

# Hertfordshire County Council Annual Report 2020 - 2021



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Hertfordshire



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**Our ambition is to ensure that Hertfordshire continues to be a county where people are able to live healthy, fulfilling lives in thriving, prosperous communities.**



**Richard Roberts,**  
Leader of Hertfordshire County Council

**Owen Mapley,**  
Chief Executive of Hertfordshire  
County Council

# Foreword

**With the Covid-19 pandemic the past year has been like no other. There is no precedent.**

Throughout the pandemic our priority has continued to be to deliver our core public services to the highest standards. And as well as working to keep our residents safe and healthy, we have aimed to keep Hertfordshire sustainable and prepared for the future.

We're now pleased to present Hertfordshire County Council's Annual Report for 2020 – 2021.

The report gives a summary of how we've responded to the pandemic, as well as what the council has achieved over the past year and how we have spent the funding we receive for the benefit of our residents.

The report charts progress against the ambitions and commitments set out in Hertfordshire County Council's Corporate Plan 2019 – 2025.

We are again pleased with the progress the council has been able to make against the objectives set out in our Corporate Plan – alongside the extra challenges created by the pandemic last year. We have worked closely with our partners on shared priorities and have delivered services which make a real difference to the residents of Hertfordshire despite, like other councils across the country, facing significant financial constraints that have been stretched even further by the pandemic.

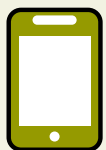
Whilst celebrating some of the achievements from the past year we also recognise that the Covid-19 pandemic continues to affect people's lives across the county. This crisis emphasises the importance of ensuring Hertfordshire remains a county of opportunity and that we continue to recover together.



# Covid-19: Hertfordshire's response



**1.5 million visits**  
to the **Covid-19** pages  
on our website



More than  
**11,500**  
keeping-in-touch calls  
to local family carers

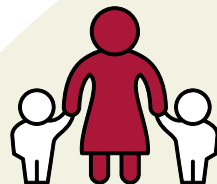
**2,400  
businesses**  
checked or advised  
by **Trading Standards**



**£7.7m**  
of funding secured to  
improve walking and  
cycling schemes



**1.75 million  
downloads**  
from our e-library



More than  
**72,000 visits**  
by our **social workers** to  
families they support



## Ongoing support

from our Covid-19 response  
team provided to all childcare  
and education settings



**4,470 referrals**  
to our Money Advice  
Unit, raising **£22.2m** in  
**additional benefits** for  
residents



More than  
**163,000 enquiries**  
dealt with by HertsHelp  
community helpline

## 80,377 rapid tests

conducted at more than **65 sites** and  
**53,307 home rapid test** kits provided  
to residents and businesses



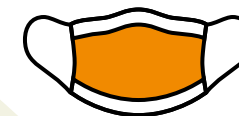
**1.2 million  
Hertfordshire  
residents  
playing their  
part**

## HAPpy Holiday

Activity programme supported  
**1,624 children** in person,  
**2,309 online** and provided  
**3,424 wellbeing packs**



**600 care homes  
and care providers**  
and **35,000+** social care staff  
supported through our new  
Care Provider Hub



More than  
**9 million pieces  
of vital PPE**  
delivered to groups including  
GPs, care homes, social  
workers, charities, schools  
and public transport  
providers

Over  
**103,608  
support tasks**

completed by  
volunteers with  
**2,667 continuing** to  
help **3,616 people**  
regularly



Funding from  
the Covid-19

## Winter Support Grant

helped **109,137 families**,  
**96,610** of these with  
children under 19



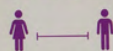
**132,000  
food packages  
delivered**



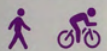
**6,266  
medicine  
deliveries**

## Stay Safe Hertfordshire

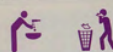
Please protect yourself and your community  
by following this advice:



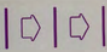
Please keep  
your distance



Walk and cycle  
whenever you can



Wash your hands  
regularly and catch it,  
kill it, bin it



Follow the signs

For more information go to  
[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/  
coronavirus](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coronavirus)



Thank you for your patience and helping to keep your town centre open



**1.2 million Hertfordshire residents have played their part during the pandemic, the impact of which continues to be felt in our communities. Responding to the pandemic was an example of multi-agency working with invaluable contributions made by organisations across the county.**

**Here are just some examples of the work that was done to help keep residents safe and healthy:**

### Partnership working

The county's response to the pandemic was led by Hertfordshire's Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The LRF, which is a partnership of over 60 organisations including the emergency services, local councils, health services and volunteers.

The LRF, supported by the council's Resilience team, played a vital role in coordinating the major multi-agency response to the challenges of Covid-19, which required a joined up and collaborative response to the pandemic from teams across the council and from our many partners in the county.

### Volunteer and People Assistance Cell (VPAC)

Part of the LRF, VPAC was a multi-agency effort that ensured all Hertfordshire residents had access to food and basic provisions where required. Mobilised initially in March 2020, and then again in November 2020, it provided support to the clinically extremely vulnerable (those who were Shielding) as well as those who were self-isolating. Support included:

- Volunteer support including shopping, medication collection, befriending and dog walking. This was provided by the new Community Help Hertfordshire (CHH) service, under which all community and voluntary sector organisations in the county came together to provide a unified response to support those in need.
- Hertfordshire Community Navigation Service (HCNS) supporting vulnerable service users in their own homes and in moving from hospital to home.
- HertsHelp supported those shielding to request (if required) food and basic items such as pharmacy deliveries. We worked with Herts FullStop to make 108,000 food and toiletries deliveries to individuals and over 10,600 deliveries to organisations as part of Operation Shield.
- A broadened Crisis Intervention Service offering intervention support for those in financial crisis and for families in receipt of free school meals.
- The new HERT (Hertfordshire Economic Recovery Team) partnership where Citizens Advice Hertfordshire (CAH) and our Money Advice Unit (MAU) came together to enhance the finance, welfare benefits and debt management advice already available to vulnerable residents.

## Operation Shield

**On 21 March 2020, the Government set out a number of measures aimed at protecting those at high risk of severe illness from coronavirus.** Individuals were contacted to avoid face-to-face contact with others for twelve weeks (later extended to the end of July 2020). This was being referred to by central Government as 'shielding'.

The primary aim of Operation Shield was to support the 40,000+ shielding residents in Hertfordshire, by ensuring they were able to obtain essential supplies of food and medication. Operation Shield was mobilised by 28 March 2020 to provide food packages and deliver medication as required.



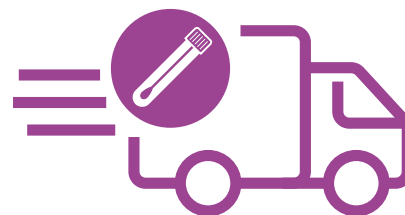
### Operation Shield consisted of:

- A local helpline and triage system
- The provision of emergency food parcels in the first week (28 March 2020)
- The regular supply of food parcels for those in the shielded cohort who were not able to obtain supplies from other sources
- The provision of food supplies to organisations supporting the Covid response (for example, district councils, foodbanks, charities)
- The provision of medication through the delivery of pharmacy prescriptions

The direct provision of food was always considered to be a short-term response to an acute need to provide support to residents. Operation Shield also actively supported residents in making alternative and more sustainable arrangements in preparation for the operation closing down. This including supporting people to obtain help from friends and family to attain their food/medicine prescriptions, to obtain an online priority delivery slot with their preferred supermarket, to obtain a food shop or assist with online shopping, by allocating a volunteer to help them, or by referring and triaging them to longer terms pathways of support.

## Vaccination Centres

**Council staff were instrumental in converting its Robertson House site in Stevenage into one of the first operational Covid-19 vaccination sites, not just in Hertfordshire but the whole country. Firefighters worked closely with teams across the council and Royal Air Force service personnel to prepare the building.** The work involved converting one of the county council's conference centres into a fully established medical centre. Staff turned 'pods' within the building into medical bays, and set up registration areas, waiting rooms, observation areas, as well as staff rest and welfare areas. This collaborative approach ensured that the centre was able to open its doors to the first cohort of residents and administer almost 1,000 vaccines on day one. This was the first of several vaccination centres that the council helped to set up across the county.



### Mobile Testing

We helped to set up **three mobile testing units** across Hertfordshire which tested, at times, over 700 symptomatic individuals each week.



