

**Harlow Council:
Working Together for Harlow
Corporate Plan 2021**

HARLOW



**Harlow Council
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www.harlow.gov.uk**

Harlow
Council
Working together for Harlow

Leader of the Council



Mark Ingall
Leader of the Council

What a challenging year 2020 has been.

As a town we have faced unprecedented difficulties throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Its impact has affected, and continues to affect, all our lives and the services which we as a council provide.

As a result, this latest update to the Corporate Plan will be a little different. Our vision, priorities and goals will of course continue to be worked towards, but we must acknowledge the challenges we will face in meeting them in the short and medium term. These challenges are set out in this plan and will form the basis for an action plan which we will work through to deal with them.

This plan also looks at what we have already done and what we will build on in future years. Despite the extraordinary circumstances in which we find ourselves, Harlow Council continues to deliver a wide range of services to residents, and also continue to improve those services and enhance what we do for Harlow. Sound financial management means we can do all this while living within our means. We are still investing money into things that are important to our town and that will support our residents and businesses during the pandemic and as we recover. We pledge to maintain this tight control on our finances at a time when we face ongoing economic uncertainty.

We will not be complacent. As a community leader we are determined to keep improving, keep doing things differently and better and do what is right for the people and businesses of Harlow. Our decisions are driven by our values and priorities, with fairness and equality at the heart of everything.

Harlow is a great place. We are determined that as it grows Harlow will remain a great place and continue to be a town that delivers for all. Despite all the challenges we face, we will keep doing what we can to keep Harlow working and our communities supported, each and every day.

Chief Executive



Brian Keane
Chief Executive of the Council

I always say that our best asset is our people, and this year has really put that into focus.

As we have all been forced to adapt to a new way of working brought about by coronavirus, and the new challenges that have come with it, I am extremely proud at how our staff have all risen up to the task of keeping our services going and focusing on supporting our residents and businesses.

Harlow like all other towns in the country has been hit both economically and as a community as a result of the pandemic. Therefore it is so important, now more than ever, that we continue to work as community leaders, and as a partner among many other organisations, working for the benefit of our town.

The pressure on councils to do more with less resources remains, and we will reprioritise those resources on supporting our town through the pandemic and supporting our town in its recovery. Although life is a little different at the moment, we are not letting this stop our ambitions for the future. We will continue to protect the services we provide and to make sure they are safe in the world we are currently living in. We will also continue to look at ways we can enhance our services without cutting what we do or cutting jobs. This is the very opposite to what many other councils will be doing.

Throughout this year we will continue to consider the threats and opportunities that we face from the pandemic as we work to remain focussed on our priorities. The opportunities laid out in this corporate plan can only be met by everyone working together and we all have our individual roles to play.

I know that, thanks to the hard work that all our staff put in every day no matter the circumstances, we can continue making a difference to our town.

Introduction

In 2020, we published our Corporate Plan for 2020-2021. The purpose of this update is to reaffirm our commitment to our Corporate Priorities, Principles and Goals for 2021-2022, whilst recognising and responding to the Covid 19 Pandemic, changes to legislation, government priorities and opportunities to implement innovation.

For 2021, we have decided not included a 'delivery plan' due to the rapidly changing environment the Council has to work in as a result of Covid 19. Instead, we will report and publish our achievements and performance against our goals through Cabinet and our quarterly Joint Finance Performance Reports (JFPR).

Our Corporate Plan is a central component of the Council's business planning and is underpinned by a series of strategies and plans linking key elements such as the Medium Term Financial Strategy, strategic and operational activities (service and team planning), PPPs, governance, and performance management. The Plan will be reviewed and updated annually.

The Corporate Plan forms the "golden thread" that ensures that everyone in the Council is working towards the same goals; and that corporate priorities, principles are achieved. This will be accomplished through the Council's 'business planning process', for the remaining two quarters of 2020/21 (January and March 2021), where officers will compile their Service Plans for the next financial year (2021/22)

Performance Management Framework

To ensure the Council remains on target, it is essential to monitor the progress of our priorities, principles, and goals. This is done through the Council's Performance Management Framework, which sets out the mechanisms and the range of tool utilised by Officers and Councillors in gathering and reporting the Council's quarterly performance service milestones and performance indicators.

