

Hertfordshire County Council

Annual Report 2017/18



Hertfordshire County Council
www.hertfordshire.gov.uk



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Foreword

This Annual Report for 2017/18 gives a summary of what Hertfordshire County Council has done during the year and how we have managed the funding we received from our residents.

Once again, the County Council has been determined to provide the best services possible with reduced resources, managing increased demand and still finding further efficiencies. We have made it our priority to be innovative in the way we deliver services, intervene early to prevent problems before they arise and work more closely with our partners and our communities.

The past year has been a challenging period for local government. With events such as Grenfell Tower, terrorist attacks in both London and Manchester, and the financial troubles faced by Northamptonshire County Council. During such times, we are reminded of the importance of learning from events we see around us.

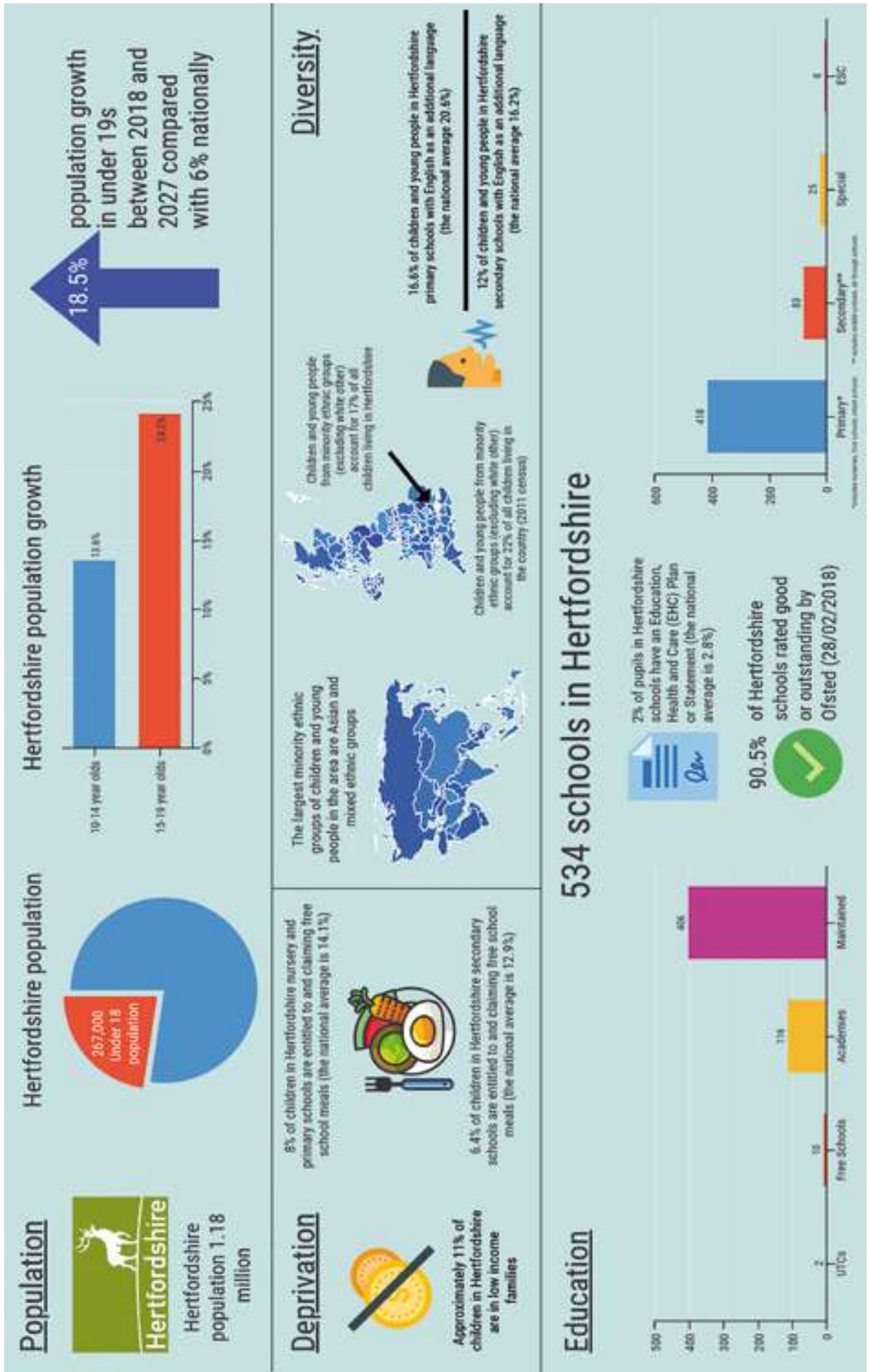
Looking ahead to 2018/19 and beyond, Hertfordshire is entering a challenging era of growth, but one where there is a real opportunity for us to help our residents and our county to thrive. We want to be more assertive in pressing our residents' case, continuing to work closely with our partners – especially when it comes to issues such as housing and infrastructure.



David Williams,
Leader of the County Council

John Wood,
Chief Executive

About Hertfordshire



Our Vision

Hertfordshire County Council seeks to demonstrate that it is a leading council through the quality of services it provides and the way they are delivered, reflecting the following values and behaviours:

- **Being citizen focused** – making a positive difference in Hertfordshire
- **Making sure every penny counts** – responding to the need to restrain public spending
- **Acting with integrity** – committing to acting in an open, honest and ethical way
- **Getting things right** – continuing to improve and learn from experience
- **Continuing to innovate** – embracing change through being creative

Hertfordshire County Council's Corporate Plan for 2017-21 sets out the following vision for the county:

We want Hertfordshire to remain a county where people have the opportunity to live healthy, fulfilling lives in thriving, prosperous communities.