## Locality Budget funding

**Every year each of our 78 county councillors is provided with a Locality Budget to spend on projects in their local area.** Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, councillors were each given a total of £10,000 per year to spend on projects which promote the social, economic or environmental wellbeing of their division. In light of the challenges the county faced as a result of the pandemic, this funding was increased in the 2020-2021 financial year to help support Covid-19-related schemes, with an extra £5,000 made available to each councillor. Last year, 1,587 grants were awarded totalling over £1.154m. Grants supported a wide range of local projects and good causes including support for food banks, social support projects, distance learning materials, virtual cultural projects and volunteer training.

## Crowdfund Hertfordshire

**The Hertfordshire-wide platform was launched in May 2020 by Hertfordshire County Council, working collaboratively with local partners.** Since the launch, the platform has helped fund around 40 projects through four funds: Hertfordshire County Council's Community Innovation Fund, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's Small Business Innovation Fund, East Herts Community Fund, and Hertsmeire Borough Council's Community Infrastructure Levy Fund.



The platform has offered an alternative to traditional fundraising activities that have not been possible during the pandemic, and a number of funded projects were designed to respond to the

adverse effects of Covid-19 and to aid recovery. Projects that have been helped fund included the Supported Activities Programme in Letchworth Garden City, which was awarded £1,000 by the county council and £2,000 by East Herts District Council to enable the purchase of masks, sanitiser, tabletop screens and other PPE items so their activities could start again. Another example was The Hadhams Community Hub which was awarded £2,000 by East Herts District Council and £1,500 by the county council to create a local Community Hub for The Hadhams and surrounding villages.

## The outdoors

**As a result of the pandemic, there has been significant interest in visiting and exercising outdoors.** Hertfordshire's Rights of Way network saw an estimated 200%+ increase in use as residents turned to the network as a great recreational facility. The Rights of Way Google Map, Hertfordshire Walking eNews and short walks online resources were available to help people explore outdoors and manage their wellbeing.





## Library online platforms

**Following the first lockdown, library teams made a swift transition to using online platforms to deliver normally in-person services.** This included Baby Rhyme Times and story times recorded from home while libraries were required to be closed and extended to a wide range of other offers ranging from virtual escape rooms to theatrical performances and chair yoga.

The learning that took place across this period has equipped library teams to deliver a mixed offering as services return to normal – for example libraries hosted a session with the Canadian-based illustrator of the graphic novelisation of *A Handmaid's Tale* – a booking that would not have been viable in person. Virtual class visits and sessions for schools have also been developed to give children and teachers an insight into what the library service has to offer.

## Home Library Service

**The Library Service has for decades offered a Home Library Service delivering books to vulnerable customers.** In the days following lockdown the service responded, developing a doorstep service so that Home Library Service customers could continue to receive a supply of books delivered safely to their door.

By the end of October 2020, over a thousand deliveries had been made. When arranging these deliveries over the phone, customers said they were glad of someone to talk to, as they were unable to go out or have family, friends visit them. The Home Library Service could not exist without the support of volunteers. Included with the books were social care information leaflets and details about services that may be of interest. Very often calls became befriending conversations, an aspect which staff and volunteers describe as being mutually rewarding.

## Hertfordshire Better Business for All – toolkits for businesses to become Covid-secure

**Hertfordshire Better Business for All partnership (BBfA), which brings together Trading Standards, the fire service and district councils, produced a toolkit of resources to help local businesses become Covid-secure, resume trading safely, and protect staff and customers as lockdown eased.** The toolkit was one of a number of service initiatives utilised as demand on Trading Standards teams increased by up to 50% above normal levels for much of the year.

## Local Outbreak Plan

**First published in June 2020, the county's local outbreak plan details how Hertfordshire will respond to a localised outbreak of Covid-19.**

The plan sets out how measures will be taken to prevent, manage and contain outbreaks of coronavirus and protect residents.





# Our Vision

Our Corporate Plan for 2019-25 sets out the following vision for the county:

“*As the county of opportunity, Hertfordshire County Council wants to continue our support in delivering a county where people are living healthy, fulfilling lives in communities that are both thriving and prosperous.*”



**This vision is underpinned by the following four ambitions:**

- **Opportunity to live in thriving places**
- **Opportunity to share in Hertfordshire's prosperity**
- **Opportunity for everyone to achieve their potential**
- **Opportunity to enjoy healthy and safe lives**

This report summarises the council's key achievements between April 2020 and March 2021, in line with these ambitions.

# Our commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

Hertfordshire is a diverse place to live and work and our county's demography reflects a broad range of people from different backgrounds.

We are committed to ensuring we demonstrate diversity in everything we do; making our services accessible for everyone, and ensuring our policies and practices are inclusive.

**In March 2021 we agreed our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for Communities, Partnerships and Services, alongside our workforce strategy to ensure that inclusion is part of our DNA.**

The pandemic of 2020-21 has been challenging for all our residents, but we know some of our residents have been disproportionately affected, whether that be because of health inequalities or pressures through financial hardship. During this period, we have been working alongside many community groups and partners to develop targeted messages, educational webinars and continuing to build and develop new partnership arrangements.

An example of this is our collaboration work with the Herts Inter Faith Forum and prominent religious leaders, with several webinars held by our Director of Public Health and the Equality and Diversity team ahead of major festivals to allay their fears and offer support to our communities.





# Opportunity to Live in Thriving Places

We want everyone to have the opportunity to live in active, vibrant communities.

Sustainable places where people can enjoy a good quality life, growth is sensitively managed, and the value of Hertfordshire's clean and green environment is respected.

**In our Corporate Plan we committed to working with our partners to:**

- develop and deliver a positive, shared long-term vision for growth in Hertfordshire ensure new developments provide the necessary infrastructure and other community resources, such as roads, schools and libraries
- act to limit the impact of climate change by developing an ambitious Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy and taking a countywide approach on issues such as air quality and energy use
- deliver a sustainable solution for dealing with the county's waste
- deliver a co-ordinated programme of highway improvement and maintenance.



## Developing a shared long-term vision for growth

### Hertfordshire Growth Board

**The Hertfordshire Growth Board comprises the County Council, the 10 district and borough councils and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.** The Board is chaired by the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council. Over the past year the Board has formed a statutory joint committee to increase openness and transparency and to support the delivery of good growth with long-term benefits for Hertfordshire residents.

### Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Housing Investment Grant

**We entered into an agreement with Homes England on 31 March 2021 to enable us to drawdown £171m of Housing Investment Grant (HIG) funding. Simultaneously, we entered into back-to-back agreements with Places for People and Essex County Council as delivery partners.**



The successful bid, led by Hertfordshire County Council on behalf of our local authority partners, was confirmed in the 2020 budget. The funding will provide strategic transport infrastructure for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, unlocking 10,000 new homes and allowing Hertfordshire County Council and its strategic and delivery partners to deliver the vision for the new Garden Town.

## Necessary infrastructure and community resources

### School places

**The county council continues to ensure that there are enough mainstream and special school places available to meet demand, both in the short term and in preparation for housing growth across the county.** We have supported the provision of 1,174 mainstream primary and 724 secondary places (years 7-11) across the county for academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Building work has been completed on Avanti Meadows, a new primary school in Bishop's Stortford, which will open in September 2021. As part of the same Academy Trust a new secondary school and a further primary school are also set to open in 2022 and 2023 respectively, to ensure that there are enough school places to serve new housing in the town.

We have made significant improvements to our Special Schools including replacement classroom accommodation projects; improved hygiene facilities and toilets; increased dining areas; increased staff toilets and staff room spaces to support increases in staff. Capacity in these schools has also been increased by 189 places for academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22. The rebuild of The Valley School, a secondary special school for children with learning difficulties in Stevenage, was approved by Cabinet in September 2020. The new accommodation, which will increase capacity by a further 15 places, is planned to be available in early 2023.



## Acting to limit the impact of climate change

### Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy

**Following our declaration of a climate emergency in Hertfordshire, our Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy was approved by Cabinet in March 2020 and the corresponding Action Plan was approved in December.**

In order to gain an improved understanding of carbon emissions across all council operations (including council buildings, transport and service delivery), an organisational carbon trajectory has been prepared. This study identifies the reductions needed, year on year, in order for us to be a net zero carbon organisation by 2030.

