

Harlow Council: Working Together for Harlow

Corporate Plan 2016/17 - 2018/19

Foreword by the Leader of the Council

I am pleased to present this update to Harlow Council's Corporate Plan: Working Together for Harlow 2016-2019. This plan outlines the Council's vision and priorities to drive improvement over the next three years and what we have already achieved in meeting them.

The Council has had a number of notable successes, including building the first council houses in 25 years, driving forward the delivery of the Enterprise Zone, modernising thousands of Council homes, regenerating Clifton Hatch, and continuing to promote the Living Wage – with our joint venture with Kier Harlow receiving the East of England Living Wage Champion award.

The announcement that Public Health England's national Science Hub will start moving to Harlow in 2019 is recognition of the fantastic potential of Harlow, and will strengthen Harlow's reputation as a centre for science and bring thousands of high quality jobs to Harlow.

We are, however, living in unprecedented times, with the resources available to the Council under increasing pressure. The Council has already had substantial cuts to its external funding, and this will continue.

The Council has shown leadership and tenacity in standing up for the wishes of Harlow residents. Harlow Council, in conjunction with Essex County Council, obtained an unprecedented town wide injunction to deal with unauthorised encampments, while recognising the need for provision of authorised traveller sites. The Council reached a ground breaking deal to make sure that street lights remain on overnight, recognising the specific needs of Harlow.

We will continue to robustly make the case for investment in Harlow on much needed infrastructure, including road and rail, and health facilities.

It is more important than ever that the Council is open and transparent about the decisions it needs to make, and is driven by a set of values and priorities that have fairness and equality at the heart of everything it does. This enables everyone to participate and take advantage of the many great things that Harlow has to offer.

To this end, the Council and I are determined to continue making a positive and visible difference to Harlow and will remain focused on achieving the following:

A Fairer Harlow, A Harlow to be Proud of

Working with the whole community of Harlow, including Government, the Voluntary Sector, Businesses, Faith Groups and others, the Council wants to achieve the following:

- **Reducing inequality** and supporting all Harlow's citizens to reach their full potential, actively contribute, and benefit from all that Harlow has to offer.
- Harlow to be a great place to **grow up** with children getting the best start in life, being healthy, being ready to learn as they start school, enjoying school, and achieving their academic and social potential. Children and young people should have access to a range of activities to enable them to make a positive contribution to their communities and to realise their potential and talent.
- To develop opportunities for **learning** beyond school age, providing a mix of further and higher education suited to the needs of residents and employers.
- Harlow to be an excellent place to do **business**, with the right infrastructure and with a highly skilled workforce that meets the needs and expectations of existing and potential employers in the town, and provides employment opportunities for Harlow people that pay a decent wage.
- Harlow residents to have good **health and wellbeing**, with the Council playing a leading role in tackling the underlying root causes of poor health and the issues that affect wellbeing.
- Harlow to be a great place to **grow older** with people living happy, healthy and independent lives.
- Harlow to have great community spirit, with people actively participating in **sustainable communities**, taking a pride in Harlow, its environment and its people.
- All of the neighbourhoods in the town to be desirable places to live with homes appropriate for people of different needs and resources, and at different points in their lives, attractive and well-kept buildings and open spaces, good roads, parking and public transport, and with people being and feeling **safe and secure**.
- **People to get along**, including with people from different backgrounds.
- Projecting local **Pride in Harlow** onto a regional and national stage to promote Harlow as a great place to live, shop, work, and do business.
- Harlow to have high quality community **cultural and sporting events**, attractions, and facilities for residents and visitors to experience, with a range of places for visitors to stay.

To achieve these outcomes we have identified five priorities for the next five years:

- **More and better housing** - tackling the housing need of Harlow residents, both in quantity, affordability, range and quality.
- **Regeneration and a thriving economy** - regenerating Harlow and supporting a thriving economy that benefits all the people of Harlow. Working with our partners in local and national government, the community, and the private sector, to create an infrastructure that is appropriate for sustainable growth.
- **Wellbeing and social inclusion** - working with partners to support people living happy healthy lives, and getting along with one another.
- **A clean and green environment** - an attractive, clean, green and sustainable environment to be enjoyed by all.
- **Successful children and young people** - engaging young people and actively promoting opportunities for all, in education, in employment, and in the community.

All underpinned by sound leadership, management of resources, and governance.

Despite the challenges, I am convinced that, by working together, we can make a positive and visible difference, and ensure a bright future for Harlow.



Councillor Jon Clempner, Leader of the Council

Harlow today

An urban and green new town mixing high-quality varied housing types for all incomes, owners and tenants.

Harlow is an enterprising and compact new town in West-Essex. It is made up of suburban communities as well as shopping centres and industrial and distribution centres. It is home to a University Technical College and a 51 hectare Enterprise Zone (EZ). It is one of the 44 sites in the country selected by Government to provide a platform for economic growth and deliver benefits for business. The EZ investment will be used to develop a new Life Sciences Med-tech Innovation Centre; building on the town's pioneering traditions and bringing jobs to the area.

Harlow retains many of the features, art, cultural and leisure facilities which made it so popular in the post-war years. It has also retained a large proportion of social housing and has the second highest proportion of council housing in the county. The Council has prioritised investment in this area to ensure decent homes for all.

A young population

Harlow has a young population with those aged under 10 accounting for over 13 percent of the population. Excluding London Boroughs, this represents the 19th highest rate in England and Wales respectively.

Harlow is a great place to bring up children but the picture in Harlow concerning school performance is mixed. There has been a general rise in results in both primary and secondary schools, tracking national improvements, but performance varies enormously from school to school. Harlow is in line with the national average of 66 percent of early years children showing a Good Level of Development (GLD) for 2015. In 2013 this was only 38 percent, an increase of 28 percentage points. This means within Essex, Harlow is the district that has seen the largest improvement of pupils achieving a GLD for the period 2013 – 2015.

Harlow Council will continue to work with partners to increase the number of Harlow children judged as being ready for school and to raise aspiration and academic achievement so that all children and young people can achieve their full potential.

A diverse population

Harlow has a more diverse population than ten years ago. Around 16 percent of the population are from black or minority ethnic groups, many of whom are economic migrants from Eastern Europe, Africa and South-Asia. Harlow remains a place where people have positive relationships.

The success of Harlow, its proximity to London and the issues brought about by the national economy and welfare reform have created its own unique housing pressures. Housing in Harlow is predominantly privately owned at just over 68 percent, while social housing makes up just under 32 percent.

An enterprising place

Despite the tough economic climate, Harlow has remained a competitive location for business and growth and is well equipped and situated to support economic growth across West-Essex.

However, there are variations in different parts of Harlow. Household incomes of residents are just under 10 percent lower than workplace wages on average and there are pockets of deprivation, notably around the centre and south-west of Harlow.

As Harlow continues to become more business orientated in coming years, a key opportunity is to use the regeneration of deprived areas to create employment opportunities and reinvigorate communities. The Council will need to continue to work with community groups and other organisations to tackle local problems and improve the lives of residents.

Financial context

The Council has annual net General Fund expenditure of £11million, is the landlord for over 9,500 properties and over 2,300 leasehold properties at a gross cost of nearly £60 million and currently delivers an annual capital investment programme of nearly £20 million.

The services it provides affects the lives of everybody living in, working in or visiting Harlow and as part of its transformation over the last nine years, and in response to the financial challenges it has faced, the Council has achieved significant financial savings totaling £22.5m in its General Fund.

The Council has achieved all of this whilst managing to protect front line services with partnership working with the voluntary and private sectors being used wherever possible to maintain access to services.

This financial achievement is illustrated in the table below:

	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Total in year savings	2,415	3,260	2,183	1,479	2,107	1,906	1,502	1,534	1,264
Cumulative Savings	6,059	9,319	11,502	12,981	15,088	16,994	18,496	20,030	21,294
Annual Budget (NET)	15,268	15,557	15,969	16,042	13,532	12,744	12,444	11,801	10,804
Annual savings as a % of Annual Budget (NET)	15.82	20.96	13.67	9.22	15.57	14.96	12.07	13.00	11.70

The Council has also made significant savings over the last nine years for its Housing Revenue Account. Again this has been achieved whilst improving the standard of housing to meet Decency standards, maintaining access to services and indeed performance has been improved.