This report will summarise the Council's key achievements in delivering the first year of this plan, according to the four key themes it identified:

- **Opportunity to Thrive**
- **Opportunity to Prosper**
- **Opportunity to be Healthy and Safe**
- **Opportunity to Take Part**



Developments and Achievements in 2017/18

Opportunity to Thrive

The County Council's Corporate Plan states:

We want every Hertfordshire resident to have the opportunity to maximise their potential and live full lives as confident citizens. We also want everyone to have the opportunity to live in communities where the value of Hertfordshire's clean and green environment is respected.

We want everyone in Hertfordshire to be able to live in an affordable, safe home, so over the past year we have continued to work very closely with our District and Borough Council colleagues to plan for the future housing needs of the County, with a focus on the older and disabled population.

We have also been working towards becoming a greener county, and our level of waste recycled is now higher than the English average. Hertfordshire's schools continue to be highly rated and high achieving and we were delighted to be appointed as an ambassador to promote our innovative work on reducing parental conflict to other local authorities.

Notable developments in 2017/18 include:

- The scale and pace of growth across the county has quickened over this year, with a further 100,000 homes planned in the County over the next 15 years. Most of the Districts are finalising their local plans and moving ahead on major regeneration projects and the implementation of new housing locations.
- The Council has done a huge amount of work with local District and Borough Council colleagues to plan for the future housing needs of a growing older and disabled population. The Council have already agreed a number of schemes with District and Borough council and housing partners to enable people to stay in their own home with care and support on site.
- The Council changed the way it assesses and works alongside people to help them to live independently in March 2018 – through its new 'Connected Lives' social care assessment framework. Bringing

together practitioners and the Council's care providers, it will transform the conversations its Adult Care Services teams have with people which is underpinned by the concepts of the Care Act. New aspects of the process include exploring community assets for care and introducing a streamlined assessment form.

- The Council dealt with a number of very significant planning applications such as Katherine Warrington School and Rye House Energy Recovery Facility. Designed to treat all of Hertfordshire's residual local authority collected waste, the Rye House facility would generate low carbon electricity. The Council approved plans to build the plant in December 2017, stating the "negative impacts of the facility are clearly outweighed by the benefits". However, the Secretary of State for Communities and local government called in the application for closer inspection. A planning inspector has held a public inquiry and will recommend whether the planning permission should be granted.

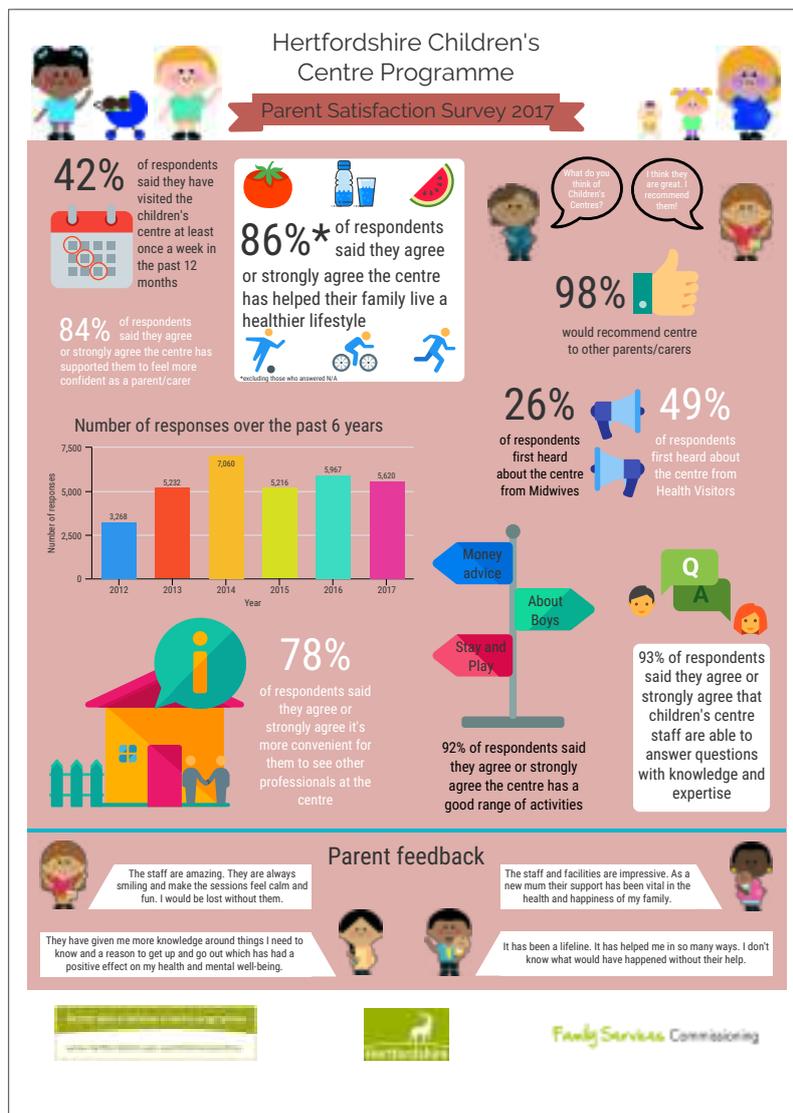
- The provisional percentage of household waste recycled, composted or reused in Hertfordshire in 2017/18 is 50.9%. This is higher than the English average of 44.9%.
- The Council's Countryside and Rights of Way team has improved the abandoned railway line that connects Hatfield and St Albans. Working in partnership with St Albans City and District Council, the team has made improvements that make the route in the town suitable for people to use for short commuting journeys as well as recreation in line with the Council's Local Transport Plan. Plans to improve conditions for users of the Cole Green Way were also drawn up. The team works to improve a wide range of greenspace across Hertfordshire for people and wildlife, involving local people as volunteers. In 2017/18 its staff have secured more than £530,000 of external investment to improve Hertfordshire's portfolio of cherished greenspaces. The number of District and Borough owned parks now flying the nationally recognised "Green Flag Award" for excellence has reached another milestone. Last year 55 parks received awards, up from just 5 in 2006.

