

North Hertfordshire Partnership



Annual Report to the Community

**Annual Community Conference
Monday 11th October 2010**

Working in partnership and making a difference.

North Hertfordshire – a vibrant place to live, work and prosper

Annual Report to the Community for 2009/2010

Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper

North Hertfordshire Partnership – Making A Difference

The North Hertfordshire Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for North Hertfordshire. It brings together representatives of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors – including the parish and town councils to enhance the environmental, economic and social well-being of our area.

The key tasks for the partnership are to:

- Advance the environmental, social and economic well-being of North Hertfordshire
- Create a shared vision and shared sense of priorities for our “place”
- Prepare and implement the sustainable community strategy
- Bring together local plans, partnerships, funding and initiatives to provide a forum through which the providers of local services can work together to meet local needs and priorities effectively
- Promote citizenship and democratic engagement

Governance of the partnership is through a board and a smaller executive. The terms of reference are available on www.northhertspartnership.gov.uk

We launched our Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) at the conference in November 2008. Since then our priority has been to make it real and to continue to improve the district.

Performance Reward Grant – Resources for Local Priorities

Partners work together in many ways to make a positive difference to our community. In addition the Partnership is investing more than £400,000 earned by partners from the Performance Reward Grant through success in the targets set by the Local Area Agreement.

The Partnership has been developing a number of cross cutting projects that would help advance the Sustainable Community Strategy. Following the reduction in resources announced in June partners worked effectively together to prioritise, refine and combine proposals.

At this time eight projects have been approved for funding. They are:

- Partnership Enhanced Communities *(led by Hertfordshire Constabulary)*
- Housing Under-Occupation Project *(led by North Hertfordshire Homes)*
- Relocation of Letchworth Citizens' Advice Bureau *(led by CAB)*
- Active in North Herts *(led by Sport North Herts)*
- Strengthening Communities and Involving People *(led by NHCVS)*
- Green Spaces and Biodiversity *(led by CMS)*
- The Community Pot *(led by NHCVS)*
- Partnership Development *(led by NHDC for the LSP)*

The relocation of Letchworth CAB has already been completed. The other projects will soon start to benefit our communities.

A ninth project – the John Clements Centre (*lead by John Clements Sports and Community Centre*) – may receive funding in 2011/2012.

There is still a limited amount of revenue and capital funding to be allocated.

This report continues by outlining some activities in each of the ten themes – ways in which the partnership is making a difference in North Hertfordshire.

Protecting and Enhancing the Environment

A page of the Summer edition of NHDC's Outlook Magazine was devoted to connecting residents to locally grown foods, some of its benefits and to the farmers and countryside producing it. It also promoted Open Farm Sunday, held in June, with several farms in North Herts opening their gates for the afternoon.

NHDC Waste Management team have reported a decrease in residual Household Waste (that which is neither reused, recycled or composted) down by 15.71% as well as achieving their targets for recycling. Some of this success is attributed to the introduction of the Flats Recycling programme.

The Wildlife Sites Partnership (WSP) has received reports for all of the Districts in Hertfordshire on performance towards achieving Positive Conservation Management (PCM) of important sites for wildlife. In North Hertfordshire there has been an increase of 10 sites meeting PCM (from 67 to 77), surpassing the target of 5%. This has been achieved through a number of Environmental Stewardship Schemes on privately owned land as well as the appropriate management of District Council green space.

Three projects to enhance and increase opportunities to access green spaces in North Hertfordshire undertaken in the past 2 years were recognised nationally for their good practice through Green Apple Awards. Norton Common was awarded Green Flag status following work by NHDC, Countryside Management Service, Friends of Norton Common and grounds maintenance contractors John O'Conner. The District Council has also won a Heritage Lottery Grant to restore the Howard Park and Gardens and employed a champion for the site.

LEADER projects covering most of the District are now underway. One covers the Chilterns and the other parts of North Herts, East Herts and Uttlesford (Essex). The latter, Eastern Plateau Rural Development Programme, will invest in local rural business ventures. The vision for the programme is a low carbon future for the rural economy. Grants are administered by a local action group comprising predominantly private sector professionals. Projects supported will help rural businesses reduce their carbon foot-print, create new business start-ups, support farm diversification and encourage rural tourism. The Eastern Plateau programme has a budget of just under £3m to distribute before the end of 2013.