This trajectory will inform where sustainability initiatives will need to be delivered across our services, in order to achieve our net zero targets. The Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy supports the delivery of a good quality of life for Hertfordshire residents where a clean and green environment is both protected and enhanced.



### Initiatives include:

- Transitioning all council-owned vehicles to a carbon neutral fleet by 2030. This includes preparing the council to invest in sustainable modes of transport and installing the correct infrastructure to support outstanding service delivery, in a manner that is both efficient and sustainable.
- Improving the electrical distribution infrastructure across the county, to be achieved through collaborative projects with the private sector under the Green Recovery Fund.
- Leading on the development of a biodiversity baseline and action plan for Hertfordshire, working in partnership with colleagues from the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership to improve wildlife and nature standards across the county.
- Facilitating the delivery of a suite of greenspace audits to identify opportunities and provide recommendations for biodiversity enhancements on district and borough council greenspaces
- Developing our first Corporate Tree and Woodlands Strategy to direct our approach to enhancing tree and woodland management and expanding the tree canopy cover across the county, to maximise the benefits for communities and wildlife.



## Schools and decarbonisation

**Schools will play a critical part in achieving our objectives to be carbon neutral by 2030.** Over the past year we have worked with partners to progress the following activities relating to reducing carbon across the school estate:

- A successful application for £24 million from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), enabling us to deliver decarbonisation works across multiple school sites. This includes the installation of air source heat pumps to replace existing gas boilers, the installation of double glazing, wall insulation works and the installation of solar panels and accompanying battery storage.
- An Education Environmental Advisory group has been set up including school and diocesan representatives to help steer our approach and embed positive engagement across all schools.

## Managing the county's waste

### Opening of the Ware Recycling Centre

The newly redeveloped Ware Recycling Centre was opened to residents on 31 October 2020. The first of its kind in Hertfordshire, the new 'supersite' is four times larger than its predecessor and has been designed to handle up to 300,000 visits and up to 10,000 tonnes of waste a year.

Featuring a split-level design allowing the majority of waste to be deposited without the need for lifting or carrying up steps, the new centre offers 38 spaces for parking and unloading. A purpose-built Reuse Centre offers residents the opportunity to deposit, browse and buy reusable items that would have otherwise been thrown away.

The centre is an important investment in Hertfordshire's infrastructure, which will help make the county more environmentally sustainable and ready for the future.

The power for the new Ware Recycling Centre is being generated from gas extracted from the neighbouring landfill site. This renewable source of electricity means a significantly reduced reliance on the use of fossil fuels and ensures that this recycling centre is powered by waste produced by Hertfordshire's residents and businesses.





## Tewin Road Recycling Centre and Depot

The joint planning application with Welwyn Hatfield for a new Recycling Centre and Depot in Tewin Road, Welwyn Garden City, was approved on 24 November 2020. The construction is phased with the Welwyn Hatfield Streetscene depot being completed prior to the new Recycling Centre.

We expect the entire development will take approximately 18 months to complete and therefore the new Recycling Centre should be operational later in 2022.

## Highway improvement and maintenance

### Highways

In 2020-2021 we have delivered over 1400 highways schemes to maintain and improve carriageways, footways, drainage, bridges and safety. As part of this Councillors used their Highways Locality Budgets to progress projects worth over £7m, with 300 schemes completed in the year alongside a range of other locally led initiatives aimed at improving the condition and safety of the network.



The highways teams repaired 16,900 potholes and attended to 6300 faults that required a 2 hour response.

The New River Bridge Improvement Scheme in Hoddesdon was completed on time and opened to all road users on 6 March 2021 despite the significant challenges posed by Covid-19 and poor weather over the winter. This key local infrastructure project provides a new, modern and resilient road link to improve access and safety for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians coming in and out of Hoddesdon Business Park and better connects businesses with the strategic highway network. The new bridge has a design life of 125 years and is significantly stronger than the 60-year-old bridge it replaces.

Work is continuing on a major scheme to improve the A602 to improve the major junctions, reduce delays and make the route safer. The main construction work started in mid-June 2020, and will continue until Spring 2022. To protect the environment newts have been prevented from entering the site with approximately 1.5km of newt fencing installed, and approximately 6000 roman snails have been trans-relocated to 2 new areas of habitat within the scheme boundary.



Works continued on the creation of a bypass of Little Hadham to improve journey times on the A120 which is an important East-West link in Hertfordshire. This bypass and flood alleviation scheme will reduce congestion and help minimise flood risk within the village. Once complete the new 3.9km bypass to the north of Little Hadham will reduce congestion caused by the Little Hadham traffic lights and provide more reliable journey times.

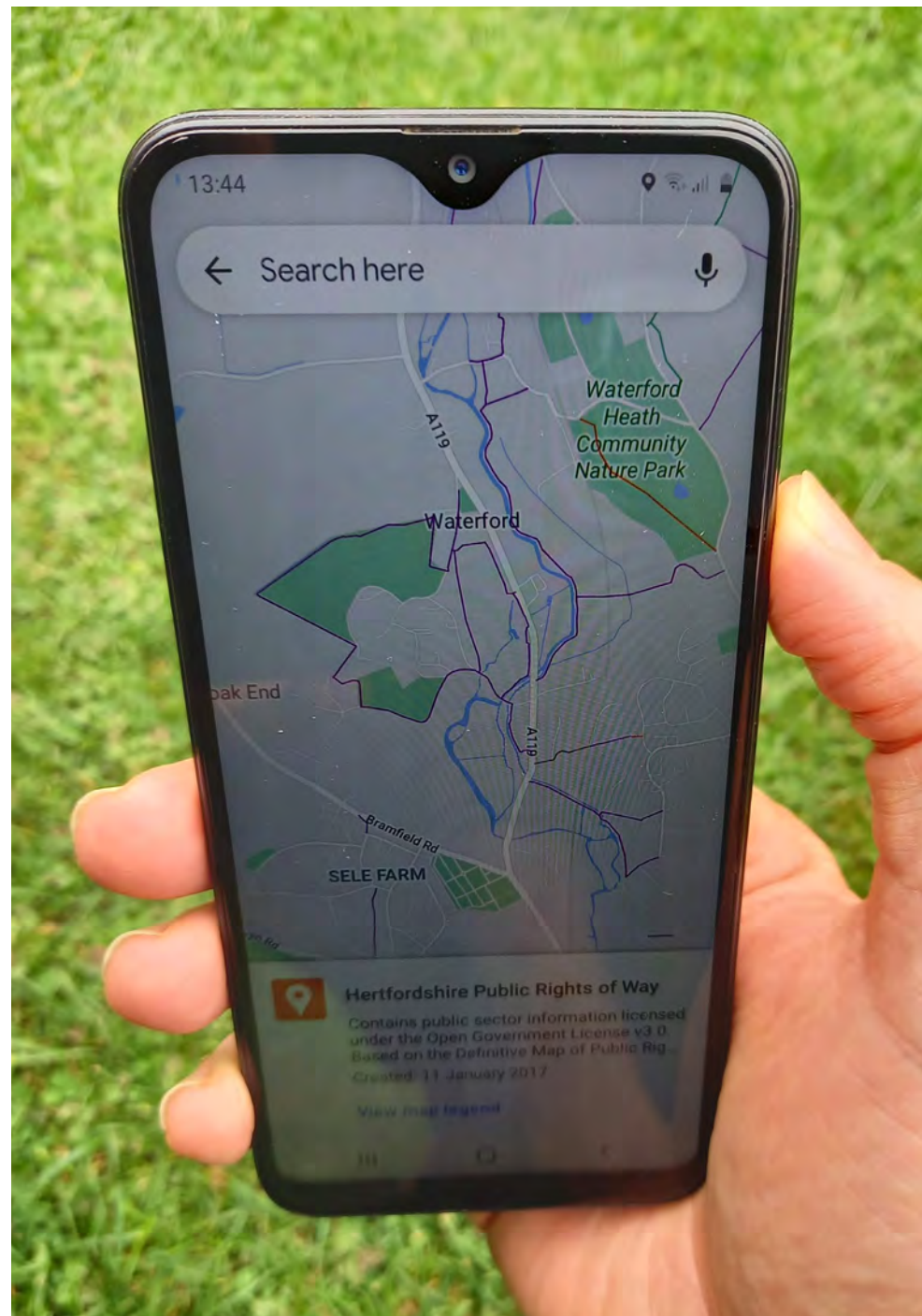
Hertfordshire County Council have worked in partnership with the Environment Agency to develop the scheme to include flood alleviation measures. New road embankments across the River Ash and Albury tributary will act as flood storage dams to reduce flood risk to the village and other nearby communities. The scheme is likely to complete in winter 2021.