Alban Way St Albans to Hatfield



- Over 8,500 children have accessed 30 hours free childcare in Hertfordshire in the first year of the new entitlement. Hertfordshire County Council was the first local authority in the country to be accredited for 30 hours eligibility checks. 90% of two year olds eligible for free early education had either taken up their entitlement or accessed a children's centre, up from 85.6% last year.
- The County Council brought together its functions for Public Health and Children's Services to redesign how children centres, health visitors and school nurses can work together more closely to provide a seamless service to families. Following a successful procurement process, the new integrated 'Hertfordshire Family Centre Service' will start on 1 November 2018. This transformed service delivers our ambition to aim to provide every child with the best possible start in life, giving them the best opportunities throughout their education and working lives.





- 97% of Hertfordshire applicants were allocated a reception place at their preferred school with no pupils unplaced this year for the first time in several years.
- Despite there being a much larger cohort at the secondary school stage than in previous years, 94% of Hertfordshire applicants were nonetheless successful in securing a secondary school place at their preferred school.
- Hertfordshire's schools continue to be highly rated and high achieving, with 90.5% of schools rated as good or outstanding in their most recent Ofsted inspection and GCSE results in summer 2017 being in the top 15% nationally. However, the challenge remains to reduce the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils in the county.
- Every day the Council transports over 3,000 children and adults to school and day care centres county-wide via contracted small vehicles.
- More schools than ever are promoting healthy non-car based options for travelling to and from school. 41% of schools have signed up to the Modeshift Stars Active Travel Scheme compared to the national average of just 14.3%.
- Under the brand name 'Families First', Hertfordshire was appointed as an ambassador for promoting its innovative work on reducing parental conflict to other local authorities in the region. 106 parents in conflict were referred to counselling and mediation services. 100% of those who completed the course say their children



benefitted, and 55% of them went on to be supported within less intrusive and cheaper universal services.

- 62 targeted parenting courses were ran, with 684 parents completing (of whom 27% were fathers) and 1,304 children benefiting. Improvements were measured in: emotion, play, empathy, control, discipline, pressure, self-acceptance and learning.
- Over 100 young people took part in Local Intervention Fire Education (LiFE) courses. These courses enable children aged between 13 and 17 to undertake a structured programme of activities aimed at improving their life chances whilst also developing team building skills,

communications and making them aware of the wider impacts of any decisions they make.

- In 2017 the decision was made to end the lease for Cuffley Camp, a children's outdoor education centre near Potters Bar. This decision was made after a review of the camp's sustainability, and it was agreed that the council could not maintain the levels of investment the camp needed to thrive. However the camp is currently being redeveloped by outdoor education provider specialists.



Spotlight on...

In November 2017, The Family Safeguarding Project was the overall winner of the Guardian Public service awards as well as winning the Care category. In the initiative's first year, the time children spent in the care system was cut by 50% and, with less reliance on expensive agency social workers, the authority saved about £2.5m. Staff sickness rates have dropped and turnover has fallen dramatically; only 3% of vacancies are unfilled.

The success extended beyond the council. The service has also had an impact on domestic abuse. By the end of its first 12 months there was a 66% reduction in repeat police callouts to domestic abuse incidents. There has also been a 53% reduction in emergency hospital admissions for adults and a 36% improvement in pupils' attendance at school.



Opportunity to Prosper

The County Council's Corporate Plan states:

We want Hertfordshire's economy to be strong, with resilient and successful businesses that offer employment opportunities to residents, helping them to maintain a high standard of living.

Over the past year we have worked to improve the opportunities our residents have to succeed in the County. We have seen the launch of the pioneering collaboration between the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the University of Hertfordshire for their launch of the Hertfordshire science partnership, and we have had a record low rate of 16-18 year olds not in education, at only 3.08%. We were also pleased to establish our new property company Herts Living Ltd which will enable us to play our part in providing new homes for Hertfordshire.

Our roads continue to be some of the busiest in the country and a long hard winter increased the need for interventions and repairs to the network. We were disappointed with the announcement that the funding was no longer in place for the Metropolitan Line extension to Watford but will continue to work with partners to find a way forward.

Notable developments in 2017/18 include:

- The Council have continued to work with the Hertfordshire LEP on their review of the Economic Plan for Hertfordshire, securing infrastructure funding and inward investment, and on the skills strategy linked to the future needs of business and our key sectors.
- The Council's new property company Herts Living Ltd which was established in September 2017, will enable the Council to play its part in providing new homes for Hertfordshire. Herts Living Ltd will build around 6,000 homes over the next 15 years, 500 of which will be from a joint venture property development partnership between Herts Living Ltd and Morgan Sindall Group. The 50:50 partnership, formally known as Chalkdene Developments, will provide homes and jobs across the county through a series of housing-led developments on the council's surplus land. The development partnership also has the potential to deliver schemes under the government's One Public Estate initiative and on behalf of other public sector partners in addition to the County Council.
- The pioneering Hertfordshire Science Partnership was launched in March. An innovative collaboration between the University of Hertfordshire and Hertfordshire LEP, it will leverage state-of-the-art science facilities and academic expertise at the university to boost the dynamic pharmaceutical, life sciences and agri-technology sectors in the East of England.
- Hertfordshire roads are some of the busiest in the country and a long hard winter meant the Council had to nearly double the average salting runs. Damage to road surfaces also increased leading to more interventions and repairs including the repair of some 20,000 potholes.
- To ensure continued service improvements, both main Highways contracts were renegotiated and extended to run through to 2024.
- The Highways' Street Lighting Service won the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation award for Sustainability.

