
 1. Wednesday Drop in Club – support funding for weekly activities.
- 4.3 Two further grant applications agreed in principle by Members at the last Area Committee Meeting require formal ratification:

1. Letchworth Town Twinning Association – support funding 2008 activities.
2. Friends of Mrs Howard Gardens Group – initial start up support funding.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Committee has delegated powers to administer funds from the budgets described.
- 5.2 There are no other legal implications pertinent to this report.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the information detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, which relates to the Area Committee budget balances for the current financial year 2007/08.
- 6.2 The spreadsheet also details the pre-allocations carried forward from the previous financial year 2006/07 to the current financial year 2007/08.
- 6.3 In addition, the spreadsheet includes the balances relating to allocated Visioning Budgets available within the Letchworth area.

7. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no human resource and equalities implications pertinent to this report.

8. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 8.1 Consultation with Members has occurred in connection with the allocation of funds for Community Projects.
- 8.2 Consultation with the respective officers and external agencies/groups has taken place with regard to funding proposals for Area Committee Discretionary Development Funds.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Committee is asked to note the budgetary expenditure, balances and carry forwards from the Development Budgets and the Visioning Budgets.
- 9.2 That the Committee notes and acknowledges the amounts of uncommitted Visioning, Development Discretionary Funds within each respective Budget and considers the allocation of those funds to projects and initiatives.

9.3 That the Committee allocate a grant of £1,000 as support funding associated with the Town Twinning 25th Anniversary Celebrations as proposed at the last Letchworth Area Committee on 19th September 2007.

9.4 That the Committee allocate a grant of £250 as support funding associated with the set and initial support costs relating to the newly formed Friends of Mrs Howard Gardens as proposed at the last Letchworth Area Committee on 19th September 2007.

10. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The allocation of funds will improve the services provided by local organisations and groups that are available and accessed by members of the community.

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

11.1 Not applicable.

12. APPENDICES

12.1 Appendix 1 – Spreadsheet of Committee Delegated Budgets 2007/08.

12.2 Appendix 2 – Wednesday Drop In Club Grant Form

12.3 Appendix 3 – Letchworth Town Twinning Grant Form (to follow)

12.4 Appendix 4 – Friends of Mrs Howard Garden's Grant Form (to follow)

13. CONTACT OFFICERS

13.1 Ashuk Ahmed
Community Development Officer
Telephone: 01462 474225
E Mail ashuk.ahmed@north-herts.gov.uk

13.2 Lois Stewart
Group Accountant
Telephone: 01462 474451
E Mail lois.stewart@north-herts.gov.u

Letchworth Budget 2007/2008

<u>SUMMARY/ TOTALS</u>	<u>Funding</u>	<u>Allocated</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>Outstanding</u>	<u>Unallocated Budget</u>
<u>Revenue Visioning</u>	£34,513	£29,513	£16,694	£13,009	£5,000
<u>Capital Visioning</u>	£120,100	£103,745	£20,595	£83,150	£16,355
<u>Jackmans Improvement</u>	£2,828	£2,828	£2,828	£0	£0
<u>Small Area Grants</u>	£21,256	£19,781	£16,526	£3,255	£1,475

<u>Discretionary</u>	£45,814	£42,230	£32,650	£9,580	£3,584
<u>General Town Centre</u>	£9,430	£5,910	£5,910	£0	£3,520
Total	£233,941	£204,007	£95,203	£108,994	£29,934

Letchworth Budget 2007/2008

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<u>General Town Centre</u>	£9,430	£5,910	£5,910	£0	£3,520
Total	£233,941	£204,007	£95,203	£108,994	£29,934

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT	AGENDA ITEM No 7
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TITLE OF REPORT: CHAMPION NEWS

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of the activities and schemes with which the Community Development Team has been involved.
- 1.2 To bring to the Committee’s attention some important community based activities that will be taking place during the next few months.

2 THE FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. PROJECT/ ACTIVITY/ SCHEME DETAILS

3.1 Jackmans Youth Provision

The Jackmans Improvement Group with partner agencies are continuing to develop the services and facilities currently being provided.

Pool tables, Air Hockey & Table Tennis Tables, plus other multi-media equipment have been purchased in direct response to requests by local young people.

Herts County Council have assigned a number of part time Youth Workers to deliver activities during the dedicated evenings of operation. In addition, the Youth Service has recently assigned a Development Officer to assist in the practicalities behind running the youth facility.

All other partner agencies including NHDC continue to give the project support and assistance. Rap-Aid are also delivering sessions for the younger age groups at the centre.

3.2 **Grange Youth Provision**

The Youth Wing's Management Committee is due to meet on 1st November 2007 to continue to develop the provision of activities for young people on the Grange.

The group still needs volunteers to come forward to continue to enhance the services provided and endeavour to seek further funding and equipment.

The Management Committee is looking to achieve Trust status later in the year and will formally alter its constitution to enable this to be achieved.

3.3 **Letchworth Youth Council**

As part of the Letchworth Action Group, a multi-agency partnership, which supports activities for Young People in Letchworth, officers are continuing to assist the Letchworth Garden City Council and other partners in the formation of a representative Youth Forum / Council for Letchworth.

It is hoped that an embryonic Youth Forum / Council will be formed before Christmas, with the majority of engagement occurring in Mrs Howard Hall and more formal sessions occurring at the Garden City Council offices.

3.4 **Rap-Aid**

Rap Aid hope to officially launch their projects based at Mrs Howard Hall in January 2008.

Their services will provide a range of innovative activities and opportunities for young people, including a young people led media project. (subject to funding)

3.5 **Westbury Action Group**

Officers are supporting a multi-agency group in the possible formation of a Community Association group for the Westbury area, similar in style to the JIG & GIF organisations.

An open evening was arranged inviting the local community to become engaged and take an active part in what happens in the Westbury.

This meeting was held at Westbury Primary School, with a number of community development professionals in attendance offering advice and assistance.

Over 50 local residents attended the meeting resulting in 15-20 residents signing up to be involved in the formation of Westbury Action Group (WAG).

Community Development Officer is currently supporting the group with the

drawing up of formal documents i.e. Constitution, Equal Opportunity policy etc.`

The group is to meet on Monday 12th November 2007, 7.30pm at Westbury School.

3.6 Town Centre Christmas Festivities

The Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Manager is to address the Letchworth Area Committee on at the meeting scheduled for Wednesday 21st November 2007 to update Members on the jointly coordinated Christmas Festivities Programme for the town.

3.7 Letchworth Review of Primary Schools

Hertfordshire County Council Cabinet met on 15 October 2007 and agreed to publish statutory notices for the closure of both Lannock Primary School and Westbury Primary School on 31st August 2009.

While recognising the concerns of some members of the Education Panel about the closure of Westbury School, the Cabinet agreed that there was no other way to effectively reduce primary places in that part of Letchworth and ensure strong schools for the future.

Community support for the Westbury area will be maintained with the continuation of plans for a Children's Centre and pre-school provision on part of the Westbury School site.

All pupils at Westbury Primary School will be offered a place at Icknield Infants' or Wilbury Junior School, which are both within walking distance. All pupils from Lannock Primary School will be offered a place Radburn Primary School.

3.8 Dog Waste Bin Provision – Jackmans Play Area

The cost to purchase and install a Dog Waste Bin for the area would be £231.73

To maintain the emptying of the bin works out to be an additional £33.01 which will cover from 1st December to 31st March 2008.

3.9 Environmental Awareness – Plastic Carrier Bags

At the Committee Pre-Agenda meeting the Chair of the Area Committee asked if an item on Plastic Bag awareness for the town could be raised as part of the Champion News Report to seek the Committee's view on the matter.

4. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 4.1 Consultation has taken place with the respective agencies, organisations and ward members with regards to the activities and events mentioned in section 3 of the report.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That the Committee endorses the actions taken by the Community Development Officer to promote greater community capacity and well - being for Letchworth Garden City.

6. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 6.1 Stuart Izzard Senior Community Officer x4854
e-mail stuart.izzard@north-herts.gov.uk
- 6.2 Ashuk Ahmed Community Development Officer - Letchworth x4225
e-mail ashuk.ahmed@north-herts.gov.uk

TITLE OF REPORT: TREE STRATEGY**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek the Area Committee's view on the adoption of a Tree Strategy that is intended to ensure the future maintenance of the tree stock owned or managed by the Council.
- 1.2 To enable Ward Members to use their local knowledge to input into the strategy.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This Report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the 16th October 2007, meeting of Cabinet the following was resolved:
 - That the adoption of a Tree Strategy be agreed, in principle;
 - That the Strategy, as set out at Appendix A to the report, be presented to Area Committees and their comments reported back to a future meeting of the Cabinet.
- 3.2 Trees form an important element of the character of North Hertfordshire. Trees in the towns and villages are particularly important as they improve the environment in which people live. Many of the trees in the towns and villages are owned and managed by either the County or District Council.
- 3.3 In line with the newly adopted "Pathfinder" approach officers have been working with the County Council to find sustainable solutions for the long term management and maintenance of the tree stock under their control.
- 3.4 The strategy details the current condition of trees, highlights areas of concern and provides policies to safeguard their future management. Its objective is to "provide the Council with a management tool that clearly sets out agreed priorities for the long-term management of the Council's tree stock". Appendix A details the Strategy.
- 3.5 The aims of the Strategy are to:
 - a) Provide a basis to perpetuate the character of towns and other areas and provide for a continuity of the local treescape by establishing a tree population with a balanced age structure and diverse species mix.

- b) Allow the identification, quantification and evaluation of the Council's trees resource.
 - c) Enable the preparation and execution of maintenance regimes and the prioritising and programming of a periodic maintenance or conservation works appropriate to the nature of each site. The Council's legal obligations would also be met more effectively, as would resistance to claims for damage or negligence.
 - d) Improve the service to the general public. By increasing proactive maintenance and prudent replacement, trees would cause less danger, damage and nuisance thus reducing complaints, claims for damage and emergency situations.
 - e) Enable the true cost of maintaining the Council's tree stock in a responsible manner to be established and allow realistic annual estimates to be compiled. Initial costs could increase significantly, but in the longer term as the health and condition of the tree stock improves, subsequent maintenance costs should reduce.
 - f) Make the general public aware of the Strategy by appropriate publicity, thereby projecting the Council as an environmentally responsible body. Generally encourage and educate people not only to appreciate trees but also understand the reasons and need for tree renewal.
 - g) Establish a more positive form of tree management which would allow both Council Members and its officers to deal with representations from the public, which may conflict with the views of others, in a firm, fair and more orderly manner.
- 3.6 Currently the Council has limited knowledge on the number, age and condition of the trees under its control. Work on trees is ordered as and when required. At the core of the Strategy is a computerised database system, "Arbortrack", which will be used to record survey results of trees. This will give the information necessary to provide a strategic approach to tree management, and the Council will be more able to provide proactive tree management and obtain a uniformity of service across the District.
- 3.7 The strategy has identified three main areas of concerns and recommends actions for improvements. These are:
- 3.8 **Highway Trees:**
- 3.8.1 The general maintenance of highway trees is unsatisfactory in all four towns; the situation in Letchworth has become critical because of its high population of street trees. During the past two financial years, i.e. 2005/06 and 2006/07, budgets have been exhausted in less than six months, leaving dead and potentially hazardous trees unattended.
- 3.8.2 By identifying the problem and working in partnership with the County Council, a new Highways Agency agreement is being proposed, which will provide sufficient resources to maintain street trees in a safe and healthy condition.

3.9 Village Trees:

3.9.1 Many of the trees in villages are located on the highway. Currently the County Council maintains them, and this results in a different level of maintenance to highway trees located in the towns.

3.9.2 In order to provide parity of provision, the strategy recommends that highway trees in the villages are included in the agency agreement with the County Council.

3.10 Cemetery Trees:

3.10.1 Over recent years the budget for tree maintenance in cemeteries has been reduced. The current allocation is £3,700 which is not sufficient to cope with the required work, and like highway trees the stock is in decline.

3.10.2 The strategy recommends that consideration should be given for a growth bid to provide sufficient funds to maintain the future of the tree stock.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Council, like any other landowner has a duty to maintain its trees in a safe condition. Any injury or damage caused by unsafe trees could result in the Council having to pay compensation for injury or loss.

4.2 If the Council assumes the responsibility for highway tree maintenance, it has both a statutory duty to maintain the trees, as well as its duty as agent of the highway authority.

4.3 The Council is given enforcement powers under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to ensure that trees within its district are maintained in a safe condition. For that reason, the Council should ensure that its trees are properly maintained.

5. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

5.1 If agreement is reached to renew the Hertfordshire Highway Partnership (Environmental Maintenance Agency Agreement) the strategy provides the means to supply an improved service with no additional cost to NHDC. In essence, it is providing more for less.

5.2 Risk Implications

5.2.1 The adoption of the strategy and regular inspections of the tree stock will significantly reduce both the County's and NHDC's insurance risk.

5.2.2 The inclusion of trees in villages reduces the risk of claims that the Council is providing an enhanced service in its urban areas.

6. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 If the strategy is to be adopted, it will be necessary to recruit a new member of staff to replace the post of Senior Tree Officer, which has been vacant since April 2007.

6.2 The budget for this post is contained within the existing revenue allocation.

- 6.3 The existing job description of the post of Senior Tree Officer would need to be reviewed to ensure it meets the current needs of the Council and the strategy.
- 6.4 In order to fully undertake the functions of the strategy, there will need to be changes in working practice with increased use of I.T. and mobile working.

7. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 7.1 The Portfolio Holder for Environment has been kept informed as the Strategy has developed.
- 7.2 The Strategy is being presented to Area Committees.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 To recommend to Cabinet that the adoption of the Tree Strategy be approved.

9. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 To provide sustainable working practices to best meet customer expectations for the maintenance and development of trees under the Council's ownership and management.

10. APPENDICES

- 10.1 Appendix A - Draft Tree Strategy

11. CONTRIBUTING OFFICERS

Steve Geach: Parks & Countryside Development Manager	Tel: 01462 474553
Kim Sawyer: Corporate Legal Manager	Tel: 01462 474561
Lois Stewart: Group Account	Tel: 01462 474566

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



TREE STRATEGY

(DRAFT)

(FIVE COLOURED PICTURES)

FOREWORD

North Hertfordshire is described as a green and pleasant place to live. I believe this is largely due to the abundance of trees, not only in our rural areas but also in our urban settlements. We may not realise it, but trees form an essential element of our everyday lives.

North Hertfordshire District Council has signed up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. Currently climate change is close to all our hearts, and as your local Council we are pleased to do all we can to help. The importance of trees is clearly recognised in the Declaration, and this strategy helps to safeguard them for our future generations.

On a more personal note, living in the World's First Garden City, I truly appreciate the importance of trees in the urban environment, they really do bring an element of the countryside and calm into all our lives.

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BENEFITS OF A TREE STRATEGY

The strategy aims to conserve and improve the character of North Hertfordshire's towns and their environs by caring for the Council's trees with primarily proactive planned maintenance and tree renewal programmes.

Trees are long-lived plants, and their life span may be between 20 and 100 years in urban conditions or longer in favourable situations such as parks and gardens. It should be recognised that while some of the benefits of introducing a tree strategy may be immediate or become apparent over a comparatively short period in tree terms, i.e. less than five years, others will take much longer to achieve.

The development and maintenance of quality green space with adequate provision of trees is an intrinsic part of that well being. The benefits of the ability to enjoy moderate activity in pleasant surroundings are well documented, with the added advantage that the landscaping itself also helps to reduce noise nuisance, a contributor to stress, and pollution.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Trees are important. They are essential to life, and their importance must not be undervalued. We all rely on plants for our existence and trees rank high on any plant list of life givers. Trees provide amenity, food, wood, shade and shelter. They provide habitats for wildlife. They bring the countryside into the town and add to its character. They absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen. Their foliage reduces pollution including chemical, particulate and noise pollutants. Trees may reduce the risk of flooding and soil erosion. Property values may be less where trees are not present. They reflect the changing seasons with new leaves, flowers, seeds and fruit, autumn colour, bark patterns and winter branch tracery. The presence of trees often adds calm and tranquillity to an area, reducing human stress and improving the quality of life.

Most people like trees. Trees often appear permanent, immovable and timeless yet put simply, they are large, living organisms with a finite lifespan often no longer than our own. They may fall into ill health and often die prematurely. However, unlike humans and most other animals and plants, they can cause serious injury or damage if their condition causes them to fail.

In a modern environment, the need for periodic maintenance of trees and long term planning of treescapes is an essential pre-requisite to providing a safe and healthy population of trees now, and in the future. This fact is well recognised by arboriculturists but not always appreciated by the general public. In 1994, the Department of Environment (DoE) published the results of case study research on Urban Tree Strategies. This illustrated the range of techniques and opportunities when planning tree surveys and strategies, and followed earlier recommendations by the DoE that tree strategies should be adopted. The following short extract from one such publication issued in 1993 is reproduced here. "Changes in the overall tree stock occur slowly, due to the longevity of many species. As a result, the role of trees in the urban environment is often taken for granted. However, over the next 20 to 50 years there are likely to be major changes in the tree stock in those towns which have a legacy of broad-leaved native and introduced species. Large street trees often dominate major approaches or occupy central sites and, as they die, their loss will greatly impoverish the urban scene. Positive steps are needed to replace such trees".

