

**SUPPLEMENTARY REPORTS FOR
COUNCIL**
7.30 pm on Thursday 9 December 2021
In the Council Chamber, Civic Centre

The attached documents are due to be considered at the meeting listed above and were unavailable for circulation when the agenda for the meeting was published. The agenda item to which the documents relate is noted below.

AGENDA

9. References from Cabinet and Committees

- c) Referral from Electoral Review Working Group - Harlow Council Electoral Cycles (Pages 2 - 16)

The Electoral Review Working Group has recommended to Full Council that the Council does not proceed with public consultation on opting for all out elections at this time.

- d) Referral from Cabinet - Corporate Strategy (Pages 17 - 46)

Cabinet has recommended to Full Council that:

- i) A new Corporate Strategy for 2021- 2023 attached at Appendix A to the report, is adopted.
- ii) Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make minor and consequential amendments to the Corporate Strategy following strategic stakeholder consultation.

- e) Referral from Cabinet - Local Council Tax Support Scheme Proposals (Pages 47 - 71)

Cabinet has recommended to Full Council that the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) remains unchanged for the 2022/23 financial year.

REPORT TO: **FULL COUNCIL**

DATE: **9 DECEMBER 2021**

TITLE: **REFERRAL FROM ELECTORAL REVIEW
WORKING GROUP – HARLOW COUNCIL
ELECTORAL CYCLES**

LEAD OFFICER: **SIMON HILL, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND
CORPORATE SUPPORT (01279) 446099**

**CONTRIBUTING
OFFICERS:** **ALISON HODGSON, ELECTORAL SERVICES
MANAGER (01279) 446038**

**JANET JACKSON, CORPORATE AND
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER
(01279) 446004**

**ADAM REES, SENIOR GOVERNANCE SUPPORT
OFFICER (01279) 446057**

RECOMMENDED that:

- A** The Council does not proceed with public consultation on opting for all out elections at this time.

BACKGROUND

1. The Working Group considered a report on holding a consultation on the Council changing its electoral cycle to all out elections, from the current system of elections by thirds. Further details are included in the report to the Working Group attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

2. Having considered the report, the Working Group recommended to Full Council that the Council does not proceed with public consultation on opting for all out elections at this time for the following reasons:
 - a) The time constraints of making a decision following a consultation by the end of March;
 - b) The Covid-19 pandemic is still ongoing;
 - c) Given the results of the survey on turnout in local elections there were concerns that there wouldn't be enough public appetite for a meaningful result;

- d) A consultation would not be appropriate at the current time; and
 - e) There is no current budget for the consultation.
3. The Working Group noted that the possibility of changing to all out elections could be explored at a later date.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications are set out in the report attached as Appendix 1.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Report to the Working Group dated 30 November 2021

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None.

Appendix 1

REPORT TO: ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP

DATE: 30 NOVEMBER 2021

TITLE: HARLOW COUNCIL ELECTORAL CYCLES

LEAD OFFICER: SIMON HILL, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE AND GOVERNANCE SUPPORT (01279) 446099

CONTRIBUTING OFFICERS: ALISON HODGSON, ELECTORAL SERVICES MANAGER (01279) 446038
JANET JACKSON, CORPORATE AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER (01279) 446004
ADAM REES, SENIOR GOVERNANCE SUPPORT OFFICER (01279) 446057

RECOMMENDED that:

- A The Working Group recommends to Full Council whether a consultation on changing to all-out district elections should be carried out and what form that consultation should take.

BACKGROUND

1. Currently the Council holds its elections in thirds. Each year, one Councillor for each of the 11 wards is elected. On the fourth year, the Council doesn't hold elections. Essex County Council holds its elections in this year.
2. The Council is also, at the request of the LGBCE, reviewing its electoral arrangements. This is because a number of the wards have populations which are over 10 percent above or below the ward average. Should the ward boundaries change, there will be a requirement to hold all-out elections where all seats would be up for election regardless of how long the remaining term was.
3. The Council has the power to switch from holding elections by thirds to all-out elections permanently. If such a change were to occur it would be best for this to align with the all-out elections which would be triggered by ward changes. The Council has been asked to implement new ward boundaries by 2024.
4. There is no one size fits all approach to election cycles. About two thirds of councils currently hold all-out elections with the remaining councils holding them by thirds.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

5. Neither election cycle type is inherently better than the other, but they have advantages and disadvantages over each other. Below is a table summarising most of the more common ones:

a) Elections by thirds – Pros

- i) Provides continuity of Councillors and knowledge as not all Councillors are up for election. More experienced Councillors can also carry out a mentor role with newer Councillors.
- ii) Provides a more up to date reflection of the views of local people through more frequent opportunities to vote.
- iii) Electorate are used to the current system.
- iv) Fewer candidates needed each election meaning that all seats are more likely to be contested.
- v) More regular opportunities for people to stand for election and provides a regular influx of new councillors who can bring new ideas and fresh approaches to the Council.
- vi) Yearly district elections are more likely to coincide with national elections and it is more likely they can be scheduled alongside by-elections, reducing costs.
- vii) The counting process is more straightforward and faster because electors only vote for one candidate.
- viii) Allows for more stability with gradual change at the council, rather than the possibility of big changes every four years.
- ix) Polling stations, staff and everyone involved can plan for always having an election every year on the first Thursday in May and are less likely to have by-elections at short notice.

b) Elections by thirds – Cons

- i) Wards must all have three Councillors.
- ii) Elections can be costly to administer each year.
- iii) Constant yearly campaigning by Candidates may lead to voter fatigue and a lack of interest.
- iv) Administrations may be more likely to avoid taking contentious decisions through fear of losing votes at upcoming elections

c) All-out elections – Pros

- i) Allows for single or multi-member wards.
- ii) Voters will get to see a four-year mandate and long-term commitments from candidates.
- iii) Potentially more effective political management and greater political stability. It allows for a strategic approach to policy and decision-making in line with medium term financial strategy as the administration has a four year period to deliver its mandate
- iv) Allows for a complete change in councillors.
- v) Less costly as only once every 4 years. It is estimated that over a 10 year period there would be a saving of £285,000 with the electoral cycle being the same as for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.
- vi) Fewer elections may mean less election fatigue so people may be more interested in voting when the times comes.

d) All-out elections – Cons

- i) Administration of the election is more challenging due to the greater number of candidates, and the counting process being more complicated.
- ii) Loss of knowledge and experience if all councillors could change which could impact on build-up of knowledge etc.
- iii) There may be difficulties identifying sufficient candidates to contest all seats, resulting in uncontested elections, lower quality candidates.
- iv) All out elections may disadvantage smaller political parties who may not have the resources to campaign across the town and put forward as many candidates.
- v) Electors can only have their say once every four years on how the Council is performing
- vi) If a large number of Councillors are replaced in one election this may be disruptive and may lead to big changes to policies, plans and services.
- vii) Likelihood of increase in by-elections as councillors may not be able to stay for full 4 years and so would incur more costs and may be difficult to book venues at different times of the year, especially at short notice.

- viii) May lose experienced election staff if they are not used as regularly and staff will have fewer opportunities to develop skills.

Cost of Elections

6. The Council budgets £85,000 for a standalone district election. There are some fixed costs for elections such as polling venue hire, which mean that combined elections are comparatively cheaper.
7. The Council is able to claim back costs associated with non-district council elections, although it must budget for the initial outlay.
8. If the Council switched to all-out elections, there would be some years where there would be no elections ordinary elections at all. The Council would therefore only need to budget for by-elections, which are clearly much cheaper to run due to their limited scale.
9. Under the current electoral cycle the Council budgets £10,000 on non-district council election years in the event there are by-elections. Under all-out elections the likelihood of by-elections is greater and budget of £27,500 would be required.
10. It is estimated that over a ten year period the switching to all-out elections would save the Council £285,000. This does not factor in inflation and assumes that General Elections will be held in five year intervals.

Next Steps

11. The Council would be required to carry out a public consultation on a possible change to all-out elections before Full Council could approve any change. Any change would be aligned to the requirement to have all-out elections for the revised ward boundaries which would take effect from 2024.
12. The Working Groups is invited to consider the information above and decide whether it would like to carry out a public consultation.
13. The Council is also aiming to submit proposals on the number of Councillors that will be elected to the Council. This will be subject to a separate report which will include an analysis of current Councillor workload. However, it is important that the Council determines what electoral cycle it wishes to have as continuing to hold elections by thirds will require the number of Councillors to be a multiple of three.
14. The LGBCE expects the Council to submit its proposals for council size before March 2022. Therefore any work on electoral cycles must take place as soon as possible so it can feed into the work on council size.

IMPLICATIONS

Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)

None specific.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration

Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)

As contained in the report.

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance

Housing

As contained in the report.

Author: Andrew Murray, Director of Housing

Community Wellbeing

As contained in the report.

Author: Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment

Governance (Includes HR)

As contained in the report.

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Support

Appendices

Appendix A – Electoral Cycles Leaflet

Appendix B – Equality Impact Decision Tree

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None.

Council Consultation on Election Cycle

We would like to hear your views on whether we should change to whole council elections every four years, or whether we should keep the current system of 'elections by thirds'.

We are carrying out a consultation which runs until 31 January 2022.

We have included some background information below, along with the main arguments for both electoral cycles.

Our council

Harlow Council has 33 Councillors who represent 11 wards. Every ward has three councillors, who are elected for four years.

Current cycle – elections by thirds

The Council holds elections for one seat in every ward for three successive years out of four.

Whole council elections

Under this system, all councillors would be elected at the same time, once every four years.

This would not affect other elections such as parliamentary, county council and police, fire and crime commissioner elections.

How to have your say

You can complete the online survey at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx or complete the form overleaf.

Outcome of consultation

The Council has the power to change its election cycles under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Following the consultation a meeting of the Full Council on 24 February 2022 will consider whether to change the electoral cycle or to keep it as it is.

If the election cycle were changed this would happen from May 2024.

| Why keep elections by thirds | Why change to whole council elections |
|---|---|
| <p>More frequent opportunities to make your views known with more immediate political accountability.</p> <p>Greater continuity of Councillors as they can't all be replaced in a single election.</p> <p>Gradual change that retains knowledge and experience whilst allowing for new councillors with new ideas.</p> <p>Voting for one councillor at an election is simpler and understood by voters.</p> | <p>Four year mandates and less focus on yearly campaigning.</p> <p>Lower cost as elections won't take place every year.</p> <p>Allows for a complete change in councillors once every four years and we can have single or multi-member wards.</p> <p>Fewer elections may reduce election fatigue which may increase turnout.</p> |

Have your say

Keep elections by
thirds

Change to whole council
election

What are your reasons for your choice above? (optional)

Completed forms can be handed in at the Civic Centre, the Latton Bush Centre, Harlow Library, Old Harlow Library, Mark Hall Library, Great Parndon Library, or Tye Green Library.

