



**NHDC SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2021/2022**

APPROVED BY	Status	Date
Leadership Team	Final	

**Process**

Leadership team approve Service Delivery Plan for 2021/22

Week commencing 24/05/21 - Service Delivery Plan uploaded to website/intranet and communicated to staff and members

The Service Delivery Plan covers a four year period, is updated annually and is reviewed by Leadership Team at least every six months.

The relevant service delivery action plans will be used by service managers to set tasks and objectives in teams' Regular Performance Reviews. Key project updates will form part of regular face to face all staff briefings.

Executive Members and Shadow Executive Members will be briefed on the relevant service delivery action plans by the appropriate Service Director.

**Next review due:** by Leadership Team no later than end October 2021.



## SECTION 1 – CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

### A. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This is the Service Delivery Plan for NHDC for 2021/22. It has been written taking into account the four year vision for the Council. It describes how objectives will be achieved within a robust monitoring framework and in the context of the new Council Plan ([www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/council-plan](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/council-plan)) and Medium Term Financial Strategy ([www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/budgets-and-spending/medium-term-financial-strategy](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/budgets-and-spending/medium-term-financial-strategy))

The Plan is divided into the following sections:

- Section 1: Context and Overview
- Section 2: Service Assurance Statement
- Section 3: Service Area Action Plans

### B. VISION FOR OUR SERVICES

The Leadership Team will ensure that the Council continues to meet its statutory obligations in supporting the Council's decision-making and governance structures and promote openness and transparency, as well as providing a professional, customer-focused service. It will also continue to respond to and implement any relevant legislative changes and ensure that these are reflected in the authority's Constitution, policies, processes and procedures.

Our vision is to provide high quality customer facing services which directly affect the communities in which we live, work and prosper. A new Council Plan was adopted on 24 September 2020 for 2021-26, setting out the Council's approach to its vision, priorities and objectives of:

- Be a welcoming, inclusive and efficient council
- Build thriving and resilient communities
- Respond to challenges to the environment
- Enable an enterprising and co-operative economy
- Support the delivery of good quality and affordable homes

The organisation adopted organisational values in 2019 ("We are") with corresponding behaviours for staff ("I am"). They reflect the approach we will take to delivering the objectives and serving our community. The values and behaviours are:

We are together	I am considerate
We are continually improving	I am adaptable
We are forward thinking	I am innovative
We are customer focused	I am constructive
We are listening	I am open
We are performance focused	I am professional



North Hertfordshire is set to grow over the next few years, with the proposed Local Plan for the District creating an additional circa 13,000 homes and 6,000 jobs. With our responsibilities as the Local Planning Authority, we need to guide the future development for the District and increase the economic viability of our area, through planning briefs, town centre strategies and guiding the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. With this growing population and the continuing needs of our existing community, it will be imperative to improve and initiate new methods of community engagement using a wider range of approaches and techniques, including identifying and engaging with groups we do not currently reach.

In recent years, we have seen a marked shift in how residents communicate and interact with the Council, with visitor numbers to both the website and our social media channels constantly increasing. Against this backdrop the transformation project remains critical to our future service, enabling customers to self-serve where appropriate by automating processes and making it easier to navigate around the Council's website, releasing resources to deal with more complex enquiries and increased / new demand.

This transformation with our customers is also reflected in how we need to work as an organisation. With greater open plan working it is important that services work as paper-light as possible. Additionally, our aim is for support services that allow self-service for colleagues where possible, but are backed up by professional solutions focused support where required. As part of this work the Council has rolled out paperless internal and committee meetings through use of the ModGov app and is actively exploring options for the use of Artificial Intelligence and bots to improve the customer experience.

In January 2020 we undertook a Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, which provided a number of different recommendations as we look to improve our Council, our district and the communities we serve. Good progress is being made against the Action Plan developed to respond to those recommendations, with the most recent update reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in March 2021. The Shaping our Future and Transformation programmes are two of the key ways in which we are responding to the Corporate Peer Challenge.

## C. COVID-19 IMPACTS

The financial impacts of Covid-19 are detailed in section F.

