

Hertfordshire's Annual Report 2014-15

Foreword from Robert Gordon, Leader of the County Council and John Wood, Chief Executive and Director of Environment

To follow (to be inserted)

Significant developments and achievements

- Since 2010/11, the County Council has delivered savings which now amount to £172 million per annum; eighty-seven per cent of the savings have come from doing things more cost effectively, while largely protecting the range and quality of the front-line services the county council provides.
- 75% of residents asked in our regular surveys say they are satisfied or very satisfied with the way the County Council runs things. This compares favourably with a national average of 71%. Of residents surveyed, 88% said that they were satisfied with Hertfordshire as a place to live, compared to 82% nationally. Despite the challenging financial situation and the savings that every local council has to find, 82% of residents surveyed said that they thought that council services had stayed the same or got better.
- We have pooled £240 million of council and NHS monies in one of the most ambitious health and social care integration programmes in the country. Delivering pro-active support to older people at risk of admission to hospital has been identified as a priority and we're developing together in new services to prevent older people having to go into hospital unnecessarily.
- Over the past year, education standards have continued to improve. 66% of young people achieved 5 A* - C grades at GCSE – 11th highest in the country.
- To continue to address the demographic pressures in the county, the County Council increased the number of primary school places by 564 in 2014. This includes 429 permanent places and 195 temporary places with work ongoing to further increase the number of places over the coming year. As a result of school place planning during 2014, it was possible to offer 94% of Hertfordshire children a place in a school of their choice, with more than 81% being offered their first choice.
- Hertfordshire has secured £4.8m of Department of Education Innovation funding. The Family Safeguarding programme will deliver innovative approaches to improve the support families receive from the social care system. It will establish Family Safeguarding Teams across the County, which will build on the skills mix of our Children's Social Work teams, adding Domestic Abuse specialists and Community Psychiatric nurses to focus on parental mental health and substance misuse.
- Hertfordshire has retained all 82 of its children's centres. 90% of all children aged 0-4 years old in the county are currently registered with a children's centre and of these, 76.7% of children and their families have accessed children's centre services in the past twelve months.
- Our Inspiring Library Strategy will ensure that a static library presence will remain at all current communities. Work continues to ensure that buildings are able to deliver modern library services. Co-locating in or hosting community facilities and services has been key to this. In the last couple of years we have seen Borehamwood library co-located with Youth Connexions, community facilities and a museum. Harpenden Library now shares a building with Youth Connexions.
- A third "Day Crewing Plus" (DCP) station was completed and brought online at Baldock and Letchworth by Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS). As an alternative crewing

system, Day Crewing Plus has allowed HFRS to maintain operational cover and response times while releasing financial and other capacity within the service.

- A new contract was successfully put in place for the operation and management of the counties 17 household waste recycling centres. New interim waste disposal contracts were signed to secure savings and improve diversion of waste from landfill.
- The Council secured £269,000, through the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee medium term programme, to fund flood risk project appraisal work in Hertford, Watford, Rickmansworth, Potters Bar , London Colney and Long Marston.
- We secured the funding for the A602 to improve the existing road to ease traffic congestion and for the A120 – the Little Hadham Bypass – a new road around the village to remove extensive queueing at the traffic lights in the centre of the village. Our programme of highway maintenance and improvement works was delivered earlier in the financial year than we have managed before, with 847 schemes delivered. This included responding to the damaging effects of the 2013/14 winter and incorporating delivery of an expanded programme of works following the award of extra government funding.
- Final agreement was reached for the funding of Croxley Rail Link project, including the transfer of delivery, and all associated risks to London Underground Limited.
- Our highways street lighting service did not perform at the appropriate level from December 2014 to April 2015. Through concerted effort by officers and Ringway, our street lighting maintenance contractor, service levels were restored. Alongside the general street lighting maintenance service, a phased conversion to LED lighting with remote automated monitoring and control is being implemented to modernise our street lighting stock and reduce energy costs.
- The quality of Hertfordshire County Council services was recognised through a number of accolades in 2014/15:
 - The Trading Standards volunteer scheme was showcased as an example of best practice at the national Trading Standards Institute (TSI) conference which took place in Harrogate.
 - Hertfordshire Resilience were awarded an RSPCA Bronze Community Animal Welfare Footprint (CAWF) Award in the ‘contingency planning’ category, in recognition of the excellent work completed by the Animal Welfare Task and Finish Group.
 - The British Horse Society’s Lady Elizabeth Kirk Award was presented to the Rights of Way team for works undertaken in Wall Hall woods, Aldenham.
 - Our Countryside Management Service was once again accredited with the Investing in Volunteers UK quality standard.
 - Our Cycle Training received the Green Apple Award from the Green Organisation.
 - We received a positive Peer Review of the Council’s highways services.
 - The Ministry of Defence have recognised Hertfordshire County Council as part of their Employer Recognition Scheme by nominating it for a Silver Award.
 - Public Health was awarded a national award for suicide prevention and reduction.