- The Council launched a new Smart Card for eligible children who can now simply use it to tap on the bus when boarding, speeding up journey time and eliminating the need for carrying cash.
- In January 2018 it was announced that the funding is now not in place for the Metropolitan Line extension to Watford Junction Station, and Transport for London (TfL) are looking at alternative schemes. The Council will continue to work with Watford Borough Council, the Hertfordshire LEP and central government to secure the transport infrastructure improvements needed to support the town's regeneration and growth.
- In 2017/18 3.08% of young people aged 16-18 were not in education, employment or training (NEET) – a record low rate for Hertfordshire and one of the lowest rates nationally.
- 73 NEET care leavers participated in the Youth Connexions Hertfordshire Employment Guarantee Scheme (working with JobCentre Plus) where 19 achieved an employment outcome, 14 found training or education and a further 2 found a volunteering placement.
- In 2017/18 over 160 young people in Hertfordshire were supported to either, find work, training placements or go on to further education through the Princes Trust Team Programme. It was graded as 'outstanding' for the second year running by the quality review panel in June 2017.
- 36 individual young people who were care leavers showed progress in increasing their employability skills in 2017/18, through Care Leaver hubs, focusing on preparation for work.
- The Hertfordshire Apprentice Alliance (HAA), a partnership with the LEP public sector bodies and learning providers across Hertfordshire, has delivered a joint procurement for Apprenticeships. In 2017/18, the Council started 31 new apprenticeships.
- Hertfordshire's latest squad of trainee firefighters were the first in the country to be registered as apprentices under the new Operational Firefighter Standard. The trainees have embarked on a 24 month structured apprenticeship programme, designed to turn them into competent firefighters.
- Through the Work Solutions programme, the County Council has secured paid employment for 51 people (18 with Asperger's Syndrome, 26 people with a learning disability, 4 people with mental health issues and 3 people with a physical disability), working an average of 21 hours per week. The Council have also found voluntary work for 12 people as a stepping stone into employment.
- The Money Advice Unit (MAU) dealt with almost 4,000 cases and raised £16 million in additional benefits for vulnerable Hertfordshire residents – carers, mental health service-users, parents of disabled children and people in crisis. This is the highest ever-total raised by the MAU in a single year. Within that figure, the MAU's new project - Hertfordshire Macmillan Benefits Advice Service – worked with around 1,000 people affected by cancer and raised £3 million for people affected by cancer.
- The Council continues to be at the forefront of the Primary Authority Partnerships scheme with partnerships with some of the largest businesses in the UK including Tesco, Mothercare, Amazon, Dixons Carphone and B&Q. 5 new businesses have joined over the past year. These partnerships have helped those organisations to grow and receive regulatory support from Trading Standards and Fire Safety Officers, reducing the burden of regulation, increasing compliance levels across the country and allowing a business to have a single local authority as their point of contact for regulation.

- The Council's partnership with Which? Trusted Traders has gone from strength to strength helping Hertfordshire consumers find local trustworthy, reputable traders who offer good customer service. Over 250 Hertfordshire businesses have now been endorsed and can carry our joint Which? Trusted Traders and Trading Standards approved logo.



Spotlight on...

The County Council has launched a new scheme called Connected2Work which aims to help those who have autism, or a learning or physical disability to get into work. As part of this, a new web site for signposting service users to opportunities and support has been developed. This scheme is integral to the Hertfordshire Skills Strategy working in partnership to increase and develop our workforce to ensure we can support a strong economy within which businesses can thrive, whilst enabling all residents of Hertfordshire to maximise their own individual potential and share in Hertfordshire's prosperity.



Opportunity to be Healthy and Safe

The County Council's Corporate Plan states:

We want Hertfordshire residents to have the opportunity to live as healthy lives as possible and to live safely in their communities

Over the past year we have been working to develop more opportunities for our residents to lead healthy lives. Hertfordshire health walks became the largest accredited scheme in England, leading 4,000 walks across the county and attracting over 56,000 attendance.

The number of smokers in Hertfordshire is at an all-time low of 13.5%. Over 4,000 smokers quit last year following treatment and support from a Hertfordshire stop smoking service. We have made good progress against the challenging targets we were set to reduce Delayed Transfers of Care from Hospital and have worked closely with partners, staff and parents to reduce the impact of the closure of the Nascot Lawn NHS respite centre.

We also want our residents to live safely in their communities. Over 3,000 households received safety advice visits in 2017/18 and the number of children being referred into social care has continued to reduce as more families receive effective early help and support.

