

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Tuesday 4 February 2025 at 7.00pm
Council Chamber - Civic Centre

1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions
2. Declarations of Interest

To receive Councillors' declarations of interest (if any) in relation to any matters on the agenda.
3. Minutes (Pages 3 - 5)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024.
4. Matters arising
5. Written questions from members of the public

To receive any questions from members of the public in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.
6. Written questions from Councillors

To receive any questions from Councillors in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.
7. Responses of the Cabinet to Reports of the Scrutiny Committee

To consider responses (if any) of the Cabinet to reports and recommendations from the Committee.
8. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (Pages 6 - 21)
9. Performance, Finance and Risk - September and October 2024 (Pages 22 - 51)
10. Work Plan (Pages 52 - 53)

To review the Committee's work plan for the current year.
11. Climate Change Task and Finish Group - Update (Pages 54 - 55)
12. Playhouse, Arts and Cultural Quarter Task and Finish Group - Update (Pages 56 - 58)
13. References from Other Committees

14. Matters of Urgent Business

Such other business which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be received as a matter of urgency by reason of special circumstances to be specified in the minutes.

**MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON**

3 December 2024

7.00 - 8.40 pm

PRESENT**Committee Members**

Councillor Tony Edwards (Chair)

Councillor Matthew Saggars (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Tony Durcan

Councillor Michael Garnett

Councillor Mark Ingall

Councillor Andrew Johnson (as substitute for Councillor Dr. Emma Ghaffari)

Councillor Kay Morrison

Councillor Russell Perrin

Also Present

Councillor Joel Charles

Paul Austin, Chief Inspector – Essex Police

Leanne Archer, Inspector – Essex Police

Officers

Hannah Marriott, Governance Support Officer

Phil Dart, Strategic Support

Rebecca Farrant, Assistant Director - Corporate Services

Oliver Gillard, Deputy Programme Manager

Jacqui Van Mellaerts, Assistant Director - Finance

Natasha Terrell, Assistant Director - Governance, HR and Legal

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dr. Emma Ghaffari. Councillor Andrew Johnson attended as a substitute for Councillor Dr. Emma Ghaffari.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

42. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2024 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

43. MATTERS ARISING

None.

44. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

45. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

46. **RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

47. **CLEAR, HOLD, BUILD**

The Committee received presentations from Chief Inspector Paul Austin from Essex Police and Councillor Joel Charles, Portfolio Holder for Public Protection, on Clear, Hold and Build.

Chief Inspector Paul Austin advised the Committee that Clear, Hold, Build was a National Home Office initiative. He advised that “build” would be the hardest part of the scheme and would require a whole system approach that included community support at the heart. It was noted that the Stow was chosen for the initiative as it was a small area, there had been an uptake in crime recently and the Police were aware of gang activity.

The Committee noted that the Officers Operations Group would be working on a number of actions including; additional CCTV, repair work to street furniture, cleaning activity and security doors. It was agreed that the community needed to take ownership and that the Council would work with Essex Police to encourage the creation of a Resident’s Association.

The Committee noted that the “hold and build” model could be taken to other areas in the town if needed. It was also noted that local businesses needed to be supported to help build confidence.

It was suggested that an update be brought forward to the Scrutiny Committee in a year’s time to assess how well “hold and build” were going.

48. **BUDGET MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Committee received the Performance and Finance report for August 2024.

The Committee noted that Councillor Hannah Ellis, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and Transformation, was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting and sent her apologies.

The Committee noted that the report had already been discussed at Cabinet. The Committee suggested that the timetable for budget monitoring and performance reports needed to be looked at for future meetings.

49. **CLIMATE CHANGE TASK AND FINISH GROUP - UPDATE**

The Committee noted that there was an ongoing issue with the appointment of a Chair for the Task and Finish group. Councillor Tony Edwards advised that he would address matter outside of the meeting.

50. **PLAYHOUSE, ARTS AND CULTURAL QUARTER TASK AND FINISH GROUP - UPDATE**

Councillor Tony Durcan advised that the group met on 14 November 2024. The group looked at the business plan and received evidence from external consultants, Counter Culture. It was noted that the relevant Portfolio Holder had received more detailed information since the meeting.

The Committee noted that the group had amended the Terms of Reference and that these would come back to Committee for approval.

51. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee received a report summarising its work plan for 2024/25.

Councillor Tony Edwards advised that the meeting on 6 February 2024 may be moved to 4 February 2024. This would be discussed with officers and the Committee would be advised accordingly.

Councillor Tony Edwards also advised that there would be an additional meeting either on 25 March 2025 or 1 April 2025.

Finally, Councillor Tony Edwards advised, that to allow time for items to be discussed in sufficient depth, he has requested that eight Scrutiny meetings be scheduled for the 25/26 administrative year.

RESOLVED that the work plan be noted.

52. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

None.

53. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy



Report to: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 4 February 2025

Portfolio Holder: Councillor David Carter, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing

Lead Officer: Cara Stevens, Assistant Director – Housing Operations
(01279) 446490

Contributing Officer: Lisa Whiting, Housing Options and Advice Manager
(01279) 446371

Executive Summary

- A** This report provides a final version of the Harlow Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Framework 2025 to 2030. This final version takes on board feedback from Scrutiny Committee on the 15 October 2024 and the public consultation exercise.
- B** Provides a draft copy of the Harlow Homelessness and Rough Sleeping framework 2025 – 2030, along with a summary of the public consultation carried out.

Recommended that:

- A** Scrutiny acknowledges the final version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and summary of the completed public consultation (attached as appendices 1 and 2 to the report).

Reason for decision

- A** It is a statutory requirement that the Council publishes a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. The existing publication expires in April 2025.

Background

1. Under section 1(3), (4) of the Homelessness Act 2002, local authorities have a duty to review and publish their homelessness strategy on at least a 5-yearly basis.

2. The strategy must be based on an analysis of current and future needs and services, placed in the context of the current housing market, and must look to the potential challenges for the next five years.
3. The strategy has the overarching objective of eliminating rough sleeping and providing a homelessness and housing needs service that focuses on the prevention of homelessness, with early intervention being key to achieving this. It identifies our priorities for tackling homelessness in Harlow over the next 5 years and beyond, with partnership working being at its heart.
4. The strategy sits within the corporate priority of “Transform Harlow’s Housing”.
5. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 to 2024 generated significant levels of success, including the partnerships we have in place to deliver services to homeless people, the ability to access accommodation within the private rented sector, improved services to those surviving domestic abuse, transforming the Housing Allocation Policy to focus on local homes for local people. In addition, it helped us to secure the delivery of Bromley Cottages and the ongoing support for Streets 2 Homes in managing rough sleeping numbers.

New Framework

6. Whilst the new strategy looks to build on these areas of success, we have identified the following overarching key priorities:
 - a) Increase homelessness prevention work.
 - b) Eliminate rough sleeping completely.
 - c) Access to suitable accommodation and support, including temporary accommodation, accessing the private sector, supported housing and homeownership.

There also continues to be several challenges and emerging themes which include:

- a) Affordability issues and cost of living crisis.
- b) The gap between Local Housing Allowance and rent levels.
- c) The increased use of housing stock in Harlow by London Boroughs
- d) Tackling the difficulties faced by those with mental health issues, in accessing and maintaining accommodation.
- e) Tackling difficulties in accessing the private rented sector.
- f) Managing pathways for care leavers and migrants.
- g) Lack of support services to refer into, which would help prevent homelessness and increase sustainability chances.
- h) Lack of specialist supported accommodation, especially for young people and those with complex needs.
- i) International crisis and supporting Afghan and Ukrainian refugees.

- j) Recruitment issues, with difficulties in recruiting staff with the right skill and experience into the sector.

Consultation

7. It is important to involve service users and stakeholders in the development of this strategy, and so a variety of methods have been employed to gauge feedback on proposals.
8. A team workshop was held with officers during September 2024, to review internal challenges and seek input from those closest to delivering our services.
9. A stakeholder consultation event took place on the 9 September 2024, which included a range of partners from both the statutory and voluntary services. This included health partners, drug and alcohol services, rough sleeping services, mental health, housing, support, young people, integration services, probation and the Department for Work and Pensions.
10. A Member workshop took place on the 24 September in advance of the public consultation which provided an overview of the current demand and resources, key emerging issues, challenges that Harlow residents face in relation to homelessness and key priorities for action. This workshop provided members with an opportunity to comment ahead of the planned public consultation.
11. A 6-week public consultation exercise closed on 16 December 2024. The survey covered areas of key challenges and priorities for action. There were 41 responses to this public consultation, 95% of whom were Harlow residents. A summary of the feedback is included as Appendix 2. Overall, respondents were supportive of the three key priorities that are set out in the strategy, with 90% agreeing these were the right priorities to drive the council's work. Respondents identified affordability as the biggest challenge for local people, with concern that local housing was too expensive for those in low income.
12. This feedback from public consultation has been used to shape the final version of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy.
13. The Homelessness and Rough Sleeper strategy will be presented to cabinet on the 13 March 2025 and if approved will come into force with effect from the 1 April 2025.

Implications

Equalities and Diversity

An Equality Impact will be completed and provided for the Cabinet meeting of 13 March 2025. There are no adverse impacts on any groups.

Climate Change

No climate change implications have been identified

Finance

No direct financial implications arising from this report.

Author: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Assistant Director – Finance and Section 151 Officer

Governance

None, this report is for Member acknowledgement and in preparation for a cabinet decision.

Author: Julie Galvin, Legal Services Manager and Monitoring Officer

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Harlow Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 2030

Appendix 2 – Public Consultation Survey Response Summary

Background Papers

None

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None.

Harlow Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 to 2030

Foreword by Cabinet Member for Housing

I am very pleased to introduce our new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which will form the backbone of the work the Council does, with our partners, to tackle homelessness in our town.

We face a very unique set of challenges in terms of what this Council must do to meet local housing need. This framework is our route map to take us forward and to tackle those challenges head on, in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping and the underlying root causes of both.

Harlow is ranked in the bottom 40% of the most deprived lower tier authorities, it experiences high levels of housing need, alongside increasing house prices and lower than average salaries. Residents experience serious affordability issues when looking for a suitable housing solution to meet their needs.

Harlow sees consistently high levels of homelessness. The Council has at any one time in the region of 250 to 350 households living in temporary accommodation

This strategy has been developed at a time where there is much work being done locally, supported financially by central government – and sets out a commitment to end rough sleeping and to alleviate homelessness in Harlow.

It is intended that this strategy is a short, sharply focussed tool to guide the work of the council and its partners, ensuring shared objectives and desired outcomes are clear.

Councillor David Carter

Portfolio Holder for Housing

1. About Harlow

For most of its existence the village of Harlow was little more than a charming stopping point on the road between Cambridge and London. The original village was expanded after the Second World War to provide modern, secure housing for the thousands of Londoners displaced by the 'Blitz'. The older parts of the town were left in situ, linked by the new housing estates and a series of small shopping centres.

The new town was designed to complement the rural Essex countryside, with generous swathes of green areas and parkland dissecting the housing estates. Many

of the town's new buildings were designed in a contemporary, even futuristic style (for the pre 1970s).

Today Harlow continues to grow and its numerous facilities and proximity to London, Cambridge and Stansted International Airport, make it attractive to businesses, shoppers and commuters alike. There are plans to develop Harlow further with ambitious regeneration projects already underway, which include further investments in housing, business and recreation facilities, whilst preserving the town's green spaces.

Being just outside London, house prices are high. Around 40% of households in Harlow own their properties or with an outstanding mortgage. 26% of households rent privately and 34% live in social rented properties. There are significantly more social renters and less owner occupiers compared to national and regional averages.

Affordability of local homes is a real issue for residents. Many seek social housing, or low cost home ownership models, but supply cannot match demand. Local residents can be priced out. The most extreme form of this leads to homelessness. As a local authority, we will continue to work hard to tackle this – both at root cause level and the practical reality.

2. Introduction and strategic fit

This framework has the overarching objective of eliminating rough sleeping and providing a homelessness and housing needs service that focuses on the prevention of homelessness. Early intervention is the key to achieving this.

The framework identifies our priorities for tackling homelessness in Harlow over the next five years and beyond. Partnership working is at its heart. The three key priorities are:

Increase homelessness prevention

Access to suitable accommodation and support, including temporary accommodation, accessing the private rented sector, supported housing and home ownership

Eliminate rough sleeping completely

We consulted on these priorities and over 90% of respondents agreed these were the top priorities in tackling homelessness in our town.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy sits under the umbrella of the wider Corporate Plan. The Strategy sits within **Mission 1** which is to **Transform Harlow's Housing**. This includes:

- Embedding our new housing allocations policy and processes to increase transparency and efficiency in our social housing allocations.
- Both directly delivering and encouraging developers to build more high-quality homes for local people.
- Embracing the new legislative changes to landlord provision particularly through the Social Housing Regulation Act and other similar changes.
- Delivering new high-quality council housing which incorporates sustainable construction approaches, energy efficient and photovoltaic technologies.
- Working with developers through the planning process to target sustainable approaches to the delivery of all new homes.

There are also key links to the Housing Strategy, the Tenancy Strategy, the Temporary Accommodation Plan and the Housing Allocations Scheme. These plans interact together to tackle housing need in our neighbourhoods and town.

Consultation

We have worked with partners to develop this framework, and we have consulted stakeholders and residents on challenges, priorities and action. We did this through a series of workshops and an online survey. Feedback was received from a range of partners including local housing associations, supported housing providers, neighbouring local authorities, key voluntary sector organisations including health partners, probation, Department for Work and Pensions and Essex County Council.

Council Members were involved in developing this strategy during a workshop in September 2024, and through the wider public consultation process.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to review and feedback on an early draft of the framework, and in shaping the nature of the wider consultation exercise.

Harlow residents were invited to have their say through an online consultation during autumn of 2024.

3. Building on our success

Our previous Homelessness Strategy generated significant levels of success. We are particularly proud of:

- The partnerships we have in place to deliver services to homeless people
- Our work on early intervention and prevention, meaning fewer people need temporary accommodation
- The work we have done so far on securing access to the private rented sector
- The work we have done to improve services to those surviving domestic abuse, including having a Housing IDVA working with us, through Safer Places
- Reviewing the Housing Allocations Policy and implementing a new policy to ensure homeless households are given due priority, and bringing local connection to the forefront

- Ensuring the quota scheme is targeted at the right organisations so as to have local impact, supporting local people
- The delivery of Bramley Cottages and the ongoing support of Streets for Homes
- Managing rough sleeping numbers so fewer people are hitting the streets and where they do, are being supported to move on.