LOCAL CONTEXT

The North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) was formed in 1974 with the amalgamation of the former urban districts of Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston, together with 33 parishes administered by Hitchin Rural District Council. The District covers an area of 147 square miles and most of this area is rural in character. Its present people population is approximately 120,000. The majority of the Council's tree maintenance responsibilities are confined to the District's four main towns of Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City and Royston. Baldock, Hitchin and Royston are ancient market towns and Letchworth Garden City is Britain's First Garden City. Each town has its own character to which their treescapes contribute. The recent adoption of woodlands at Great Ashby has increased the Council's tree ownership responsibilities outside the established urban areas. The Parish Council maintains trees in villages, or if on a designated highway, the responsibility falls to the County Council. Although NHDC do not own trees on the highway it is responsible for their maintenance.

The Council's tree stock is an important resource, which is impossible to value in monetary terms. The complexities and costs of maintaining and managing trees and treescapes in public places has increased over recent years. Changes in the law, more emphasis on public safety, increased insurance claims for injury and damage, concerns about the environment, a greater awareness over the loss and replacement of trees, and complaints about the problems trees cause have all contributed to this need for improved maintenance and management.

SCOPE OF STRATEGY

The Tree Strategy focuses on the Council's management and maintenance of its tree stock. This includes trees that are either owned or managed by the Council in parks and playing fields, housing estates, highways, cemeteries and churchyards, car parks, woods and commons and other sites where trees exist. The maintenance of hedges, screens and semi-natural scrub generally over three metres in height is included, but not garden hedges or shrubs.

The Tree Strategy recognises the importance of trees in private ownership. As private bodies undertake this management, they are excluded from this document. Recommendations for their management and maintenance are covered in the Biodiversity Action Plan and Green Space Strategy which looks at wider landscape issues.

The General Policies section will apply to trees maintained by the Council in most situations throughout the district. More site-specific policies, which relate to a particular town, site type or specific locality or area will be developed where appropriate. Existing or proposed management plans for any particular site are not contained within this document, but such plans are listed under Appendix A.

The strategy provides more detailed information and guidance on the arboricultural aspects of the Council's Green Space Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan.

The **Tree Strategy** is compliant with the Vision for North Hertfordshire:

“Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live work and prosper”

and specifically to the Council's strategic objectives:

“Promoting sustainable development of the District to ensure we deliver adequate, affordable housing, protect the environment and conserve the heritage of our historic towns and rural settlements”

“Promoting first class leisure and cultural facilities to contribute to healthy living for all our citizens”.

The **Community Strategy** is: “Improve the quality of life for people living and working in North Hertfordshire by ensuring work by public service organisations, voluntary organisations, community groups and businesses is centred around areas of importance to local people”.

The **Green Space Strategy** is: “Form a strategic and holistic plan for the development of green space managed by North Hertfordshire District Council. Produce sustainable management of the Authority’s assets and to make continuous improvement in line with user expectations”.

The Tree Strategy is complementary and integral with the **Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change**. The Council's recent commitment to signing the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change additionally commits us to the development, with partners and local communities, of a Climate Change Strategy for the District within the next two years. This long-term plan will of course need to consider the benefits of provision of properly managed green spaces, not only for leisure, but for the benefits they can bring in terms of carbon reduction.

NHDC North Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan: “which promotes an integrated approach towards effective biodiversity within both the urban and rural environment”.

OBJECTIVE

To provide the Council with a management tool that clearly sets out agreed priorities for the long-term management of the Council’s tree stock.

AIMS

- a) Provide a basis to perpetuate the character of towns and other areas and provide for a continuity of the local treescape by establishing a tree population with a balanced age structure and diverse species mix.
- b) Allow the identification, quantification and evaluation of the Council’s tree resource.
- c) Enable the preparation and execution of maintenance regimes and the prioritising and programming of a periodic maintenance or conservation works appropriate to the nature of each site. The Council’s legal obligations would also be met more effectively as would resistance to claims for damage or negligence.
- d) Improve the service to the general public. By increasing proactive maintenance and prudent replacement, trees would cause less danger, damage and nuisance thus reducing complaints, claims for damage and emergency situations.
- e) Enable the true cost of maintaining the Council’s tree

stock in a responsible manner to be established and allow realistic annual estimates to be complied with. Initial costs could increase significantly, but in the longer term as the health and condition of the tree stock improves, subsequent maintenance costs should reduce.

- f) Make the general public aware of the strategy by appropriate publicity, thereby projecting the Council as an environmentally responsible body. Generally encourage and educate people not only to appreciate trees, but also to understand the reasons and need for tree renewal.
- g) Establish a more positive form of tree management which would allow both Council Members and its officers to deal with representations from the public, which may conflict with the views of others, in a firm, fair and more orderly manner.

TREE DESCRIPTION SUMMARIES

The majority of trees for which the Council is responsible are situated within the urban areas of the District. The following brief descriptions summarise the key arboricultural features in each town.

The surveying of all trees under the Council's control is being undertaken currently across the district. This is a time-consuming exercise as, with the exception of woods and other semi-natural sites, each tree has to be inspected and its details recorded. Woods and semi-natural sites are recorded as an area. Information on these sites relates to trees only and do not consider grass, low scrub or water courses. Therefore this condition survey is based on sample areas from each town, but it is considered that the information given below is a fair reflection of the current situation. Details of each site category are given under their respective town heading, with a summary of areas of concern at the end of each town section.

BALDOCK

(Insert Photo of High Street Trees)

Baldock has a significant number of mature street trees, the most prominent of which line its wide High Street. Many roads in the housing areas to the south and west of the town centre also have prominent tree avenues. The housing areas to the East, and particularly Clothall Common, have mainly informal plantings of trees at early-maturity growing on amenity land.

The Weston Hills area includes one of the largest wooded areas in the district maintained by the Council. It is an important area for wildlife. The main wooded area is recovering well from the damage sustained in the great storms of 1987 and 1990 with new, young woodland emerging.

The town's parks, playing fields, cemetery and churchyard contain both formal and informal tree features of mixed age.

CONDITION APPRAISAL

Details of each site category are given under their respective heading with a summary of areas of concern at the end.

- a) Cemetery: The trees here are generally in a reasonable condition. A majority of trees are aged at early to full maturity. There is very limited space for new planting. The larger boundary trees overhanging adjacent gardens are a regular source of complaint.
- b) St Mary's Churchyard: The situation here is very similar to the cemetery but with few complaints from adjacent residents.
- c) Recreation Grounds: Avenue Park is the main park in the town but sports and play facilities occupy much of the available space. There is a range of tree species and ages here including a few rare species and a large Horse Chestnut near the main Letchworth Road entrance which is believed to be the only survivor from the original avenue of trees from which the park takes its name. Most trees are in a reasonable condition. A small number of trees have been identified for attention. Other, smaller parks and play areas include Holroyd Crescent, Chiltern Road and Pryor Road recreation grounds where they exhibit a range of tree ages.
- d) Clothall Road Playing Field: This site is known locally as Bakers Close. There are a number of mature trees around the boundary areas primarily in the mature to over-mature range. Occasional maintenance on some of the larger trees is required to maintain safety and appearance. New planting here, involving excavating the soil, is generally not allowed as this site is a scheduled ancient monument.
- e) Highway trees: The majority of street trees are planted in verges around the town. There is a reasonable range of ages and species. The condition of trees is also variable, with younger, healthy stock and older specimens nearing the end of their life. In roads such as Weston Way, Chilvers Bank and The Leas, new planting undertaken in the 1980's has led to a generally healthy population of trees in early-

maturity. The reintroduction of pollarding Lime trees in the Nightingale Way area should reduce complaints and the maintenance requirement here in future years. The trees in the High Street range between early and over-mature but includes the semi-mature Limes in the market car parking area. The age and condition of the High Street trees will be considered in conjunction with the proposed improvement scheme for the area. To the North of the town centre, the verge trees in Salisbury Road are generally in a poor condition. There are also areas of semi-natural highway land including the steep banks in London Road and at the entrance to Bygrave Road. The banks in London Road, in particular, are in need of improved management. The coppicing of selected areas to remove leaning trees and encourage dense, safer regeneration to bind the soil should be considered when resources allow.

- f) Public amenity land: This category of land is found primarily within housing areas and in Baldock, forms an important part of the character of the Clothall Common estate. The trees on Clothall Common range in age from young through semi-mature with some of the early plantings entering early-maturity. Most of the trees are in good health and growing well. The early plantings prior to building on the site were planted in groups of six different tree species and are becoming quite dense as they increase in size. This has led to number of complaints about nuisance.
- g) Woods and commons: At Weston Hills, most of the trees are young to semi-mature in age and have grown largely from natural generation since the 1990 storm. There are also areas of older trees some of which are in poor condition. Ivel Springs has a large number of young trees in the area adjacent to the old football and car boot market ground and also neglected trees and scrub further north on the site. The spinney to the east of Chilvers Bank and Hilltop contains some large trees at the rear of the houses. The trees here are in a reasonable condition owing to some periodic maintenance undertaken in past years but there has been little work here recently.
- h) Miscellaneous sites: Of the two Council owned allotment sites in Baldock, North Road allotments has some arboricultural interest. There are a few older trees in the wetter area towards Ivel Springs. Some new trees have been planted near the railway bank which are presently under the management of the Countryside Management Service.

The car park and market area in High Street contains a row of Limes at a semi-mature age. One of these trees at the front of the telephone kiosks was planted on memory of Ron Page: a well respected Baldock resident. One over-mature Lime remains here and will require removal in due course. The trees at The Twitchell car park and to rear of the adjacent Community Centre are of mixed ages but the larger, older trees have a limited life expectancy because of the need for safety. There is quite limited scope for replanting here.

SUMMARY

- a) The trees in the cemetery, churchyard, and recreation grounds are generally in a satisfactory condition but should receive periodic maintenance and the need for tree replacement monitored.

APPENDIX A

- b) The groups of maturing trees on Clothall Common will require selective thinning at an early date to avoid overcrowding and excessive nuisance if future problems are to be avoided.
- c) Improvements in highway tree maintenance are a growing priority. The survey of Baldock street trees early in 2006 has highlighted the need for periodic inspections and trees requiring attention.
- d) The emerging new area of wood at Weston Hills will require management to ensure continued satisfactory growth. Some of the older trees will require attention to improve safety, especially near paths and areas where children are known to be active.
- e) The older trees in The Twitchell car park will need careful monitoring and may need replacing over the next five to ten years.

HITCHIN

(Insert Photo St. Mary's Church)

Hitchin, including Ickleford, has many roads with smaller, ornamental trees at a range of ages. It also has a small number of prominent street tree avenues such as The Avenue, Chiltern Road (where the trees are actually in the carriageway) and Hampden Road. The management of these trees has been contentious over the years and the problems exacerbated by a lack of funds. The recent reintroduction of pollarding in Hampden Road has considerably eased the problems here after years of disagreement and controversy.

The town has numerous recreation grounds in the form of parks, playing fields and open spaces and allotments where both formal and informal tree features exist. Most tree age groups are represented at these sites.

The semi-natural sites include Oughtonhead Common, Bury Mead Springs, St Ippolyts Brook Rural Walk and Purwell Meadows. The latter site was replanted with numerous trees mainly around its boundary areas. All four sites comprise a range of wildlife habitats such as grass, shrubs, trees and water. Parts of the Woodside area in Walsworth Road is also semi-natural in nature.

St Mary's Churchyard and its riverside frontage contains prominent, specimen trees of all age groups. Hitchin cemetery contains a substantial population of trees but many of these are now over-mature and the loss of older trees is frequent.

The Market Square and St Mary's Square have individual and groups of specimen trees of varying age and amenity value.

CONDITION APPRAISAL

- a) Cemetery: Hitchin cemetery is divided into two main sections. The older and larger north east section containing the chapel and a smaller south west section. Many of the trees in the older section are in a poor condition and a gradual erosion of these over-mature trees will continue in future years. This is especially true of the Silver Birch which have a comparatively short life span. There has been some limited planting of specimen trees in this section over the past 20 years where space permits but these will not compensate for the losses being incurred. The younger, south west section also has some ageing Silver Birch along its St John's Road boundary and these are being lost gradually. The remaining mature trees in this section are in a variable condition with some younger, healthy trees at a semi-mature age.

The current budget allocation for cemetery trees is not sufficient for the long term maintenance of the tree stock - consideration should be given for a growth bid.

- b) St Mary's Churchyard: The trees in the churchyard are generally in a good condition. Only one or two older trees have a limited life expectancy at present. A number of young and semi-mature trees are present which should offset any tree losses over the next ten to twenty years. An area of unkempt woody vegetation next to the river needs attention, and its removal could improve the view of the church from Queen Street.

- c) Recreation Grounds: The main ornamental park in Hitchin is Bancroft Recreation Ground. Trees here are a mixture of older specimens which are now fully- to over-mature and younger trees planted over the last 25 years. The general condition of the trees is good, but more work has been necessary on the older trees in recent years to maintain safety. Butts Close accommodates an important avenue of Horse Chestnut trees across its main open area. It is generally accepted that these trees were planted in 1937 to celebrate the Coronation of King George VI. However, photographs exist dated 1906 and 1943 both showing very young trees planted in the approximate positions of the present trees. The trees in the central area of this feature have performed poorly because of the wet growing conditions. Other trees on the Close appear reasonably safe and healthy. Windmill Hill (and Dell field) has a healthy number of young and semi-mature trees present with a small number of prominent ageing trees with a limited life expectancy. Oughtonhead Way and Smithsons Recreation Ground both have young and older trees in a generally good condition. Notable playing fields include King George V, Ransom Recreation Ground, Walsworth Common and St John's Road. King George V playing field has a number of younger trees planted around its boundaries and also a limited number of semi-mature trees to provide arboricultural interest in the future. The trees at Ransom Recreation Ground are in a fair condition with a few older trees needing attention. At Walsworth Common, many of the large riverside Willows are showing their age with decay and defects. Young trees planted adjacent to the railway bank have suffered from vandalism. Trees at St John's Road recreation ground are mostly at semi or early-maturity requiring limited maintenance at present. Other playing fields include Burford Way where a significant amount of new planting was undertaken as part of the Trees for Life programme. Purwell Lane has some older trees in average condition and a small number of healthy semi-mature trees. Cadwell Lane has little of arboricultural significance.
- d) Public amenity areas: One of the main amenity areas in Hitchin is in Passingham Avenue where there is a large selection of young and semi-mature trees. There are numerous other smaller areas within the housing areas of the town. While no major problems have been noted, periodic maintenance is required to maintain both young and older trees.
- e) Highway trees; The main street tree issues in Hitchin over past years have been where large, older street trees exist. Roads such as The Avenue, Chiltern Road, Hampden and Granville Roads and the upper end of Wymondley Road have been particularly problematic. The issues revolve primarily around nuisance and damage to footways and kerbing. The trees may not be dangerous but a lack of routine maintenance pruning and some trees with large roots growing in footways rather than grass verges, have exacerbated the problems. There are numerous other highway trees where their condition is less than satisfactory because of a lack of maintenance funding. There are also lengths of neglected, overgrown hedgerow (Bedford Road), semi-natural banked areas (Hitchin Hill and Moorhead Hill), and areas of planted trees and scrub (Priory Way). The latter area may benefit from selective or line thinning to improve their vegetation in a dense and safe condition.
- f) Semi-natural sites: Oughtonhead Common has a

number of locations where older trees are present and occasional problems with fallen trees or branch shedding are experienced. Most of the young trees at Purwell Meadows are becoming established, but some of the older trees and larger scrub vegetation are in need of inspection and attention. The large trees alongside the St Ipolytts Brook Rural Walk, and particularly the Poplars, are becoming prone to limb shedding.

- g) Miscellaneous sites: The two main allotment sites with trees are Nightingale Road (located within Ransom Recreation Ground) and Old Hale Way. The former site has a row of pollarded Limes in reasonable condition. Old Hale Way has a number of riverside Poplar trees which are in a poor to fair condition.

Most of the town car parks have a tree presence. Woodside car park has the highest population of trees and while these are considered to be reasonably safe, a more positive approach to their maintenance is required. Trees in other car parks are in a reasonable condition.