Notable developments in 2017/18 include:

- Following a significant fire at a care home in Cheshunt during 2017, in which two residents tragically lost their lives; the Council's Fire Protection team have been working very closely with the care industry to ensure high levels of safety. This included a series of very well attended training events, organised with the Hertfordshire Care Providers Association, to help ensure appropriate fire safety measures are in place at both residential care homes and day-care providers.
- The Hertfordshire Home Safety Service completed 957 home visits in 2017/18 providing security advice and fittings, fire safety advice and falls prevention work. The team also completed 2,319 Safe and Well visits during the same period.
- Our HertsWise scheme, to support people and carers living with dementia has been an example of investing in voluntary sector partners to provide local groups and activities to enable people to stay safe and well at home.
- The County Council and our health partners have continued to join up health and social care services over the past year. From the "Falls Response Car" with the Ambulance Trust, to community navigators with GP practices and improvements to mental health services, we have made improvements to all of our services to keep people well.
- During 2017/18 the Council supported almost 13,000 discharges from hospitals for more than 9,000 people. Hertfordshire residents go to 11 different hospitals inside and outside the county boundaries.
- In 2017-18 Hertfordshire were set challenging targets to reduce Delayed Transfers of Care from Hospital. Since April 2017 Hertfordshire have reduced their social care delays by 47%.
- In Autumn 2017, an expanded and improved Hospital Discharge and Community Navigator service began across Hertfordshire with over 40 people employed by the voluntary sector to improve people's wellbeing, reduce social isolation and

ensure faster hospital discharge through connecting people up with services and organisations available in their community. The success of this programme can be seen in, for example, Watford General Hospital which has seen at least a 10% increase in discharge numbers.

- The number of referrals to children’s social care has continued to reduce during 2017/18 as more families are supported through Early Help. The number of children subject to child protection plans at March 2018 has reduced by 48% since January 2015 to 533 and the number of children looked after has reduced by 16% to 815 since January 2015¹. However, a lack of availability and choice of care placements for teenagers in care (both fostering and residential) is leading to increased costs particularly for those with high needs and complex behaviours.
- In 2018 Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group made the final decision to withdraw their funding contributions from Nascot Lawn NHS respite centre for children. The County Council has been working closely with partners, staff and parents to reduce the impact of this decision and ensure that the families involved are supported in finding alternative options for care.



- Hertfordshire’s Year of Physical Activity (HertsYOPA18) started on 1st January 2018. Led by the Herts Sports Partnership, the County Council, and the Districts, the Year encourages residents to “Move More to Feel Great” by trying something new on their doorstep, and is being widely promoted across the county.
- The Council’s Public Health team has worked with Hertfordshire Sports Partnership, and the Active and Safer Travel Team to support schools to get involved in the Daily Mile, running for 15 minutes every day. 68 Hertfordshire primary schools (roughly 18,660 children) now participate, and have recently been inviting older community members to join their Daily Mile as part of Hertfordshire’s Year of Physical activity.



¹ Excluding unaccompanied asylum seeking children

- Hertfordshire Health Walks volunteers led more than 4,000 walks across the county attracting over 56,000 attendances, making it the largest accredited scheme in England.
- The number of people who smoke in Hertfordshire is at an all-time low of 13.5%. Over 4,000 smokers quit smoking last year following treatment and support from a local stop smoking service. The number of pregnant smokers in Hertfordshire receiving support and successfully quitting has risen, and smoking at the time of delivery has fallen to 6.7%
- 2017/18 saw the expansion of the Council's sexual health service (Sexual Health Hertfordshire) with the opening of a brand new clinic in Stevenage and an all-day service in Bishops Stortford
- Since February 2018, Hertfordshire residents aged over 16 years can order a free, confidential STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection) home testing kit which allows them to test for Syphilis, HIV, Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea. The service is proving to be popular with just over 1,200 kits were requested with 708 returned in the first six weeks after launch.
- The Council has led a multi-agency partnership to agree a suicide prevention vision where "no-one in Hertfordshire feels suicide is their only option", and an ultimate ambition of zero suicides. Delivery of the plan has included training of 700



professionals, development of a suicide-aware school standard, and improved suicide bereavement support.

- The new Hertfordshire Public Health Service Strategy 2017-21 was launched in 2017. It sets out Public Health's commitment to work closely with other organisations to help residents to help themselves to live to an old age in good health and, where possible, disability free.
- The #JustTalk campaign to encourage teenage boys to talk about their mental health launched in January 2018. In the first week there were 949 people tweeting and 9,000,000 Twitter impressions. 250,500 people were reached via Facebook, SnapChat and Instagram, 90% of whom were teenage boys.
- The Hertfordshire Partnership fund completed its second phase with around 100 Public Health Projects being undertaken by District and Borough Councils on Public Health's behalf.



Spotlight on...

In October 2017, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service working alongside Herts Careline and Living Safely to provide a Stove Guard device linked to a Telecare provider. This product automatically turns a cooker off if it gets too hot or if it is left on after cooking – significantly reducing the risk of a home fire happening. The product now features as one of the safety systems recommended by Herts Careline for those living with dementia or short term memory loss.

ADULT CARE AND SUPPORT IN HERTFORDSHIRE



A walking netball project in Three Rivers District funded by the Council's public health team

Opportunity to Take Part

The County Council's Corporate Plan states:

We want to enable all Hertfordshire residents to make a more active contribution to their local areas, working with elected representatives and other community activists to tackle local issues and ensure that council services are more responsive to their priorities and ambitions.

We are always working to increase the number of residents who are actively involved in their communities. 956 young people took part in the National Citizen Service, we have developed standards for working together with our residents and we continue to be indebted to the fantastic contribution that volunteers from across the county make to our services every year.

Each year, members of the public also have the opportunity to apply for funding from the locality budget scheme to support a wide range of groups and small organisations to deliver worthwhile projects in their area. In 2017/18 a total of 1,294 grants were approved by councillors.