### Rights of Way

**As well as improving local roads across the county, including road resurfacing programmes, Hertfordshire's 1,900 mile public Rights of Way network and redundant railway lines are actively maintained and improved to provide opportunities for active travel and leisure.** This Rights of Way work is undertaken by the council's Countryside and Rights of Way team.

Investment in the Cole Green Way and Ayot Green Way improved the surface and surrounds to make walking and cycling more accessible for residents. Remnants of the Cole Green Way's rail heritage have been restored, improved and celebrated, benefitting from secured external funding.

The Google map of Public Rights of Way in Hertfordshire has been published. The map can be easily loaded onto a smartphone to provide the perfect way for residents to find and follow the routes close to home. This has now been viewed more than one million times.





# Opportunity to Share in Hertfordshire's prosperity

We want Hertfordshire's strong economy to continue to grow, with resilient and successful businesses that offer good employment opportunities and help to maintain a high quality of life for all.

We want Hertfordshire to be recognised as a great place to do business, with a skilled and productive workforce and infrastructure that supports the local economy.

## In our Corporate Plan, we committed to working with our partners to:

- improve Hertfordshire's workforce by delivering the county's Skills Strategy
- broaden access to the labour market by developing the county's offer of work experience and employment opportunities
- reinvigorate many of our town centres, ensuring that the changing roles of our High Streets are curated effectively
- address the county's strategic infrastructure priorities, including 5G and full fibre broadband, by exploring innovative funding models and external funding opportunities
- implement our long-term strategic Transport Vision for the county
- deliver a fair but robust regulatory and support environment that enables businesses to grow and create jobs.



## Improving Hertfordshire's workforce

### Summer Survey

Services for Young People carried out a survey during summer 2020 seeking the views of young people from across Hertfordshire on how the Covid-19 lockdown had affected their wellbeing and what their biggest concerns were.

2,608 young people completed the survey – findings included:

- 73% felt 'good' or 'ok' on the day they completed the survey.
- Only 4% felt they needed extra support.
- Concerns focussed on a lack of social interaction and isolation from peers, friends and wider family, and on missing school or struggling to cope with schoolwork at home – all impacting on young people's mental health.
- 92% said they understood social distancing rules and 74% felt that the rules were quite or very easy to stick to.
- 60% took advantage of lockdown to take up new hobbies.

### Annual Young People's Awards 2020

**In November 2020, more than 60 young people from across Hertfordshire were recognised for their outstanding achievements at the annual Services for Young People Awards, which were held virtually for the first time.**

The awards took place during National Youth Work Week and highlighted the impact that Youth Workers and Personal Advisers have on helping young people overcome barriers and fulfil their potential, particularly during this challenging year. Young people were nominated by their peers and their workers.



The winners included:

- A 14-year-old who was referred to Services for Young People as he was at risk of becoming involved with anti-social behaviour. He was able to reflect on his past decisions and consider the positive choices he would make moving forward and became very passionate about the subjects discussed during the programme. He attended other projects with Services for Young People, including completing an emotional wellbeing programme.
- An 18-year-old who lacked the confidence and motivation to go to college after Year 11, having missed a lot of his last year at school, and was unsure about his next steps. After attending a Positive Pathways programme he was offered employment at a gold club where he had successfully completed his work experience, with the possibility of this leading to an apprenticeship.



## Skills Strategy

Hertfordshire County Council has led with the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Department for Work & Pensions to develop, with a wide range of stakeholders, the development of the third Hertfordshire Skills Strategy - now known as the Hertfordshire Skills & Employment Strategy. The Strategy will focus on five themes, of which the first is Unlocking emerging talent, support for young people aged 16 – 24 years.

This theme recognises the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on young people aged 18-24, particularly the sharp rise in unemployment. Data also evidences that young people from vulnerable groups e.g. young people who have had experiences being in care, young people with learning difficulties and / or disabilities and young people who have been involved with the youth justice system are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to career prospects. Alongside the statistical evidence, countywide research on behalf of HM Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire in February 2021 found that many Years 12 and 13 students were pessimistic about employment opportunities in the near future.

## Broadening access to the labour market

### Helping young people into work with The Prince's Trust

Each year, the Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service invites young people to take part in its 12-week Prince's Trust Team Programme. Students are encouraged to undertake a voyage of self-discovery to boost and develop skills, experience, confidence and motivation, to find work or go on to further education or training.

On 11 March, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's (HFRS) Prince's Trust Hemel Team 8 received the Dell Technologies Community Impact Award at the Annual National Prince's Trust Awards ceremony.



This prestigious award was in recognition of the positive contribution made by that team to their local community whilst developing their own skills. As part of their community challenge, the team renovated an area that helped residents at a local care home to see their friends and family, by creating a garden visiting area. Team Leader Stephen Ford explains:

*"The care home had faced two disasters. The roof on a structure had collapsed and a sinkhole had appeared in the garden. As the care home had to use funds to solve these issues, they did not have the resources to work on the gardens. This is when Team 8 came to the rescue."*

The young people have become a part of the care home community, as new friendships were made across the generations. The young people also volunteered to return to the home once a week to maintain the gardens and meet up with the residents.

## Hertfordshire Apprenticeship Alliance

**We have continued to work with the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and learning providers, to advance apprenticeships in the county through the Hertfordshire Apprenticeship Alliance.** Over 300 apprenticeships benefit from gaining new skills and employment opportunities via the apprentice levy and Hertfordshire County Council is listed in the country's top one hundred apprenticeship employers named by the Government.

## Hertfordshire County Council Recruitment

**The year saw many challenges facing skills and employment, with a number of residents furloughed or facing job uncertainty due to the pandemic.** In response our Human Resources team worked closely with the Hertfordshire LEP, the Districts and Boroughs and the NHS to promote opportunities to attract skills and talent into the workforce. This included recruiting over four hundred staff during the Autumn/Winter of 2020/21 to work in vaccination and testing centres across the county.

March 2020 saw the introduction of a redeployment hub, managed by the Human Resources team, and at its peak over 600 staff across the county were either redeployed or in line to be redeployed in response to the pandemic. This included library staff helping with Operation Shield and Fire Officers supporting the East of England Ambulance Service.

In a year like no other, the Human Resources Service Desk saw an increase in demand of inquiries due to the complex and fast-moving support required from managers and staff as we grappled with shielding, vaccinations and isolation. The workforce flexibility and resilience has been a key part of our response to the pandemic and much praise goes to each and every one of them.

## Reinvigorating town centres

### Watford Junction

**In November 2020, Hertfordshire County Council, Watford Borough Council, and developers signed an agreement setting out the infrastructure required to redevelop the retail park at Watford Junction.** This will deliver 1,214 flats, including 84 affordable homes, as well as providing 1,248m<sup>2</sup> of commercial retail floorspace and improving the streetscape and amenity of the Watford junction area.

Through engagement at the local plan, pre-application, and application stage, we have secured the provision of a new on-site primary school, funding towards a new secondary school serving Watford, and upgrades to Penn Road. This partnership working will ensure that existing and new residents will benefit from high quality local services





## Addressing strategic infrastructure priorities

### Broadband

**In 2020-2021 the Hertfordshire Broadband Programme made nearly 2,500 connections available to more rural and challenging locations across the county, taking the total number of additional connections in the county to 54,000 since 2013.**



During this period, we successfully kicked off two other Superfast and Full Fibre Delivery projects utilising Government funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to target rural businesses and GP surgeries respectively.

The GP surgery project successfully made Full Fibre Gigabit speeds available to 25 surgeries and the DEFRA funded rollout is in the process of making connections available to nearly 190 rural businesses and a similar number of residential premises.

We continue to work closely with Government and other local partners such as the Hertfordshire LEP to develop a clear digital strategy to ensure the county of Hertfordshire maintains its strong digital and economic position.