The Green Infrastructure Plan (GI Plan) for North Hertfordshire is to be the subject of a demonstration project. Supported by the Performance Reward Grant this project will draw together delivery partners including Countryside Management Service, North Herts District Council and others to implement projects that will increase the function of green space and countryside in the district. Work will begin to develop the ideas outlined in the GI Plan

in the coming few months. This will be followed by the implementation phase over the coming financial year. Meanwhile, other District and Borough Councils across Hertfordshire are following the example set by NHDC to develop their own GI Plans.

Finally, the need for a climate change strategy was identified as a key priority in the consultation leading to the SCS. We were delighted that the district Climate Change Strategy was launched at last year's conference. We recognised that urgent action on climate change is needed. Since then actions to reduce the District and County Councils' CO₂ emissions have been agreed and they are preparing to adapt to the climate change that is already happening. But action is needed to reduce CO₂ emissions in the community as a whole and for that to succeed the whole community in North Hertfordshire, including those who are part of the LSP, must be involved (Tony Bradford, Countryside Management Service).

Providing Decent and Affordable Housing

There has been considerable success over the past year in relation to the provision of new affordable housing, particularly housing available for shared ownership and under the rent to homebuy scheme, allowing people to move into home ownership as their circumstances allow it. This is becoming a very important part of the housing provision in our geographical area, due to the current economic climate.

The partnership plans to continue to provide additional affordable housing into the future, and will be looking into more ways of achieving this given the reduced grant funding available (Victoria Hisgrove, Director of Operations, North Hertfordshire Homes).

The Partnership is also looking forward to contributing to the first Local Investment Plan for North Hertfordshire, and in particular to help determine priorities and direct investment into the delivery of decent and affordable housing (Martin Lawrence, Strategic Housing Manager, NHDC).

Improving Travel and Transport

The NHDC parking strategy was agreed by Cabinet in September 2009 and relates to areas where the District Council has control or influence. Cabinet subsequently agreed an action plan and allocated resources to implement various aspects of the strategy over the coming 4 years. A review of on street parking arrangements in Baldock has progressed well during 2010 as the first of the town wide parking reviews.

The Hitchin Urban Transport Plan is being formulated as one of the Countywide transport plans by HCC as the highway authority with significant involvement of NHDC. Public consultation is underway at present and it is anticipated that the Plan will be finalised in early 2011. The Royston Transport Plan has now been completed and a key action of providing a pedestrian/cycle crossing of the rail line is progressing.

The Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Investment Strategy has been completed and the coalition Government's announcements on the future of the Community Infrastructure Levy are awaited before decisions are taken on the next steps to secure additional infrastructure funding (David Scholes, Strategic Director of Planning, Housing and Enterprise, NHDC).

Children and Young People

The District Children's Trust Partnership (DCTP) and its sub groups help to deliver the priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The North Herts Children and Young People's Plan 2009-12 has the main theme of 'Empowering Children, Young People and Families for Brighter Futures'. The importance of 'family' remains a priority area of work for the Hertfordshire Children's Trust.

The DCTP subgroups have been effective in meeting the needs of children, young people and families through Children's Centres, Extended Services and the embedding of early intervention and support through Integrated Practice and Common Assessment Framework.

A 0 – 7 partnership project has been piloted in North Herts. It is for families with children aged up to seven and aims to intervene at the earliest opportunity. It provides specific support from a health visitor to prospective parents likely to be vulnerable due to the birth of a baby. It is needs assessed and aims to prevent problems escalating. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process and Personalised Commissioning have been very useful in supporting identified families.

- Parenting Support for families - Children's Centres and Extended Schools Teams have provided a wide range of and activities for families, within children's centres, schools, community premises and via outreach.
- Impact: Parents are supported locally, increasing their confidence and skills in parenting and raising a family
- Future: Depends on national and county plans for children's centres, extended schools and parenting support
- Extended Schools - Extended Opportunities Funding – for children and young people from lower income households to enable them to participate in positive out-of-school activities
- Impact: Self-esteem and skill levels raised by trying out new activities. Families have a positive view of school and are motivated for their children to persevere and achieve despite economic disadvantage
- Future: Pupil premium?