Our Finances

The following section summarises Hertfordshire County Council's spending and funding for the financial year from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015.

The table below shows revenue spend by service compared to budget, and how this is funded by taxpayers. These figures include spending during the financial year on day to day items, such as salaries, premises costs and supplies and services.

| Spend against Revenue Budget | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 2013/14 | | 2014/15 | |
| Actual | | Budget | Actual |
| £m | | £m | £m |
| 163.22 | Children's Services | 170.89 | 170.48 |
| 331.60 | Health & Community Services | 352.80 | 344.92 |
| 30.01 | Public Health | 37.37 | 35.58 |
| 109.82 | Environment | 114.20 | 111.23 |
| 37.04 | Community Protection | 36.55 | 35.67 |
| 64.77 | Resources & Performance | 56.19 | 51.54 |
| 56.15 | Capital Financing | 34.53 | 33.63 |
| 16.68 | Central Items | 2.26 | (1.04) |
| | Contingency | 2.60 | |
| 809.29 | Total Spend | 807.39 | 782.01 |
| | Funded By: | | |
| 231.95 | Government grants | 230.49 | 232.82 |
| 108.38 | Business Rates | 107.32 | 107.32 |
| 462.42 | Council Tax | 469.57 | 469.57 |
| 6.54 | Movement (to)/ From reserves | | (27.70) |
| 809.29 | | 807.39 | 782.01 |

The variance of (£27.7m) saving includes £8.7m planned underspends and grants received late in 2014/15, which have been identified to carry forward to spend in future years. The underspend position reflects the authority's continuing drive to reduce spend in order to address the ongoing funding gap, arising from growing demands on our services and reduced government funding. It does not negate the need for the Council to continue with its challenging and innovative transformation programme, for delivery of further efficiencies in 2015/16 and beyond.

In addition to the revenue spend above, in 2014/15 the Council incurred £207.6m capital expenditure, continuing to invest in a programme of schools expansion to meet growth in pupil numbers, and in maintenance of the county's road network. This has been funded from

government grants and other contributions, capital receipts from the sale of other assets, and some revenue budget and reserves. The Council continues its policy of minimising borrowing and took no new long term borrowing in 2014/15.

| Capital Investment, 2014/15 | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | 2014/15 | 2013/14 |
| | £m | £m |
| Adult Social Care | 6.3 | 6.1 |
| Central Services | 5.1 | 5.3 |
| Children's & Education Services | 102.3 | 109.3 |
| Cultural & Related Services | 0.7 | 2.9 |
| Fire & Rescue | 2.8 | 1.8 |
| Planning Services | 6.7 | |
| Highways & Transport | 84.8 | 49.2 |
| Cost of Services | 207.6 | 174.5 |
| Funded by | | |
| Grants and Contributions | (151.9) | (105.9) |
| Capital receipts | (36.0) | 0.0 |
| Revenue Expenditure from capital | (14.1) | (46.6) |
| Capital reserves | (5.6) | (12.3) |
| | (207.6) | (164.8) |

The Council produces a full Statement of Accounts which shows the authority's financial position, prepared in accordance with international accounting standards and statutory requirements. These include a number of non-cash transactions, that do not need to be funded from Council Tax or other sources. At the time of publication, the Statement of Accounts is subject to external audit opinion. The unaudited accounts and previous years' audited accounts, are available [here](http://www.hertsdirect.org/your-council/lafinance/account/) (http://www.hertsdirect.org/your-council/lafinance/account/)

Council Priorities

In 2013, Hertfordshire County Council launched its new Corporate Plan for 2013-17: *Hertfordshire – County of Opportunity*. This set out the following vision for the county:

“We want Hertfordshire to remain a county where people have the opportunity to live healthy, fulfilling lives in thriving, prosperous communities”.

The plan sets out the council’s key priorities and how it intends to deliver this vision across four key themes:

- Opportunity to Thrive
- Opportunity to Prosper
- Opportunity to be Healthy and Safe
- Opportunity to Take Part

Opportunity to Thrive

The County Council's Corporate Plan states:

"We want every Hertfordshire resident to have the opportunity to maximise their potential and live full lives as confident citizens. We also want everyone to have the opportunity to live in communities where the value of Hertfordshire's clean and green environment is respected".