## Travel in the county

### Additional buses on the school network

**Our Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) led on delivering additional capacity to the bus network for the start of the school year in September 2020.** The ITU worked with other council departments and commercial bus operators to deliver 70+ extra buses onto the bus network to mitigate social distancing and ensure students could travel safely to and from school.

## Providing support to local businesses

### Brexit support

**In preparation for and following the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, Trading Standards implemented plans to provide targeted support to those businesses immediately affected by new requirements.**

In addition to taking part in Brexit-themed webinars and regulator Q&As for local businesses, the service worked with Environmental Health partners and the Herts Growth Hub through the Hertfordshire Better Business for All (BBfA) partnership to create a single place for Hertfordshire businesses to find advice on Brexit, hosted on the Hertfordshire [LEP website](#).



# Opportunity for **Everyone to achieve their potential**

We want everyone to have the opportunity to enjoy a happy, fulfilling and independent life.

Where people encounter difficulties or challenges, we want them to be able tackle these issues early on, minimising the impact on their lives, the lives of their families and the communities around them.

## **In our Corporate Plan we committed to working with our partners to:**

- bring key services together at our Family Centres to ensure every child is ready to thrive when they begin school
- continue to improve educational standards and raise aspirations and attainment, maintaining the provision of good schools including for those with special educational needs and disabilities
- increase people's resilience by providing them with the information, tools and services they need to help themselves
- ensure everyone can enhance their opportunities through access to lifelong learning
- enable independent living by improving the supply and choice of accommodation options available in the county
- help people to live at home independently for longer by investing in the latest supportive technology
- support carers in the invaluable role they play looking after loved ones.





## Family centres – bringing people together

**The Hertfordshire Family Centre offer to families is clear, integrated and easy to access so that families receive the support they need.** Due to the pandemic, Public Health Nursing and Family Support effectively delivered a range of services over the last year both in person and virtually.

This included:

- supporting parents in developing support networks through a range of local child development sessions
- providing Baby and Toddler Health Clinics, two-and-a-half-year-old group reviews, oral health workshops for reception year children and antenatal 'Preparing for Baby' courses
- building children's confidence and encouraging peer interaction through services such as Stay and Play and Toddler groups
- working with partners such as the Citizen Advice Bureaux to highlight the benefits of free early education and childcare to both children and parents

The Family Support Service also provided targeted support to 1,380 families (which includes 2,076 children under 12 years of age). Each family received an assessment to identify their needs and the support required with the average length for the support being 128 days. The success rate following completion of this was 73% achieving all outcomes or making significant progress towards this.

The number of families requiring additional support steadily rose throughout the year indicating that the impact of Covid-19 presented some families with additional challenges.



**73%** achieving all outcomes or making significant progress

## Educational standards, aspirations and attainment

**To ensure schools stayed open for as many children as possible we implemented a number of infection control measures to help schools to continue to offer quality education to all students.**

This included a team of Covid-responders from our Public Health teams, and advice and support on managing positive cases and outbreaks in schools. Support has also been available weekends and evenings. Herts for Learning (HfL) were also commissioned to support educational standards and raise aspirations during the pandemic.

This included:

- Developing and delivering the 'Coming Back Stronger' programme. A £660k programme that supported schools and other educational setting in their recovery from the pandemic. It covers all phases of education focussing on plugging education gaps because of the pandemic and supporting children and young people' wellbeing
- Coordinating the provision of over 9,000 laptops and 262 routers funded by the council, the Department for Education and the Daily Mail for schools for children on low incomes to gain access to on-line learning platforms.
- Providing guidance, in the form of webinars and best practice guides to schools to develop digital classrooms for remote learning during the Autumn term. This enabled the vast majority of schools to offer comprehensive remote learning for all students when schools were closed to the majority of students between January and March 2021.



262



9,000+

## Increasing people's resilience

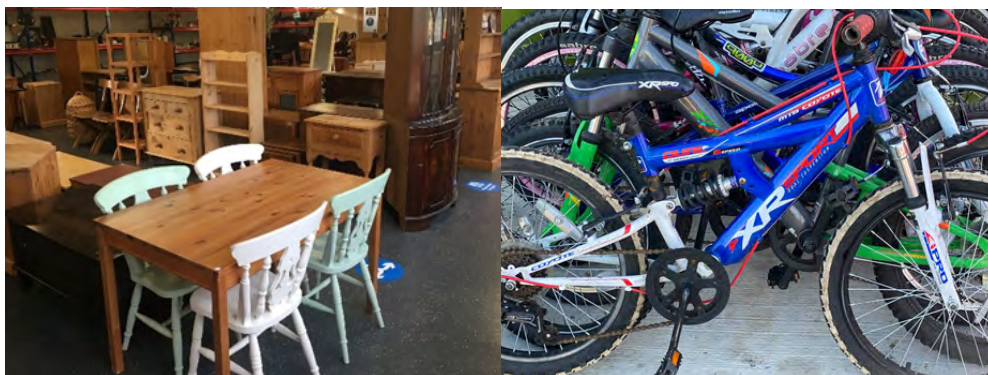
### Work experience placements help Reuse Centres go from strength to strength

The Covid pandemic had a big impact on the county's Reuse Centres, located at Ware and Waterdale near Watford. However, they have since benefitted from all the decluttering that residents have been focussing on during their time at home. Their reopening in December and April was enthusiastically embraced, and the reuse centres enjoyed bumper sales.

The Reuse Centres are self-funded with income from sales paying for the service and invested into initiatives designed to increase reuse and support social value projects.

The flexibility of direct service delivery has enabled us to explore working with other council functions including with the Virtual School. This includes providing young people looked after by the county council with retail-based work experience by offering placements to 16-year olds.

All of the bikes parked during lockdown have generated lots of interest from community groups and we are working with the Active and Safer Travel Team to provide bikes to the Fit, Fed and Read initiative, enabling families from low income households to participate in 'bikeability' courses.



## Enhancing opportunities through lifelong learning

**The Bookstart programme in Hertfordshire spreads the joy of reading together to thousands of families.** Bookstart is funded by the charity BookTrust and is coordinated in Hertfordshire by the library service. The scheme brings together health visitors, family support centre teams, libraries and early years settings to encourage families to enjoy sharing books and rhymes with babies and young children.

Health visitor partners give out the Bookstart Baby bags to families with a new baby, helping to promote parent/baby bonding and supporting babies' brain and language development.



We gift the Bookstart Treasure packs through nursery classes, early years settings and childminders to encourage reading for pleasure – a key indicator for a child's success in later life.

- Number of nursery aged children in Hertfordshire = 15,500
- Packs gifted over the financial year 2020/21 = 9,490
- Number of packs not gifted due to Covid-19 = 6,000
- Reaching 61.2% of eligible children.

Family centres use the Bookstart Corner resources to promote the benefits of a quality home learning environment to help pre-school children build their speech, language & pre-reading skills and to become "school ready".



Libraries play a key role by offering engaging early years activities to draw families in, by promoting the positive impact of sharing rhymes and books with young children and by showcasing the wealth of quality picture books available for families to borrow.

### **Hertfordshire Adult and Family Learning Service (HAFLS)**

**HAFLS runs a wide range of quality and approved courses for adults aged 19+, aimed to help improve people's lives.**

Despite a dip in numbers at the start of the year, we were still able to reach our target participant levels for skills provision (3,827 learners filling 6,160 places on courses) for 2020/21. However, there were some changes to our normal learner demographic due to the impact of the pandemic. There were also some changes over the year in the types of courses being asked for.

HAFLS' Building Better Opportunities project and Supported Employment Team (Work Solutions) continued to recruit participants throughout. While actual numbers taking up these opportunities dropped compared to previous years, we were still able to offer current participants a high level of support resulting in a total of 70 people with learning difficulties and disabilities and other barriers to employment being placed into paid work this year. This was despite the steep decline in the number of jobs being advertised and the fact that all work had moved from face to face to online.



## **Enabling independent living through accommodation options**

### **Older People - Extra Care Housing**

**The Council is working to facilitate the development of more Extra Care housing in Hertfordshire.** This type of housing offer is for people over 55 with care needs. Unlike a residential care facility, people live in individual homes that they own or have a tenancy for, with a tailored care package. Schemes often have communal and community facilities to encourage socialising and on-call support when needed. They enable older people to remain independent, reducing care needs and improving quality of life, as people live longer with more complex needs. In order to expand provision and provide greater choice to people, we developed a Strategic Business Case for a programme of new Extra Care Housing in Hertfordshire, which sets out plans to stimulate the market to meet a predicted demand for 3,539 additional Extra Care homes by 2030.