The Council has seen a 60 percent reduction in its Government funding for the General Fund in the period 2011/12 to 2015/16 and will face more cuts of 14.2 percent in 2016/17 based upon the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. In response to further austerity, the Council has a three year financial strategy setting out how it will balance the books. Over the next three years the Council is proposing further savings of around £2.5m

Financial information, including the Council's budgets, sources of income, and the budget gaps projected by the Council is contained within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. This can be found on the Council's website.

The Council's approach to change

The Council has adopted principles that promote and support the close working relationships it has with the town's residents and organisations. They also state the commitment of Councillors and staff to deliver high quality and effective services.

The Council will therefore focus on:

- Influencing others
- Performing in partnership with the Community
- Supporting people and business
- Equality and Fairness
- Openness and Transparency

Influencing others

As a major sub-regional centre, Harlow's success is important for communities across a wide area. With its fantastic connections to London, Cambridge and Stansted Airport, Harlow has huge potential to be a major driver for economic growth. The Council will seek to ensure that these challenges and opportunities are recognised in positive ways through the resource allocations and investment decisions of others.

The Council will raise Harlow's profile throughout the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area nationally and internationally to attract businesses to invest in the town. It will work in partnership with the LEP, the West Essex Alliance, the LSCC and local businesses to ensure that this profile is improved.

As a member of the Living Wage Foundation, the Council will work with employers to help ensure that the residents of Harlow get a fair deal with their local employer.

Performing in partnership with the Community

The Council continues to work alongside community and voluntary groups and residents to shape and deliver services. The Council's inclusive approach enables residents' voices to be heard and valued and ensures that Council services reflect local views.

Despite a reduction in its funding, the Council will strive to continue to protect those front line services that residents most value. The Council will work with the community to ensure that needs are identified and understood and that service provision and commissioning is focused on those in greatest need.

Supporting people and business

The Council has built strong relationships with businesses to encourage them to stay in Harlow and it continues to work to attract new businesses also. It will work to support local residents in equipping themselves to secure the jobs that are created.

The Council will be doing its bit to make Harlow an even better and more enjoyable place to live, work and visit. It cannot do it all by itself and it will be seeking help and support from its partners and from the community.

As the Council's strapline for its logo states, we will be 'Working Together for Harlow'.

Equality and fairness

We recognise that certain groups in society are still more likely to suffer from unfair treatment and discrimination. We therefore continue to strive to eliminate all forms of unfair treatment and discrimination, and are committed to the continued development of a working culture in which fair treatment of all is the norm.

We believe in openness, honesty and integrity; in responsibility and accountability; in mutual trust and respect, and in valuing diversity in our role both as an employer and as a public service provider.

Openness and transparency

The Council believes that it has nothing to lose and everything to gain by being open about what it does, how it spends its money and, how well it is performing.

We aim to be open with customers, employees and other stakeholders and show them that we operate and use our resources, fairly, efficiently and effectively.

Openness and transparency are key ingredients to build accountability and trust. We are committed to demonstrating openness and transparency in the way we operate our business and how we communicate with the public.

Delivering the Plan

Provided below are details of how Harlow Council's priorities will be pursued to ensure they are achieved.

The Council will measure its aim of **improving Harlow for residents, businesses and visitors** against four key performance indicators:

- The level of resident satisfaction with Harlow as a place to live.
- The level of resident satisfaction with the way Harlow Council runs things.
- Whether residents agree that Harlow Council provides value for money.
- How well informed residents are about local public services provided directly or indirectly by Harlow Council.

The Council regularly reports on its performance and achievements on the Council's website, www.harlow.gov.uk/performance

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, 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.

Harlow Council Priorities

More and better housing

“Housing remains a top priority for me and the Administration. The landscape for housing that we have been used to has changed. The changes to the national housing policy, Housing Benefit rules, and other welfare reforms have/will place many Harlow residents, including many Council tenants/leaseholders, under increased financial pressure.

Importantly, the new Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015 will remove the freedom for councils to set rents locally. This has had a major impact on the Council’s HRA Business Plan which had previously assumed annual rent increases equivalent to CPI+1percent until 2024/25 in line with government guidance.

The ongoing challenges are:

- ***Implementing a sustainable 30 year Business Plan.***
- ***Implementing its five year Housing Investment Programme (HIP) investing over 100m and delivering improvements to its housing stock to improve the living conditions of its tenants. Tackling local priorities, and prioritising energy efficiency schemes (tackling fuel poverty).***
- ***Significantly improving the energy efficiency of the Council’s homes and tackling fuel poverty by installing external wall insulation, enhanced energy efficient windows and doors.***
- ***Becoming one of the councils in England that will deliver the Government’s Social Mobility Fund aspirations.***

Tackling housing need, however, is my key priority, in all its forms, and I work towards:

- ***More housing available in Harlow, with a wider choice of housing types which are genuinely affordable.***
- ***Tackling the growing need for supported housing.***
- ***Helping to improve the choices for those in housing need.***
- ***Improving health and wellbeing by improving housing conditions.”***

Councillor Rod Truan – Portfolio Holder for Housing

Our goals for the next three years:

1. More housing for Harlow:

- Work with our partners, to provide evidence to support the need for urban extensions and future infrastructure requirements in Harlow through the technical documentation supporting the Local Development Plan.
- More housing available in Harlow, with a wider choice of housing types which are affordable.
- Continue to increase the range and type of supported housing.
- Support the development of Harlow's design guides to encourage developers to provide high quality design.

2. Better housing for Harlow:

- Provide high quality housing stock, with all Council homes in the town meeting Modern Homes standards. Publish a five year Housing Investment Programme (HIP) and invest annually in improvements to ensure decent homes targets are met and improve housing conditions.
- Implement a programme of energy efficiency, tackling fuel poverty with initiatives tackling high energy use dwellings with low thermal efficiency.
- Tackle fuel poverty by providing advice and support on energy use and the installation of energy efficiency initiatives such as smart meters, insulation, and external cladding.
- Target raising housing standards in private sector housing by reviewing additional licensing of Households in Multiple Occupation (HMO's).
- Improve choices for those in housing need.
- Encourage and facilitate effective Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement.
- Continue to improve housing standards.
- Provide effective tenancy enforcement support tackling health and wellbeing.

3. Improve tenant and leaseholder satisfaction:

- Provide opportunities for tenant and leaseholder representatives to have their say on service improvement activities.
- Implement the revised 'Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy' in response to national and local priorities and applying it to increase representation and widen engagement.
- Ensure that housing works programmes are communicated in advance and monitoring arrangements improved.

- Ensure tenants and leaseholders have opportunities to choose, be consulted and receive feedback from, their representatives when seeking to influence and be involved, in the management of their homes.

4. Reduce homelessness:

- Improve services and choices for those in housing need, and increase promotion of wider housing options and use of the private sector.
- Continue to review the Allocations Policy in response to national and local housing need priorities.
- Publish a Tenancy Strategy making best use of housing stock and providing support and targeted assistance for tenants living in Council accommodation.
- Tackle homelessness by implementing the Homelessness Strategy and working in partnership with agencies to develop the Harlow Homelessness Partnership, (HHP) targeting resources and joint working.
- Continue to provide additional help and support to those residents impacted by the Government's Welfare Reform programme.

What we have achieved so far:

More housing for Harlow

New Social Housing - The Council built 18 new homes during 2015 on empty garages sites at Fesants Croft, Felmongers and The Hill. These were the first new Council homes for a quarter of a century, and has directly contributed to reducing the numbers on the Council's Housing Needs Register.

Better housing for Harlow

Modernising Council Homes - Harlow Council's biggest ever investment and transformation of Council homes continues with over 34,600 improvements completed so far in more than 8,200 different homes and a five-year £100 million investment in Council housing renewal, making a real transformation. Works included kitchen, bathroom, and window installations

From 2015/16, the programme has involved external works to Council owned tenanted and leasehold properties. Components include roofing, fencing, communal entrances, high rise windows, bin store replacement, wall finishes, and insulation.