Notable developments in 2014/15 include:

- Over the past year, education standards have continued to improve. In 2014, 83.1% of children achieved level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2, placing Hertfordshire at 19th in the country and 66% of young people achieved 5 A* - C grades at GCSE – 11th in the country.
- The percentage of good and outstanding schools in our county continues to rise and at a faster pace than nationally. At the end of February 2015, 83.4% of schools were judged good or better by Ofsted, up from 77.5% in September 2013. 82.6% of pupils now attend a school judged to be good or outstanding (based on the number on the roll at the last Ofsted inspection). This is an increase of nearly 4 percentage points since April 2014.
- Whilst Hertfordshire has a strong track record of high overall attainment, with above national averages at all key stages, the gap between the attainment of our disadvantaged pupils and their peers in the county remains too large. In key stage 2, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally has reduced from 2013 for all key stage 2 indicators and is below the gap of Hertfordshire's statistical neighbours. The gap has also reduced for all key stage 4 indicators and is below the gap of Hertfordshire's statistical neighbours and the national average.
- Through its traded offer to schools, Youth Connexions has provided 3,021 days of careers guidance into our mainstream schools, academies and colleges providing approximately 15,000

career guidance sessions. In addition, during the 2014 -15 academic year, 7,285 young people received work experience placements in a wide variety of occupational areas.

- We have worked with 1,714 families as part of the Thriving Families Programme. A payment by results programme is in place where local authorities are awarded for achieving significant and sustained progress in addressing the eligible families' problems. Hertfordshire has now exceeded the target of working with 1,350 families by March 2015 set by the Department for Communities and Local Government, meaning we can now participate in Troubled Families Phase 2 from 1 April 2015. This aims to support around 4,500 families over the next 5 years.
- We have developed an innovative free Telecare service, which provides services such as personal alarm pendants linked to a monitoring centre, for people who need adult social care services. 4,000 installations have been made between September 2013 and April 2015. People have told us they feel more confident and independent as a result of having Telecare in their homes.
- Our Fire and Rescue Service continued to develop and expand its delivery of the Prince's Trust Team Programme, which is designed to improve the lives of unemployed young people between the ages of 16 and 25, across Hertfordshire. It aims to improve self-confidence, communication skills, motivation and job prospects.
- We have worked with District and Borough council partners, enabling them to achieve significant improvements in the kerbside collection services. The introduction of separate food waste services in some parts of the County is a major step forward to drive future improvement. The county council run household waste recycling centres already achieves recycling rates of 60%.
- A new suite of interim waste disposal facilities, successfully implemented from April 2014, have increased the use of regional energy recovery facilities. The total amount of local authority collected waste we sent to landfill has reduced from 34% in 2013/14 to 27% in 2014/15.
- We have actively represented Hertfordshire's interests by pushing for improvements to key transport infrastructure, including the identification of the A1M corridor for a strategy review and the commitment to a Task Force to investigate improvements to the West Anglia Main Line. We have also contributed to the London Plan, the overall strategic plan for London, which sets out a fully integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the capital to 2036.
- We provided input into the Government's Airports Commission work on future airport capacity in the South East and made a full response to the Stansted Airport Sustainable Development Plan which was published in September 2014. We have continued to lobby through bodies such as the AEF and the Luton Airport consultative committee regarding greater control of night flights.
- We were awarded funding following a successful bid to the government's Fire Services Improvement fund for a pioneering scheme to locate village libraries at the County's part-time fire stations. The funding will be used to relocate up to four existing libraries from their current homes to modern new facilities on the same site as the village fire station.

Opportunity to Prosper

The County Council's Corporate Plan states:

"We want Hertfordshire's economy to be strong, with resilient and successful businesses that offer employment opportunities to residents, helping them to maintain a high standard of living".



Notable developments in 2014/15 include:

- Buoyed by improving economic conditions, the Herts economy grew strongly in the last twelve months and now enjoys an employment rate close to 80 per cent, with the 2014 unemployment rate at 4.6% (UK average 7.6%). Provisional figures from UK Trade and Investment suggest Inward Investment levels are at a five year high, but there are growing signs that the commercial property market is struggling to meet growing business demand for Grade A commercial space.
- Although Hertfordshire is now a £30.4bn economy, (the fifth largest upper tier economy outside London) economic challenges include the rise in house prices by 13.2% over 2014 (UK average 7.6%), skills shortages emerged across the county and wide sub-county variances in unemployment are still present.
- We have worked closely with Hertfordshire's Local Enterprise Partnership on implementation of key proposals in their Strategic Economic Plan for the county. This has included supporting its bids to central government for infrastructure funding through the Single Local Growth Fund, resulting in funding being achieved for major transport infrastructure projects such as the Croxley Rail Link, A120 Little Hadham by-pass and improvements to the A602. We have also worked with the Local Enterprise Partnership on a renewed Inward Investment enquiry service for the county.
- The Connected Counties Programme has provided fibre broadband coverage to almost 8,000 business and residential premises in Hertfordshire. This has included wide-scale coverage upgrades in the Maylands, Centennial and Gunnelwood Road business parks. The programme is on track to ensure 90% fibre broadband coverage in Hertfordshire by March 2016. In April, a

second contract was signed worth £13.9 million which will extend fibre coverage to 95% by December 2017 and 98% by April 2019.

