

North Hertfordshire District Council

Corporate Equality Strategy

Foreword

North Hertfordshire District Council is committed to achieving equality of opportunity as an employer, a provider of services and as a community leader.

As a service provider, we want our services to be accessible and useful for everyone in North Hertfordshire regardless of their individual backgrounds and needs. As an employer we want our employment practices to be fair to everyone. We aspire to have a workforce whose diversity generally reflects the population of the district and which has the skills and understanding to improve the lives of the people of North Hertfordshire. As a community leader we seek to promote equal opportunities for everyone who lives, works or visits North Hertfordshire.

Our commitment to put our residents and staff at the heart of our business, and make equality and diversity for the users of our services and for our employees a reality is demonstrated by:

- Our Vision
- Our Mission
- Our Core Values
- Our Strategic Priorities
- Our Investors in People award

However, we know that there is always more to do so we have in place plans for continuous improvement.

We recognise that in our society, groups and individuals continue to be unfairly discriminated against and we acknowledge our responsibilities to actively promote good community relations, equality of opportunity and combat discrimination in all its forms.

Our aim in reviewing and refreshing our Corporate Equality Strategy is to demonstrate our wholehearted commitment to continued action in tackling inequality.

John T Campbell
Chief Executive

Councillor F J Smith
Leader of North Hertfordshire District Council

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Executive summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is North Hertfordshire District Council's first comprehensive Corporate Equality Strategy. The strategy sets out how the Council will promote equality and community cohesion, value diversity and tackle unfair discrimination in North Hertfordshire. It demonstrates the Council's commitment to meeting the needs of everyone who lives, works or visits North Hertfordshire.
- 1.2 The strategy brings together the Council's existing race, disability and gender schemes. With the introduction of new legislation relating to religion, age and sexual orientation discrimination in 2009, the Council believes that it is helpful to also include these additional three aspects of equalities within the remit of this strategy.
- 1.3 The strategy also deals with our work within the Equality Standard for Local Government and looks ahead to the new Equality Framework which includes aspects of social inclusion.
- 1.4 North Hertfordshire District Council is deeply committed to providing excellent services to a diverse population who make different and valuable contributions to the life of the district
- 1.5 With that in mind this strategy should not be seen in isolation but as part of the Council's policies.
- 1.6 We are determined to ensure equality in our services, as an employer and as a community leader to promote the equality of all people, leading by example in all we do.
- 1.7 This strategy and its action plans will develop and change over time to reflect the priorities expressed by communities in North Hertfordshire. We will actively welcome comments, suggestions and contributions at any time in the future to help us eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities for everyone who lives, works or visits North Hertfordshire.

2. Who is this strategy is aimed at ?

- 2.1 This Strategy is aimed at everyone in North Hertfordshire – those who live, work in and visit the district, as well as elected Councillors and employees of the Council.

3. Our priorities

- 3.1 This strategy identifies some priority outcomes, which describe our overall ambitions for equality, and provide a framework for delivering and managing all our services. They are:
 - strong and positive relationships within different communities and between people from different backgrounds;
 - accessible and inclusive services, opportunities and information available to all;

- a district where people feel safe, free from harassment, hate crime and discrimination, and can report incidents in the knowledge that issues will be handled sensitively and effectively;
- a workforce and environment where diversity is valued, where employees are treated fairly, and where all employees have the opportunity to fully contribute towards the success of the Council.

4. The strategic framework for the Council

4.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy for North Hertfordshire makes commitments to:

- promote equality of opportunity by understanding and valuing the diverse needs of the community and developing equality action plans covering ethnicity, people with disabilities, gender, faith and religion, age, and sexual orientation;
- tackle inequalities and improve access to services;
- promote social inclusion;
- develop a sense of pride in our communities;
- actively promote quality relationships between individuals and groups of people;
- eliminate “hate crime.”

5. How the Council will deliver this strategy

5.1 The outcomes are to be underpinned by a wide range of measures contained in a series of action plans, which will set out a phased approach to achieving our outcomes over the next three years.

5.2 The Council’s Corporate Diversity Group will monitor performance against the action plans.

5.3 All services are required to maintain up-to-date Equality Impact Assessments of current services and policies, and to assess the equality impact of any proposals for change.

5.4 Reports will be made to the Council’s Performance, Audit and Review Committee and our progress may be considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

6. Partnership Working

6.1 Through the Local Strategic Partnership, equality and diversity issues can be addressed by the key public agencies whose work has a critical impact on the community. The partnership includes representatives from the District Council, County Council, Police, Primary Care Trust, voluntary and private sectors.

6.2 Representatives from minority groups are included on the Local Strategic Partnership.

Part 1 - Introduction

1. This Strategy

1.1 The Council will take appropriate action to ensure that our commitment to equality of opportunity and the promotion of diversity influences everything we do as a service provider, service user, employer and community leader.

1.2 This strategy will inform every area of activity, from the way we provide services to the way we employ our staff. It is a central responsibility of all Members, managers and employees of the Council.

1.3 Definitions

1.4 What is Equality?

Equality is a concept underpinned by legislation. It requires organisations to provide relevant and appropriate access for the participation, development and advancement of all individuals and groups. Equality is about tackling discrimination and dealing with inequality. It's about fairness, decency, respect and high standards of behaviour between individuals and groups.

1.5 What is Diversity?

Where there are two or more people, you have diversity. Diversity is difference and we are all different from each other. Our differences include family background, age, ethnic origin, gender, physical abilities, qualities and appearance, nationality, sexual orientation, educational background and marital status.

1.6 What is an Equality Scheme?

An equality scheme is a plan that outlines a public authority's actions aiming to address aspects of the general duty as outlined in equality legislation. The general duty is a positive duty that builds equality into the beginning of the process rather than making adjustments at the end. It represents a change from a legal framework where the onus is on the individual to bring a complaint of discrimination to one where the onus is on the public sector to seek out actual or potential discrimination and address it.

1.7 The purpose of this Strategy

This document is the Council's principal policy document for addressing equality and diversity issues in the way it delivers its services and as an employer.

Its overall purpose is to:

- ensure that North Hertfordshire District Council complies with equalities legislation;
- meet our policy objectives on Equality and Diversity;
- ensure that we maintain a high level of community cohesion.

1.8 The District's Vision

This strategy relates directly to the vision of the North Hertfordshire Local Strategic Partnership: 'Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper'.

It is important that in delivering this vision we include the diverse needs, skills and values of everyone who lives or works in, or visits North Hertfordshire.

1.9 The Council's Mission

It reflects the North Hertfordshire District Council mission: 'To work collaboratively with our partners and communities to deliver the vision for the district of North Hertfordshire.'

1.10 The Council's Core Values

The Council has a series of underpinning core values which support the aspirations of the vision:

- Aiming to deliver what our customers want
- Delivering high quality services
- Striving to continuously innovate and improve
- Encouraging a listening and learning culture amongst our colleagues
- Promoting equality in service delivery and within our organisation.

1.11 Legal requirements

1.12 The Council recognises the changing nature of equality legislation and in terms of developing a Corporate Equality Strategy will incorporate the following national legislation and regulations into its scheme and services as appropriate. The legislation and regulations are listed in Appendix D.

1.13 The Equality Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech on 3 December 2008. One of the key proposals includes the introduction of a new generic equality duty on public bodies which brings together existing public duties on Race, Disability and Gender and extending it to include a further four equality strands.

1.14 With this in mind we have now combined in this strategy the Council's existing Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes along with additional equality schemes in relation to Religion or Belief, Age and Sexual Orientation, as well as our position statement on Social Inclusion. This strategy will be reviewed once the Equality Bill has passed through parliament and the requirements on public bodies are confirmed.

2. The Equality Framework for Local Government

2.1 This national framework is the national public sector benchmark and was introduced in April 2009. It is designed specifically for local councils to help them to tackle discrimination and positively promote equality.

Part 2 - Equality and Diversity in Employment

1. Introduction

- 1.1 North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) recognises the value of a workforce in which people from differing backgrounds are encouraged to bring fresh ideas and perceptions, enabling us to deliver high quality responsive services to all members of the community.
- 1.2 NHDC therefore seeks to recruit a workforce that reflects the diversity of North Hertfordshire. We will provide a safe, secure and accessible working environment that values the identities and cultures of all our employees.
- 1.3 NHDC will provide equality of opportunity in all areas of employment, including the recruitment, selection, training and development and retention of staff. We will ensure that all recruitment and selection procedures operate in a fair and non-discriminatory way so that those best able to do the job are appointed and, where appropriate, promoted.
- 1.4 Those seeking employment, training or promotion will be considered solely on the basis of their competencies and relevant experience, qualifications and skills. Employees will be treated fairly in relation to redundancy and the operation of grievances and disciplinary processes.

2. Consultation – Employment

- 2.1 Employees will be asked for their views on a wide range of issues and regular staff attitude surveys will be conducted with the results reported to the Performance Audit and Review Committee (PARC) and Cabinet.
- 2.2 The Trade Unions will be fully consulted in the development of all Council policies on employment issues. A Joint Staff Committee meets to provide the opportunity for Council Members and representatives of the Trade Unions to meet to discuss industrial relations and other employment matters.
- 2.3 Council employment policies and practices will be regularly reviewed and consultation will take place with employees, Trade Unions and staff representatives on the Staff Consultation Forum to evaluate their effectiveness and recommend changes.

3. Monitoring of Employment Policies

- 3.1 The Council will monitor the following areas by age, race (Equality and Human Rights Commission guidelines), disability, gender, sexual orientation and religion or belief:
 - recruitment and selection of staff
 - make-up of the workforce by grade
 - training and development opportunities
 - promotion
 - grievances and disciplinarys
 - the number of employees who leave the Council and their reasons for leaving.

- 3.2 Regular reports will be produced from this monitoring process and the information gained will be taken into account in the development of policies, practices and procedures and, in consultation with departments, in the development of equality employment performance indicators.

4. Recruitment and Selection Practices

- 4.1 Those involved in recruitment and selection will be required to follow the Council's policy guidelines on fair selection methods as set out in the Council's Recruitment Practice Guide. Human Resources will regularly review and monitor the implementation of this policy.