**Work is ongoing to develop and improve nursing care capacity across Hertfordshire, with the development of a new Nursing Home at Wormley in Broxbourne set to open in Autumn 2021.**

## Helping people to live at home independently for longer

**Assistive technology helps residents in their homes. Devices and gadgets are easy to use and can help residents to stay safe, well and independent.** This includes reminding individuals to take their medication and enable them to get help if they fall and cannot reach the phone. Devices can be standalone, linked to family or carers, or they can be connected to a team of trained advisors in a monitoring centre who will ensure you get the support you need.



This includes the development of two services to respond to both emergency and preventative

## Supporting carers

**Over the last year, we have worked closely with our commissioned care support partners, Carers in Herts.**

Our general advice line, HertsHelp on 0300 123 4044, extended its opening times and calls from carers have increased significantly. Advice on our webpages has continually been updated and we have introduced a new portal that allows carers to register an 'in case of emergencies' plan with us:

We also commission a free carers breaks service of up to 18 hours which was increased to 22 hours during the pandemic.

More information is available from  
**<https://www.turning-point.co.uk/services/herts>**



# Opportunity to Enjoy healthy and safe lives

We want everyone to have the opportunity to live healthy lives for as long as possible and to live safely in their communities.

Recognising the significant effect that remaining healthy and safe has on people's happiness and life chances, we want all services to work together to improve the overall wellbeing of our residents, including using effective early intervention measures to help tackle inequalities.

## In our Corporate Plan, we committed to working with our partners to:

- through our Family First approach, work with families to provide support as problems emerge so the challenges they face do not escalate
- integrate health and social care services to improve the support that people receive
- improve the health of the county's population, employing preventative strategies to help reduce or delay the need for health and care services
- reduce the number of accidental deaths by undertaking preventative safety work
- address serious violent crime in Hertfordshire, taking a shared approach to tackling knife crime, modern slavery and cross county border drug dealing
- develop closer working arrangements with our emergency service partners to provide collaborative services in an ever more effective and efficient way
- work with communities to ensure they are prepared for emergencies such as flooding, a major fire or an infectious disease outbreak.





## Family First approach

**Families First is the term used in Hertfordshire for services that work together to support families who need extra help.** These are also known as early help services. We all experience difficulties at some point. Families First can help find early help and information to prevent issues from getting worse. Between March 2020 and March 2021, 856 Families First Assessments (which includes 1,934 children and young people) were completed. Early help services play a crucial role in preventing needs from escalating.

## Integrating health and social care services

### Discharge to Assess

**In new hospital discharge arrangements known as ‘Discharge to Assess’, the social care assessment takes place in an out-of-hospital environment, either at home or in a short-stay placement in a care home.** Discharge to Assess supports discharges from acute and community hospitals and is based on the principle that decisions about a person’s care and support needs, particularly in the longer term, are best made after or during a period of enabling care when a person is well on the way to recovery and any immediate crisis is passed. Our Adult Care Services (ACS) Accommodation Commissioning Team has worked closely with system partners to implement services to support the new arrangements. We have also worked with health partners to ensure

good ‘wrap-around’ support into these facilities, for example via Local GP ward rounds, and input from Community Health Providers.

### Provider Hub

**In close joint working with the Herts Care Providers Association (HCPA), a Provider Hub providing a seven-day telephone helpline, website and email support for care providers was created in March 2020.** Support has ranged from responding to PPE and testing queries, support with contingency planning, keyworker status and ID cards, staff capacity issues, Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) procedures, staff support and training and testing and guidance and support in regards to the vaccination programme. The Provider Hub was supported by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to share intelligence and cascade national guidance. The Provider Hub was noted as an example of best practice in the Government’s social care action plan.

### Everyone In

**As part of the Covid response to rough sleeping and the Government’s ‘Everyone In’ initiative, we developed a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing the support needs of rough sleepers placed in emergency and temporary accommodation.** Substance misuse, mental health and criminal justice services worked collaboratively alongside housing partners to identify those rough sleepers in priority need of support whilst accommodated and to prevent them from returning to the streets. We achieved 56% uptake of first dose Covid-19 vaccinations with one of the hardest to reach populations - rough sleepers.

## Improving the health of the county’s population

### JustTalk

**The JustTalk mental health programme, led by Public Health working in partnership with 35 agencies from across the Hertfordshire mental health system, has continued to run online and in schools and colleges across Hertfordshire.**



The programme vision, developed in partnership with young people, is:

*To make Hertfordshire a county in which all young people recognise that it's ok to not be ok, feel comfortable and confident in talking about mental health, have tools for looking after their emotional wellbeing, and know how to access support when it's needed.*

### Public Health Nursing service

**Our Public Health Nursing service continued to deliver services to families.** Due to the pandemic, some of the support that was offered was through virtual appointments particularly during the first three months of this year. Many families fed back that they valued this approach and are keen for virtual appointments to continue to be offered alongside face to face appointments.

### Chathealth

**Nearly 13,000 babies were born in Hertfordshire during this year and all were offered a new birth visit by our health visitors.** The service has also developed a text service called Chathealth for parents of 0-5 years old children who need advice or information. Over 1,000 messages were received from parents and carers in the first 3 months of this service starting.

### Sexual health services

**In response to the changing situation surrounding the pandemic, additional contraception and sexual health services were moved online.** This helped maintain access to support while releasing capacity within primary care and sexual health services and minimising face-to-face contact. 27,744 online Sexually Transmitted Infections tests were ordered, 4,976 contraception pill prescriptions and 1,343 emergency contraception prescriptions were dispensed.

17,606 face-to-face consultations still took place in specialist sexual health services in Hertfordshire.

### Stopping smoking

**Delivery of commissioned stop smoking services by providers within GP practices and community pharmacies ceased due to conflicting demands placed upon staff.** This increased the need for clinical delivery by the Hertfordshire Health Improvement Service (HHIS). Clinic hours increased by 100% in April, May and June 2020, with all advisors, specialists and managers increasing their clinical case load to support smokers.

Our smoking in pregnancy incentive scheme helped to support a 100% increase in the number of women supported to stop smoking during their pregnancy. During 2020-21, HHIS saw an increase in people accessing the service to quit smoking, which led to an increase in quitters across the county. 2991 people committed to their quit attempt (1757 in 2019-20) with 1629 of those quitting smoking (878 in 2019-20).

### Modeshift and Bishop Wood Church of England Junior School

**The Modeshift STARS scheme recognises schools, businesses and other organisations that have shown excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable and active travel.**

Tring-based Bishop Wood Junior School achieved a platinum Modeshift STARS accreditation, after first gaining gold in 2016 and continuing to hold gold accreditation since then. The whole school community has embraced active travel as part of their ethos for healthy and active lifestyles and work closely with the county council and charity partners, Living Streets. They are committed to the 'walk once a week' programme and walk to school week.

## Active and Safer Travel

**Our partnership with British Cycling has enabled us to expand our offer for cycling.** The partnership gives people options to try new schemes and initiatives in line with the growth of cycling during the Covid-19 pandemic. We have been able to focus on areas of low cycling take-up in a way we have not previously be able to.

The increased levels of ride leaders for guided rides and the Breeze ride programme, specifically designed to get more women involved in cycling, is giving people the chance to socialise and keep active.

## Safety work

### Safe and Well Visits

**Despite the limitations and restrictions of Covid, we were still able to undertake 1,981 safe and well visits to support some of the most vulnerable members of our community.** Safe and Well visits form the bedrock of our prevention activities providing health and well-being advice, fire safety advice and the fitting of specialist equipment where a need is identified, this includes arson proof letterboxes, smoke alarms for the hearing impaired, portable suppression systems and fire-resistant bedding packs, throws and clothing. Amongst those visited this year were visits to 676 victims of domestic abuse for whom the Hertfordshire Home Safety Service provides a lock fitting service.

### Trading Standards

**Trading Standards assisted in withdrawal of over 2 million potentially dangerous consumer products during the year.** In one instance, the product posed such serious risk of fire and electric shock that the importer was prosecuted and ordered to pay a fine of £15,000.