- Almost all of our young people benefit from a secure path into adulthood. NEET rates (young people not in education, employment or training) remain one of the lowest of any local authority in England and have reduced further in 2015 to a record low rate of 3.74%. However, our NEET rates are still too high for those in vulnerable groups (Children Looked After/Care Leavers, Young Offenders, those with a Special Educational Need or Disability).
- Since 2012, 142 young people aged between 17-25 years of age started an apprenticeship with the council in business administration, IT, finance, Building Maintenance and social care and of those starts, 17 were care leavers. The council provides support and mentoring to all the apprentices and additional support for care leavers through the application process.
- We have embarked on a new partnership with JobCentre Plus to ensure that our Care Leavers receive extra support to enter the job market. A sign of encouragement has been the reducing NEET rate for areas with higher deprivation levels.
- Our Work Solutions team, which supports people with Autism Spectrum Disorder, learning disabilities, mental ill health, sensory and physical disabilities to seek and secure paid employment, placed 90 people into employment of their choice and consistently supported between 160 and 200 people during 2014/15 to sustain their jobs.
- Changes to our policy on response to Automatic Fire Alarms have resulted in a significant reduction of 29.5% in attendances to non-domestic false alarms.
- Our Joint Protective Services (JPS) team is leading the Better Business Compliance pilot project, which is intended to facilitate stronger relationships and understanding between national (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, Immigration, Environment Agency and Gangmasters Licencing Authority) and local regulators (Trading Standards, Fire and Rescue, Environmental Health, Licensing) and local businesses.
- Our Money Advice Unit continues to support people through targeted projects to ensure people are accessing their full range of entitlements to benefits. The number of carers being supported with money advice has risen by 38% in just two years. The number of people eligible for social care support who also receive money advice has risen by 58% in the same period.
- In 2014/15, the Intalink m-ticketing app was launched and the website was renewed. Intalink received over 55,000 visits per month. We have also launched Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) with five bus operators (Red Rose, Red Eagle, Red Line, Metroline and UNO).

Opportunity to be Healthy and Safe

The County Council's Corporate Plan states: "We want Hertfordshire residents to have the opportunity to live as healthy lives as possible and to live safely in their communities. With responsibility for public health returning to local government, we want all services to work together to improve the overall health and wellbeing of people in Hertfordshire".



Notable developments in 2014/15 include:

- Overall, the health of people in Hertfordshire is generally better than the England average. Life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the England average. However, life expectancy is 7 years lower for men and 5.8 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Hertfordshire, compared to the least deprived areas.
- The Hertfordshire Year of Walking was launched in January 2015 to inspire more people to walk for healthy exercise or simply to get from A to B. The Countryside Management Service has coordinated Hertfordshire Health Walks and trained, supported and enabled 260 Volunteer Health Walk Leaders to deliver 55 health walks per week across the county, delivering 38,000 participations, an increase of over 15% on the previous year.
- A multi-agency Tobacco Control Alliance coordinates the actions to reduce the health inequalities caused by smoking. The percentage of the population smoking in Hertfordshire is now at an all-time low of 15.5% and is below the England average of 18.4%. Smoking in pregnancy continues to decline and is 7.8% compared to the England average of 12%. Plans to reduce this still further are in place.
- A total of 3,917 people accessed drug and alcohol treatment services in 2014-15, half of whom were new service users. The total number is very similar to the 3,967 people the previous year. Of this number, 2,593 (66%) accessed drug treatment services and 1,324 (34%) accessed alcohol treatment services.