The Council publishes a statement of its performance each quarter. These reports includes information on the milestones, performance indicators and the Council's finances. The Performance reports are presented to Cabinet and when agreed are published here.

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

Council Values

The Council strives to be an organisation where people make things happen and promote excellence, good customer service and continuous improvement. We want to ensure that all staff are consistently aware of how their role contributes to the achievement of corporate priorities and principles, are clear about what is expected and share the Council's values. The Council is committed to promoting equality, challenging discrimination and developing community cohesion.

The Council's values are:

- Integrity** Clear, meaningful and honest two way communication with staff, customers and partners.
- Value People** Treating everyone fairly, equally and with mutual respect. Investing in staff, recognising individual and team contributions to achieve success.
- Inspirational** Support and encourage accountability, creativity and innovation amongst our staff, key stakeholders and partners.

Council Priorities

In 2020, Cabinet agreed the following six priorities and three principles for the next two years.

-  **Resilience and recovery**
-  **More and better housing**
-  **Regeneration and a thriving economy**
-  **Wellbeing and social inclusion**
-  **A clean and green environment**
-  **Successful children and young people**

Council Principles

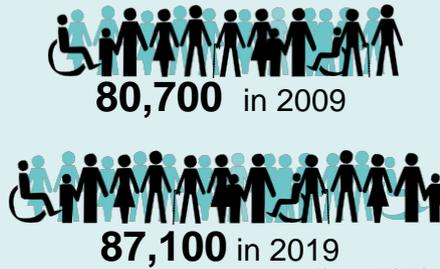
- Being the Community Leader**
- Sound Resource Management**
- Equalities and Fairness**

Harlow in Numbers

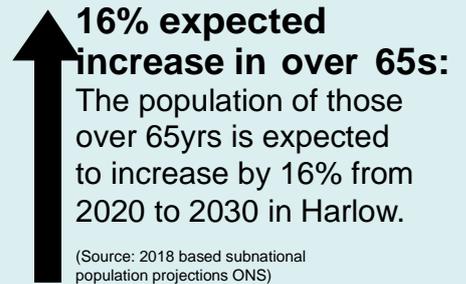
Our Community:



(Source: NOMIS December 2020)



(Source: NOMIS December 2020)



(Source: 2018 based subnational population projections ONS)

Housing:



(Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, table 100, updated May 2020)



(Source: England.shelter.org.uk Jan 19)

3,118 new homes built from 2011/12 - 2019/20

(Source: Harlow Council Planning Services December 2020)

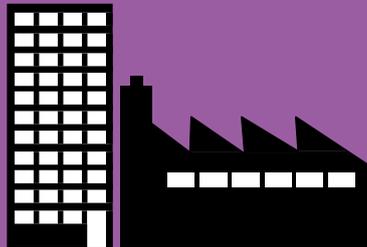


(Source: Hometrack December 2020)

Local Economy:

Number of enterprises
2020 = **3,150**
2018 = **2,875**
increase of 275 enterprises between 2018 and 2020

(Source: NOMIS December 2020)



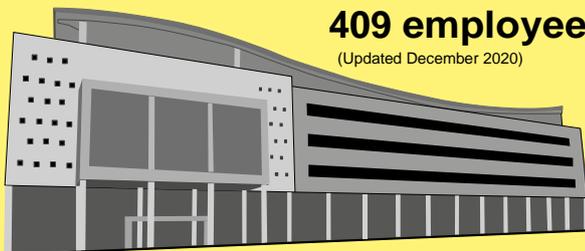
Environment:



49% of land is green space and **51%** is all other land (including built development and residential gardens.)

(Source: Harlow Local Development Plan, adopted December 2020.)