Appendix B

Decision Making Tree - Equality Impact Assessment

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is the process by which organisations examine their activities in order to minimise the potential for discrimination. They can help ensure that equality, social inclusion and community cohesion issues can be considered when drawing up policies or proposals which affect the delivery of your services.

The process is also used to monitor interventions designed to have a positive impact on a particular group.

What are the aims of an EIA?

Discrimination can occur due to unforeseen reasons. It is also often the case that organisations sometimes unintentionally overlook or exclude certain groups by not specifically considering their needs. By carrying out an EIA you can obtain a profile of how your policies, services or activities will affect different equalities groups. The potential for discrimination is reduced when undertaking EIA's and awareness among staff who may have little or no experience is raised. Most importantly, your organisation will be complying with legislation by identifying and designing-out discrimination.

Who has to carry out an EIA?

The Equality Act 2010 requires all public bodies to carry out EIA's. They have proved to be so effective in practice that the principles have been extended to cover the nine protected characteristics:-

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Process

There are effectively two different levels of impact assessment. The first is the Initial Screening which should be carried out in all cases. Depending on the result of the Initial Screening you may then need to move on to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

Stage One – Initial Screening

By carrying out an initial screening you will be able to determine whether a full Equality Impact Assessment is needed. It should identify positive, neutral or negative impact.

Screening must be done during the development or design of the policy and before it goes to any group or committee for approval. If it is going to the Board for approval, then it is a requirement of the Board that a full EIA is carried out where the policy is found to be relevant to equality and diversity.

Screening is a short easy process which makes use of statistics, consultation outcomes, results of ethnicity monitoring, complaints, analysis of PALS, audit reports, research information, and reviews demographic data. If there is no data, take action to collect the evidence of likely impact and revisit the document (it could be through PPI, research, consultations, desk research/interview, public health data).

When screening a policy or undertaking a full assessment you can involve your team, other colleagues or partners in the sector and together consider the full implications of the policy and improvements to be made.

Before you start screening do the following:

- Be clear about policy aims, purpose, objectives and outcomes and beneficiaries
- Use the evidence/data you have. However, if you have none or require additional information to make an informed decision, then put monitoring in place/gather some data to support the process
- Ask the following questions and in conjunction with the evidence/data you have, your knowledge, expertise, partnership input, past experiences or research about how your policies have affected certain groups, national information about how some groups are affected by our activities/policies/decisions.

Once you have screened the policy or activity to establish if it has any relevance to equality and diversity, answer the questions below to find out whether an EIA is needed:

| Questions to be used during the Screening Process | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| | | |
| 1) Does/will the policy or activity affect the public directly or indirectly? | ✓ | |
| 2) Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal? | ✓ | |
| 3) Does the evidence/data show an existing or likely differential impact for the different strands of diversity? Age, gender, disability, race, religion, sexuality | | ✓ |
| 4) Do/will people who belong to the different strands of diversity have different needs, experiences, issues or priorities in relation to this policy or activity (use evidence) | | ✓ |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5) Could the policy or activity affect how services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, where and by whom? | | ✓ |
| 6) Could the policy or activity affect our workforce or employment practices? | ✓ | |
| 7) Have complaints been received from different equality groups about the effect of this policy, proposal or our activities in general (having no complaints does not always mean there is no issue – always advisable to find out) | | ✓ |
| 8) Does the policy involve or will it have an impact upon eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and promoting good relations between diverse groups | | ✓ |
| 9) Is there likely to be an adverse/negative impact or risks to the organisation, for users, equality groups and staff if the policy or activity is implemented in its current format? | | ✓ |

Nil impact (no yes's) – The process stops here.

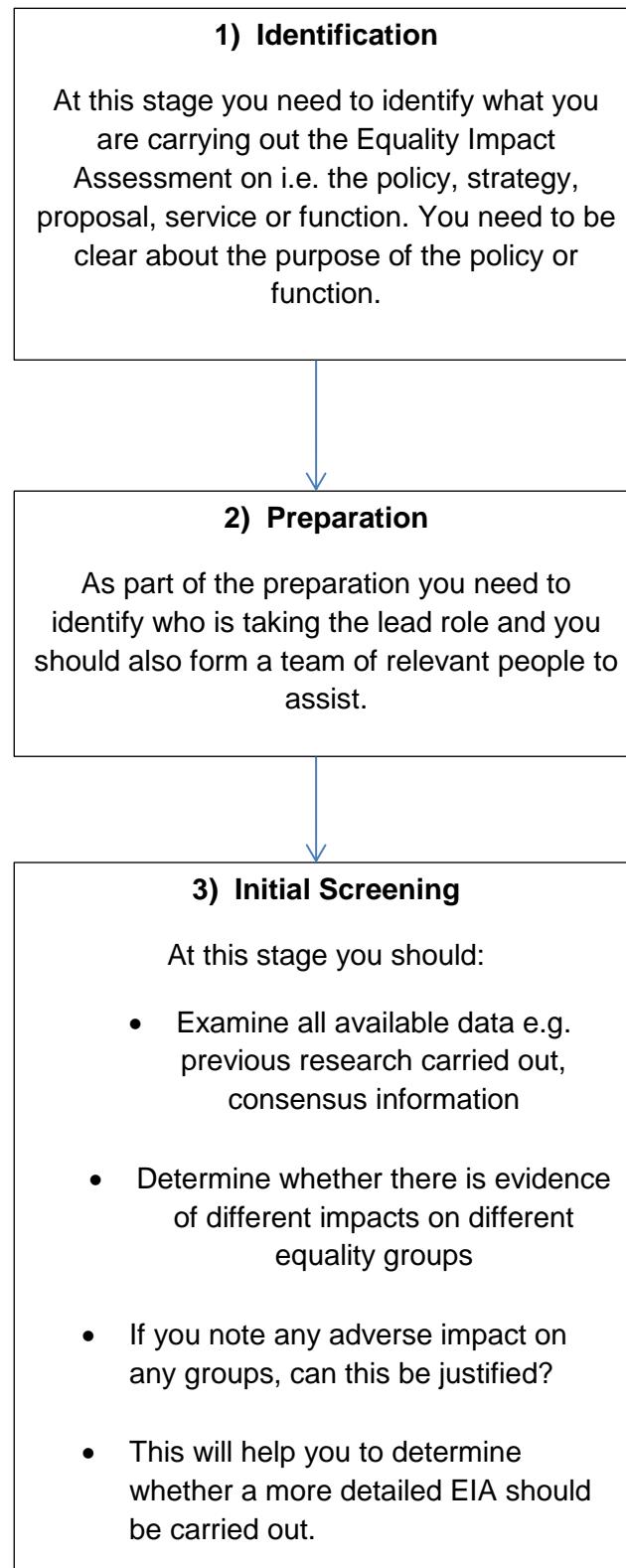
Low impact (1 to 3 yes's) – A full EIA is required but is not an immediate priority, you can prioritise for later on in the year.

High impact (4 to 9 yes's) - A full EIA is required immediately. The EIA should be carried out in consultation with affected groups.

Stage Two – Completing the Equality Impact Assessment

If the initial screening reveals that there may be a negative impact on any particular group, then you should carry out an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) using the Equality Impact Assessment Form (Appendix D – Part C) and EIA Guidance Sheet (Appendix D – Part B).

Step by step guide to an EIA



4) Gather further data and research

At this stage you should consider all of the information used for the initial screening and then identify and gather other relevant information. You may need to consider new mechanisms for gathering data.

5) Consultation

At this stage you should involve all relevant stakeholders, this might include service users, other community groups etc. It is important that you explain to people what you are doing and think about accessible ways of consulting with people. You might use focus groups, postal questionnaires etc.

6) Assess impact

You should now consider all of the data you have gathered including findings from the consultation to assess the impact. You should assess whether there is, or is likely to be, a positive impact or negative impact for different groups. You should assess and determine the nature of this negative impact.

7) Eliminate or reduce negative impact

Once you have determined the nature of the impact, you should examine why it has occurred or is likely to occur. You will then be able to explore ways to reduce or eliminate the negative impact.



8) The Action Plan – Monitor & Review

This is where you develop an action plan to implement what is needed and set up arrangements for monitoring and review.



9) Publish results

It is important that you make the results of the EIA available so you should consider how you will publish the results. It is also important to identify the people that need to know the results.

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| REPORT TO: | CABINET |
| DATE: | 2 DECEMBER 2021 |
| TITLE: | CORPORATE STRATEGY 2021-2023 |
| PORTFOLIO HOLDER: | COUNCILLOR RUSSELL PERRIN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL |
| LEAD OFFICERS: | BRIAN KEANE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE (01279) 446000 |
| | SENIOR MANAGEMENT BOARD (01279) 446004 |
| CONTRIBUTING OFFICERS: | POLICY AND PERFORMANCE TEAM (01279) 446252 |

This is a Key Decision

It is on the Forward Plan as Decision Number: I012619

The decision is not subject to Call-in Procedures for the following reason:

The decision stands as a recommendation to Full Council

This decision will affect no ward specifically.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet recommends to Full Council that:

- A** A new Corporate Strategy for 2021- 2023 attached at Appendix A to the report, is adopted.
- B** Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make minor and consequential amendments to the Corporate Strategy following strategic stakeholder consultation.

REASON FOR DECISION

- A** The new Corporate Strategy provides the Council with important context for decision making and the allocation of its resources following changes to the Administration. Approval of the Corporate Strategy is reserved to Full Council.

BACKGROUND

1. As was envisaged when officers last reported to Council in February this year, new arrangements have been applied to the new Corporate Strategy. A new business planning period is envisaged during the autumn/winter period, to better align to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Risk.