The Council will continue to prioritise kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems, electrical works, windows and doors to maintain the Decent Homes Standard and develop its own Harlow Standard. The volumes of work achieved up to November 2015 are as follows:

- Kitchens – 2,920
- Bathrooms – 2,337
- Additional WC – 612
- Electrical Inspections – 6,345
- CCU -1,768
- Smoke Alarms – 2,629
- Boilers – 1,380
- Heating Distribution – 1,793
- Doors – 4,807
- Windows – 12,192

A new eight year external works programme focusing on roofs, external facia and works to tower blocks started in April 2015.

Improve tenant satisfaction

Improved satisfaction - A tenant satisfaction survey is carried out bi-ennially by Housing Services. In the last survey in 2014 satisfaction with the overall service was at 74 percent (increased by one percent since 2012) and 74 percent of respondents were satisfied with the quality of their home. The next Landlord Survey is due to take place at the end of 2016.

Reduced homelessness

- Continued to implement the revised Homelessness Strategy in conjunction with partners in order to develop an action plan and target scarce resources.
- Implemented a revised rent deposit guarantee scheme to increase the availability of housing that is affordable.
- Received accreditation from the government to implement a social mobility scheme to encourage national mobility within social housing providers.

Other achievements

Tackling housing need - reducing the number of people on the housing needs register however, the town's social housing shortage focuses even more attention on how Council housing is allocated. The revised Allocations Policy has:

- Strengthened the local connection eligibility.
- Provided additional priority to members of the Armed Forces.
- Increased priority to Council tenants wishing to move to a smaller property.
- Additional priority to adopters and foster carers.

Tackling fuel poverty - the external walls of over 400 Council homes were insulated and covered with new render to help reduce heat loss and make them warmer, reducing heating bills and tackling fuel poverty. The programme was completed in December 2014 and was jointly funded by a £1.5m grant from Scottish and Southern Energy Solutions.

Providing housing support - the Careline and Supported Housing Team achievements include installing approximately 231 alarm units, attaining the Telecare Services Association (TSA) platinum accreditation for the sixth year running, accredited to the BS 50134 - 7:2003 Provision of Social Alarm Systems, which means that Careline is operating at a very high industry-recognised standard providing support to vulnerable residents of the town.

What we will do next (our objectives for 2016/17):

- Recognise the uncertainty over rent income and ensure the Council is able to tentatively plan the Housing Revenue and Capital Programme over the next few years whilst appropriately and directly addressing local priorities.
- The Council's investment in its housing assets with a further £60m to be spent over the next three years will have to reduce to align with new government housing policy announcements.
- Defer the development of a longer-term programme of new Council House building and review annually.
- Continue to implement the actions in the Homelessness Strategy and Tenancy Strategy delivery plans.
- Raise tenant satisfaction through increased communication and providing more opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to be involved in their service.
- Continue the implementation of the Modern Homes Programme and commencing a further works programme, over the next five years on the communal and external areas of our homes directing resources in improving energy efficiency, reducing the energy bills to our tenants and tackling fuel poverty.
- Complete feasibility study and seek funding for increased extra frail housing support schemes.
- Consult on our preferred options for housing growth in the Local Development Plan.
- Commence the refurbishment of two Tower Blocks to include external cladding and environmental improvements.
- Commence the replacement of Council owned district heating schemes to increase energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty.

Regeneration and a thriving economy

“Harlow new town was built around principles of sustainable communities, with its green spaces a fundamental part of the design. We remain committed to these principles and of regenerating the town with high quality jobs for local people, and reinvigorating Harlow as a great place to live and work.

This renewal has been accelerated with work on the Town Park, building the first Council Houses for 25 years, and the establishment of the Enterprise Zone and the ARU Medtech Campus starting to make significant progress. We have created a Town Centre Regeneration Fund to ensure that it gets the attention it deserves.

We will continue to focus on driving forward this regeneration, renewing neighbourhoods, attracting inward investment providing high quality jobs and lobby to ensure we have the right infrastructure in place to enable sustainable growth. This year the Council will move ahead with its plans to start improving the look and vibrancy of Broad Walk and Market Square to help attract investment. Harlow has a bright future and the Council will play a full and active role in bringing this about.”

Councillor Tony Durcan – Portfolio holder for Regeneration and Enterprise

Our goals for the next three years:

1. Lead on the delivery of the Enterprise Zone (EZ):

- Work with landowners and developers to secure occupiers.
- Continue our fast-track approach to planning to assist developers.
- Take forward the creation of a new science park incorporating the Anglia Ruskin University MedTech Campus.
- To improve the environment and infrastructure at Templefields.
- Take forward the EZ Skills Plan to support the development of a skilled workforce.

2. Deliver neighbourhood regeneration and Priority Estate schemes:

- To continue the regeneration of the Briars, Copshall Close and Aylets Field in order to deliver new homes to rent and buy.
- Take forward the redevelopment of new homes, retail outlets and a health centre at Prentice Place.
- Develop a master plan and begin the regeneration of Staple Tye neighbourhood area.
- Bring forward a package of sites to deliver new homes and retail facilities within our neighbourhoods.

3. Work with Essex County Council to deliver transport infrastructure:

- To build the case, continue to lobby and help to identify a funding package for a new junction 7a on the M11.
- Work with Essex County Council to ensure delivery of the road infrastructure improvements required for the Enterprise Zone are delivered.

4. Preparing for growth:

- Continue our fast-track approach to assist developers.
- Develop a forward plan for improving Harlow's transport infrastructure in the context of the Town's potential growth.
- Build relationships with developers and landowners which will assist with the sustainable growth of Harlow.

5. Support improvements to the Town Centre:

- Implement the Town Centre Improvement Plan which covers: attracting investment and creating opportunities for residents and business, restoring pride and promoting the Town Centre.
- Consider new policy and alternative options for the future of the Town Centre.
- To work with landowners, developers and potential investors to bring forward initiatives to revitalise the Town Centre.
- Promote the Town Centre to traders and shoppers, and improve the public realm and the northern end of the town centre.
- Review Town Centre Planning and Licensing policies.

6. Support the economic development of Harlow:

- Produce an Economic Development Strategy for Harlow in order to influence the plans, strategies and resource allocations of others including engagement and support for WEA, LSCC, the Outer London Commission, ECC, SELEP and Central Government.
- Work with employers and education providers to increase the range and level of skills in the town.
- Build strong relationships with businesses to promote business support services and innovation through growth sector forums and direct business engagement.
- Support inward investment by encouraging the retention of employers in Harlow and attracting new business to protect and create jobs.

Glossary

- **SELEP** (South East Local Enterprise Partnership) - SELEP brings together key leaders from business, local government, further and higher education in order to create the most enterprising economy in England.
- **WEA** (West Essex Alliance) - The West Essex Alliance exists to improve the economic prosperity and opportunity and provides a voice for business to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.
- **LSCC** (London, Stansted, Cambridge Consortium) - The consortium was formed to organise and promote a clear economic area, with strong inter-connections; commuting to work, clusters of industries and supply chains.
- **ECC** (Essex County Council).
- **Outer London Commission** - The OLC explores how different parts of outer London can better realise their economic potential, especially its town centres, as well as opportunity and intensification areas and industrial locations.

What we have achieved so far:

Lead on the delivery of the Enterprise Zone

Enterprise Zone - A £5m funding package, which paves the way for the start of construction work on a world-class, state-of-the-art data centre campus and business park in Harlow Enterprise Zone, was agreed as part of a public-private sector partnership. The financial package is made up of a £2.5m loan from the Homes & Communities Agency's Local Infrastructure Fund matched by a loan from Harlow Council. The money enables the implementation of infrastructure works on the 20-acre site and will be backed up by investment in excess of £30m from the private sector.

Achievements include:

- Completion of demolition works at London Road South (July 2015).
- Letting of contracts for the refurbishment of two buildings (October 2015).
- New tenants (Arrow Electronics and Raytheon UK) announced for London Road South (September 2015).
- Completed Superfast Broadband installation at River Way (July 2015).
- Land acquisitions completed at London Road North (April 2015).
- OJEU process for developer section launched (March 2015) and three developers shortlisted (July 2015).
- Tree clearance programme undertaken (March 2015) enabling the new road constructions to start on site at London Road in November 2015.
- Properties search database set up (October 2015.)