- 4.2 The guide stipulates:

- a job description and person specification must be drawn up for every vacancy and provided to all prospective employees;
- information about job vacancies must be made available to all sections of the community (except in situations where, in line with relevant employment legislation and the Council's Employment Policy, external advertising of vacancies is restricted);
- all job applicants should be given details of the selection process in advance;
- all short listing criteria must be based on the person specification;
- all selection decisions must be made on the basis of merit;
- all those involved in recruitment and selection should receive training in fair recruitment and selection procedures.

- 4.3 Regular reports will be produced from this monitoring process by Human Resources and considered by the Organisational Development Team and Corporate Management Team. The information gained will be taken into account when making decisions such as where to advertise in the future.

- 4.4 We will set appropriate corporate and service / unit employment and pay based objectives for race, gender, disability, age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation.

5. Training and Development Opportunities

- 5.1 As an Investor in People, the Council is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in the development of its employees.

- 5.2 All employees will be supported to undertake the training and development they need to help them achieve and maintain a high standard of performance and will be given encouragement and support to achieve their full potential.

A range of opportunities is available for continuous learning and development to improve career prospects including day release training, planned work experience and work shadowing.

- 5.3 Where employees with disabilities undertake training and development, appropriate arrangements will be made as necessary to ensure that all opportunities are equally accessible.
- 5.4 We will include a cultural awareness module in the equality and diversity training programme.

6. Use of Genuine Occupational Requirements and Positive Action

- 6.1 We will use the powers available under the Race Relations Act and the Sex Discrimination Act to appoint a person of a particular gender or from a particular racial group where gender or race is a genuine occupational requirement for the job.
- 6.2 The Council will make all appointments on merit, and where there is an under-representation of staff at a particular level, we will use appropriate legal powers to take positive action to recruit and maintain a workforce that reflects the diversity of North Hertfordshire's communities. This will include:
- the development of strategies to ensure that positive messages of encouragement to apply for posts are given to under represented groups;
 - action to ensure that all employees have equal opportunities to training, development and career opportunities;
 - the incorporation of diversity awareness into all management development programmes;
 - action to remedy the under representation of particular groups at particular levels within the workforce. For example by selecting the most appropriate way of advertising job opportunities and developing and offering targeted training, development and career opportunities to those groups, where appropriate.

7. Bullying & Harassment Policy

- 7.1 The Council is committed to maintaining a working environment where every employee is treated with dignity and respect and where each person's individuality and sense of self worth within the workplace is maintained.
- 7.2 Harassment or bullying within the workplace is entirely unacceptable and any employee who feels harassed can complain without fear of being victimised or isolated.
- 7.3 The Council's Bullying & Harassment Policy provides a clear and effective process for handling complaints and provides for support to those making a complaint.
- 7.4 The Council's Whistleblowing Policy allows the anonymous reporting by individuals of inappropriate behaviour.

8. Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures

- 8.1 The Council's Managing Misconduct and Complaints Resolution Procedures have been developed in consultation with the Trade Unions and in line with the principles of natural justice. Discrimination may amount to gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal or criminal offence.

Part 3 - Equality and Diversity in Delivery of Services

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The services provided by the Council are essential to the economic, environmental, and social well-being of local communities. The Council is committed to providing quality services based on the principles of equality and taking action to ensure that our services are equally accessible to all people and appropriate to the differing needs of all sections of North Hertfordshire's communities.
- 1.2 The Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Plan will help to ensure that we work actively and positively in partnership with other agencies, communities and voluntary sector organisations, with the aim of ensuring that all services are provided fairly.

2. Monitoring the use and impact of services

- 2.1 The Performance Audit and Review Committee will monitor the following processes to ensure continuity of approach and provide advice and guidance as required.
- 2.2 Corporate Equality Action Plans will set out the key actions for each aspect of equality to which individual Directorates and service areas will contribute.
- 2.3 Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out to identify those service areas that impact most highly on service users. Those services will then be subject to a more in-depth assessment to review and monitor core services by race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion and belief to:
 - improve service take-up;
 - identify where changes can be made;
 - better target resources to address need;
 - incorporate equality data analysis into the departmental service planning process;
 - demonstrate improvements.

3. Consultation – Service Delivery

- 3.1 The NHDC Consultation Strategy enables the Council to actively develop effective consultation mechanisms with community representatives to:
 - establish the needs and satisfaction levels of those using our services;
 - identify people's needs in accessing information, such as translation requirements, providing information in alternative formats and providing hearing loops;
 - identify user needs in relation to access to buildings, such as people with disabilities and parents with young children;
 - take into account the needs of service users when new services are planned;
 - evaluate and review progress;

- provide community groups with the knowledge and understanding of how the Council operates so that they can participate in service development and improvement. Our aim is to remove barriers to participation and develop improved ways of consulting where this is necessary so that groups can be fully involved in consultation processes. Consultation with community groups on progress made against the service delivery equality performance indicators will take place at least once a year.

3.2 The Council identified a number of specific groups or organisations with whom it will directly consult on key aspects of policy development. These groups may form a task and finish sub-group of the Corporate Diversity Group.

3.3 The Council will also publicise its key strategic policy documents on its web-site in order to allow a wider comment from the general public.

4. Comments, Compliments and Complaints (CCC)

4.1 The CCC procedure will be made fully accessible in hard copy and electronic formats and will be monitored by age, disability, race, gender, sexual orientation and religion/belief.

4.2 We will give appropriate support to those people who need help with language or interpretation.

4.3 The CCC system will include the reporting and recording of all racial incidents as defined by BVPI 174 (reported racial incidents per 1,000 population).

5. Corporate Business Planning Processes

5.1 The Corporate Diversity Group will develop mechanisms to include the results of equality data analysis into the corporate business planning process.

5.2 Equality performance indicators will be set and reported to the Performance Audit and Review Committee and Cabinet annually.

Part 4: General Equality Statement and Scheme for each aspect of equality

1. Introduction

1.1 This statement sets out our commitment to equality in employment, service delivery and community leadership in a series of six equality schemes. These summarise the Council's undertakings for each aspect of equality (known as strands) under the following six equality strands:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sexual Orientation

2. Legal requirements

- 2.1 As a local authority with statutory powers and duties, the Council is aware of its obligations to work within the legislative framework in relation to equality.
- 2.2 Legislation outlawing discrimination on the grounds of gender and race has been in force since the mid -1970s. More recently, legislation covering disability, religion or belief, age, and sexual orientation has been introduced.
- 2.3 This strategy will help the Council to meet the requirements of current and future legislation on equality and diversity.
- 2.4 A list of equalities legislation is set out in Appendix D.

3. Key policies and strategies

- 3.1 The Council recognises that to achieve its vision, strategic objectives and core values, the promotion of equality and diversity are integral to its planning, policy development and service delivery functions.
- 3.2 The Council has a Corporate Plan that sets out its short, medium and longer term priorities and actions.
- 3.3 The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for North Hertfordshire was developed by the Council and other agencies in the Local Strategic Partnership. The SCS includes a commitment to promote equality of opportunity by understanding and valuing the diverse needs of the community and developing equality action plans covering all areas of equality.
- 3.4 The other key strategies and policies the Council has in place to implement its vision, strategic objectives and core values are listed in Appendix A.

4. Meeting the duties of the Equality Scheme

- 4.1 The specific and general duties associated with each equality strand are explained under the legislative requirements set out in Appendix D.

5. Putting the Equality Scheme into action

- 5.1 The Council will implement the Equality Scheme through the Corporate Equality Action Plan.
- 5.2 The Equality Scheme will be monitored and reviewed by the Corporate Diversity Group reporting through the Corporate Management Team to Cabinet. The outcomes will be published annually.
- 5.3 The Portfolio Member for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs has the overall lead Member responsibility for the delivery of the Corporate Equality Action Plan, with other Cabinet Members having responsibility for key objectives of the plan as appropriate for their Portfolios.
- 5.4 The overview and scrutiny function is performed by the Performance, Audit and Review Committee(PARC) and the Scrutiny Committee. PARC has responsibility for assisting Cabinet in the formulation and monitoring of policy whilst the Scrutiny Committee scrutinises decisions made or about to be made. The Committee chairmen/women work closely together to avoid duplication of work.
- 5.5 The Head of Policy, Partnerships and Community Development has the lead officer responsibility for the overall management of the Corporate Equality Action Plan and Strategic Directors will take responsibility within their own departmental or service specific areas of responsibility.
- 5.6 The Council expects all staff to show commitment to ensuring the Corporate Equality Action Plan is implemented at a departmental and service delivery level and abide by the principles of this Corporate Equality Strategy.
- 5.7 All departments must include the equality objectives set out in this strategy in their equality action plans and include a clear timetable for improving performance.

6. Incorporating the Equality Schemes into the Corporate Equality Action Plan

6.1 Corporate Diversity Group

- 6.2 This group includes representatives from each department and meets monthly to manage and coordinate the work on corporate equality and diversity issues. The group's aim is to have an integrated approach to policy and service development, ensuring a corporate perspective is relayed to the individual departments.
- 6.3 The group aims to include officers with a seniority to make things happen together with others who can bring a perspective from each of the equality strands.

6.4 Review of this strategy

- 6.5 This strategy will be reviewed by September 2011 and thereafter every three years.
- 6.6 The review outcomes will be published and communicated to staff and the wider public as a clear re-statement of our values, beliefs and actions.

6.7 Demographic information about North Hertfordshire

6.8 The 2001 Census provided an opportunity to review the demography of the population in North Hertfordshire. The 2006 mid-census update provided a revised overview of the demography of North Hertfordshire. The next census is due in 2011.

6.9 Where information is available for specific minority groups, it is included in the Profile of North Hertfordshire in Appendix C.

6.10 Relevant equality data, performance indicators and targets

6.11 The Corporate Diversity Group will determine the range and level of targets to be met and the indicators to be collected. These will reflect national requirements to link in with external performance assessments.

6.12 Equality targets will be set for individual service areas. As a general principle, use of services should reflect the population of the local communities. If there is under-representation, then the Council will consider whether proactive steps need to be taken to redress the balance.

6.13 Monitoring and reporting arrangements

6.14 The Corporate Diversity Group will oversee the development of both corporate and departmental monitoring, ensuring that the Human Resources Department are involved and linking into the corporate business planning process.

6.15 Equality and Diversity actions will be reported through the Council's Performance Management system annually.

6.16 Consultations with the community

6.17 The Council's Consultation Strategy provides survey mechanisms to allow the views of minority groups to be gathered and analysed.