Our staff have adapted to the different ways of working, changes in work and additional work that has arisen as a result of Covid-19. As we come out of the pandemic, there is normal work that needs to be caught up on, as well as untaken leave. We also have to be mindful of staff burn-out and other health and wellbeing impacts. The measures being taken to support this are covered in section G. The impact of Covid 19 on 'business as usual' will mean that some service areas will have a significant workload to catch-up on, as well as projects normally undertaken in 2021/22. A year on year plan will be required to return to normal workload and not create problems in future years for cyclical work, such as food inspections.

The combination of limited financial resources and supporting our staff means that we need to be realistic about how much we can achieve on Covid-19 recovery. It is likely that our role will be focused on enabling and supporting others.

Over the past year we've delivered a number of projects to support residents and businesses through the pandemic, including:



- Supporting the Food provision network and signposting families who need emergency help with food to local organisations in their area
- Distribution of food vouchers
- Providing activity packs to families during the school holidays
- Supplying local charities and support groups with sanitary products to tackle period poverty
- Working with Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) to provide welfare packs to individuals and families who flee domestic abuse
- Supporting the Letchworth Best Before Café to purchase a basic kitchen for their new premises
- Working with the Hitchin Food Rescue Hub to stock up their non-perishable larder essentials
- Partnering with the Family Support Service, provided by the North Herts Family Centre, to encourage local families with children under 5 to sign up to receive advice and support from the Centre

In addition to these projects, we have also provided over £90,000 in Coronavirus Community support grants and over £45million in Government support grants to North Herts businesses and residents.

We have worked with Herts County Council (HCC) on many Covid-19 related activities, these include but are not limited to:

- arranging food parcel distribution
- monitoring and assisting with many types of grants for businesses and community groups
- keeping in contact with shielding/clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
- assisting HCC in providing popup and roving test sites and vaccination sites.

#### **D. FOUR YEAR VIEW – KEY ACTIVIES AND PROJECTS**

At the time of adopting this Service Delivery Plan the Council has been working hard to respond to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic over a sustained period, with much of our resource dedicated to maintaining Council services and supporting the most vulnerable in our communities. Over a year on as the restrictions begin to relax, we will also need to work to support the recovery of impacted services, the operation of the Council and the community recovery. However, it should be noted that further outbreaks will affect the timetable of any recovery plans and the actions within this Plan. This work in relation to recovery and responding will take precedence over the activities and projects set out below, but where we are able to progress items we will endeavour to do so. As the length of the pandemic and the recovery are unknown the timescales for the below activities and projects are subject to change.

A Coronavirus recovery strategy has been approved by a Councillor led Project Board with key themes of:

- Staff / Councillor welfare
- Operational Services
- Development and delivery of Council priorities
- Transformation and lessons learnt
- Financial security of the Council
- Community recovery



Each service area is required to produce a Service Area Action Plan identifying their activities and projects for the forthcoming period. These Service Area Action Plans are appended in section 3 of this Service Delivery Plan. Some of the key activities and projects within those Action Plans are set out below. All activities and projects being brought forward will be in line with budgets and the financial challenges the Council faces, as set out in Section F.

2021/22

- Delivery of our Covid-19 Recovery Plan
- Implementation of the Action Plan, in response to recommendations from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge
- Continue to develop a Growth Strategy for the District, including the examination and adoption of the Local Plan 2011-31 and development of supplementary planning documents. Developing a corporate approach to adoption of the Local Plan, including master planning as well as participating fully in the wider Hertfordshire growth agenda and developing our own Local Plan post 2031
- Represent the Council's interests with regard joint and neighbouring projects/plans/policies and applications and wider strategic planning considerations
- Development and implementation of the Parking Strategy (including electric vehicle strategy)
- Review of Economic Development Strategy
- Participate in, consider and implement recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission Review
- Review of the Grounds Maintenance Contract to be considered by Cabinet in June 2021, followed by a review and agreement to the Green Space Management Strategy
- Continued development and delivery of climate change initiatives e.g. electric vehicle strategy, air quality strategy, design aspirations.
- Review of Equality Strategy
- Respond to consultations and determine the impact of any changes in Local Government funding mechanisms.
- Carry out a budget review, including consultation with residents and stakeholders
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme Review
- Development of new NHDC website
- In-house rebrand exercise
- Development of online consultation / community engagement portal
- Develop further the collaboration between NHDC and HCC for the provision of IoT Assistive Technology (Careline)
- Enable longer term agile working for staff including the provision of hybrid and virtual meeting capability
- Cyber essentials accreditation
- Implementation of voice to text technology for Council Tax enquiries
- Installation of solar panels on the roof of the District Council Office
- Support the people recovery from Covid-19, including wellbeing and culture changes
- Deliver commercial activity in line with the Commercial Strategy
- Implement Community Lottery