2. There has also been a refresh of the Council's priorities now called Strategic Themes. The four Key Strategic Themes that reflects the priorities of the new Administration are:
 - a) Economic Growth;
 - b) Social Cohesion;
 - c) Safeguarding the Environment; and
 - d) An Efficient Council
3. These Strategic Themes will guide the focus of the Strategy and position the Council to be a vehicle to "extend opportunity and prosperity to all".
4. The Corporate Strategy is part of the annual corporate and budget planning process. The Strategy gives direction to the Council so that it continues to focus on the right themes for Harlow to take forward for the next three years.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

5. The Corporate Strategy 2021-2023 attached at Appendix A:
 - a) Sets out the Council's strategic ambitions for the next three years to March 2024 within the financial resources available;
 - b) Provide a firm link to the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and;
 - c) Sets out how the Strategic Themes will be achieved through the Ambitions set out on Appendix A to this report.
6. Overall, the Strategy represents some continuity of the priorities that have gone before, but also signals significant change, including:
 - a) More emphasis on strategic growth and regeneration, climate action and sustainability;
 - b) Investment in our neighbourhoods, our housing and maximising opportunities in our new housing programme;
 - c) A financially efficient, low tax Authority that maximises income; delivers value for money and protects its discretionary services;
 - d) Focus on a community agenda that promotes community and business resilience; social inclusion and is a customer centric organisation;

- e) Setting Harlow on track to be a successful place to work and do business at the heart of the UK Innovation Corridor, attracting new investment and businesses; and
 - f) A platform for HTS Group, through its developing Business Plan, to become a greater provider of local authority services.
7. It is proposed that, once the Strategy is approved by Cabinet, the following key activities will be undertaken:
- a) Further engagement with strategic partners;
 - b) Alignment with the MTFS and Risk during the autumn and winter period of 2021;
 - c) Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) undertaken at a later stage when implementation is recommended to Cabinet; and
 - d) The final Strategy brought back for adoption at Full Council later in the year.
8. A 'Delivery Plan' to be developed once the Strategy is approved which will outline the key actions to meet the Ambitions over the life of the Strategy. The Plan will form the basis for future performance reporting to Members and provide an opportunity to refresh the delivery proposals on an annual basis.
9. Subsequent service plans and team plans will be drawn up which will feed into the Personal Performance Plans (PPP's) of staff from April 2022.

IMPLICATIONS

Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)

As contained within the report.

Author: Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth and Regeneration

Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)

The resources earmarked for delivering the 2021 - 2023 Corporate Strategy will be detailed the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and presented to a future meeting of Cabinet

Author: Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance

Housing

As contained within the report.

Author: Andrew Murray, Director of Housing

Community Wellbeing

As contained within the report.

Author: Jane Greer, Director of Communities and Environment

Governance (Includes HR)

As contained within the report.

Author: Simon Hill, Director of Governance and Corporate Support

Appendices

Appendix A – The Corporate Strategy 2021 - 2023

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

EIA - Equality Impact Assessment

MTFS – Medium-Term Financial Strategy

PPP's – Personal Performance Plans

APPENDIX A

Harlow Council

Corporate Strategy 2021- 2023

FOREWORD



I am delighted to introduce Harlow Council's new Corporate Strategy. This strategy sets out our vision for Harlow and provides a clear policy framework for how it will be realised. Our vision for Harlow is to be the best town in the country, to live, to work and to raise a family.

Our vision is one in which our town centre is regenerated making it a fun and vibrant place to spend your leisure time. Harlow will become a shopping destination with a diverse range of retailers. A town centre with high quality restaurants to suit a wide variety of tastes as well as becoming a centre of entertainment which is accessible to people of all age groups and backgrounds. We will regenerate our town's estates by ensuring the environment is well cared for and that local amenities such as our parks, playing fields, paddling pools and playgrounds are maintained to a high standard.

Our Council will be a council that promotes community cohesion and works with Harlow's fantastic volunteers, charitable bodies and faith groups to ensure that no one is left behind. Our Council will seek to support the most vulnerable in our society and will work to ensure that the "levelling up" agenda is applied to the benefit of all, so that every resident in our town has a stake in its future prosperity.

We will be an efficient Council that works with and supports local businesses. Protecting and investing in our much loved discretionary services will be at the heart of this Council's mission, because we recognise the vital part they play in the quality and standard of resident's living.

Our ambitious council house building programme will deliver a greater number of council homes. Creating homes that will give more of our residents a personal stake in our town. Greater numbers of council homes will also help to support those who are amongst the lowest paid in our society. Our commitment to Harlow North and the Harlow Gilston Garden Town partnership will ensure that not only are there more homes for the people of Harlow but that they are also in the right place; supported by adequate and sustainable transport infrastructure and local amenities.

This Council will never pursue an agenda of overdevelopment. Whilst this Council recognises the need for more homes, new housing should not infringe upon residents' standard of living. With this in mind, it will be this Council's policy to ensure that development to the South and West of Harlow are opposed and that the impact of any further development to the East of Old Harlow is limited.

The vision and ambitions I have outlined will be achieved through an overarching 'vision statement' supported by 'four key strategic themes'. Harlow is a great place to live and work. This Council will be the main engine for making it an even better place to be; but above all else it will be a council that is there to serve and support the people of Harlow.

Councillor Russell Perrin
Leader of Harlow Council

INTRODUCTION

Our Strategy is a central component of the Council's business planning; and is underpinned by the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and other strategic and operational activities such as service and team planning, Personal Performance Plans (PPPs), governance, and performance management.

The Strategy is for 3 years and will be reviewed and updated in the municipal year 2023-24.

The Council's Cabinet Members and their portfolio responsibilities are set out in the subsequent pages below.

This connected Strategy ensures that everyone in the Council is working towards the same strategic ambitions and that our key strategic themes are achieved. This will be accomplished through the Council's 'delivery plan' for the current financial year (2021/22) and next financial year (2022/23).

To ensure the Council remains on target, its progress against our strategic ambitions will be monitored through the Council's Performance Management Framework, which sets out the mechanisms and the range of tool utilised by Officers and Councillors in gathering and reporting the Council's quarterly performance on service milestones, key performance indicators and the Council's finances.

The Council publishes a statement of its performance each quarter. These reports are presented to Cabinet and when agreed are published here

<http://www.harlow.gov.uk/performance-reports>

OUR VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is to position the Council to be a vehicle to “extend opportunity and prosperity to all.” Now is the time for joint working and seizing opportunities that will build a lasting legacy of growth, inward investment and shared prosperity for Harlow.

This ambition will be achieved through our four key strategic themes that will guide the focus of this Strategy. These are:

1. Economic Growth

Harlow sits at the heart of the UK Innovation Corridor reaching from London to Cambridge. The Corridor provides the potential for Harlow’s sustained economic growth and future opportunity for increased investment in its infrastructure and take the Town towards a better future post COVID-19. The Council will work with central and local government to pursue the Levelling Up agenda to help enhance local economic growth.

We will position Harlow as a regional centre for arts and culture and unlock the potential of our Local Authority Trading Company to bring greater return for residents.

Through our regeneration programme and the opportunities from economic growth, we will make Harlow a Town fit for the future. The prosperity of the Town will also see our residents developing the skills required to secure employment, accessing good quality housing as part of sustainable and social provision. The regeneration of our Town Centre will further enhance our growth ambitions and create opportunities to welcome business expansion

2. Social Cohesion

Our aim for social cohesion is to have a framework of strategies that builds on our community’s resilience, promotes the health and wellbeing of residents and improves the experience, wellbeing, financial resilience and social mobility of working families.

As a priority, we are determined to deliver a joined up, wrap-around approach that opens the potential to even higher levels of social and economic wellbeing. We will do this by:

- a) Targeting residents who need greater support to realise their life ambition;
- b) Through the ‘Essex Plan for Working Families’ gaining a better insight of the challenges faced by working families in Harlow and the support they need.
- c) Working with community leaders, employers, health and care authorities and professionals, police and criminal justice organisations, faith and charitable groups.

- d) Promoting the benefits of inclusion by building on existing networks with a renewed focus on engagement to strength the bond between the Council and each part of the community that makes Harlow a great place to live.

We will do this through an enhanced commitment to promote and deliver tangible actions that increases inclusion and boost community engagement. We will reduce anti-social behaviour and the influence of gangs; support our local Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority communities to thrive and work with local our health professionals and authorities to address the impact of long COVID.

3. Safeguarding the Environment

The safeguarding our Town's environment for future generations has never had a greater imperative. Our aim is to improve the cleanliness of the Town and identify practical measures that will enhance our Town.

We will promote green enterprise and technological innovation, enhance our existing environment and support the use of more renewable energy sources. Through the opportunities of the Garden Town, ensure the full benefits of the development around our Town are realised by residents including taking forward changes in our environment and sustainable transport.

The Council aim is to significantly reduce its carbon footprint and achieve the government's targets for Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Council's target for Net Zero is 10 years (2040) before the government's commitment. Through our new Carbon Reduction Plan (April 2021 – March 2026), we will further deliver carbon savings from our operations in that period and begin the critical work required to meet Net Zero by 2040.

4. An Efficient Council

Our aim is to establish the foundations for a sustainable future for the Council, where we focus on what matters most to our residents and adds most value to their lives. However, the challenges of managing the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the already significant constraints on our finances, means we need to ensure the services we provide are efficient and affordable. We will do this by:

- a) Maximising operational efficiency by transforming Council services to meet modern ways of working;
- b) Ensuring clear service priorities that are aligned with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- c) Taking a more commercial approach to increase income yield from specific regeneration opportunities in the years to come;

- d) Increasing the income yield from financial investments as part of a prudent treasury management approach, including, challenging existing cost estimates and unavoidable cost increases;
- e) Reducing the reliance on government grants for the funding of ongoing services; and
- f) Maximising operational efficiency through the transformation of Council services to meet modern ways of working.

COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS RESILIENCE



"The pandemic has tested the resilience of our community. Residents continue to show a great deal of courage and a determination to support those most vulnerable to the virus. There have been many personal sacrifices that mean a focus on an economic and social recovery is crucial as we cautiously look forward to our post-COVID future."

The local economy is the beating heart of growth and the rising levels of productivity in the East of England. It is our plan to accelerate and to promote innovation, attract new businesses and do everything possible to work with Essex County Council and the Government to address local labour market challenges.

A strong local economy empowers our community and delivers greater shared prosperity, but we must not be complacent about the human cost of the pandemic. Through renewed community leadership, our administration will build a social and economic recovery built around supporting equal life chances and access to opportunities, no matter your age, race, sexual orientation, faith, ability or background, is the key.