6.18 The Council is actively seeking to increase the number of local minority groups it consults with and, where this is not possible, to seek the views of national or regional groups representing each aspect of equality.

6.19 Partnership Working

6.20 The Local Strategic Partnership provides the means for equality and diversity issues to be discussed and considered amongst the key public agencies whose work has a critical impact on the community. The partnership includes representatives from the District and County Council, Police, Primary Care Trust, and voluntary and private sectors.

6.21 Promoting respect for equality and diversity

6.22 The council will ensure that promotion of equality and diversity is included in corporate and departmental planning and service delivery.

- 6.23 It is the responsibility of Corporate Management Team, based on recommendations from the Corporate Diversity Group, and supported by the directorate line management system of all staff to make this happen.
- 6.24 The political dimension will be maintained through the work of the Cabinet which will review progress of the council's implementation of the Corporate Equality Strategy and action plans.
- 6.25 The Corporate Business Planning process will include equality implications and the impact these may have on minority communities in North Hertfordshire.
- 6.26 The Corporate Equality Strategy and action plans will be positively promoted to all staff through team briefings, induction and appraisal, the in-house newsletter, the web-site and bespoke training.
- 6.27 It will be the responsibility of individual directors to ensure through their line-management system that all levels of staff are kept informed and advised on the latest developments.
- 6.28 The induction for all new staff, recruitment and appraisal training will make specific reference to the strategy.

7. Equality Schemes

- 7.1 The following Equality Schemes set out the council's commitment to equality in employment, service delivery and community leadership for each of the six equality strands.

8. Age Equality Scheme

- 8.1 North Hertfordshire District Council is opposed to age discrimination and ageism amongst employees and customers. We recognise that:
- age discrimination can affect all age groups
 - effectiveness in the workplace is not necessarily related to age
 - employment decisions should not be based on age
 - services should be sensitive to the needs of all age groups.
- 8.2 We will value people regardless of age and seek to ensure that our employment policies and service delivery are fair to all age groups. We will work to create an environment where people are judged on their ability, competency and skills rather than on misconceptions and prejudices about age.
- 8.3 **To achieve our aims we will:**
- work to provide appropriate and effective services which meet the varying needs of all age groups in North Hertfordshire;
 - consult local communities and organisations representing different age groups on the services we provide, recruit on the basis of the skills and

abilities required for the job, and remove age-related criteria in our employment practices;

- provide training on the basis of need, regardless of age;
- work with other agencies and community groups to eliminate age discrimination.

9. Disability Equality Scheme

9.1 North Hertfordshire District Council is committed to achieving disability equality, eliminating disadvantage experienced by disabled people and discrimination on the grounds of disability. We recognise our duties under disability legislation. We further recognise that disabled people are disadvantaged by certain environments and by social attitudes which reflect, principally, the needs of non-disabled people and that the way in which we deliver our services can reduce this disadvantage. We commit ourselves to the objectives of making our services, facilities and resources equally accessible and equally useful to disabled and non-disabled people alike and to maximising disabled people's access to employment.

9.2 To achieve our aims we will:

- strive to make all our services and documentation accessible to disabled people and take account of disabled people's needs;
- whenever possible modify our procedures and equipment to make full use of an individual's ability and adapt our facilities as necessary to accommodate disabled people;
- continue employing, whenever practicable, employees who become disabled during their employment, and to assist in their re-training;
- guarantee disabled people an interview for any vacancy for which they meet the minimum essential requirements on the Person Specification;
- work with agencies and community groups to promote equal opportunities and eliminate discrimination against disabled people.
- Take action to increase the number of disabled people making an active contribution to public, civic and community life, including public appointments, and enabling participation in cultural, sporting and community events.
- Take action to ensure disabled people are part of planning and regeneration strategies by involving them in the process and ensuring accessibility.
- Take action to increase the take up of entitlements by disabled people, including ways to ensure that disabled people are able to access their entitlements and are able to discuss the options available to them.
- Take action to eliminate harassment and hostility faced by disabled people.
- Take action to successfully divert disabled people who may be participating in anti-social behaviour, including through community safety partnerships, neighbourhood policing and inter-agency working.

- Work with registered social landlords on the housing actions from the latest EHRC guidance.

10. Gender Equality Scheme

10.1 North Hertfordshire District Council is committed to achieving gender equality. We recognise our duties under gender equality legislation and undertake to strive for gender equality in service provision and employment.

10.2 To achieve our aims we will:

- support the principle that men and women should receive equal pay for the same or broadly similar work, for work rated as equivalent and for work of equal value;
- monitor our workforce to identify any gender pay gap or occupational segregation;
- revise any non-essential job criteria which may directly or indirectly discriminate against a particular gender group;
- work to ensure that there is equal access to training, secondments, benefits and career progression regardless of gender where appropriate;
- strive to create an environment which is free from harassment, sexist language and behaviour;
- work with other agencies and community groups to promote gender equality and eliminate disadvantage.

11. Race Equality Scheme

11.1 North Hertfordshire District Council is committed to achieving racial equality in the district. We accept that North Hertfordshire is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-faith society, and value this diversity. We recognise our duties under race legislation and related codes of practice. We also recognise the disadvantage that employees and customers from minority communities could face were there unconscious racism within the Council. We undertake to oppose all forms of racial discrimination, whether intentional or not, to strive for racial equality in service provision and employment, and to promote good relations between all racial groups.

11.2 To achieve our aims we will:

- work to eliminate racism, including unconscious racism, in both employment and service delivery;
- listen to all local ethnic communities and involve them in the development of services which recognise and value their diversity;
- provide services which are relevant to people's needs and which respect their cultural and social identities;

- make every effort to ensure that our services are equally accessible and useful to all members of all communities;
- strive to create an environment which is free from racial harassment and racist behaviour;
- work with other agencies to promote racial equality and eliminate racial disadvantage and racial harassment;
- make use of positive action to encourage people from minority communities to take up employment and training opportunities.

12. Religion and Belief Equality Scheme

12.1 North Hertfordshire District Council is committed to creating an environment in which no-one faces discrimination or harassment on the basis of their religious belief, or lack of religious belief. We recognise our duties under all relevant legislation. We will strive for equality in employment and service provision for people of all religions, and those with no religious belief .

12.2 To achieve our aims we will:

- work towards developing an organisational culture which accepts that everyone has a right to their distinctive religious, philosophical and cultural identities;
- work with other agencies and community groups to help eliminate discrimination on the grounds of religious belief, or lack of religious belief;
- work to ensure that all managers are aware of the following:
 - the need to understand the religious requirements of their staff;
 - their duty to make reasonable adjustments wherever possible to allow people to pursue their religious and philosophical beliefs;
 - to be reasonable and flexible about the application of the Council's dress codes;
 - to support staff in the pursuit of their religious and philosophical beliefs.

13 Sexual Orientation Equality Scheme

13.1 North Hertfordshire District Council recognises the discrimination that lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people face in their lives, and we are committed to working to remove this discrimination and meeting all our obligations under relevant legislation. We want to create an environment where lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people are free from discrimination and harassment and feel safe to be open about their sexuality, if they choose to do so. We have undertaken to make our services accessible to everyone, and we will work to ensure that our employment policies and service delivery are not based on the assumption that everyone is heterosexual.

13.2 To achieve our aims we will:

- work to produce appropriate and effective services which meet the needs of all service users irrespective of sexuality; work with other agencies and community groups to promote equal treatment of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people as employees and as service users;
- recognise that sexuality is not relevant to any council post and should not be seen as a criterion for determining an individual's suitability for a post;
- work towards the equal application of all terms and conditions of service irrespective of any employee's sexuality;
- consult local (or where that is not possible regional or national) organisations for gay, lesbian, bisexuals and transgender people on the services we provide, and where appropriate, develop services to meet their needs.

14. Social Inclusion Position Statement

- 14.1 A Social Inclusion Strategy which included a statement of current initiatives was agreed in 2005 and is reproduced in Appendix E.

The Social Inclusion Strategy is due to be reviewed in 2010.

Appendix A: Key Policies and Strategies

1. To implement the Council's Vision, Strategic Objectives and Core Values, it has in place or is developing the following key strategies and policies:

2. Policies

Arts, Museums and Heritage Strategy

Best Value Performance Plan
Biodiversity Strategy
Climate Change Strategy
Comprehensive Equality Policy
Comprehensive Performance Assessment Plan
Community Safety
Contaminated Land Strategy
Corporate Plan
Crime and Disorder Reduction
Directorate Service Plans/Work Programmes
Economic Development
Environmental Strategy
Financial Assistance to Voluntary and Community Organisations
Food Law Enforcement
Forward Plan
Green Spaces Strategy
Homelessness Strategy
Housing Investment Programme
Housing Stock Transfer
Leisure and Cultural Strategy
Local Development Framework
Local Plan
Local Transport Strategy
New Equality Standard (BV2)
Rural Strategy
Social Inclusion Strategy
Sports Facility Strategy
Sustainable Community Strategy
Waste Management Plan

