



DRAFT 12 February 2010
**St Albans City & District
Council
Corporate Plan 2010-13**

Historic St Albans District: a premier
community



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Introduction

Welcome to St Albans City & District Council's corporate plan for 2010 to 2013. The plan sets out what our focus will be during this period and will help the Council to play its part, with others, in making the District an even better place to be.

In identifying our priorities we have looked at how our work can support the aims of other key plans, in particular the recently revised Sustainable Community Strategy, which is a plan for the whole District bringing together the work of many local organisations.

Each year we review the corporate plan to make sure that we are still focusing on the right priorities for the District and to take forward our work for the next three years.

We will build on our successes such as delivering services more efficiently through our customer contact centre, implementing the Twin Bin refuse and recycling scheme which has significantly increased levels of household waste recycled and introducing choice based letting for housing tenants.

This will be a challenging time for us as financial pressures continue to have a significant impact on our budget. During this year's review we have had to look closely at how we work, so that we can still deliver the priorities which have the biggest impact for visitors and those who live, work and learn in the District.

Playing our part in improving life locally

The corporate plan sets out what we must do to play our part in delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy, *Shaping our District together for 2021*. The strategy, produced by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), sets out an overall direction and priorities for the District to make it easier for local organisations to tackle the issues together. The strategy has recently been revised to reflect the new challenges emerging for the District.

Sustainable Community Strategy
Vision A progressive, unique and vibrant District, which values its environment, heritage and culture, and cares for the future: an outstanding place to live where everyone can flourish.
Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring the District is a great place to be• NEW Creating a diverse and sustainable economy for the 21st century• Keeping the District healthy• Supporting an active community that has pride in itself and cares for its future

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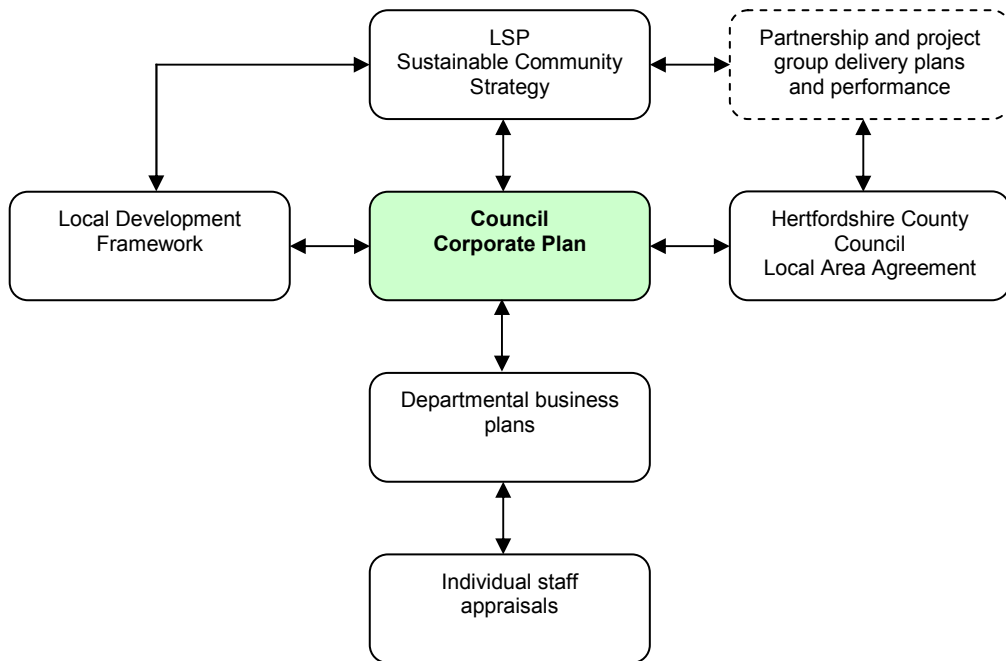
- Areas of work to address identified gaps**
- Providing accessible facilities and activities for young people
 - Supporting the voluntary and community sector to provide preventative and support services
 - Encouraging and promoting community participation and volunteering
 - Reducing our impact on the environment
 - Reducing inequalities
 - **NEW** Meeting the needs of an ageing population
 - **NEW** Promoting sustainable local economic development

The Local Development Framework (LDF) is the spatial expression of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the corporate plan. The LDF is a set of planning documents which will describe how growth and development should be guided and managed over the next 20 years. This plan will influence and support much of our work and will have an impact across our aims on issues such as the need for additional affordable housing and protecting our natural and built environment.