Some of the trees at the Hitchin Museum and Library complex are in a poor condition and require attention. Others planted when the Tilehouse Street bypass was constructed are now at a semi-mature age and would benefit from thinning to leave the best specimens room to grow. The trees at the Hitchin Swimming Centre and Archers have received occasional maintenance over past years. Some of the older trees, especially adjacent to Butts Close, are showing evidence of over-maturity and decline

SUMMARY

- a) A gradual loss of trees in Hitchin cemetery can be expected over the next decade or two. A planned programme of removal and replanting may be appropriate here, but the need for grave space is paramount. The current budget allocation for cemetery trees is not sufficient for the long term maintenance of the tree stock - consideration should be given for a growth bid.
- b) The town's recreation grounds generally support a healthy range of tree species of an acceptable age structure. There will be a loss of older trees over future years, and the need for replacement planting monitored.
- c) The maintenance of highway trees is quite poor at present, with only urgent and some essential maintenance being undertaken. Little or no general pruning is being done, which will lead to an increase in complaints and dissatisfied residents.
- d) Areas of mature and over-mature trees within semi-natural sites are poorly managed at present. There is a need to review the maintenance and management of these areas to ensure their future health, safety and conservation.
- e) Periodic inspections and maintenance of trees in car parks is required in areas where tree safety is a high priority. Trees in allotment sites also need attention at appropriate intervals. Some of the trees in the jointly owned Museum and Library (NHDC/HCC) require early attention.

- f) Older trees at Old Hale Way Allotments and the Hitchin Swimming Centre will need attention in the near future.

LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY

(Insert Photo of Broadway Gardens)

Letchworth Garden City is Great Britain's First Garden City. One of its most prominent features are the avenues of large, mature street trees which line many of the roads around the town centre. Since the early 1970s, attempts to replace some of the older tree avenues have been made with varying degrees of success. The two main problems have been a lack of funding continuity, and resistance to mature tree removals by residents. The presence of wide grass verges in many roads lend themselves to planting with street trees, and more success has been achieved in recent years.

The town centre has seen a number of improvement schemes over the past twenty-five years, including the refurbishment of Broadway Gardens (formally Kennedy Gardens) and the Broadway Walk area. Many of the trees in the town centre are young or in early-maturity.

Beyond the town centre, the older housing areas have avenues of street trees of varying ages. The Grange estate, a 1950s development, has a mixture of avenue trees and less formal plantings, while the Jackman's and Lordship estates, 1960s and 1980s respectively, have most of their trees on open grass areas.

The Garden City also has a number of playing fields and parks with primarily informal plantings of trees. New plantings at some of these sites increased the numbers of trees present and should improve species age and diversity.

Letchworth has two cemeteries now. The old cemetery in Icknield Way has a largely established population of mature trees, while the new Wilbury Hills cemetery has only young trees at present.

Norton Common is the prime semi-natural site in the town which has a range of habitat types as well as both formal and informal tree features. There are a number of smaller woods and spinneys dotted around the town, including Murder Lane spinney and Jackmans plantation.

CONDITION APPRAISAL

- a) Cemeteries: The two cemeteries in the town are Letchworth cemetery in Icknield Way and Wilbury Hills cemetery which opened in 2003. In Letchworth cemetery, many of the trees are fully- to over-mature. The general condition of these older trees has improved over recent years following the pollarding of the main tree avenue through the middle of the site, and other pruning works to remove dead wood and reduce nuisance. Some new trees were planted to fill gaps in the aforementioned avenue. The newer Wilbury Hills cemetery contains only young trees at present.
- b) Churchyards: The Council is responsible for trees in two churchyards: St Nicholas's at Norton and St Mary's in Old Letchworth. The trees in both churchyards are in a fair condition with a mix of old and young trees.
- c) Recreation Grounds: Howard Park and Howard Gardens have a significant population of trees which are becoming over-mature and their life expectancy may be less than fifteen years. There are, however, some young and semi-mature trees among the more mature

trees which are growing well. Proposals for both the park and gardens to be refurbished with Heritage Lottery Funding are being formulated, which will improve the situation in the longer term here. Broadway Gardens and Broadway Walk (which is strictly public highway) have been recently refurbished. Both sites now contain a significant number of young trees. The young trees in Broadway Gardens are growing quite well and three mature Oaks at its north end have been retained. The Sweet Gum trees in Broadway Walk are variable in condition and some are obviously struggling to establish. The main Garden City playing fields are Jackmans, Baldock Road, Hillbrow, Wilbury, Grange and Temple Gardens. All these sites have areas of older trees in the form of specimens or groups, tree belts, and a few areas of tall scrub. Most of the mature trees are in an average to good condition but the scrub areas appear more neglected. The Jackmans, Grange and Temple Gardens sites are all planted with young trees and shrubs as part of the "Trees For Life" programme.

- d) Public amenity areas: There are significant areas of public amenity space within some of the housing estates around the outer town despite the transfer of much amenity land around former Council housing areas to North Hertfordshire Homes. The trees in these areas are generally in a fair to good condition. As most of the housing estates with significant amenity areas are less than 50 years of age, the original tree plantings range from semi- to fully-mature in age. The amenity areas in Waysbrook, and Westholm and Eastholm Greens contain a range of tree ages and most trees are in reasonable health, but require some pruning maintenance. The maintenance of a locally prominent Hornbeam Screen in Sollershott East has been complicated by a land ownership issue. Arrangements will need to be made for its regular maintenance to preserve the feature.
- e) Highway trees: The street or verge trees in the Garden City exhibit a wide range in age, condition, size and species. Many of the trees are planted in formal avenues. It is a generalisation, but the normal life span of street trees roughly equates to the human life span, i.e. Between 50 and 100 years. Therefore many of the original avenue plantings are being gradually eroded by tree losses. The condition of the older trees will continue to deteriorate over the next 20 years. A significant amount of new tree planting has taken place since the 1970s some of these younger avenues, which are generally much healthier, should contribute to a continuity of the town's treescape into the foreseeable future. The choice of tree species to plant the new avenues has not been trouble free. In the 1980s and early 1990s, two tree species have given rise to ongoing problems. In Willian Way, the planting of an Ornamental Ash species has led to problems with weak forks and limb shedding which was not foreseen. A similar problem has been experienced with certain clones of Plane tree, e.g. those planted in Pixmore Way (East section), and nursery suppliers now acknowledge the importance of clonal selection at the propagation stage of tree production.
- f) Woods and commons: The prime semi-natural site is Norton Common. In the late 1970s and 1980s, regeneration was encouraged by an annual coppicing of selected areas. This annual maintenance ceased owing to a lack of resources, and there has been no similar periodic maintenance since. A recent range of tree works has been undertaken

concerned primarily with safety requirements over adjacent roads and new cycle paths. The trees in Jackmans plantation and the spinnies in Howard Drive and Radburn Way are in a good condition but concerns by adjacent residents arise occasionally over potential danger and damage.

- g) Miscellaneous sites: Trees have a presence at all the main allotment sites and tree condition is variable.

The town's car parks have few trees. Some of the Lombardy Poplar trees around Hillshott car park were removed some years ago for reasons of safety, and new planting undertaken. The remaining Poplars may require attention within five years.

There is a tree presence at the Council Offices and Town Lodge. These trees appear reasonably healthy.

SUMMARY

- a) The older trees in Letchworth cemetery will require ongoing maintenance to keep them in a safe condition and control nuisance to adjacent residential properties. This will include periodic repollarding of the main avenue of Limes every five to ten years. More replanting may be necessary in the longer term.
- b) At Howard Park and Gardens, short term maintenance will need to include attention to the older trees. The refurbishment of these two sites in the near future may dictate the priorities for medium and long term maintenance. The performance of the young trees in Broadway Gardens and especially Broadway Walk will require close monitoring, especially over the next few years, to ensure their satisfactory establishment. It is anticipated that some soil improvement and replanting will be needed at the latter site. In addition to the general maintenance of young and older trees in playing field sites, attention to neglected scrub areas and overgrown hedgerow is required.
- c) While the general maintenance of highway trees is unsatisfactory in all four towns, the situation in Letchworth has become critical because of its high population of street trees. During the past two financial years, i.e. 2005/06 and 2006/07, budgets have been exhausted in less than six months, leaving dead and potentially hazardous trees unattended. The agency agreement under which the Council currently maintains highway trees is currently under review.
- d) The periodic maintenance of the trees and scrub on Norton Common needs to be considered to regenerate and conserve its character.
- e) The need to maintain or replace older trees in car parks and especially around Hillshott car park should be considered.

ROYSTON

(Insert Photo of Priory Gardens)

Royston has seen much new housing development outside the town centre since the middle of the last century, but it has managed to retain a significant amount of its tree belts and plantations, particularly in the southern half of the town. The building of houses close to large and old trees has caused problems, mainly because of nuisance and the risk of danger which concerns adjacent residents. These concerns are exacerbated by the presence of large, shallow rooting Beech trees growing on a thin topsoil overlying chalk. This situation has resulted in comparatively small wooded areas incurring high maintenance costs. Nevertheless, some of these areas continue to be attractive local amenities and valuable habitats for wildlife.

The various housing estates also contain a mixture of both formal and informal tree features at a range of ages. Many contain older trees of high amenity value where sites have been redeveloped from large old gardens.

The main park in the town is Priory Memorial Gardens, and together with the adjacent St. John's churchyard is a pleasant local amenity containing trees in a variety of species and ages. The Gardens accommodate a memorial Cedar and an Evergreen Oak for the late Tom Potter and Harold Greenfield respectively. An Oak was also donated by the town's twin in Germany, Grossalmerode.

The two cemeteries in Melbourne Road both contain some large prominent trees with associated under storey, most of which is becoming neglected.

CONDITION APPRAISAL

- a) Cemeteries: The two cemeteries, one on the east and one on the west side of Melbourn Road, both support an ageing population of trees. The West cemetery also has lengths of neglected trees and scrub along its north and south boundaries. The trees are generally in a fair to good condition but there are very few young trees present to eventually replace the older trees. The trees in St John's churchyard are in a good condition and exhibit a range of ages. The Yew trees adjacent to the Church have given rise to concerns over shading and dampness but no action has been taken on these matters to date.
- b) Recreation Grounds: Priory Memorial Gardens contains a good range of tree species and ages. The condition of the trees is also generally good. There has been a significant amount of new planting over recent years to replace a number of large, old trees which were removed. There is a risk of the gardens becoming over-planted with trees if this continues. The town has three small to medium-sized playing fields. These are Newmarket Road, Ermine Close and York Way. All have a comparatively young population of trees in a good condition.
- c) Highway trees: Royston does not have a large specimen street tree population but what it has ranges from young through to over-mature. Some of the older trees are nearing the end of their safe life. This especially applies to certain trees in Green Drift and Sun Hill. Some of the belts of trees adjacent to highways and especially along Newmarket Road do require regular inspection and maintenance.

- d) Public amenity areas: Amenity areas of land exist in many of the housing estates around Royston. The largest is in Burns Road where numerous young trees, including those in the "Trees For Life" programme, were planted on this old amenity tip site. The trees on amenity areas are considered to be in an acceptable condition with new and replacement trees planted on areas in Layston Park, King James Way and the Coombelands estate now entering semi-maturity.
- e) Semi-natural sites: The two main sites of arboricultural interest are Greenwalk and Stile Plantations: both plantations are maintained by the Council for the Town Council who provide an annual budget for maintenance. Other sites maintained as semi-natural are Bury plantation, the treed margin area around Layston Park, part of Shrubbery Grove and some of the woody vegetation along Newmarket Road. The nature of these sites means there will always be some variation in tree condition, but they are all currently inspected twice annually to identify any suspect or hazardous trees.
- f) Miscellaneous sites: There are prominent healthy trees in early maturity at the town centre car park but some of the trees east of the Town Hall are showing signs of over-maturity. Semi-mature trees at The Warren car park are growing well.

SUMMARY

- a) The condition of ageing trees in both cemeteries will require monitoring. The trees and scrub margins in the west cemetery require attention but funding has not been available to date.
- b) The safe life expectancy of older street trees is now limited.
- c) The semi-natural belts of trees adjacent to Newmarket Road are satisfactory at present but require a longer term management regime if the character of these areas is to be maintained.
- d) Some of the older trees around the Town Hall and car park have a limited life span.

GREAT ASHBY

(Insert Photo)

Great Ashby is a new area of housing development within North Hertfordshire but on the outskirts of Stevenage. The main arboricultural interest here is the woodlands in and around the developing housing estate area. The woods are a valuable habitat for local flora and fauna as well as providing residents with a pleasant local amenity. The commuted sum of money provided by the developers is helping considerably to deal with safety and nuisance issues as well as providing funds for ongoing management projects.

The Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust currently undertake management in areas of the ancient woodland. In the longer term it is proposed to establish a base for the Countryside Management Service who will work along side the Trust to ensure long term, sustainable management of the woodlands.

The District Park has been planted with numerous young trees, which will enhance the area as they establish and grow.

CONDITION APPRAISAL

- a) The increasing housing development around the ancient woodlands is having a detrimental effect. Some boundary trees have to be felled or extensively reduced for safety and nuisance reasons.
- b) Young newly planted trees have to compete with rabbit and deer damage.
- c) Natural regeneration is continually occurring, but is being hindered by trampling from the increased number of visitors.

SUMMARY

- a) In adopting the woods in Great Ashby in 2003, the Council took control of a number of neglected and poorly managed sites. Pryors Wood was the only exception, which had been managed by The Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. An initial sum of money followed by a commuted sum for maintenance supplied by the developers has allowed safety and essential maintenance works to be undertaken. Situations involving dead, dying and defective trees will continue to arise, and these will need attention where people and property are threatened. Management proposals are being prepared by The Countryside Management Service to provide longer term conservation of the woods. Regular maintenance of the new trees in the District Park will be required to ensure they grow to maturity.

RURAL AREAS

In general, trees on amenity land in the villages are the responsibility of the Parish Council. NHDC do, however, have a small number of public amenity areas in Orchard Road, Broom Grove and Peters Way, and St Martins Road car park.

There are trees on adopted amenity land in Angels Meadow, Ashwell which are in a reasonable condition.

The Council also has a number of tree maintenance responsibilities in Knebworth, including part of St Martin's Churchyard, Knebworth Cemetery.

Historically NHDC maintained the village trees associated with Council Housing developments. Since the transfer to North Hertfordshire Homes, they undertake their own tree maintenance.

There are approximately 3,000 trees located on the highway in village locations. Unlike in the urban areas where NHDC maintain trees on behalf of the County, the County maintains these trees direct. This has resulted in a two-tier approach to tree maintenance on the highway. It would be desirable to have parity of provision for the urban and rural areas.

POLICIES

It is intended that these policies will provide information and guidance, which will help the Council and its Officers to base future decisions on agreed standards and procedures. The policies are divided into three groups. These are General Policies, Site Specific Policies and Tree Specific Policies.

GENERAL POLICIES

CONTRACT AND CONTRACTORS FOR TREE WORKS

The Council will employ specialist arboricultural contractors to undertake tree works. These contractors will operate within the conditions and specifications contained in the Council's Contract for Tree Works, and under the general direction and supervision of its arboricultural officer. The Tree Works Contract will be revised and renewed periodically as required. Specialist contractors will be invited to tender at each renewal, and the selection of one or more suitable contractors will be based on a combination of price and best value. The best value element will include proven performance considerations such as levels of service, skill, experience and competence.

PRIORITISING TREE WORKS

The need and reasons for tree works are many and varied. Therefore, with limited resources in finance, staff and time together with the constraints of weather and seasonable considerations, it is necessary to prioritise tree works. The following system of prioritising works shall be used:

- a) EMERGENCY AND URGENT WORKS - these works are where there is an immediate or imminent risk of danger or damage (emergency works) or where a situation requires action within a few days to avoid more serious danger or damage occurring (urgent works).
- b) PRIORITY ONE WORKS – this priority will normally be applied to dead, dying or hazardous trees where there is a significant risk of potential danger or damage.
- c) PRIORITY TWO WORKS – this priority will be given to essential or important maintenance.
- d) PRIORITY THREE WORKS – this priority will embrace general maintenance operations.
- e) PRIORITY FOUR WORKS – these will normally be low priority and non-essential works

LEGAL POWERS

This policy deals with the main legal powers vested in the Council to deal with dangerous trees and nuisance hedges.

- 1) The Highway Act 1980 empowers the Council under its Agency Agreement with the County Council to require landowners to deal with dangerous trees threatening the safety of users of the public highway.
- 2) The Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 gives powers to the Council to require landowners to render safe dangerous trees threatening persons or property on adjacent land.
- 3) The High Hedges Act (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Part 8) empowers the Council to require landowners to cut and maintain high, evergreen hedges where valid complaints from neighbouring residents are received.

The Council will continue to delegate its powers to the appropriate officers where implementation of the above powers is required.

INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

It will not be possible to inform residents generally in advance of smaller scale tree maintenance works. The Council will, however, endeavour to inform local residents of proposed or imminent tree works where such works are likely to cause concern, disruption or inconvenience. The information will normally be disseminated by letter, but additional or alternative means may be used where appropriate, e.g. by house or telephone calling or press release.

Localised community consultation will generally be undertaken where a genuine choice exists between differing non-essential proposals which will affect the local treescape. Views and preferences will be sought from residents and other interested parties consulted or informed as necessary. The results of the consultation will be considered, along with other factors affecting the proposed works in order to achieve, as far as practicable, the most satisfactory solution or course of action.