- The number of people accessing weight management services was 4,845, which is a significant increase on the previous year. A new programme aimed specifically at men, in partnership with Watford FC Community Trust, launched in 2015 with the first cohort of men losing 192lbs in excess weight in twelve weeks.
- Hertfordshire's suicide rates are now lower than average for England and continue to reduce.
- A total of 38,828 people have taken up the offer of having a health check in 2014-15 - a significant improvement on the 27,096 delivered in 2013-14. Sexual health services delivered over 60,000 contacts with Hertfordshire residents and workers. These services have been redesigned for the future.
- Hertfordshire's school nurses delivered over 105,000 contacts with schools, children and families. This included weighing and measuring 24,184 children as part of the National Childhood Measurement Programme, and immunising 6,218 children.
- The Countryside Management service created and launched a walking trail that follows a countryside route parallel to, and promotes the use for leisure of, the Abbey Flyer railway line.
- The St Albans Green ring was launched, designed to increase use and enjoyment of the city's green space by providing easy and attractive cycle and walking routes.
- The Workplace Health programme is well established, supporting employers keep workplaces healthy. To date, over 50 employers are actively taking advantage of the offer, covering over 70,000 employees. Support on offer includes workplace stress programmes, stop smoking, weight management and Health Checks. Advice and support to help employers and employees manage drug and alcohol problems and get into help are also in place.
- Following significant dissatisfaction with the service, the County Council has led a review to help re-focus mental health services for children. The comprehensive review established the level of challenge facing mental health services for children and young people in Hertfordshire. Over 600 people's views have been used to inform the findings and conclusions of the report. The new proposals, if ratified, would deliver transformation of the whole service.
- After an increase in 2013/14, there has been a 14% reduction in referrals to social care in 2014/15. The number of children subject to child protection plans has reduced by 23% to 881 since April 2014. As of March 2015, there were currently 1,018 children who are looked after in Hertfordshire, equivalent to a rate of 39.4 per 10,000 of the 0-18 year old population. This compares with a 2014 national rate of 60 and a 2014 statistical neighbour rate of 42.3.
- The percentage of children exiting care through an adoption or special guardianship order (SGO) has remained strong, with 19% leaving care through this process. While this is a reduction upon 22.9%, it is still higher than the 2014 national and regional average of 17%. Delays caused by appeals during the court process have impacted upon performance. There were 66 adoptions and 42 SGO's during the year.
- We have increased the number of people receiving direct payments to buy their care and support by almost 20% to over 2250. This gives people significantly more choice and control than traditional services commissioned by the council.

- This year, we have continued to increase support for carers and recognition of the invaluable contribution they make. After a successful pilot scheme in Stevenage, the Carer's Passport was rolled out to all other areas of Hertfordshire, ensuring family members who care for a loved one are supported and able to lead a fulfilling life of their choice. The County Council has also worked closely with both Hertfordshire Clinical Commissioning groups to provide more joined up services for carers, including a successful 'Carers Friendly Hospital' pilot at the Lister Hospital, which is now being replicated at Watford General Hospital and GP Carers Champions at many surgeries across the county.
- Strategies we have put in place to make it easier and safer to report domestic abuse in Hertfordshire has resulted in a 47% increase in the number of victims coming forward over the last 2 years. Focussed improvements are now being made in the consistency through which victims are referred to services, and gaps around the provision of services and support for victims and perpetrators.
- A total of 7,225 Home Fire Safety Visits were undertaken in 2014/15 by our front line fire fighters, specialist staff and Community Protection volunteers. Considerable effort has gone into working with carers and developing referral pathways in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Approximately 1,300 care staff and support workers have received fire awareness input in 2014/15.
- Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service launched an educational awareness campaign, Caring Together, aimed at reducing the number of vulnerable people killed and injured in accidental house fires. The fire service is asking all professionals who visit the homes of vulnerable people to take part in this new training to help them to identify fire hazards and reduce risk.
- Our Learn2Live young driver intervention programme, targeted at lower sixth form students, has been expanded to cover 50% of all 17 year olds. A record number of children received Bikeability cycle training, with over 10,000 children trained to cycle safely over the last 2 years. 480 schools have a travel plan which encourages walking and cycling.
- Our Speed Management Strategy was reviewed to increase the number of roads now eligible for 20mph limits and zones without the requirement for physical measures. The new criteria will also reduce the costs of implementing these zones. There has also been a 40% increase in numbers attending driver training courses, enabling those who are caught speeding to be made aware of the implications of their actions.
- Since its inception in 2014, the Hertfordshire Lifestyle and Legacy Partnership Board has built upon the work of the county's Olympic Legacy Board whilst broadening its horizons to a wider set of shared objectives in the areas of health and wellbeing, physical activity and sport, arts and culture and volunteering. The Board has been involved in various initiatives including endorsement of a countywide physical activity and sport framework, rewarding schools for keeping the Olympic values in place on an annual basis, as well as participation in a successful national pilot researching better commissioning of physical activity with Sport England.

Opportunity to Take Part

The County Council's Corporate Plan states:

"We want to with elected representatives and other community activists to tackle local issues and ensure that council services are more responsive enable all Hertfordshire residents to make a more active contribution to their local areas, working to their priorities and ambitions".