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up Property Company if business case demonstrates it is viable.</li> <li>• Continue to explore opportunities for the regeneration of the Churchgate Shopping Centre, Hitchin and Hitchin Market</li> <li>• Produce specification and tender out new storage facility for the museum collections at Bury Mead, then clear site and commence building work.</li> <li>• Produce and publish a revised Heritage Strategy.</li> <li>• Review and prepare to implement a new Procurement Strategy to help the Council and its businesses and residents in the pandemic / post EU Transition environment.</li> <li>• Review and respond to consultations and implement actions, such as the new proposed Protect Duty covering publicly accessible locations.</li> </ul>
2022/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review process of the three Leisure Contracts that terminate on 31/03/2024</li> <li>• Embed any service changes agreed as part of the contract review with John O’Conner’s and implementing the agreed actions.</li> <li>• Work with HCC &amp; EHDC on a joint Business case for a purpose built depot, transfer facility and household waste recycling centre</li> <li>• Review of the Waste contracts, considering either renewal or extension and scoping and agreeing service changes in line with the Government’s Waste &amp; Resources Strategy</li> <li>• Planning approval and procurement of the new waste facilities for commencement at contract change in 2025</li> <li>• Continue work Growth Strategy for the District for the next plan period;</li> <li>• Delivery of climate change initiatives e.g. electric vehicle strategy, air quality strategy, design aspirations.</li> <li>• Participate in, consider and implement recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission Review</li> <li>• Monitor and prepare to adapt to the consequences of the Parliamentary Boundary Review</li> <li>• Implementing consequences of HCC new Assistive Technology Strategy</li> <li>• Migration of Working Age Housing Benefit Caseload to DWP (dates to be confirmed)</li> <li>• Refurbishment of Charnwood House and potential letting for mixed office and community uses.</li> <li>• Replacement of Royston Town Hall Annexe with food retail store including community space.</li> <li>• Complete and open the new museum storage facility.</li> <li>• Business rates revaluation and responding to changes to the Business rates system</li> <li>• Planned migration of Working Age Housing Benefit caseload to Universal Credit</li> <li>• Migration of Local land charges to the Land Registry</li> <li>• Develop a People Strategy for 2023 onwards</li> <li>• Deliver commercial activity in line with the Commercial Strategy</li> </ul>
2023/24 and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of recommendations of the Local Government Boundary Commission Review</li> </ul>



2024/25

- Deliver commercial activity in line with the Commercial Strategy
- Deliver the procurement and implementation of the three Leisure Contracts that terminate on 31/3/2024
- Procurement of the Waste contracts, considering either retendering or negotiating an extension

## E. DESCRIPTION OF OUR SERVICES

The Leadership Team strives to manage an effective, efficient, open and transparent workforce, which meets statutory requirements and enables the Council to deliver quality services to its residents.

The Council delivers a wide range of statutory services, for example routine waste collection, recycling, street cleansing, food inspection, collecting Council Tax and Non-domestic (business) rates, administration and payment of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support, finding temporary and permanent homes for residents, emergency planning etc. We provide regulatory services making decisions on matters affecting the community as the Local Planning Authority, Licensing Authority and Housing Authority and seek to protect the community from a range of environmental, occupational and public health risks. In addition, the Council delivers a number of discretionary services i.e. those we choose to do rather than those we have a legal requirement to deliver. Examples include operating our parks, supporting vulnerable people through the use of assistive technology, supporting the voluntary and charitable sector through advice and grant funding, leisure centres and the North Herts Museum.