ALLEGATIONS OF TREE-RELATED DAMAGE OR INJURY

Where it is alleged that a Council tree is implicated in damage to property, with or without an accompanying claim for compensation, the Council will investigate the allegation and, if necessary, ask the property owner or their insurer for evidence in support of their claim. Subject to the circumstances and strength of evidence, the Council/its insurers may employ its own/external expertise to assess the extent and cause of the damage and collect evidence. The Council may decide at this point to take non-prejudicial action to reduce the risk of further damage and/or invite the property owner to substantiate any losses for consideration by the Council/its insurers. The Council/its insurers will refute any claim if the evidence produced fails to substantiate the allegation.

The Council will not pay for any preliminary survey or excavation costs incurred by a potential claimant, but these may be included in any final settlement if the claim is successful. Claims will be passed to the Council's insurer for assessment and settlement, but subject to the deduction of the policy excess which is paid by the Council.

Claims for alleged personal injury caused by trees owned or managed by the Council are relatively uncommon. Where such claims are made, the Council will follow a similar procedure to claims for damage. Where a serious injury has occurred, the Council will act with appropriate urgency to minimise any contriving risk of danger to people.

LIMITED OR SEASONAL NUISANCE

The presence of trees near dwellings, especially in urban areas, can cause a limited or seasonal nuisance leading to complaints from residents. Examples include the shedding of leaves, seeds, fruit, petals and other debris, honeydew secreted by aphids, bird droppings, squirrel activity, shading of sun or daylight, obstruction of views, minor rubbing of telephone lines, and interference with television and satellite entertainment.

The Council does not consider these nuisances to be sufficiently serious to warrant high priority action except in special circumstances, e.g. an emergency call line for a disabled person. Requests to alleviate such nuisances will, therefore, generally be given low priority status and only minimal action taken to avoid spoiling the appearance of the tree.

PRIVATELY OWNED TREES

The Council will not generally supply detailed advice or guidance on the maintenance or management of private trees. Instead, a list of local tree contractors and consultants of whom the Council has some knowledge of their competence will be sent to the person requesting assistance. The standardised information will mention that checks need to be made for legal protection. Officers may give some general verbal guidance or supply written guidance through the planning system where trees are protected or of some public value.

The Council will not undertake works to privately owned trees. In exceptional circumstances, e.g. where there is an immediate or obvious risk of danger and the tree's owner cannot be traced or is not in a position to organise tree works, the Council may use its tree contractor to rectify the situation and recover any costs from the tree owner subsequently.

SPONSORED TREE WORKS

Third parties will be allowed to sponsor the costs of tree works in appropriate circumstances. Offers of sponsorship usually relate to tree planting but occasionally offers to pay for pruning or felling are made.

All trees planted as a result of sponsorship will be treated as normal Council trees post planting and the Council will not guarantee to replace the tree if it is damaged or fails to establish. No plaques will be allowed.

The Council will not normally allow third parties to organise or carry out tree works on its land. Where an exception is made, the Council will require the sponsor to employ one of the Council's own tree contractors to execute the works in accordance with the Council's contract conditions.

CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION (CCTV)

The increased use of CCTV for surveillance purposes has led to annual requests for pruning where tree foliage obstructs the view of cameras. It is hoped that those responsible for siting such cameras will take account of the presence of trees and their effect on camera vision to minimise problems. However, some conflict is inevitable.

The Council will carry out the pruning of trees to maintain and improve the vision of CCTV cameras in liaison with the CCTV operatives. This pruning will generally aim to maintain the aesthetic appearance of the trees. Excessive pruning or tree removal shall only be considered where serious circumstances justify such action.

CRIMINAL DAMAGE

Acts of criminal damage includes unauthorised attempts by third parties to fell or destroy mature trees and acts of vandalism which can result in the loss of semi-mature or young trees.

Where trees are damaged or lost as a result of criminal acts, the Council's Tree and Enforcement Officers will initially investigate the situation and involve the police if necessary. Where sufficient evidence can be obtained to identify the offenders, the Council may consider civil proceedings or support any action the police deem appropriate.

In deciding the costs of criminal damage, the Council will include:

- a) The cost of all corrective, repair and reinstatement works.
- b) The cost of any replacement planting.
- c) The estimated loss of any amenity value (in pounds sterling) based on the Haliwell format for assessing such costs.

FLY POSTING

The Council will not allow posters of any kind to be fixed to its trees. Any illegal fly posters will be removed or defaced and reported to the Council's Planning Enforcement Section for action if required.

AGE CLASS AND MONOCULTURES

Tree populations need to contain a range of age groups to provide a continuity of trees and perpetuate the particular features or character of an area. There also needs to be a mixture of different species of trees to reduce the effect of pests and diseases. This is especially important where particular tree species or families are susceptible to serious problems in this respect.

The Council will manage its trees to ensure that there is an uneven age structure, i.e. a mixture of young, semi-mature, mature and over-mature trees relevant to the nature of the site and safety considerations. Similarly, a range of tree species shall be present in any given area and monocultures avoided.

The policy above must not conflict with features such as tree avenues, where uniform rows of trees of a similar age and the same species are needed for the desired effect. Different avenues can, however, be at different ages and species to provide the required diversity.

WILDLIFE

All proposed arboricultural works will take account of their effect on the local flora and fauna. Wildlife is protected statutorily by The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This means that many tree work operations, especially where the works are undertaken at semi-natural sites and to hedgerows, would need to be undertaken during the appropriate season. There are exemptions, however, where the works have health and safety implications.

The nature and extent of the works may also affect the value and quality of the habitat for wildlife. All such works shall aim at conserving and improving the habitat for wildlife wherever practicable.

COMMON IVY

Common Ivy is an indigenous evergreen climbing plant which, in its natural environment, uses trees as a means of support to gain increased exposure to light and air. Ivy provides cover and food for wildlife and often contributes to the character of woodlands and similar habitats. It is not a parasite and healthy trees will usually tolerate and control its spread. It is generally only when an ageing tree starts to decline, i.e. its vigour decreases and its canopy thins, that Ivy may take advantage of the situation by growing into its crown and in some circumstances, engulf the whole tree and hasten its demise. This is a natural process but it is often perceived that the Ivy is responsible for strangling and killing healthy trees.

General observations over the past few years support the perception of

some that the presence and growth of Ivy is on the increase but as far as is known, no scientific research has been carried out to support this perception. The control of Ivy in woodlands and commons by cutting and killing would prove an expensive and probably ill-founded conservation exercise.

The Council's general policy on Ivy shall be that measures to kill or control its growth will normally only be taken where it threatens important trees, maybe obscuring defects, or for other reasons of safety or nuisance. Ivy will not normally be controlled at semi-natural sites.

OVERGROWN HEDGES

Hedges require regular cutting to maintain their size and appearance, to keep them safe, and retain their screening, barrier or partitioning function.

Hedges which have become unkempt or overgrown will be reinstated by tree contractors to the required size to allow regular maintenance to be recommenced by the grounds maintenance contractor. Hedges will normally need to be three metres or less in height to be maintained by grounds maintenance operatives.

ADOPTION OF LAND

Where the Council adopts or inherits new land, the following procedures shall apply:

- a) The area to be adopted will be inspected by a tree officer to assess the condition of its arboricultural features and the potential future maintenance requirement. This should include identifying any tree on land which appears to be on 'no man's land' to reduce future problems over tree ownership.
- b) The Council will agree with the landowner, usually a developer, the content of any tree works to bring the area to a standard acceptable to the Council for adoption. and to agree arrangements and costs for the works to be completed.
- c) Require the landowner to deposit an appropriate commuted sum with the Council to cover 10 years maintenance of the area. The commuted sum shall equate to the following standard estimates (stated at 2006 prices) but subject to any special factors or considerations.

Single payments:

- (i) Large or over-mature trees - £500.00 per tree.
- (ii) Medium-sized trees - £300.00 per tree.
- (iii) Small or young trees - £150.00 per tree.

Payments per year:

- (iv) Mature or neglected woodlands - £ 550.00 per hectare.
- (v) Young woodland or common - £250.00 per hectare.

- d) The Council will revoke any Tree Preservation

Orders or Planning Conditions relating to the trees to be adopted, as they will become within the occupation of the Local Planning Authority and therefore will be exempt from such protection. This will also avoid unnecessary internal bureaucracy. The existence and effect of any other covenants or conditions relating to the trees should be considered as part of the adoption process.

TREES AND DEVELOPMENT

This policy addresses only those tree related issues which may have a bearing on the future maintenance responsibilities of the Council. These general policies are:

- 1) All trees identified for retention on development sites shall be properly surveyed and protected in accordance with British Standard BS5837: 2005: Building in Relation to Construction - Recommendations.
- 2) The Council, through its Planning Services, shall seek agreement with the developers under Section 106 Agreements to secure, where appropriate, provision for new tree planting or works to maintain or conserve important trees and other arboricultural features. All such works must be carried out in accordance with the Council's Contract for Tree Works and monitored by the Council's arboricultural or landscaping staff.

SITE SPECIFIC POLICIES

The Council is responsible for a range of sites each with its particular nature or character. These sites may be owned by the Council, managed under an agency agreement or after adoption or by agreement with the site owner. The following general policies will be applied to the various categories of sites where trees are present.

RECREATION GROUNDS

The management of trees in parks and playing fields must take account of the character and usage of the site. While trees often make a valuable contribution to such sites, they must be in balance with other features and facilities such as flower beds, shrub borders, open grass, sports and play areas, and buildings. Over-planting with trees will be avoided.

Where space permits, trees will generally be allowed to grow naturally with minimum maintenance, but some features will require periodic maintenance, e.g. pollarded screens. Additional inspections and maintenance will be needed for trees near play areas.

Provision will be made for the gradual replacement of older trees to ensure the presence of mature trees in the future.

CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS

Trees can play an important role in cemeteries and churchyards, adding to their character and tranquillity. Trees do, however, occupy space which otherwise might be used for burials, and this fact must be considered

when replanting is undertaken in cemeteries. Trees can also cause damage to graves by root action or falling branches, etc.

The management of trees in cemeteries and churchyards shall aim to maintain a reasonably safe and healthy population, with provision for tree removal and replacement as required. Many sites contain a combination of both informal and formal tree features which must be accommodated within the maintenance regime.

HOUSING ESTATES

Most trees in modern housing estates are planted informally on grass amenity areas. Older estates may have both large and small trees on highway verges with only a few trees on amenity land (see Highway Trees below).

The trees will generally be managed as for trees in parks, including additional maintenance where they are near buildings or play areas.

HIGHWAY TREES

The management of highway trees is concerned with two prime criteria. These are the maintenance of safety and provision of amenity. Trees may also perform other secondary functions of varying importance, including the reduction of noise and air pollution, traffic calming, physical barriers, screening, shade and shelter.

The need for highway trees to be maintained in a safe condition is very important. The trees should be inspected periodically to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that they are in a healthy condition, are free from defects which might cause them to be prone to wind blow or branch shedding. They should not obstruct users of the highway or obscure sight lines, traffic signals, street lights or road signage.

Verge trees also have amenity value, often adding significantly to the character of a particular road or town. The size and form of trees as well as their flowers, fruit, foliage and bark may all contribute to their amenity value.

In accordance with Central Government's "Path Finder" directive, NHDC will work in partnership with the County Council to find sustainable ways to manage and maintain the highway trees in a safe and healthy condition.

SEMI- NATURAL SITES

The trees at semi-natural sites may range from dense woodland through more sparsely treed areas with groups or single specimen trees to open common with a few scrubby or hedgerow trees. The trees and other woody vegetation at these sites shall be managed to conserve and enhance the value of the site which can include amenity, wildlife habitat and the management of public access. Where an agreed management plan exists, maintenance works should comply with or compliment the plan's aims.

MISCELLANEOUS SITES

These include trees in car parks, around public buildings and at allotment sites.

Trees in car parks and around public buildings need to be in a safe and healthy condition and maintained similarly to trees along side highways or near play areas.

Trees at allotment sites may be given lower priority, except where there is an obvious risk of danger to people or adjacent property. Trees which unreasonably affect the ability of allotment holders to cultivate their plots will also require attention.

TREE SPECIFIC POLICIES

TREE INSPECTIONS

The Council will undertake periodic inspections of all trees and woodlands under its control. These inspections shall be carried out between two- and five-year intervals, subject to available resources, location, age and condition of the trees, but may be shorter or longer in some circumstances. Subject to available funding from the County Council, inspections of highway trees will take place at three-yearly intervals. Inspection intervals will, however, inevitably depend on available resources. A record of each inspection will be kept on the Council's computerised tree management database, including details of any action required and its works priority rating.

TREE FELLING AND REMOVAL

Trees will only be felled in one or more of the following circumstances:

- a) The tree is dead, dying, damaged, diseased or dangerous, and its removal is the safest or the most prudent course of action.
- b) The tree is causing, or there is a significant risk of it causing, unacceptable damage to the surrounding area or an adjacent structure.
- c) Where the tree is being felled in conjunction with a tree replacement scheme or as part of a thinning exercise to improve the growth of other adjacent trees.
- d) Where the tree is unsuitable for its location because of its size, shape or form, or is causing an unacceptable nuisance to adjacent residents or its surroundings.
- e) Where the tree occupies the space required for an approved structure or construction and there is no satisfactory alternative to felling.
- f) There may occasionally be special or exceptional circumstances that warrant the removal of a tree.

Tree stumps will normally be removed wherever practicable for safety reasons and also to control disease, prevent unwanted regrowth and to allow proper reinstatement and replanting if required. Stumps may be left in situ, especially at semi-natural sites where regrowth is encouraged or wood is left to decay and provide a wild life habitat.

TREE PRUNING

Trees will normally be pruned for one or more of the following reasons:

- a) Where part of tree is dead, dying, damaged, diseased or dangerous, to rectify the defect and maintain safety.
- b) To remove or alleviate an unreasonable source of nuisance or potential damage to people or property.
- c) To remove obstructing branches or foliage for safety reasons, clear over ground services or improve the vision of CCTV cameras,
- d) To encourage the formation of a safe and balanced tree or control its overall size.
- e) To prune or sever roots to remove or reduce the risk of existing or future damage. This may include entering private land, with the owner's consent, to deal with roots originating from a Council maintained tree.

TREE REPLACEMENT

The two main modes of tree replacement undertaken by the Council are tree planting and natural regeneration.

Tree planting will be the prime form of replacing trees in both formal and informal treescapes including parks and playing fields, highway verges, cemeteries and churchyards, and housing estates. New tree planting may be necessary on sites which are being improved, developed or adopted by the Council. Where tree planting is being considered, factors such as the aims and purpose of the planting, timescale and scope, tree species, size and siting, and need for protection, aftercare and long-term maintenance implications must all be considered. Where the nature of the planting site allows, indigenous plant species and their varieties will generally take preference over exotic species. Great Britain does, however, have a rich and diverse population of exotic species and these will often prove more suitable for specific sites especially where size, habitat and ornamental value are prime considerations.

The replanting of tree rows or avenues has proved to be especially contentious over past years and policy is aimed to overcome historic problems.

- a) Allow a significant number of gaps to appear in the row or avenue.
- b) Consult third parties, e.g. residents, statutory undertakers, highway authority, on replanting proposals

- c) Prepare a replanting plan for the whole feature and commence replanting in the gaps.
- d) Continue planting as older trees are removed creating additional gaps.

Natural regeneration will be favoured at semi-natural sites such as woods, commons, hedgerows and locations where replanting would be difficult to establish and/or which may be dangerous or difficult to access, e.g. steep banks. Sites where natural regeneration is deemed appropriate will be managed to encourage such regeneration by selective felling, thinning and protection as required.

PROGRAMME FOR MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

	Proposed Action	Target Dates
1	Finalise negotiations with County Council to agree sustainable method of maintaining highway trees.	Oct 2007
2	Finalise negotiations to an expansion of the Highway Agency Agreement to include the rural area for tree maintenance.	Oct 2007
3	Prepare new contract for tree works and letting programme for contract to commence on 1 st April 2008.	Dec 2007
4	Adoption of tree strategy by NHDC	Dec 2007
5	Provide resources to undertake programme of maintenance actions	March 2008
6	Commence recording details for Performance Indicators.	April 2008
7	Initiate works recording and administration aspects of Arbortrack Tree Management System.	April 2008
8	Complete all tree survey inspections in all villages	May 2008
9	Complete all tree survey inspections in the four towns.	Aug 2008

PROGRAMME FOR MAINTENANCE ACTIONS

	Proposed Action	Target Dates
1	Introduce a three year cyclical inspection and maintenance regime by dividing the district into three areas, e.g. 1 Baldock, Royston and rural area, 2 Hitchin, 3 Letchworth Garden City.	April 2008
2	Continue existing arrangements to deal with emergency and urgent tree works using nominated contractors.	Ongoing
3	Complete outstanding priority and essential tree maintenance works from 2007/2008 in all site categories.	May 2008
4	Commence programme of works on priority 1 and 2 jobs identified from the Arbortrack surveys and inspections, and other sources as necessary. Also undertake priority 3 works where resources permit, including young tree maintenance.	June 2008
5	Identify sites for new or replacement planting to provide a continuity of trees for the future.	Ongoing

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The figures for performance indicators will be obtained from official orders and computer data. The figures are designed to give a reasonably accurate and meaningful indication of performance. Figures will generally relate to specific months of the year but it is the total annual figures, i.e. April to March inclusive, which provide a true indication of performance.