Nobody in our community should be left behind as a result of the pandemic. Our administration wants to ensure that Harlow residents can access the benefits of future business growth by acquiring the new skills employers need or supporting individuals to successfully start a business of their own. We will seek to attract support to make this happen through upskilling and reskilling opportunities.

Our focus on community and business resilience will enhance inclusion by focusing on a community agenda that promotes social inclusion and fully embraces the rich diversity in the Town's population. The route to a better future is about enhancing opportunity, and we plan to build on the successful community response delivered during the lockdowns. This will lay the foundations for future years that ensures everyone benefits from the recovery.

To achieve this vision, we will look to boost community engagement, invest in innovative voluntary projects, steer young people away from the vicious cycle of crime, support our most vulnerable residents, make our streets safer, encourage and support the performing arts, address wellbeing challenges and promote the value of working together to address the social and economic challenges our town must confront to build a better tomorrow.

It is a privilege to lead the Town's post-COVID reconstruction. Our administration recognises the responsibility entrusted in us to deliver for Harlow at a time of crisis. We will move forward in earnest to deliver on the people's priorities."

Councillor Joel Charles
Deputy Leader of the Council
Portfolio Holder for Community and Business Resilience

Strategic Ambitions for Community Resilience

At the heart of our policy agenda is a determination to promote social inclusion, the need to respond to the challenges faced by our community during the pandemic and a commitment to build a future post-COVID that delivers more opportunities for all residents to succeed.

Set out below are the short, medium and long-term ambitions envisaged to achieve our aspirations for Community Resilience.

| Short-term Ambitions | Medium-term Ambitions | Long-term Ambitions |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead the town through the initial post-COVID recovery, working closely with community leaders to co-create a response.• Support the town's voluntary and charitable groups to thrive.• Provide community leadership to address immediate COVID-19 related public health challenges.• Tackle anti-social behaviour in all its forms in partnership with the police and criminal justice partners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Embed a focus on social inclusion across all activities in Harlow Council.• Continue to promote safeguarding best practice to ensure vulnerable groups in our community receive the right support.• Enhance the capability of the council to engage more with the community through more proactive consultation methods.• Support the development of more opportunities for residents to learn, earn and start a family in Harlow. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to guarantee the financial security of the council's non-statutory community services.• Adopt a more targeted approach to supporting the most vulnerable in our community by using council funding to scale up interventions that address wider health and wellbeing challenges.• Position the HTS Group as a leading provider of public sector services (responding to housing need and the regeneration agenda) in Harlow and the wider East of England. |

Strategic Outcomes for Community Resilience

The following Strategies will support the delivery and outcomes of our strategic aspirations Community Resilience. These are:

- **Community Resilience Strategy:** A single strategic focus to promote and actively enhance social inclusion, by working with community leaders, including the local charitable sector, faith groups and residents' associations to confront exclusion and provide opportunities for all.
- **Health and Wellbeing Strategy:** Work with the Princess Alexandra Hospital, the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group and other health and care professionals to address gaps in public health provision and raise awareness through prevention campaigns.

- **Community Safety Strategy:** Tackle the root causes of anti-social behaviour and crime by working with local policing leads and criminal justice partners to support rehabilitation initiatives. We will also address issues impacting on the safety of the Town's streets by working more closely with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex.
- **Community Engagement:** Improved two-way conversation between the Council and residents to help shape the development of community services, allowing people to take a more direct role in the decision making process.

Strategic Ambitions for Business Resilience

Set out below are the short, medium and long-term ambitions envisaged to achieve our aspirations for Business Resilience.

| Short-term Ambitions | Medium-term Ambitions | Long-term Ambitions |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the immediate economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are understood and addressed to support the recovery. • Work with partners at a county and national level to support the implementation of a youth employment and skills plan e.g. Kick Start • Continue to attract businesses in the target sectors of advanced manufacturing, life sciences, MedTech, digital and ICT to the Harlow Innovation Park. • Work with local businesses to ensure there is a strengthened and one single organisation that is empowered to represent their best interests. • Ensure Phase 1 of the Innovation Park is operating near to / at full capacity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a refreshed Economic Development Strategy to chart the course to maximise economic recovery and the benefits from investment over the medium to long-term • Ensure that increased numbers of innovative businesses are attracted to the Harlow Innovation Park and other business centres in the town. • Ensure the Government investment programmes that support economic recovery and levelling up are secured for Harlow. • Ensure economic recovery is supported through actively encouraging local anchor institutions to open opportunities for local procurement, supply chain development, employment and education/skills opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that Harlow is perceived as the successful centre of economic growth within west Essex and eastern Hertfordshire. • Work to ensure the supply of space for business expansion opportunities in Harlow and the wider Garden Town to support economic growth. • Collaborate further with Essex County Council and the Government to raise awareness of local labour market challenges in Harlow and close gaps in the market. |

Strategic Outcomes for Business Resilience

The following strategic outcomes have been identified for Business Resilience. These are:

- Harlow to become an economic powerhouse in the East of England and as part of the UK Innovation Corridor, which enables SME's to grow and attract anchor institutions and organisations to further boost the local economy, creating more jobs, opportunities and prosperity.
- New opportunities for high-skilled, long-term jobs, apprenticeships, and training increased through the productivity and outputs of Harlow's local economy – providing more routes for residents to achieve their career ambitions.
- Reduction in youth unemployment.
- Rising levels of working age adults accessing education and skills opportunities to reskill or upskill.
- Increased education and skills training opportunities aligned to local employment and business.
- Increased numbers of businesses and start-ups engaged in business and innovation support programmes.
- Ensure that resident wages reach above national average levels.
- Increased numbers of successful inward investments to Harlow.
- Increased numbers of businesses in Harlow.
- A thriving local labour market that offers high quality jobs.
- Increased supply chain, employment and procurement opportunities with local anchor institutions.
- Increase the value of the visitor economy through supporting the arts, culture, heritage and visitor attractions sector.
- **HTS Group Commercial Strategy:** Create a new vision for the HTS Group to become one of the largest providers of public services in the East of England by reimagining the direction of the Group to achieve a greater return to the taxpayer.

As part of the overall vision, the community and business portfolio contributes to our strategic themes 'economic growth' and 'social cohesion'. If the Council is to deliver further access to opportunities and routes to increased prosperity it will be important to:

- a) Enhance social inclusion as a mechanism within the community to begin making better progress to transform community engagement, so that better communication is in place to guide residents and families towards support that could be potentially life changing.
- b) Focus our work programme on business resilience, including the promotion of digital innovation and inclusion, up-skilling, sustainability and celebrating the Town's creative and cultural heritage.

STRATEGIC GROWTH



"Harlow has expanded considerably since it was initially developed as a New Town in 1947. In spite of this expansion, Harlow now has two key challenges to overcome: first, it does not have the critical mass to fulfil its vision and ambitions, to attract the investment and the amenities it wants to achieve its economic growth potential, and second; some areas of the Town require regeneration. All of which are a result of age, the economic downturn, a lack of funding, the COVID pandemic and changes in permitted development.

Key to our strategic growth ambitions are measures that bring opportunities for new and existing residents. We are currently taking steps to realise our aspirations through the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, the Local Plan and sustainable transport infrastructure, all of which will aid our strategic growth.

Looking forward, we are excited with our plans for our Town Plan, the creation of a Community Infrastructure Levy plus a host of other regeneration initiatives that will further aid growth and prosperity in Harlow. These opportunities will stimulate the critical mass and infrastructure required to deliver and support existing and new communities in a sustainable way."

Councillor Michael Hardware
Portfolio Holder for Strategic Growth

Strategic Ambitions

Set out below are the short, medium and long term ambitions envisaged to achieve our aspirations for Strategic Growth.

| Short-term Ambitions | Medium-term Ambitions | Long-term Ambitions |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore opportunities for innovative service provision on a business case basis.• Develop a new governance process for the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town to speed up delivery.• Support the development and implementation of the new M11 junction 7a. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enable the broader regeneration of the existing Town• Increase local engagement in the planning process, ensuring greater openness and transparency.• Integrate the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town into Harlow to ensure a cohesive and inclusive community.• Create a Rolling Infrastructure Fund to help deliver investment in Harlow. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop schemes for new Sustainable Transport Corridors and Road improvement.• Facilitate modal shift to sustainable transport modes through investment and support of low and no carbon travel options. |

Strategic Outcomes

The following strategic outcomes have been identified for Strategic Growth. These are:

- Review of the Local Development Plan (Local Plan) policies and objectives completed to ensure they are up to date.
- Deliver the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town programme in conjunction with Garden Town neighbours.
- Create a Community Infrastructure Levy to deliver further infrastructure support for the Town.
- A planning process, which is transparent and actively engages residents, encouraging them to participate both at a high level, when policies are being written, and when applications have been submitted.
- Ensure Harlow both old and new has the latest digital infrastructure and is future proofed to accommodate technological developments around the corner.
- The creation of effective Sustainable Transport Corridors, including supporting a fast and affordable rails links to London and other regional hubs.
- Implement a Strategic Infrastructure programme to support the growth of the Town e.g. The River Stort Crossings and Sustainable Transport Corridors.

The Portfolio for strategic growth will be integral to the delivery of three of the four Strategic Themes. Our strategic ambitions will ensure our strategic themes are delivered so that new and existing communities will be able to thrive in the new sustainable Harlow of the future. Harlow is at the heart of the UK Innovation Corridor. This will ensure Harlow's sustainable strategic economic growth and further opportunities for future and sustained investment.

HOUSING



"The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a direct economic and social impact on people's lives and future prosperity. The Council's focus in this strategy will therefore be on establishing a strong recovery for Housing Services tackling housing need, providing support for tenants/leaseholders and re-establishing the delivery of the Housing Investment Programme (HIP) to keep our stock to the highest quality, safe, and improving housing conditions. The Council will work with its partner Harlow Trading Service (HTS) Housing & Regeneration Ltd, the private sector and registered social landlords to pursue this aim.

The Council continues to receive additional government grant to help and support those who find themselves sleeping rough with our Partner "Streets2Homes". Together we are finding more settled housing solutions. We will continue to support tenants and leaseholders in financial difficulties with help and access to Government support.

The Council has a principle role in all this through its substantial proportion of the housing stock. We are determined that our homes are safe and well maintained. We want everyone to have a home they can afford and, where they wish, to raise a family in neighbourhoods where there is social cohesion and community wellbeing.