The corporate plan also links with other local, regional and national key strategies such as the three-year Local Area Agreement with Hertfordshire County Council, which sets out targets for our work to make sure public services across the county continue to improve.

The corporate plan priorities flow through into the departmental business plans, which identify the work programmes and performance targets for each of the Council’s departments. Ultimately the work programmes and performance targets set for individual staff as part of the appraisal process come from these.

The diagram below shows how our corporate plan is shaped by key external strategies and how it guides the work of the Council.



Making sure we deliver

The corporate plan is a key tool in our corporate planning cycle linking policy-making, budget setting and performance management. It is shaped by our budget and corporate planning process which identifies where our budget needs to be spent and what we need to do to deliver excellent services.

Apart from making sure our work supports wider strategies, this process includes looking critically at our performance, talking to residents, staff and councillors about what they see as the priorities, and considering outside pressures such as the recession.

External assessments of our performance have shown we have maintained our progress and the Audit Commission's most recent assessment gave the Council a 'performs well' rating for managing its performance and a 'performs adequately' rating for its use of resources, with an overall rating of 'performs adequately'. It described the Council as "continuing to provide good quality services which matter most to its local residents". Importantly, the assessment also shows ways we can improve further and these actions, along with any recommendations coming out of other external assessments, will be incorporated into the relevant departmental business plans.

We set ourselves measures or targets so that we can track how well we are progressing towards achieving our priorities. These include the national performance indicators we are required to collect by the Audit Commission and as part of our Local Area Agreement with Hertfordshire County Council, as well as a number of departmental key performance indicators and action milestones we set for ourselves.

We recently reviewed how we monitor our performance to make it more effective and have reduced the number of measures we look at and introduced a simpler template for reporting back and monitoring performance.

Our corporate priorities involve working across departments and with partners such as local organisations and residents in order to deliver complex projects. We have therefore set up project boards for each of these key projects to help to monitor progress and to make sure that projects hit their identified targets. Cabinet reviews progress quarterly and the progress reports to Cabinet are available to the public and others to view via the Council's website www.stalbans.gov.uk. A summary of progress is included later in this plan in the sections on each of the priorities.

Also, individual departments' progress in delivering corporate projects is monitored quarterly against departmental business plans by the Chief Executive's Board (the Chief Executive and all Heads of Service) and relevant Portfolio Holder (the councillor who is responsible for the portfolio relevant to that department), along with their progress in delivering the service based supporting initiatives and other key services.

Achieving in challenging times

Financial pressures will continue to have a significant impact on our budget as we face reductions in Government grant of up to 10-15% over this period and the recession will continue to affect our income levels. We are also determined that we stick to our commitment of Council Tax rises at inflation or below. We were able to have a zero Council Tax rise for 2009/10 and this year Council Tax has been decreased by 0.4% to ensure nobody has to pay more than last year.

These pressures will leave us with a significant budget gap and hence difficult choices to face. If we are to achieve our priorities we need to work differently and are looking closely at where we can work more efficiently to provide more for less and continue to deliver value for money. For example our success in increasing recycling rates has saved us £300K in landfill tax.

We will continue to implement our Business Improvement Programme so that we can provide even more services to customers through our dedicated contact centre and are re-organising the planning department to provide a more customer-focused and modernised service. We will look for more opportunities to work in partnership to help deliver our priorities by sharing resources.

We are also exploring other organisation-wide opportunities for making savings such as increasing home and mobile working, rationalising design and print spending, reviewing employee benefits, and introducing electronic procurement and paperless invoicing.

Although these are challenging times this is an opportunity to focus on better shaping services around our customers needs, not just making savings, putting us in a stronger position to achieve excellence once the economic recovery comes.

Keeping our focus - our vision and aims

Our Vision

Historic St Albans District: a premier community

Our Aims

Aim 1: To safeguard the environment

Aim 2: To build a community that is open, fair and inclusive

Aim 3: To work in partnership for the health and well being of the community

Aim 4: To cherish and promote our heritage, arts and culture

Aim 5: To ensure the District is a desirable place to visit and in which to live, learn and work

Our vision and aims continue to provide an over-riding focus for our work, while appropriately addressing new emerging issues, and will help us to deliver the refreshed Sustainable Community Strategy's vision of '*A progressive, unique and vibrant District, which values its environment, heritage and culture, and cares for the future: an outstanding place to live where everyone can flourish*'.