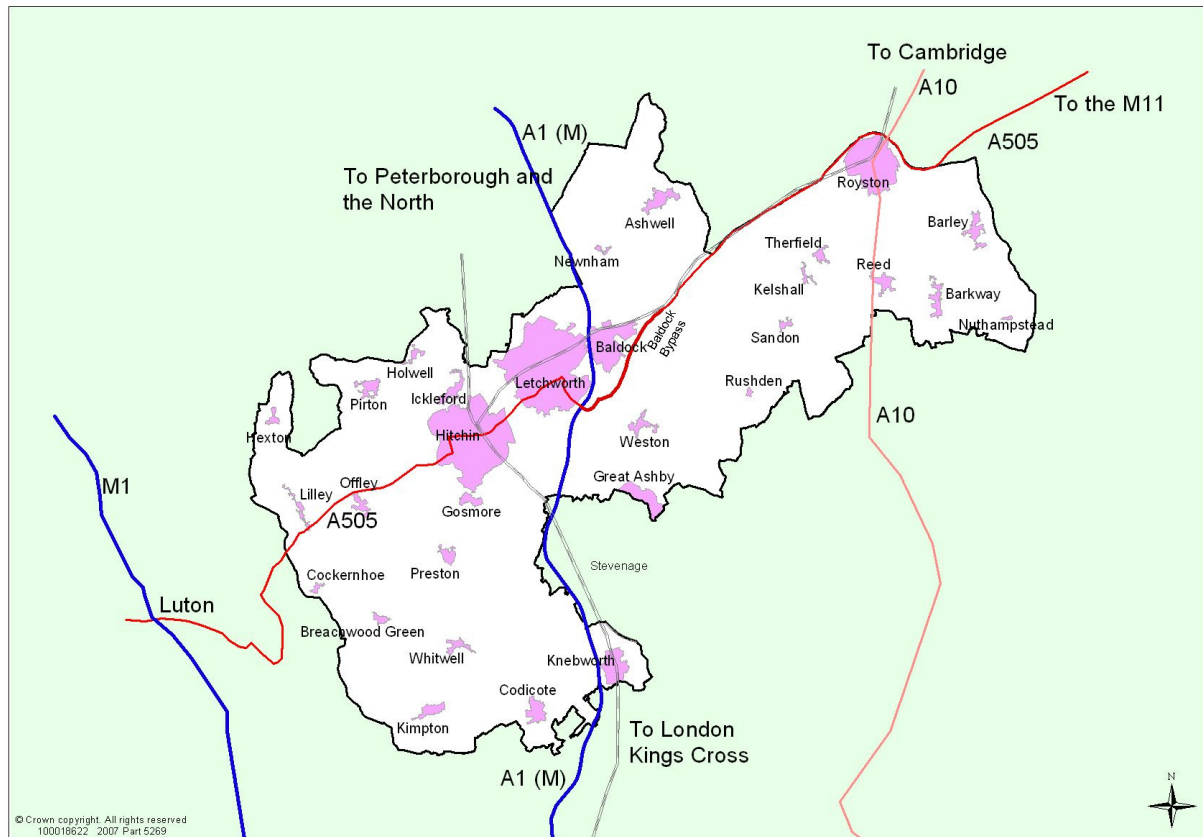
3. Resource Strategies

Asset Management Plan
Communications
Corporate Health and Safety Strategy
Customer Care
People Strategy (which incorporates the Workforce Development Plan)
Service and Financial Plans

Appendix B: Glossary of terms

Corporate Business Planning Process	CBPP
Corporate Diversity Group	CDG
Corporate Equalities Action Plan	CEAP
Corporate Management Team	CMT
Equality Impact Assessment	EIA
Equality Framework for Local Government	National framework designed specifically for local councils to help them to tackle discrimination and positively promote equality.
Equality Strand	The six aspects of equality (Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Religion and Belief, Sexual Orientation) are known as equality strands.
IDeA	Improvement and Development Agency
Local Strategic Partnership	LSP
North Hertfordshire District Council	NHDC
North Hertfordshire Minority Ethnic Forum	NHMEF
Race Equality Scheme	RES
Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000	RR(A)2000
Stonewall	Charity and campaign group for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals
Sustainable Community Strategy	Overarching strategic plan for North Hertfordshire. A long term vision owned by North Hertfordshire Local Strategic Partnership.

Appendix C: Profile of North Hertfordshire



1. Location and Geography

North Hertfordshire is one of ten districts within the County of Hertfordshire. The district council offices are in Letchworth Garden City, which is 38 miles (61km) from central London. It is 32 miles (53km) from Knebworth to London and 12 miles (19km) from Royston to Cambridge.

The district has boundaries with nine other district council areas - Stevenage, East Hertfordshire, St. Albans and Welwyn Hatfield within Hertfordshire but also Luton, South Bedfordshire, Mid Bedfordshire, South Cambridgeshire and Uttlesford (Essex).

It includes four small to medium sized towns and part of the Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

2. District size.

The district covers 37,538 hectares or 23% of the County of Hertfordshire.

3. Population.

North Hertfordshire is a diverse area. The 2001 Census population was 116,908 but the district now has a population of about 122,500 (mid-2007 population estimate, ONS). Many live in the four main settlements of Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston and Baldock but about 30,000 live in rural areas.

It is projected that the population in 2021 will be 141,200 (Sub National Population Projection published by ONS 12 June 2008).

The population density is 3.26 persons per hectare (2001 Census). That compares with 6.29 for Hertfordshire, 2.82 for the East of England and 3.77 for the whole of England.

There are 49,870 dwellings (2001 Census) giving 2.46 persons per dwelling. That compares with 2.41 for Hertfordshire, 2.33 for the East of England and 2.32 for the whole of England.

4. Age breakdown.

In 2007 22,900 residents were children aged up to and including 14 and 7,300 were aged 15 to 19. 23,500 were of pensionable age (65+ for men and 60+ for women). Within that 10,000 were aged 75 or over (Source: ONS mid-year estimates for 2007. Released 22 August 2008).

By 2021 the up to age 14, 15 to 19, and 75 plus populations will be - to 26,200, 7,000 and 14,400 respectively. So there will be about 14.4% more children up to age 15, and about 44% more older pensioners than now. There will be 67% more people aged 85 plus though the 2007 figure was only 3,000 (Sub national projections released 12 June 2008). Sub national projections are based on trends and do not take account of future policy changes.

5. Ethnicity

Description	Population 2001	Population 2004	Population 2005	Population 2006
White British	89.35%	87.6%	87.15%	86.67%
White Irish	1.29%	1.25%	1.24%	1.23%
Other White				
Inc. Other White European	2.57%	3.25%	3.40%	3.54%
Indian	2.67%	2.58%	2.57%	2.63%
Pakistani	0.22%	0.42%	0.41%	0.49%
Bangladeshi	0.29%	0.42%	0.41%	0.41%
Other Asian	0.32%	0.42%	0.41%	0.49%
Caribbean (Black)	1.01%	1.1%	1.08%	1.07%
African (Black)	0.18%	0.42%	0.58%	0.66%
Other Black	0.11%	0.17%	0.17%	0.16%
Chinese	0.35%	0.42%	0.50%	0.49%
Mixed ethnicity	1.45%	1.67%	1.74%	1.73%
Other ethnic group (inc. Japanese and Egyptian)	0.19%	0.33%	0.33%	0.41%
Totals	100.00%	100.05%	99.99%	99.98%

The percentages in the "population 2001" column are from the April 2001 Census (total population = 116,908). Those in the "population 04," "population 2005" and "population 2006" columns are from the mid 2004 (total population 119,900), mid 2005 (total

population 120,600) and mid 2006 (total population 121,500) estimates. The 2006 ethnicity estimates were released in August 2008 (ONS).

By 2006 13.33% (about 16,200 people) did not describe themselves as white British and 8.56% (about 10,400 people) did not describe themselves as white.

The 2006 population estimate for North Hertfordshire was 121,500. There were 610 National Insurance registrations by non-UK nationals in 2006/2007. The greatest number (170) were from Poland. There were 90 from India and 30 from France. (Source: DWP National Insurance Data.)

Taken together the 2001, 2004, 2005, 2006 statistics and national insurance registrations show the changing diversity of our population.

6. Religion or Belief

The 2001 Census information for North Hertfordshire is as follows:

69.8% Christian
 18.7% No religion
 1.94% Sikh
 0.73% Muslim
 0.65% Hindu

7. Sexual orientation

Only limited information about the sexual orientation of people in North Hertfordshire is available. The best available indicates that around 6% (about 7,300 people) are gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Source: The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations Guidelines for Employers, published by Stonewall 2004.

8. Social profile of the community

Social Grade. Fewer people working in North Hertfordshire are at higher or intermediate management grades compared with the County and the whole of England. The percentage is slightly below that for the East of England Region. Much of the difference is accounted for by the higher proportion of semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers (Census 2001).

Grade	North Herts	County	Region	England
AB	21.38%	26.20%	21.94%	23.51%
C1	37.11%	38.00%	35.85%	36.08%
C2	15.89%	14.17%	17.45%	16.17%
D	25.35%	21.35%	24.55%	23.99%
E	0.28%	0.27%	0.22%	0.25%

(Approximated social grade – workplace population from Neighbourhood Statistics)

The workplace population was 47,664 in 2001. The figures should be viewed in the context that many North Hertfordshire residents travel out to better paid jobs elsewhere. There are 60,744 economically active people living in the district (Census 2001) and the net commuting balance is over 11,000 individuals.

9. Housing

Housing remains relatively expensive. The minimum income needed to enter the housing market through owner occupation for a two bedroom terraced house is £50,000 per year. That assumes the availability of a 95% mortgage. It is estimated that 93.8% of concealed households are unable to buy (North Herts 2006 updated Housing Needs Survey and 2008 North Herts and Stevenage Strategic Housing Market Assessment).

10. Transport

There are five stations – Knebworth, Hitchin, Letchworth, Baldock, and Royston in the district. Ashwell and Morden station is only 300 metres outside the boundary. First Capital Connect provide direct local services to London, Cambridge, Kings Lynn and Peterborough. National Express East Coast services to Edinburgh, Leeds and York travel through the district but a change of train is needed at Stevenage or Peterborough.

9,201 (18.85%) of the 48,809 households in North Hertfordshire do not have access to a car or van (Census 2001). That compares with 17.69% in Hertfordshire, 19.80% in the East of England and 26.84% in the whole of England.

A high proportion (24.2% compared with 14.2% nationally) of those working travel more than 20 kilometres to work. While 20.9% travel less than 2 kilometres and a total of 33.2% less than 5 kilometres to work only 12.3% walk or cycle. 59.8% drive a car or van to work, 8.3% travel to work by train and 2.5% by bus. 9.9% worked at or mainly from home (Census 2001).

11. Education

Educational attainment is quite high. 64.6% achieved five or more A*-C GCSEs in 2006. The range was from 40.4% in one part of Hitchin (Oughton Ward) to more than 85% in two other areas (85.4% Hitchin Priory and 85.1% Hitchin Highbury). The next highest ward was Arbury 83.3% which includes Ashwell. (Source: Community Profile and Needs Analysis).

24.8% of people aged 16 to 74 are graduates (19.8% in England and Wales) but 23.3% had no qualifications (29.1% in England and Wales. Census 2001).

11.4% of local children live in low income households (Audit Commission area profile for 2004).