These frontline services are supported by other services such as legal, finance, IT and HR which enable our teams to deliver services to the community. There is safeguarding support across the organisation to ensure the Council meets its legal obligations to safeguard children and adults at risk. We source, analyse and internally promote information and research to identify economic, equality and environmental needs of North Hertfordshire communities and ensure our policies and strategies are targeted to those needs.

The Council recognises the focus for commercial activities, as demonstrated by the role of Service Director for Commercial in the senior management structure. The Commercial Strategy sets out that the commercial team will ensure teams across the Council are supported in the development and implementation of ideas/projects within their service areas. It is important that the Commercial team supports and does not lead these, as the long term management of those activities will stay with the service area. There will be many projects that remain in the commercial team, as this service will be exploring and implementing new ventures that have a commercial focus and will need to remain with this service.

Services may not always be delivered by NHDC alone, but in a partnership or through alternative delivery models. Key partners include those in partner authorities and other Councils across the county, Urbaser (waste contract), John O'Connor (grounds maintenance contract), settle (previously North Herts Homes), Stevenage Leisure, Countryside Management Service and Groundwork. We work to support local, county wide and wider partnerships that seek to improve



the wellbeing of our local community e.g. through the North Herts Health and Wellbeing Partnership and Hertfordshire Public Health Board.

Other key partners in the operation of the Council include District Councillors, County Councillors, Parish Councillors, local Members of Parliament, the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, the Local Government Association, the East of England Local Government Association, the Local Government Ombudsman, housing associations, North Herts Centre for Voluntary Service, Citizens Advice North Hertfordshire, North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum, Youth Connexion Herts, Business Improvement Districts, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, the Police, Herts Young Homeless and the Stevenage Haven.

As part of our service we need to manage a proactive programme of communications activity across a range of channels which ensures the good work of the Council is promoted and improve resident satisfaction with the Council, by ensuring they feel well informed about its work. Cabinet adopted the Communications Strategy for the period 2019-2023 in December 2018.

Effective performance management requires performance information that is robust and accurate. The use of Pentana Performance ensures that the Council applies a corporate approach to the production and use of high quality data. Performance against KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) is reported on a quarterly basis to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## F. FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The Council's budget for 2021/22 was set by Full Council on 1 February 2020 at £18.4 million, an increase of over £3m compared to 2020/21. This reflects the ongoing pressures that the Council faces in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to supporting our leisure centres and swimming pools. Some of these additional costs are being met by support from Government, but the majority is being met from Council reserves. In addition to this, the Council still needs to meet inflationary pressures and also looks to provide some additional time limited investments.

Where possible savings have been made to off-set some of these spend pressures. Spend at the 2021/22 levels is unsustainable in the medium term and the Council is budgeting on the basis that spend pressures from the Covid-19 pandemic will subside.

The Council is still faced with significant uncertainty over its future funding. There is the prospect of a Fair Funding review, changes to Business Rate retention, a Business Rate reset and a replacement for New Homes Bonus. The timing and impact of all of these is unknown. They could all lead to a change in the total amount of funding provided to Local Government and also how it is distributed.

The Council is forecasting that it will need to bring its spend down to around £14.9m by 2025/26. Given that this needs to include allowances for meeting inflationary cost pressures, the Council will need to find annual savings (including service changes, income generation and efficiencies) of around £2m by 2025/26. This makes some assumptions over the future level of funding that the Council will receive, but this is very uncertain. There could be even greater reductions in Central Government funding from changes to Fair Funding review and increased Business Rates retention.

The Council could also be faced with ongoing cost or income pressures in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, such as reduction in the use of car parks, increases in the volumes of waste that need



to be collected and disposed of and reductions in the use of our leisure facilities. So overall we need to be in a position to:

- Deliver savings that have already been identified
- Identify at least a further £2m of savings/ income generation. The planned budget review and consultation will help guide areas where savings will be focused. Be ready to deliver those savings/ income generation by 2025/26 at the latest.
- Continue to explore new ways of delivering services and commercialisation opportunities, especially those that can be implemented ahead of any forecast changes in funding
- Ensure we remain able to respond to changing financial pressures, such as cost changes when key contracts are retendered, changes in disposal costs for recyclable materials and general changes to the way the waste system operates (e.g. National Waste Strategy, Extended Producer Responsibility).