This new strategy looks to build on these areas of success where they are still relevant. However, there are several challenges and emerging themes. These include:

- Affordability issues and cost of living crisis
- The gap between Local Housing Allowance and rent levels
- The increased use of housing stock in Harlow by London Boroughs
- Tackling the difficulties faced by those with mental health issues, in accessing and maintaining appropriate accommodation
- Tackling difficulties in accessing the private rented sector
- The impact of the Renters Reform Bill – will landlords exit that market? Will removing no-fault evictions ease homelessness levels?
- Managing pathways for care leavers and migrants
- Lack of support services to refer into, which would help prevent homelessness and increase sustainability chances. Sometimes tenancy breakdown is inevitable without these services
- Lack of tenancy training, which could help younger people (and others) prepare for the responsibility of holding a tenancy
- Lack of specialist supported accommodation, especially for young people and those with complex needs
- Lack of direct access accommodation, to prevent a first night on the streets
- Encouraging residents to seek help earlier enough, and removing the stigma of approaching the council
- Recruitment issues – difficulty in recruiting staff with the right skills and experience into the sector

We consulted on these challenges and respondents told us the top priority for them was tackling the affordability of local housing, as it was often too expensive for those on low income.

4. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Harlow

What do we mean by homelessness?

A home is not simply a building. Although most people associate homelessness with rough sleeping, that is far from the whole story. The following are all examples of situations where it is considered people to be either homeless or threatened with homelessness:

- The household has no legal right to be in the property. This may include people staying with family or friends who want them to leave

- The household is being evicted from a tenancy or their house is being repossessed
- Members of the household are the subject of violence, threats of violence or abuse in their home
- The property is unsafe, or its condition is affecting the health of the occupants and there is no practical remedy
- People who are 'sofa surfing', moving between various friends and or family members
- The household is staying in a hostel, night shelter or bed and breakfast establishment. Temporary accommodation is not a home.

Key data – Homelessness in Harlow

Homelessness applications and decisions

The total number of decisions on homelessness applications made annually in Harlow over the last five years is shown in the chart below.

	Total annual applications made
2019-2020	273
2020-2021	315
2021-2022	350
2022-2023	392
2023-2024	354

Preventing homelessness

We aim to talk to people as early as possible about their housing options. Council officers will give advice to help people understand what their housing options are to enable them to make informed decisions. Where there is a threat of homelessness, our officer's work hard to prevent it from happening. This will include:

- Home visits
- Negotiation with landlords
- Use of Discretionary Housing Payments
- Signposting to support services
- Warm handovers to partner agencies for specialist casework
- Refer to debt counselling and money advice

Where we cannot prevent homelessness, we work to find a suitable housing alternative. This can include:

- Discussions with applicant about moving in with other family and friends
- Finding accommodation in the private rented sector
- Provision of temporary accommodation
- Personalised housing plans - each applicants receives a tailored housing plan

Homelessness acceptances

The table below sets out the different types of duties owed to those who approach as homeless.

The Homeless Reduction Act

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Prevention duty	73	81	159	186	160
Relief duty	186	207	181	186	176
Total owed a duty	259	288	340	372	336
Not threatened with homelessness	14	27	10	20	13
Total initial assessments	273	315	350	392	354

Where a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is threatened with homelessness and eligible, it must help the applicant secure that accommodation does not cease to be available for their occupation.

Where a local authority is satisfied that an applicant is homeless and eligible, it must help the applicant secure that accommodation becomes available for at least six months

Reasons for homelessness in Harlow

The main reasons for homelessness in Harlow are:

- ending of a private rented sector tenancy (38%);
- eviction by family or friends (23%)
- loss of accommodation through domestic abuse (7%) .

These are in line with the top 3 reasons nationally.

Local homelessness trends compared to national trends

The following chart compares rates of homelessness acceptances in Harlow with the regional figures for East of England and national figures for England. This is achieved by looking at the number of homelessness acceptances per 1000 households of the population for each area.

2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Harlow	2.90	2.50	4.00	2.20
East of England	1.80	1.70	1.80	2.30
England	1.70	1.70	1.80	2.20

Using Temporary Accommodation

In developing a plan to tackle homelessness, we have to make judgments on how to achieve best value for money in allocating limited resources in order to meet legal duties.

The use of bed and breakfast and other temporary accommodation is by far the most expensive and least satisfactory response for those in need. We use temporary accommodation whilst assessments are being carried out and we have a duty to provide housing for a homeless household but is not able to provide a permanent home at that point. At any one time we have in the region of 250 to 350 households living in temporary accommodation. This is a mix of housing association properties, council owned properties and properties secured in the private rented market.

We will continue to review the provision of resources to prevent homelessness and provide settled accommodation against meeting the costs of short term temporary accommodation provision. We want to reduce this number and have set aside a budget to make better use of private sector homes, which can either be sourced by our clients, or by us. This gives much more flexibility over the type and location of properties we can offer.

Types of temporary accommodation

We use a range of temporary accommodation to meet its duties towards homeless people. The table below shows a snapshot of the numbers living in each type of accommodation, as at September 2024.

Supported housing	6
Council owned stock	15

Nightly lets (rooms in shared properties)	86
Private provider (self contained family sized homes)	237
Emergency bed and breakfast	9

Rough Sleeping

The table below shows the rough sleeping figures for Harlow, East of England and England.

Rough sleeping data

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Harlow	3	4	0	4	7
East of England	458	266	240	285	337
England	4266	2688	2443	3069	3898

Breaking this data down further, it is interesting to see comparisons across Essex.

Essex Local Authority	2019 - 2020	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
Basildon	5	3	2	1	4
Braintree	5	0	5	3	7
Brentwood	0	0	0	0	1
Castle Point	0	1	3	2	2
Chelmsford	15	9	13	15	18
Colchester	10	4	2	7	4
Epping Forest	2	1	2	1	4
Harlow	3	4	0	4	7
Maldon	2	1	2	3	0
Rochford	1	1	1	0	2
Southend-on-Sea	32	8	10	16	35
Tendring	4	0	2	11	7
Thurrock	8	5	2	7	6
Uttlesford	0	0	1	2	0

The profile of rough sleepers shows they are mostly male, mostly over 25 and mostly from the UK. The causes of rough sleeping vary from individual to individual but in Harlow, rough sleepers have the following principle issues:

- The person is dealing with issues relating to mental health, drugs or alcohol (or a combination of these)

- The person is failing in making and sustaining long-term relationships
- The person is not able to sustain a tenancy
- The person's behaviour is often erratic and unpredictable
- In many cases, the issues the person is dealing with are very longstanding and entrenched

5. Our priorities

The progress and success of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy will be regularly monitored by the Housing Advice and Options Manager and Assistant Director for Housing Operations, and at least annually by the Harlow Homelessness Partnership.

We have three key priorities:

Increase Homelessness Prevention Work

We will:

- Prevent homelessness through private sector supported by our Rent Bond Scheme;
- Work closely with partners to identify opportunities for earlier intervention
- Work to ensure those facing homelessness know where to go for help
- Continually develop our personalised housing plans
- Review and improve our offering to private sector landlords
- Explore the formation of a Landlords Forum
- Adapt and continuously review our homelessness prevention options in light of wider housing market pressures including welfare reform and the cost-of-living crisis
- Aim to create an approachable image for the Housing Options Service, to encourage early intervention opportunities

Eliminating Rough Sleeping Completely

We will:

- Drive forward our ambition to end rough sleeping in the district
- Make sure that we co-ordinate with other groups to raise awareness and build effective partnerships
- Provide an outreach service
- Provide in-reach support at Bromley Cottages
- Provide a Rough Sleeper Co-ordinator
- Enhance and continue to implement severe weather emergency protocols
- Explore opportunities that support tenancy sustainment
- Bid for all relevant funding opportunities

Provide access to suitable accommodation and support, including temporary accommodation,

We will

- Not use of bed and breakfast for homeless 16/17 year olds;
- Not allow homeless families with children (or pregnant family member) to occupy bed and breakfast for longer than six weeks
- Aim to place in emergency accommodation within the borough where safe and available;
- Make use of our own studio apartment properties as temporary housing
- Maximise opportunities within the private rented sector
- Promote home ownership opportunities

6. How we will deliver the Strategy

We will deliver the Strategy in a number of ways:

Direct delivery

We have a statutory duty to prevent homelessness and as such this priority will be directly delivered by our housing team and resources, in collaboration with housing providers and other statutory and voluntary organisations, assisted by occasional funding streams through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Delivery in partnership

Whilst overall responsibility for rough sleeping in the area lies with us, the ongoing progressive work of the Harlow Homelessness Partnership is crucial to ending rough sleeping locally.

We will work with stakeholders to:

- Make sure that we are all using the opportunities they have to identify people who may be at risk of homelessness
- Make sure that the formal process for agencies to refer people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness is fully understood and easy to use
- Involve other organisations in the identification and provision of opportunities to help people facing housing issues
- Explore and generate ideas for potential projects and monitor potential sources of funding such as community funds and government initiatives
- Maintain housing options for households in housing need
- Work with private sector landlords to secure private rented accommodation for households in housing need

Enabling

We will ensure delivery of new affordable housing in the district, working in partnership with key housing associations. We have an enabling role to support the delivery of new affordable housing opportunities and ensuring that new affordable delivery is appropriate in terms of its location, type, size and tenure. This includes our own new developments, and those provided by partner housing associations.

Strategic support and engagement

We engage with strategic stakeholders such as MHCLG, Homes England, housing associations, Essex County Council, and other local district authorities to support and enable the delivery of projects that will assist in tackling homelessness and rough sleeping. Partnership working strongly underpins this document and success of this strategy cannot be achieved working in isolation.

7. Funding

Government Grants for Homelessness

Since 2017/18 we have been allocated a Flexible Homelessness Prevention Grant to assist in the prevention of homelessness, following the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act. The aim of this grant is to provide councils with the flexibility to use the grant in their work to prevent and alleviate homelessness.

Our Planned Expenditure

Our base budget is drawn from a mixture of government grants and council income. Resources are allocated to the Housing Options Service to cover the costs associated with our Allocation, Homelessness and Housing Options functions.

8. Leading change

This Homelessness and Rough Sleeping strategy will be delivered by the Harlow Homelessness Partnership, which is a strong group of organisations who work together to address the issues, problems and barriers that lead to homelessness in our town.

The group is chaired and lead by our Housing Options and Advice Manager.

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Consultation 2024

This framework sets out our priorities to increase homelessness prevention work, eliminate rough sleeping completely and improve access to suitable accommodation and support – this includes temporary accommodation, access to private sector housing, supported housing and homeownership.

95% Of people who responded to this consultation were residents
5% Preferred not to say

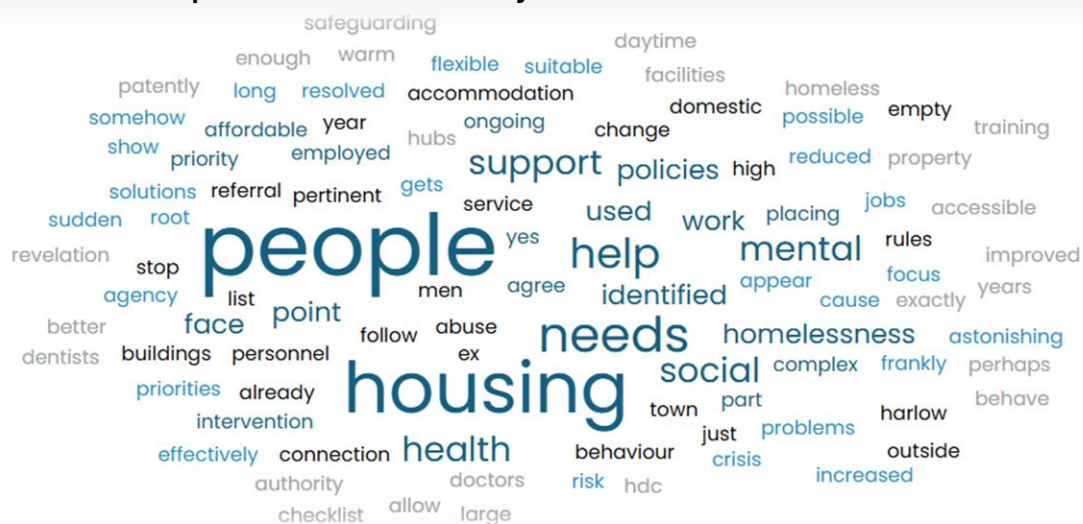
93% Of people who responded to this consultation live in Harlow
7% Preferred not to say

Top 5 Challenges	High Priority	Low Priority
Cost of living crisis	15%	22%
Affordability of local housing – too expensive for those on low income	29%	5%
Local Housing Allowance is out of step with rent levels	7%	10%
Many people approaching for help with either mental health issues or complex needs	15%	37%
Ability to find alternative housing because of placements being made by other boroughs in Harlow	29%	22%

90% Agree with the Key Priorities for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Framework.

- Increase homelessness prevention work
- Eliminate rough sleeping completely
- Access to suitable accommodation & support, including temporary accommodation, accessing the private sector, supported housing and homeownership.

What other priorities for action would you like to see included in our framework?



Performance, Finance and Risk – September and October 2024



Report to:	Scrutiny Committee
Date:	4 February 2025
Portfolio Holders:	Councillor Hannah Ellis, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services and Transformation Councillor James Leppard, Portfolio Holder for Finance
Lead Officers:	Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Assistant Director – Finance and Section 151 Officer (01279) 446251 Rebecca Farrant, Assistant Director – Corporate Services (01279) 446811
Contributing Officers:	Jason Thorpe, Business Insight Officer (01279) 446942 Richard Criddle, Service Finance Manager and Deputy 151 Officer (01279) 446251

Executive Summary

- A** This report details the council's performance against key indicators up to the end of October 2024, and financial position to period 7 of the financial year. The council is performing well across the performance indicators and is in a good financial position.

Recommended that Scrutiny committee:

- A** Reviews the Council's overall performance to end of October 2024 and agrees any recommendations for Cabinet consideration.

Reason for decision

- A** To ensure the council scrutinises performance against its budget position for General Fund, Housing Revenue Fund and Capital programmes.