The Council:



Harlow Council has **409 employees**
(Updated December 2020)

Harlow Council has **33 Councillor Seats**

- Labour: 19
- Conservative: 12 (2 vacancy)



Annual Budget (NET) 2019/20 **£9.963 million** March 2020

Housing Revenue Account Budgeted Expenditure **£52.853 million** March 2020

Our Vision: Working Together for Harlow

Being the Community Leader



Whilst we are facing the challenges of operating differently and in innovative ways, we will continue to take a leading role in promoting the needs of Harlow and its residents.

In December we took the decision to proceed to the construction phase of more Council homes for this year which we know is important to our residents and we will continue to invest in Housing.

We will continue to work to meet those needs, to the limits of which we are able during this pandemic, to represent the community and provide high quality services through our staff, often working remotely.

This includes new ways of providing responsive services online for residents and providing absolute transparency in our decision making by having meetings online with public participation ensuring that as a council, we do what is right for our town.

We will ensure that our residents are able to access information through our communication channels in a clear and easy format that meets their needs.

I recognise the impact that businesses have in Harlow and will make sure we procure goods and services from companies that do things the right way.

Above all else, we will continue to work hard to ensure Harlow is a great place to live and work for the whole community.

Councillor Mark Ingall - Leader of Council

Our Goals

- Promote the needs of Harlow.
- Maintain the Council's role as the recognised community leader.
- Improve opportunities for Harlow residents to participate in local democracy and decision making.
- Ensure we are meeting our statutory and regulatory duties.
- Improve communication with the public through the Community Engagement Strategy.
- Increase transparency through Joint Finance Performance Reports (JFPR), the Procurement Strategy, Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR).
- Ensure the Council's procurement framework supports ethical businesses.

Recovery and Resilience



As the Town faces unprecedented times and its biggest health challenge in generations, the Council has taken the step of appointing me as a Cabinet member to focus solely on the Council's response to the Pandemic and to prepare an action plan that ensures we learn from the crisis and emerge from it stronger.

We have set ourselves a vision for the Recovery of Harlow:

"To harness the positive aspects of the community response to the Covid-19 crisis and address the

negative outcomes such that the Harlow that emerges - its residents, businesses and voluntary groups – is stronger, more resilient and poised to take full strategic advantage of the opportunities for growth and renewal.”

I am supported in my role by a cross-party working group of Councillors meeting monthly to guide our work to mitigate the effect of the pandemic on the community and businesses within our town. I am sure that our residents agree that this is a time for collaboration not division and on that basis, I thank all Members for their constructive participation.

The Council has, in its own operations, faced many challenges in order that we continue to deliver vital services to residents and businesses. We will keep these under constant review as needs and circumstances change, always with the goal of supporting you as best we can.

Our Goals, set out below, are those the Council has agreed to meet the future challenges and will steer our decision on recovery on:

- businesses and the economy
- the Voluntary Sector
- the Faith sector on Social Cohesion
- the social impact on the town’s residents as a whole and support required
- Housing, including social housing, homelessness, and private landlords
- those using accessing existing or temporary benefits

This is the greatest challenge faced by the town and the Council. Our Goals seek to secure the best possible socio-economic recovery measures and opportunities, regeneration, and infrastructure improvement outcomes for the town.

Councillor Eugenie Harvey – Deputy Leader of Council and Portfolio Holder for Recovery and Resilience

Our Goals:

- Promoting within everything that it does for the recovery of the town, the strategic priorities of its Corporate Plan
- Managing and recording Harlow Council’s recovery response to the COVID-19 pandemic to meet its priorities as a community leader and fulfil the requirements as a local authority under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to “take the lead in facilitating the rehabilitation of the community and the restoration of the environment.”
- Seeking to remove the barriers that keep people beyond the reach of employment, services, jobs and other socio-economic recovery measures and opportunities.
- Maximising the opportunities for innovative ways of future working across the Council and with partners, its own LATCO and other stakeholders (such as the voluntary sector) to the benefit of the local community and business sector.
- Preparation and planning to ensure, with other public sector agencies, that in the face of future outbreaks or emergencies, all residents are given the best possible health protection and outcomes, particularly those at risk of health inequalities.
- Securing the best possible regeneration and infrastructure improvement outcomes for the town across the wider HGGT area in the context that they promote residents’ health and wellbeing and economic recovery.
- Harnessing data and monitoring performance to ensure that services delivered post COVID-19, meet the changing needs of residents and businesses.