Full Council agreed a capital programme for 2021-2026 of £39.8 million. In delivering this the Council will use up the remainder of its set-aside receipts, have to sell a number of surplus land sites for use as housing and borrow. Borrowing has a significant revenue impact from borrowing costs and a minimum revenue provision. So overall we will need to:

- Keep the existing capital programme under review to ensure that the projects provide value for money
- Develop and assess business cases for all discretionary capital spend, using the assumption that it needs to be funded from borrowing. This is especially the case for capital investments which are intended to generate income alongside other benefits.
- Generate new capital receipts.

## G. STAFFING OVERVIEW

The Leadership Team consists of the Managing Director and six Service Directors responsible for Commercial, Customers, Legal and Community, Place, Regulatory and Resources.

The Council's staffing structure (end March 2021) contains the equivalent of 319 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) Employees). At that time the Council employed 330 people, equivalent to 293 FTE meaning there are vacancies totalling 27 FTE.

Further information on the Council's staffing structure can be obtained from the Pay Policy Statement and organisation chart (see [www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/duties-and-allowances-senior-managers](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/duties-and-allowances-senior-managers) ). Due to the Council's budgets, the staffing structure has little or no spare capacity within it, therefore work will need to be prioritised at peak times or consideration given to whether additional resources are required to meet specific challenges or deliver particular projects. This has been very evident over the last year when a lot of the work of the Council has been focused on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Council staff have done as much as they can to continue with planned activities whilst having to work in new ways and pick up new areas of work. However, some planned activities have not taken place. The Leadership Team is responsible for monitoring this dynamic process and allocating budget as required.

The analysis previously conducted by the Senior Management Group identified the Council's staff



as one of our key strengths and this should be recognised. The quality of our staff has enabled us to respond to the changing pressures facing local government, whilst continuing to provide quality services to our community. We have implemented a People Recovery Plan to support our staff through the remainder of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and into the recovery phase. We recognise that even as things get back towards normal there will still be impacts, such as increased workloads and the need to take holidays. We also expect there will be positive changes to the way that people want to work, and we will support and enable this. Looking forward we will move towards a longer-term people strategy. That strategy is likely to include a focus on how we continue to develop our staff and ensure a resilient and flexible workforce, supported by a strong approach to recruitment and retention of staff, succession planning and supporting the management of absence, health and wellbeing. The organisational values and corresponding behaviours provide a clear framework for building on those existing strengths. The work of our Shaping our Future programme will develop and build on that.

The Council's focus on its gender pay gap, has evolved to looking at all areas of potential inequality. This has led to the development of an employee-led Inclusion Group. The Group is encouraged to provide ideas and recommendations to the Leadership Team and the Shaping our Future steering group.

The Leadership Team recognise that the financial pressures on local government has meant that our pay in some areas is not competitive with other employers. We continue to review ways that we can improve the overall reward package. We will also look at other ways to make our roles more attractive, particularly those that are 'hard-to-fill'.

The Council has successfully operated an Apprenticeship scheme for a number of years and the Council is now taking on more Apprentices with services beginning to fund Apprentice places. The increase in the number of Apprenticeships standards has seen the introduction of Higher Apprenticeships, the use of these alongside standard Apprenticeships ensures we get best value from our Apprentice Levy. The use of Higher Apprentices is considered where relevant, including when we have difficulty recruiting or retaining in specialist professional roles, it can help the Council in "growing our own" staff with specialist skills.

We constantly offer a wide range of learning and development opportunities including leadership and management development, project management training, managing change, personal and career development and a whole range of essential learning activities.

With regards staff engagement, throughout the pandemic a variety of tools have been utilised to ensure staff feel supported while working from home. These include staff briefings via zoom, virtual drop in kitchen events and access to online exercise classes. Half day monthly development sessions have also been implemented for all staff. Staff wellbeing surveys have also been carried out, the results of which are highlighted in section J.