Other Options

- A No other options were considered, the review of performance and finance by Scrutiny Committee constructively challenges the Cabinet's role to review the use and allocation of assets and resources as contained within its terms of reference.

Background

1. The Cabinet regularly monitors the performance of service delivery and financial position to ensure it can deliver its annual delivery plan and respond efficiently to arising issues.
2. The information in this report supports the council's Corporate Mission to Deliver High-Performing Services. Effective use of financial resources supports maintaining delivery of priority and statutory services, and investment in the council's assets.

Issues/Proposals

3. The report is split into three sections, Performance, Finance and Risk. The performance section sets out the council's achievement against key performance indicators as at end of October 2024. Data published against the metrics collected by Oflog have not been updated since the last report to Cabinet and are therefore not included in this report.

Performance – Key Performance Indicators

4. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are set annually as part of the council's corporate delivery planning process. The performance measures selected reflect the key service delivery of the council. In addition to those indicators reported to Cabinet a number of internal measures are also collated for operational management purposes, for example customer service advisor feedback surveys and workflow data for specific processes.
5. Monthly performance indicator reporting therefore includes details of the actual performance figure as compared to targeted performance figure, along with commentary to provide additional context for the performance of that month. The reporting also includes assignment of a RAG status for each indicator. A RAG status provides a shorthand way of identifying measures that *Require attention* as they may not align with the annual expected performance, measures that are out of target for that month and therefore need *Awareness*, and measures where performance is *Going well*. This status is denoted by the letters R, A and G, and presented through red, orange and green colouring.
6. The council performed well against the majority of KPIs during September and October 2024. As at end of October sixteen indicators performed within target and one indicator was highlighted for awareness and monitoring as performance is just outside tolerance of good performance. This continues the trend of performance improving month on month in this financial year. Performance for September and October can be found at Appendix A.

7. Changes have been made to the way that income collection performance is measured. This data is cumulative and shows how much is collected month on month and is compared to the previous year. The amount collected each month can differ as some payments are made annually, and others monthly, dependant on payment terms used by those paying.
8. The presentation of this data previously showed the % of money collected to date, but did not show how the collection rates were performing. A target of 100% of expected collection levels has now been applied. Where the reported collection data equals or exceeds the 100% target, the council is on track to achieve the year-end figures. If the reported data falls below the target, the percentage indicates how close the council is to achieving the year-end goal.
9. The contextual indicator showing number of rough sleepers is not included in this report. There is no target set for this indicator as there are a number of internal and external services and varying factors that contribute to the support and delivery of services to this cohort. It is recognised that this is one of a number of indicators that highlights the number of rough sleepers within the town. Work around a new Homelessness Strategy was presented to the September Scrutiny Committee meeting and consultation on this document started in October 2024. The draft strategy includes several priority actions and delivery of these alongside metrics related to rough sleepers, homelessness prevention and temporary accommodation will provide a holistic picture of the council's performance in this critical area of work.
10. Performance measures are used to inform and drive more effective performance on the part of both the council and those contracted to deliver on its behalf. No performance indicators are RAG rated red and only one is RAG red as orange as detailed in paragraph 11. The following areas are demonstrating extremely good performance (RAG = green):
 - Number of Empty Council Homes
 - Void turnaround times
 - Households living in temporary accommodation
 - Housing rent collection
 - Leasehold service charge collection
 - Contact Harlow abandoned calls
 - Customer complaints
 - Contact Harlow call waiting times
 - Missed bin collections
 - Invoice payments
 - New benefits claims
 - Benefit changes in circumstances
 - Council Tax collections

- Business rates collections
- Planning appeal performance
- Other planning application performance

11. Staff sickness levels are reporting at an *awareness level*. Staff sickness is marginally higher than the targeted level; the Personnel Committee receives a detailed breakdown of sickness absence types and length for full review and monitoring in this area.
12. The data for the void turnaround times is to be confirmed for period of October. A review of timings and methodology for the way data is collected and formulated is currently being carried out. The timelines for the review did not align with publication dates for this report, however full data will be included in the next report to Cabinet. Performance for void turnarounds continues to be reported to the Cabinet Member for Housing on a weekly basis.

Corporate Plan Delivery Plan

13. An annual delivery plan for the council's Corporate Plan was set for the start of the financial year. Progress against all milestones and measurements, across each of the council's six missions, due to outturn during quarter 2 of 2024/25 is shown at Appendix B. For each milestone the delivery plan includes a starting position (i.e. at start of Q1) and projected year end measurement to be used to demonstrate its success. Percentage completion against each milestone is reported, with more detailed commentary of activity presented alongside this. Where milestone target dates have slipped, expected completion for each still remains within the financial year and therefore there is no cause for concern.

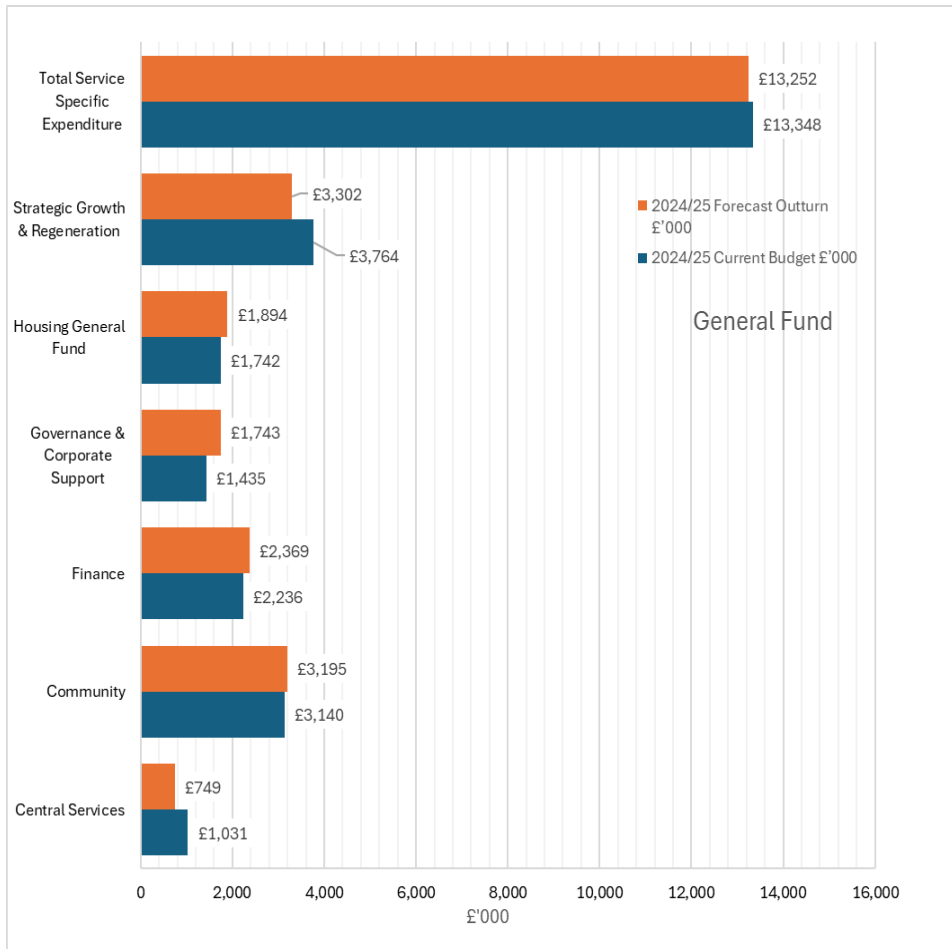
Finance

General Fund Account

14. The council set the 2024/25 budget in February 2024, with service specific expenditure totalling of £13.613 million.
15. The General Fund summary position up to the end of October 2024 (Period 7) is summarised in the table below. The forecast outturn for service expenditure is expected to decrease to £13.252 million, reporting a favourable variance of £136,000.
16. Appendix C provides a breakdown of major key variances and explanation of the position set out in the table below. The main reason for the favourable position is reduced business rates and energy costs for the civic centre as well as increased green waste subscriptions and increased Essex County Council Inter Authority Agreement contribution.

	2024/25 Current Budget £'000	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £'000	2024/25 Variance £'000
Central Services	1,031	749	(282)
Community	3,140	3,195	55
Finance	2,236	2,369	133
Governance & Corporate Support	1,435	1,743	308
Housing General Fund	1,742	1,894	152
Strategic Growth & Regeneration	3,764	3,302	(462)
Total Service Specific Expenditure	13,348	13,252	(96)
Non Service Specific & Funding	1,578	1,538	(40)
Funding	(14,926)	(14,926)	0
General Fund (Surplus)/Deficit	0	(136)	(136)

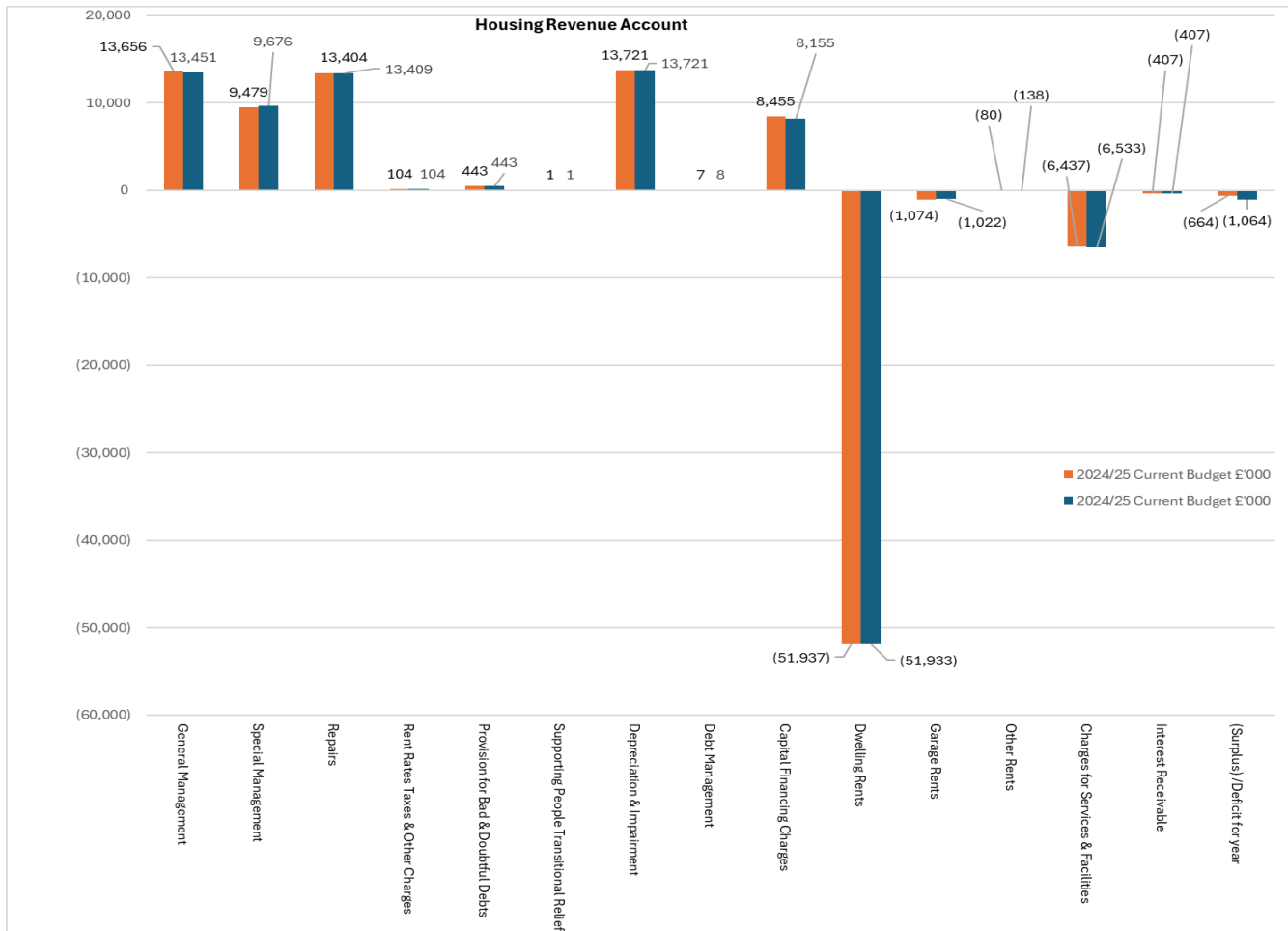
Note: Figures in brackets represent reductions in expenditure or increases in income



Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

17. The council approved a HRA budget and net surplus of £0.664 million for 2024/25, there were no approved carry forwards in July 2024, thus the current working balance as at 31 March 2024 is £11.444 million.
18. The HRA summary position up to the end of October 2024 (Period 7) is summarised in the table below. The forecast outturn is expected to decrease significantly to £1.064 million surplus, reporting a favourable variance of £400,000 with a revised working balance of £11.844 million.

Housing Revenue Account	2024/25 Current Budget £'000	2024/25 Forecast Outturn £'000	2024/25 Variance £'000
<u>Expenditure</u>			
General Management	13,656	13,451	(205)
Special Management	9,479	9,676	197
Repairs	13,404	13,409	5
Rent Rates Taxes & Other Charges	104	104	-
Provision for Bad & Doubtful Debts	443	443	-
Supporting People Transitional Relief	1	1	-
Depreciation & Impairment	13,721	13,721	-
Debt Management	7	8	1
Capital Financing Charges	8,455	8,155	(300)
Total Expenditure	59,271	58,969	(302)
<u>Income</u>			
Dwelling Rents	(51,937)	(51,933)	4
Garage Rents	(1,074)	(1,022)	52
Other Rents	(80)	(138)	(58)
Charges for Services & Facilities	(6,437)	(6,533)	(96)
Interest Receivable	(407)	(407)	-
Total Income	(59,935)	(60,032)	(98)
(Surplus) /Deficit for year	(664)	(1,064)	(400)
Balance at 1 April (pre-Audit)	10,780	10,780	-
Surplus / (Deficit) for year	664	1,064	400
Balance as at 31 March	11,444	11,844	400



19. Appendix D provides a breakdown of major key variances and explanation of the position set out in the table above. The main reason for the favourable position is due to the changes in legislation regarding retained capital receipts.

Capital Programme

Non Housing Capital Programme (NHCP)

20. A summary of the Non-Housing Capital Programme (NHCP) is shown in the table below. The Council approved a budget of £32.781 million in Feb 2024, and subsequently £14.4 million of carryovers in July 2024. The total NHCP Programme for 2024/25 is £42.334 million.