Our key corporate priorities

We also consider that the four main organisational priorities, identified last year, will continue to have the greatest impact in delivering a long term sustainable future for the District. Each of these priorities delivers some or all of the corporate aims. The priorities are:

- Providing leisure facilities at Westminster Lodge and London Colney, including youth provision
- Producing the Local Development Framework including the District Vision and protecting the Green Belt and the environment to ensure a sustainable and greener community
- Enhancing the District by providing visible improvements to the street scene
- Achieving value for money quality services, efficiencies and below inflation Council Tax rises

The following sections focus on each of our four priorities setting out how these deliver the priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy, along with the key milestones to take these forward over the next three years.

We have also identified supporting initiatives which will help us to address these priorities and to play a bigger part in delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy's priorities and gap areas. All supporting initiatives will be picked up in the relevant departmental business plans.

In addition to our supporting initiatives, we have a number of 'statutory services' which we have a legal obligation to provide and other key services which we consider central to the aims of the Council. As part of our budget and corporate planning process we look to minimise our activity on non-statutory services that are not a priority, in order to make sure that we focus on delivering our service priorities.

KEY CORPORATE PRIORITY

Providing leisure facilities at Westminster Lodge and London Colney, including youth provision

Objective

To redevelop the current Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre site and provide a leisure facility at Cotlandswick Open Space, London Colney.

Lead Portfolio: Sport and Healthy Living

Other Portfolios: Culture and Heritage

Project board: Leisure Facilities

LSP Sustainable Community Strategy priorities supported:

- Ensuring the District is a great place to be
- Keeping the District healthy

This corporate priority will help to meet the LSP's identified gap areas 'Providing accessible facilities and activities for young people' and 'Reducing inequalities'

Our progress so far

- Final design and cost plan for modernising Westminster Lodge leisure facilities has now been agreed, following extensive consultation with residents, and a planning application submitted to Council in mid-January 2010
- Expressions of interest have been received from a small number of commercial leisure and sports operators for providing leisure facilities at Cotlandswick Open Space and a decision will be made shortly

What we're doing

During 2010/11 we will....

- Seek tenders for the construction of the new Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre by June 2010
- Begin construction work on the new centre from December 2010
- Start the process to identify a commercial operator for the new centre from November 2010

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- Develop options for leisure facilities at Cotlandswick Open Space and consult the public on these to identify a final approach

During 2011/12 we aim to....

- Start construction work on the new leisure facility at Cotlandswick Open Space

During 2012/13 we aim to....

- Open the new Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre in 2012
- Demolish the old centre and complete final landscaping work in 2012
- Have opened the Cotlandswick Open Space leisure facility

Supporting initiatives

- **Developing the District as a cultural hub** - including promoting tourism, leisure and creative industries as a key step to creating a sustainable economy
- **Developing our leisure activities as an opportunity to combat deprivation and strengthen communities**

KEY CORPORATE PRIORITY

Producing the Local Development Framework including the District Vision and protecting the Green Belt and the environment to ensure a sustainable and greener community

Objective

To have in place the necessary strategic policy framework to guide development, and to work with residents and others, so that we can protect our environment including the Green Belt and achieve our shared vision for the District.

Lead Portfolios: Planning and Conservation (Local Development Framework) Environment and Sustainability (Carbon Reduction and Climate Change)

Other Portfolios: Culture and Heritage

Project Boards:

- Local Development Framework
- Environment, Sustainability and Greener Community

LSP Sustainable Community Strategy priorities supported:

- Ensuring the District is a great place to be
- Creating a diverse and sustainable economy for the 21st century
- Supporting an active community that has pride in itself and cares for its future

This priority will also help to meet the LSP's identified gap area 'Reducing our impact on the environment'

Our progress so far

- Residents consulted on the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework during summer 2009, resulting in all existing Areas of Housing Search in the Core Strategy being withdrawn from the current Local Development Framework Core Strategy Document
- Consulted residents on the District Vision during September 2009 to identify an overall plan for how St Albans city centre should look, which will be used to inform the Core Strategy
- Successfully legally challenged some of the housing numbers in the Government's regional plan which would encroach on the Green Belt
- Refused planning permission for a Railfreight Interchange and defended the appeal against the decision in order to protect the Green Belt

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- Achieved target of providing an average of 100 new affordable homes per year during 2008/09 and 2009/10
- Completed improvement work to make some of the Council's hostels which are used for temporary accommodation self contained
- Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting (combining dry recyclables and green waste) is 51.38% (average for quarter April - December 2009) exceeding the target of 50% which was to be achieved by 2010/11
- Introduced steps to reduce the Council's carbon production including installing carbon reduction measures to main council buildings and introducing schemes to reduce staff car travel (e.g. including staff bicycles, interest free bicycle loans, interest free rail tickets)
- Launched Network St Albans, a partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, the University of Hertfordshire, bus and rail operators and others, to reduce traffic congestion by creating an integrated public transport network throughout the District
- Organised a programme of events and promotions around the District to raise residents' awareness of energy, water and waste efficiency
- Secured a two-year support package from the Energy Saving Trust to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the District

What we're doing

During 2010/11 we will....

