

Appendix A

Corporate Plan 2024-28

Message from the Leader of the Council

Dan to draft

Message from the Chief Executive

Andrew to draft

Purpose of our Corporate Plan

The corporate Plan is Harlow Council's main strategic document.

It sets out with clarity our priorities for Harlow and how we will achieve, measure and fund them from 2024 to 2028. Our new Corporate Plan has been produced in tandem with our new Medium Term Financial Plan to ensure our plan is financially achievable and will be delivered.

Where we want to be – our corporate narrative

Harlow was created just after the war to give people a better future – and that's just as important today for everyone who lives and works in Harlow.

We're determined to put the heart back into Harlow by delivering a vibrant, safe and welcoming town centre that will restore pride in our town, attracting investment and opportunities for all.

We want our town to be a place where people of all ages enjoy spending their time with events, activities and a new cultural quarter with something for everyone. We want to keep the Harlow pound here, so residents choose to spend their time and money in Harlow, supporting and encouraging local businesses to flourish and succeed.

It's not just a renewed town centre that's important for our future. Our beautiful parks and green spaces are rightly treasured but we know people want to feel safe in – and proud of - their homes, neighbourhoods and communities.

We know how proud our people are of the place we call our town. Our people are already focusing on the day to day services that make a difference across the town – tackling issues in your street, fixing council homes and delivering more housing for local people. We'll continue to put what's important to residents first, despite the financial pressures we, like all councils, are facing.

Our town has a strong track record of innovation – fibre optics and so much more was invented here – and that spirit of invention and discovery will play a part in our reinvention of Harlow.

We know we haven't always got it right for some of our residents who have felt let down. But we've been listening to people's concerns and priorities, and we're determined to rebuild trust with everyone who calls Harlow their home. We'll be honest about the challenges ahead; we'll be clear about what we're going to do and why it's important for our future.

We know how we'll make a difference to Harlow in the short term. But that's just the start of our work to deliver a bright future for everyone here and we will keep focusing on what's most important for local people - making Harlow a better place to live, work, raise a family and start a business.

Demographics

[insert key facts]

The Plan is based on a wide range of datasets and was created in collaboration with elected political leaders, residents and staff from across the council. This has been done to ensure our Plan is evidence based, clear and focussed on what matters most.

The Plan is arranged around three main themes:

People: A safer, healthier, more prosperous future for everyone who lives and works in Harlow

Place: A place where people of all ages enjoy spending their time with something for everyone

Performance: Focusing on the services that make a difference, and putting what's important to residents first.

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People

We want Harlow to have healthy and safe communities with access to housing, education and skills to provide a better future for everyone who lives and works in Harlow.

Where are we now

[insert info graphics]

Harlow's population is 93,300 (ONS Census, 2021) - an increase of 13.9% from 2011. This is the fifth highest increase in the East of England and more than double England's average increase (6.6%). Our growing population will lead to greater demand for good quality housing and we already have the largest social housing provision of any local authority in the East of England.

Life expectancy is the second worst in Essex at 78.6 years compared to the national average of 79.4 years. Harlow faces a number of health challenges, with childhood obesity levels within the top highest Essex cohort, as well as mental health and suicide rates that are highest in Essex.

Harlow is home to around 3,200 business and provides ... jobs. We also have one of the best colleges in the country, upskilling thousands of Harlow residents each year by working with local employers to ensure we are providing the skills needed in a rapidly changing economy. However, the number of unemployment related benefit claimants has increased to 4.4% in August 2023 – above the national average of 3.7%. Securing investment, jobs and new business growth will be key to improving individual aspirations within the town.

Our residents' most important local issue is tackling crime and antisocial behaviour, with only 37% of Harlow residents reporting feeling safe after dark, which is well below the Essex average of 55% and 71% nationally. Domestic abuse, violence against a person and sexual offences are the most prevalent crimes in Harlow, which we must reduce.

Where do we want to be

Our Priorities are to...

- Support a healthier future that addresses health inequalities and provides access to the right support to boost health and wellbeing.
- Create a safer future for Harlow where communities benefit from targeted action on crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Build the skills and education of future generations.
- Provide better access to housing for all residents.
- Strengthen engagement with the Council for people of all ages.

We will do this by/How will we get there ...

Support a healthier future that addresses inequalities and provides access to the right support to boost health and wellbeing.