NON HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME Period 7 2024/25							
Schemes	Approved Budget 2024/25	2023/24 Carry overs	Q1 Cabinet Amendments	Q2 Cabinet Amendments	Current Budget	Projected Outturn	Variance: Outturn to current budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Latton Bush Centre	873	873		(63)	1,683	1,632	(51)
Commercial Properties	603	658	(124)	63	1,200	1,317	117
Highways & Car Parks	240	157			397	367	(30)
Drainage Works	135	80			215	55	(160)
Community Buildings	574	187	(317)		444	424	(20)
Other Public Schemes	631	138			769	443	(326)
Civic Centre	909	1,020	(300)		1,629	1,629	-
Garages	197	0			197	197	-
Contingency	50	0			50	50	-
TOTAL ASSET MANAGEMENT	4,212	3,113	(741)	-	6,584	6,114	(470)
Communities and Environment	629	246			875	838	(37)
Governance and Corporate Services	311	19		(120)	210	329	119
Strategic Growth & Regeneration	1,108	1,008		30	2,146	2,057	(89)
OTHER SERVICES	2,048	1,273	-	(90)	3,231	3,224	(7)
Council House Building Programme	3,708	468	(4,026)		150	100	(50)
Innovation Park	0	1,906			1,906	1,906	-
Levelling Up Fund	9,352	468			9,820	1,093	(8,727)
Town Centre Ltd Liability Partnership	0	5,000			5,000	5,000	-
Towns Fund	13,461	2,182			15,643	11,712	(3,931)
OTHER SCHEMES	26,521	10,024	(4,026)	-	32,519	19,811	(12,708)
TOTAL NON-HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME	32,781	14,410	(4,767)	(90)	42,334	29,149	(13,185)
Reprofiling as at period 7 required							13,502
New Budget Allocations Required							-
Period 6 Variance (Favourable)/Adverse							317

21. As at Period 7 the projected outturn of the full programme is forecasted to be £29.149 million resulting in a favourable variance of £13.185 million. A full list of variances and commentary is included within Appendix E.
22. Included within the projected outturn, £13.502 millions of schemes are requested to be re-profiled into the 2025/26 programme. For clarification, this expenditure and therefore financing is still required for the scheme, but the expenditure will be committed in a future year. By reprofiling the budget into a later year, means that no additional future financing for the scheme will be required. A breakdown of the schemes requested to be reprofiled into 2025/26 are included within Appendix E.
23. If the reprofiling is approved, the overall forecast for period 7 shows an adverse variance of £0.317 million. This is largely due to roofing projects within the programme occurring higher costs than expected.

Housing Capital Programme (HCP)

24. A summary of the Housing Capital Programme (HCP) is shown in the table below. The Council approved a budget of £60.409 million in February 2024, (including the New

Council House Building Programme) and subsequently £9.431 million of carryovers in 2023/24. The total HCP Programme for 2024/25 is £69.840 million.

HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME PERIOD 7 2024/25							
Schemes	Approved Budget 2024/25	2023/24 Carry overs	Q1 Cabinet Amendments	Q2 Cabinet Amendments	Current Budget	Projected Outturn	Variance: Outturn to current budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
HTS Internal Works - ASC	1,139				1,139	1,257	118
HTS Internal Works - Compliance	1,100	163			1,263	1,263	-
HTS Internal Works - Internal	2,600	16			2,616	2,616	-
HTS Internal Works - Garages	215	86			301	301	-
HTS Internal Works - Sumners Farm Close	300			179	479	479	-
TOTAL HTS	5,354	265	0	179	5,798	5,916	118
External Works	9,050	1,679	450	(179)	11,000	11,000	-
Damp & Structural Works	1,600		164		1,764	1,764	-
Other Works	8,700				8,700	8,700	-
Fire Safety & Compliance	6,500	1,133			7,633	7,633	-
Energy Efficiency Works	800	175			975	975	-
Housing IT	255	50			305	305	-
Garage Demolition Programme	500	851			1,351	1,351	-
TOTAL CORE HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME	27,405	3,888	614	(179)	31,728	31,728	-
Acquisitions	0	926			926	926	-
Council House Building Programme	27,650	4,352	(24,202)	(24,202)	7,800	14,635	6,835
TOTAL NON CORE PROGRAMME	27,650	5,278	(24,202)	(24,202)	8,726	15,561	6,835
TOTAL ALL HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME	60,409	9,431	(23,588)	(24,202)	46,252	53,205	6,953
Reprofiling as at period 7 Required							(6,835)
New Budget Allocations Required							-
Period 7 Variance (Favourable)/Adverse							118

25. As at Period 7 the projected outturn of the full programme is forecasted to be £53.205 million resulting in an adverse variance of £6.953m million. This is due to realignment of HTS inflationary uplifts within the Annual Service Charge and the re-profiling of schemes back into 2024/25. A full list of variances and commentary is included within Appendix F.
26. Included within the projected outturn, £0.675m million of scheme's are requested to be re-profiled into the 2025/26 programme. For clarification, this expenditure and therefore financing is still required for the scheme, but the expenditure will be committed in a future year. By reprofiling the budget into a later year, means that no additional future financing for the scheme will be required. A breakdown of the schemes requested to be reprofiled into 2025/26 are included within Appendix D.
27. In addition £7.510 million of scheme's are requested to be re-profiled back into the 2024/25 programme due to works on the Staple Tye sites accelerating more rapidly than expected following the recent appointment of The Hill Partnership Ltd as the main contractor.

Implications

Equalities and Diversity

Officers do not believe that current performance will have an impact on the council's equality duty however the council will ensure that services included within its annual delivery plan are accessible to all.

Climate Change

This report has no direct impact on climate change.

Finance

Financial monitoring for period 7 of financial year 2024/25 has been reviewed and included within the body of the report.

Author: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Assistant Director – Finance and Section 151 Officer

Governance

The Council has a fiduciary duty to the taxpayer, requiring the prudent use of resources, including control of expenditure and financial prudence in the short and long term. This report sets out as at October 2024 performance, risk and financial position for the Council as part of its fiduciary duty to implement budgetary controls and monitoring.

Author: Julie Galvin, Legal Services Manager and Monitoring Officer

Appendices

Appendix A - KPI report August

Appendix B - Corporate Delivery Plan

Appendix C – General Fund Variances Period 7

Appendix D – HRA Variances Period 7

Appendix E – NHCP Variances Period 7

Appendix F – HCP Variances Period 7

Appendix G – Risk dashboard and risk register

Background Papers

None

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

KPIs – Key Performance Indicators

MTFP – Medium Term Financial Plan

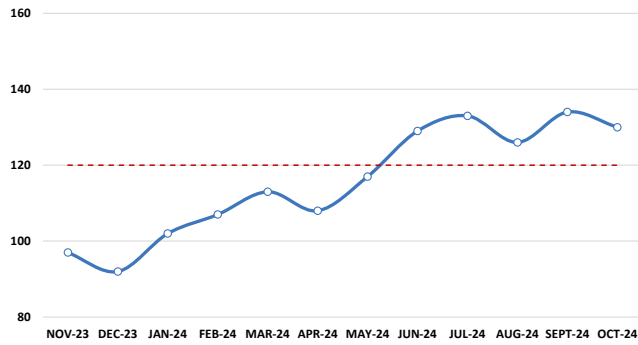
HTS – Harlow Trading Services

HOUSING PERFORMANCE

EMPTY COUNCIL HOMES

130

TARGET: <120

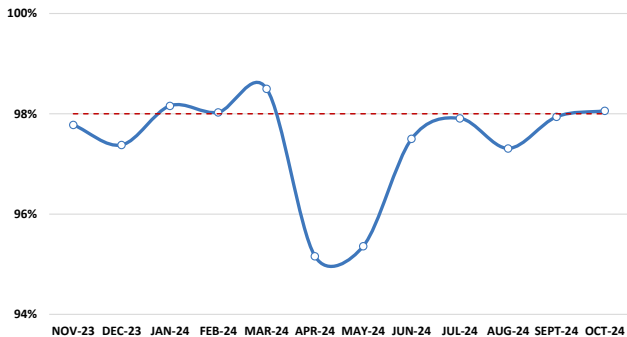


A slight reduction in number of empty council homes was seen during October.

HOUSING RENT

98.06%

TARGET: >98%



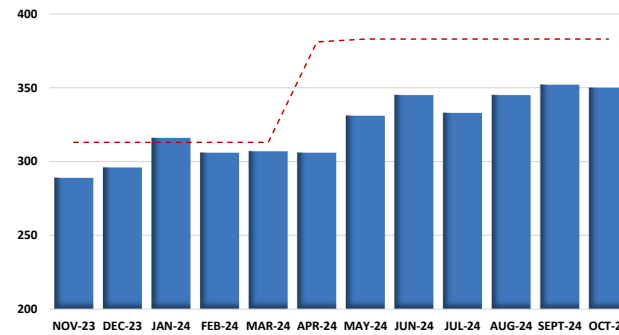
Rent collection performance for October increased to 98.06%, marginally above target and the highest collection figure for the financial year to date. This remains in line with previous years trends.

TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

350

23/24 TARGET: <313

24/25 TARGET: <383

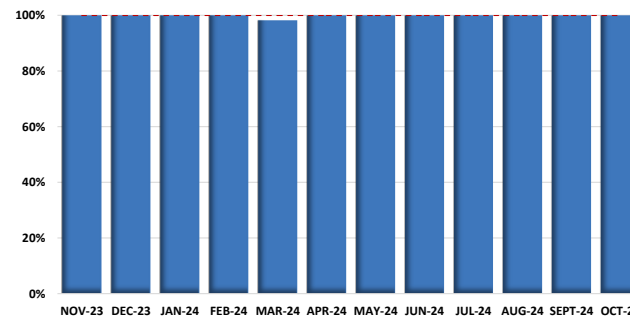


TA figure reduced slightly this month due to move on from temporary accommodation through the housing needs register/homeless end of duty requirements, we are still seeing increased presentations and due to the decant relating to Sycamore Field and Joseph Rank House this number is expected to increase.

LEASED SERVICE CHARGE COLLECTION

100%

TARGET: 100%

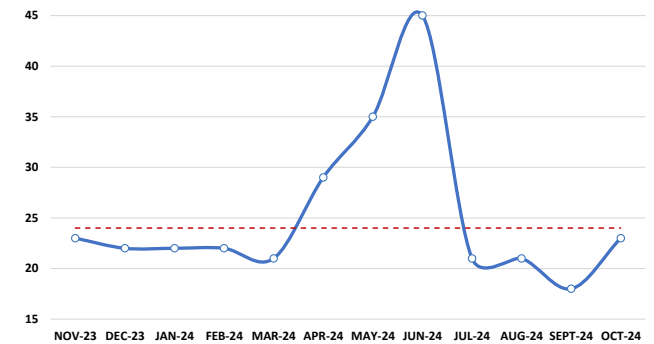


Leasehold Service Charge collections for October are on track to achieve year-end figures.

RE-LETTING HOUSING

23

TARGET: <24

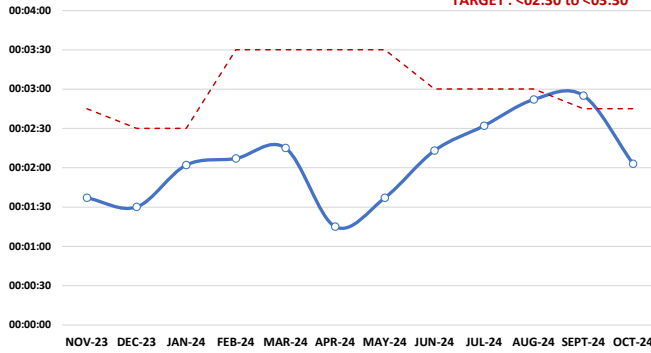


There is a slight increase due to a number of of homelessness cases which were subject to review extending amount of time voids were empty.

CALL WAITING TIMES

02:03

TARGET : <02:30 to <03:30

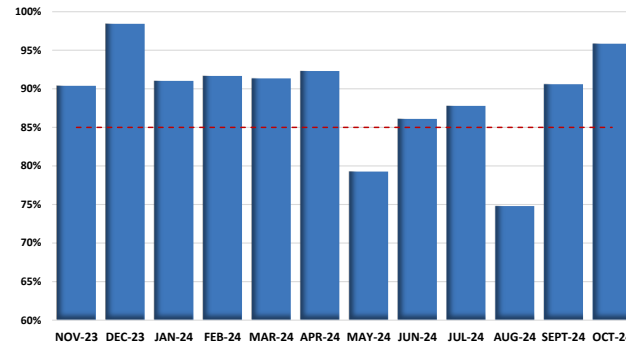


A reduction in call volumes in October has resulted in improved performance for the month which is the expected trend.

CUSTOMERS COMPLAINTS

95.86%

TARGET : >85%

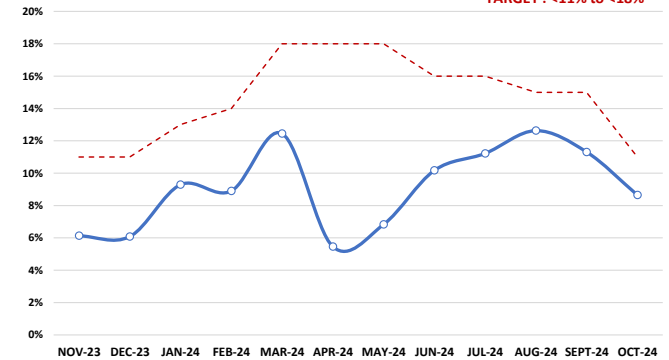


The number of customer complaints responded to within the given time period in the council's complaints policy has been on target for the past two months.

ABANDONED CALLS

8.65%

TARGET : <11% to <18%

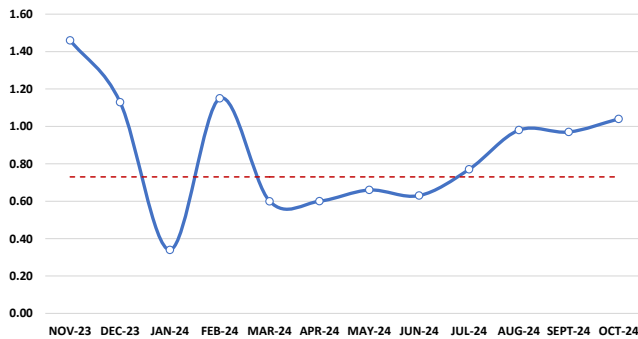


A reduction in call volumes in October has resulted in improved performance for the month which is the expected trend.