12. Health

Life expectancy at age 65 is the number of additional years that a person reaching that age is expected to live. At 20.3 years local female life expectancy at age 65 (i.e. living to a total of 85.3 years) is the same as the average for the region but at 17.3 years male life expectancy at the same age is the third lowest in Hertfordshire. The highest male life expectancy at 65 in the county is in Three Rivers (18.4 years) and the lowest Watford (16.9). The East of England average for men is 17.6. (Source: National Statistics data for 2004-2006. Published winter 2007.)

About 14% of North Hertfordshire children in school year 6 are obese (National Child Measurement Programme 2006/2007). It is predicted that a third of adult men and 28% of women in England are likely to be obese by 2010. About half of the local population

do no exercise. 20.9% of North Hertfordshire people take part in a minimum of three 30 minute sessions of sport or active recreation per week. That compares with 26.8% for St. Albans and 26.2% for East Hertfordshire (Active People Survey 2006).

There is a real risk that rising obesity will cause the long term increase in life expectancy to be halted and reversed. One estimate is that UK life expectancy will decrease by five years by 2050 if current trends are not reversed (Department of Health, 23 January 2008).

13. Main employers.

The largest employer in the district is a contract cleaning company. They are followed by the County Council, Tesco and Johnson Matthey. The District Council employs about 386 people (full-time equivalents). These figures and sizes may change, of course, given the current downturn in the financial markets.

14. Unemployment rate

The latest available unemployment figures for the district are for October 2007 to September 2008, which was before the full effects of the recession were felt. They showed that 3.8% (2,300 people) of the economically active population are unemployed. That compares with 3.7% in Hertfordshire, 4.3% in the Eastern Region and 5.3% in Great Britain. (Source: Labour Market Profile, ONS for Oct 2007 to Sept 2008.)

The Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) claimant count for April 2009 was 2,289 people. That represents a 144.8% increase compared with April 2008. 3.1% of the working age population are JSA claimants, which compares with 2.9% in Hertfordshire as a whole, 3.5% in the East of England and 4.1% in the UK.

In January 2009 there were 171 unfilled vacancies in the district. That compares with 432 a year earlier. In December 2008 there were 308 unfilled vacancies in the district. That compared with 508 a year earlier.

15. Economic profile.

Compared with the rest of the country North Hertfordshire is affluent but while the average income of those living in the district is higher than the average for the county the average of those working in the district is lower. A significant number of residents commute out of the district to higher paid jobs.

Earnings by residence (2007)

North Hertfordshire	£533.1 (men £609.5, women £439.0)
Hertfordshire	£543.7 (men £599.6, women £463.3)
East of England	£479.1 (men £531.8, women £400.4)
Country (GB)	£459.0 (men £500.7; women £394.8)

Earnings by workplace (2007)

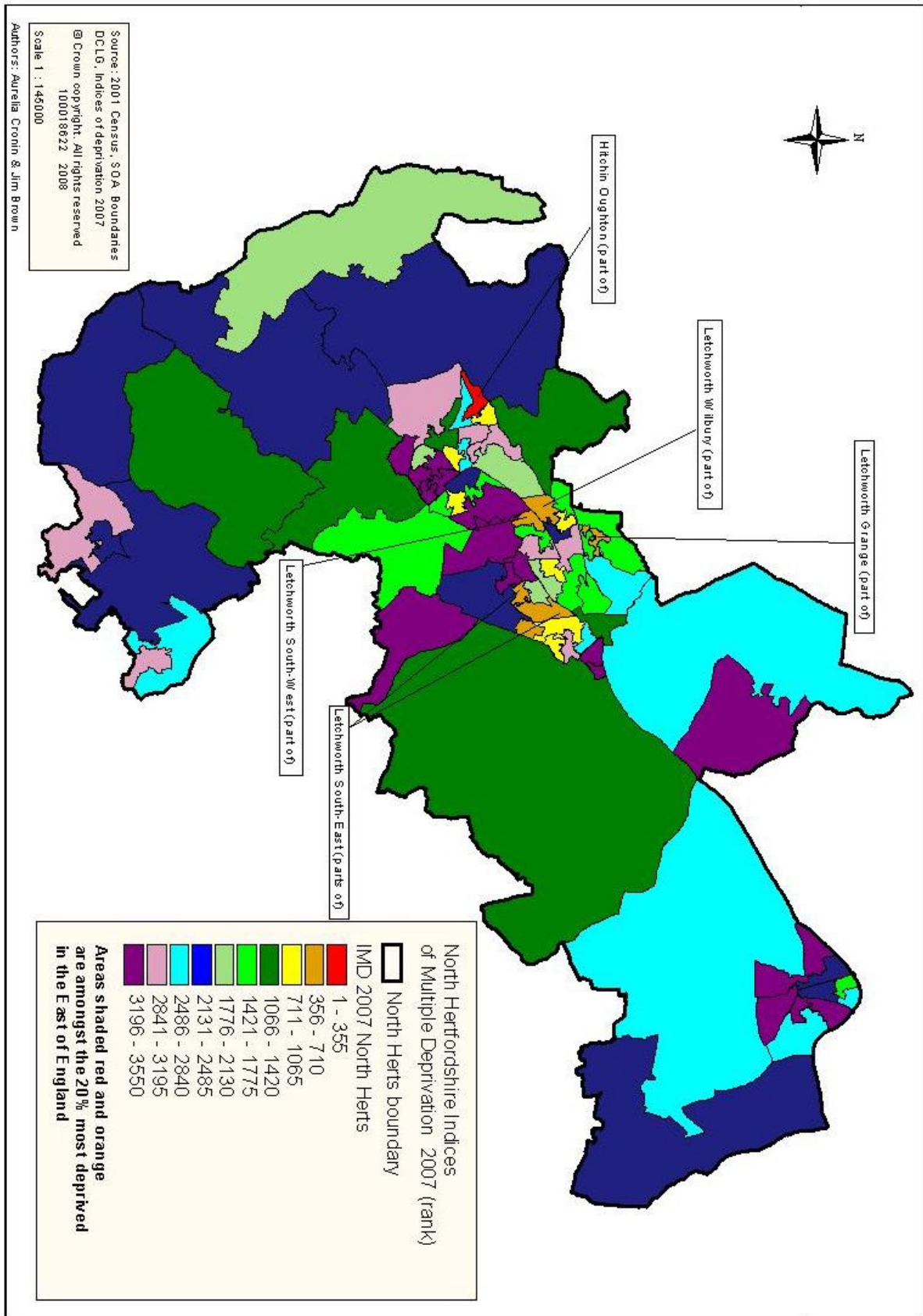
North Hertfordshire	£477.6 (men £508.3, women £442.1)
Hertfordshire	£486.8 (men £530.5, women £431.0)
East of England	£450.0 (men £498.7, women £382.9)
Country (GB)	£458.6 (men £500.0, women £394.8)

(All figures are gross weekly pay for full-time workers from the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings).

North Hertfordshire is prosperous. The average incomes of its residents are high. The recently released IMD 2007 (Index of Multiple Deprivation) ranks North Hertfordshire as 289th out of the 354 Council areas in England. That places us amongst the 20% least deprived in the country and compares with 292nd in 2004.

But it is a district of contrasts. While two of its 79 census areas (known as Super Output Areas - SOAs) are among the 1% least deprived in the whole of England - six of its areas are among the 20% most deprived in the East of England and one of those is in the top 10% (IMD 2007). See the map on the next page.

Detail from the same index shows one area which is among the most 10% deprived in the country in the sub domain for older people. A total of ten SOAs are among the 25% most deprived for older people. A total of seven SOAs are among the 25% most deprived for children. One area appears in both lists.



16. Skills

Skill levels amongst the working age population are relatively high:

	North Herts (numbers)	North Herts (%)	Herts (%)	Eastern (%)	G.B. (%)
NVQ4 and above	24,100	32.4	32.7	25.0	27.4
NVQ3 and above	35,000	47.1	50.0	41.8	45.3
NVQ2 and above	51,400	69.1	67.7	61.9	63.8
NVQ1 and above	61,200	82.3	82.5	77.7	77.7
Other qualifications	4,800	6.5	8.0	8.2	8.5
No qualifications	8,300	11.2	9.5	14.0	13.8
Working age population	74,200		(Percentage of 656,700)		

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey for January 2006 to December 2006 (Nomisweb).

But about one fifth of local adults have significant literacy and numeracy problems.

17. Community Safety

The rate of reported crime is lower than the England average. There was a 14.6% reduction in total recorded crime from 9,063 incidents in 2006-2007 to 7,738 in 2007/2008. The number of recorded crime incidents fell from 9,391 to 9,063 in the previous year. See below for rates and some examples:

	North Hertfordshire			All England Average
	2005/2006	2006 / 2007	2007 / 2008	2006 / 2007*
Recorded crime, all types per 1,000 pop'n.	78.3	75.0	63.7	NA
Domestic Burglaries per 1,000 households	8.0	7.3	8.06	10.4
Robberies per 1,000 population	0.9	0.60	0.63	1.2
Vehicle crimes per 1,000 population	9.5	8.6	8.04	11.0
Violent crimes per 1,000 population	15.6	14.7	12.59	19.2

The knife and gun crime rates are amongst the lowest in the country.

However perceptions do not entirely match the crime figures and there are concerns about vandalism and graffiti. 62.9% of North Hertfordshire residents surveyed in 2003 said vandalism and graffiti was a problem. In 2006, this had fallen to 35%.

* All England averages for 2007/2008 are not yet available.

Appendix D: Equalities legislation

1. The Council recognises the changing nature of equality legislation and will incorporate the following national legislation and regulations into its schemes, policies and services as appropriate:
 - 1.1 Equal Pay Act 1970
Race Relations Act 1976
Sex Discrimination Act 1975
Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005
Public Interest at Work Act 1998
Human Rights Act 1998
Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
Protection from Harassment Act 1997
Gender Recognition Act 2004
Civil Partnership Act 2004
Equality Act 2006
Employment Equality (sexual orientation) Regulations. 2003
Employment Equality (religion or belief) Regulations. 2003
Employment Equality (sex discrimination) Regulations. 2005
Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Employment Nov 2005
Public Sector Equality Duties - Race (2002), Disability (2006), Gender (2007)

2. Race

- 2.1 The Council is aware of its obligations to work within the legislative framework of the 1976 Race Relations Act and Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

2.2 Definitions

- 2.3 The Council has adopted the following definition of racism (which has emerged from the Lawrence Inquiry):

“In general terms, “racism” consists of conduct or words or practices which advantage or disadvantage people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. In its more subtle form, it is as damaging as in its overt form”.