- Ensuring the community is kept informed about Council's and other related bodies' actions to keep them safe and prioritise their well-being as we adjust to a new and uncertain reality and seek to build individual and collective resilience.

More and Better Housing



Last year has seen a very challenging year as we continue to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

This has seen major changes affect once strong performance in housing services as a result of responding to the current pandemic and against additional national, regional, and local challenges having to be faced.

Housing remains a top priority for me and the administration, recognising the need to establish our recovery from the pandemic, and remain well placed to what may come after. My top priorities remain for more and better housing with housing that is genuinely affordable, tackling homelessness, helping to improve choices for those in housing need, increasing the range and type of Supported Housing, improving residents' health and wellbeing, and the raising of housing standards. This is even more relevant following the implications locally from Covid-19.

Working in partnership with our local housing agencies has been an ongoing success story as we have had to accommodate more rough sleepers during the last year, working to receive additional grant funding to support those who are in genuine housing need. The Supported Housing service continues to be nationally recognised, being accredited by Telecare Services Association (TSA).

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan will be reviewed in 2021 in response to the changing environment and the resources available.

Councillor Mark Wilkinson – Portfolio Holder for Housing

Our Goals:

- Invest in the housing stock.
- Delivering the house building programme with a wider choice of housing types of all tenures which include affordable, social rented and council housing.
- Work towards improving choices for those in housing need.
- Increase the range and type of Supported Housing.
- Tackle homelessness by implementing the Homelessness Strategy.
- Encourage and facilitate effective tenant and leaseholder engagement

Regeneration and a Thriving Economy



The impact of Covid-19 on the economy and prospects for regeneration are far reaching. It is in this context that the Council will continue to strive for its long term ambition to make Harlow the place of choice to do business in the UK Innovation Corridor and ensure that we lead the regeneration of key areas of our town.

We have established the Harlow Growth Board, working with all key partner organisations in Harlow and over the course of the coming year this will steer our efforts to develop our bid to Government for the funding of our Town Investment Plan, strongly focussed on the town centre, and bring a compelling voice for investment in our town. We will continue to build out the Harlow Innovation Park and welcome new occupiers, and work with our colleagues in Public Health England to ensure successful plans for their progress in relocating to

Harlow.

All of these key developments will bring new business and employment opportunities for Harlow businesses and residents and we will strive to maximise these opportunities. Delivering new quality homes will be central to our plans. The Council will continue to prioritise the delivery of homes on its pipeline of sites and influence key developments of the Harlow & Gilston Garden Town plans and delivery of critical infrastructure. We will also act to ensure that our businesses and residents access support to address the impacts of Covid and that we respond to changes that the pandemic has accelerated such as the growing importance of digital to our economy and learning, and businesses and workers seeking to move from London into more flexible workspaces.

Councillor Tony Durcan – Portfolio Holder for Growth and Prosperity

Our Goals:

- Do all we can to help address the major economic impacts of Covid-19.
- Lead the delivery of the Enterprise Zone (EZ) and Harlow Innovation Park.
- Work with Public Health England to deliver real benefits for local residents and businesses from those developments.
- Adopt science and technological innovation to support the regeneration and prosperity of the town.
- Work with others to align and develop skills of local residents to take advantage of future employment opportunities.
- Promote Harlow as an attractive, green, and sustainable location for businesses.
- Increase investment in the infrastructure required for Harlow's economic and housing growth.
- Drive forward the regeneration of the Town Centre to deliver a unified town centre re-balancing and repurposing areas of the town centre that have declined.
- Deliver more housing of all tenures to maximise the opportunity for new Council homes, social rented homes, and other forms of truly affordable housing.

A Clean and Green Environment



The principles of the original Master Plan for the New Town prepared by Sir Frederick Gibberd in 1947 have given Harlow its unique character. The Town was built around a series of neighbourhoods, separated by large areas of natural and semi-natural open spaces, now known as Green Wedges. These areas form key physical features of Harlow and have helped to shape Harlow's subsequent growth.