STAFF SICKNESS ABSENCE

1.04

TARGET : <0.73

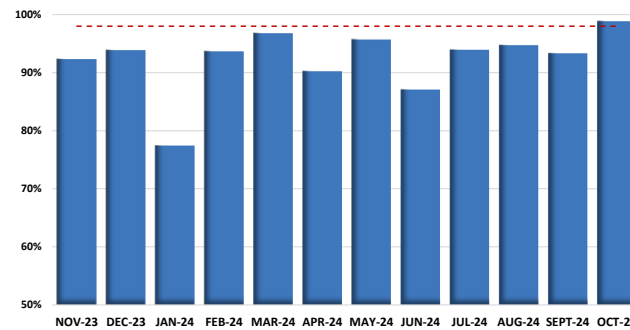


Reporting from October - sickness per month - including long-term and short-term sickness.

INVOICE PAYMENTS

98.84%

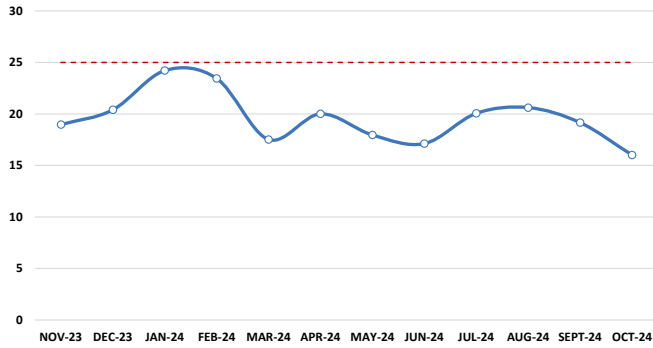
TARGET : >98.0%



Internal process reviews have resulted in improved payment times.

NEW BENEFIT CLAIMS **16.02**

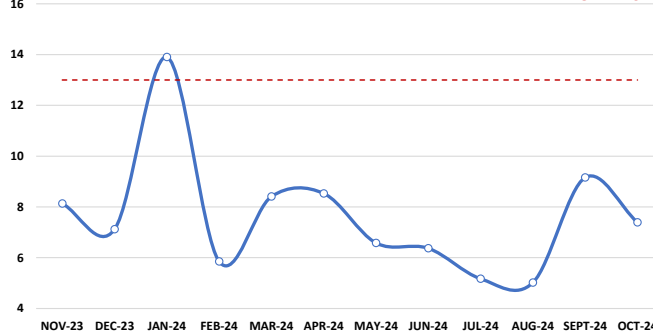
TARGET: <25



Processes within the benefits team continue to provide good turnaround times for new claimant applications to be processed.

CHANGES IN CIRCUMSTANCES **7.39**

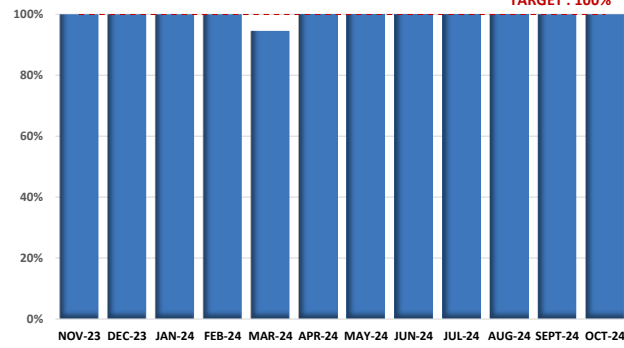
TARGET: <13



Processes within the benefits team continue to provide good turnaround times for changes in circumstances.

COUNCIL TAX **100%**

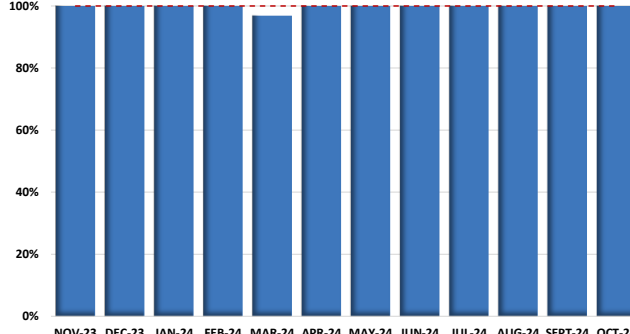
TARGET: 100%



Council Tax collections for October are on track to achieve year-end figures.

BUSINESS RATES **100%**

TARGET: 100%

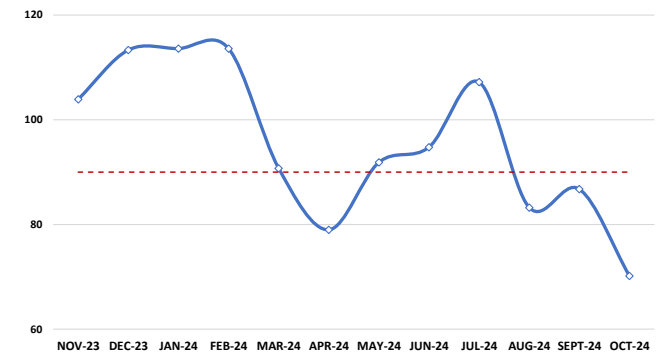


Business Rate collections for October are on track to achieve year-end figures.

ENVIRONMENT PERFORMANCE

MISSED BIN COLLECTIONS **70.16**

TARGET: <90



The number of missed bins.

Appendix A

Performance Name	Description	Portfolio	Annual Target (24/25)	High or Low is Better?	Performance Last Year (2023/24)
Number of Empty Council Homes	The number of empty Council Homes recorded at month end (indicator reference HMS8)	Housing	120	Low	113
Re-Letting Local Authority Housing	Average days taken to re-let local authority housing over the past month (indicator reference BV212.05)	Housing	24	Low	21
Households Living in Temporary Accommodation	The number of Households Living in Temporary Accommodation in the past month	Housing	383	Low	307
Housing Rent	The % of housing rent collected against the amount of rent owed for the past month	Housing	98%	High	98.50%
Leasehold Service Charge Collection	The % on track to achieve year-end figures (indicator reference LHI SO26)	Housing	100%	-	98.21%
Contact Harlow Calls Abandoned	The % of calls to Contact Harlow which are not answered by a Customer Advisor in the past month	Finance and Governance	15%	Low	10.71%
Customer Complaints	The % of Customer Complaints responded to within target time in the past month	Finance and Governance	85%	High	89.90%
Contact Harlow Call Waiting Times	The average time callers to Contact Harlow wait for their call to be answered in the past month	Finance and Governance	3 mins	Low	2m 08s
Staff Sickness Absence	The average number of Council working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE (full-time equivalent) in the past month	Finance and Governance	0.73	Low	0.75
Missed Bin Collections	The number of reported missed bin collections within the past month, per 100,000 bins collected	Environment and Sustainability	90	Low	108.05
Invoice Payments	The % invoices received by the Council which are paid within 30 days each month (indicator reference BV008)	Finance and Governance	98%	High	93.07%
New Benefits Claims	The average number of days to process new benefits claim applications in the past quarter	Finance and Governance	25	Low	21.73
Benefit Changes in Circumstances	The average number of days to process change events related benefits claimants - per quarter	Finance and Governance	13	Low	9.39
Council Tax	The % on track to achieve year-end figures (indicator reference BV009)	Finance and Governance	100%	-	94.55%
Business Rates	The % on track to achieve year-end figures (indicator reference BV010)	Finance and Governance	100%	-	96.87%
Planning Appeals	The % Planning Appeals allowed against Council decision within last quarter (indicator reference BV204)	Economic Development	66.60%	Low	25.00%
Major Planning Applications	The % of Major Planning Applications processed within 13 weeks or agreed timescale within last quarter (indicator reference NI157a)	Economic Development	75%	High	100%
Other Planning Applications	The % of Other Planning Applications processed within 8 weeks within last quarter (indicator reference NI157b&c)	Economic Development	75%	High	94.73%

Performance Name	Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	Jul 24	Aug 24	Sep 24	Oct 24	October Comments
Number of Empty Council Homes	108 ^G	117 ^G	129 ^G	133 ^G	126 ^G	134 ^G	130 ^G	A slight reduction in number of empty council homes was seen during October.
Re-Letting Local Authority Housing	29 ^A	35 ^R	45 ^R	21 ^G	21 ^G	18 ^G	23 ^G	There is a slight increase due to a number of of homelessness cases which were subject to review extending amount of time voids were empty
Households Living in Temporary Accommodation	306 ^G	331 ^G	345 ^G	333 ^G	345 ^G	352 ^G	350 ^G	TA figure reduced slightly this month due to move on from temporary accommodation through the housing needs register/homeless end of duty requirements, we are still seeing increased presentations and due to the decant relating to Sycamore Field and Joseph Rank House this number is expected to increase.
Housing Rent	95.16% ^A	95.36% ^A	97.50% ^G	97.91% ^G	97.31% ^G	97.94% ^G	98.06% ^G	Cumulative rent collection performance for October increased to 98.06%, marginally above target and the highest collection figure for the financial year to date. This remains in line with previous years trends
Leasehold Service Charge Collection	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	Leasehold Service Charge collections for October are on track to achieve year-end figures.
Contact Harlow Calls Abandoned	5.46% ^G	6.83% ^G	10.17% ^G	11.22% ^G	12.63% ^G	11.31% ^G	8.65% ^G	A reduction in call volumes in October has resulted in improved performance for the month which is the expected trend.
Customer Complaints	92.31% ^G	79.28% ^R	86.09% ^G	87.79% ^G	74.79% ^R	90.60% ^G	95.86% ^G	The number of customer complaints responded to within the given time period in the council's complaints policy has been on target for the past two months.
Contact Harlow Call Waiting Times	1m 15s ^G	1m 37s ^G	2m 13s ^G	2m 32s ^G	2m 52s ^G	2m 55s ^A	2m 3s ^G	A reduction in call volumes in October has resulted in improved performance for the month which is the expected trend.
Staff Sickness Absence	0.6 ^G	0.66 ^G	0.63 ^G	0.77 ^A	0.98 ^A	0.97 ^A	1.04 ^A	Reporting from October - sickness per month - including long-term and short-term sickness.
Missed Bin Collections	78.98 ^G	91.86 ^A	94.77 ^A	107.19 ^R	83.23 ^G	86.74 ^G	70.16 ^G	The number of missed bins.
Invoice Payments	90.23% ^A	95.70% ^A	87.09% ^R	93.93% ^A	94.73% ^A	93.34% ^A	98.84% ^G	Internal process reviews have resulted in improved payment times.
New Benefits Claims	20.01 ^G	17.96 ^G	17.12 ^G	20.06 ^G	20.62 ^G	19.16 ^G	16.02 ^G	Processes within the benefits team continue to provide good turnaround times for new claimant applications to be processed.
Benefit Changes in Circumstances	8.53 ^G	6.58 ^G	6.37 ^G	5.17 ^G	5.02 ^G	9.16 ^G	7.39 ^G	Processes within the benefits team continue to provide good turnaround times for changes in circumstances.
Council Tax	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	Council Tax collections for October are on track to achieve year-end figures.
Business Rates	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	100% ^G	Business Rate collections for October are on track to achieve year-end figures.
Planning Appeals			0.00% ^G			0.00% ^G	0.00% ^G	This indicator continues to perform well above targeted performance.
Major Planning Applications			50.00% ^A			100.00% ^G	N/A	None determined in October.
Other Planning Applications			78.86% ^G			82.00% ^G	88.00% ^G	This indicator continues to perform well above targeted performance.