- 2.4 Furthermore, the Council recognises the concept of institutional racism, which is defined as:

“The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin.

It can be detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people”.

2.5 Meeting the General Duty

2.6 Four principles govern the Council's efforts to meet the statutory duty of promoting race equality:

1. It is obligatory for the Council to promote race equality.

2.7 Race equality is a mainstream part of our collective functions in terms of service planning, policy making, service delivery, regulation, inspection, enforcement and employment.

2. The Council must meet the duty to promote race equality in all relevant functions.

2.8 Race equality is more relevant in some public functions than others. The Council will assess whether and to what extent race equality is relevant to all of the functions listed in Appendix 1. This will have a particular affect on those services which may impact on some groups of people more than others.

3. The weight given to race equality should be proportionate to its relevance.

2.9 The Council has to have "due regard" to the three parts of the general duty to promote race equality. The weight given to race equality should be proportionate to its relevance to a particular function.

"Due regard" means that race equality is as equally important when the ethnic minority population is large or small.

4. The elements of the duty are complementary (which means they are all necessary to meet the whole duty).

2.10 While the three parts support each other and, in practice, may overlap, they are essentially different, and that the Council must consider its approaches to each area separately.

To meet all three parts of the general duty, the Council must:

- 1) Identify which of its functions are relevant to race equality
- 2) Prioritise these functions
- 3) Assess all relevant functions and policies for their impact on race equality
- 4) Consider and make changes to policies, where necessary
- 5) Carry out an audit of all employees, by grade, type of contract, pay and benefits, length of service, gender, disability and racial group.

2.11 Meeting the specific duty of the Race Equality Scheme

The Council must prepare and publish a Race Equality Scheme which sets out how it plans to meet its general and other specific duties to promote race equality (as defined in Section 2(2) of the Race Relations (Amendment Act) 2002.

Section 2(3) requires the Council to review the assessment of policies and services within three years from 31st May 2002 and thereafter every three years.

3. Gender

3.1 The Council is aware of its obligations to work within the legislative framework of the Equal Pay Act 1970; Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and The Equality Act 2006.

3.2 Definitions

3.3 The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 prohibits:

- direct and indirect discrimination against women on the grounds of sex
direct and indirect discrimination against men on the grounds of sex
- discrimination against a person on the grounds that that person intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment
- direct or indirect discrimination against married people on the grounds of marital status
- discrimination against any person in the form of victimisation for asserting, or helping someone else to assert, in specified ways, a statutory right to equal treatment.

3.4 The Sex Discrimination Act only prohibits discrimination in certain specified circumstances, though these are wide ranging. They include:

- discrimination in employment
- discrimination in the provision of vocational training
- discrimination in education
- discrimination in the provision of goods, facilities and services to the public.

3.5 Meeting the new Gender Public Duty

The Equality Act 2006 includes a new gender public duty. This duty is intended to address the fact that, despite 30 years of individual legal rights to sex equality (Equal Pay Act 1970; Sex Discrimination Act 1975), there is still widespread discrimination and persistent gender inequality.

Policies and practices that seem neutral can often have a significantly different effect on women and on men, often contributing to greater gender inequality and poor policy outcomes. Individual legal cases have not been enough to change this through application of Case Law, and therefore additional steps to rectify any areas of continued concern were required..

The Equality Act of 2006 amends the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to place a statutory duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- promote equality of opportunity between men and women

This is known as 'the general duty' and came into effect on 6 April 2007.

- 3.6 The duty applies to public authorities in respect of all of their functions, that is, as service providers, policy makers and employers. It also applies to services and functions which are contracted out. Public authorities are expected to pay 'due regard' to the provisions of the duty in all of their functions. The concept of 'due regard' is based on the concepts of proportionality and relevance. The weight which public authorities give to gender equality should therefore be proportionate to its relevance to a particular function. The greater the relevance of a function to gender equality, the greater regard which should be paid to it, and vice versa.
- 3.7 The requirements of the general duty - to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and to promote equality of opportunity between women and men are the core of the gender duty.
- 3.8 Unlawful discrimination in the Sex Discrimination Act and the gender duty means:
- direct and indirect discrimination against women and men, in employment and education; in goods, facilities and services and in the exercise of public functions;
 - harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity leave;
 - discrimination on the grounds of gender reassignment in employment and vocational training;
 - direct and indirect discrimination in the employment field on the grounds that a person is married or a civil partner;
 - victimisation.
- 3.9 The gender equality duty aims to make gender equality central to the way that public authorities work, in order to create:
- better-informed decision-making and policy development
 - a clearer understanding of the needs of service users
 - better-quality services which meet varied needs
 - more effective targeting of policy and resources
 - better results and greater confidence in public services
 - a more effective use of talent in the workforce
- 3.10 To support progress in delivering these, there are also 'specific duties' which apply to major public authorities including North Herts District Council. These set out the exact steps those authorities should take to help them meet the general duty.
- 3.11 The specific duties require those authorities to:
- Produce and publish an equality scheme identifying their gender equality goals and action to meet them, in consultation with employers and stakeholders;
 - Monitor and review progress;
 - Review the scheme every three years;
 - Develop, publish and regularly review an equal pay policy, including measures to address promotion, development and occupational segregation;
 - Conduct and publish gender impact assessments of all legislation and major

policy developments, and publish their criteria for conducting such impact assessments.

- 3.12 Transsexual people are protected from discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender reassignment in employment and vocational training under existing sex discrimination legislation. Public authorities are legally required to take this into account when addressing that part of the gender duty which requires the elimination of unlawful discrimination and harassment.
- 3.13 Gender reassignment discrimination and harassment in access to goods and services is also unlawful as from late 2007, under the European Goods and Services Directive. Public authorities are also legally required to take this into account under the duty.
- 3.14 We recognise that gender stereotyping in our society can have a dramatic affect on the lives of both men and women. Women are frequently disadvantaged for example by policies and practices that do not recognise their greater caring responsibilities, their different patterns of work and greater vulnerability to gender based violence.
- 3.15 Men are also disadvantaged for example, by workplace cultures that do not support their caring responsibilities, by services that assume they have little or no role as parents, or health services that do not recognise their different needs.
- 3.16 Gender equality and compounded discrimination: The focus of the Gender Equality Scheme is to address issues arising from gender inequality, but discrimination and disadvantage is compounded for many men and women because they are disabled, older, young, black, from a minority ethnic community, a lesbian, gay, transsexual, a refugee or asylum seeker. The diversity of men's and women's experience is valued and acknowledged by the Council.
- 3.17 **Meeting the specific duty of the Gender Equality Scheme**
- 3.18 Public authorities with a duty to publish a gender equality scheme also have a range of specific duties that help them to meet their general duty to promote gender equality. The statutory code of practice for England and Wales summarises the duties as follows:
 - 3.19 To prepare and publish a gender equality scheme, showing how the public authority will meet its general and specific duties, and setting out its gender equality objectives.
 - 3.20 In formulating its overall objectives, to consider the need to include objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap.
 - 3.21 To gather and use information on how its policies and practices affect gender equality in the workforce and in the delivery of services.
 - 3.22 To consult stakeholders (that is, employees, service users and others, including trade unions) and take account of relevant information in order to determine its gender equality objectives.
 - 3.23 To assess the impact of its current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality.

3.24 To implement the actions set out in its gender equality scheme within three years, unless it is unreasonable or impracticable to do so.

3.25 To report against the scheme every year and review the scheme at least every three years.

4. Disability

4.1 Definitions

4.2 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines Disability as:

“A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

4.3 This traditional view of disability is called the "medical model of disability", because it sees people as medical problems. This model can often lead to people feeling they are a burden. The "social model" enables people to look at themselves in a more positive way which increases their self-esteem and independence. It ignores how "bad" a person's impairment is. Instead it establishes that everyone is equal and demonstrates that it is society which erects barriers that prevent disabled people participating and which restricts their opportunities. The Council bases its approach on the social model.

4.4 Specific statutory duties

4.5 The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 imposes a number of specific statutory duties on the Council as a scheduled public authority listed in the Disability Discrimination (Public Authorities Statutory Duties) Regulations 2005. These duties are intended to assist public authorities in meeting the General Duty, in particular by setting out what public authorities should do to plan, deliver and evaluate action to eliminate discrimination and promote equality.

4.6 The core requirements are:

- The preparation and publication of a Disability Equality Scheme
- Implementation of the Disability Equality Scheme
- Annual reporting

4.7 This scheme meets these requirements and contributes toward our aim of promoting good equalities practices across the district and ensures that we will meet the needs of our disabled customers and employees. This Scheme sets out our overall objectives for improving and addressing disability inequalities and the action plans for delivering improvements to access and services. It will therefore help us to achieve a number of things:

- To meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and set out our plans to improve disability access to employment and services.
- Make sure that we are taking the needs and views of disabled people into account when we design or deliver services, make access improvements or develop policies.
- Continuously monitor and improve the ways in which we deliver services to disabled people.

- 4.8 In addition to the Disability Discrimination Act, this Scheme supports compliance with the Building Regulations 2000 (including amendments 2003) and the Fire Precautions (workplace) regulations 1997 (as amended 1999).
- 4.9 This Scheme also anticipates future disability legislation and recognises that, as a public body, the Council's duties in this area are likely to expand.

5. Religion and Belief

- 5.1 The Council is aware of its obligations to work within the legislative framework of the Employment Equality Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2006.

5.2 Definitions

5.3 Religion

In order to be protected under the Equality Act 2006, a religion or belief must be recognised as being cogent, serious, cohesive and compatible with human dignity. The concept includes religions that are widely recognised in Britain (although it isn't limited only to these), such as:

Baha'i faith ; Buddhism ; Christianity ; Hinduism ; Islam ; Jainism ; Judaism
Rastafarianism ; Sikhism ; Zoroastrianism.

Denominations or sects within a religion will also be considered as religions, or religious beliefs, such as Catholicism and Protestantism, which are divisions of Christianity.