Notable developments in 2017/18 include:

- 956 young people aged between 16-17 years old took part in the National Citizen Service, which helps them to build skills for work, life and the transition into adulthood. Key groups continue to be targeted, such as those in receipt of free school meals, children looked after, those known to Intensive Family Support and Targeted Youth Support.
- 2018 sees the tenth anniversary of the Community Protection Directorate's Volunteer programme. Over 100 volunteers, including Fire and Rescue volunteers, are actively supporting the directorate to achieve its aims and objectives. The programme also offers an opportunity for residents to become involved in a variety of work ranging from Home Safety Visits to working with Trading Standards staff on underage sales and counterfeit goods.
- The Council has developed standards for 'co-production' – developing new ways of working and services that people want to see, solving problems that people and carers feel are most important. This is an opportunity for people to be involved and engaged with senior managers from the County Council. So far, the Council have raised issues about public transport, the social care budget, loneliness and public information.
- A number of consultations took place throughout the year, including initiatives to inform the Council's budget and determine key priorities. Results of these activities, which included an online survey, a discussion event with community leaders and consultation with businesses, are available on our website.
- A series of events took place in October 2017 for Local Democracy Week, to raise awareness of how local authorities operate. Events included a blog featuring one of our young commissioners, a lunchtime briefing by councillors to staff, councillor visits to local schools, and a mock debate event for local school children hosted by the Chairman of the County Council.
- Councillors allocate funding from their locality budgets to support a wide range of groups and small organisations to deliver worthwhile projects, from the refurbishment of village halls to the purchase of community defibrillators.

In 2017/18, each County Councillor had a budget of £10,000. A total of 1,294 grants totalling nearly £779,400 were approved by Councillors through the scheme. Each County Councillor is also able to nominate £90,000 of highways works each year.



Spotlight on...

Conservation Volunteers and Friends Groups have contributed 28,700 hours of their time over the year, including a dedicated volunteer team who are increasing volunteering on Rights of Way.

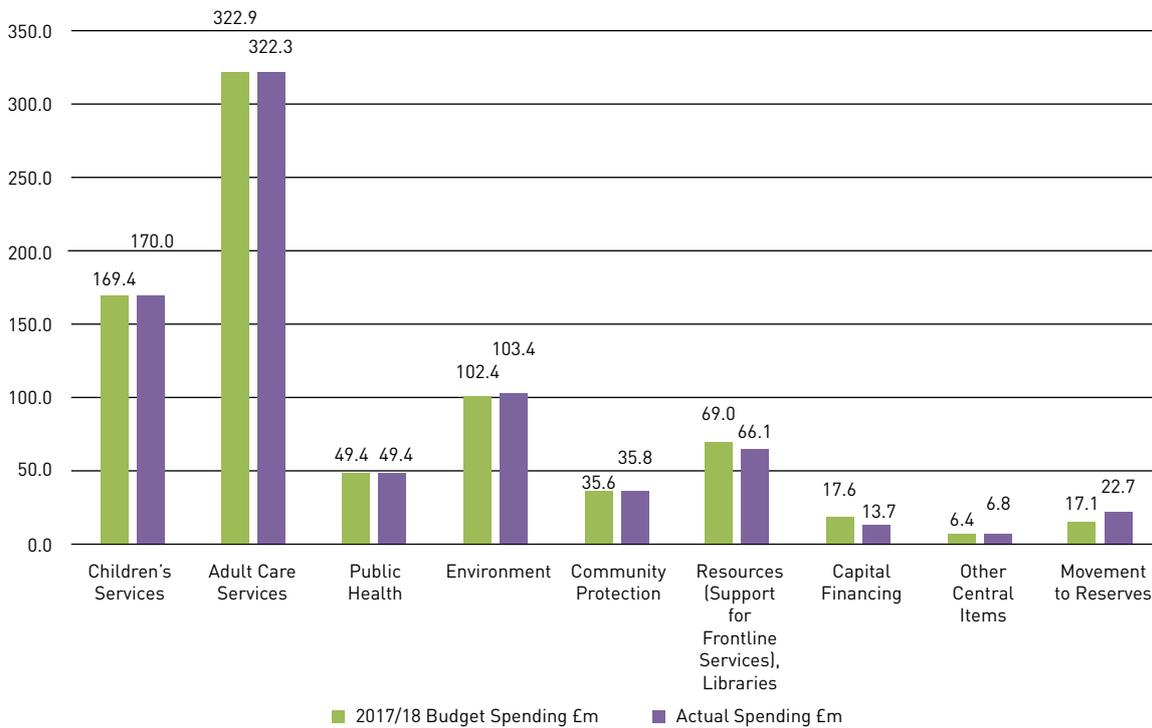


Our Finances

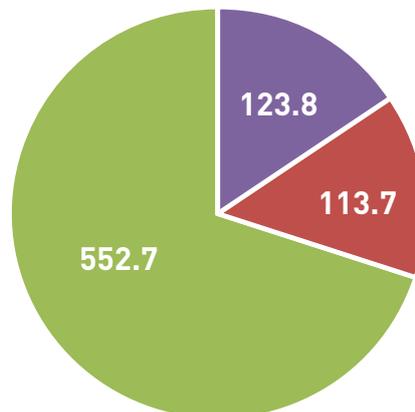
During 2017/18 the Council continued to respond to financial challenges. These included meeting increasing demand within reducing resources, meeting the needs of Hertfordshire residents and businesses, and investing in innovative projects to transform the way services are delivered. The following section summarises the Council's spending and funding for the year.