Medtech Campus - Harlow is proud to be involved in a ground-breaking partnership that will drive growth and innovation in the UK medical technology sector. The Anglia Ruskin University MedTech Campus will provide one of the world's largest health innovation spaces for companies of all sizes - from start-ups and micro SMEs to large corporates - with the aim of establishing the UK as a global force in a sector worth £170bn per year. The project, which is a partnership between Chelmsford City Council, Harlow Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Anglia Ruskin University, is predicted to grow the UK medical technology sector by £1.2bn and generate approximately 12,500 jobs. In principle agreement has been reached with ARU to establish a Med Tech Innovation Centre on the London Road North site, to be delivered in 2016/17.

Public Health England's (PHE's) Science Hub - In September 2015 the Chancellor announced that PHE's laboratories at Porton will move to Harlow and complete the government's plan to bring all the public health laboratories onto a single integrated campus. The Hub will create a centre of excellence for research, health, improvement and protection and bring together world-renowned scientists working to protect and improve the health of the nation.

The new integrated hub, which will include PHE's headquarters, will provide the expert science to ensure that the UK is better protected against key threats such as pandemic flu and international threats like Ebola. It will be fully operational by 2024 with the first facilities opening in 2019. Up to 2,500 jobs will be on the site with many more involved in construction and the supply chain.

Deliver neighbourhood regeneration and Priority Estate schemes

Priority Estates - In 2014 Countryside Properties and Home Group were selected as the developers to regenerate the Briars, Copshall Close and Aylets Field estates. In spring 2015 the Development Agreement was entered into by all parties. There followed a consultation event for residents where views were fed into the planning of the estates. Planning permission was granted in the summer of 2015.

The relocation of residents living in phase one of the scheme is now well underway and it is anticipated that Countryside and Home Group will be able to begin the development and start on site in the early part of 2016. The regeneration will take about five years to complete.

Achievements:

- Delivery plan implemented for regeneration of the Briar's, Copshall Close and Aylets Field (October 2015).
- Action Plan to deliver a pipeline of future neighbourhood sites/hatches for regeneration to be completed Feb 2016.

Deliver the Heritage Lottery Fund Town Park Project

Pet's Corner - Harlow's family attraction Pets' Corner, which celebrates its 50th anniversary next year, reopened on 27 October 2015 following major refurbishment. The facility has been completely renovated with a new events barn, new shelters for animals, a new bird enclosure and aquarium, a new small animal quarantine room, updated surfacing and drainage and a new duck pond. New cladding and repairs to buildings have been completed throughout. Facilities for staff have also been upgraded and access for all visitors has been improved with a new ramp, hand rails, gift shop, reception and entrance gates. Construction work on a new eco-friendly learning centre next to Pets' Corner continues and once completed will host educational visits to the Town Park and Pets Corner.

Other improvements to the Town Park include:

- Landscaping: The landscaping contract undertaken by Blakedown has now been completed except for some turfing and minor path work.
- The Water Garden: The Water Garden is now fully accessible and visitors can enjoy the new planting scheme and paths.
- Bandstand: The refurbishment of the Bandstand has been completed except for some concreting at the front. Harlow College work experience students are completing the interior redecoration of the bandstand.
- Spurriers House: Refurbishment of the ground floor is underway to enable a café with seating to be created.
- The Learning Centre, made from straw bales is nearing completion.
- Town Park volunteers have completed the restoration of the Rose Garden which will be fully reopened once the Spurriers Café terrace work is completed. They are now working on the restoration of a rockery in the Specimen Garden.

Deliver the Pathfinder Council Homes Project

The Council built its first council homes in over 25 years at the former garage sites in Fesants Croft, Felmongers and The Hill. Eighteen two bedroom homes have been built and were all completed by December 2015. Families from Harlow's Housing Needs register have now all moved into their new homes.

Support improvements to the Town Centre

Harlow Council and Essex County Council continue to look at regeneration options for Harlow Town Centre. The Harlow Town Centre has a valuable role as a sub-regional destination. The Council will be implementing short, medium and long term improvements to ensure the town centre's success in meeting the needs of current and future residents. A Town Centre Action Plan sets out what the Council and key partners will do to improve and regenerate the Town Centre in meeting short, medium and long term goals.

- Attracting investment and creating opportunities for residents and business.
- Restoring pride and improving public realm.
- Giving stakeholders a say in working together.
- Promoting Town Centre opportunities to residents, businesses, community groups and visitors.

Harlow Market - In November 2014, Harlow Market was relocated into Broad Walk as part of plans to improve the viability of the market. It is hoped that the extension will place market traders in a better position to capitalise on better footfall, encouraging new shoppers and traders.

Other improvements

During 2015 significant improvements to the clock tower roundabout were made. This will ease congestion and aid access to the Enterprise Zone at London Road. In 2015 works began to complete a new access road from A414 into Enterprise Zone London Road North.

Support the economic growth of Harlow Council

Council awarded GEW High Impact award - The Council, in recognition of its contribution to this year's Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) campaign, has been selected as a winner of the High Impact award. This year's GEW, which ran from 16-20 November 2015, involved a range of organisations helping local entrepreneurs 'Make it Happen' at a special event in the town. The event, was an opportunity for anyone considering starting a business or becoming self-employed to find out about the range of support available.

Global Entrepreneurship Networking Event 17 November 2015 - Networking event for likeminded businesses to learn more about how the Enterprise Agency Norwich and Waveney Enterprise Services (NWES) can provide support through advice, training, finance and managed office space and meeting rooms.

Business workshop - Harlow Council in partnership with Anglia Ruskin University has teamed up with a business consultancy and management company, Simboc, to provide a free workshop for anyone interested in becoming their own boss or starting a business.

'Harlow Business' - a quarterly newsletter is sent out to local businesses to update them on Council work and partnership opportunities.

What we will do next (our objectives for 2016/17):

- Start works on the ground at the London Road South site of the Enterprise Zone and secure additional tenants.
- Commence construction on the SELEP funded transport infrastructure projects at London Road and Templefields.
- Agree a mechanism for the delivery of a new Science Park at the London Road North site of the Enterprise Zone.
- Continue with the regeneration of the Briars, Copshall Close and Aylets Field.
- Implement the Action Plan for Harlow Town Centre to ensure that Harlow Town Centre is a place that everyone can enjoy and be proud of.
- Develop a pipeline of sites that can be developed for housing of all tenures.
- Ensure that Harlow is attractive to business, offering a competitive advantage to give businesses an edge.
- Continue with a programme to deliver neighbourhood regeneration schemes such as Slacksbury Hatch and Staple Tye.

Wellbeing and social inclusion

“Harlow has a proud history of tolerance and promoting fairness and equality. We will continue to work with partners to ensure that people get on well together, are actively engaged in making Harlow a great place to live and work, and feel proud of our town.

During 2014 and the early part of 2015 Harlow saw significant challenges with unauthorised encampments, this led to an increase in community tension and frustration. Harlow Council and Essex County Council actively explored long-term solutions and in December 2015 were granted a town-wide injunction from the High Court banning the setting up of unauthorised traveller encampments in Harlow.

On a more positive note, to help meet the needs of Travellers, the Council, in partnership with Essex County Council were successful in its bid to the Homes and Communities Agency for funding to refurbish and upgrade the Travellers site at Fernhill Lane. This will see all derelict plots on that site refurbished and those plots currently occupied will be brought up to an equivalent standard.

Harlow Council will do all it can to explore long-term legal solutions that will provide a long term sustainable solution for dealing with unauthorised traveller encampments in the town.

Harlow Council continues to do all that it can to tackle domestic abuse and over the past 12 months has undertaken and supported many initiatives including supporting the Daisy Project in A&E and Maternity Unit in PAH, and Till Receipt initiative highlighting how to report incidents of DA and Support Information. Harlow Council chairs the Domestic Abuse Forum and ran a Christmas gift appeal donating gifts to families living in local refuges accommodation over the Christmas period. More than 200 gifts were donated.