5.4 Belief

For the purposes of the Equality Act 2006, belief is defined as including philosophical beliefs, such as humanism, which are considered to be similar to a religion. Other categories of beliefs, such as support for a political party, are not protected by the Equality Act.

6. Sexual Orientation

- 6.1 The Council is fully aware of its obligations to work within the legislative framework including the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, the Civil Partnerships Act 2005, the Equality Act 2006 and the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007.

6.2 Definitions

Everyone has a sexual orientation or a gender, but these are sometimes confused. Sexual orientation describes who we are sexually attracted to. We may be:

- 6.3 Heterosexual or straight: attracted to others of the opposite gender.

Lesbian (women) or gay (men): attracted to others of the same gender.

Bisexual: attracted to others of either the opposite or the same gender.

- 6.4 Gender describes our identity as a woman or a man. For most people this coincides with the biological sex ascribed at birth. Because gender and sexuality are not the same thing, someone who is transgender may be straight, lesbian, gay or bisexual. Transgender people are protected under the Sex Discrimination Act Regulations of 1999 in terms of employment.
- 6.5 Direct discrimination is where one person is treated less favourably than another person is treated, has been treated or would be treated in a comparable situation on grounds of sexual orientation.
- 6.6 Indirect discrimination is where a policy or practice is applied which disadvantages people of a particular sexual orientation unless it can be objectively justified. It is defined more broadly in these regulations than, say, current race discrimination law and there is no requirement to demonstrate the disadvantage through statistics.

7. Age

- 7.1 The Council is aware of its obligations to work within the legislative framework including the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006.
- 7.2 Age discrimination law currently applies to employment, vocational training, further education and higher education.
- 7.3 Age discrimination law does not currently apply to goods and services, though human rights law may give some protection in these areas.
- 7.4 **Definition**
- 7.5 Legally, the test for many potential cases of age discrimination is whether the discrimination can be said to be 'justified'. Unlike most other types of discrimination, justification can be used lawfully as a defence for direct age discrimination, as well as indirect age discrimination.

Appendix E: Social Inclusion Strategy

A Social Inclusion Strategy which included a statement of current initiatives was agreed in 2005 and is reproduced below. It is due to be reviewed in 2010.

Executive Summary

- 1.1 This strategy sets out the Council's position on social exclusion and identifies a means whereby it can direct its business to achieve greater social inclusion.
- 1.2 The strategy considers the national implications of current thinking on social exclusion and then determines a North Hertfordshire perspective, including a policy definition. The strategy also proposes target groupings within the community who may be more likely to experience social exclusion at some time in their lives.
- 1.3 The strategy identifies statistical and demographic data that are pertinent to a better understanding of how social exclusion impacts upon North Hertfordshire's urban and rural communities. However, it also recognises that the current analysis of such data is not sufficiently precise and requires a much more robust interpretation.
- 1.4 The strategy sets out the policy context in which tackling social exclusion is one of the key means by which the Council, in partnership with other agencies can achieve its strategic objectives, mission and ultimately the vision for North Hertfordshire.
- 1.5 The strategy proposes that any work on social inclusion builds on that which the Council has or is already delivering. Many of the strategies and plans which the Council has developed in recent years have a social inclusion dimension. These can be highlighted and amalgamated within a Social Inclusion Action Plan which will help the Council to articulate a more coherent and comprehensive approach to social inclusion, but one that does not require any fundamental new thinking.
- 1.6 Any actions emerging from the review and refreshment of existing plans and strategies will need to be fed into the corporate business planning process of the Council. This will help embed social inclusion within the fabric of the organisation.
- 1.7 This strategy acknowledges that the Council has the necessary organisational and management structures and systems in place to take the social inclusion agenda forward.
- 1.8 The strategy sets out a timescale for the development of more detailed actions and a process for monitoring and evaluation.

2. Introduction - What is Social Exclusion?

- 2.1 Social exclusion is a term that originated in Europe and was adopted in the UK in 1997 to define not just income poverty, but also other forms of disadvantage.

The Government definition of social exclusion is:

“ A short-hand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health, and family breakdown.”

(Preventing Social Exclusion, Social Exclusion Unit, 2001)

- 2.2 The main causes and consequences of social exclusion are poverty and low income, unemployment, poor educational attainment, poor mental or physical health, family breakdown and poor parenting, poor housing and homelessness, discrimination, crime, and living in a disadvantaged area (Breaking the Cycle of Social Exclusion, Sept 2004).
- 2.3 However, there may also be other causes of social exclusion that may not directly be associated with poverty, but nevertheless may mean that individuals and community groupings are excluded from participating in those experiences that are normally associated with a good quality of life, eg: those experiencing domestic violence, discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, faith, sexual orientation, mental health, rural isolation, disability and age.
- 2.4 Poverty and social exclusion can pass from one generation to another, as the effects of childhood poverty or parents with low educational attainment are likely to continue to influence the child's life chances in later life.
- 2.5 Risk factors for social exclusion may be more widespread in some neighbourhoods, but not everyone at risk lives in a deprived area.
- 2.6 Some groups of people are more vulnerable than others. These include children living in poverty or local authority care; young people not in education or training, teenage parents and young carers; unemployed adults and those with no skills or long-term health problems; prisoners; and lone parents and poor pensioners. The risk of social exclusion increases in proportion with the number of at-risk categories.
- 2.7 It is also possible to be more at risk from becoming socially excluded at certain times of life. This is significant at key 'transition points' such as moving from primary to secondary school; becoming a parent; after a divorce or relationship breakdown; and retirement.
- 2.8 Nationwide the scale of the problem is difficult to quantify. However, the best indications we have are that less than 1% of the population experiences the most extreme forms of social exclusion such as rough sleeping or teenage pregnancy, around 10% have significant problems like persistent poverty, and 20–25% are at some risk of social exclusion.

3. National Context – a brief summary

- 3.1 The Local Government Act 2000, gave local authorities a new power to:

“ provide a solid foundation for the overall well-being of their area that directly responds to local, national and regional issues”.

3.2 The issues of social exclusion and social inclusion had been a central government priority for several years and a Social Exclusion Unit within the Cabinet Office was set up to develop and co-ordinate Government Policy in this area.

3.3 The Government's approach to social exclusion has been set out in Preventing Social Exclusion, a report by the Social Exclusion Unit (March 2001).

The report set out the Government's three goals for tackling social exclusion:

Prevention – stopping exclusion happening in the first place, by reducing the risk factors to the most vulnerable in society

Re-integration – helping to mainstream the excluded back into society

Basic minimum standards – delivery of minimum standards of service to everyone

3.4 The UK National Action Plan on Social Exclusion 2003 – 05 was published in the autumn of 2003 and sets out a national picture of the government's approach to tackling poverty in relation to other EU countries. There are national targets and areas of work that are reflected at a local level.

3.5 The LGA has four priorities for social inclusion: child poverty, local strategic partnerships and neighbourhood renewal, community safety and input into jobs and enterprise in deprived areas and on mental health.

The LGA has agreed with central government a series of shared priorities for public services:

- Promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities
- Promoting the economic vitality of the localities
- Meeting local transport needs more effectively
- Transforming our local environment
- Creating safer and stronger communities
- Raising standards across our schools

3.6 Through the Local Strategic Partnership, the Council is committed to working towards delivering on these priorities.

3.7 It is likely that the latest initiative currently underway to develop Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs) throughout the County, will also positively impact on Social Inclusion. A proposed list of 12 LPSA targets will be developed, drawn together from the priorities identified by each district Local Strategic Partnership.

4. Local Context

4.1 The Council commissioned an independent report entitled Concerning North Herts (April 1998) and from this agreed an Anti-Poverty Strategy in September 1998.

4.2 In the light of the passage of time and a changing national agenda, it is appropriate that the issues identified within the Anti-Poverty Strategy are

assessed and any issues that are still pertinent to a revised Social Inclusion Strategy for 2005-2010 are re-considered.

- 4.3 This Council, as a public service provider, has a duty and responsibility to all residents in the planning and delivery of services. However, as it is evident that across the District there are areas of greater need, a rationale for the development of a socially inclusive way of working is to provide assistance as needed to those individuals and communities to alleviate their experiences of disadvantage and inequality and to help them achieve their aspirations and opportunities.
- 4.4 If the Council is to develop and implement its role in achieving the Vision for North Hertfordshire more fully, it will need to take a proactive approach to tackle those target areas and communities. In short, the District will need to determine its own approach to Social Inclusion.

5. What is the level of social exclusion in North Herts?

- 5.1 The Observatories Social Exclusion Partnership Report 2004 on Poverty and Social Exclusion in rural East of England, using the Countryside Agency's classification of districts, defines North Hertfordshire as being "urban".
- 5.2 The report provides a useful summary of the overall scale of poverty and social exclusion in rural East of England in terms of income, work, education, health, housing, services and crime. However, the report does not specifically refer to North Hertfordshire and one action for the strategy is to obtain a better understanding of how social exclusion does impact on this District.
- 5.3 The 2001 census sets out the most recent demographic data for the District (Appendix 3).
- 5.4 The data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation shows the analysis of all the wards in North Hertfordshire against a basket of socio-economic indicators, which are used nationally to identify levels of deprivation. While the figures show that there are areas of relative prosperity and wealth, there are also pockets of what can be termed social exclusion in the District.
- 5.5 The Children's Preventative Strategy produced in consultation with Hertfordshire County Council highlights data relevant to children and young people.
- 5.6 Taken together, the differing demographic datasets and indices of deprivation provide an overview of the state of the district. However, in themselves, they do not determine a specific analysis of social exclusion. Substantial further work is needed to create a matrix that cross-references the demographic data against those groups within our communities that may be most vulnerable in terms of social exclusion, and this will form part of the strategy development.

6. How Can The Council respond to Social Exclusion within the District?

- 6.1 The vision for the District that has been agreed by the Local Strategic Partnership is:
- Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper.

6.2 The role and mission of the District Council is:

- To work collaboratively with our partners and communities to deliver the vision for the district of North Hertfordshire.

6.3 The new Strategic Objectives for the Council are:

- 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.
- 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 focused services.

6.4 Working within the framework of its Strategic Objectives, the Council aims to use its powers and responsibilities both as a direct provider of public services and in an enabling approach through its community leadership role within a range of partnerships, especially the Local Strategic Partnership, to help reduce the levels of social exclusion experienced by the citizens of North Hertfordshire. In doing this, the Council will be helping to improve expectations and levels of social inclusion, which fit better with its longer term aspirations.