The DCTP stakeholders event on the 22nd September 10 was well attended by partners. North Herts needs analysis shows that recorded bullying incidents in North Herts have risen sharply and is the highest in the County. The North Herts DCTP plans to convene a task and finish group investigate this and recommend actions.

The DCTP has been successful in its application to the North Hertfordshire Partnership (the LSP) for Local Area Agreement Performance Reward Grant money to deliver a project entitled 'Active in North Herts' which aims to embrace the Department of Health's initiative "Active Celebration – Using the London 2012 Games to Get the Nation Moving".

Active in North Herts will be aimed at children and young people in North Herts who are the least active, and will use 2012 as a vehicle to create excitement and a festival atmosphere towards participation in sport and physical activity (Jacquie Hime, Chair of DCTP).

Strengthening Communities and Involving People

Through partnership working and focusing support resources the LSP's Strengthening Communities & Involving People theme group has proactively secured in excess of £80,000 of Performance Reward Grant funding in support of delivering and reshaping services for the Community.

The "Community Pot" is being launched this evening. This is a £20,000 fund which has been made available from the Performance Reward Grant. The fund offers grants of up to £1,000 for voluntary and community sector groups for projects which will help implement one or more of the themes in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Go to www.nhcv.org.uk for an application pack. Applications close on 19th November.

The North Herts Citizens Advice Bureau has successfully relocated its main offices in Letchworth to a High Street location on Leys Avenue giving the agency an improved presence with the town and helped address access to the services it provides.

Over the year combined agency resources will focus on encouraging communities and individuals to have a greater voice & participate in local activities and community groups, whilst addressing the emerging themes and initiatives stemming from the Big Society and the forthcoming Localism Bill.

Consultation on the Council's new rural strategy ended on 30th September. The new document is expected in December.

Several aspects of the 2010 Equality Act were implemented from the 1st October. The Partnership is anxious to involve the whole community in its activities and welcomes people from diverse backgrounds to its board (Stuart Izzard, Community Development Manager, NHDC)

Safe Community

There has been a continued positive result for the safe community theme, building on the successes of previous years, with general crime levels continuing at the same low levels as seen in the previous financial year. Specific current crime reduction successes this year are the reduction of 'robbery' offences by 47%, the reduction of 'theft of motor vehicle' offences by 26%, the reduction of 'serious violent crime' offences by 60%, and the reduction of 'serious sexual' offences by 23%. Furthermore, the number of anti social behaviour incidents in North Herts, year on year, has reduced by 14%.

A detailed response plan by our community safety partners to tackle burglary non-dwellings, such as business and commercial premises, has seen levels of these offences dropping, with focussed work till continuing in this area. The Joint Action Group (JAG) continues to focus partnership efforts on behalf of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (Chief Inspector Neil Ballard, Police).

Improving Health and Well-Being

The Health and Well-Being Partnership distributed £10,000 worth of grants to community health improvement projects to support the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The scheme was funded by the Primary Care Trust who awarded the money to the LSP. It built on successes in previous years.

The grants were used to fund projects by the African Caribbean Lunch Club, Groundwork Hertfordshire, Herts Sports Partnership, Home Start – North Herts, North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum, the Phoenix Group and Sport North Herts.

The Partnership organised successful seminars on tobacco control and obesity in 2010, resulting in action plans for North Hertfordshire to address these important health priorities. It is in the process of reorganising itself into separate groups for North Hertfordshire and Stevenage.

North Hertfordshire District Council successfully bid for funds to tackle health inequalities through tobacco control, distributed by Hertfordshire Tobacco Control Alliance. This will fund a project to reduce smoking in commercial vehicles by appointing a Smoke free Compliance Officer (the first such post in the county).

Until recently there were two primary care trusts (PCTs) covering the county. Now there is one which is now known as NHS Hertfordshire.

Significant changes to the way health services are configured are likely. A Government White Paper was published on 12 July 2010 with consultation closing at the start of October. A Government paper on the future of public health is expected in December. We will be keen to ensure our successful partnership working continues. (NHS Hertfordshire).