We have an ambition to build more council homes. We want all of our homes to be sustainable and affordable to heat, meeting the latest building standards. To achieve all this we will talk to our tenants, leaseholders and residents, to explain what we are doing and why. We will find out more about the people who live in our properties so that our services meet their needs. This is an ambitious plan, but we have the drive and ambition to see it delivered."

Councillor Simon Carter
Portfolio Holder for Housing

Strategic Ambitions

Set out below are the short, medium and long term ambitions envisaged to achieve our aspirations for Housing.

| Short-term Ambitions | Medium-term Ambitions | Long-term Ambitions |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify preliminary council owned sites for all tenures appropriate for new housebuilding.Identify housing needs to inform the type of housing that would be required for new housebuilding.Improve the cleanliness of the communal areas in flat | <ul style="list-style-type: none">In conjunction with Regeneration develop a house building plan for identified council owned sites.Continue to tackle poverty and inequality by delivering housing strategies.Deliver plans and strategies for affordable housing. This | <ul style="list-style-type: none">All neighbourhoods to be desirable places in which to live with homes that are safe, secure, and appropriate for people at different points in their lives.Ensure future housing plans and strategies are aligned to the new national Housing White Paper. |

| Short-term Ambitions | Medium-term Ambitions | Long-term Ambitions |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| <p>blocks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the customer experience with the Council's repairs service • Continue to make the best use of and invest in our homes, tackling local priorities, prioritising energy efficiency schemes that can make a difference in tackling climate change and fuel poverty in line with the Government's Green Paper. • Enable an improved conversation between the Council and tenants/leaseholders to help shape the continued development of housing services, allowing people to take a more active role in policy making. • Tackling homelessness, by providing more choices for those in housing need increasing the promotion of wider housing options and use of the private sector. • Ensure homes are decent, compliant, safe, affordable, and accessible to promote good physical and mental health and wellbeing and which are fit for the future. | <p>will include carbon reduction methods such as new boilers, roof installations (retrofitting).</p> | |

Strategic Outcomes

The following Strategies will support the delivery and outcomes of our strategic aspirations for Housing. These are:

- **Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy.** Work with residents and deliver services in an open, transparent, and accountable way.
- **Allocations and Homelessness Strategies.** Ensure actions plans are delivered, prioritised, and focussed to meet local housing need.
- **Affordable Housing Strategy.** Grow by building new council homes that are affordable and meet local housing need. More residents in their own home whether its Council or private.
- **Sub Regional Strategy.** Play a leading and influential role regionally and nationally within the housing sector. Actively seek partnership opportunities with other housing providers.
- **Housing Regulatory Plan.** Invest in and deliver good housing regulatory governance, improving services.
- **Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.** Invest in securing and keeping the best talent in housing services. Use housing assets effectively and support sound financial health and sustainability.
- Focus on **Supported Housing Service** to ensure a “needs led” service taking advantage of any changes to the Social Care legislation and associated funding.

Good quality affordable housing of all tenures that is appropriate for people at different points in their lives is a cornerstone of a successful and growing Town. The Housing Portfolio contributes to a number of the key strategic themes as part of the overall vision of this administration to level up the Town.

REGENERATION



“Sir Frederick Gibberd’s foresight in the form of the masterplan for Harlow New Town in 1947, envisaged the Town “as an organism which would go on changing and being rebuilt as the needs of people altered”. Now, 74 years on we have reached the great rebuilding stage and will rise to the occasion.

The Portfolio will begin a programme of regeneration and renewal not seen since the Town was built. Embedding the Gibberd principles will unleash-the potential of our great Town to spread opportunity and prosperity to all.

The scale of the task cannot be underestimated. However, our programme will ensure that Harlow is truly fit for the future. Opportunity and prosperity will be reflected across all areas of the Town and resident's lives. Harlow's renewal will be kick started with a radical and transformational programme in delivering residents priorities.

Our programme will not only ensure that Harlow truly is fit for the future, but that opportunity and prosperity are reflected no matter which street corner you stand on and no matter where you look from your window. Harlow truly will be one of the best towns in Britain and that journey will be kick-started with radically transformational regeneration and renewal delivering on the people's priorities.”

Councillor Dan Swords
Portfolio Holder for Regeneration

Strategic Ambitions

Set out below are the short, medium and long term ambitions envisaged to achieve our aspirations for Regeneration.

| Short-term Ambitions | Medium-term Ambitions | Long-term Ambitions |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">In conjunction with Housing develop a housing building plan for identified council owned sites.Develop a Neighbourhood Renewal Plan.Ensure all external communication activities are targeted to reflect the ambitions from the Corporate Strategy.Bring forward a Town Centre Master Plan to | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Deliver a successful Joint Venture(s) partnership(s) to rebuild the Town Centre as part of the new master plan for HarlowRoll out a once-in-a-generation programme of Neighborhood Renewal for key infrastructure such as our estates, hatches, neighborhood centers, leisure, and cultural assets.Ensuring the medium to long term viability of key | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Build a new wave of high-quality Council homes to ensure we meet the local housing needs.Ensure all growth is in line with our ambitious Town Plan for Harlow for the next 30 years. |

| Short-term Ambitions | Medium-term Ambitions | Long-term Ambitions |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| <p>provide an effective planning framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the commercial element of Building Control. • Establish a new build growth plan for the Innovation Park and the Enterprise Zones. | <p>employment areas in the Town.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a fully independent and interconnected cycle track network. • Work with non-Council owned community assets to regenerate their sites leveraging outside investment to level up non-Council owned assets. • Ensure the delivery of regeneration is in line with the sustainable growth of Harlow. • Reform the Planning service to encourage greater regeneration of the Town, e.g. 'one stop shop'. | |

Strategic Outcomes

- Harlow town centre will be thriving as one of the best places in the country to enjoy high-end retail, leisure, hospitality, arts and culture including a night-time economy and an excellent quality of environment and public realm with people travelling to the town centre from other areas in the region to enjoy its offerings.
- Harlow's neighbourhoods will be injected with a new lease of life to mirror the anticipated quality of development and life envisaged for the wider Harlow & Gilston Garden Town and absolutely in accordance with the Gibberd principles, restoring pride in all corners of the existing town boundary.
- The Town will be interconnected with a cycle track network independent from the road.
- Residents in the Town will benefit from a renewed sense of pride in the appearance and function of the town centre, hatches, neighbourhood centres and estates.
- All stakeholders and growth partners will share and deliver an ambitious, holistic vision for Harlow.
- More Harlow residents will have their own home whether Council or privately owned.

- Harlow's Innovation Park and Enterprise Zones will be occupied and thriving with industry-leading businesses supported in first class environment and infrastructure.

Our ambition to achieve this regeneration will ensure this Portfolio will contribute to the significant progress in achieving our key strategic themes, all of which will provide opportunities that will help deliver sustainable, inclusive growth and prosperity for Harlow.

FINANCE



“Finance features at the heart of the development and delivery of this ambitious Corporate Strategy and its underpinning core themes of opportunity and prosperity. This delivery involves the reprioritisation of both the financial and human resources across the organisation.

Resources are and will continue to be scarce. It will be a key challenge to maximise our resources through innovative and new ways of working both internally, and with partners – in both the public and private sectors. Finance will work closely with other portfolios to explore and develop commercialisation opportunities to create new revenue streams.

Development of the Council’s workforce is critical to support the ever changing skill requirements that will facilitate our ambitions. Harlow needs a Council that is fit for the future. The Council will meet resident’s needs, using skills and expertise from within and outside of the Council. These skills and expertise will provide the necessary support as we venture into new delivery models and funding arrangements.

We will undertake a full review of the Council owned property portfolio to ensure that revenue generating opportunities are not missed. These measures are consistent with the aim of this Council to reduce both the burden of and reliance on local taxation, but not at the risk of devaluing or undermining our much loved discretionary services.”

Councillor James Leppard
Portfolio Holder for Finance

Strategic Ambitions

Set out below are the short, medium and long term ambitions envisaged to achieve our aspirations for Finance.

| Short-term Ambitions | Medium-term Ambitions | Long-term Ambitions |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure a financially efficient, low tax Authority that maximises revenue generating opportunities and efficiencies gains; delivers value for money and protects its discretionary services.• Develop a property portfolio management strategy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A workforce that is agile and has skills required to drive forward services.• Review the Treasury Management Strategy.• Develop financial models to support the regeneration programme.• Develop a Risk Management Strategy.• Develop an IT Strategy that | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A financially sound Council.• Update the Councils’ Asset Management Plan |

| Short-term Ambitions | Medium-term Ambitions | Long-term Ambitions |
|-----------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| | meets the future needs of residents and the Council. | |

Strategic Outcomes

- Deliver a sustainable Medium Term Financial Strategy which protects discretionary services and reduces the local taxation burden in real terms. Any reduction in local taxation will not be made at the cost of discretionary services.
- The Council's Accommodation Review completed. The Strategy and Action Plan implemented
- A robust approach to risk and adoption of a Risk Management Strategy.
- A new IT Strategy and Action Plan to meet the future needs of our residents and staff.
- Asset Management Plan updated to drive a five year capital investment programme.
- A financial framework and package that supports the Administration's regeneration objectives.

The Finance Portfolio contributes to the achievement of three of the key strategic themes. Our ambition to be a low tax authority impacts directly on the economic wellbeing of our residents. Our strategic ambition will make the Council more efficient and more able to serve the Town.

GOVERNANCE



“Governance features at the heart of the development and delivery of this ambitious Corporate Strategy and its underpinning core themes of opportunity and prosperity. This delivery involves the reprioritisation of human resources across the organisation.

It will be a key challenge of this Portfolio to explore innovative and new ways of working. We will endeavour to explore commercial opportunities that support our key strategic themes. This development of the Council’s workforce is critical to support the ever changing skill requirements that facilitates our ambitions.

It will also be a priority of this Administration to improve voters engagement in the democratic process.

Local businesses will be supported, developed and promoted through innovative procurement strategies

Climate change is one of the most significant threats facing the world. One of the largest factors contributing to climate change is man-made emissions, especially those relating to the use of non-sustainable power sources. The Council recognises that action must be taken quickly in order to prevent climate change from causing irreversible damage to the planet.

One of our key strategic ambition for this Portfolio is to step up this Council’s plan to get to Net Zero and show civic leadership in tackling climate change. This is critical if we are to safeguard the environment and to ensure Harlow is a Town fit for the future.