6.5 The strategy therefore needs to consider the ways in which those areas and community groupings which are experiencing higher levels of deprivation and exclusion can be better supported so as to bring about less inequality and improved community cohesion and regeneration.

7. Defining Social Exclusion for North Hertfordshire

7.1 At a seminar in January 2004 for District Council partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors, a number of workshops considered the meaning of social exclusion and how this was seen in the district. Following this, a view of social exclusion and who might be termed socially excluded was discussed and developed.

7.2 An analysis of views expressed showed that there was a very strong agreement that *social exclusion* was relative to the ability of people to access goods, services, employment, health, facilities. However, there was also a view that barriers existed that prevented all people from making use of the provision.

7.3 For *social inclusion*, not surprisingly, the perspective was one where services should be provided for all members of the community but that special measures

should be taken to reach out to those who might be least able to help themselves.

- 7.4 Those people who were perceived as possibly being *socially excluded* were those who were living in poverty, had poor health and housing, had mental or physical disabilities, people from ethnic minorities or those whose first language was not English, gay and lesbian people, older people, children and young people, those who were not computer literate, lived in rural areas or had limited access to transport, travelers.
- 7.5 The same exercise was undertaken with the Management Team of the Council in February 2004 and similar outcomes were demonstrated. Social inclusion/exclusion focused on the ability or inability of persons to access services or participate fully in society or community activities or where services were designed to enable full access. The socially excluded were seen to be those who were disadvantaged by a variety of circumstances including barriers that prevented them from participating.
- 7.6 While these exercises cannot be considered to be wholly objective and scientific, nevertheless they portray a similar, shared understanding about social exclusion and how it can be evidenced in this district and also the steps that need to be taken to effect greater social inclusion.
- 7.7 From these exercises it has been possible to determine a North Herts policy definition on social exclusion:
- Social Exclusion exists where individuals and community groupings across the District experience isolation from the mainstream life due to their not being able to use those services and provisions to which they have a right.**
- 7.8 The experience of social exclusion can also be where individuals can feel excluded from the mainstream of their community. In physical, social or financial terms they may not necessarily fall into a generally accepted category of exclusion, but for other reasons they perceive themselves to be so.
- 7.9 Similarly, for the Council, those who may be termed socially excluded can be seen to fall within the following community groupings:
- People experiencing poverty;
 - Older people (more than 50);
 - Children (up to 11) and youth (12-19);
 - People living in rural areas;
 - People from ethnic minorities;
 - Disabled people;
 - Religious minorities;
 - People with mental health, learning and sensory difficulties;
 - Travellers.
- 7.10 It should be made clear that not all people within the above categories will either be or feel socially excluded. However, evidence suggests that there is a greater likelihood that such demographic categories will demonstrate or evidence social exclusion.

- 7.11 From the above, it can be determined that some of the target groups may experience more than one type of “exclusion”. For example, children living in rural areas may well be more socially excluded in terms of lack of access to services or facilities than children living in urban areas.

8. A Policy Commitment to tackling Social Exclusion

- 8.1 The Council’s purpose for developing a Social Inclusion Strategy is to ensure that the collective policies and functions of the Council are directed to alleviating disadvantage, deprivation and inequality within our communities and to optimise their life opportunities and experiences as set out in the Strategic Objectives.
- 8.2 The Council aims to ensure that there is fairness, respect and dignity given to all North Herts residents, employees and visitors but that there is targeted support to those most in need.
- 8.3 In delivering a socially inclusive way of working, the Council recognises that it will need to work with and through our communities in partnership with other statutory and voluntary/community based agencies, for example: the Local Strategic Partnership, the Compact.
- 8.4 At the same time, any Social Inclusion Strategy must reflect a balance between the needs of the urban and rural context of North Hertfordshire.

9. Developing a Social Inclusion Strategy for North Hertfordshire

- 9.1 Although the Council has not had a specifically defined Social Inclusion Strategy, it is apparent that many of the policy, functional and service based areas of work have contained elements of social inclusion thinking and practice.
- 9.2 It is not therefore proposed that the Council develops a new, separate Social Inclusion Strategy. Rather, at a strategic level, existing policies and service delivery already happening should be reviewed, refreshed and more clearly set within a social inclusion context.
- 9.3 Aspects of work that are most relevant to social inclusion will be highlighted and then at an operational level, managed to ensure that there is better joined up working. As part of this process, existing plans and strategies will be updated, new actions and targets developed as required and priorities determined.
- 9.4 At present the key strategies and plans to be reviewed are:
- Anti-Poverty
 - Access to Services
 - Area Visioning
 - Corporate Equality Action Plan
 - Sustainable Community Strategy
 - Fuel Poverty
 - Health Improvement and Modernisation Programme
 - Housing Needs
 - Homelessness
 - Community Safety

- Leisure and Cultural
- Policies and Procedures for Financial Assistance to the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Procurement
- Preventative – migration to Children’s Trusts (with CSF)
- Environmental Health
- Corporate business planning
- Community Legal Services Partnership
- Rural Strategy
- Best Value Reviews – Children
Youth
Older People
Meals
Leisure
Revenues
Transport

It is likely that as the review progresses, further plans and strategies will be considered.

- 9.5 Arising from the review, any work areas and priorities from each service can be set out in discrete Social Inclusion Action Plans. These in turn will have links into the Area Visioning and Work Programmes of the Area Committees to help bring about a greater embedding of social inclusion throughout the organisation.
- 9.6 These Action Plans will be monitored and evaluated on an annual basis.
- 9.7 At the same time, there will need to be a much more detailed analysis of the demographic and statistical data for North Hertfordshire to ensure that there is more particular objective evidence to support the social inclusion approach.
- 9.8 The most appropriate methodology for taking social inclusion forward is to ensure that any plans and actions emerging from the review of policies and services are managed through the corporate business planning process for 2006/7 and beyond. This will be the mechanism for changing or re-directing the allocation of resources to meet social inclusion objectives.
- 9.9 The Social Inclusion Strategy will be referred to the Local Strategic Partnership for its endorsement and in recognition that a multi-agency approach to dealing with the issues offers an optimum way of bringing about the changes needed.

10. Management Implementation Plan

- 10.1 Experience and research has shown from the LASE (Local Authority Social Exclusion) Peer Reviews that there are 9 essential ‘links’ in the ‘chain’ of activity in tackling social exclusion. These are:
1. political leadership
 2. managerial leadership
 3. partnership working
 4. community engagement
 5. performance management
 6. resourcing
 7. equalities

- 8. organisational development
- 9. monitoring and evaluation

10.2 The Council already has in place the necessary vision, values, mission, objectives, organisational structures and management systems to ensure effective implementation of the change that tackling social inclusion is likely to engender.

11. Timescale

11.1 This Social Inclusion Strategy will be prepared by April 1st 2005.

11.2 The relevant policy/functions/service areas will be reviewed by the end of September 2005.

11.3 A composite summary of the key actions required will be prepared by the end of October 2005, for incorporation into a detailed Social Inclusion Strategy Action Plan (SISAP) that will be submitted to Cabinet in December 2005 for endorsement.

11.4 Any budgetary issues will be considered as part of the corporate business planning process for 2006-7 and thereafter.

11.5 The Social Inclusion Strategy Action Plan will need to be considered by the Area Committees, the North Hertfordshire Compact and to be endorsed by the Local Strategic Partnership prior to a final approval by Cabinet.

11.6 The Social Inclusion Strategy Action Plan will become fully effective from 1st April 2006.

12. Resourcing

12.1 Resources for implementing the social inclusion change will come from a variety of sources.

12.2 A number of schemes are already being funded as part of the Council's corporate business planning process through mainstream work programmes.

12.3 The Area Visioning budgets and the Area Committee Development budgets are alternative means of funding short term, quick win projects or schemes. These can be deployed more flexibly within the overall context of the Council's strategic priorities and social inclusion approach.

12.4 Given the relative affluence of the District, there are limited options for large chunks of external funding, for example : from Surestart, New Deal. However, where there are opportunities to bid for specific project funding that can benefit one or more of the target groups then these should be taken up, for example: Better Play, Quids for Kids Campaign, Investing in Communities.

12.5 However, one issue of short term funding that needs to be addressed is the exit strategy, and there is a risk that projects might not receive longer term funding.

12.6 Similarly, with an ever tightening budgetary position, it may well be necessary for a reallocation of resources from those services or areas where there is less need to those areas that can demonstrate greater need. Such service re-modeling will

need to be considered within the overall context of the corporate business planning process.

- 12.7 In terms of income generation, it may be appropriate to raise greater levels of income from those better able to pay while those less able are either given concessions or a higher level of subsidy, so that they can access Council services.

13. Communication of Strategy

- 13.1 The revised Social Inclusion Strategy will require effective communication of what it is intended to achieve to a diverse audience of Members, staff, partner groupings and the public.
- 13.2 There will need to be appropriate press-releases, publicity information and the raising of awareness of staff and public alike, setting out clearly what are the realistic expectations.

14. New Implementation Arrangements

- 14.1 The implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy cannot be achieved by NHDC alone.
- 14.2 The current thrust of service delivery in the public sector is through strategic partnerships, working effectively across multi-agency boundaries. Such partnerships are typified by the Local Strategic Partnership, and the work that has been achieved in the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 14.3 New arrangements are constantly being put in place to improve services to reach those most in need, for example the creation of Service Level Agreements with voluntary and community organisations, the setting up of the North Hertfordshire Compact, the development of Time Banks and the Community Legal Services Partnership and the thinking around new Social Enterprise models of community action involving the private, public and voluntary sectors.

15. Review and Evaluation

- 15.1 The Social Inclusion Strategy will set out Council thinking and priorities for a five year period 2005 - 2010.
- 15.2 However, flexibility will need to be built in so as to enable responses to be made to changing local circumstances.
- 15.3 A Social Inclusion Project Team, a sub-group of the Corporate Diversity Group will monitor and review progress of the Strategy, reporting back to Corporate Management Team as appropriate and Cabinet on an annual basis.

We want this document to be read and understood by everyone.

If you would like to receive it in large print, Braille, audio tape or another language, or have any general queries, please:

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