Active and Creative is part of the Improving Health and Well-Being theme:

Sport North Herts (SNH), now in its third year, seeks to bring together a range of agencies each of whom has the promotion of sport and physical activity in its aims and action plans. It enjoys the successful programmes of the two school sports partnerships, which have enriched the physical education activities of our young people, many of whom now experience three hours of curricular physical education each week. The schools partnerships have developed strong links with the sports clubs and we now find our young folk participating in the junior sections of the clubs.

Initiatives have also been created, especially by the Extended Schools Consortiums, to encourage children from disadvantaged homes to regularly access these extra curricular activities.

The considerable efforts of the Tackling Anti Social Behaviour Partners has seen children attracted to regular sessions of football, basketball, dodge ball, street dance, cricket, rounder's and uni-hockey away from anti-social behaviour and raising their awareness of the dangers of misuse of alcohol and substance, the benefits of healthy eating, and sound sexual health matters.

The hope is that the ten SNH sport specific forums will generate more club orientated opportunities, especially for the 16 – 24 age group, women and the over 50's. These groups fall short of the expectations of Sport England and need us to give them greater priority in the future.

However, there is much to be achieved to facilitate both youngsters and adults experiencing a strong healthy culture. If their programmes are to be realised then it follows we need more volunteer leaders and assistants. We must take full advantage of the courses promoted by the local Volunteer Centres, the North Herts College and the Herts Sports Partnership.

The fast approaching mounting of the London 2012 Games on our doorstep is a unique opportunity to fire the enthusiasm and commitment of both young and adults alike. To this end, we applaud the excellent Olympic-style festivals driven by our School Sports Partnerships (Ken Charles, Sport North Herts).

This year Ashwell Museum opened its Lottery Funded Local History Resource Centre and Community Archive. The Hitchin British Schools Museum has just received a BIFFAWARD grant of £25,000 towards improving the fabric of the building, making it more energy efficient, and giving a better experience to visitors, staff and volunteers. The Letchworth Garden City Heritage Museum has recently received a £9,000 grant from AIM (the Association of Independent Museums), for conservation of an album of photographs showing the building of the early Garden City. Last year we reported that the Bancroft Players had raised £140,000 towards their appeal to raise £200,000 to add a Youth Wing onto the Queen Mother Theatre in Hitchin. Good progress is being made with phase one of the building work (Ros Allwood, Cultural Services Manager, NHDC 2010).

Enriching the Lives of our Elders

The LSP hosted the “Listening to Carers Day” which took place at the Goldsmith Centre in November. This looked at the important part carers play in supporting vulnerable, young and older individuals across North Herts, and at the same time ensuring their own needs are being addressed in our plans – whether that is by providing information, support to seek benefits or the opportunity to take a break from caring duties whilst their charge is cared for by others.

Age Concern and Help the Aged have combined to form Age UK.

NHDC supported the setting up of an independent Over 50s Forum for North Herts which has now received some funding (Claire Morgan, Community Development Officer, NHDC).

All providers, voluntary organisations, charities, social enterprises and service users are invited to attend a stakeholder event in Hitchin Town Hall on Thursday 14th October 2010. The event will focus on the Prevention and Wellbeing/Community and Voluntary Services Review. For more information: please contact Andy Nazer , Community Commissioning , Adult Care Services on 01438 844111.

Increasing Economic Prosperity and Employment

The impact of the recession has prompted many agencies to consider the sustainability of the local economy and ensuring we have the relevant skills and capacity for the future.

In September 2010 a study by Experian for the BBC to measure the likely impact of public spending cuts showed that North Hertfordshire was the 92nd most resilient out of the 324 local authority areas in England. That compares with St. Albans (2nd); South Cambridgeshire (10th); Uttlesford (5th); East Hertfordshire (46th); Welwyn Hatfield (87th); Stevenage (131st); Central Bedfordshire (133rd); and Luton (261st). The local economy has indeed remained relatively stable with the claimant count remaining at 2300 persons since March 2009. Job centre vacancies has increased year on year with North Hertfordshire showing less volatility in notified vacancies than a number of adjoining Districts.