The figures used for indicators will be as follows:

- a) Emergency and Urgent Works – these figures cover all emergency and urgent works, i.e. jobs which require prompt action and generally fall outside programmed or planned maintenance. The figures cover a range of works from small minor jobs to the felling and clearance of large dangerous or fallen trees. In theory, an increase in planned or pro-active maintenance should produce a reduction in the number of emergency and urgent works.

Initial Target: To achieve a 2% year on year reduction in the number of emergency and urgent tree jobs.

- b) Tree felling and planting figures – the figures for felling relate to established trees growing as single specimens or in groups or avenues. Similarly, the planting figures only include nursery standard trees planted as specimens or in groups or avenues. The figures do not include trees in woodlands or other semi-natural sites where thinning and natural regeneration or whip-planting is the normal mode of tree replacement. Also excluded are trees planted to replace unestablished young trees which have died or been destroyed. These exclusions are designed to avoid distortion of the figures which would give a false indication of performance. Tree felling is carried out all year round, but planting is generally undertaken between the months of November to March.

Target: To plant annually one new tree for every tree lost or felled (but not necessarily at the same location or site).

APPENDIX A

SEMI-NATURAL SITES WITH MANAGEMENT PLANS

The following sites have existing management plans or plans which are being prepared or proposed.

Generally, these plans are prepared by The Countryside Management Service (CMS) in liaison with the Council.

LIST OF SITES AND STATUS

Broadway Gardens, Broadway, Letchworth Garden City - Management Plan.

Burymead Springs, Cadwell Lane, Hitchin – Management plan in preparation.

Butts Close, Fish Ponds Road, Hitchin - Greenspace Action Plan – Draft awaiting comments/approval.

Dell, Walsworth Road, Hitchin - Management Plan – current.

Great Ashby Woodlands - Greenspace Action Plan – Draft with NHDC.

Ivel Springs, Great North Road, Baldock - LNR – Greenspace Action Plan at Draft stage.

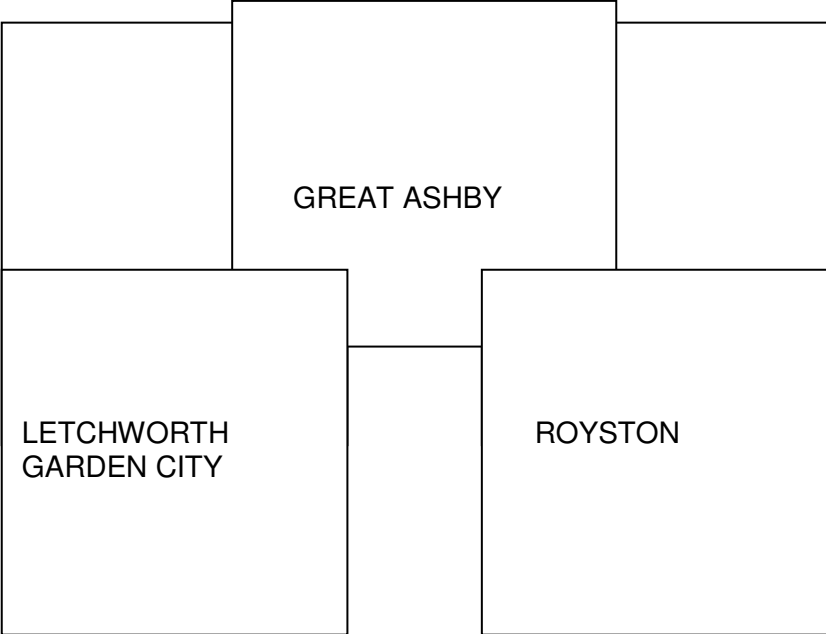
Norton Common, Icknield Way, Letchworth - LNR – Greenspace Action Plan current.

Oughtonhead Common, Burford Way, Hitchin - LNR Common Management Plan - current (review 2007 to Greenspace Action Plan) .

Purwell Meadows, Cambridge Road, Hitchin - LNR – Scrub plan current.

Weston Hills, Chiltern Road, Baldock - Candidate LNR – Plan in preparation.

N.B. – LNR = Local Nature Reserve.



TITLE OF REPORT: SERVICE and FINANCIAL PLANNING 2008-2013 – EFFICIENCIES and INVESTMENTS 2008/09**REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND REGULATORY SERVICES****1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 To present to Committee the list of efficiency and investment items submitted by officers for 2008/09 to 2012/13 that were presented to Cabinet on the 16th October and then forwarded for consultation to Council Members at the Budget Workshops held on 30th October and 1st November.
- 1.2 To seek the Committee's views on the provisional efficiency and investment items as part of the consultation process on Service and Financial Planning for 2008/09 onwards.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key decision that was first notified to the public in the Forward Plan on the 1st July 2007.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the Cabinet meeting on 16th October, Members were informed that a minimum 2008/09 efficiency target of £651K was required. The budget strategy reported to Cabinet in June identified a target of £802.5K, however the latest target incorporates changes to General Fund spend as identified as part of the quarterly budget monitoring process. The target includes an allowance of £250K for investment proposals and a Council tax level of 4.9%.
- 3.2 It was explained to Cabinet that the figures produced are based on the best available information and may be subject to further change before the final budget is set in February 2007.
- 3.3 The efficiency and investment proposals are vetted and sensitivity testing carried out before Challenge Board agree in consultation with the Finance Portfolio holder, the options to be presented to Cabinet and to Members at the Member workshops.
- 3.4 At the Cabinet meeting Members rejected SG32 increasing parking income (£141k) and this option is no longer an item for consideration for the 2008/09 Service & Financial Planning Process.

3.5 Key dates for the remainder of the Service and Financial Planning process are:-

- Budget workshops to seek Member views on the officer proposals – 30th October and 1st November 2007
- October and November consultation with Area Committees, LSP, Business groups etc.
- 18 December 2007 Cabinet receive comments from workshops and Area Committees, partners etc. and consider the draft budget.
29 January 2008 – Cabinet recommend final budget.

4. FINANCIAL STRATEGY

4.1 The Council's financial management strategy was presented to Cabinet on the 26th June and the accompanying report outlined the following:

- the financial background to the service and financial planning process for the period 2008 to 2013.
- the known funding pressures which the Council will face in that period and the Council's medium term financial forecast.
- the strategy for dealing with any funding gap.

4.2 In identifying the likely Council Tax requirement, the report focussed on the pressures on expenditure and assumed a neutral position with regard to income. The strategy was based on the following assumptions:

- Year on year spend is adjusted to take account of cyclical variations in expenditure
- Investment income falls in accordance with the cash flow/investment projections to take account of the reducing balance of capital receipts and assumptions regarding interest rates.
- Assumed average base rate of 5.25% for 2008/09 and subsequent years.
- Any approved one-off growth or carry-forward budgets for 2007/08 have been removed from the base figures in subsequent years.
- Government support will increase in real cash terms year on year by 1%.
- Contract inflation in accordance with individual contractual terms.
- Pay inflation at 2.5%
- Pay increments due in 2008/09
- General inflation of 3.5% on expenditure and 4.9% on fees and charges income
- Use of the HRA earmarked reserve will happen on a phased basis to prevent erratic movements in Council Tax increase.
- The Council tax base figure will rise by 1% per annum.
- The minimum General Fund balance should be 5% of net expenditure plus an allowance for identified risks.
- Allowance for Statutory Growth of £250k per annum
- Any growth in Area Committee budgets to reflect additional responsibilities will be offset by reductions in Directorate budgets.
- Vacancy control target set at 3% of salary budget to yield in the region of £440k towards a savings target.

4.3 The financial management strategy is an integral part of the Service & Financial Planning process, providing the financial analysis to complement the objectives in the Corporate Plan.

- 4.4 The medium term financial strategy recommended a continuation of a phased use of balances over this and the next three years to bring the amount held in balances and reserves back to the 5% of net General Fund expenditure plus an allowance of £400k for known risks.
- 4.5 Within the financial management strategy report the efficiency target required for 2008/09, that maintained the council tax increase and council reserves within the parameters set in the financial strategy was £802.5K.

5. ISSUES

Changes to the Medium Term Financial Forecast

- 5.1 Since the meeting in June, the base budget figures have been reviewed in the light of known changes and Appendix 1 presents the position at September 2006. The 2007/08 and onwards base figures includes the items agreed as on-going growth when setting the current year's budget and known changes following the closure of 2006/07 accounts and the 1st quarter budget monitoring review. Also included are a number of projected changes to the General Fund spend which will be reported as part of the 2nd quarter budget monitoring review in December. Any further changes to the anticipated 2007/08 outturn position will be reported at the December Cabinet meeting when the draft budget recommendations will be made.
- 5.2 As well as the base figures, the parameters contained with the financial management strategy have been reviewed and the revised position is also summarised in Appendix 1, the following changes have been made to the forecast:
- Assumed average base rate of 5.75% to June 2007 and 6.00% November to January and thereafter 5.75% for the remainder of the financial year and 5.50% in subsequent years.
 - A reassessment of the amount of investment interest projected for 2008/09 onwards, based on lower cash balances to invest. The investment interest projected for 2008/09 is anticipated to be lower by £169K.
 - Government Support projected at 0% increase for 2008/09 onwards
 - Contract inflation at an average of 3.55%
 - General inflation of 4.1% (RPI for August) for fees and charges income and not based on the previous years Council Tax of 4.9%.
 - The risks value included within the 2008/09 General Fund balance have been increased to £534K from £400K to account for efficiency proposals identified which may be delayed/deleted.
 - Included in this staff inflation is the higher employer pension contribution required to reduce the estimated pension fund deficit. The contribution is on a stepped basis starting at £202K in 2008/09 and rising to £384K in 2010/11 and reducing thereafter to a contribution of 26.4% for the next 14 years based on the 2004 valuation plus an allowance of 1% for the anticipated effect of the 2007 valuation.
- 5.3 The revised financial management strategy requires a minimum £651K of efficiencies to be approved, the total efficiencies identified in Appendix 2 & 3 are £638K, (which excludes SG32-increase in parking income). Members should be aware of the following issues:

- The CSR07 high level figures were released on 9th October, the headline figures indicate a 1% increase in real terms. However, it is unclear how the grant will be allocated with the complex system of 'floors' and 'damping'. The Council's allocation will not be known until December 2007.
- Even if all the efficiency options are taken there is a shortfall of £13K, further efficiencies will need to be found, or the 2009/10 efficiencies target of £550K would need to be increased. All the efficiency options in Appendix 2 & 3 are included in the 2009/10 base budget.
- The estimated increase of 1% for pension increases for the 2007 valuation is an estimate only and is described as an average across the District. As one of the higher percentage contributors to the scheme in Hertfordshire, there is every likelihood that the percentage required from 2009/10 onwards may be significantly higher than 1%.
- The figures produced are based on the best available information and may be subject to further change before the final budget is set in February 2008. There are, for instance, a number of items which are still subject to negotiation such as Concessionary Fares.
- There may be further changes to the 2007/08 General Fund budget in the 2nd quarter monitoring report to the December Cabinet.
- There may be an increase in refuse tipping costs as the Council has just been notified that the Holwell and the Ugley site tips will be closed in 2009 which may result in additional costs for tipping refuse at a site out of the district.

Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07)

5.4 The CSR07 was announced in Parliament by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the 9th October 2007. As mentioned in paragraph 3.3 it is unclear how the grant will be allocated and the Council's allocation will not be known until December 2007. However, the headline figures for Local Government indicated that:

- The 1% real terms funding increase for councils in total, however it is unclear whether the headline figures quoted included previous ring fenced grants or how much relates to £677Million for PFI projects. Furthermore, the 1% increase also includes £212Million for the national concessionary fares scheme.
- £150m to support local authorities in delivering efficiency savings to realise £4.9billion cashable efficiencies by 2010/11.
- Introduction of option for Local Authorities to raise business rate supplements to improve economic growth.
- £500 million of incentives over the three year period via the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant to drive improvements in housing supply and ensure that by 2011 Local Planning Authorities have the necessary development plan documents in place to support housing delivery.

Investment and Efficiency Proposals

- 5.5 Table 1 gives a summary of the investment and efficiency proposals by year detailed in Appendices 2 to 5.

Table 1 Summary of Investment & Efficiency Proposals 2008/09

	2008/09 £'000	2009/10 £'000	2010/11 £'000	2011/12 £'000	2012/13 £'000
Revenue Investment Proposals:					
Funded from General Fund	231.6	235.1	235.1	227.9	227.9
Funded from IT Reserve	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
Total Investment Proposals	<u>239.6</u>	<u>243.1</u>	<u>243.1</u>	<u>235.9</u>	<u>235.9</u>
Capital Investment Proposals:					
Funded from Capital Receipts	335.2	141.0	133.0	100.0	100.0
Funded from IT Reserve	132.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Capital Investment Proposals	<u>467.20</u>	<u>141.0</u>	<u>133.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>100.0</u>
Efficiency Proposals:					
Challenge Board	191.9	139.6	134.6	129.6	129.6
Salary Related	255.7	277.7	266.0	266.0	266.0
Service Related	103.7	112.9	120.4	112.9	120.4
Contributions to Others	54.4	54.4	54.4	54.4	54.4
Income Increases	32.0	32.0	32.0	32.0	32.0
Total Efficiency & Income Proposals	<u>637.7</u>	<u>616.6</u>	<u>607.4</u>	<u>594.9</u>	<u>602.4</u>

Investment proposals

- 5.6 Directorates have been asked to put forward investment items which will assist in meeting the vision to make North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper by achieving its strategic objectives: -
- Promoting sustainable development of the district to ensure we deliver adequate affordable housing, protect the environment and conserve the heritage of our historic settlements.
 - Encouraging responsible citizenship and creating safe communities with less crime and less fear of crime.
 - Promoting first class leisure and cultural facilities to contribute to healthy living for all of our citizens.
 - Targeting resources at areas of disadvantage in the district to reduce social exclusion and improve the quality of life for everyone.
 - Creating opportunity for all by promoting sustainable local economic development.
 - Ensuring that we listen to our citizens and deliver responsive, high quality, value for money, customer focussed services.
- 5.7 Members will recall that an allowance of £250K for investment is included in the MTFS. Revenue investment proposals totalling £231.6K (excluding IT bids funded via IT reserve), are included at Appendix 4 and Capital investment proposals of £335.2K (excluding IT bids funded via IT reserve), are included in Appendix 5. Table 2 shows the investment proposals for 2008/09 analysed over the 6 strategic objectives:

Table 2-Investment Proposals over Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Revenue £'000	Capital £'000
Sustainable Communities	134.3	100.0
Safer Communities	33.3	103.2
Satisfied Communities	0.0	0.0
Prosperous Communities	0.0	0.0
Healthier Communities	0.0	132.0
Equal Communities	64.0	0.0
	<u>231.6</u>	<u>335.2</u>
Add:		
IT initiatives subject to business case	8.0	132.0
Total Strategic Investments Proposals	<u>239.6</u>	<u>467.2</u>

Efficiencies and Income Proposals

- 5.8 Appendix 2 lists the efficiencies proposals totalling £605.7K and Appendix 3 lists the income increase options totalling £32K giving total efficiency proposals of £637.7K. As with Investment proposals, efficiencies proposals are identified over the 6 strategic objectives and table 3 shows each efficiency and income option by strategic objective:

Table 3-Efficiencies and Income Proposals over Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objectives	Efficiencies £'000	Income £'000	Total £'000
Sustainable Communities	66.8	21.0	87.8
Safer Communities	6.0	0.0	6.0
Satisfied Communities	337.2	11.0	348.2
Prosperous Communities	0.0	0.0	0.0
Healthier Communities	3.7	0.0	3.7
Equal Communities	0.0	0.0	0.0
	<u>413.7</u>	<u>32.0</u>	<u>445.7</u>
Add:			
Challenge Board Efficiencies	<u>192.0</u>	<u>0.0</u>	<u>192.0</u>
Total Efficiencies and Income Proposals	<u>605.7</u>	<u>32.0</u>	<u>637.7</u>

- 5.9 Included within the efficiency proposals are £256K relating to staffing budgets. Some of the posts are currently vacant, however where the proposal relates to staff in post, every effort is being made to redeploy them. NHDC has continued to seek staffing efficiencies through shared services with other authorities, such as for shared auditor and procurement officer posts and services such as Meals on Wheels and CCTV.
- 5.10 Budget scrutiny efficiencies linked to the review of income and expenditure budgets which varied from the original budget and arising from more efficient ways of delivering services have produced savings of £191.5K. These include shared services and partnership work savings of £14K relating to a reduction in CCTV running costs.