The chart below shows the cost of delivering services for the financial year April 2017 to March 2018 compared to budget, and how these are funded by taxpayers. They include spending on day to day items, such as salaries, premises costs and supplies & services.

Total Spend against Budget, 2017/18



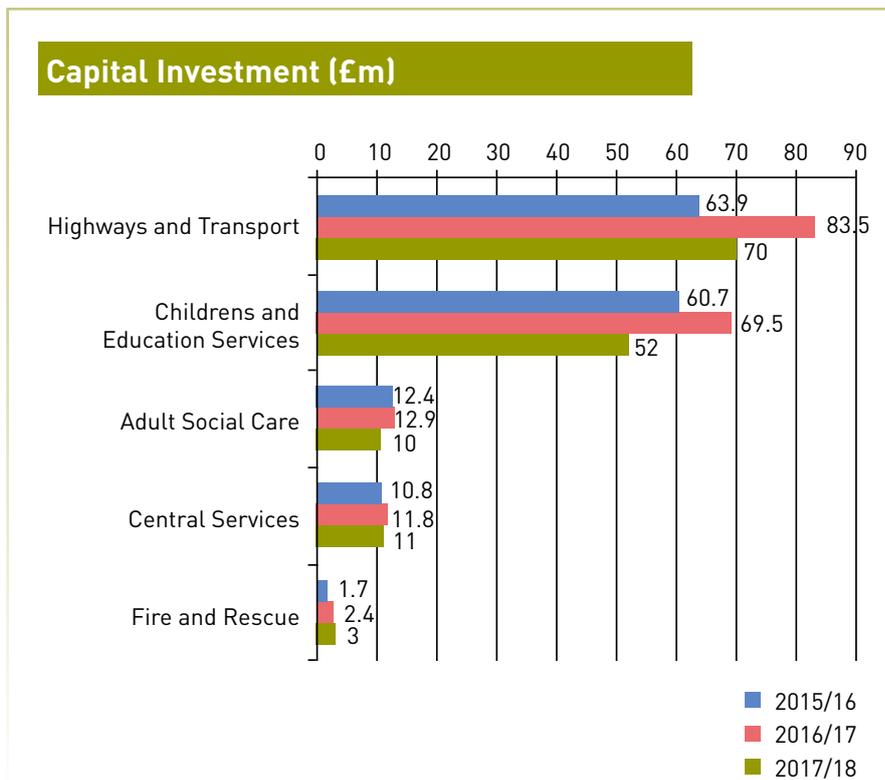
Funding for Actual Spending 2017/18 £m



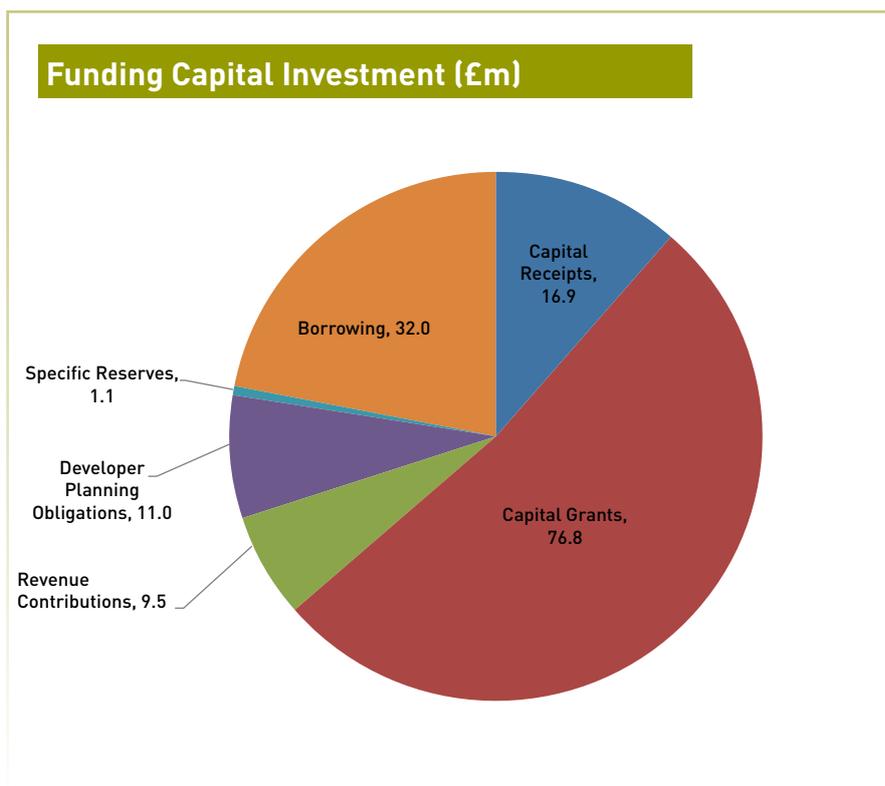
Despite the reduced government grants and increase in demand that have been faced, the Council has been able to manage within the budget available. While there was concern during the year that some services were facing higher than expected levels of demand, which increased the risk of spending more than budgeted, by the end of the year these issues had been addressed. Overall, the final position was a net £5.6m (0.7%) underspend against budget.

The Council continues to invest in its infrastructure, including a programme of schools expansion to meet growth in pupil numbers, and in maintenance of the county's road network. Capital investments made in 2017/18 amount to £147.2m. Similar amounts have been invested in previous years, as shown in the Capital Investment.

This investment has been funded from government grants, capital receipts from the sale of surplus assets, developer planning obligation and some revenue budget contribution. Some borrowing was required, but this is being met from the Council's own balances, and there was no new external long term borrowing in 2017/18.