Councillor Alastair Gunn
Portfolio Holder for Governance

Strategic Ambitions

Set out below are the short, medium and long term ambitions envisaged to achieve our aspirations for Finance and Governance.

| Short-term Ambitions | Medium-term Ambitions | Long-term Ambitions |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">An Authority that values its staff and ensures that they are able to deliver future services that meet the changing needs of the Town.Ensure, as far as we are able to do so under law that procurement activities provide equality of opportunity for local business. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Deliver a people centred approach to services for residents and business based on customer insight and associated demand.Develop a Commercial Strategy.Develop a Strategy & Action Plan for the outcomes of the Accommodation Review | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reform Election cycle.Meet target of net zero emissions from Council operations in advance of the Government target of 2050. |

| Short-term Ambitions | Medium-term Ambitions | Long-term Ambitions |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop opportunities to increase greater democratic engagement • Explore opportunities for shared service provision on a business case basis. • Ensure existing and new contracts deliver for the people of Harlow. • Ensure the Council's Constitution enables it to deliver the priorities of the Administration in both an efficient, but democratically fair manner. • The Equality, Diversity Inclusivity Policy is embedded in the Council's functions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all procurement activities support the Council's Carbon Reduction Plan. • Identify ways in which parking provision can be enhanced to prevent inappropriate use of green spaces and access difficulties. | |

Strategic Outcomes

- A longer term organisational People and Resource Plan developed to support an agile workforce.
- A Customer Services Strategy and Action Plan that responds to changing customer demands.
- The procurement of goods, works and services are open, fair, ethical, lawful, and transparent, which benefits local businesses.
- Opportunities improved for residents to participate in local democracy and decision making. Improved democratic equality through the electoral services review process.
- Implementation of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan and processes.
- Activities that contributes to the Carbon Reduction Plan are reflected across the Council.
- An effective way developed to measure the Council's carbon footprint, which includes targets that are evidenced based and a new carbon management plan to achieve Net Zero.

- Programme delivered for the installation of electric vehicle charging points across Harlow.
- Deliver year-on-year improvements in the Council's recycling rates; and the operations for refuse collection.

The Governance Portfolio contributes to the achievement of a number our key strategic themes. Our procurement policies will provide economic opportunities for SMEs in the Town. Residents will have good customer experiences and the opportunity to put their views to the Council; as well as those residents in the greatest need to interact with the Council regardless of their backgrounds. These ambitions will support the Council and the Town for the future.

ENVIRONMENT



“Within and beyond the challenges posed by the urgent need to respond to climate change is an opportunity to enhance Harlow’s environment. Addressing the downward trend in the cleanliness of the Town and its street scene by reinvigorating the Town’s green and open spaces through a new approach to promote biodiversity. We can once more make Harlow a place that people are proud to live in and be the best place to start and bring up a family.”

Councillor Nicky Purse
Portfolio Holder for Environment

Strategic Ambitions

Set out below are the short, medium and long term ambitions envisaged to achieve our aspirations for Environment.

| Short-term Ambitions | Medium-term Ambitions | Long-term Ambitions |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustain and improve cleanliness of the Town with the maintenance and protection of open spaces• Improve Harlow’s bio-diversity through an active tree planting programme and creation of a variety of wildlife habitats. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop an overarching Climate Change Strategy for Harlow which will support residents and businesses to make informed choices about actions which will reduce carbon emissions.• Review the Tree Maintenance Policy• A survey of the Council’s Trees undertaken using GIS. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop new a proactive strategy to prevent littering |

Strategic Outcomes

- The Council’s ‘community leadership’ role will be strengthened through the production of a Climate Change Strategy for Harlow.
- Continue to exceed Keep Britain Tidy standards in the maintenance of the Town’s environment.
- Bio-diversity improved through a programme of tree planting and a variety of habitats.
- Policy for Tree Maintenance developed.
- Programme developed for Tree maintenance.

The ambitions and outcomes outlined here will be the primary mechanism for the Council delivering against its Strategic Theme of ‘Safeguarding the Environment’. Harlow’s natural environment is highly regarded by residents as one of the town’s core assets and the Council will work to protect and enhance this. Also, this will contribute significantly to the theme of developing a ‘Town for the Future’. Attracting the right investment to Harlow will to a large extent be dependent upon the town providing an attractive environment for residents, businesses and visitors.

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **2 DECEMBER 2021**

TITLE: **REFERRAL FROM CABINET POLICY
DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP – ANNUAL
REVIEW OF LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT
SCHEME (LCTSS)**

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: **COUNCILLOR JAMES LEPPARD, PORTFOLIO
HOLDER FOR FINANCE**

LEAD OFFICER: **SIMON FREEMAN, DEPUTY TO THE CHIEF
EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
(01279) 446228**

CONTRIBUTING OFFICER: **DONNA BEECHENER, REVENUES AND
BENEFITS MANAGER (01279) 446245**

This is a Key Decision

It is on the Forward Plan as Decision Number I012618

The decision is not subject to Call-in Procedures for the following reason:

The decision stands as a recommendation to Full Council

This decision will affect no ward specifically.

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet recommends to Full Council that:

- A The current Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) remains unchanged for the 2022/23 financial year.

REASON FOR DECISION

- A The Working Group considered a report on the LCTSS and made a recommendation to Cabinet for consideration.

BACKGROUND

1. At its meeting on 25 November, the Working Group considered a report on the LCTSS for 2022/23.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

2. Having considered the report, the Working Group has recommended to Cabinet that the Scheme remains unchanged for 2022/23

IMPLICATIONS

Implications are set out in the original report attached as Appendix A to the report.

Appendices

Appendix A – Report to Cabinet Policy Development Working Group on 25 November 2021

Background Papers

None.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

LCTSS – Local Council Tax Support Scheme

Appendix A

REPORT TO: **CABINET POLICY DEVELOPMENT
WORKING GROUP**

DATE: **25 NOVEMBER 2021**

TITLE: **ANNUAL REVIEW OF LOCAL COUNCIL TAX
SUPPORT SCHEME (LCTSS)**

LEAD OFFICER: **SIMON FREEMAN, DEPUTY TO THE CHIEF
EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
(01279) 446228**

CONTRIBUTING OFFICER: **DONNA BEECHENER, REVENUES &
BENEFITS MANAGER (01279) 446245**

RECOMMENDED that the Policy Development Working Group:

- A** Acknowledges the current position regarding the 2021/22 Local Council Tax Support Scheme and endorses continuing stability within the scheme for 2022/23.
- B** Recommends to Cabinet that the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme remains unchanged for the 2022/23 financial year.

BACKGROUND

1. In accordance with the Welfare Reform Act 2012, and the Local Government Finance Act 2012, councils are required to implement a Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS) annually, and by 11 March each year at the latest for the forthcoming financial year.
2. The Pan Essex working group, originally established to consider a County wide approach to the localisation of council tax support, has continued to work very effectively. Having focussed on the development of the local schemes, the group has looked at those exemptions and discounts awarded to council tax payers. As a result the group implemented a range of measures targeted at ensuring that each authority across Essex undertakes work on a consistent basis to help protect the tax base in each district. Work will continue to be undertaken in 2021/22 to ensure compliance and to check and challenge council tax reductions awarded for which entitlement may have subsequently changed or be no longer appropriate.

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)

3. The national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme, which was wholly funded by Central Government and administered locally by billing authorities, was abolished with effect from 1 April 2013. Each local authority was charged with designing and implementing its own local scheme for the 2013/14 financial

year against a backdrop of a 10% reduction in national funding when compared with CTB. The scheme must be reviewed annually and the Council approved its local scheme for the 2021/22 financial year at its meeting held on 10 December 2021.

4. Prior to the introduction of LCTS there had been no cap on CTB expenditure under the national scheme. However under LCTS Government funding was restricted through the introduction of a cash limit in the form of a fixed grant. In addition the grant was set at a level which was 10% less than the previous council tax benefit expenditure estimated from 2012/13. For Harlow this represents a reduction in funding of around £1.3 million per annum from April 2013.
5. The grant for LCTS was originally identified specifically within the Council's overall Revenue Support Grant and retained Business Rates income for 2013/14. The level of funding for 2014/15 and future years has not been identified in the same way and has been included in the Council's overall Formula Funding. As a result of this there is no protection for the LCTS funding and it is subject to the wider Government cuts to local government funding. Since the introduction of the scheme the Council's overall funding has reduced by over 55% but there has been no reduction in the Council's support of its LCTS scheme.
6. In order to ensure that Pensionable Age customers should be no worse off under the local scheme, national rules remain in place for this group of claimants. As protection remains in place for those of Pensionable Age, the impact of the reduction in funding has fallen upon Working Age claimants as reported during the implementation of the annual schemes since 2013/14.
7. Harlow Council is part of a Pan Essex Project Group, with a remit to design an Essex Framework for LCTS. The principles of the framework were reported to Cabinet on 12 July 2012. On 22 November 2012 Harlow Council adopted a LCTS scheme following public consultation during the summer of 2012 based on these principles, which are detailed below:
 - The scheme will be cost neutral.
 - Council tax support will continue to be assessed on a means tested basis.
 - Council tax support will not be paid above Council tax band H.
 - Council tax support is capped at 76% of council tax liability.
 - The first £25 of weekly earnings is disregarded in the calculation of support.
 - There is no entitlement to support where the applicant has capital of over £6,000
 - Second adult rebate and underlying entitlement were abolished to remove the administrative burden of these.

For comparison purposes, the LCTS schemes for the other Essex District and Unitary Councils are attached at Appendix A.

8. Harlow has ensured that in the development of its local scheme the eligibility criteria for LCTS remains aligned with the previous national council tax benefit scheme, with specific protection for families and persons with disabilities. In addition and despite the reductions in overall Government grant received by the Council the scheme has been supported and maintained without variation to the above principles.