Summary of Investment and Efficiency Proposals

- 5.11 Capital and revenue Investment proposals will add £370.8K to the Council's top 3 strategic priorities (Sustainable, Safer and Satisfied), with £196K relating to Healthier and Equal priorities.
- 5.12 The majority of efficiency and income proposals relate to the Council's top 3 priorities, however this is because officers are constantly looking for efficiencies across the Council's budgets and the options put forward aim to reduce service cost without impacting on service outputs, i.e. value for money; a prime objective of the strategic priority of satisfied communities.

Scoring System for Efficiencies and Investment Proposals

- 5.13 In preparing these proposals, officers have sought to ensure that these strategic priorities are driving the budget process. Both efficiencies and investment proposals are scored as the Service and Financial Planning Process provides a cyclical framework by which the Council determines its priorities and aligns both resources and finances to achieve these, in line with our short, medium and long term commitments determined in the Corporate Plan. To assist in the prioritisation process the scoring system has been developed further for 2008/09.
- 5.14 The Council's Capital Strategy requires that projects submitted by services be classified against ten key factors, as outlined in table 4 below. The scoring has been applied to all considerations of both revenue and capital investment in order to determine the risk and effect of growth on a service.

Table 4 – Capital & Revenue Investment Key Factors

	Capital Investment	Revenue Investment	Points Score
1	Strategic/Corporate objectives* top 3 Lower priority 3	Strategic/Corporate objectives* top 3 Lower priority 3	4 2
2	Statutory pressures	Statutory pressures	4
3	Health & Safety	Health & Safety	5
4	Political Direction	Political Direction	4
5	Contractually inescapable	Contractually inescapable	5
6	Adverse impact on service	Risk Management	4
7	Consultation/Opinion Poll survey	Consultation/Opinion Poll survey	2
8	Condition survey	Condition survey	1
9	Best Value FSR & Service review	Best Value FSR & Service review	3
10	Invest to save/VfM	Invest to save/VfM	3

* Strategic/corporate objectives include the priorities identified in the North Hertfordshire District Council Corporate Plan in response to items raised via earlier work on Area Visioning and the approved North Herts Community Strategy. For investment proposals (capital & revenue) the three higher ranked objectives of Safer, Sustainable and Satisfied score 4, while the three lower ranked objectives of Equal, Healthier and Prosperous score 2.

- 5.15 In applying this methodology, critical analysis has taken place to ensure that where reference is made to a strategic objective that is recorded, but the project itself has only received a strategic/corporate objective score of four points where there is specific reference within the Corporate Plan. This was considered to provide a more robust determination of priority.
- 5.16 Similarly, if an objective appears in the Corporate Plan it was taken to reflect prior political direction and hence scored only the once, whereas projects and services lying outside the Plan but which have clear political interest have received four points in recognition. There will also need to be additional work following the completion of the S&FP process to integrate any objectives supported for efficiencies and investment proposals into the next edition of the Corporate Plan.
- 5.17 Efficiencies were scored in an similar manner, taking account of the negative impact of removal from the Corporate Plan, adverse effect on service and evidence of public opinion in the form of an existing survey. This will assist in the establishment of ranking in terms of overall impact as decisions are taken. Scoring for efficiencies has been applied against seven key factors, as outlined in table 5 below:

Table 5 –Revenue Efficiency Savings Key Factors

	Revenue Efficiencies	Points Score
1	Strategic/Corporate objectives* top 3	2
	Lower priority 3	4
2	Political Direction	4
3	Risk Management	4
4	Consultation/Opinion Poll survey	2
5	Condition survey	1
6	Best Value FSR & Service review	3
7	Invest to save/VfM	3

* Strategic/corporate objectives include the priorities identified in the North Hertfordshire District Council Corporate Plan in response to items raised via earlier work on Area Visioning and the approved North Herts Community Strategy. For revenue savings the three higher ranked objectives of Safer, Sustainable and Satisfied score 2, while the three lower ranked objectives of Equal, Healthier and Prosperous score 4.

- 5.18 Following the scoring of all efficiencies and investment proposals based on the points in the above tables, the total score for each proposal has been ranked in order, highest score meeting more of the key factors.

The Service & Financial Planning Process

- 5.19 Part of the Service and Financial Planning process involves the Challenge Board, comprising the Chief Executive, the two Strategic Directors and the Accountancy Manager scrutinising the Council's budgets for potential areas of efficiency and raising questions with the budget holders. At the same time, Heads of Service are required to put forward their suggestions for potential savings and growth to the Challenge Board. The process for the first time this year included the Heads of Service group who peer

challenged the efficiencies and investment proposals and fed back comments to Challenge Board.

- 5.20 There has been a policy change in the presentation of efficiencies and investment proposals. Only those proposals which commence in 2008/09 are included in the appendices to this report. Officers have identified longer term efficiencies and investment proposals and are currently working on these proposals to ascertain how viable they are and when they could be implemented. Members will be updated as part of the service and financial planning process.

Outcomes from Budget Workshops

- 5.21 Members have had the opportunity to raise any queries on the suggestions in informal meetings held on the 30th October and 1st November and to express a view on the items contained in the lists. Members' comments will help to inform Cabinet's decision on which items to maintain in the list for further consideration.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. Members are reminded of the duty to set a balanced budget.

7. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The financial implications arising from this report are outlined in the main body of the report.
- 7.2 Given the pressures identified in this report, in order to balance the budget and achieve a Council Tax figure in accordance with the agreed strategy, it will be necessary to find an acceptable balance between reducing expenditure, increasing income from fees and charges, using balances and increasing the Council tax. The final decision on the District Council Tax level for 2008/2009 will be made at Council on 7th February 2008.
- 7.3 Risks relating to the achievement of efficiency targets and investment approvals are managed by a combination of implementation plans, regular monitoring reports and maintenance of adequate revenue reserves. An update on 2007/08 efficiency proposals will be given at the December Cabinet as part of the 2nd quarter monitoring report.

8. HUMAN RESOURCE AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Human resource and equality implications that may arise from proposed efficiencies and investment proposals are outlined in the 'anticipated impact' column of the proposal forms. In line with the Council's reorganisation policy, consultation has started with those staff directly affected by the efficiency proposals detailed in Appendix 1 and there may be some redundancy costs in 2007/08.

9. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 9.1 As part of the normal Service & Financial Planning process, consultation on the growth and savings will be carried out during October and November. As in previous years, Member workshops were held on the 30th October and 1st November. This is in addition to seeking the views of Area Committees, PARC, Scrutiny, the LSP, parish councils and business ratepayers.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 That the Committee gives its views on any changes to the lists.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To ensure that all Members are consulted on the proposed savings and growth bids and afforded the opportunity to comment before Cabinet sets the draft budget on 18th December 2007.
- 11.2 To ensure that the Council is able to adjust its base expenditure downwards to narrow the gap between our 2008/09 District Requirement figure, as adjusted for anticipated capping limits, and our service spending requirements

12. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 12.1 Not applicable.

13. APPENDICES

Appendix 1-Medium Term 5 Year Forecast
Appendix 2 – Efficiencies – Service proposals
Appendix 3 – Efficiencies – income increase proposals
Appendix 4 – Investment – Revenue proposals
Appendix 5 – Investment – Capital proposals

14. CONTACT OFFICERS

Report Writer – Clare Fletcher, Accountancy Manager, Tel 474470, email clare.fletcher@north-herts.gov.uk

Contributor - Norma Atlay, Strategic Director Finance and Regulatory Services, Tel 474297, email norma.atlay@north-herts.gov.uk

Barrie Jones, Head of Financial Services, Tel 474243, email barrie.jones@north-herts.gov.uk

Frances Bogie, Head of Legal Services, Tel 474460, email frances.bogie@north-herts.gov.uk

Kerry Shorrocks, Head of Human Resources, Tel 474224, email kerry.shorrocks@north-herts.gov.uk.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Budget working papers 2007/08
1st Quarter Monitoring Report 2007/08
CSR07

APPENDIX 1: Medium Term 5 Year Financial Strategy Forecast based on 4.9% Council Tax

	Actual	NOTE	1st Quarter Projected	Updated from Estimate Book				
	2006/07		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Total Net Spend	16,673,694		17,528,920	16,902,000	16,938,477	18,280,284	19,011,003	18,707,072
Add:								
Projected Changes at Quarter 2 report (December)		1	185,821					
Less Efficiencies not achieved			32,000					
Year on year superannuation increase		2		2.00%	4.80%	3.80%	-7.60%	0.00%
Superannuation charge per year				25.40%	30.20%	34.00%	26.40%	26.40%
Salary Estimates Superannuation increase				202,482	485,958	384,716	-769,433	0
Pay Inflation				550,518	550,518	550,518	550,518	550,518
Other Inflation				372,520	372,520	372,520	372,520	372,520
				1,125,520	1,408,996	1,307,754	153,605	923,038
Income Increases on discretionary income				-82,375	-82,375	-82,375	-82,375	-82,375
Efficiencies:								
2008/09 Efficiencies		3		-651,000	21,640	9,200	12,500	-7,500
2009/10 Onwards Efficiencies Required					-551,000	-676,000	-676,000	-600,000
Investment Proposals:								
2008/09 Investment Proposals		3		231,570	3,500	0	-7,200	0
2009/10 Onwards Investment Proposals					250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000
Total Expenditure	16,673,694		17,746,741	17,525,715	17,989,237	19,088,863	18,661,533	19,190,235
Government Support	-7,338,835	4	-7,559,423	-7,559,423	-7,559,423	-7,559,423	-7,559,423	-7,559,423
Use of Balances	-1,213,396		-867,238	-812,520	-732,414	-1,255,019	-216,367	-97,565
Transfer to/from Collection Fund	33,000		17,867	0	0	0	0	0
District Precept	8,154,463		8,639,395	9,153,772	9,697,400	10,274,421	10,885,743	11,533,247
Average Band D Council Tax	170.05		178.38	187.13	196.28	205.90	215.99	226.57
Council Tax increase	4.90%		4.90%	4.90%	4.89%	4.90%	4.90%	4.90%
Tax base	47,952		48,433	48,917	49,406	49,900	50,399	50,903
Revised Balances at 31 March each year:								
GF Balance -cr	2,989,105		2,088,806	1,276,286	1,299,462	1,354,443	1,333,077	1,359,512
HRA Reserve -cr	2,569,164	5	2,569,164	2,569,164	1,814,164	505,164	311,164	188,164
Total Balances	5,558,269		4,657,970	3,845,450	3,113,626	1,859,607	1,644,241	1,547,676
					- = income/reduction in net expenditure			
Risks Balance				400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000

Notes

1 Increases in 2007/08 potential spend identified and to be reported at 2nd Quarter in December.

2 Superannuation percentages are based on the 2004 valuation 6 year phasing period to target percentage of 25.4% plus 1% increase for 2007 valuation data from the received from the Actuaries shows superannuation increases to 34% in 2010/11 and then levels off at 26.4% for the next 16 years. **Note of caution 2007 valuation figures have yet to be released. Previous Assumption was that rates would rise at 1.9%-3.8% ongoing.**

3 Efficiencies /Investment proposals identified fluctuate between years

APPENDIX 1: Medium Term 5 Year Financial Strategy Forecast based on 4.9% Council Tax

4 Government Support anticipated to be at zero increase

5 Reserve balances have been adjusted to take into account the deletion of savings option SG32 parking increases.

Ref No	Description of Efficiency Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (maximum score +21)	Efficiency/Income Proposals (Ranked to highest score indicating that efficiency proposal has higher priority)	Budget 2007/8	Actual 2006/07	Efficiency in 2008/09	Efficiency in 2009/10	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)	Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/ Reputation etc)
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Ranking: 1= Efficiency meets the most criteria to be taken, 32= Efficiency meets the least criteria to be taken

BUDGET SCRUTINY EFFICIENCIES	£ 191,850	£ 139,570
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REVENUE EFFICIENCIES -SALARY EXPENDITURE RELATED

SG1	Deletion of Reconciliation Technician post, Accountancy Services, (member of staff in post) 1FTE	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£20,320	£19,830	£20,320	£20,320	Y	N	New technology (to import rather than manually enter data via The cash management system), will mean a reduction in work loads. The residual work supporting the Reconciliation Team for debtors and payments will need to be redistributed among existing staff, there is a risk that there will be a delay in reconciliation work and the general ledger may not be as up to date as at present. The staff member currently works 15 hours in the post room to take account of the reduced work load and a transfer to the MSU to cover vacancies is being trialed. NO ALLOWANCE FOR REDUNDANCY COSTS (£10.4K, 2007/08). FORMAL STAFF CONSULTATION STARTED.
SG2	Deletion of Temporary Staff budget (Accountancy Services)	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£6,910	£0	£6,910	£6,910	Y	N	This budget allows for the buying in of professional accountancy staff at peak workload times (closure/budget setting etc). Since 2003/04 the number of staff in the Accountancy section has reduced from 15.27 to 13.46FTE (a reduction of 1.81 FTE, excluding the current efficiency proposals). The additional budget gave flexibility during peak workload periods, however the budget was last used in 2004/05 to buy in additional accountancy support.
SG3	Deletion of Insurance officer post, Insurance & Risk Management Services (member of staff in post) 0.62 FTE.	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£20,190	£19,409	£20,190	£20,190	Y	N	Insurance claims have reduced, (post stock transfer/ outsourcing of services). The officer provides insurance advice to managers, insurance policy wordings, limitations and contacting the insurance company, setting up and dealing with claims correspondence, adjusting estimates, closing and filing the claim. The officer provides minute taking and telephone support which would have to be redistributed to Accountancy Services staff and the F & R S Directorate PA's. With the reduced Accountancy structure, support may be inadequate and no specialist insurance support will provided in the absence of the Risk Manager. Certain service improvements implemented after the Insurance FSR may have to be discontinued (eg claims satisfaction questionnaires, reports to internal services on claim settlements). Proposed changes to handling of personal injury claims may mean a narrower time frame to produce claims evidence. Service managers would need to locate and photocopy evidence. Efficiencies and investment proposals involving staff changes were considered and agreed by the Organisational Development Team on 2nd October 2007. NO ALLOWANCE FOR REDUNDANCY COSTS (£11K, 2007/08). FORMAL STAFF CONSULTATION STARTED.

Ref No	Description of Efficiency Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (maximum score +21)	Efficiency/Income Proposals (Ranked to highest score indicating that efficiency proposal has higher priority)	Budget 2007/8	Actual 2006/07	Efficiency in 2008/09	Efficiency in 2009/10	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)	Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/ Reputation etc)
Ranking: 1= Efficiency meets the most criteria to be taken, 32= Efficiency meets the least criteria to be taken										
SG4	Deletion of Support Estates Technical Officer post, Property Services, (member of staff in post and due to retire in Nov. 2008) 0.54 FTE.	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£12,900	£11,990	£5,370	£12,900	Y	N	Efficiency improvements will arise as the new asset management system (AMS) is implemented. Day to day Estates Service commitments will also diminish following the completion of a number of significant asset disposals. A modest reduction in workload is also anticipated through the use of Consultancy services, where the cost of their engagement can be supported from receipts or improved income. The Estates Service currently comprises a full time qualified estates surveyor and a part time technical support officer (FTE 0.54). Operational efficiencies achieved over the next 12 months will permit deletion of the technical support officer post from the establishment. The risk with this proposal would be from delays in implementing the AMS from which most of the saving in staff time will be derived. The AMS is being managed under the IT project management process. The technical support officer is due to retire in November 2008. The 1st year efficiency would be £5.37k. These staff changes are to be considered by the Organisational Development Team on the 16th October. NO ALLOWANCE FOR REDUNDANCY COSTS HAS BEEN MADE. INFORMAL STAFF CONSULTATION TO DATE.
SG5	Deletion of Engineers post, Property Services (member of staff in post) 1 FTE.	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£33,520	£32,234	£25,140	£33,520	Y	N	With the exception of maintaining minor off street lighting works, much of this function (car parks, bus shelters and street furniture) could be absorbed within the Section's general building surveying function. There is minimal risk in pursuing this proposal because, although the existing post holder's experience and knowledge would be lost, a vast proportion of the base service data the member of staff uses is extremely well documented. The engineer currently undertaking these duties is due to retire in March 2010. Earliest proposed date for deletion of post is July 2008. 1st year efficiency would be £22k. These staff changes are to be considered by the Organisational Development Team on the 16th October. NO ALLOWANCE FOR REDUNDANCY COSTS HAS BEEN MADE. (£28.8K, 2007/08). INFORMAL STAFF CONSULTATION STARTED.
SG6	Deletion of Admin Support post Grade 2 .5FTE(Vacant post no redundancy costs)	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£12,350	£10,728	£12,350	£12,350	Y	N	The current structure of the MSUs' has been reviewed and the efficiencies are a result of the amalgamation into 1 MSU. These staff changes are to be considered by the Organisational Development Team on the 16th October.
SG7	Deletion of Post room admin support 15 hrs grade 2 (Vacant post no redundancy costs)	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£7,640	£7,640	£7,640	£7,640	Y	N	The current structure of the MSUs' has been reviewed and the efficiencies are a result of the amalgamation into 1 MSU. These staff changes are to be considered by the Organisational Development Team on the 16th October.
SG8	Deletion of Project Officer post 7.4 hrs grade 4 (remaining 29.6 hrs to provide PA cover & contract monitoring. Vacant post no redundancy costs)	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£17,980	£16,414	£5,140	£5,140	Y	N	The current structure of the MSUs' has been reviewed and the efficiencies are a result of the amalgamation into 1 MSU. These staff changes are to be considered by the Organisational Development Team on the 16th October.