Harlow Council in partnership with local businesses and Essex Fire & Rescue Service have signed up to form the Harlow Dementia Action Alliance. The Alliance works to make Harlow a dementia-friendly town, where people with dementia and their carers feel supported and fully integrated in the local community. Harlow Council is also signed up to the Keep Safe scheme. A free scheme that helps people feel safer when out in town by providing them with key fobs containing essential telephone numbers of relatives, friends and carers. Local venues such as shops and libraries sign up to the scheme and provide free access to use of a telephone or make a call on behalf of someone producing their Keep Safe card.

On another positive note Harlow Council became the first council to become a Living Wage employer and in 2014 the Joint Venture with Kier Harlow Ltd was awarded the East of England Living Wage Champion award for ensuring that people who work on behalf of the Council get a decent wage.

The Council has also made a commitment to explore options for alternative delivery models for the Playhouse and Pets Corner to help secure a long-term future. These services not only benefit those that use them directly, but make Harlow a better place to live, and attract businesses.”

Councillor Emma Toal – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Youth and Community.

Our goals for the next three years:

1. Achieve the key ambitions of the Harlow Wellbeing Strategy

- Address eight key issues identified within the Community Wellbeing Strategy:
 1. Smoking, drug and alcohol abuse
 2. Mental health
 3. Employment opportunities
 4. Peaceful neighbourhoods free from anti-social behavior
 5. Homelessness
 6. Children to start school ready to learn and improving educational attainment
 7. Older people maintaining independence and being treated with dignity
 8. Tackling obesity and making better life choices

- Attempt to address causes of social exclusion and health deprivation where the Council can have an influence.

2. Continue to manage the impact of welfare reform and other pressures

- Assess the impact of welfare reform and other pressures on specific communities and to develop strategies to reduce inequalities where appropriate.

3. Work with partners to tackle crime and anti-social behavior

- Review partnership arrangements in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour and ensure robust partnership arrangements with the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- Develop a prioritised action plan to achieve priorities identified in the Safer Harlow Partnership Strategic Assessment, to prioritise resources and to manage public expectations.
- Work in partnership on the Integrated Offender Management and Community Payback Schemes.
- Work in partnership to challenge perceptions about the extent of crime and anti-social behaviour in Harlow and to raise awareness of the fact that Harlow is a safe place to live.

4. Develop a partnership approach to the provision of Discretionary services.

- To ensure the sustainability of valued services while reducing the Council's costs.

5. Implement a new Customer Service strategy for 2016 to 2019

- To satisfy our customer's needs and demands whilst reducing our operating costs.

What we have achieved so far:

Achieve the key ambitions of the Harlow Wellbeing Strategy

Employment opportunities

Unemployment rates have been steadily decreasing over time with 7 percent of the economically active population of Harlow unemployed between July 2013 and June 2014. This decreased again to 6.7 percent for the period July 2014 to June 2015.

Harlow Council is to co-ordinate access/promotion of skills and learning opportunities by developing West Essex Skills and Learning Forum by March 2016.

Peaceful neighbourhoods free from anti-social behaviour

The Council has introduced a corporate Anti-social Behaviour Policy introducing the new anti-social behavior legislation to provide the Council with powers to use the new legislation where necessary.

Street Lighting

Agreement was reached between Harlow Council and Essex County Council to keep Harlow's street lights on all night seven days a week from 25 October 2015. Essex County Council accepted Harlow Council's offer to fund street lights staying on all night every night in Harlow. In February 2015, Harlow Council agreed as part of its 2015/16 budget to increase its Council Tax by 1.5 percent to pay to keep street lights on subject to Essex County Council's agreement.

The cost to Harlow Council will be just under £106,000 a year starting from 25 October 2015 and the costs will be reviewed annually at the end of October for the next four years. The agreement between the two Councils will see Harlow Council pay for the additional electricity and arising CO2 emissions with Essex County Council continuing to be responsible for the maintenance of the lights. Harlow Council will also support Essex County Council on any initiatives to explore trialing the use of more energy efficient lighting to help reduce costs for Council taxpayers.

Addressing Health Deprivation

Outdoor Gym - Installation of a new Outdoor Gym with cardio and core strength areas split over 2 locations funded by Harlow Health Centres Trust. This facility is proving popular and provides a free way for residents to exercise.

Tennis Courts and Multi Use Games Areas - Refurbishment of facilities at Blackbush Springs, Bush Fair, The Dashes, Foldcroft, Northbrooks and Staple Tye. These facilities are free for residents to play sports such as tennis, basketball and football. The improvements were well received by residents.

Active Harlow - The Community Sport and Physical Activity Network has successfully attracted a range of funding from sources such as Active Essex and Harlow Health Centres Trust to deliver targeted interventions that increase participation in sport and physical activity. Projects have ranged from the Doorstep Sports Club at Paringdon Sports and Social Club that attracts up to 50 teenagers every week to Healthy Harlow, a weight management project delivered in partnership with Harlow Leisurezone, Anglia Community Enterprises and Harlow Sports Awards which aims to celebrate the contribution local residents make to sport and physical activity whilst raising the profile of sport in Harlow locally and across the County. In excess of 2000 attendances have been recorded at Active Harlow projects.

Other projects include:

- Fortnightly walks to encourage people to get fitter whilst enjoying the open air of the Town Park began 7 August 2015.
- Harlow Council in partnership with Hub + Spoke (a not for profit cycle hub), Paringdon Sports and Social Club, Essex Police, The Cyclists Touring Club, Halfords, Decathlon and Tesco delivered Ride Harlow on 30 August 2015; a mass participation cycling event encouraging residents to get on their bike and take to the cycle tracks of Harlow.
- Free fitness sessions at the Outdoor Gym provided by local business Stanley4Fitness.

Living Wage

The Council has introduced a Living Wage for all of its employees and its JVCO partner Kier Harlow Ltd, has done the same. On 2 November 2015, the new UK Living Wage rate of £8.25 per hour (rising from £7.85) was announced.

The Living Wage rate, which is set independently and updated annually, is based on the cost of living. It is higher than the national minimum wage of £6.70 per hour, and the new minimum wage premium for over 25s of £7.20 per hour called the “National Living Wage” that will come into force across the UK in April 2016. The government rate is separate to the Living Wage rate calculated by the Living Wage Foundation.

Kier Harlow Ltd joined the Council in 2014 in becoming a Living Wage Employer. Employees of Kier Harlow Ltd will continue to be paid at least the voluntary Living Wage rate when they transfer in 2017 to the Local Authority Trading Company. The Council also encourages all its suppliers to pay the Living Wage through its procurement processes.

According to the Living Wage Foundation there are a total of eight Living Wage employers in Harlow including U First Care, Land Sheriffs Ltd, GSK as well as bank branches of Lloyds, Nationwide and Barclays.

Social inclusion and community cohesion

The 2015 Essex Tracker Survey reported that 14 percent (15 percent in 2014) of residents in Harlow volunteer at least once a week with a group, club or organisation. This is a slight reduction compared to 2014 although it has increased from 11 percent in 2013. Results were collected in September and October 2015.

The Survey also reported that 69 percent of Harlow residents agreed with the statement that ‘their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together’.

Leah Manning Centre - The Leah Manning Centre continues to provide day care for older people under contract with Essex Social Care. The Council works with West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group (WECCG) in the voluntary and community sector to provide a joined up approach for meeting the needs of older people. The Centre promotes social inclusion for older people through activities such as the Canal Trip (8 September 2015) and VE Day Street Party (8 May 2015).

Dementia Action Alliance - The Council has joined forces with other organisations to support the estimated 1,000 people living with dementia in the Harlow area. Local businesses and public services including Asda, Tesco and Essex Fire & Rescue Service have signed up to form the Harlow Dementia Action Alliance. The Alliance works to make Harlow a dementia-friendly town, where people with dementia and their carers feel supported and fully integrated in the local community.

Dementia Training - Harlow Council is encouraging its employees to undertake Dementia training.