Notable developments in 2014/15 include:

- In Hertfordshire, the election of members of the United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP) takes place annually in January, with young people aged 11-17 being given the opportunity to stand to represent their peers in each of the ten districts. The role of the MYP is to consult with young people to ensure that they effectively represent the voice of young people in Herts at local, regional and national levels. 5 Members of the Youth Parliament were elected with 5 deputies.
- The National Citizen Service gives all 16 and 17 year olds the chance to take part in activities that build skills for work and life and culminates in a team project to help the community. Youth Connexions delivered this programme to 845 young people in Hertfordshire in 2014; each participant completed 60 hours of voluntary work totalling 50,000 voluntary hours across the life of the programme.
- We spent £9 million in 2014/15 with voluntary sector organisations, which in turn use over 3,000 volunteers to deliver their services. These services range from lunch clubs, to social activities to peer support to support people with specific needs. The aim of these services is to ensure they meet the changing needs of our diverse communities and improve their health and wellbeing.
- Our Community Protection Volunteer team continues to deliver an innovative scheme for damage from severe weather. Hertfordshire's Volunteer Incident Support Team (VIST) is only the second of its kind in the country, providing a post-incident clear-up service to those in the community who are most in need.

- Our Countryside Management Service (CMS) is the only Hertfordshire based organisation accredited with Investing in Volunteers, the National Standard for Volunteering. CMS organises conservation volunteering on greenspace and Rights of Way which, along with the Hertfordshire Health Walks, secures more than 27,000 hours of volunteering activity for the council per year.
- Our Rights of Way service engaged with the Chiltern Society volunteers on the North Hertfordshire area of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In liaison with both the adult probation service and the youth offenders teams, they undertook more practical tasks on the Rights of Way network.
- We have worked with the Hertfordshire Association of Parish and Town Councils (HAPTC) to enhance the working relationship between Hertfordshire County Council and Parish, Town and Community Councils. A new shared statement of 'Partnership Principles' has been developed and six-monthly conferences are held to discuss matters of common interest.
- Through the Highways Together initiative, pilot projects have been developed to explore different ways in which Parish and Town Councils could undertake basic maintenance tasks on the highway. This initiative is due to be rolled out across the county. Our Highways service also continues to supply salt to district and borough councils, local community groups, schools and town and parish councils.
- Our Rights of Way & Countryside Management Service (CMS) have worked with Parish Councils through the ongoing Parish Paths Partnership (P3) scheme, to give local people and councils a say, to highlight their own local priorities. All CMS produced green space action plans are shared with local people and their input actively sought.

Have Your Say

Hertfordshire County Council provides services for the public, on behalf of the public and using public money. Engaging the public in what we do and how we do it is essential, and the information the public gives us about what they need and how we can improve our services is vital. This work helps us to spend public money wisely and to ensure we are tailoring our services to the needs of each community.

We are committed to engaging with local people directly about key issues and decisions to be made.

Between December 2014 and January 2015, we undertook a number of initiatives to inform our budget and key priorities:

- Dedicated budget pages on our website were created inviting residents to take part in an online questionnaire to feedback what is important to them and the priorities they consider the Council should be focusing on.
- On 7 January 2015, a Twitter Question and Answer session was held entitled #AskDerrick. This session gave residents the opportunity to tweet their questions on our budget priorities to the Executive Member for Resources and Transformation and receive a recorded video response. The response was tweeted later in the day from our Corporate Twitter account and published on Herts Direct.
- An engagement event with representatives from voluntary and community groups took place on 24 January 2015.
- Consultation with the business community also took place via the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce. The [results](#) of this consultation can be found on the Council's website.

Specific service-related proposals which affect the Integrated Plan are each subject to their own individual consultations. In 2014/15, this has included public consultations on:

- *Review of arrangements to provide travel support to young people aged 16-18* – run between April and July 2014, the results of this exercise were considered by Cabinet on 13 October 2014;
- *Changes to Hertfordshire's Household Waste Recycling Service* - conducted between June and August 2014, the results of this exercise were considered by Cabinet on 22 September 2014;
- *Proposals to re-organise the county's children's centres* – this ran between June and August 2014, the results of which were considered by Cabinet on 22 September 2014;
- *Review of the County Council's financial support for local bus services in the County* – conducted between July to October 2014, the results were considered by Cabinet on 15 December 2014; after taking into account the feedback received a further consultation was undertaken on revised options;
- *Service developments to the Hertfordshire Library Service as part of the 'Inspiring Libraries' strategy* – this ran between September and December 2014. This followed a public consultation on the future direction of the library service conducted between October and December 2013; and
- A range of site specific school expansions and transport and highways improvements.