Just under half of all the land in Harlow is open space – a mix of designated Green Wedge, Green Belt, and other open space. The new Local Plan, which adopted in the December 2020, provides for such assets to be protected against the threat of unwarranted intrusion and inappropriate development for the benefit of both current and future generations, whilst supporting other key Council priorities. The plan sets out an aspirational vision for the town whilst preserving its character.

I know from talking to residents; and from previous budget consultations that keeping our streets and public places clean and tidy and looking after our parks and open spaces remain high priorities for Harlow residents. Improvements in street cleaning and maintenance of our green spaces have been sustained.

Looking after the Town's green spaces comes at a cost but efficiency savings have been reinvested

into extra grass cutting and green space management which has made a positive impact. I look forward to continuing to work proactively with HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd to improve the care of our green spaces and street scene.

Now that we have our new Local Plan adopted we are in a strong position to achieve the long term regeneration of Harlow, balancing the need to accommodate growth with protecting our environment. The development of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town will move further forward this year and Harlow Council will work as a proactive member of the partnership to advance the interests and potential of the town.

Councillor Danny Purton – Portfolio Holder for Environment

Our Goals:

- Sustain the cleanliness of the Town with the maintenance and protection of open spaces.
- Continue to promote and support the Keep Britain Tidy Spring Clean Campaign 2021/22.
- Minimise domestic waste and maximise reuse and recycling.
- Invest in un-adopted roads, cycle paths and pavements.
- Implement the highest standards for the built environment.
- Improve flood defence capability and maintain waterways.
- Commence a review of Harlow's Local Plan and bring forward relevant Supplementary Planning Documents and other planning policies to deliver the objectives of the Local Plan.
- Complete the Town Centre Master Plan.
- Advance the regeneration of Harlow via the Local Plan and the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town initiative.
- Seek improvements to encourage sustainable journeys and undertake a feasibility study into the potential for a Harlow Metro System.

Wellbeing and Social Inclusion



Wellbeing and social inclusion have been seriously challenged by the Covid 19 pandemic. Inequalities have been exposed, and members of our community have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. We will continue to work closely with our partners to understand and mitigate these impacts, learning how services can evolve to meet these challenges. We will advocate with and for our community for the resources and opportunities to enable recovery and address ongoing impacts to our resident's prosperity, health and wellbeing, and sense of community.

On a more positive note our community and voluntary sector partners have responded magnificently with more local people stepping forward to play their part in assisting our community, in partnership with public services. We can learn from this experience how to continue to strengthen this infrastructure for the challenges that lay ahead.

Our community assets have experienced a hugely difficult year at a time when people perhaps need them the most. We must prepare to bring these opportunities back at the safest and earliest moment to ensure the cultural and sporting life of our town can recover its vibrancy. We must be ready to value, protect and promote our local assets even more and seek ways to improve their resilience..

Councillor Chris Vince – Portfolio Holder for Community & Wellbeing

Our Goals:

- Achieve the key ambitions of the Harlow Health and Wellbeing Strategy Healthy Harlow and associated action plans.
- Play a leading role in tackling the underlying root causes of poor health and the issues that affect wellbeing.
- Work collaboratively with the wider partners to deliver Health and Wellbeing.
- Continue to work with partners to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour, and domestic abuse.
- Enhance and develop the town's cultural offer for visitors and residents of the town through a collaborative approach with local and regional stakeholders.

Successful Children & Young People



The Covid 19 pandemic has impacted the towns children and young people in wide ranging ways from education and mental health to employment prospects. Even just socialising and enjoying growing up have been compromised.

We will continue to work with the youth council and other young peoples' organisations and services to understand how we can bring together a coalition of support for children and young people to mitigate and move forward from the effects of the pandemic.