Keep Safe Scheme - Harlow Council in partnership with Essex County Council, Essex Police and Essex Safeguarding Adults Boards is providing free key fobs for older people aged 60 and over to carry which contain essential telephone numbers of relatives, friends and carers. These can be used to contact someone in situations like losing a purse or wallet, feeling unwell or becoming disoriented. Currently 54 local venues such as shops and libraries have signed up to the scheme and will provide free access to use of a telephone or make a call on behalf of someone producing their Keep Safe card. Scheme members should look out for the Keep Safe logo which identifies that the venue is part of the scheme.

Work with partners to tackle crime and anti-social behavior - The Council has worked in partnership to tackle crime and anti-social behavior. Examples of the work include:

- **A week of Community Action** where partners worked together to combat anti-social behavior in Harlow. Work undertaken included opening void Council garages to locate stored stolen goods and identify and appropriately signpost rough sleepers. Properties were also visited and residents spoken to regarding their use of cannabis in premises.
- **Safe and Social events** have been organised to raise safety awareness amongst the elderly in Harlow and also provide an opportunity to socialise.

A successful multi agency campaign was launched to combat problems associated with Halloween and Fireworks, additional Firework 'Test Purchasing' was carried out by Trading Standards, 100 percent of premises tested passed the 'test purchase'.

Domestic Abuse Awareness Week - Took place on 30 November to 4 December 2015. On Friday 27 November 2015, an independent charity providing support to those affected by domestic abuse called Safer Places held a conference at the Civic Centre entitled 'Stemming the tide'. Throughout the week there was an information and awareness stand with representatives from Safer Places, Family Solutions and Harlow Council set up in various places around the town.

Domestic Abuse Training - Harlow Council is committed to increasing awareness of Domestic Violence and/or Abuse, Forced Marriage or Honor Based Abuse and providing guidance for staff. As part of this commitment, two new courses have been created for Harlow Council employees to undertake.

Harlow Domestic Abuse Forum Gift Appeal – The scheme involved contributors buying a gift and donating it at any of the participating shops. The gifts were given to families living in local refuges accommodation over the Christmas period.

Gypsies and Travellers - the Council has continued to be open and transparent by keeping the public informed on a daily basis in the past year with regard to the unauthorised Traveller encampments in the town. Information is made available on the Harlow Council website and via the Harlow Council twitter feed.

Harlow Council will be seeking, through the Department of Communities and Local Government, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, changes in the enforcement powers available to Councils to deal with unauthorised encampments. The Council has also written to Government urging them to enforce Traveller provision in other parts of the Country and within Essex.

District wide injunction against unauthorised traveller encampments granted until June 2017

In the last year Harlow endured significant challenges with unauthorised encampments. Harlow Council and Essex County Council actively explored long-term solutions and were granted an interim town-wide injunction from the High Court banning the setting up of unauthorised traveller encampments in Harlow.

After the necessary months of planning and gathering evidence to make an application for an injunction, Harlow Council and Essex County Council applied for the district wide ban against 35 named travellers and persons unknown, from setting up unauthorised encampments in Harlow. The High Court injunction also covered and protected 454 parcels of land and banned persons unknown from setting up unauthorised traveller

encampments. These sites included 320 vulnerable sites including parks and playgrounds, previously occupied sites, highway verges, schools and private land identified by Harlow Council and Essex County Council, as well as 134 parcels of land that incorporated cycle tracks.

Harlow Council has also physically protected land from unauthorised encampments by installing appropriate posts and banners.

What we will do next (our objectives for 2016/17):

- Continue to support the achievement of key ambitions from the Harlow Wellbeing Strategy.
- Implement revised arrangements for crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Implement a prioritised action plan to combat anti-social behaviour and environmental crime.
- Actively explore options for alternative delivery models for retained discretionary services such as the Playhouse and Pets' Corner.
- Implement the actions from the Customer Service Strategy 2016 – 2019.

A clean and green environment

“Harlow’s green spaces are a major part of the unique character of the town and play a key role in making it such a great place to live in, bringing the landscape right into the heart of the community and making it easy to get outside for sport and leisure, as well as simply being great to look at. The town’s green spaces provide really good opportunities for residents to get involved in important nature conservation work too, and it is great to see that community volunteers get the chance to be involved in enjoyable and valuable nature conservation work.

I know from talking to residents, and the results of the budget consultation, 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. Efficiency savings invested in extra grass cutting and green space management have made a positive impact.

The regeneration of the Town Park is an important project for Harlow. £2.8m is being invested into the improvements with more than £1.8m of this coming from Lottery funding. This money has been invested in improvements to Pets’ Corner including a new events barn and a Learning Centre to provide an enhanced education programme.”

Councillor Mark Wilkinson – Portfolio Holder for Environment

Our goals for the next three years:

1. Improve the cleanliness of the town and the maintenance of open spaces:

- Continue to improve street cleaning and grounds maintenance performance.
- Devise a communications strategy/plan aimed at improving the community’s understanding of action taken to protect and improve the environment and increase the shared sense of pride and ownership in Harlow’s environment.
- Continue to work towards the smooth transition of duties and responsibilities from Kier Harlow Ltd to the new Local Authority Trading Company (LATC).

2. Minimise domestic waste and maximise reuse and recycling:

- Work with Essex Waste Management Partnership to deliver communication campaigns to minimise waste volume and maximise reuse and recycling.
- Review available waste and recycling collection and disposal methods and market information to prepare for collection contract replacement in June 2018.
- Work with Essex Waste Management Partnership to deliver communication campaigns to minimise waste volume and maximise reuse and recycling.
- Prepare and put in place a waste and recycling collection system fit for the future to continue service beyond the current collection contract which expires June 2018.

3. Invest in unadopted roads and pavements:

- Improve the highway inspection regime, to ensure that problems are identified sooner, to minimise trips and slips.
- The system of inspection and recording will be further enhanced by the ongoing development and use of hand held Geographical Information computer that details the condition at the time of inspection, records any defect and where necessary instigate the necessary follow up works.

4. Tackle town-wide parking problems.

- Through the 'North Essex Parking Partnership' tackle town wide parking problems to achieve the following:
 - Fewer illegally parked cars meaning fewer accidents, better traffic flow and accessibility.
 - More effective operation of emergency and service vehicles.
 - Improvement of the general environment by providing a more environmentally efficient transport system.
 - Encouragement of sensible and safe parking.
 - Parking provision that is responsive to the public's needs.
- Through the 'North Essex Parking Partnership' review existing and predicted levels of demand for parking, the availability and pricing of existing parking facilities and the nature and extent of on-street parking restrictions.
- Continue to work within the partnership to ensure value for money and that the current review reflects the aims and objectives of both business and local community.

5. Regenerate the Town Park.

- Through the Council's successful bid of £1.83m Heritage Lottery Funding, improve the awareness, appreciation and enjoyment of Harlow Town Park, restoring and adapting its unique collection of features and styles for today's park users.

What we have achieved so far:

Improve the cleanliness of the town and the maintenance of open spaces.

Street Scene - The Kier Harlow Ltd Street Scene Team have seen ongoing improvements and has remained within target to Sept 2015. The percentage of land assessed as having unacceptable levels of fly-posting has also stayed consistently good and within target.

Average time to remove fly-tips - The time taken to collect fly-tipping has consistently performed better than the target of 3.5 hours.

Residual household waste per household - Harlow is among the best performing areas in the country with regard to the amount of household waste collected per household.

Communication strategy for optimised waste management to be implemented - The Council has agreed to work through Essex Waste Management Partnership on a communication campaign to minimise food waste.

Maintain or increase recycling rates from domestic waste - This service has remained effective, and the quantity of material collected for recycling has exceeded expectations. The Council has successfully completed roll-out of its food waste from flats service and promoted its garden waste collection services, attracting an increased number of subscribers. Despite a national trend towards increased residual waste, which adversely affects recycling rates, the percentage of waste diverted by recycling or composting has remained close to ambitious targets.

Tackle town-wide parking problems

Parking - A series of six consultations with local residents regarding parking issues in their specific parts of the town were carried out in 2015 leading to the implementation of several traffic regulation orders.