DELIVER HIGH-PERFORMING COUNCIL SERVICES SERVICE PLAN

MISSION / PRIORITY	2024/25 MILESTONES	Performance measurement	Position at Q1	Targeted position at Year end	PROGRESS	Comments
6. Deliver High-Performing Council Services						
6.1 Strengthen engagement with the Council for people of all ages.						
HP1	Reforming how we consult and engage with our residents, including our tenants, to ensure the voice of all the town's communities is at the heart of all we do.	To create a Community Engagement Strategy Action Plan.	To create a Community Engagement Strategy Action Plan by September 2024	Not yet started	Action Plan in place	0% Action slipped to Q4 to tie in with exploration of new consultation platform for the council.
HP2	Focusing on engagement activities to specifically attract younger people to have their say on Council services.	To complete Youth Council surveys and get feedback from young people. To create an online Youth Engagement Forum.	Number of Young People who completed the Youth Council survey. Number of Young People who have engaged with the Youth Engagement Forum.	Not yet started	Survey complete Forum operational	0%
HP3	Introducing electronic communications options where this enhances service delivery to residents.	To run feedback survey for Council news email newsletter (launched December 2023). To set benchmark against which to measure increased numbers of voters registered through the annual canvass. Set in December, measured annually.	% of residents reporting that they feel informed. Overall electorate figure of 64,982 in December 2023	52% of residents report feeling informed in 2023 resident survey	Action Plan in place	0%
HP4	Increasing voter registration and turnout.	Set benchmark against which to measure increased voter turnout for local elections, set in May, measured annually.	% voters registered who turn out to vote.	25.19 % turnout for 2023 local election	> 25.19%	65% Following General Election (4 July 2024) canvass start commenced 30 July 2024 with data matching processes. Canvass will conclude with the publication of the new register on 7 January 2025. 100% The overall turnout for May 2024 local elections was 28.33%, turnout for the General Election was 58%.
6.2 Listen to what residents tell us and use this, alongside supporting data, to make decisions.						
HP5	Giving residents an annual opportunity to comment on the service that Harlow council provides and the things that are important to them.	To run a repeat residents' survey with bespoke question set focussed on community service provision (arts and cultural). To run repeat residents' survey with bespoke question on communications preferences.	Resident survey run in 2024.	Data from 2023 survey held.		50% Pre-planning for resident survey ready for October 2024 launch
HP6	Genuinely embed first class communication and engagement with our residents in all we do.	To produce 2024/25 Communications campaigns plan to ensure residents are engaged, informed and educated about key council To include data comparisons in all decision making reports.	% of residents reporting that they feel informed.	52% of residents report feeling informed in 2023 resident survey	equal to or > 52%	50% Two campaign plans completed in Q2.
HP7	Making data led decisions and embedding benchmarking in all we do.	To include description of all available options in decision making reports.	% of reports which include data comparisons. % of reports which include alternative options considered.	No data The current report template includes Options		50% % turnout for full year to be reported at year end. 50% % turnout for full year to be reported at year end, alternative options considered for all reports to cabinet during Q2.
6.3 Actively tell residents how we use Council resources and how others can work with us to deliver services.						
HP8	Ensuring all council decisions, policies and services are transparent.	To webcast all Council, Cabinet and Development management meetings. To review and improve the schedule for key policies.	% of meetings webcast and views of those (baseline 2024/25). % of key policies reviewed.	No data Not yet started	Baseline set All HR policies to be reviewed by personnel committee.	50% All Cabine, Council and DM meetings webcast in Q2 30% Policy reviews taking place at Personnel Committee.
HP9	Making it easier for local business to work with us under reformed procurement practices.	To change our procurement strategy to meet new procurement law, introduce social value and increase collaboration.	New procurement strategy in place by November 2024.	Not yet started, awaiting statutory guidance from the Cabinet Office	New strategy complete	20% Procurement strategy review work commenced. Public Procurement Act delayed until 24 February 2025 (announced Q2 12.09.2024). National procurement policy survey due to commence in October 2024 finishing November 2024, this will shape local future procurement strategy. Collaborative working with peer local Authorities and Unitary may support implementation and service delivery.
HP10	Deliver new shared services where there are identified operational and commercial drivers and seek diverse and best fit partners.	To review our financial regulations to ensure that these do not present a barrier to local contractors. To review SME T&Cs to ensure these are marketable and commercially attractive (within the requirements of the To develop a shared service opportunities plan	New financial regulations in place % of Harlow businesses that win Harlow Council contracts.	Not yet started 2023/24 baseline	Review complete > 2023 baseline	80% Substantially complete subject to final review following changes in legislation, and alignment to any Constitution changes. 100% HC have adopted and implemented the Cabinet Office short form services agreements for both consultant and services contracts. 50% Engaged with North Essex Council's Partnership mapping exercise
HP11	Providing best value by analysing areas of greatest spend to provide economies of scale.	To complete a review of all council spend to identify opportunities in support of the 2025/26 budget and the MTFP.	The number of shared service opportunities identified for the Council.	Not yet started		0% N.B. Budget timetable for 2025/26 set
6.4 Continuously improve service provision and provide excellent customer service in all we do.						
HP12	Driving a culture of continuous improvement and challenge.	To set a schedule for cyclical service reviews to focus on delivering services within a balanced MTFP and in support of the To set a schedule of process reviews to be completed in support of the 2025/26 budget. To deliver Level practice management standards to achieve accreditation. To maintain low numbers of customer complaints	The number of service reviews completed. The number of process reviews completed. Level accreditation received by October 2024.	Not yet started Not yet started Level accreditation achieved for 2023.		0% To be delivered as part of transformation 0% To be delivered as part of transformation 100% Level accreditation achieved in June 2024.
HP13	Enhance our customer service experiences	To maintain high levels of customer satisfaction for interactions with our Contact Harlow team To implement a new contract structure so that payment is more accurately linked to performance Delivery of increased financial return to the Shareholder	% of customers who rated their experience with Contact Harlow team as good or better. % of residents who rated their experience with HTS services as good or better.	80% 2023/24 baseline	equal to or > 80% > 2023 baseline	50% Customer complaints process reviewed and changes to Stage 2 investigations implemented with final responses made outside of receiving service. 25% Post customer care surveys offered for Contact Harlow engagements via phone. 25% New HTS governance structures in place 50% New HTS governance structures in place
HP14	Further transforming HTS service provision to ensure we are providing first class services.	To reach conclusion on a Shareholder Agreement that sets out ways of working and expectations. To make a decision on new contract beyond 2027 when current one expires To implement a revised Local Council Support Scheme.	To complete a revised Shareholder Agreement by October 2024. Decision on contract renewal made by end December 2024.			100% New HTS Group Governance Arrangements approved by Shareholder in April 2024. 25% Shareholder Strategy engagement planned for Q3
HP15	Identify opportunities for simplification in Local Council Tax Support Scheme.	To implement a revised Local Council Support Scheme.	To implement the revisions to the Local Council Support Scheme by April 2025			45% Report prepared for Scrutiny in advance of consultation run in Q3
HP16	Establishing a benchmarking scheme to measure Council performance against best practice in all decision making.	To use key benchmarking authorities' data to inform executive reports to show where the council has learnt from other authorities.	% of reports which include data comparisons.			50% Data comparisons included for appropriate reports; performance reporting to cabinet at every Cabinet meeting commenced in April 2024 and includes benchmarking of Oflog performance metrics.
6.5 Build resilience around our people, resources and finances to not just deliver services, but make them better.						
HP18	Providing accessible and easy to use services for our residents.	To complete IT cloud migration project to support flexible and agile ways of working. To achieve compliance with accessibility requirements for digital services via Siteimprove To review all income derived from property asset management as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process. To review all income derived from arrears collection as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process. To review all income derived from local taxation as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process.	Migration to cloud environment complete for relevant applications and user accounts by July 2024. % of monthly accessibility checks completed.	100% compliance	100% compliance	50% User accounts all moved to cloud environment. Applications migration programme in place - some delay expected due to availability of application provider resources. 50% Checks for Q1 confirmed compliance 50% Budget setting process commenced in Q2 50% Budget setting process commenced in Q2 50% Budget setting process commenced in Q2
HP19	Seeking cost reduction and reviewing income streams through challenging how we deliver services, ensuring value for money, as well as a return on investment.	To review all income derived from fees and charges as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process. To introduce new competitive processes aligned to procurement legislation changes to drive financial and social value in the council's major contracts	MTFP set in line with 2025/26 budget timetable.	MTFP for 2023/24 onwards set in February 2024.		50% Procurement strategy review work commenced. Public Procurement Act delayed until 24 February 2025 (announced Q2 12.09.2024). National procurement policy survey due to commence in October 2024 finishing November 2024, this will shape local future procurement strategy. Whilst identifying procurement for major contracts significant promotion of social value aims and objectives have been shared with demonstrable local examples meeting existing statutory duty to deliver social value. 50% Monthly pulse surveys implemented in May 2024. Surveys complete for July, August and September in Q2. 50% Recruitment portal now live on council's website
HP20	Create a culture that supports high performance and enables a flexible, skilled, engaged and diverse workforce that maintains positive relationships with trade unions.	To run staff survey to build upon key drivers for change from 2023/24 survey and engage and support the workforce in To go live with recruitment portal to allow more accessible and efficient recruitment process to be put in place. To review the Staff Performance processes. To set training programme for year to ensure all staff have the skills and knowledge needed to deliver services	Staff survey run by June 2024. Recruitment portal live by end August 2024 % of staff to have completed a Staff Performance Review in 2024/25. % of staff who have participated in the training programme in 2024/25.			50% Monthly pulse surveys implemented in May 2024. Surveys complete for July, August and September in Q2. 100% Recruitment portal now live on council's website 0% Review taking place during Q3 50% Training undertaken during Q1 by staff on set development programmes.

Latest Financial Performance (Budget Variations / Exceptions):

General Fund Major Variances - Period 7 2024-25

Service	Current Budget £000s	Forecast Outturn £000s	Variance £000s	Main Contributing Factors to Variations
Central Services				
Wider Leadership Team	1,027	745	(282)	Net employee costs
Minor Service variances	4	4	0	
Central Services	1,031	749	(282)	
Community				
Paddling Pools	115	163	48	Increased maintenance costs
Pet's Corner	322	370	48	Staffing costs
Community Safety Team	522	547	25	Staffing costs
Minor Service variances	2,181	2,115	(66)	
Total Community	3,140	3,195	55	
Finance				
Insurance Services	426	207	(219)	Cost of increased insurance premiums, partially offset by vacant posts and increased recharges
Housing Benefits	(190)	197	387	Reflects reduced Housing Benefit Admin subsidy and increased temporary and supported accommodation claims not covered by grant income
Minor Service variances	2,000	1,965	(35)	
Total Finance	2,236	2,369	133	
Governance & Corporate Support				
Legal	75	57	(18)	Vacant posts
ICT	101	163	62	Vacant posts, reduced recharges
Members Services	431	609	178	Reflects adoption of revised members allowances scheme and other reduced running expenses
Telephony	(47)	(4)	43	Saving not being achieved due to technical issues that prevented migration of the telephony system on original timescales
Minor Service variances	875	918	43	
Total Governance & Corporate Support	1,435	1,743	308	
Housing GF				
Leah Manning Centre	323	209	(114)	Vacant posts and reduced energy costs
Housing Options and Advice Team	591	837	246	Net increased cost of temporary accommodation
Minor Service variances	828	848	20	
Total Housing General Fund	1,742	1,894	152	
Strategic Growth & Regeneration				
Civic Centre	(16)	(307)	(291)	Reduced business rates, energy and staffing costs
Latton Bush Centre	(357)	(274)	83	Reduced service charges
Planning and Building Control;	884	1,022	138	Increased staffing costs

Environmental Health	958	1,096	138	Increased staffing costs
Refuse & Recycling	2,346	2,045	(301)	Reduced inflation, increased green waste subscriptions and ECC IAA contribution
Street Cleaning	1,355	1,410	55	Cost of emptying litter bins
Garages	(1,945)	(2,028)	(83)	Reduced revenue contributions to capital outlay
The Water Gardens Car Park	(316)	(281)	35	Reduced income
The Harvey Centre	(532)	(683)	(151)	Net increased income
Minor Service variances	1,387	1,302	(85)	
Total Strategic Growth & Regeneration	3,764	3,302	(462)	
Service Specific Variations	13,348	13,252	(96)	Sub-total
Non Service Specific & Funding				
Interest Receivable	(718)	(718)	0	Forecasts to be reviewed alongside budget setting
Interest Payable	340	340	0	Forecasts to be reviewed alongside budget setting
HTS Management	(70)	(60)	10	Forecasts to be reviewed alongside budget setting
Early Retirement	346	296	(50)	Forecasts to be reviewed alongside budget setting
Minimum Revenue Provision	1,737	1,737	0	Forecasts to be reviewed alongside budget setting
Essex Council Tax Sharing Agreement	(500)	(500)	0	Forecasts to be reviewed alongside budget setting
New Homes Bonus Grant	(475)	(475)	0	Finance Settlement Funding 2024/25 - Amount fixed
Contribution to / (from) Reserves	918	918	0	Forecasts to be reviewed alongside budget setting
Collection Fund Deficit / (Surplus)	(2,051)	(2,051)	0	Position will be reviewed following NNDR1 in Autumn
Settlement Funding Assessment (Business Rates Income)	(3,400)	(3,400)	0	Position will be reviewed following NNDR1 in Autumn
Funding Guarantee	(1,011)	(1,011)	0	Finance Settlement Funding 2024/25 - Amount fixed
Service Grant	(22)	(22)	0	Finance Settlement Funding 2024/25 - Amount fixed
Revenue Support Grant	(136)	(136)	0	Finance Settlement Funding 2024/25 - Amount fixed
Council Tax	(8,306)	(8,306)	0	Finance Settlement Funding 2024/25 - Amount fixed
Total Non Service Specific & Funding	(13,348)	(13,388)	(40)	Sub-total
Total General Fund Budget Variations	0	(136)	(136)	

Latest Financial Performance (Budget Variations / Exceptions):

Housing Revenue Account Major Variances - Period 7 (2024-25)

Service	Current Budget £000s	Forecast Adjustments	Forecast Outturn £000s	Variance £000s	Main Contributing Factors to Variations
General Management					
Employee costs	5,192		5,287	95	
Consultancy costs	718		709	(9)	
Legal Costs	265		265	1	
Subscriptions	108		176	68	The projected overspend is due to the newly introduced Housing Regulator Fees and increased fees for the Housing Ombudsman.
HTS Pension charge	758		754	(4)	
Support Costs	5,058		4,808	(251)	Underspend driven mainly by a reduction in Information Technology (£126k), Corporate Management (£57k) and Administration Buildings costs (£56k).
Insurance	1,188		1,247	59	Overspend due to increase in premiums
Recharges from HRA to Capital	(100)		(230)	(130)	Reflects cost of specific posts recharged to the capital programme
Recharge HRA to HRA	(410)		(410)	-	
Recharge from HRA to GF	(480)		(480)	-	
Minor Service Variances	1,359		1,325	(35)	Specific Grants Income (Service Related), Ten Partic. Team Income
Total General Management	13,656	-	13,451	(205)	
Special Management					
Support Costs	692		696	4	
Energy costs	712		712	-	
HTS	5,698		5,698	-	
Multi Storey Flat Blocks	166		274	108	Increased cost of alarm maintenance.
Homelessness	1,483		1,568	85	Increased staffing costs offset by grant income (shown under Charges For Services and Facilities)
Minor Service Variances	728	(40)	728	-	
Total Special Management	9,479	(40)	9,676	197	
Repairs					
Void Security	208		318	110	Reflects ongoing costs associated with the Sycamore Field decanting programme waking watch initiative.
HTS	11,647		11,647	-	
Support Costs	138		138	-	
Net loss of insurance	82		82	-	
Recharge from HRA to GF	(71)		(71)	-	
Minor Service Variances	1,400		1,295	(105)	Tendered Works to Flats budget £55k, Loss of Insurance - Housing R&M £20k and Job Codes Loss of Insurance £20k not being utilised
Total Repairs	13,404	-	13,409	5	
Rent Rates Taxes & Other Charges					
Council Tax - Empty Properties	104		104	-	
Total Rent Rates Taxes & Other Charges	104	-	104	-	
Provision for Bad & Doubtful Debts					
Provision for Bad/Doubtful Debts	443		443	-	
Bad Debt Provision other HRA non rent	-		-	-	
Total Provision for Bad & Doubtful Debts	443	-	443	-	
Depreciation & Impairment					
Depreciation & Impairment	13,721		13,721	-	
Total Depreciation & Impairment	13,721	-	13,721	-	
Debt Management					
Minor Service Variances	7		8	1	
Total Debt Management	7	-	8	1	
Supporting People Transitional Arrangements					
Minor Service Variances	1		1	-	
Total Supporting People Transitional Arrangements	1	-	1	-	

Latest Financial Performance (Budget Variations / Exceptions):

Housing Revenue Account Major Variances - Period 7 (2024-25)