- Revise the Local Development Scheme which is the timetable for the LDF
- Prepare a pre-submission draft of the Core Strategy and submit for consultation to seek views on issues of 'soundness'
- Continue to resist development in the Green Belt and provide a contingency budget for large-scale planning appeals
- Start to implement the District Vision
- Undertake traffic modelling to inform measures to reduce traffic congestion in and around the city centre
- Produce and implement key planning documents including defining the character of the conservation areas in St Albans, Wheathampstead and Redbourn, and a strategy to protect and enhance green spaces
- Develop a green infrastructure strategy
- Continue work on producing the site allocations and development policies (Development Plan Documents - DPDs) to identify the sites across the District to meet future needs e.g. for employment, retail, homes, and the policies to manage development

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- Continue to upgrade our sheltered housing stock in partnership with housing associations
- Review choice based lettings and make any necessary changes to the Council's allocation scheme
- Work with Hightown Churches and Praetorian Housing Association to complete improvements to the Night Shelter
- Produce a Climate Change Strategy and implementation plan for the District which will achieve our target of 3% annual reduction in greenhouse gas emissions
- Start project to engage small and medium employers in using technology to develop travel plans including mobile ticketing
- As part of Network St Albans, introduce steps to improve the public transport network such as a network map and marketing, real time information, bus stop improvements and improved scheduling on corridor routes
- Carry out a feasibility study on the use of a mini park and ride for St Albans

During 2011/12 we aim to....

- Hold a public examination of the Core Strategy
- Continue implementing the District Vision
- Prepare and consult on issues and options for the site allocations and development policies (DPDs)
- Complete a specialised housing scheme for disabled people
- Fully implement the Climate Change Strategy including delivering climate change adaptation measures across all Council services and introducing carbon reduction measures to Council leisure buildings
- Introduce a partial traffic management scheme to St Peter's Street

During 2012/13 we aim to....

- Submit the site allocations and development policies (DPDs) to the Secretary of State for public examination

Supporting initiatives

- **Protecting and shaping our natural and built environment** – including delivering the Local Development Framework (LDF) and District Vision to improve the visible street scene, public buildings and spaces and increase green transport - we will continue to resist development of more than 7,200 homes in the District by 2021 in order to protect the Green Belt

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- **Delivering the housing strategy** – including increasing the supply of affordable and sustainable homes by continuing to seek to build an average of at least 100 homes each year
- **Continuing to work to reduce the District's carbon footprint** - to achieve the targets of a reduction in the Council carbon footprint by at least 25% by 2013, and reducing the District's footprint by 3% each year from 2006 to achieve an overall reduction of 60% by 2025. This will include playing our part in addressing traffic congestion, increasing household waste recycling further, supporting the local community to deliver grassroots environmental projects and engaging and training Council staff to embed sustainability within their day to day work
- **Supporting businesses and individuals in the District in dealing with the adverse impact of the economic situation and creating a sustainable economy for the future**
- **Creating a more effective and integrated environmental regulatory response**

KEY CORPORATE PRIORITY

Enhancing the District by providing visible improvements to the street scene

This priority is very closely linked to the previous priority on the Local Development Framework (LDF) and much of the work on this priority will feed into the LDF priority or be shaped by it.

Objective

To work with Town and Parish Councils, St Albans City Forum and our contractors, to improve the appearance of the street scene across the District.

Lead Portfolio: Community Engagement and Support

Other Portfolios: Community Leadership and Communications, Culture and Heritage, Environment and Sustainability, Planning and Conservation, Sport and Healthy Living

Project Board: Street Scene and Public Realm

LSP Sustainable Community Strategy priorities supported:

- Ensuring the District is a great place to be
- Supporting an active community that has pride in itself and cares for its future

Our progress so far

- Our initiatives to improve the street scene have had a positive impact as our Place Survey results showed that only 28% of our residents now see litter as a problem (compared to 37% in the previous Best Value Performance Indicator survey)
- Provided matched funding to the Town and Parish Councils to make local improvements
- Produced a Streetscape Design Manual to guide parishes and others on the choice and care of the physical fabric of the street scene e.g. street furniture and signs
- Introduced licensing of pavement furniture
- Started a programme of voluntary road closures in the most heavily parked roads to allow cleaning and maintenance, in partnership with Hertfordshire Highways
- Introduced parking enforcement to protect the District's verges and footways

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- Provided on-street recycling bins in some public spaces
- Delivered some street scene projects with the help of probationers on the Community Payback Scheme

What we're doing

During 2010/11 we will....