Alongside this consultation activity, we have engaged widely with service users and partners to help shape its future spending and service plans. Notable examples of this include:

- Our involvement in the key countywide partnerships such as Hertfordshire Forward, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership;
- Engagement with our key partners such as the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the County's district and borough councils, the Highways Agency and the Department of Transport on major transport schemes;
- Countywide conferences on health and wellbeing (26 June 2014), working with the voluntary and community sector (15 October 2014) and public health (4 November 2014);
- Work with the County's town and parish councils to develop closer working arrangements;
- Engagement with the County's young people on the Herts Young People Manifesto through Herts1125 and the Hertfordshire UK Youth Parliamentarians.
- As part of our ongoing commitment to track and monitor public perceptions of its services, each year we ask 1,000 Hertfordshire residents their views on their local area and on Hertfordshire County Council via a telephone survey. The most recent wave of the [survey](#) was carried out in Autumn 2014.
- Our Citizens Panel also took part in a number of consultations. Our Citizens Panel is a large, demographically representative group of Hertfordshire residents used to assess public preferences and opinions. If you are interested in becoming a member of the Citizens Panel, sign up here: <http://www.ors.org.uk/HCC/GetInvolved/>

All Council consultations are logged on our [consultation finder](#) enabling members of the public to more easily find and participate in council consultations.

Members of the public can submit and present petitions to the council. Details of how to do so can be found [here](#). Our [e- petitions system](#) enables residents to collect signatures for petitions on the internet, rather than just on paper. This allows petitions to be made available to a wider audience and potentially provide the opportunity to gather more support for the issue covered.

Residents can also [contact their local County Councillor](#) to give their views on any aspect of the Council's services.

Working with Communities in Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire County Council has made a commitment to giving local people more say and control over local services.

Through the Hertfordshire Local programme, we are seeking to *'shift power from the state to individuals, families and communities. It seeks to position councillors as an indispensable resource within active communities. It aims to ensure that residents are suitably informed to allow them to influence and shape local services and take a more active part in assisting them to help themselves'*.

The most recent wave of our Residents' Survey, carried out in Autumn 2014, showed that currently only 33% of residents say that they feel they can influence decisions in their local area. Whilst this figure is in line with the national picture, a key aim of our Hertfordshire Local work programme is to get more people more involved in their local areas and support communities who want to play a more active role.

In the last wave of the Residents' survey, 66% of residents said they would like to be more involved, an increase from the 61% who responded positively in Autumn 2013/14. This compares to 44% nationally who would like to be more involved in decisions that affect their local area. Clearly there is a lot of potential for us to explore ways in which this positive response can be turned into action.

Locality Budgets

Each County Councillor has £10,000 per year to allocate to worthwhile community projects in their division. From local parents groups, to community celebrations, and even supporting the production of a visitor guide for a park's tree trail, members' locality budgets have provided financial support to a wide range of worthwhile causes.

In 2014-15, a total of 1,201 grants totalling over £769,000 were approved by county councillors through the locality budget scheme. These grants benefitted the community in many ways, from local parents groups, to community celebrations, as well as supporting a community internet TV station.

Highways Locality Budget Scheme

All County Councillors are also allocated with £90,000 to fund highways works in their electoral divisions. Residents are encouraged to contact their councillor to influence how this money is spent.

Local Democracy Week

A range of activities were delivered as part of Local Democracy Week 2014 (13-19 October). This included the use of social media to engage the public on relevant issues. The UK Youth Parliament Manifesto was launched on Saturday 18 October 2014, a number of councillors visited local schools and materials were developed for schools to use in Personal, Social, Health & Economic Education (PSHE) /Citizenship lessons that week.

Information about local County Councillors

There are [dedicated webpages for each County Councillor](#). The pages include individual profiles, contact details and information on what grants local councillors have given to community groups as part of the [locality budget scheme](#)

Volunteering

Over 500 people already volunteer with the County Council, in a wide range of roles, which help improve life in our local communities. Further information on [how to volunteer](#) with the County Council is available.

Using the latest technology to make volunteering more accessible

Hertfordshire County Council provides funding to three local 'Time Banks', where members of the public can volunteer their time and skills and in exchange 'withdraw' time from other Time Bank members. During 2014/15, the County Council funded Time Banks in North Hertfordshire, Hertsmere and Watford & Three Rivers. During the year, these Time Banks had a total of 921 active members and saw 10,339 hours of volunteering exchanged. Opportunities for the coming year include replicating a successful Gardening Scheme in North Hertfordshire into Stevenage, reaching out to more working age people, and closer work with partner organisations such as Housing Associations.

Community Directory

[With over 9,000 entries in the Hertfordshire Directory, there is a wide range of information to help residents find out what is happening locally.](#) There are also links to a wide range of national organisations. This site will continue to be developed, including adding different ways you can search for information to make it even easier to get the results you want.

Council Transformation

Since 2010/11, Hertfordshire County Council has delivered savings which now amount to £172 million per annum; eighty-seven per cent of the savings have come from doing things more cost effectively, while largely protecting the range and quality of the front-line services the county council provides.