- Identifying and addressing barriers to health provision with closer working relationships and influence with local health organisations.
- Improving access to affordable and free activities that promote and support healthy lives, including cultural, creative, sport/physical activities and access to green spaces.
- Supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and families through improved service provision and closer working relationships and influence with other service providers.
- Improving numbers of residents who are digitally engaged to be able to access services and information that support their health outcomes.

Create a safer future for Harlow where communities benefit from targeted action on crime and anti-social behaviour.

- Ensuring the Community Safety Hub with Essex Police is a genuine hub of tackling crime and antisocial behaviour which makes a tangible difference for residents.
- Working with PFCC to deliver the outcomes from Essex Crime Plan.
- Identifying current antisocial behaviour issues and emerging trends and hotspots within the town and taking real steps to reduce antisocial behaviour over the Plan period.
- Joint working with police and health partners to tackle anti-social behaviour in residential areas as well as new town centre provision as the regeneration projects complete.

Build the skills and education of future generations.

- Increasing levels of educational attainment and qualifications among Harlow's young people, including increased enrolments on STEM related subjects and those which local employers demand.
- Closing the gap of the proportion of the working age population obtaining L3 and L4 qualifications in comparison with the national average.
- Developing skills for growth by supporting and promoting the delivery of affordable skills opportunities for all adults.

Provide better access to housing for all residents.

- Embedding our new Housing Allocations Policy and processes to improve 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.

Strengthen engagement with the Council for people of all ages.

- Focussing on engagement activities to specifically attract younger people to have their say on Council services.
- Increasing voter registration and turnout.
- Introducing electronic communications options where this enhances service delivery to residents.

- Reforming how we consult and engage with our residents to ensure the voice of our residents is at the heart of all we do.

We will measure this through...

(describe performance monitoring/deliverables for each outcome with key performance measurements)

It will be funded by...

(Inclusion in MTFP/external funding/capital funding/additional borrowing/income generated by x etc)

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Place

We want Harlow to be a place where people of all ages enjoy spending their time, through providing high quality housing, renewed neighbourhoods, green spaces and a thriving town centre that meets the needs of the community.

Where are we now

[insert info graphics]

Harlow occupies an area of 3,054 ha and is located at the centre of the UK Innovation Corridor. This strategic location makes Harlow a key location for ICT, aerospace and life science industries, but improved infrastructure is needed to secure future investment in the town. The UK Health Security Agency is moving to Harlow and the much needed new Princess Alexandra Hospital will start construction in 2025.

Nearly a quarter of Harlow's (701ha) land is designated as Green Wedge and the town is home to Harlow Town Park, one of the largest urban parks in the country, as well as a network of woods, ponds and marshes. Despite this, Harlow has one of lowest proportions of population accessing green spaces in Essex according to the Essex resident survey.

A vibrant town centre is fundamental to Harlow's future prosperity. We have secured over £40million in funding through the Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund which will transform Playhouse Square and College Square into a vibrant arts and culture quarter, create a new transport hub in Terminus Street and a revived Broad Walk and Market Square. We have also set up the Harlow Regeneration Partnership with one of the UK's leading developers and put in place our first Partnership Business Plan covering the Plan period.

There are around 37,900 homes in the town and whilst we are set to deliver hundreds of new homes over the Plan period, our fast-growing population will mean greater demand for good quality housing options.

Where do we want to be

Our Priorities are to...

- Invest in new and existing Council housing and estate infrastructure.
- Respect our natural resources through minimising pollution and waste and creating clean and inviting green spaces.
- Facilitate sustainable growth and investment in the town.
- Create thriving neighbourhoods, with a welcoming renewed town centre at their heart.
- Deliver services which protect and support the town's businesses and homes.

We will do this by/How will we get there...

Invest in new and existing Council housing and estate infrastructure.

- Reviewing estate amenity areas and compiling a programme of renewal to improve safety, security, & resident enjoyment.

- Deliver hundreds of new council homes.
- Deliver the Harlow Regeneration Partnership Business Plan.
- Reviewing Priority Estates to establish a delivery programme of major estate renewals.
- Developing an investment programme for estate infrastructure and ancillary infrastructure.

Respect our natural resources through minimising pollution and waste and creating clean & inviting green spaces.

- Continuing with a Retro fit programme of existing housing to reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency.
- Delivering new council housing which incorporates sustainable construction approaches, energy efficient and PV technologies.
- Working with developers through the planning process to target sustainable approaches to the delivery of all new homes.
- Expanding the provision of EV charging points across the neighbourhood areas and Town Centre.
- Delivering the outcomes of the climate change strategy to see the town through to its net zero target by 2040.