The focus for this year has been on creating a Business Forum specific for North Hertfordshire Businesses, to engage, consult and understand the key challenges affecting business in the district. The Strategy going forward will be to support the revival of the town centres, implement initiatives to combat the Human resource issues, and look at mentoring in the work place, and strengthening the work the Chamber already does in education / business links, and youth employment.

During the last year the Herts Works county partnership arrangement has been established with a series of topic groups and allocated funding from countywide PRG. In North Hertfordshire there has been a successful bid for Vibrant Towns funding to help improve the environment of a run down 1960s shopping precinct in Royston. The Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership bid was submitted to the Government in August as part of the national localism arrangements and an outcome to that process is awaited (Yolanda Rugg, Area Director, North and East Herts, Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry).

Promoting Lifelong Learning, Training and Skills Development

The LSP, through its sub group, the North Herts Learning Partnership have developed an action plan to encourage people into learning and refresh and learn new skills and to support residents to improve their Literacy, Numeracy and vocational skill levels. Over the twelve months to 31 July 2010 more than 1400 people have accessed adult and community learning and a further 6828 residents accessed courses which led to a recognised qualification. In addition 300 people completed a literacy and numeracy qualification.

The economic downturn has impacted on employment opportunities in the district and local providers have supported over 400 local residents to improve their employability and vocational skills over the last year

We are partners in the countywide Local Area Agreement, and one of the areas most affected by the recession is our ability to enable those not in employment, education or training (known as ‘NEETS’) to secure places on assisted employment schemes since the capacity of employers themselves has been affected. We, as partners, will need to refocus our activity to support this particular group of individuals to develop in readiness for future challenges and opportunities (Bev Jones, Assistant Principal – Employer and Community Provision, North Hertfordshire College, 2010).

The leads for the ten themes in the strategy are:

Theme	Lead
Protecting and Enhancing the Environment	Tony Bradford (Countryside Management Service, HCC)
Providing Decent and Affordable Housing	Victoria Hisgrove (North Hertfordshire Homes)
Improving Travel and Transport	David Scholes (North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC))
Improving the Life Chances of Children and Young People	Jacquie Hime (District Children’s Trust Partnership / Centre for Voluntary Services (CVS))
Strengthening Communities and Involving People (inc. equality, diversity and cohesion)	Stuart Izzard (North Hertfordshire District Council)

A Safe Community	Neil Ballard (Hertfordshire Constabulary (Police))
Improving Health and Well-Being (inc. active and creative)	Pieter Shipster (NHS Hertfordshire (Primary Care Trust))
Enriching the Lives of Our Elders	Pieter Shipster (NHS Hertfordshire (PCT))
Increasing Economic Prosperity and Employment	Yolanda Rugg (Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry)
Promoting Lifelong Learning, Training and Skills Development	Bev Jones (North Hertfordshire College)

Hertfordshire Forward

Hertfordshire Forward is the county level LSP. The Sustainable Community Strategy is linked to the countywide SCS, details of which can be found on the website: <http://www.hertslink.org/hertfordshireforward>. Hertfordshire Forward's Annual Conference is on Friday morning, 12th November.

Major Topics considered by the Board

The Partnership seeks to improve the well-being of North Hertfordshire as a whole and certainly the topics considered by the Board and Executive this year have been very wide ranging. In 2009/2010 they included:

Abolition of Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA); Annual Community Conference; CAB 70th Anniversary; Carers' Consultation; Climate Change Strategy; Community Cohesion; 50 Plus; Diversity Peer Challenge; Health and Well-Being grants; Health Profiles; Health White Paper; Hertfordshire Equality Council (launch); Hertfordshire Forward; Local Democracy Week (October 2010); Local Development Framework (LDF); LSP Work Programme; Obesity Event; Parish and Town Councils' Conference; Partnerships Toolkit; Performance Assessment Panel; Performance Reward Grant (PRG); PREVENT; Royston Rail Crossing; Rural Development Programme (Eastern Plateau); Sex Education; Sport North Herts; Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) action plans and theme reports; Tobacco Control and Urban Transport Plans.