This was achieved mainly through doing things more efficiently behind the scenes - reducing the costs of the council's contract with other organisations for services such as children's centres and waste disposal and encouraging more residents to use the web to get in touch and apply for services. The challenging financial circumstances mean that we also have to consider more difficult changes to services such as the reduction in subsidy to bus routes.

Central government's priority of cutting the national deficit in public spending means that the council's total income continues to fall, whilst the pressure to spend increases due to inflation, the county's growing population and the cost of meeting the many needs of Hertfordshire's residents, including older people and people with a learning disability. It is therefore calculated that, over the next three years, we will have to find further savings growing to 120 million a year by 2017/18 in order to respond to rising demographic and service demands.

Given the scale of the challenge, in addition to further work by service departments and cabinet panels, a more fundamental approach is being taken forward across the council and with partners in a number of areas, with the intention of improving outcomes and driving efficiencies. The aim is to build on existing partnership work and to look at whether outcomes can be improved and/or costs reduced by working together to make best use of the public pound in Hertfordshire. This work has progressed in a number of areas during 2014/15, with plans for new multi-agency teams to support adults with complex needs, family safeguarding and the extension of integrated teams in adult care during the coming year.

The Year Ahead

Some of the potential challenges and opportunities we face in the coming year and beyond are:

- Despite having achieved savings of £172 million per annum already, it is calculated that, over the next three years, the County Council will have to find further savings growing to £120 million a year by 2017/18. Further difficult decisions will therefore need to be made to identify the remaining savings.
- Meeting the demands of Hertfordshire's growing and changing populations, ensuring there are sufficient school places, that our growing numbers of older people and adults with learning disabilities receive appropriate support and that infrastructure needs are met.
- Responding to implications of the priorities and reforms of the new United Kingdom government, including the development of the devolution agenda, potential changes to the planning system and the future role of education.
- Following a successful Care Act implementation programme, an increased focus on wellbeing in all our contacts with people in need of care and support.
- Continuing to 'narrow the gap' in educational outcomes, achievement and wellbeing for vulnerable groups.
- Ensuring children's social care, adults' social care, education and the health services work more effectively together on integration of services.
- Going live on a new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) from spring 2015. From this date, Police, Health, Probation and Children's Services staff will work together to ensure children are better safeguarded.
- Taking on from October 2015, the commissioning of Health Visiting for all infants. This year will also see a redesign of the School Nursing Service.
- Continuing to review the location of all fire station sites to ensure the current locations meet the existing and future operational needs, whilst also ensuring the provision of an effective, efficient and economic service.
- Continuing to participate in the Emergency Services Mobile Communication's project. This is a major replacement project of the existing communication network used by all emergency services across the UK which will have major resource and management implications from 2016 onwards.
- Co-ordinating the implementation of agreed recommendations from the SafeLives (formally CAADA (Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse) review of domestic abuse services and processes.
- The implications of the Davies Commission on airport expansion, due to report in summer 2015.
- Engaging with the review of the London Plan which will be looking at the strategic development of London for the next twenty years.
- Taking on new flood risk management duties, in particular the new statutory consultee role for all major planning applications.
- Securing a long term value for money solution for the disposal of the counties residual waste.
- Continuing our investment in the maintenance of the county's highways and footways.
- Improving residents' customer experience when dealing with the Highway service.

- Promoting and supporting the delivery of improved technology throughout the organisation and County.
- Exploring the potential to make better use of our buildings and identify wider opportunities to trade.
- Launching the Council's next generation website which will be simple to use and even more efficient. Using the latest technology, the website will aim to anticipate customers' needs and offer a personalised, user-friendly service.

Our Values and Behaviours

The county council is ambitious for its residents and communities and is demanding of itself as an organisation. It seeks to demonstrate that it is a leading council through the quality of services it provides and the way they are delivered, reflecting the following values and behaviours:

- **Being citizen focused** – making a positive difference in Hertfordshire
- **Making sure every penny counts** – responding to the need to restrain public spending
- **Acting with integrity** – committing to acting in an open, honest and ethical way
- **Getting things right** – continuing to improve and learn from experience
- **Continuing to innovate** – embracing change through being creative

Our Commitment to Equalities

We are committed to achieving diversity and equality of opportunity, both as a large employer and as a provider of services. We have a public duty to promote equality and to combat the unfair discrimination that still exists in society. We also believe that this helps us do our job better.

We recognise, respect and celebrate the fact that our staff and the people we serve are all very different, whether this is in our ethnic background, family setting, gender, religion and belief or other factors. We believe that diversity drives innovation, a culture of fairness and respect and equality of opportunity for all.

We demonstrate our commitment to tackling inequality and promoting diversity in everything we do. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, we have published evidence of the impact of our policies and practices on people with protected characteristics, as well as the objectives we have set to continue this work. Our full commitment to equality and diversity is detailed on our website at www.hertsdirect.org/equalities.