Regenerate the Town Park

Town Park – During 2015 major refurbishment of Harlow Town Park has been undertaken through a landscaping contract and a capital works contract as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded Project. Under the landscaping contract new planting areas and new paths were created across the park and as well as restoring the Water Garden area and extending the

rhododendrum dell areas. Through the capital works contract improvements have been made to Pets' Corner (including the erection of a new events barn and a Learning Centre), the bandstand and Spurriers House (to enable the ground floor to be used as a café).

In addition Harlow College students have supported the improvements to the park by:

- Constructing bat boxes that have been erected across the park
- Painting the inside of the bandstand
- Laying paving and constructing a series of five raised beds in the Walled Garden

The weekly and monthly Town Park volunteer groups have helped maintain the park by undertaking extensive work across the park including the refurbishment of the sensory garden and the circular garden in Spurriers Core.

The Education and Volunteer Officer has also led monthly guided walks and fortnightly health walks which have helped the public appreciate the various features and habitats within the park.

What we will do next (our objectives for 2016/17):

- The residents' budget consultation undertaken during the summer of 2014 identified that parks, open spaces and street cleaning were amongst those services that received the highest scores and therefore were the most important to residents. In recognition of this the following actions will take place:
- Re-investment in efficiency savings and performance payments to deliver continued focus on street cleansing activities and improved grounds maintenance.
- More communications to residents of the actions and activities taken to improve the environment.
- Complete the Heritage Lottery Funded capital works within the park and continue to create a series of events and activities in the park that help increase people's appreciation of the park including developing the educational programme on offer.
- Implement a revised highway inspection regime, to ensure that problems are identified sooner, to minimise trips and slips.
- We will continue to further our commitment to minimising waste and increasing recycling through our ongoing programme to increase the collection of food waste from flat blocks for separate biological treatment. The Council will also continue to promote and enhance residents' participation in wider waste minimisation and recycling issues by working with Essex Waste Management Partnership to deliver a communications campaign emphasising the importance of proper use of the full range of waste and recycling services available.

Successful children and young people

“The Council works to support the young people of Harlow in a wide range of ways.

We have implemented a school readiness programme to help ensure that children get the best start in life, and in November 2015 the Harlow Educational Progress Awards were held for the second year running. The awards, organised by Harlow Council through the Harlow Strategic Partnership for Educational Attainment, aim to recognise and reward young people who have made significant progress in their education and recognise the contribution that they have made to their schools and the community.

The Council continues to prioritise the improvement of educational outcomes in Harlow and will be working hard toward this goal in 2016-2019.

The Youth Council, with whom I have had the opportunity to work with closely this year, offers young people the chance to develop a huge number of skills, interact with the towns’ decision makers and have their opinions heard.

The Council has offered a huge amount of support to the new University Technical College and the Anglia Ruskin University Centre which is allowing many students access to higher education where this may not have been possible previously.”

Councillor Emma Toal – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Youth and Community.

Our goals for the next three years:

1. Help to improve outcomes for Harlow’s children and young people:

- Continue to implement the findings of the Scrutiny Review of Educational Attainment and in particular work in partnership to address the issue of low levels of ‘school readiness’, helping parents and pre-school providers to support Harlow’s pre-school children so that they start school with the necessary skills to enable them to be ready to learn.
- Work in partnership to help schools improve and to drive up aspiration and educational attainment for Harlow’s young people. In particular, to facilitate the provision of support and training for Reception teachers.
- Work in partnership to support young people post-16 to ensure that there is a range of opportunities that will encourage continued learning and allow young people to reach their full potential.

2. Support young people to be more involved in decision making

- Enhance the support given to the Youth Council, so that Youth Councillors can be more involved in the Council's decision-making processes and act as advocates for young people in Harlow.
- Encourage young people to be involved in community life and in democratic processes.
- Support work to challenge negative perceptions about Harlow's young people and about educational attainment in Harlow.

3. Support families with complex needs

- Work with a range of partners to support those families that have the most complex needs to ensure that every child has the best possible start in life and encourage aspiration and achievement throughout education and into adult life.

4. Supporting Apprenticeships for young people

- For new or expanding business, industrial or other employment generating uses in Harlow, provision through planning obligations will be sought for:
 - Employment of local people (including the use of apprenticeships)
 - Work related training provision
 - Education opportunities
 - Affordable childcare.
- Enshrine the support for apprenticeships for young people in the revised Local Plan and the Council's procurement policy.

5. Safeguarding children and young people

The Council takes the safety and wellbeing of children and young people seriously and works continuously with the Essex Safeguarding Children Board and a range of partner agencies to ensure that effective policies and procedures are in place and so that staff and Councillors receive appropriate training to assist the identification of children at risk of abuse and ensure that robust referrals are made to Children Social Care when necessary.

What we have achieved so far:

Help to improve outcomes for Harlow's children and young people.

Educational attainment for Harlow's young people - The outstanding educational progress and contribution of 30 young people was recognised at the annual Harlow Educational Progress Awards on 24 November 2015. All 30 young people were nominated by their schools for the progress and contributions they have made at different learning stages often overcoming significant challenges to do so. This year a record number of nominees were made after 19 young people were nominated last year. The awards were presented by Professor Michael Thorne, Vice Chancellor of Anglia Ruskin University.

Harlow School Readiness Project - Harlow Council, Essex County Council, Children's Centres and other agencies are working together to address the issue of 'School Readiness' in order to help ensure that Harlow children have appropriate opportunities to acquire the skills they need to be ready to learn once they start school. The project is governed by the Harlow Strategic Partnership for Educational Attainment which has issued a 'Harlow Pledge For Educational Attainment' and partners are working together to give every Harlow child the opportunity to fulfil their potential. This project commenced in January 2014 and was initially targeted in three geographical areas - Little Parndon, Potter Street and Staple Tye and will be rolled across the district in early 2016. Since the School Readiness Project commenced the number of Harlow children judged as having a Good Level of Development on entry to Year One has increased from 38 percent in 2013/14 to 66 percent at the end of September 2015.

Support young people to be more involved in decision making

Youth Council - Enhanced support to Harlow Youth Council has enabled the introduction of additional trained Youth Workers to work with project groups and ensure that priority work streams can be moved forward effectively.

Elected Youth Councillors have also been given the opportunity to attend a residential training programme that will help develop confidence, team work, planning, communication and project work skills to assist them build positive relationships with adult Councillors. They have had the opportunity to attend formal internal and external meetings in order to have their say and influence local decision making about important issues that affect young people in Harlow.

Youth Council Survey - Harlow Council has been consulting young people on their views about the effectiveness of Harlow Youth Council and its role, along with what young people feel are the top issues for them. The results will be used to inform the Council's Scrutiny Committee Review of Harlow Youth Council.

Big Debate - Harlow Youth Council organised a Big Debate on Saturday 4 July 2015 so young people could ask questions to a panel of people that make decisions. The panel included Harlow Councillors from all parties, Robert Halfon MP, and representatives from Essex County Council and West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group.

Supporting Apprenticeships for young people

Apprentices - Harlow Council employs apprentices in a range of service areas from IT to planning. There are currently a total of eight apprentices and Harlow Council is looking to employ more.

What we will do next (our objectives for 2016/17):

- Continue to develop the Youth Council.
- Continue to work with partners to improve the educational attainment of Harlow's young people.
- The third Harlow Educational Attainment Awards will be held.
- The Harlow School Readiness Project, although initially targeted in three geographical areas - Little Parndon, Potter Street and Staple Tye, will be rolled out across the district in early 2016.
- Continue to support officers to attend a range of multi-agency partnership meetings that promote the health, safety and wellbeing of all Harlow children.
- Will continue to consider employing apprentices when the appropriate opportunities arise.

Harlow Council principles

Being the Community Leader

Our goals for the next three years:

1. Promote the needs of Harlow

- As the democratic governance body for Harlow it will fulfil its community leadership role and represent the interests of the community of Harlow nationally, regionally and locally.
- It will be the leading advocate for Harlow and will seek to influence bodies with decision-making powers that can affect Harlow for the benefit of the community it serves.

2. Maintain the Council's role as the recognised community leader

- Work with local, regional and national partners to ensure that the value that Harlow Council can add to the design of new policies and services is recognised.
- Undertake a number of scrutiny reviews on key issues for Harlow to understand how resources are allocated and how organisations are performing.
- Influence spending decisions of key service providers for the benefit of Harlow so that Harlow receives a level of resources that matches its needs compared to other places in Essex, the region and the country.