The Council produces a full Statement of Accounts which shows the authority's financial position, prepared in accordance with international accounting standards and statutory requirements. These include a number of non-cash adjustments that do not need to be funded from Council Tax or other sources. The audited accounts for 2017/18 and previous years' audited accounts are available here.



Our Commitment to Equalities



Hertfordshire County Council is committed to achieving diversity and equality of opportunity both as a large employer and as a provider of services. It has a public duty to promote equality and to combat the unfair discrimination that still exists in society.

The Council recognises, respects and celebrates the fact that its staff and the people it serves are all very different, whether this is in their ethnic background, family setting, gender, religion and belief or other factors. It believes that diversity drives innovation, a culture of fairness and respect and equality of opportunity for all.

It demonstrates its commitment to tackling inequality and promoting diversity in everything it does. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, it publishes evidence of the impact of its policies and practices on people with protected characteristics as well as the objectives it has set to continue this work.

The Council's full commitment to equality and diversity is detailed on its website. This includes its Equality Strategy 2016-20, which sets out the key issues the Council is addressing, how it will meet its legal requirements and how it will measure its success.



The Year Ahead

Hertfordshire has a growing and ageing population. We are supporting our District and Borough colleagues to plan for over 100,000 new homes and as many jobs over the next 15 years and this means we need to plan for the delivery of infrastructure to support this growth—especially for those areas the county council has direct responsibility for, such as new schools and improved roads.

The Council will be increasing its capacity to respond effectively to these growth pressures and the digital revolution to ensure our service needs are met and that infrastructure is well planned and funded. As part of this, work is underway by the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to develop a Local Industrial Strategy for the county to continue to develop Hertfordshire's strong and diverse economy.

Other potential challenges and opportunities the Council faces in the coming year and beyond include:

- The forthcoming publication of the Green Paper for Care and Support, along with the Spending Review, due in early 2019, come at a time when adult social care is at a cross roads. It is widely accepted that continuing with the status quo is not an option and collectively government, the NHS, local government, along with other key stakeholders and the public must determine how best to deliver a sustainable funding solution in the short, medium and long-term.
- Any reforms must ensure that adult social care remains a local service, democratically accountable to residents. This is critical to ensuring a continued interface with wider community based issues on a local level.
- Hertfordshire's population is predicted to increase over the next decade. This growth is not evenly distributed and by 2021 42.6% of Hertfordshire's population will either be under 20 or over 65. This demographic pressure will increase demand on the Council's services and further stretch its ability to respond to needs. In addition, over 70,000 Hertfordshire residents have a disability and the Council's services need to ensure they meet the needs of the disabled community.
- The Council will need to find ways to reduce cost and maintain or improve services whilst preparing for the future despite demand pressures. The government's spending review will not start until early 2019, which is the earliest the Council will know about its funding situation beyond 2020. There may be little certainty of previous grants or confirmation of what the general council tax level could be set at for future years. In addition, the National Living wage increase adds to the Council's budget challenges.
- The Council will continue to monitor the implications of the UK's decision to leave the European Union in the lead up to the country's withdrawal in March 2019.
- The Council will be working with Hertfordshire's Police and Crime Commissioner and partner agencies to form a new strategy to combat the recent rise in serious crime, including knife crime and gang activity in the county.
- The pipe line of major transport projects should see the procurement of five major schemes enabling the start of construction of A120 Little Hadham bypass before the end of 2018. The Council have also received planning permission for the expansion and development of the Household Waste Recycling centre at Ware and hope to start work on this site later in the year.

- A new strategy is in development for the A414. With new homes expected to impact upon this route, the strategy aims to identify the role, function and investment priorities for the road.
- The Council expect to see a 20% increase in traffic on Hertfordshire's roads over the next 15 years. The Council is looking at smarter options such as prioritising cycling and walking, and using new technologies; and will continue to invest in key road schemes to improve our road network.



- Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue constantly strives to enhance the safety of its firefighters and its operational effectiveness. Through a combination of academic research, staff input, field testing and collaborative working with other fire and rescue services, Hertfordshire has introduced new operational procedures, adding the latest water misting equipment to its fleet. The next steps will be to consider alternative firefighting and rescue vehicles, different crewing models and how best to fully utilise the opportunities presented by advances in technology.
- Following publication of Dame Judith Hackitt's independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety, the Council is likely to see a new, expanded, role for our Fire Protection team at higher risk premises. Dame Judith's report recommends that this should include changes to regulatory responsibilities as well as a much greater focus on fire safety at all stages of a building's life.

- Working with Trading Standards and external partners including the Police and the OPCC, we will be developing and launching a Scams Strategy which focuses on crimes and incidents targeted against older and vulnerable residents.
- The focus for the Council's Children, Young People and Families Services in the year ahead is to narrow the gap between those children and young people who achieve positive outcomes, and those who need support to be able to thrive. Under the brand name 'Families First' we can offer early help and support to families before their needs escalate.
- The service will continue to work with schools and Herts for Learning on strategies to improve the achievement of more disadvantaged children including children looked after and those with special educational needs and disabilities. Service transformation plans and a specific special educational needs and disabilities strategy will be implemented.
- We will continue to improve the way we work alongside our residents and think about what support is available to them in their own communities - ensuring that we can 'Connect and Prevent' the need for social care, 'Connect and Enable' people to live independent lives, and 'Connect and Support' those who need help with tasks of daily living.
- The Council will be piloting new digital assistive technologies as an integral part of a person's care plan to better support people's independence, identify changing needs at an earlier stage and provide better support for family carers.



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