The service was also active tackling distribution of illicit goods, seizing 8,000 counterfeit items and 80,000 cigarettes around the county. One such seizure of tobacco saw the business owner receive

a suspended prison sentence and £5,000 confiscated as proceeds of crime.

## Fire Protection

**In response to the government's Grenfell Tower Inquiry and recommendations, our Fire Protection Inspecting Officers have made strong progress in their inspection programme, reviewing fire safety arrangements in many of the county's tall-buildings, updating sight-specific risk information and working with the Responsible Persons to address any areas of concern.**

## Tackling crime

**County Community Safety Unit A comprehensive Needs Assessment was undertaken by the County Community Safety Unit (CCSU) in 2018 which sought to analyse the position with serious violence in Hertfordshire.**

The Assessment highlighted that whilst nationally knife crime was at its highest level over the last seven years, Hertfordshire had seen the largest proportional increase during this time, with a 44% increase over the previous three years. In response to this, Hertfordshire's Serious Violence Strategy 2018-2021, alongside a Delivery Plan was developed. Significant progress in relation to this strategy has been made including the implementation of MACE (multi-agency child exploitation) panels, a refreshed adolescent offer and changes to improve information and intelligence sharing.

A toolkit for schools was designed to support practitioners in identifying signs of vulnerability linked to criminal and sexual exploitation, as well as to signpost to relevant support according to the level of identified need. Joint work has also been undertaken with the Police Schools and Gang team to put preventative messages into schools.



## Herts Modern Slavery Partnership (HMSP)

**The HMSP brings together more than 100 statutory and non-statutory partners from across the county to tackle human trafficking and modern slavery in all its forms. In March 2020, the HMSP Adult Modern Slavery Task and Finish Group was created.** The next steps are to continue to work in collaboration with partners and service providers to review the implementation of the recommendations through a multi-agency action plan.

## Domestic Abuse

**During the pandemic, there was a significant increase in calls to the national domestic abuse helpline and a need for more safe accommodation support.**

The Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership (HDAP) worked together to create an emergency response with three key messages:

- Coronavirus doesn't cause domestic abuse, perpetrators do
- Specialist support and services remain available to anyone who needs it
- Perpetrators will be held to account for their behaviour.

We worked with the domestic abuse sector across the county and we created a media campaign, working with the police to ensure that our key messages were widely shared and the public and professionals knew that services remained available. We developed a triaging service for support, with the Herts Independent Violence Advisory Service being the first port of call. Safe accommodation remained a priority for contact as well.

Additionally, a Domestic Abuse Pathway Project was developed with over 640 victims and survivors providing their views on support in the county – including barriers to access. The project was developed using an evidence-based approach and also involved consulting with front line professionals to ensure we are clear on how to get our pathways into services and support right. The results will inform the future commissioning of services for anyone affected by domestic

abuse, over the coming years and, most importantly, ensure the victim's voice is included.

## Working with emergency service partners

**In line with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner in 2019, signifying our collective intent to identify opportunities where emergency service can work collaboratively, we continue to explore further joint working possibilities between the police and fire and rescue services in Hertfordshire.**

Hertfordshire's Emergency Services Collaboration Board is overseeing a programme of collaborative changes which includes better use of estates, including the building of a new police and fire headquarters and a better response structure in cases where both services are needed. This year an agreement was reached for both services to jointly use a fire service drone to assist at major incidents and during searches for high-risk vulnerable missing people. Plans are also being progressed to redevelop Hertfordshire's Joint Emergency Services Academy in Stevenage.



# How Are We Delivering Our Vision?

## Citizen Focused



We continue to work proactively to shape service delivery around the needs of our residents, providing opportunities for people to express their views and opinions. Last year, for example, we consulted on our Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy and the Draft Waste Local Plan 2021. We also published our [Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#) for communities, partnerships and services which demonstrate our commitment to ensuring we demonstrate diversity in everything we do; making our services accessible for everyone, and ensuring our policies and practices are inclusive.

## Operational Excellence



Over the past year, we continued to be proud to deliver key services which make a real difference to the residents of Hertfordshire. Throughout the pandemic our priority remained to deliver our core public services to the highest standards – identifying opportunities to make the most of our resources, redeploying our staff as required to help us to achieve our objectives. We encouraged a proactive approach, developing innovative, often online, solutions when more conventional service delivery options were not possible.

## Collaborative Leadership



We continue to work closely with key partners across the public, private and voluntary and community sector to achieve the best outcomes possible for Hertfordshire and its communities. Over the past year, partnership working has been vital to ensuring the county provided a co-ordinated and effective response to the pandemic. At the same time, excellent work continues through partnerships such as Hertfordshire Growth Board and the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Systems to progress our shared ambitions for the county.

## Delivering Transformation



Embedding a culture of continuous improvement continues. We recognise that small changes and improvements to everyday practice leads to improved service delivery across the county. In 2021/22, the Council will launch Beyond Today - its new approach to managing and delivering its major change programmes and related priorities.

## Developing Our People



Following such a challenging year, we are prouder than ever of our staff and the contribution they have made to tackling and responding to the pandemic. Caring about their wellbeing is ever more important and significant efforts have been made to ensure support is available to those who need it. We also continue to recognise the need to develop our staff and are listed in the country's top one hundred apprenticeship employers named by the Government. In line with our commitment to making inclusion part of our DNA, in 2020 we set out the [Diversity & Inclusion Strategy](#) for our workforce, outlining our desire that our workforce reflects the communities we serve and for all our staff, regardless of their background, identity or circumstances, to have a sense of belonging to our organisation.



## Our Finances

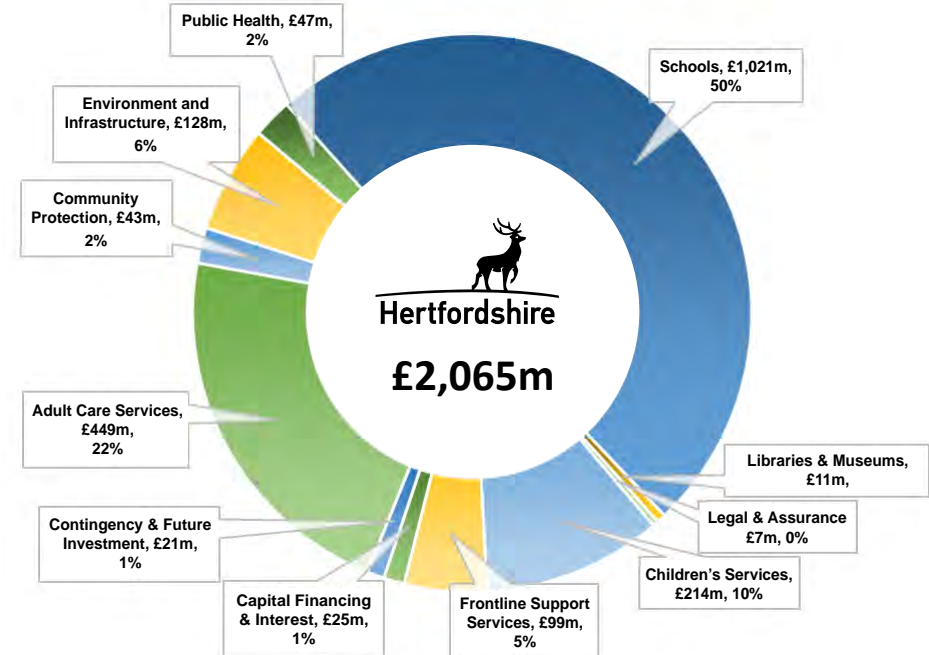
Throughout 2020/21, the Council has done whatever has been needed to support our residents through the pandemic, and to cover the cost of that.