9. The 2013/14 scheme was designed to deliver savings of £1,361,235 to ensure that expenditure on LCTS did not exceed the total Government funding allocated for the scheme. At the time of writing this report the LCTS scheme costs for the current and previous financial years are detailed below. In the current financial year and previous financial year there has been an increase in working age claimants linked to increased claims to Universal Credit following the Covid 19 pandemic.

| LCTS Award | Pensionable Age | | Working Age | | Total LCTS Award |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------|----------------|------------|-------------------|
| Date | Live Case load | LCTS Spend | Live Case load | LCTS Spend | |
| 1 April 2013 | 3,819 | £3,535,031 | 5,302 | £3,810,068 | £7,345,099 |
| | | | | | |
| 31 March 2014 | 3,673 | £3,483,230 | 5,189 | £3,741,202 | £7,117,494 |
| | | | | | |
| 31 March 2015 | 3,547 | £3,240,964 | 4,890 | £3,363,313 | £6,604,277 |
| | | | | | |
| 31 March 2016 | 3,291 | £2,941,981 | 4,469 | £3,184,219 | £6,126,200 |
| | | | | | |
| 31 March 2017 | 3,099 | £2,936,255 | 4,510 | £3,068,939 | £6,005,195 |
| | | | | | |
| 30 September 2017 | 3,027 | £2,895,860 | 4,147 | £3,144,517 | £6,040,377 |
| | | | | | |
| 30 September 2018 | 2843 | £2,859,265 | 4,427 | £3,378,867 | £6,238,132 |
| | | | | | |
| 30 September 2019 | 2706 | £2,850,114 | 4,307 | £3,434,117 | £6,284,231 |
| | | | | | |
| 30 September 2020 | 2486 | £2,753,754 | 4,690 | £3,883,891 | £6,637,645 |
| | | | | | |
| 30 September 2021 | 2397 | £2,697,949 | 4,808 | £4,008,503 | £6,706,452 |

10. In response to Covid 19 the government announced in 2020 its intention to award a "hardship" payment of up to £150 to council tax payers in England in receipt of

LCTS, Harlow Council and made payments totalling £837,780 to 6,602 households, with £96,011 to support households going forward.

11. The Government sets a Formula Funding Settlement for monies it will pay across to local authorities to support their services and legal obligations. In recent years the funding provided by Central Government has fallen substantially with consistent annual reductions on previous years' funding. So, whilst the cost to Harlow Council for LCTS has reduced by just over £638,000 between 2013/14 and 2021/22 the Council received a reduction in mainstream central government funding of £3.5 million over the same period.
12. It was estimated that the in-year council tax collection rate for 2013/14 in Harlow would be affected by the introduction of LCTS and could fall by over 3% compared to the collection rate in 2012/13. The collection rate at the end of the second quarter in 2021/22 is 53.83% and this is attributable to the impact of Covid 19 and suspension of recovery action. Formal recovery action has recommenced in this financial year, but many taxpayers will have arrears of council tax to pay in addition to the current year's liability and this is impacting the current in year collection rate.

| Date | Council Tax Collection Rate |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 30 September 2012 | 56.83% |
| 30 September 2013 | 56.60% |
| 30 September 2014 | 56.28% |
| 30 September 2015 | 56.71% |
| 30 September 2016 | 56.75% |
| 30 September 2017 | 56.48% |
| 30 September 2018 | 56.07% |
| 30 September 2019 | 56.30% |
| 30 September 2020 | 53.83% |
| 30 September 2021 | 53.58% |

At the time of writing this report –

- Council tax collection rate is impacted due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The introduction of a 12 month instalment scheme by the Government in 2014 will also impact on the collection statistics when compared with prior years with income having been collected predominantly over 10 months.
 - The additional funding provided within the agreement with the precepting bodies has enabled employment of extra staff dedicated to working with LCTS claimants.
 - There is continuing good engagement with LCTS claimants meaning that it has been possible to agree payment arrangements with residents at an early stage, and reducing or avoiding the need for further recovery action.
13. Formal recovery action for council tax was suspended during the 2020/21 financial year as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. Officers undertook "soft" recovery action where payment of instalments had not been made, and those in receipt of LCTS received specialist advice from the LCTS officers where

appropriate. As formal recovery action was not undertaken in 2020/21, those in receipt of LCTS were not issued with a Final Notice or Summons in year, and action has been taken in this financial year. The table below provides details of action taken in previous and current financial years at the end of quarter two in respect of those with open or closed LCTS claims.

| Date | Percentage of all working age LCTS claimants receiving a Final Notice in the financial year | Percentage of all working age LCTS claimants receiving a Summons In the financial year |
|---|---|--|
| 30 October 2013 | 26.7% | 16.6% |
| 30 October 2014 | 29.8% | 18.4% |
| 30 October 2015 | 25.6% | 23.1% |
| 30 September 2016 | 23.36% | 15.34% |
| 30 September 2017 | 22.24% | 16.51% |
| 30 September 2018 | 23.67% | 16.0% |
| 30 September 2019 | 24.7% | 17.8% |
| 30 September 2020 | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| 30 October 2021 2020/21 financial year | 32.82% | 15.91% |
| 30 October 2021 2021/22 financial year | 9.45% | 0% |

- Whilst the collection position is currently lower than expected due to the impact of Covid 19 and the level of support being awarded has increased, recovery of amounts falling due can take several years to collect and it is currently too early to be able to forecast what the impact of Covid 19 will have on the overall final collection position for each year.

LCTS 2022/23 Proposals

- Officers are keeping the performance of the LCTS scheme under review and as the Council plans for 2022/23 the scheme is in its eighth year of operation. Given the complexities of the scheme, the large claimant base and other national factors outside of the Council's control this is still seen as a relatively short period on which to base judgements and future estimates. There are ongoing significant impacts of Covid 19, the longer term impacts of which are difficult to analyse and quantify at this time.
- Universal Credit Full service was introduced in Harlow in September 2017. Where claimants of Universal Credit (UC) are in work, UC is calculated using real time information Pay As You Earn (PAYE) information. This can result in varying UC entitlement levels from month to month. Where the claimant is in receipt of LCTS, this variation in UC entitlement may result in a change in the level of LCTS each month, which increases or reduces the balance of council tax payable. This interaction with the council tax statutory instalment scheme can result in customers receiving multiple bills over the financial year, with

revised monthly instalments becoming due. This can lead to confusion, non-payment, and potentially a hampering of the collection and recovery process.

17. During the pandemic it became apparent to officers that the increasing LCTS caseload and interaction with UC was creating an ever increasing workload of monthly UC changes, which often results in very small increases or decreases in the overall level of LCTS, and results in the issue of revised bills, instalments and notifications to customers. These monthly changes cause considerable confusion and dissatisfaction for customers and generate unnecessary repeat contact for the customer and service.
18. Officers have explored alternative options to smooth out the interaction with UC for the benefit of the customer utilising a change to the scheme approved by Cabinet on 7 December 2017. This change affords the Revenues & Benefits service discretion in regards to Department of Works & Pensions notifications for working age CTS claims, and enables the service to implement a regular review process, as opposed to monthly updates to claims. The Revenues and Benefits service will continue to receive the DWP UC notifications, but will use these when the claim is reviewed, along with other DWP data that is available to the service. The review process will ensure those claims that have fluctuating earnings will be reviewed more regularly. Any changes which affect the level of LCTS will be reflected in the ongoing award and will only be implemented retrospectively where the change is significant, e.g. a change in the household make up, a change in the level of capital / savings. All LCTS claimants in receipt of UC will be reminded of their responsibility to report significant changes. It is envisaged this change in procedure will deliver an improved service to customers, and will also aid council tax collection.
19. Overall, monitoring of the local scheme indicates that it is still operating well and whilst collection of the amounts billed to claimants and residents overall has reduced this is not attributable to the scheme itself. Engagement with residents impacted by the changes has also been extremely good. In order to maintain certainty for both claimants and the Council, in these challenging times, the proposals for the scheme in 2022/23 are to maintain the restriction on the entitlement to support at 24% for a ninth year and that the reductions to the Council's core Formula Funding will not be passed on to claimants despite the current uncertainty around funding for local government in 2022/23.
20. A full equalities impact assessment was carried out on the current scheme. This has been reviewed and is attached to this report at Appendix B.

Conclusions

21. The LCTS scheme operated by the Council has performed well in its eight years of operation. Claimants have been very well supported by the dedicated officers appointed utilising the resources provided through the funding agreement with the key precepting bodies.
22. It is again proposed to retain the scheme largely unchanged for the reasons set out in the report.

IMPLICATIONS

Environment and Planning (Includes Sustainability)

No implications specifically arise from the Council Tax Benefit reforms. Welfare Reform more widely will have a range of different impacts on delivery of service objectives.

Author: **Andrew Bramidge, Director of Strategic Growth & Regeneration**

Finance (Includes ICT, and Property and Facilities)

Financial impacts of the LCTS scheme are being considered as part of the wider budget process and development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Author: **Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance**

Housing

None Specific

Author: **Andrew Murray, Director of Housing**

Community Wellbeing

Contained within the report at this stage. The implications of the final scheme will be assessed for impact on vulnerable groups, as outlined in the report

Author: **Jane Greer, Director of Communities & Environment**

Governance (includes HR)

None specific

Author: **Simon Hill, Director of Governance & Corporate Services**

Appendices

Appendix A – Essex LCTS Schemes

Appendix B- Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers

LCTS Scheme Policy

<https://www.harlow.gov.uk/benefits/council-tax-support/council-tax-support-scheme>