The Council will seek to open employment and work experience opportunities for young people to assist in countering the large increase in youth unemployment. We will continue to work in partnership to deliver support for school readiness and to ensure that lessons are learned and acted upon to ensure all your people are able to access learning. We will encourage young people's engagement with the Youth Council to ensure that there is a strong voice for youth in the town in shaping all that the Council and its partners do.

Councillor Chris Vince – Portfolio Holder for Community & Wellbeing

Our Goals:

- Help to improve outcomes for Harlow's children and young people.
- Support young people to be more involved in decision making.
- Work with partners to support families with complex needs.
- Safeguard children and young people.
- Work with partners to develop opportunities for learning beyond school age, providing a mix of further and higher education suited to the needs of residents and employers.

Sound Resource Management



The Council's financial position has and continues to be very good. Financial information is published regularly and features as part of the Council's commitment to conducting its business in an open and transparent way. External assessments of the Council's financial position remains good with unqualified Value for Money judgement being presented by its external and independent auditors BDO LLP.

2021/22 will be another challenging year for the Council's finances with the ongoing issues of Covid and the longer term impacts it may have on the economy still unclear and uncertain both nationally and locally.

With the future funding arrangements for local authorities remaining extremely uncertain Harlow

Council has ensured that over the past ten years of austerity no services have been cut or stopped despite the significant reductions in funding it has received from central government.

This is an incredible achievement and one which I continue to be extremely proud of, but it is likely to make further savings very difficult to achieve in the future especially if Government funding changes have an adverse impact for Harlow.

Councillor Mike Danvers – Portfolio Holder for Resources

Our Goals:

- Ensure the Council is economic, efficient, and effective.
- Get the best from the resources available.

Equalities and Fairness



I pay tribute to the work by the late Councillor Frances Mason during the past year who championed equalities in the Council since taking on the Governance, Equality and Diversity Portfolio. Work that she instigated will form her legacy over the coming year.

Harlow is a town that is proud of its diversity and long history of promoting fairness. The Council is committed to improving the outcomes for all and preventing any form of discrimination. The Council has implemented and proudly supported a number of schemes to achieve these aims, including a formal review of its equality arrangements this year and the bringing forward a new policy and action plan.

We continue to ensure that the Council meets all its legal duties, regarding equality and diversity. The Council will continue to work with Community Partners and its new Community Forum to develop its approach to equalities. We continue to adapt how the Council's Governance works to ensure transparency of its decision making with online meetings and will undertake a review of our Constitution to ensure good governance and fairness.

The Playhouse continues to host a wide range of events which cover issues such as mental health and has hosted a number of events ensuring that the Playhouse is accessible to all. It remains at the very heart of our diverse community providing a place to meet and celebrate the diversity of our town.

The Council is committed to ensure it takes a robust approach to slavery and human trafficking and acknowledges its statutory duties under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and keep its processes for contracts and partners under active review. The Council sets a target to have a positive impact on the fair and safe working conditions of those working directly or indirectly for the organisation and expect its suppliers, contractors, and partners to share in this vision.

The Council will undertake further work on its procurement strategies to improve the Social Value in its contracting to promote the local economic, social, and environmental well-being of Harlow. The Council continues to do all it can to tackle domestic abuse, in which there has been a worrying increase during the pandemic. We continue to work proactively with other organisations who provide support for victims.

We do all that we can to Safeguarding our young people and vulnerable adults to keep them from

harm. We work closely with our partners to ensure we have effective policies and procedures in place and ensure that our staff and councillors receive the appropriate training to ensure every person, young or old can live their lives without harm.

Councillor Mark Ingall, Leader of Harlow Council

Our Goals:

- Ensure the Council's decision making is open, transparent, and fair and takes into account the diversity of the Town, ensuring equalities are incorporated.
- Develop and promote the diversity of Harlow.
- Support the citizen of Harlow to actively contribute and benefit from all that Harlow has to offer by fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those that do not.
- Work with residents and businesses to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Increase public confidence in how we tackle domestic abuse.
- Enhance the quality of life and care for people with a learning disability, autism and/or mental health issues.
- Safeguarding adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable, protecting them from avoidable harm and acting in their best interests where they lack capacity.