## H. LOOKING BACK



Key achievements for 2020/21 include:

- Adoption of the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan and progress on its implementation
- The administration of Covid-19 Government grant schemes with just over £45million in grant funding paid out to North Herts businesses and residents in 2020/2021.
- Successfully deploying homeworking kit and capability to 108 staff at the start of the pandemic to enable services to continue running. All staff quickly adapted to working at home 100% of the time.
- The roll out of Zoom and enhanced video conferencing technology, enabling virtual committee meetings to take place, as well as management meetings and staff briefings.
- Ensuring residents and businesses were kept informed about the local and national Covid-19 response through targeted communications.
- Playing an effective role in the Local Resilience Forum's response to Covid-19, including active participation in several cells.
- Supporting town centre recovery through the COVID 19 pandemic, specifically by developing a Shop Safe, Shop Local campaign, in conjunction with East Herts Council
- Implementing safety measures in playgrounds and maintaining parks and open spaces during the pandemic, including dealing with increased litter.
- Keeping critical waste services running for residents, despite staff shortages due to Covid-19.
- Significant partnership working to reach a successful outcome in the form of a new agreement between Careline and HCC
- Implementation of a Customer Portal for Council Tax (with other services to follow)
- The launch of a new payroll system, including quickly transitioning from face-to-face to virtual training.
- Completing improvements at North Herts Leisure Centre, including fitness changing rooms refurbishment.
- Completing disposal of Town Lodge, document centre and bungalow in Letchworth to facilitate construction of block of nine flats and the regional HQ of Croudace Homes.
- Securing Willmott Dixon as a Strategic Partner for development opportunities
- Implementing a successful Business Partnering Framework for staff.
- Acoustic treatment has been installed at Hitchin Town Hall, which has significantly improved the acoustics at the venue.
- Progressing the Local Plan through examination with resumed hearings held between November 2020 and February 2021, followed by closure of formal hearing sessions and issuing of proposed Further Main Modifications by the Inspector;
- Implementing recommendations of Corporate Peer Challenge and Housing Delivery Test Action Plans, by developing policy and governance frameworks for delivery of key Local Plan sites through the master planning process

Areas identified for development, including through scrutiny, audit and assurance processes include:

- High priority SIAS recommendations relating to the procurement and supplier resilience (all



- in progress towards full implementation)
- The action areas identified in the Assurance Statement in section two need to be addressed.
  - The matters identified on the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan.

## I. OVERVIEW OF KEY RISKS

The Council has a Risk and Opportunities Management Strategy and Policy that ensures it identifies, assesses, manages, reviews and reports its risks.

Each Service Director and/or Service Manager will identify and assess the risks relating to service delivery or the Council's objectives. Officers then record these on the Council's Risk Register on Pentana Performance (the Council's performance and risk management software).

The Council calls its strategic risks 'Corporate Risks' and officers report these on a quarterly basis to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. Officers also present an annual report on risk management to Full Council.

The Council's approach to Risk, including the Risk and Opportunities Management Strategy is set out on the Council's website (see <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/performance-and-risk-management> )

The Council's current Corporate Risks are (as at May 2021):

- Brexit- EU Transition
- Covid-19 (General and impact on Leisure Management contract)
- Local Plan
- Managing the Council's Finances
- Cyber Risks
- Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Services Contract
- Sustainable Development- Neighbouring Authorities and National/ Regional Planning Issues
- Impact of Anti-Social Behaviour on Council Facilities
- Income Generation
- Increased Homelessness
- External Factors affecting the future provision of waste services

## J. COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

The latest District Wide Survey, carried out in Autumn / Winter 2019 showed that overall the Council is performing well, with 92% of residents surveyed satisfied with the area as a place to live and 73% of residents satisfied with the way the Council runs things. While the latter measure has seen a drop in satisfaction of 3 percentage points since 2017, it is still well above the LGA national Benchmark of 63%. However, 11% of residents think that the way NHDC runs things has got better over the last two years, a significant decrease since 2017 (15%).