3. Improve opportunities for Harlow residents to participate in local democracy and decision making

- Develop the 'Community Engagement Strategy' to ensure that it draws on best practice and provides value for money.
- Support the voluntary and community sector in making funding applications and developing its capacity.
- Work in partnership to develop initiatives and activities to involve people in improving their neighbourhoods.
- Support existing Residents Associations and the development of new ones.

4. Improve communication with the public

- Provide opportunities through public meetings, access to Council meetings, the website, and through Councillor Surgeries for members of the public to express their views on policy issues affecting the town.
- Provide information in a variety of formats setting out the challenges being faced by the Council, what it has achieved and the choices that it faces within the resources that it has available. This includes, where appropriate, details of what it can't do as well as what it intends to do.
- Continue to develop the Council's website so that more services, such as bookings, are available to the public online or through mobile devices.

5. Increase transparency

- Meeting government requirements for open data and transparency publicise details of how much and on what the Council spends its money on and its performance.
- Conduct, as far as is possible within the legal constraints placed upon it, the business of the Council in public.
- Ensure that the Council continues to conduct its business with integrity and in a businesslike manner showing respect for individuals and the Council's Constitution.

6. Amend the Council's procurement rules to support ethical business in Harlow

- The Council's Procurement Strategy to be further updated to reflect recent legislative changes such as the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- Continue to adopt and implement further changes to the public sector procurement legislation, policies and procedures.

What we have achieved so far:

Promote the needs of Harlow and be recognised community leader

Lobbying

M11 Junction 7a - Harlow Council have lobbied central government on a range of issues which are key needs for Harlow. This includes the proposed new junction 7a for the M11 that would create access to the motorway from the north of the town.

Illegal Encampments - Harlow Council will continue to lobby the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, calling for a review into the powers available to local Councils as well as the powers that the Police have available to deal with unauthorised encampments.

The Council will be continuing to petition for appropriate changes. The Council has also written to Government urging them to enforce Traveller provision in other parts of the Country and within Essex.

Princess Alexandra Hospital - Harlow Council in consultation with the Councils of West Essex and East Hertfordshire is lobbying central government to:

- Address funding issues at the Princess Alexandra Hospital.
- Develop a longer term plan to secure financially sustainable, appropriate and sufficient access to health services for the communities served by the Princess Alexandra Hospital.

Crossrail 2 – Harlow Council will be making representations to make the case for Crossrail 2 to have a terminus in Harlow recognising the benefits for Harlow, the area that it serves and for London.

Improve opportunities for Harlow residents to participate in local democracy and decision making

VCS grants – in 2015 Harlow Council gave a total of £131,000 in grants to voluntary and community organisations in the district.

Improve communication with the public

Website - The Council's website places an emphasis on extending the amount of information and services that are provided to Harlow residents online. This adds a convenient way for residents to interact with the Council and find out essential information, complementing the existing face-to-face and telephone services available. From April 2014 to March 2015 there were 415,512 visits to Harlow Council's website compared with the previous year of 336,041 visits, an increase of 24 percent.

Residents can pay Council bills with credit or debit cards online or via a 24 hour automated telephone payments line, can book waste collection and pest control services, invite the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council to events and can report fraud or environmental issues such as fly-tipping as well as applying for services such as benefits, allotments and housing.

Between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015, £4,284,348.89 was taken via the internet and £9,938,983.59 on the automated phone system. In the same period the previous year, £3,326,688.58 was taken via the internet and £8,762,116.19 on the automated phone system. Therefore there is an increase in the number of payments made via these two methods by £2,134,527.71.

Increase Transparency

Transparency agenda - many departments in Harlow Council have been working together to ensure that they comply with the 2014 Code of Transparency. The Council is regularly publishing the required information on its Open Data webpage.

Amend the Council's procurement rules to support ethical business in Harlow

The Council Procurement Strategy has been updated and incorporates the Council's Aspirations regarding the promotion of ethical behaviour and Fair Trade, the Living Wage and Black Listing. The new EU Public Contract Directives, which became national law through the Public Contract Regulations 2015 has been adopted and implemented.

What we will do next (our objectives for 2016/17):

- Continue to lobby ECC and central Government for key infrastructure improvements for Harlow including junction 7a.
- Actively explore how the Council can improve openness and transparency, and improve resident engagement.

Sound resource management

Our goals for the next three years:

1. Ensure the Council is economic, efficient and effective.

- Further explore opportunities to deliver corporate services more effectively through partnership working wherever possible.
- Continue to ensure that financial decisions are made with long term sustainability in mind.
- Implement systems changes and procedures common to all services across the Council to drive further efficiencies.
- Additionally review the benefits that can be achieved through improved application of new technology in the way the Council conducts its business.
- Review the procurement activity across the Council to ensure that maximum benefit is obtained from its commissioning and purchasing activities.

2. Get the best from the resources available.

- Continue to manage the Council's financial resources responsibly and effectively within the policies in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the financial constraints.
- Complement the Council's asset management plans by undertaking a full non housing asset stock condition survey to ensure that resource requirements for the maintenance of the Council's asset portfolio are clearly identified and can be used to help inform future decisions in relation its overall asset holdings.
- Implement the Customer Service and Access Strategy to improve customer contact channels and reduce time taken to deal with customer contact.

What we have achieved so far:

Ensure the Council is economic, efficient and effective

Modern ICT - The Council approved a new ICT Strategy in December 2014. The action plan associated with the strategy is being delivered to ensure that there are robust and relevant ICT systems available to all services to enhance and improve service delivery to the Council's customers.

As well as the new working practices introduced with the issue of iPads the Council is continuing to look at new and alternative technologies in the workplace. Options for the interaction with customers through mediums such as tablets and smart phones are being explored in order to offer a greater number of options to access Council services.

Get the best from the resources available

People Resource Plan - The People Resource Plan looks forward to the 2018-19 financial year and sets the strategy the Council wishes to adopt in ensuring the workforce of the Council are ready and able to drive forward and achieve the Council's vision and priorities as laid out in the Corporate Plan.

What we will do next (our objectives for 2016/17):

- Continue to roll out innovative technologies to improve efficiency.
- Begin to influence and shape the future technology investment requirements of the Council in line with the ICT Strategy.
- Continue to seek new and innovative ways to secure alternative sources of funding to meet projected budget shortfalls and protect services wherever possible.

Equalities and Fairness

- The Council's Constitution sets out how it operates as an organisation, how decisions are made and the procedures that need to be followed to ensure it is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.
- Harlow Council is committed to the principles of equality of opportunity, fairness and equality for all in its service provision. These principles underpin the services the Council provides and the opportunities it creates as an employer, partner and service provider. The Council works toward an environment that is based on inclusiveness, where all potential applicants are given equal opportunity to apply for available roles with the Council and all employees can develop their full potential.
- In 2011 the Council published its Corporate Equalities Policy, Putting People First, which reflects what is enshrined in our constitution and embedded across the culture of the organisation.
- The Council is reviewing and updating its Corporate Equality Policy.
- The Council monitors how well it is performing in equalities and fairness through a variety of measures including community cohesion and reducing disadvantage. The Council's approach to equalities is embedded in the decisions it makes as an organisation.
- Where a change in policy, function or activity has a major impact on the community, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) remains an option to assess the proposed changes and asks the following questions:
 - Are there different service outcomes for different communities?
 - If so, what measures will be put in place to redress these differences?
 - What will be the impact of the delivery of any proposed new services or functions on satisfaction ratings amongst different groups of residents?
 - How have residents with different needs been consulted on the anticipated impact of this proposal?

What we will do next (our objectives for 2016/17):

- Ensure that the Council's procurement policy reflects its values of Fairness and Equality.
- Ensure that Officers and Councillors receive appropriate Equalities training.
- Ensure that the E – Learning course is rolled out to all Officers and Councillors.
- Adopt Corporate Equalities Policy for the next three years.
- Develop Corporate Equalities Action Plan in consultation with representatives of people with protected characteristics.