Ref No	Description of Efficiency Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (maximum score +21)	Efficiency/Income Proposals (Ranked to highest score indicating that efficiency proposal has higher priority)	Budget 2007/8	Actual 2006/07	Efficiency in 2008/09	Efficiency in 2009/10	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)	Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/ Reputation etc)
Ranking: 1= Efficiency meets the most criteria to be taken, 32= Efficiency meets the least criteria to be taken										
SG9	IT help desk (1st line support) move to CSC- & down grade to Hays 2 and merge with other CSC functions. 1 FTE (currently vacant) and 1FTE in post-possible redundancy.	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£22,710	£19,060	£5,010	£6,590	Y	N	This proposal was trialled for 3 months in 2006/07, with no impact on call response times. The 2 grade 2 posts would transfer to the CSC, there may be an initial impact on response times with new staff, however this is anticipated to be overcome. This efficiency proposal is reliant on the regrading of the 2 revised posts from a grade 4 to grade 2 and is based on the current member of staff transferring to the CSC. Efficiencies and investment proposals involving staff changes were considered and agreed by the Organisational Development Team on 2nd October 2007. NO ALLOWANCE FOR REDUNDANCY COSTS HAS BEEN MADE. INFORMAL STAFF CONSULTATION TO DATE.
SG10	Restructure specialist advisors into one team. Deletion of Principal Conservation Officer post. (1 FTE). (Saving reduced by £12.5k 2010/11 onwards to fund conservation area reviews a statutory requirement, funded from PDG up to and including 2009/10).	Sustainable Communities +8	=8	£53,550	£49,925	£49,090	£53,550	Y	N	This would impact on the capacity of specialist conservation advice. Specialist advice would only be provided in relation to development proposals involving listed buildings and for major proposals within conservation areas. There are approximately 100 listed building applications and 300 applications in conservation areas each year. This is likely to have an impact on the Council's ability to negotiate on smaller schemes within conservation areas and to manage the review of the District's 40 conservation areas (a statutory requirement). There would be synergies with other disciplines within a team of specialists (Urban Designer) where issues of the built form of development are also considered. There is risk associated with this proposal in relation to potential ombudsman challenge/judicial review regarding the Council's statutory duty to protect or enhance conservation areas which will be related to individual proposals. There have been no recent cases specifically relating to Conservation Area issues (though there have been Ombudsman cases relating to development At a County level work is being undertaken around partnership working associated with the development of Pathfinder proposals. This is at an early stage and as it is a likely consultancy arrangement, it is unlikely that this could replicate the scope of the current service with any efficiency. At present there are no clear proposals however there may be opportunities to use such a service on a part time/consultancy basis on a selective basis in the future. Efficiencies and investment proposals involving staff changes were considered and agreed by the Organisational Development Team on 2nd October 2007 NO ALLOWANCE FOR REDUNDANCY COSTS HAS BEEN MADE. INFORMAL STAFF CONSULTATION TO DATE.

Ref No	Description of Efficiency Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (maximum score +21)	Efficiency/Income Proposals (Ranked to highest score indicating that efficiency proposal has higher priority)	Budget 2007/8	Actual 2006/07	Efficiency in 2008/09	Efficiency in 2009/10	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)	Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/ Reputation etc)
Ranking: 1= Efficiency meets the most criteria to be taken, 32= Efficiency meets the least criteria to be taken										
SG11	Restructure services to share specialist landscape/tree advice with Grounds Maintenance	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£39,100	£36,343	£19,550	£19,550	Y	N	This has been discussed with the Head of Leisure & Environmental Services and would involve the deletion of the Landscape Officer post within Planning & Building Control and the transfer of 50% of the budget to L&ES to supplement the capacity of landscape/tree officer posts within that team who would in turn provide advice to P&BC. There are on-going negotiations with Hertfordshire Highways regarding the Council's responsibility in relation to highway trees and the outcome of these negotiations will determine the level of resourcing that the Council overall can put to these functions. Due to the fact that these negotiations have not yet been included there are risks with this proposal which relate to the ability to offer the level advice. Depending on the outcome of the negotiations there there is the possibility of a redundancy. NO ALLOWANCE FOR REDUNDANCY COSTS HAS BEEN MADE. INFORMAL STAFF CONSULTATION TO DATE.
SG12	Building Control restructure 37hrs of grade 7. Vacant post no redundancy implications.	Satisfied Communities +8	=8			£10,000	£10,000	Y	N	A reappraisal of the structure (looking at current workloads/vacant posts together with cashable efficiency gains from DIP/ mobile / remote working) can realise an efficiency of £10k to the General Fund with minimal impacts on service delivery/capacity. Building Control trading account income and expenditure is ring fenced and it is calculated that 33% of salary costs are charged to the General Fund.
SG13	Reduction of 1 x Senior Revenues Technical Officer 1FTE post currently vacant.	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£31,480	£0	£31,480	£31,480	Y	Y	Post vacant. Work has been absorbed by other members of the Team made possible by the introduction of Home Working. Efficiencies and investment proposals involving staff changes were considered and agreed by the Organisational Development Team on 2nd October 2007.
SG14	Reduction of 1 x Revenues Visiting Officer. 1 FTE post currently vacant.	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£27,220	£25,343	£27,220	£27,220	Y	Y	Additional workload can be absorbed by other staff due to introduction of Mobile Working. Full staff consultation given.
SG15	reduction of Performance Co-ordinator post to 0.5 FTE - linked to investment application for performance management system	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£24,640	£24,640	£10,320	£10,320	N	Y	The removal of half of the co-ordinator's post - currently vacant - will provide an opportunity for an invest-to-save proposal for purchase of an Electronic Performance Management system. The hours removed from this post are estimated to equal the reduction in manual inputting required at present. THIS EFFICIENCY CAN ONLY BE MADE IF INVESTMENT BID CG3 IS APPROVED.
TOTAL SALARY EXPENDITURE EFFICIENCY PROPOSALS				£ 330,510	£ 273,556	£255,730	£ 277,680			

Ref No	Description of Efficiency Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (maximum score +21)	Efficiency/Income Proposals (Ranked to highest score indicating that efficiency proposal has higher priority)	Budget 2007/8	Actual 2006/07	Efficiency in 2008/09	Efficiency in 2009/10	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)	Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/ Reputation etc)
Ranking: 1= Efficiency meets the most criteria to be taken, 32= Efficiency meets the least criteria to be taken										
REVENUE EFFICIENCIES -SERVICE RELATED										
SG16	Deletion of Historic Buildings Grant	Sustainable Communities +12	=1	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	Y	N	The historic building grant was reduced from £15k in 2006/7 to £5k in 2007/8. The costs associated with administering a grant budget of this size must be questioned (checking work/specifications) and in 2006/7 the grant was used for only 2 properties. There have been no applications for grant funding so far in 2007/8 and using council tax monies to subsidise a small number of private properties should cease.
SG17	Deletion of the Handyperson/Security scheme: This NHDC / Anchor Staying Put project is match-funded in collaboration with Supporting People and assists older and disabled people with minor repairs and improvements to domestic security. A notice period of 6 months is required in order to realise this potential saving.	Safer Communities +9	=4	£12,000	£12,000	£6,000	£12,000	Y	N	This proposal has been resubmitted to Members (although rejected last year) as it is at odds with the Council's policy of providing services, in this case welfare services, that are the responsibility of another body. Furthermore it contradicts this Council's wider housing objectives as regards the under-occupancy of housing as it often encourages single residents to continue to reside in large family dwellings. This service is currently funded in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council as this body acts as the Administering Authority for the Supporting People programme. The handyman scheme is managed by 'Anchor Staying Put' assisting elderly/disabled residents with basic repairs/security measures to maintain their independence, (2007/08 1st quarter assistance -65 residents, security work, 30 residents minor repairs). Some fitting of security measures in homes across the district is funded by a countywide scheme from SCSF (community safety) budgets totalling £121k.
SG18	Reduction in the office Accommodation maintenance budget	Satisfied Communities +9	=4	£82,880	£74,235	£5,000	£5,000	Y	N	The maintenance budget for offices is £82.9k a year. The actual spend for 2006/07 was £74k, however for the preceding 2 years in excess of £100k was spent. It is anticipated that with the high level of refurbishments taken place in 2006/07, that a saving of £5k could now be made with a further £10k transferred to a ring fenced maintenance reserve each year to allow for fluctuations between years of the level of spend required for essential maintenance as part of the office accommodation strategy. Some of the maintenance work is reactive rather than proactive. The reserve could be reviewed over the next few years to determine whether the annual contribution is adequate. The budget may be reduced further before the move to the new offices.
SG19	Reduction in the sports facility building repair and maintenance budget, and creation of a sinking fund for the maintenance of leisure facilities over the lifespan of the facilities.	Satisfied Communities +9	=4	£63,030	£23,996	£27,030	£27,030	Y	N	Under the new leisure contracts the majority of repairs and maintenance is undertaken by the contractors. However, where there is a major break down in plant and equipment which exceeds £5k the Council may be liable for the repair. In these circumstances and where existing repairs budgets were insufficient the client officer would need to seek additional funding.
SG20	Sports facilities purchase of equipment budgets	Satisfied Communities +9	=4	£24,180	£5,861	£15,180	£15,180	Y	N	Under the new leisure contracts the majority of sports equipment is purchased by the contractors. However, where there is a major purchase equipment which exceeds £5k the Council could be liable for the purchase. In these circumstances and where existing budgets were insufficient the client officer would need to seek additional funding and this has been identified as a risk.

Ref No	Description of Efficiency Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (maximum score +21)	Efficiency/Income Proposals (Ranked to highest score indicating that efficiency proposal has higher priority)	Budget 2007/8	Actual 2006/07	Efficiency in 2008/09	Efficiency in 2009/10	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)	Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/ Reputation etc)
Ranking: 1= Efficiency meets the most criteria to be taken, 32= Efficiency meets the least criteria to be taken										
SG21	Replacement of the Hometrack data contract. Planning Policy Statement 3 requires local authorities to have an in-depth knowledge of the local <i>private</i> sector housing markets and to publish a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). Hometrack provides information on the local housing markets in order to develop and maintain the Council's SHMA and also will enable the Council to dispense with the need for a Housing Needs Survey currently scheduled every 3 years.	Sustainable Communities +8	=8	£7,500	£2,500	£7,500	£0	N	Y	There is a good deal of uncertainty surrounding Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) at present, as the Government has not published guidance as to how often a SHMA should be updated. The first SHMA will be written by consultants, (NHDC is working in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council to reduce the cost of this exercise); this will provide a robust report that should be published by December 2007. Accordingly, it may not be necessary for the Council to update its SHMA every year - it could undertake this task every second or third year although until relevant statutory guidance has been published there is an element of risk in this approach. Therefore, the need for continuous housing market data (as provided by Hometrack) may no longer be necessary. The impact on staff is not likely to be significant since this data is supplied by a contractor.
SG22	Reduction in transfer to IT reserve. (The 2007/08 contribution of £37.87k is net of a 1 off contribution to capital for SSSC costs of £382.36k)	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£37,870	£397,271	£35,000	£35,000	Y	N	The IT reserve is used to fund new IT systems and contributions are made back to the fund to reflect the cost of the system. The reserve has been used to fund SSSC costs and new system costs e.g. GIS. The reserve balance at 31st March 2008 is projected at £429k, the balance at 31st March 2009 would be £489k if all the IT investment bids are approved. The reserve balance has increased because current leases have been extended or bought out, reducing in year spend on IT. Work is also ongoing to determine a replacement strategy for servers and other infrastructure which may require significant investment which a reduced reserve may be unable to resource. Furthermore, the digital printer contract intended for 2007 was postponed and ageing printers and new technology may be required as the office base work team are consolidated as part of homeworking, and also in preparation for the move to the new location in 2010. The balance on the reserve will need to be reviewed March 2009 to determine the adequacy of the fund. This efficiency has been made in conjunction with the Head of IT.
SG23	Discontinue subscription to Herts Biological Records Centre	Sustainable communities +8	=8	£16,320	£13,484	£970	£11,660	Y	N	A 12 month notice period would be required to terminate the Service Level Agreement with Hertfordshire County Council. It is considered that the service currently does not provide value for money as we do not need to use the service to a significant degree. The total cost is c.£16k and the proposed efficiency of £11.7k would allow £4.3k to purchase advice on a needs basis. This has been discussed with the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services who also use this service.
SG24	NHDC News to be available electronically only - efficiency on printing costs	Satisfied communities +8	=8	£3,360	£2,893	£2,000	£2,000	Y	N	The efficiency identified relates to the cost of printing a copy per member of staff. Moving to electronic distribution (except for those staff who have no PC) is more environmentally friendly.
TOTAL SERVICE RELATED EFFICIENCY PROPOSALS				£252,140	£537,240	£103,680	£112,870			

Ref No	Description of Efficiency Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (maximum score +21)	Efficiency/Income Proposals (Ranked to highest score indicating that efficiency proposal has higher priority)	Budget 2007/8	Actual 2006/07	Efficiency in 2008/09	Efficiency in 2009/10	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)	Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/ Reputation etc)
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Ranking: 1= Efficiency meets the most criteria to be taken, 32= Efficiency meets the least criteria to be taken

REVENUE EFFICIENCIES-CONTRIBUTIONS TO OTHERS

SG25	End Subsidy to Eastern Orchestral Board	Healthier Communities +11	3	£3,790	£3,790	£3,790	£3,790	Y	N	The AMH strategy 2007-12 identified that this grant should be reviewed. It funds a very high audience subsidy for an annual music concert at Knights Templar School, though it is linked to young people's activities. In 2006/07 145 people attended the concert, This equated to a subsidy of £26.14 per head. A contribution to the concert could be sought from Baldock Area Committee. In 2006/07 The Council (including Area Committee budgets spent £88.4k on arts and music in the district, including recharges the total cost was £147k.)
SG26	Reduction of Parish Challenge Fund and Parish Enhancement and Cleansing Fund and Parish Playground Funds	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£70,830	£42,254	£30,000	£30,000	Y	N	In recent years, the call on the Parish Challenge Fund, PECF and Parish Playgrounds has been decreasing as many of the larger rural projects have been funded through PACIF. The 2007/08 bids for Parish Challenge will be known by 30th September and it is anticipated that it is reasonable to make a reduction on the Parish Challenge element to cover those requests for grant funding up to a value of £15k. The PECF and Parish Playgrounds will be retained but kept under review.
SG27	Green Hearts	Sustainable Communities +8	=8	£4,250	£4,250	£4,250	£4,250	Y	N	Green Hearts (GHP) is a county wide project in which, through HACO, DC/BCs make a small annual contribution towards the running costs of the GHP. This contribution draws down funding from the Arts Council. NHDC has contributed to Green Hearts for 3 years alongside the majority of other Herts District/Borough Councils. If NHDC pulled out in 2008/9, it would be the only Council to do so at the present time. The GHP provides advice, guidance and help in working in partnership to develop arts and environmental projects. To date there has been no direct benefit to the district of pursuing this partnership, and since we are partners in a number of other environmental projects e.g. with the Groundwork Trust, officers feel that this subsidy can be discontinued.
SG28	Reduction of all Area Committee Grants by 10%	Satisfied Communities +5	31	£164,000	£110,648	£16,400	£16,400	Y	N	The efficiency proposal has been submitted because the need to realise efficiencies is required across all the Council's budgets. The efficiency of 10% equates to 11.7% of the Area Committee budgets carried forward in 2007/08. (Carryforwards in 2007/08; Hitchin £38.54k, Letchworth £32.98k, Southern Rural £15.22k, Baldock £30.00k and Royston £23.24k, total carryforwards £139.98k). Reduced capacity for Area Committees to allocate discretionary funds will mean less groups/projects supported. Area Committees have traditionally been against such reductions.
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO OTHERS EFFICIENCY PROPOSALS				£242,870	£160,942	£54,440	£54,440			

TOTAL OF EFFICIENCY PROPOSALS IDENTIFIED

£	825,520	£	971,738	£	605,700	£	584,560
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Ref No	Description of Income Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (maximum score +21)	Efficiency/Income Proposals (Ranked to highest score indicating that efficiency proposal has higher priority)	Budget 2007/08	Actual 2006/07	Increase in Income in 2008/09	Increase in Income in 2009/10	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)	Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/ Reputation etc)
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Ranking: 1= Efficiency meets the most criteria to be taken, 31= Efficiency meets the least criteria to be taken