Facilitate sustainable growth and investment in the town.

- Securing inward investment from both the public and private sectors to deliver new jobs and growth to Harlow.
- Both directly delivering and enabling new commercial development.
- Securing the infrastructure required to enable to vision of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.

Create thriving neighbourhoods, with a welcoming renewed town centre at their heart.

- Reviewing use of community assets to explore options for renewed incorporation to neighbourhood life.
- Delivering all regeneration projects already commissioned as well as bringing forward further schemes and investment to entirely transform the town centre in line with the Masterplan Framework.
- Restoring pride with improved landscape maintenance and an estate renewal programme for street furniture, highway infrastructure and other such facilities to transform the local street scene.

Deliver services which protect and support the town's businesses and homes.

- Improving our inspection services of private sector businesses and housing provision.
- Better support and enable local SMEs to grow.

We will measure this through...

(describe performance monitoring/deliverables/ performance measurements)

It will be funded by...

(Inclusion in MTFP/external funding/capital funding/additional borrowing/income generated by x etc)

Performance

We want Harlow Council to build a culture of continuous improvement by putting what's important to residents first, being transparent about the decisions we make and focusing on the services that make a difference.

Where are we now

[insert info graphics]

Our residents survey showed that close to three-in-five are satisfied with the way that the council runs things (58%), although satisfaction is significantly higher among residents aged 65+. We want to build a culture of continuous improvement to achieve consistent scores across age groups.

Only 44% of residents agree that the council provides value for money, and although this is similar to national perceptions (42%), we can improve this through increasing transparency with our decision making, as well as increasing data gathering so we can make sure our decisions are driven by data.

As a local authority we recognise our role to be resilient in the face of increasing change. This includes both financial resilience through creating a sustainable budget and maintaining a strong financial footing, but also making sure our resources are resilient to an increasing changing external environment.

We have over 450 members of staff across 5 service areas and 45 teams as well as over 350 staff in our wholly owned company HTS, but we lack data on skillsets within our workforce. We recognise the need for a people resource plan to make sure we have the right skills, behaviours, productivity and capacity to provide the best value services possible for the town.

Where do we want to be

Our Priorities are to...

- Be transparent about the decisions we make on the services we provide.
- Actively tell residents how we use Council resources and how others can work with us to deliver services and improvements.
- Continuously improve service provision and provide excellent customer service in all we do.
- Listen to what residents tell us and use this, alongside supporting data, to make decisions .
- Build resilience around our people, resources and finances to not just deliver services, but make them better.

We will do this by/How will we get there ...

Performance

Listen to what residents tell us and use this, alongside supporting data, to make decisions.

- Making data led decisions and embedding benchmarking in all we do.

- Giving residents an annual opportunity to comment on the service that Harlow council provides and the things that are important to them.
- Genuinely embed first class communication and engagement with our residents in all we do.

Actively tell residents how we use Council resources and how others can work with us to deliver services.

- Ensuring all council decisions, policies and services are transparent.
- Deliver new shared services where there are identified operational and commercial drivers and seek diverse/best fit partners.
- Making it easier for local business to work with us under a reformed procurement practices.
- Providing best value by analysing areas of greatest spend to provide economies of scale.
- Securing social value in contracts with our main contractors that directly benefit residents.

Continuously improve service provision and provide excellent customer service in all we do.

- Undertaking Service Reviews in all service areas.
- Identify opportunities for simplification in Local Council Tax Support Scheme and more support on the cost of living.
- Establishing a benchmarking scheme to measure Council performance against best practice in all decision making.
- Driving a culture of continuous improvement and challenge.
- Ensuring that the Customer Services Action plan is completed which will provide excellent customer service.
- Further transforming HTS service provision to ensure we are providing first class services.
- Ensuring that residents are informed about the council work and plans for the future using a variety of communication channels.

Build resilience around our people, resources and finances to not just deliver services, but make them better.

- Reviewing income streams, including property asset management, arrears collection local taxation and other charges to create financial sustainability and exploiting further commercialisation opportunities.
- Create a culture that supports high performance and enables a flexible, skilled, engaged and diverse workforce that maintains positive relationships with trade unions.
- Providing accessible and easy to use services our residents.
- Seeking cost reduction through challenging how we deliver services, ensuring value for money, as well as a return on investment.

We will measure this through...

(describe performance monitoring/deliverables/outcomes)

It will be funded by...

(Inclusion in MTFP/external funding/capital funding/additional borrowing/income generated by x etc)

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