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

CTB – Council Tax Benefit

LCTS – Local Council Tax Support

DWP – Department of Work & Pensions

UC – Universal Credit

APPENDIX A

Essex Schemes

6

| | Basildon | Braintree | Brentwood | Castle Point | Chelmsford | Colchester | Epping Forest | Harlow | Maldon | Rochford | Southend-on-Sea | Tendring | Thurrock | Uttlesford |
|--|-----------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Changes made to non-dependent deductions | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| Support restricted to a particular council tax band? | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | No | No |
| Council Tax band support is restricted to | n/a | D | n/a | D | D | D | n/a | D | n/a | D | - | - | - | - |
| Introduce minimum council tax support payment? | Yes | No | Yes | | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | Yes |
| Minimum weekly council tax support payment | - | - | - | 50p -£2 | - | -£2 | £0.50 | - | - | 25% | - | - | - | £2.00 |
| Taper rate | N/A - Banded | 24% | N/A - Banded | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% | n/a Banded | 20% | 20% | 20% | 20% |

| | Basildon | Braintree | Brentwood | Castle Point | Chelmsford | Colchester | Epping Forest | Harlow | Maldon | Rochford | Southend-on-Sea | Tendring | Thurrock | Uttlesford |
|--|-----------------|--|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Changes made to conditions around starting work? | No | £40 per week disregard for all claimants | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | £20 per week Earnings disregard | No | No | Yes | Yes |
| Hardship fund | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| Mirror all changes in Housing Benefit | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes | yes | No | Yes | No | No | yes |
| Remove Family Premium | Yes | yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | yes | yes | Yes | | No | yes |
| Changes to Minimum Income Floor | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | yes | yes | yes | No | Yes | yes | No | yes |
| Dependents reduced to two | Yes | No | yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | yes | Yes | yes | | Yes | No |

| | Basildon | Braintree | Brentwood | Castle Point | Chelmsford | Colchester | Epping Forest | Harlow | Maldon | Rochford | Southend-on-Sea | Tendring | Thurrock | Uttlesford |
|---|-----------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|---|-------------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Changes made to backdating rules to one month | No restriction | yes | No Restriction | Yes | No, unlimited backdating as long as claim received within a month of first notification of liability and delay notifying liability isn't the claimant's fault | No | No, 3 months | Yes | Yes | No Restriction | yes | No | Yes | yes |
| Change Temporary Absence rules | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes | yes | No | yes | yes | yes | yes |
| Disregard the new Bereavement Support payments for working age applicants | Yes | n/a | Yes | n/a | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | consulting | No | | No | N/A | |

| | Basildon | Braintree | Brentwood | Castle Point | Chelmsford | Colchester | Epping Forest | Harlow | Maldon | Rochford | Tendring | Thurrock | Uttlesford |
|--|----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|------------|------------|---------------|--------|------------|----------|----------|----------|------------|
| Introduce discretion in regards to DWP notifications for working age CTS claims. | N/A | | | | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | consulting | No | | No | No |
| Accept documentation from the DWP as an intention to claim Council Tax Support | No | | No | | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Consulting | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |

APPENDIX B**Harlow District Council****Equality Impact Assessment – Local council tax support scheme**

| | |
|--|---|
| Name of service, function or policy being assessed | Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23 This Equality Impact Assessment has been developed considering the following national Equality Impact Assessments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Government Finance Bill: Localising support for council tax• Local Government Finance Bill: Technical reforms to council tax• Local Government Finance Bill: Summary impact assessment |
| Service/Department | Finance / Revenues and Benefits |
| Names and roles of officers completing the assessment (indicate Lead officer) | Donna Beechener, Revenues and Benefits Manager (Lead Officer) |
| Contact telephone number of Lead officer | 01279 446245 |
| Date assessment completed | 10 November 2021 |

1. Aims of the policy/service/function and how implemented

| | Key Questions | Notes |
|-----|---|---|
| 1.1 | Is this a new policy/service/function or a review of an existing one? | This is a review of an existing policy and function |
| 1.2 | Briefly state the main purpose of the policy/service/function? | To help people with low incomes to afford their Council Tax liability, in line with the Local Government Finance Act 2012. |
| 1.3 | Briefly state the main activities of the policy/service/function? | Payment of Council Tax Discounting of Council Tax |
| 1.4 | Who are the main beneficiaries? Whose need's is it designed to meet? | Those liable for Council Tax within Harlow. Adults on a low income with low savings Any authority that can levy a Council Tax |
| 1.5 | Which staff carry out the policy/service/function? | Revenues nd Benefits staff |

2. Information Gathering and Data Collection

| | Key Questions | Notes | If further data collection is needed – state by whom, when and how is it going to be done? |
|-----|---|--|---|
| 2.1 | <p>What quantitative (numerical) data do you already have (e.g. national and local demographic data, equality monitoring data, employee data, customer profile data etc) about those who use or will use the policy or service?</p> <p>What gaps are there in the data? What else do you need?</p> <p>NB. Attach copies of the relevant data that you are using for this assessment</p> | <p>The scheme was originally modelled based on existing costs, taking account of a potential council tax increase, demand for the scheme and the reduction in Revenue Support Grant. The scheme was originally modelled to be cost neutral, but current estimates are that the scheme costs more than the current level of grant received.</p> | <p>It is not possible to identify the actual grant received to support the scheme as this has been subsumed into overall formula funding.</p> |
| 2.2 | <p>What qualitative data do you already have (e.g. results of customer satisfaction surveys, results of previous consultations, staff surveys, analysis of customer complaints/comments, feedback from community groups or individuals etc) about those who use or will use the policy or service?</p> <p>What gaps are there in the data? What else do you need?</p> | <p>The proposed scheme for 2021/22 for working age claimants does not vary from the current scheme. Consultation is legally required where there are proposed changes to the scheme.</p> | |

3. Consultation

Please state below what formal or informal consultation has taken place or that you are planning to hold with appropriate stakeholders in relation to this policy/function

| | Key Questions | Notes | If further consultations are needed/planned – state with whom, by whom, when and how is this going to be done? |
|-----|---|--|--|
| 3.1 | What consultations have been held and with whom did you consult? What were the main issues raised? | <p>Public consultations have been carried out annually, prior to the introduction of the policy and when changes have been considered. Consultations were conducted by way of an online questionnaire.</p> <p>The consultation was publicly announced.</p> | The scheme will be reviewed annually, and if changes are proposed, then further public consultation will be conducted. |
| 3.2 | What consultations were held specifically with the equality target groups? What were the main issues raised? | In introducing a local council tax support scheme in 2013, representatives of equality target groups were identified and contacted electronically alerting them to the consultation and asking them to participate. Locally and nationally concerns were raised about the new liabilities created for those unable to work due to disability. We have addressed these by confirming that the current system of applicable amounts which protect these groups will remain in place. | As 3.1 |

| | Key Questions | Notes | If further consultations are needed/planned – state with whom, by whom, when and how is this going to be done? |
|-----|---|---|---|
| 3.3 | <p>Is the Council working in Partnership with other organisations to implement this policy/function?</p> <p>Should this be taken into consideration? (E.g. Agreeing the equalities monitoring categories)</p> <p>Should the partnership arrangements have an EIA?</p> | <p>All major precepting authorities in Essex, which work together to devise the support scheme.</p> <p>HDC – Corporate Housing; Resource Management</p> <p>Department for Work and Pensions</p> <p>Ministry Of Housing Communities and Local Government .</p> <p>Each LA participating in the Essex project will conduct their own EQIA.</p> <p>DWP & DCLG have undertaken EQIA's which are publicly available.</p> | As 3.1 |

Note

- It is a legal requirement that consultation takes place with appropriate stakeholders as part of the EIA process.
- You must ensure that you record all the main areas of concern raised by equality and customer groups during consultations and how you aim to address these concerns.

4. Assessment of Impact

Based on the data you have analysed and provided, and the results of the consultation or research you have undertaken, list below how the policy or function will or does work for each of the following equalities groups.

Identify any differential impact and consider whether the policy/function meets any particular needs identified for each of the six equalities groups.

NB: If you do identify any adverse impact you must:

- a) Seek appropriate advice as to whether it is highlighting unlawful discrimination or is potentially discriminatory, and
- b) Identify steps to mitigate any adverse impact

Include any examples of how the policy or function helps to promote race, disability, age and/or gender equality.

6

| | | State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote equality |
|-----|---|---|
| 4.1 | Gender – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on women, men and transgender people And/or Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts | None identified |
| | | State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote equality |

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 4.2 | <p>Disability – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on disabled people (ensure consideration of a range of impairments including visual and hearing impairments, mobility impairments, learning disability etc)</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p> | <p>All Disability Living Allowance Benefits will continue to be disregarded thereby protecting those with specific long term conditions who fall within this group. People with disabilities will continue to receive additional premiums as part of the calculation.</p> <p>The above helps to “advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.”</p> |
| 4.3 | <p>Age – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on different age groups</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p> | <p>Older people (Pensionable Age); This group is specifically protected under Government Regulations.</p> <p>Younger people (17-25); 17 year olds may be disadvantaged indirectly if their parents have to pay more as a result of this policy. People over 18 of working age liable to pay council tax will be required to pay more than that afforded under CTB.</p> <p>The Council has agreed an exceptional hardship fund to assist those in extreme hardship.</p> |
| 4.4 | <p>Race – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy/function on different black and minority ethnic groups, including Gypsy and Traveller communities</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p> | <p>None identified</p> |
| | | <p>State evidence of impact or potential impact/How helps to promote equality</p> |

| | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 4.5 | <p>Sexual orientation – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on lesbians, gay men, bisexual and heterosexual people</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p> | None identified |
| 4.6 | <p>Religion/belief – identify the impact/potential impact of the policy on people of different religious/faith groups and also upon those with no faith</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Proposed measures to mitigate any adverse impacts</p> | None identified |
| 4.7 | <p>Socio-economic disadvantage – identify any impact on those who have a low income, or whose family circumstances/history may affect their ability to access services eg. carers and the cared for; pensioners; single-parents; long-term unemployed; history of abuse/domestic violence; benefits claimants; housebound; chronically ill;</p> | <p>The impact of the proposed scheme will be felt most by those of working age who are not disabled, some of the affects will be mitigated by more generous incentives to work.</p> <p>The Council has agreed an exceptional hardship fund to assist those in extreme need.</p> |

| | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 4.8 | <p>Any other groups, if appropriate</p> <p>e.g. children leaving care; pregnant or breast-feeding mothers; carers etc</p> | <p>Parents will continue to receive a child allowance.</p> <p>Working parents receive a higher disregard of their earnings reflecting their childcare costs.</p> <p>The Council has agreed an exceptional hardship fund to assist those in extreme hardship.</p> <p>The above helps to “advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.”</p> |
| 4.9 | <p>Are there any additional measures that could be adopted to further equality of opportunity in the context of this policy/service/function and to meet the particular needs of equalities groups that you have identified?</p> | <p>Notes</p> <p>None identified.</p> |

5. Summary Overview of EIA

As a summary overview of information and findings provided in the earlier sections of this Equality Impact Assessment, please tick the relevant boxes as appropriate to denote the OUTCOME of this process for each of the Equality Characteristics.

| Equalities category | No adverse impact AND promotes equality and diversity <i>Please tick ✓ if appropriate</i> | No adverse impact BUT equality and diversity NOT promoted <i>Please tick ✓ if appropriate</i> | Evidence of adverse impact <i>Please tick ✓ if appropriate</i> |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---|
| Gender and transgender | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Race | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Disability | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Age | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Sexual orientation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Religion and belief | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Socio-economic disadvantage | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

NB: Tick relevant box as appropriate and based on information provided in section

Signed
Project Manager

Countersigned
Head of Service

Print Name

Print Name

Date

Date

Under the Freedom of Information Act, this completed EIA form will be placed on the Harloweb and be available on request to the general public.