REVENUE INCOME INCREASES										
SG29	Increase fees for house numbering	Sustainable Communities +12	=1	£40,000	£0	£21,000	£21,000	Y	N	This would be a fee increase per dwelling by 35% (to £135 per dwelling). This proposal will need to be re-assessed at the 2007/08 half year point as the charge has only been in existence since April 2007. The £100 fee for house naming and numbering was introduced as an income proposal for 2007/08. Current income levels are on target to achieve the income of £400k for 2007/08. LA's are able to set a fee to recover their costs. Estimated costs incurred by NHDC are £61k. This proposal would see the service fully funded by fee income in 2008/09. The income and expenditure will be reviewed annually to ensure that costs are fully recovered.
SG30	Ice-cream/vendor concessions on NHDC Parks	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£0	£0	£6,000	£6,000	Y	N	Concessions to sell ice cream etc in parks and other public spaces owned or managed by NHDC are likely to generate income to varying degrees depending on the concession length and location. The projected income is subject to market testing. Vendors will be required to abide by conditions in respect of location, trading hours etc.
SG31	Increase in income from Housing Benefit Administrative Penalties	Satisfied Communities +8	=8	£5,000	£5,496	£5,000	£5,000	Y	N	If someone in receipt of housing benefit fraudulently claims, the Council has the option to apply an admin penalty as opposed to seeking a prosecution, where it is a first offence. The admin penalty equates to 30% of the fraudulent claim plus full repayment of the overpayment, if under £2k. The benefit to the claimant of paying the penalty is he/she would not receive a criminal record. While the Council has always given the opportunity for small over claims to pay a penalty (previously £1.5k up to July 2007), the Council would seek to prosecute for the larger claims, with some exceptions based on age and health. However, the option to prosecute has become less cost effective due to a change in the subsidy regulations. Prior to 2006/07 the Council was reimbursed with the value of prosecutions it achieved, from 2006/07 a fixed sum was included as part of the subsidy calculation. the Council will generally seek to prosecute in cases in excess of £2k where it is in the public interest. A £5k budget was set up in 2007/08 and it is anticipated that the authority will receive £10k from admin penalties next year.
TOTAL INCOME PROPOSALS				£45,000	£5,496	£32,000	£32,000			
TOTAL EFFICIENCY PROPOSALS				£870,520	£977,234	£637,700	£616,560			

Ref No	Description of Investment Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (Maximum score +35)	Investment Proposal (Ranked to Highest score indicating that investment proposal has higher priority)	Budget 2007/8	Actual 2006/07	Investment in 2008/9	Investment in 2009/10	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)
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Ranking: 1=investment proposal meets the most criteria to be approved, 8=investment proposal meets the least criteria to be approved

Statutory & Government Led									
RG1	Retention of a Homelessness and Housing Advice Officer post #2: this role was supported by investment in 2007/08 due to the increasing demands from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The responsibilities of NHDC include increasing the effectiveness of homelessness prevention initiatives and the 50% reduction in the numbers of people in temporary accommodation between 2005 and 2010; this role directly impacts on both of these objectives. Recent performance improvements need to be sustained in order for the Council to meet the DCLG 50% temporary accommodation reduction target by 2010 and this post has played a significant part in the successful progress to date.	Sustainable Communities +11	=1	£27,500	£0	£27,500	£27,500	Y	Y
RG2	Environmental Health and Housing Restructure	Sustainable Communities +11	=1	£1,329,150	£1,150,255	£56,770	£56,770	Y	Y
RG3	The introduction of Choice Based Lettings (CBL): CBL is mandatory for all Local Housing Authorities by 2010 - this proposal follows Cabinet's approval in September 2007 for CBL to be delivered by the Council in partnership with North Hertfordshire Homes, Howard Cottage Housing Association and Stevenage Homes. LETCWORTH (21.11.07)	Equal Communities +9	4	£0	£0	£36,500	£19,000	Y	Y

REVENUE INVESTMENT PROPOSALS

SERVICE FINANCIAL PLANNING 2008/09

APPENDIX 4

Ref No	Description of Investment Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (Maximum score +35)	Investment Proposal (Ranked to Highest score indicating that investment proposal has higher priority)	Budget 2007/8	Actual 2006/07	Investment in 2008/9	Investment in 2009/10	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)
TOTAL STATUTORY & GOVERNMENT LED PROPOSALS				£1,356,650	£1,150,255	£120,770	£103,270		

Ref No	Description of Investment Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (Maximum score +35)	Investment Proposal (Ranked to Highest score indicating that investment proposal has higher priority)	Budget 2007/8	Actual 2006/07	Investment in 2008/9	Investment in 2009/10	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)
Strategic Priorities									
RG4	NDL Metascribe software	Satisfied Communities +10	3	£0	£0	£8,000	£8,000	Y	N
RG5	Additional maintenance, communication links and control room costs associated with 2 new CCTV camera positions as proposed in 2008/09 capital programme and 1 additional camera in the 2007/08 capital programme. (Subject to CCTV strategy)	Safer Communities +8	=5	£165,270	£83,268	£8,100	£8,100	Y	N
RG6	Green Space Strategy	Sustainable Communities +8	=5	£0	£0	£50,000	£50,000	Y	N

Ref No	Description of Investment Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (Maximum score +35)	Investment Proposal (Ranked to Highest score indicating that investment proposal has higher priority)	Budget 2007/8	Actual 2006/07	Investment in 2008/9	Investment in 2009/10	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)
RG7	Mainstreaming of Rural Play Project from the Hertfordshire Children's Fund (HCF).	Equal Communities +7	=5	£54,410	£46,719	£27,500	£48,500	Y	N
RG8	3 year programme to install 18 columns for mobile cameras (6 per year)	Safer Communities +7	=8	£0	£0	£7,200	£7,200		N
RG9	Maintenance and communication links for 3 Number plate recognition cameras (ANPR). No capital implications as cameras will be provided by Herts Police.	Safer Communities +7	=8	£0	£0	£18,000	£18,000	Y	N

TOTAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

£219,680	£129,987	£118,800	£139,800
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TOTAL OF INVESTMENT PROPOSALS IDENTIFIED

£1,576,330	£1,280,242	£239,570	£243,070
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Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/ Reputation etc)

Better service for the public, less households in temporary accommodation (as per the DCLG 50% reduction target by 2010), improved performance for BV183b (length of stay in hostels), BV 202 (rough sleepers), BV213 (homelessness prevention), LPI1a (the numbers of people in bed & breakfast accommodation), LPI1b (the numbers of people in hostel temporary accommodation) and LPI4 (homelessness decision making time). Homelessness presentations have reduced. The quarter to June 30th yielded 25 applications, the same quarter a year before had 53 applications for assistance. Reduced numbers of households in temporary accommodation. This is a CLG and local target (LPI1B) and NHDC needs to reduce the numbers to 52 by 2010. The numbers have reduced slowly and the extra resourcing has helped to improve this figure to 84 at the end of June. The current rate of improvement should enable the end of year target of 75 to be met. Efficiencies and investment proposals involving staff changes were considered and agreed by the Organisational Development Team on 2nd October 2007.

This proposal will enable the Housing & Environmental Health Service to restructure so that it can sustainably deliver a wide range of housing, environmental health, licensing and environmental crime services. Many of the projects managed by this Service relate directly to the delivery of the Council's Strategic Objectives, as contained within the current Corporate Plan: for example, the delivery of affordable housing, licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation and the promotion of home energy efficiency. The measures proposed will also assist with the improvement of performance indicator results and respond to the acute Environmental Health Officer recruitment and retention difficulties currently experienced by the Service. **NO STAFF CONSULTATION TO DATE.**

CBL will enable the residents of North Hertfordshire to have more choice in their accommodation needs and fulfils the national agenda for social inclusion, community engagement and sustainability. In particular, it will encourage users of the scheme to become integral to the social housing allocation system, thereby increasing the chances of sustained tenancies, more balanced communities and a reduced reliance on transport. However this was agreed in principle at Cabinet on 4 September 2007 and subject to funding through the Service and Financial Planning process.

LETCWORTH (21.11.07)

Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/
Members/ Reputation etc)

Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/ Reputation etc)

This software enables access to systems without requiring additional licences for an increasing number of users. Without this software licence charges will need to significantly increase to take out of the CSC and web access, **THIS COULD BE FUNDED FROM THE IT RESERVE, SUBJECT TO APPROVAL OF BUSINESS CASE. THIS INVESTMENT PROPOSAL BID IS LINKED TO INVESTMENT PROPOSAL CG 2.**

New sites have been identified within the District that currently require permanent surveillance; Royston station area and Nightingale Road, Hitchin. The CCTV strategy if approved has identified that more cameras are required to complete the currently identified areas of risk for crime and disorder. **THIS INVESTMENT PROPOSAL IS LINKED TO CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROPOSAL CG 8.**

A quality audit was undertaken of all NHDC managed green space using Civic Trust Green Flag criteria. The ensuing Green Space Strategy identifies two main threads to improve and enhance Green Space of the district. Firstly, capital investment programme of infrastructure improvements to alleviate the long term under-funding that is common nationally. The strategy identifies an estimated investment of £731k over 7 years, these estimates will be adjusted with the creation of site specific management plans and design blueprints. As with current experience, partnership and grant aid funding together with S106 contributions will be utilised to maximise on this investment. **(LINKED TO CG6)**. Secondly, an increase of £50k p.a. in our Revenue expenditure will be needed to sustain the new infrastructure and maintain it to the quality standard that is expected by our communities. Greater involvement with and by community and volunteer groups and our contractors will be needed to maintain our pro-active approach to deliver efficient and effective services to local communities. (RG6)

**Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/
Members/ Reputation etc)**

The post holder organises play and leisure opportunities in rural areas (24 villages in the following wards: Arbury, Cadwell, Codicote, Ermine, Graveley, Wymondley, Hitchwood, Offa, Hoo, Kimpton, Knebworth, Weston, Sandon, Chesfield) during school holidays and in schools during term time. This post is presently funded by the Hertfordshire Children's Fund until March 31st 2008 and is unique to Hertfordshire. It is part of a preventative programme to promote the Every Child Matters agenda. Where possible, different hosting agencies are being asked whether they could mainstream appropriate projects. The Rural Project has been subject to an independent evaluation, has been evidenced to be successful and has been recommended for continuation. The Children's Fund has agreed to fund the post for 6 months in 2008/09 to help draw in other external/mainstream funding.

Mobile cameras are used to target 'hot spots' for a limited period. The 'hot spots' move frequently in the year and the additional cost of providing columns for the 'new' sites are not budgeted for. Without the additional budget the service will not be able to react as quickly to the movements of ant-social behaviour within the District.

Tracking of criminal's movements within the District is hampered by the lack of ANPR sites, the provision of three cameras will cover these 'blind spots' to ensure a more comprehensive coverage within the Herts Police area.

Ref No	Description of Capital Investment Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (Maximum score +35)	Investment Proposal (Ranked to Highest score indicating that investment proposal)	Budget 2007/08	Actual 2006/07	Investment in 2008/09	Investment in 2009/10	Investment in 2010/11	Annual Revenue Implications	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)	Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/ Reputation etc)
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Ranking: 1=Investment proposal meets the most criteria to be approved, 9=Investment proposal meets the least criteria to be approved

Strategic Priorities														
CG1	Archiving IT data	Satisfied Communities +11	1	£	-	£	-	£50,000	£0	£0	£0	Y	N	This hardware is required to store/archive workflow documents, the current hardware, purchased in 2004 is now unable to cope with the volume of data and the formatting is incompatible with new systems. THIS COULD BE FUNDED FROM THE IT RESERVE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL OF BUSINESS CASE.
CG2	NDL Metascribe Software	Satisfied Communities +10	=2	£0	£0	£45,000	£0	£0	£8,000	Y	N	N	This software enables access to systems without requiring additional licences for an increasing number of users. Without this software licence charges will need to significantly increase to take out of the CSC and web access. THIS COULD BE FUNDED FROM THE IT RESERVE, SUBJECT TO APPROVAL OF BUSINESS CASE. CAPITAL BID IS LINKED TO INVESTMENT PROPOSAL RG 4.	
CG3	Purchase and installation of a corporate electronic performance management system for the authority	Satisfied Communities +10	=2	£0	£0	£37,000	£0	£0		Y	Y	Y	The purchase of an electronic performance management system will integrate the measurement of performance and that of risk for individual services for the first time. The manual inputting required of the performance team will reduce, and hence an efficiency of 0.5 FTE post (£12,320 per annum, EFFICIENCY PROPOSAL SG 15) will effectively provide an invest to save proposal in the longer term. Whilst services will be required to input data direct, this will greatly reduce the time currently spent on filling in 'word' templates. A business plan has been submitted awaiting approval by the I.T Transformation Board, but will require agreement in terms of its capacity to link corporate, service and individual objectives to appraisal level, the scale of risk management and potential for linking the system to customer satisfaction modules (such as Govmetric) to give a better picture of corporate performance/quality/progress. THIS COULD BE FUNDED FROM THE IT RESERVE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL OF BUSINESS CASE.	
CG4	Upgrade Phase 1, CCTV cameras from tilt to dome mechanism. Upgrade fixing columns and associated links - (18 cameras in total - 6 upgrades per year for 3 years)	Safer Communities +8	=4			£33,000	£33,000	£33,000	£0					The majority of the Council's cameras do not possess the latest technologies to ensure all round coverage and are reaching the end of their life. Replacement of key components will improve their life expectancy and improve performance. Phase 1 cameras were introduced in 1997.
CG5	Upgrade 3 mobile cameras for new technology	Safer Communities +8	=4			£16,200			£0					The older mobile cameras do not possess the latest technologies and are reaching the end of their life. Replacement of key components will improve their life expectancy and improve performance.

Ref No	Description of Capital Investment Proposal	Link to Corporate Plan - Sustainable/Safer/Healthier/Equal/Prosperous/Satisfied (Maximum score +35)	Investment Proposal (Ranked to Highest score indicating that investment proposal)	Budget 2007/08	Actual 2006/07	Investment in 2008/09	Investment in 2009/10	Investment in 2010/11	Annual Revenue Implications	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Statutory Function (Y/N)	Anticipated Impact of Proposal (on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/ Reputation etc)
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Ranking: 1=Investment proposal meets the most criteria to be approved, 9=Investment proposal meets the least criteria to be approved

CG6	Green Space strategy	Sustainable Communities +8	=4	£0	£0	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£50,000	Y	N	A quality audit was undertaken of all NHDC managed green space using Civic Trust Green Flag criteria. The ensuing Green Space Strategy identifies two main threads to improve and enhance Green Space of the district. Firstly, capital investment programme of infrastructure improvements to alleviate the long term under-funding that is common nationally. The strategy identifies an estimated investment of £731k over 7 years, these estimates will be adjusted with the creation of site specific management plans and design blueprints. As with current experience, partnership and grant aid funding together with S106 contributions will be utilised to maximise on this investment. (CG7). Secondly, an increase of £50k p.a. in our Revenue expenditure will be needed to sustain the new infrastructure and maintain it to the quality standard that is expected by our communities. Greater involvement with and by community and volunteer groups and our contractors will be needed to maintain our pro-active approach to deliver efficient and effective services to local communities. (LINKED TO RG6) .
CG7	Burymead Resource Centre (£30,000) and Letchworth Museum (£30,000)- urgent roof repairs	Healthy Communities +7	=7	£0	£0	£60,000	£0	£0	£0	N	N	Both facilities have badly leaking roofs that in the past have been patched up. The capital repairs budget for museums was removed last year with a view to there not being a need for any major building repair works in the context of moves planned within the Museums FSR. However, there are no definitive moves planned in the short term, so remedial works are now required.
CG8	Two new CCTV cameras, fixing poles and fibre optic links	Safer Communities +7	=7			£54,000			£5,400			New sites have been identified within the District that currently require permanent surveillance; Royston station area and Nightingale Road, Hitchin. The CCTV strategy if approved has identified that more cameras are required to complete the currently identified areas of risk for crime and disorder. CAPITAL BID IS LINKED TO INVESTMENT PROPOSAL RG5.
CG9	Coombes C.C. Refurbishment	Healthy Communities +3	9	£0	£0	£72,000	£8,000	£0	£0	N	N	All the Council's Community Centres have been surveyed and to date the Council has spent £274k on refurbishment works (2005/06 and 2006/07). A condition survey of the Coombes Community Centre has identified the following works; upgrading the kitchen and toilets, refurbishment of the hall, upgrading heating boilers and remedying the main hall acoustics.

TOTAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

£0	£0	£467,200	£141,000	£133,000	£63,400
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TOTAL OF CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROPOSALS IDENTIFIED

£0	£0	£467,200	£141,000	£133,000	£63,400
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