- Implement a Public Realm Strategy to improve the look of St Albans public buildings and spaces
- Deliver a District in Bloom project to use flowers and other plants to brighten up the environment
- In partnership with Hertfordshire Highways look to provide more effective control on the use of "A" boards.
- Provide further match funding to Town and Parish Councils and the City Forum to provide visible street improvements
- Voluntarily close further heavily parked roads to allow cleaning and maintenance
- Make improvements to the shopping precincts at Abbots Avenue West and High Oaks
- Work with Hertfordshire Highways to reduce the amount of redundant signage and street furniture
- Introduce a schedule of work to provide better bus shelters, in partnership with Hertfordshire Highways

During 2011/12 we aim to....

- Continue implementing and developing the steps above to further improve the street scene including extending the introduction of enforcement of verge and footpath parking and making improvements to the shopping precinct at Cell Barnes Lane

During 2012/13 we aim to....

- Continue integrating the emerging themes from the District Vision and Public Realm projects into the street scene

Supporting initiatives

- **Protecting and shaping our natural and built environment**
- **Creating a more effective and integrated environmental regulatory response**

KEY CORPORATE PRIORITY

Achieving value for money quality services, efficiencies and below inflation Council Tax rises

Objective

To develop how the Council works so that we can meet the changing expectations of residents and provide services more efficiently

Lead Portfolio: Resources and Efficiencies

Other Portfolios: Community Engagement, Community Leadership and Communications, Culture and Heritage

Project Board: Business Improvement Programme

LSP Sustainable Community Strategy priorities supported:

- Ensuring the District is a great place to be

Our progress so far

- We were able to have a zero Council Tax rise for 2009/10
- Enquiries about refuse and recycling, flytipping, graffiti and abandoned vehicles, pest control, Council Tax, elections and stray animals can now all be handled through our central customer contact centre
- We have made a successful bid for funding to the Communities for Local Government (CLG) to pilot a toolkit that will help us identify our customer service standards, council-wide standards for the level of service a customer can expect from us and how we will put mistakes right
- Have introduced a new website payments system so that residents can make payments more easily

What we're doing

During 2010/11 we will....

- Continue to increase the services available to our customers through the contact centre to include complaints, planning, grounds maintenance and additional areas of environmental health e.g. licensing and noise pollution
- Provide an access point for some county services e.g. highway repairs, blue badges for the disabled

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- Implement a strategy to improve how we treat our customers and promote our customer service standards
- Develop a stronger 'one point of contact' for the Council so that customers get a seamless response whether they contact us by phone, email or face-to-face
- Provide further services to customers via the Council website

During 2011/12 we aim to....

- Further review and develop services to improve customer access by providing more of the work that is usually carried out in the back office areas via the web, telephone or through our face-to-face team
- Continue to explore opportunities for best value by partnering with other councils and Hertfordshire County Council on areas such as recruitment and employee services

During 2012/13 we aim to....

- Further develop the flexibility of our resources while still providing customers with the right balance of self service and personal contact

Supporting initiatives

- **Making our services more customer focused** – including work to develop new, more efficient and seamless services across departments
- **Engaging the community** – including developing a community engagement strategy to make residents clear what they can expect from the Council and how they can help improve life in the District, and by developing customer service standards for our work
- **Strengthening our communication with residents** – implementing the communication strategy to develop a clear, strong reputation of 'working for a premier community'

How will we fund our plans? *(to be updated following agreement of 2010-13 budget)*

Table 1: Planned revenue spending 2010-2013

Table 2: How we plan to finance this spending

Table 3: Housing Revenue Account

Table 4: General Fund Capital Programme

Table 5: Housing Investment Programme

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Any comments? Do you need this plan in an alternative format?

We very much welcome any comments you have to make about the plan. Such feedback is a valuable part of the annual review of the plan and, along with other information such as opinions from residents' surveys and changes in local circumstances, will help us to identify our future priorities and actions.

If you have questions about this plan, or you require this information in another format e.g. in large print, Braille, audio or in a language other than English, please contact the Council's Policy & Partnership department on **01727 819571** or email **policy@stalbans.gov.uk**