In general the board receives two partner presentations at each meeting and the executive will be receiving two presentations from themes at each meeting from December 2010.

Next Steps

One Performance Reward Grant (PRG) funded project has already been completed and the other eight will start soon. The Partnership has set up a Partnership Assessment Panel to monitor the progress of each project once it has received its PRG funding.

There are action plans for all ten themes in the SCS. These plans include tasks with clear responsibilities and targets which can be monitored and that performance reported through the LSP and to the public. All ten themes report to the LSP Executive every three months.

The Partnership is making a positive difference for North Hertfordshire.

North Hertfordshire Partnership Board

Thanks to all the members of the Partnership Board for 2009/10 which currently consists of

Public Sector

Countryside Management Service	Tony Bradford
East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust	Jo Arthur
NHS Hertfordshire (Primary Care Trust)	Pieter Shipster
Hertfordshire Constabulary	Neil Ballard
Hertfordshire County Council (2)	Cllr. Richard Roberts Cllr. Colette Wyatt-Lowe
Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	Ian Parkhouse
Hertfordshire Police Authority	Kevin McGetrick
Jobcentre Plus	Lisa Maving
North Hertfordshire College	Beverley Jones
North Hertfordshire District Children's Trust Partnership	Jacque Hime
North Hertfordshire District Council (5)	Cllr. Lynda Needham Cllr. Tricia Cowley Cllr. Marilyn Kirkland Cllr. Deepak Sangha John Campbell
Parish and Town Councils (3)*	Cllr. David Reavell (Kimpton) Cllr. F. John Smith (Royston) Carina Helmn (HAPTC)

* Parish and Town Council representatives are elected by the Parish and Town Councils' Conference. HAPTC is the Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils.

Private / Business Sector

Baldock Town Partnership	Nigel Cooke
Federation of Small Businesses	Tim Weaver
Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Yolanda Rugg
Hitchin Town Centre Initiative	Keith Hoskins
Letchworth GC Town Centre Partnership	Lee Boswell
Royston Town Centre Forum	Geraint Burnell
SBI – Enterprise Hertfordshire	Michael Veasey

Voluntary and Community Sector

COMPACT (4)	Mohammed Alam (Minority Ethnic Forum) Sally Salisbury (North Herts and District CAB) Andrea Watts (Carers in Hertfordshire) Austin Willett (Relate)
Arts Council for North Hertfordshire (1)	New representative required
Sport North Herts (1)	Ken Charles
Other VCS representatives (6)*	Age Concern (Jan Gough)

	Caldecote Centre (Sarah Wren) CDA for Hertfordshire (Kate Belinis) Space 2 Talk (Jane Mitchell) Faith Groups (Rev. Barry Pate) Hitchin Christian Centre (Rev. Tony Summerfield)
Young People – up to 19 (2)	Two new representatives required

Housing Providers

Howard Cottage Housing Association	John Welch
North Hertfordshire Homes	Victoria Hisgrove

Housing Association representatives are appointed by the Registered Social Landlord Forum.

Please Note

Board members can appoint substitutes for meetings they cannot attend. In general members who cannot attend a particular meeting pass the papers onto their substitute. The following members have named substitutes:

Organisation	Board Member	Substitute
Hertfordshire Constabulary	Neil Ballard	Jason Thorne
Jobcentre Plus	Lisa Maving	Hazel Chance
NHDC	Cllr. Marilyn Kirkland	Cllr. Lawrence Oliver
HNDC	Cllr. Deepak Sangha	Cllr. David Billing
North Hertfordshire College	Beverley Jones	Hazel Lodge
North Hertfordshire Homes	Victoria Hisgrove	David Smith
Primary Care Trust	Pieter Shipster	Peter Wright / Patsy Temple

In addition to board members meetings are attended by those giving policy and administrative support to the LSP and its members.

Membership of the whole board is refreshed every three years (from 2008) and implemented from the Annual Community Conference. Vacancies that arise can be filled as required.

Officers giving policy and administrative support to the Partnership include Liz Green, Jim Brown, Reuben Ayavoo and Laura Lack (NHDC).

Members of the North Hertfordshire Partnership

www.northhertspartnership.org.uk