- For example, we made an early commitment to our adult social care providers, that we would pick up any additional costs they faced, either through extra staffing or the need for PPE. That commitment remained throughout the year, and indeed has been extended into this year.
- From nothing, we established Operation Shield that then delivered 120,000 packages of essential supplies to vulnerable shielding people.
- Arrangements were put in place to keep residents safe, and to help tackle the outbreak, working with partners across the county.
- Services continued to be delivered in a safe way, but in many cases at a higher cost as a result.
- Members were able to support their local areas through an additional allocation to their locality budgets

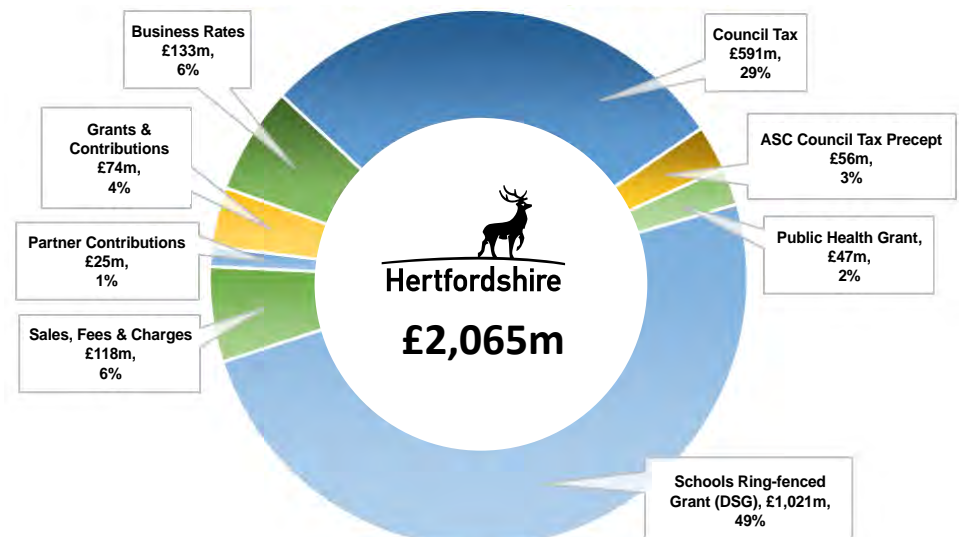
Early on in the financial year, the Council had very real concerns that the costs of the pandemic would outstrip additional funding. It's testament to previous good financial management of the council that we felt able to respond rapidly to support residents and did not need to wait for Government funding.

Over the remainder of the year the financial position improved and eventually resulted in unallocated funding being carrying forward into 2021/22 to support additional cost pressures expected in 2021/22.

### 2020/21 Gross Budget by Spending Area



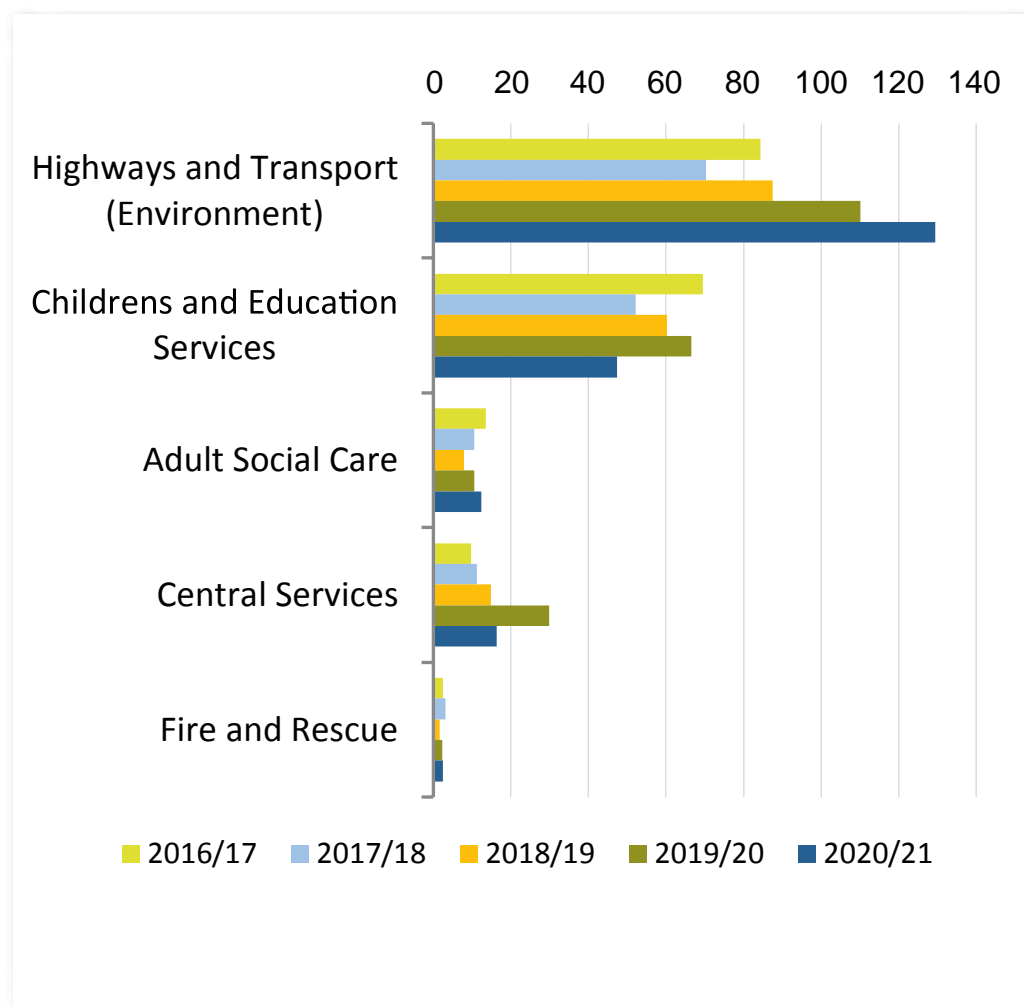
### 2020/21 Revenue Funding Breakdown



## Capital Investment Programme

The council remains committed to investing in infrastructure across Hertfordshire, with the council's capital programme for the year 2020/21 seeing an investment of £208 million across the county. Investment was particularly geared towards developing the county's highways infrastructure and delivering school expansion. This marks a second year of capital investment exceeding £200m in a twelve-month period by the council.

### Capital Investment (£m)



### Capital Funding in 2020/21

Capital Funding Breakdown	Budget £million	Outturn at Year End £million	Outturn Variance £million
Capital Receipts	33.2	8.0	(25.3)
Capital Grants	108.7	72.0	(35.7)
Revenue Contributions	7.1	7.3	0.2
Contributions from 3rd Parties	50.7	52.8	2.0
Specific Reserves	5.0	4.2	(0.8)
Borrowing	105.5	63.8	(42.7)
<b>Total</b>	<b>310.2</b>	<b>208.1</b>	<b>(102.1)</b>

The capital investment for the year was behind the initial planned programme. These delays mainly occurred due to the lockdown, extra safety working practises and impacts on the supply chain, all directly caused by the pandemic.

The delayed schemes are still planned to be delivered during 2021/22.



## The year ahead

**The Covid-19 pandemic has placed significant pressures, not least financial, on the way in which we deliver our services.**

Supporting the county to recover from the pandemic, and the related expected increased demand for services, will be a key priority.

Working closely with stakeholders and partners remains a priority for the year ahead. These relationships have only been strengthened in response to pandemic working and we will continue to fortify these working partnerships in the year ahead.

Never has the importance of working to keep Hertfordshire's communities safe and healthy been more apparent, whether that is through preventative working or with our partners in the Hertfordshire and west Essex Integrated Care Systems.



Our work to support sustainable growth as Hertfordshire's population continues to grow and age is ongoing. The work of the Hertfordshire Growth Board and delivery of our Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy will be key priorities.

- As we look forward, our services will continue to face specific challenges as well as opportunities:
- Adult Care Services: whilst social care funding remains a key challenge, there are opportunities for the ongoing development of extra care and independent living.
- Children's Services: the Hertfordshire Children's Commissioning Executive is completing data analysis to consider how children and families have been impacted by the pandemic to assist in informing priorities for the next 12 months.
- Community Protection: the department will continue to provide business support. Planning for the redevelopment of the Joint Emergency Services Academy in Stevenage also continues.
- Environment and Infrastructure: having secured funding from the Department for Transport, we will be developing plans to introduce a Demand Responsive Transport service in North East Hertfordshire.
- Public Health: will continue to work to reduce health inequalities and reduce the burden of ill health as we seek to recover from Covid-19.
- Resources: will continue to support the organisation to deliver its wider objectives. Democratic Services will build upon the use of technology to further open access to council meetings. There is also significant demand for ceremonial services (Civil Weddings and Civil Partnerships) following the coronavirus restrictions over the last 18 months.



[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)