There has been an increase in agreement level in people who think NHDC makes an effort to find out what local people want from 35% in 2017 to 42% in 2019. There has also been an increase in agreement that the Council is working to make the area cleaner and greener from 55% in 2017 to 61% in 2019.

Over two-thirds (67%) of residents are satisfied with general waste and recycling collection, dropping from 79% in 2017, while around one quarter (24%) are dissatisfied. Satisfaction is below the national figure of 74%, This was to be anticipated due to issues at the start of the waste and recycling contract in 2018.

A further District Wide Survey will be carried out in Autumn / Winter 2021. A review of the Council's Consultation Strategy will also take place this year, with a proposed focus on developing new online consultation and community engagement software to help ensure we effectively engage with a wide cross-section of our population.

In light of the pandemic, a traditional staff survey was replaced in 2020 with a survey focusing on the impacts of the pandemic on staff, specifically to assist the leadership team in identifying any issues with working from home. A further survey with a focus on wellbeing was then conducted in January 2021. Some of the questions were repeated in 2020 and 2021 enabling benchmarking. Some of the key results were:

- 83% of staff felt that overall they were coping well working from home full time – agreement has dropped from 90% in 2020.
- 75% of staff felt they are coping well with balancing home / work / caring responsibilities, dropping from 81% in 2020, – however this was asked during the latest round of home-schooling during the third national lockdown, so this should now have improved again.
- 79% of staff find using teleconferencing / video calls an effective way of communicating with colleagues, increasing from 74% in 2020.
- 88% have been having regular team meetings, agreement has increased from 76% in 2020, this coincides with improved access to technology for staff over the year.
- 82% have been having regular 1:1s with their manager, increasing from 77% in 2020, again an assumption could be made that this is due to improved technology access.

A further survey is being carried out during May 2021 with a focus on the transition back to the District Council Offices and other council buildings.



**SECTION 2 – SMT SERVICE ASSURANCE STATEMENT**

The following Service Assurance Statement has been completed for the period 2019-20 and is based on information provided by Service Directors. Retrospective for the past financial year, it represents an assessment of the level of assurance provided by controls within the Council. These controls have been in place / were implemented during the financial year and remain in place at the date of preparation of this statement.

**Overall Assessment**

We are satisfied that with the exception of those matters detailed in the Action column below, adequate systems of internal control were in place / implemented during the financial year and are on-going. We consider the overall level of assurance for the Council based on the areas covered by this assessment to be:

- Effective

**Action Areas**

Governance Area	Action	Priority	Due date	Responsible officer
Commercial activity	Ensure Managing Organisational Conflicts in Council Roles and Duties policy is followed when commercial/trading activity causes potential conflicts of interest within service areas or across different Council departments	Medium	Ongoing	All Service Directors
Safeguarding	Ensure staff book onto and attend required safeguarding training. Mandatory member training is under review following audit recommendation.	Medium	Ongoing	All Service Directors
Staffing	Ensure resilience for roles which are specialist in nature	Medium	Ongoing	All Service Directors
	Ensure delivery of People Recovery Strategy, with particular regard to employee wellbeing	Medium	Ongoing	Service Director Resources
Project management	Ensure sufficient resources allocated to enable timely and successful delivery of projects	Medium	Project Initiation Document sign-off	Project Executive
Managing and monitoring delivery of partnerships	Ensure robust governance arrangements for any all new partnerships and work with existing partners to improve governance arrangements as required, for example Growth Board, joint waste contract and Herts Waste Partnership.	High	Ongoing	Relevant Service Directors
Emergency Planning/ Business continuity planning	Review emergency planning /resilience function e.g. identifying clear roles and responsibilities in the Kimpton Flooding Plan	Low	?	Service Director Place

We have prioritised the actions identified above as follows:

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



High:	Action requiring implementation as soon as possible
Medium:	Action requiring implementation within 6 months
Low:	Action requiring implementation within 6 to 12 months

We take responsibility for ensuring that the above outlined actions are implemented and will, if requested, provide progress monitoring information to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

APPROVED BY	Status	Date
Leadership Team	Final	30/4/19



**SECTION 3 – SERVICE AREA ACTION PLANS**