Interest Charges					
Interest Charges	8,455		8,155	(300)	Following the recent announcement by the new Government that LAs can use 100% of retained RTB receipts to fund their new builds programme (previously 50%) there will be no need to borrow the other 50% in 24/25 (and 25/26) hence the forecast reduction in the cost of borrowing.
Total Interest Charges	8,455	-	8,155	(300)	
Revenue Contribution to Capital Expenditure					
Capital expenditure charges to revenue	-		-	-	
Total Revenue Contribution to Capital Expenditure	-	-	-	-	
Dwelling Rents					
Dwelling rents	(52,604)	(115)	(52,751)	(147)	Due to the decanting of both Sycamore Field and The Wayre, these buildings are no longer able to be re-let as residential properties therefore, whilst they will remain on Housings Asset Register we will not be receiving any rental income from these units, and therefore this will have an impact on the rental income levels expected.
Void Loss	667	45	817	151	
Total Dwelling Rents	(51,937)	(70)	(51,933)	4	
Garage Rents					
Garage rents	(2,531)	42	(2,393)	138	
Void Loss	1,457	10	1,371	(86)	
Total Garage Rents	(1,074)	52	(1,022)	52	
Other Rents					
Other rents	(80)		(138)	(58)	
Total Other Rents	(80)	-	(138)	(58)	
Charges for Services & Facilities					
Recharges to tenants	-		-	-	Increased grant income to offset staffing costs (shown under Special Management)
Grant income	(66)		(155)	(89)	
R&M income	(867)		(867)	-	
L/H Service Charges	(1,928)		(1,928)	-	
Tenant Service Charges	(1,510)		(1,510)	-	
Special Services	(255)		(255)	-	
Recharge from HRA to GF	(732)		(732)	-	
Minor Service Variances	(1,079)		(1,086)	(7)	
Total Charges for Services & Facilities	(6,437)	-	(6,533)	(96)	
Investment Income					
Investment Income	(407)		(407)	-	
Total Investment Income	(407)	-	(407)	-	
Total Housing Revenue Account Budget Variations	(664)	(59)	(1,064)	(400)	

Latest Financial Performance (Budget Variations / Exceptions):

Non Housing Capital programme Major Variances - Period 7 2024-25

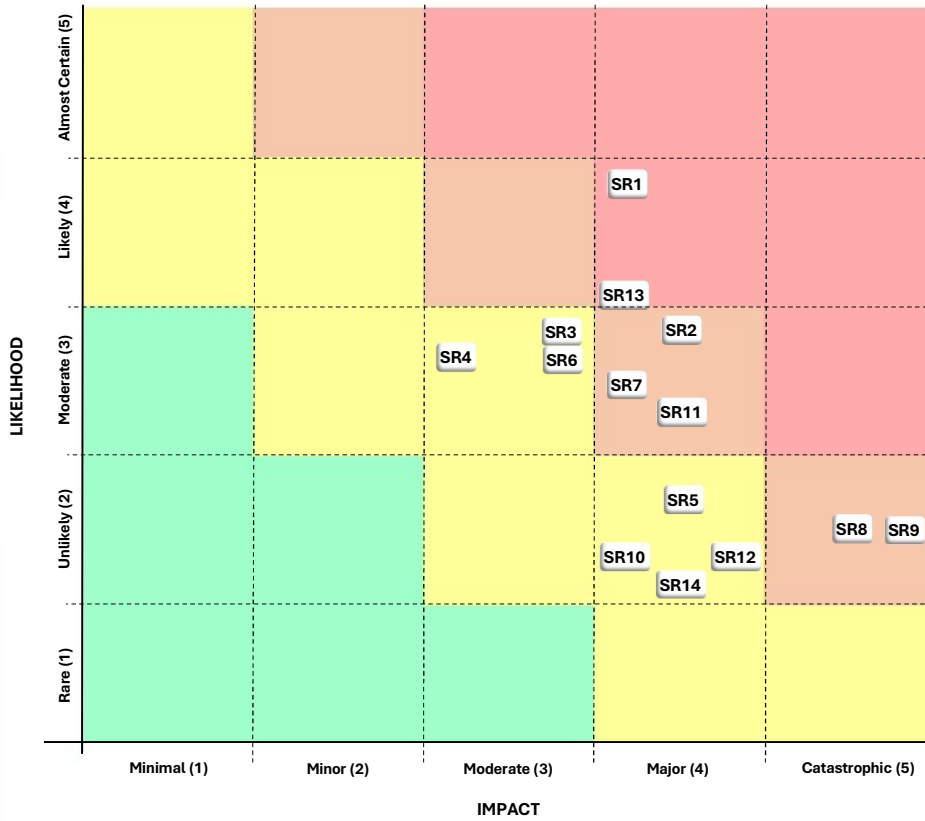
Service	Current Budget £000s	Forecast Outturn £000s	Variance £000s	Main Contributing Factors to Variations
Asset Management				
Latton Bush Centre	1,683	1,632	-51	Forecast cost of project less than expected
Commercial Properties:				
Bush Fair Pavilion	65	65	0	No variances to report
Nexus-EV chargepoints	10	9	(1)	Forecast cost of project
Ladyshot Sports Pavilion	154	10	(144)	Forecast cost of project
Bush House Offices	25	35	10	Forecast cost of project
Bush House structural and roofing works	0	23	23	Forecast cost of project
2 & 2A Wych Elm boiler replacement	15	15	0	No variances to report
Katherines Hatch roofing	120	242	122	Forecast cost of project
Slacksbury Hatch roofing	165	272	107	Forecast cost of project
Other schemes	646	646	0	No variances to report
Highways & Car Parks				
Wych Elm Car Park	30	0	(30)	Forecast cost of project
Other schemes	367	367	0	No variances to report
Drainage Works	215	55	(160)	REPROFILE REQUESTED for 25/26. Reflects unforeseen additional ecology surveys being required to satisfy Environment Agency requirements
Community Buildings:				
Harlow Museum	100	100	0	No variances to report
Ladyshot Sports Pavilion	20	0	(20)	Forecast cost of project
Other schemes	324	324	0	No variances to report
Other Public Schemes:				
Resource Management	200	100	(100)	Forecast cost of project
PV Panels	226	0	(226)	REPROFILE REQUESTED for 25/26.
Other schemes	343	343	0	No variances to report
Civic Centre:				
Boiler replacement	100	100	0	No variances to report
Other schemes	1,529	1,529	0	No variances to report
Garages	197	197	0	No variances to report
Contingency	50	50	0	No variances to report
Total Asset Management	6,584	6,114	-470	
Community				
Potter Steet Splash park	25	37	12	Forecast cost of project
Playhouse	428	379	-49	£317,870 REPROFILE REQUESTED FOR 25/26. Whilst it is anticipated some work will take place before year end however due to delays in appointment of contractors and specialist suppliers a carry over request is being requested
Other schemes	422	422	0	No variances to report

Total	875	838	-37	
Governance and Corporate Services				
Webcasting	0	119	119	Forecast cost of project
Other schemes	210	210	0	No variances to report
Total	210	329	119	
Strategic Growth & Regeneration				
The Harvey Centre	783	693	-90	REPROFILE REQUESTED for 25/26, Reflects proposed realignment of several tenants however based on current contractor timescales the bulk of the work will now not place until next year
Other schemes	1,363	1,364	1	Forecast cost of project
Total Strategic Growth & Regeneration	2,146	2,057	-89	
Other Schemes				
Innovation Park	1,906	1,906	0	No variances to report
Levelling Up Fund	9,820	1,093	-8,727	REPROFILE REQUESTED for 25/26 due to minor delays to stage 3 designs and decisions on procurement route meaning spend will take place in new financial year
Town Centre	5,000	5,000	0	No variances to report
Towns Fund	15,643	11,712	-3,931	REPROFILE REQUESTED for 25/26 due to minor delays in stage 4 designs meaning spend will take place in new financial year
Total Other Schemes	32,369	19,711	-12,658	
New Build				
New Builds	150	100	-50	REPROFILE INTO 25/26
Total New Build	150	100	-50	
Total Non Housing Capital Programme Budget Variations	42,334	29,149	(13,185)	
Projects to be reprofiled			(13,502)	Projects identified to be deferred to 2025/26
Projects require Budget Allocation			0	Various projects require a budget allocation to be instated. These 0 projects are all financed with Grant funding and is not an increase to the overall financing of the programme.
Forecasted Favourable Variance			317	True identified favourable variance for period 7.
			(13,185)	

Latest Financial Performance (Budget Variations / Exceptions):				
Housing Capital programme Major Variances - Period 7 2024-25				
Service	Current Budget £000s	Forecast Outturn £000s	Variance £000s	Main Contributing Factors to Variations
HTS				
ASC	1,139	1,257	118	Inflationary uplift realignment
Compliance	1,263	1,263	0	No variances to report
Internal Works	2,616	2,616	0	No variances to report
Garages	301	301	0	No variances to report
Summers Farm Close	479	479	0	No variances to report
Total HTS	5,798	5,916	118	
External Works				
Roofing Programme	2,986	2,986	0	No variances to report
Other External Works	8,014	8,014	0	All Other External Works are on track and are reporting no variances
Total External Works	11,000	11,000	0	
Damp & Structural Works				
Damp	764	764	0	No variances to report
Structural	1,000	1,000	0	No variances to report
Total Damp & Structural Works	1,764	1,764	0	
Other Works				
Other Works	8,700	8,700	0	No variances to report
Total Other Works	8,700	8,700	0	
Fire Safety & Compliance				
Fire Safety & Compliance	7,633	7,633	0	No variances to report
Total Fire Safety & Compliance	7,633	7,633	0	
Energy Efficiency Works				
Energy Efficiency Works	975	975	0	No variances to report
Total Energy Efficiency Works	975	975	0	
Housing IT				
Housing IT	305	305	0	No variances to report
Total Housing IT	305	305	0	
Garage Demolition Programme				
Garage Demolition Programme	1,351	1,351	0	No variances to report
Total Garage Demolition Programme	1,351	1,351	0	
Total Core Programme	37,526	37,644	118	Sub-total
Property Acquisitions				
Property Acquisitions	926	926	0	No variances to report
Total Property Acquisitions	926	926	0	Sub-total
New Builds				
New Builds	7,800	14,635	6,835	£675k REPROFILE REQUESTED for 25/26 + £7.510m REPROFILE BROUGHT FORWARD AS PROGRAMME BEING DELIVERED FASTER THAN ANTICIPATED
Total New Builds	7,800	14,635	6,835	
Total New Builds Programme	7,800	14,635	6,835	Sub-total

Total Housing Capital Programme Budget Variations	46,252	53,205	6,953
Projects to be reprofiled			6,835 Projects identified to be reprofiled
Projects require Budget Allocation			0 Various projects require a budget allocation to be instated. These projects are all financed with use of capital receipts and is not an increase to the overall financing of the programme.
Forecasted Favourable Variance			118 True identified favourable variance for Period 7
			<u>6,953</u>

STRATEGIC RISK DASHBOARD



RISK NAME	SCORE	RATING	
SR1 Adequate Housing	16	VERY HIGH	➔
SR2 Climate Change	12	HIGH	➔
SR3 Infrastructure	9	MEDIUM	➔
SR4 Economic growth	9	MEDIUM	➔
SR5 Safeguarding the Vulnerable	8	MEDIUM	➔
SR6 Business Continuity	9	MEDIUM	➔
SR7 Contracts and Partnership management	12	HIGH	➔
SR8 Corporate Health and Safety	10	HIGH	➔
SR9 Cyber Resilience	10	HIGH	➔
SR10 Data Protection	8	MEDIUM	➔
SR11 Financial Resilience	12	HIGH	➔
SR12 Corporate Governance	8	MEDIUM	➔
SR13 Resource Capacity	16	VERY HIGH	➔
SR14 Local Authority Function	8	MEDIUM	➔

HARLOW DISTRICT COUNCIL STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

Risk No.	Corporate Mission	Risk Name and Description	Risk Owner	Portfolio Holder Owner	Inherent Score (Before Controls)			Controls	Residual Risk (Nov 2024)			Direction of Travel	Additional Actions	Last Updated/Comments
					Likelihood	Impact	Score		Likelihood	Impact	Score			
SR1	Transform Harlow's Housing	Adequate Housing - If there is not sufficient and adequate Housing provided the town will not be able to fulfil housing needs.	Assistant Director - People	Housing	3	3	MEDIUM	Regulatory Board "governance" determine priorities and monitor outcomes. Allocations and Homelessness Strategies- Partnership Resources prioritised. Affordable Housing Strategy-Affordability and need. Sub Regional Strategy (influence and actively seek partnership opportunities with other housing providers)- Active part in devolution discussions. Housing regulatory Plan-Enhanced performance management, and reporting. HRA Business Plan approved by Cabinet - use of resources, delivery plans, and regulatory requirement. Supported Housing Five Year Plan-aligning to government priorities and resources.	4	4	VERY HIGH	➔	Deliver Council House Build Programme; Rent setting 2024/25 Q4; Implement actions agreed with the housing regulator.	No Change
SR2	Renew our Neighbourhoods	Climate Change - If the council does not lead on carbon emissions reduction, then it is unlikely to meet its carbon net zero target of 2040	Assistant Director - Planning and Environment	Environment and Sustainability	3	4	HIGH	PV panel project on council-owned buildings. EV charging points installed and opportunity for more being pursued. Landscape policy to be developed to identify biodiversity areas. Work in partnership with local and national organisations to share research, information, and best practice. Attend the appropriate conferences, training events and webinars. Keep abreast of best practice and new initiatives. Ensure opportunities for retrofit of the housing stock are pursued. Education events for SME to be hosted via the Business Forum (Harlow Council are organisers).	3	4	HIGH	➔	Consult on Climate Change Strategy. Develop Tree Strategy. Climate Change officer to be recruited to drive development of strategy and action plan. Use information from IBEX report to guide action planning. Use expert consultants when specialist knowledge is required. Delivering training to staff and councillors. Advice to be made available via various channels. Work with Veolia to increase recycling rates. Ensure opportunities for retrofit of the housing stock continue to be pursued.	No Change
SR3	Rebuild our Town	Infrastructure - If we do not have sufficient and adequate infrastructure, then the town will not achieve its growth potential or risks being adversely impacted by growth in surrounding Districts.	Assistant Director - Regeneration and Commercial Development	Leader	3	4	HIGH	Development of Rolling Infrastructure Fund, Up to date Local Plan, Development of Innovation Park and Enterprise, Zones, Affordable Housing Strategy, Town Centre Master Plan, Harlow Investment Fund, Neighbourhood Renewal Plan. Established Joint Committee between HGGT Partners	3	3	MEDIUM	➔	Development of Sustainable, Transport Corridor network, River Stort Crossings, Agreement of S106 package for Gilston development to include infrastructure investment in Harlow.	No Change
SR4	Secure Investment for Harlow's Future	Economic growth - If we fail to attract amenities, investment and skills, then the town will not achieve its economic growth potential	Assistant Director - Planning and Environment	Garden Town and Planning	3	4	HIGH	Economic Development Strategy, Community Resilience Strategy. Levelling Up (Essex CC) has identified skills and also education as a priority for Harlow. Levelling up (govt) have invested funding into Harlow Town Centre. Acquisition of Harvey Centre, allowing the Council to have influence over its future (within LUF scheme delivery) and regeneration of the town centre.	3	3	MEDIUM	➔	Delivery of schemes under the Levelling Up and Towns Fund programmes and Harlow Regeneration Partnership. Development of a "Prospectus" to market investment opportunities within the town centre and attendance of UKREIif in May 2024 to further promote these.	No Change
SR5	Protect our Communities	Safeguarding the Vulnerable - If we fail to follow our internal policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding vulnerable adults and children then their welfare may suffer.	Assistant Director - Community Resilience	Community and Wellbeing	2	4	MEDIUM	safeguarding mandatory training in place. Job specific checks identified and centrally carried out and monitored. Active participant in Essex safeguarding board. Joint working with partners via Safer Harlow Partnership to identify possible causes of safeguarding issues and ensure joined up working to tackle this.	2	4	MEDIUM	➔	Bi-annual Essex Child and Adult Safeguarding Board audits. Updated in-house training module.	No Change
SR6	Deliver High-Performing Council Services	Business Continuity - If the Council does not have adequate Business Continuity arrangements, then it may struggle to recover from events which prevent it delivering normal levels of service.	Assistant Director - Corporate Services	Corporate Services and Transformation	5	4	VERY HIGH	Emergency Planning severe weather plan Multi-agency working structures tested via ERF exercises on annual basis. Business Continuity Plans including Disaster Recovery reviewed regularly, partner business Continuity Plans in place for key services such as HTS Group and Veolia. New ways of working allow flexibility for workforce. Relevant insurance Policies in place. BC test took place in February 2024	3	3	MEDIUM	➔	Annual reviews of service level plans in 2024/25. Repeat testing in 2024/25	No Change

HARLOW DISTRICT COUNCIL STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

Risk No.	Corporate Mission	Risk Name and Description	Risk Owner	Portfolio Holder Owner	Inherent Score (Before Controls)			Controls	Residual Risk (Nov 2024)			Direction of Travel	Additional Actions	Last Updated/Comments
					Likelihood	Impact	Score		Likelihood	Impact	Score			
SR7	Deliver High-Performing Council Services	Contracts and Partnership management - If suppliers are unable to provide contracted services, then Harlow Council may not be able to comply with its statutory, regulatory, and strategic, service delivery obligations, resulting in reputational and financial adverse impacts.	Assistant Director - Governance, HR and Legal	Corporate Services and Transformation	3	4	HIGH	Legal contractual arrangements used to seek performance/other bonds and guarantees. HTS Group Ltd Business Plan approved that aims to deliver a framework to move the group forward to improve performance and access new commercial opportunities that would increase the return to taxpayers. HTS contract performance monitoring, Waste contract performance monitoring arrangements in place. HTS Group Ltd Business Plan. Due diligence processes during procurement.	3	4	HIGH	➔	Implement New measures under procurement reforms	No Change
SR8	Deliver High-Performing Council Services	Corporate Health and Safety - If we fail to ensure effective arrangements are in place for Health and Safety then damage to property or harm to staff or members of the public could occur	Assistant Director - Planning and Environment	Corporate Services and Transformation	2	5	HIGH	Overview of Quarterly H&S group meetings, chaired at director level. H&S audit of services carried out on cyclical basis. Corporate Compliance monitoring in place for all building services. Corporate H&S governance arrangements and policies are regularly reviewed and updated by the Corporate H&S Team. Corporate H&S Training provided. H&S performance monitored by accident and incident reports.	2	5	HIGH	➔	Review controls for health surveillance 2024/25	No Change
SR9	Deliver High-Performing Council Services	Cyber Resilience - If the Council does not have adequate protection in respect of the technology it uses, then it may suffer business interruption and a loss of productivity and service provision to residents.	Assistant Director - Corporate Services	Corporate Services and Transformation	4	5	VERY HIGH	Disaster Recovery plans, IT Maintenance and security testing (preventative measures), IT service contracts for delivery of patches where vulnerabilities are identified BC exercise for power failures undertaken in December 2022. Phishing exercises and cyber training delivered in 2023. New cloud based VPN in place and migration to this commenced	2	5	HIGH	➔	Cloud migration plans – completion of migration to new VPN, cloud environment build and data migration programmed.	No Change
SR10	Deliver High-Performing Council Services	Data Protection - If we do not comply with Data Protection legislation we may receive fines from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and litigation challenges to decisions made	Assistant Director - Governance, HR and Legal	Corporate Services and Transformation	4	4	VERY HIGH	Annual assurance statements cover information governance strategies and controls in place. DPO in place. Data protection training provided to all staff.	2	4	MEDIUM	➔	Deliver internal training during 2024/25	No Change
SR11	Deliver High-Performing Council Services	Financial Resilience - If a sustainable budget is not secured, then the Council will lack financial resilience	Assistant Director - Finance	Finance	4	4	VERY HIGH	Monthly budget monitoring; Performance, Finance & Risk report is regularly reported to cabinet; Risk assesment of minimum level of reserves is carried out yearly through the budget setting process. Budget stabilisation reserve created to smooth out budget pressures. Budget challenges processes in place. Budget planning guidelines for officers; Scenario planning underway for the budget setting process.	3	4	HIGH	➔	Review MTFP forecasting throughout the budget setting cycle.	No Change
SR12	Deliver High-Performing Council Services	Corporate Governance - If appropriate governance is not provided via management structures and monitoring mechanisms then statutory services and corporate priorities will not be delivered	Monitoring Officer	Corporate Services and Transformation	2	4	MEDIUM	Clear and robust control framework including: constitution, scheme of delegation. Clear accountability and resource for corporate governance. Integrated budget, performance and risk reporting framework. Training and development resource targeted to address priority issues; examples include GDPR, safeguarding etc. Annual governance statement.	2	4	MEDIUM	➔	Complete annual assurance statements 2024/25.	No Change

HARLOW DISTRICT COUNCIL STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

Risk No.	Corporate Mission	Risk Name and Description	Risk Owner	Portfolio Holder Owner	Inherent Score (Before Controls)			Controls	Residual Risk (Nov 2024)			Direction of Travel	Additional Actions	Last Updated/Comments
					Likelihood	Impact	Score		Likelihood	Impact	Score			
SR13	Deliver High-Performing Council Services	Resource Capacity - If the council does not have the appropriate resources to match the delivery requirements, it can not deliver its priorities	Assistant Director - Governance, HR and Legal	Corporate Services and Transformation	3	4	HIGH	Resourced People and Resource Plan that recognises and supports the councils delivery plans, Continued engagement with staff and trade unions Hybrid working and policy	4	4	VERY HIGH	➔	Skills gap mapping and action plan. Implement a development and talent spotting programme across whole council to feed into succession planning. Monthly Staff Surveying to inform future workforce strategies. Senior Leadership Team restructure to address current changes in management	No Change
SR14	Deliver High-Performing Council Services	Local Authority Function - If we fail to meet statutory obligations and policy and legislative changes are not anticipated or planned for then we will be subject to legal and financial penalty	Statutory Officers	Corporate Services and Transformation	3	4	HIGH	Horizon scanning mechanisms in place. Scrutiny and audit committee forward plans set annually to allow robust member oversight. Use of local and national networks to ensure engagement and influence on specialist policy issues e.g. procurement, oflog, ombudsman process. Project boards in place for key corporate projects e.g. land charges centralisation.	2	4	MEDIUM	➔	Annual Accounts to be published in December	Updated 28/11/24

Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2024/25

Work	Tuesday 9 July 2024	Tuesday 3 September 2024	Tuesday 15 October 2024	Tuesday 3 December 2024	Tuesday 4 February 2025	Tuesday 4 March 2025	2025
Budget Monitoring and Performance		Report		Report	Report		
Budget 2025/26					Report		
Debt Write Offs	Report						
Council Tax Support Scheme		Report					
HGGT							Report
HTS							Report
Awaab's Law (Housing)						Report	
Housing Disrepair						Report	
Homelessness			Report		Report		

and Rough Sleeping Strategy							
Essex Police			Q&A	Clear, Hold, Build			
Health							Q&A
Support for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Harassment						Report	
Burnt Mill Development							Review
Sports Facilities and Play Pitches							
Climate Task and Finish Group	Terms of Reference	Update	Update	Update	Update	Update	
Playhouse Arts and Cultural Quarter Task and Finish Group	Terms of Reference	Update	Update	Update	Update	Update	

**MINUTES OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE TASK AND FINISH GROUP
HELD ON**

21 November 2024

6.00 - 6.56 pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Michael Garnett
Councillor Kay Morrison
Councillor Russell Perrin
Councillor Stacy Seales
Councillor Jake Shepherd

Officers

Vicky Forgione, Principal Forward Planning Officer
Adam Rees, Senior Governance Support Officer
Tanusha Waters, Assistant Director - Planning and Building Control

6. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

7. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

8. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

Both Councillors Russell Perrin and Jake Shepherd were nominated to be Chair. Upon being put to the vote, both received two votes. It was agreed that who would Chair the Task and Finish Group would be discussed outside of the meeting.

This meeting would be chaired by Tanusha Waters, Assistant Director – Planning and Building Control.

9. **NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

Noted.

10. **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CLIMATE CHANGE TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

RESOLVED that the terms of reference be agreed as recommended by the Scrutiny Committee.

11. **CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY CONSULTATION**

Councillor Stacy Seales entered the meeting.

Vicky Forgione, Principal Forward Planning Officer gave a presentation on the Climate Change Strategy. A copy of the presentation is appended to the minutes.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

12. **PRODUCTION OF TRACKER OF EXISTING ACTIVITIES/PROJECTS**

Vicky Forgione gave a presentation on the actions tracker. A copy of the presentation is appended to the minutes.

It was explained that the tracker would be considered at the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

13. **ACTIONS AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Meetings would be scheduled for both January and February.

The January meeting would consider the high level recommendations to be made at Cabinet, the results of the consultation and results from the Climate Change scorecard.

The tracker update would be included as a standing item.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE PLAYHOUSE, ARTS AND CULTURAL QUARTER TASK
AND FINISH GROUP
HELD ON**

14 November 2024

7.00pm – 8.35pm

PRESENT

Committee Members

Councillor Tony Durcan (Chair)

Councillor Tony Edwards

Councillor James Griggs

Councillor Matthew Siggers

Officers

Rory Davies, Playhouse Director

Oliver Gillard, Deputy Programme Manager

Nicole Parker, Corporate Support Officer

David Sellings, Regeneration Programme Manager (Town Centre)

Benjamin Simanowitz, Local Government Graduate Programme

Suzanna Wood, Housing Development and Regeneration Manager

Other Attendees

Andrew Murdoch, Director of TTP Consulting

Tom Willcox, Counter Culture

6. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

7. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Matthew Siggers declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7 as his son is a Harlow Youth Councillor.

8. **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes from the previous meeting held on 21 August 2024 were noted.

9. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Councillor Siggers noted that in the terms of reference, it needs to be noted that this is a sub-committee in which will report its findings to the Scrutiny Committee. This would adhere to the Local Government Act 2010. Councillor Siggers and Councillor Tony Edwards can liaise on the terms of reference to ensure they are fully correct.

10. **COUNTER CULTURE - BUSINESS MODELLING FOR BLOCK E**

Tom Willcox – Counter Culture, presented a presentation on the business modelling for Block E. The presentation slides would be distributed after the meeting by Rory Davies, Playhouse Director.

Councillor Tony Durcan had asked Rory Davies if he felt the Playhouse’s benchmarks were similar to those in the presentation, Rory Davies advised he did feel they were.

The stakeholders in the report had been consulted. Rory Davies had also spoken to other stakeholders who were interested in what the Playhouse could offer them. Rory Davies asked the panel to send him other potential stakeholders or groups in which they feel could benefit from consultation.

Councillor Durcan had asked if funding models had been explored as well as financial models. Tom Willcox advised that the report could include something on this.

Tom Willcox advised that the full report would be sent in a few weeks to scrutinise the three-year financial model predictions. This would be added to the agenda on the next meeting for discussion and review and for him to come back to the meeting with the relevant Cabinet member for discussion.

11. **VEHICLE TRACKING UPDATE - TTP - SCHEME VEHICLE CONSULTANTS**

Andrew Murdoch, Director of TTP Consulting, presented an update and presentation on vehicle tracking for the Harlow theatre.

He asked the panel to send him a list of any additional questions.

The Panel wanted clarity required on how vehicles would move safely in the area and the implications. Andrew Murdoch said he would send a comprehensive list to the panel which could be reviewed at the next meeting.

David Sellings - Regeneration Programme Manager (Town Centre), advised Councillor James Griggs, he would send him updated details on the plans included within the plans.

Following the meeting additional tracking had been undertaken and the panel was emailed the information.

12. **CULTURAL STRATEGY PRESENTATION**

Suzanna Wood - Regeneration Programme Manager (PMO), gave a presentation on the Harlow Cultural Strategy.

David Sellings noted to the Committee that this strategy was for the whole town, not just the arts and cultural quarter, and aimed to secure future funding. It would be monitored and updated over time.

Interviews had been taking place consulting groups across the town by groups for feedback, and these were being held by Benjamin Simanowitz – Local Government Graduate Programme and the team. Councillor Griggs had asked who had made the interview selection and who had been interviewed. Suzanna Wood advised the list was extensive and was happy to share this with Councillor Griggs and would be happy to take on any recommendations on other people/groups to be interviewed for their feedback.

Councillor Durcan noted that there is no need to bring this back to the panel for discussion in the future, as this piece is separate to the works of this panel and would need to be in place regardless for shaping future funding across the whole of the town.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE