



A meeting of the **CABINET** will be held as a **REMOTE MEETING VIA ZOOM** on **THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2020** at **6:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 8)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2020.

Contact Officer: H Peacey - (01223) 752548

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary and other interests in relation to any Agenda item.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01223) 752548

3. HEALTHY OPEN SPACES STRATEGY (Pages 9 - 136)

To receive a report from the Development Manager on the Healthy Open Spaces Strategy.

Executive Councillor: Mrs M L Beuttell.

Contact Officer: H Lack - (01480) 388658

4. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE WHITE PAPER CONSULTATION RESPONSE
(Pages 137 - 166)

To receive a report from the Planning Policy Team Leader on the Planning for the Future Consultation Response.

Executive Councillor: J Neish.

Contact Officer: C Bond - (01480) 388435

5. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY GOVERNANCE (Pages 167 - 194)

To receive a report from the Service Manager (Growth) on the future governance arrangements for the spending of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts.

Executive Councillor: J Neish.

Contact Officer: C Kerr - (01480) 388430

6. HOUSING STRATEGY 2020 - 2025 (Pages 195 - 232)

To receive a report by the Interim Corporate Director on the Housing Strategy 2020 - 2025.

Executive Councillor: R Fuller.

Contact Officer: D Edwards - 07768 238708

7. HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON COUNCIL OWNED SITES (Pages 233 - 254)

To receive a report by the Interim Corporate Director on Housing Development on Council Owned Sites.

Please note: The appendices to the report are restricted. There will be a need to move to private session if the Cabinet wish to discuss their content.

Executive Councillor: R Fuller.

Contact Officer: D Edwards - 07768 238708

14 day of October 2020



Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Non-Statutory Disclosable Interests

Further information on [Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Non - Statutory Disclosable Interests is available in the Council's Constitution](#)

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Arrangements for these activities should operate in accordance with [guidelines](#) agreed by the Council.

Please contact Mrs Habbiba Peacey, Democratic Services Officer, Tel No: (01223) 752548 / e-mail: Habbiba.Peacey@huntingdonshire.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Cabinet.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#), together with a link to the Broadcast of the meeting.

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held as a Remote Meeting via Zoom on Thursday, 17 September 2020.

PRESENT: Councillor R Fuller – Chairman.

Councillors Mrs M L Beuttell, S Bywater, J A Gray,
D N Keane, J Neish and K I Prentice.

IN ATTENDANCE: J M Palmer.

20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 16th July, 28th July and 18th August 2020 were approved as a correct record.

21 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

22 CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH 2020/21

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report by the Business Intelligence and Performance Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing an update on the refresh of the Corporate Plan for 2020/21 and presenting the proposed new actions and performance indicators to Council for approval.

In noting that this would be the last year that the Plan would be refreshed in the current four-year term and having been acquainted with the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth), it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the proposed list of key actions and performance indicators as attached at Appendix A of the report now submitted be endorsed for inclusion in the Corporate Plan 2020/21; and
- (b) that the Council be recommended to approve the revised key actions and performance indicators for inclusion in the Corporate Plan for 2020/21.

23 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020/21, QUARTER 1

A report by the Chief Finance Officer was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) presenting details of the Council's projected financial performance for 2020/21.

In introducing the report, the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources paid tribute to all Officers who had assisted with the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Having thanked the Chief Finance Officer and her team for the production of a comprehensive financial report, it was reported that there had been an estimated revenue outturn overspend of £2.996m and an estimated capital outturn underspend of £11.757m at the end of 2020/21.

The Chief Finance Officer drew the Cabinet's attention to the revenue forecast variances by service, capital programme expenditure and the Commercial Investment Strategy. In terms of the latter, comment was made that opportunities would continue to present themselves despite the current climate but that the Council should proceed with caution in this area.

Having regard to the Capital Programme, the Executive Councillor for Community Resilience and Wellbeing acknowledged the challenges currently faced and encouraged the completion of the 3G pitch at Ramsey project.

In noting the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth), it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet note the Council's financial performance at the end of June 2020, as outlined in Appendix 1 and the register of reviews of Commercial Investment Strategy propositions as outlined in Appendix 2 of the report now submitted.

24 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2020/21, QUARTER 1

With the aid of a report prepared by the Performance & Data Analyst (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered the progress against the Key Actions and Corporate Indicators listed in the Council's Corporate Plan 2018/22. The report also incorporated progress on the current projects being undertaken at the Council at the end of June 2020.

The Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning summarised the progress over the reporting period and drew attention to numerous areas where positive progress had been achieved together with a number of indicators where services had met or were exceeding their targets. He then went on to state that there were a number of indicators that had not been met as a direct result or likely impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Having considered the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) and having commended Officers for their ability to adapt, proactively respond and initiate creative solutions to COVID-19, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

to note the progress made against Key Activities and Corporate Indicators in the Corporate Plan and current projects, as outlined in Appendix A and detailed in Appendices B and C of the report now submitted.

25 CONSULTATION ON ENGLAND'S ECONOMIC HEARTLAND: DRAFT TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Cabinet received and noted a report by the Service Manager (Growth) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which provided an outline of the Draft Transport Strategy, its aims and objectives and a draft consultation response on issues that affect Huntingdonshire, its corporate priorities and its objectives.

Having welcomed the inclusion of improved cycling connections in the draft consultation response and in recognising that some Huntingdonshire communities, particularly those in rural areas, would remain reliant on the private motor vehicle, the Cabinet noted the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth). Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that delegated authority to submit the Council's final comments on England's Economic Heartland's Draft Transport Strategy consultation be approved to the Service Manager (Growth), in consultation with the Executive Leader and Deputy Executive Leader.

26 A141 STUDY/ST IVES STUDY

Consideration was given to a report by the Service Manager (Growth) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking endorsement of the outcomes of the A141 and St Ives studies and support for the position that a strategic study for St Ives be undertaken by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

The Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning provided an update on the background to the report stating that the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 2036 had identified a need for 20,100 homes and 14,400 new jobs between 2011 and 2036. He then went on to state that North Huntingdon had been identified as an area for growth which would help to achieve the aspirations of the Local Plan. Members welcomed the proposals for bus infrastructure improvements in St Ives which would positively impact the Town and the neighbouring areas.

Having noted the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth), it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the results of the A141 Study be endorsed;
- (b) that the results of the St Ives Transport Study be endorsed;
- (c) that the list of proposals identified in the St Ives Study be approved and support for Cambridgeshire County Council in their submission to the Combined Authority for funding, and for consultation and delivery should funding be secured; and

(d) that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority recommendation of a new dedicated strategic study for St Ives be approved.

27 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and the information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

28 POTENTIAL JUDICIAL REVIEW RELATING TO NON-COMPLIANCE WITH A STATUTORY DUTY IN RESPECT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

The Cabinet gave consideration to an exempt report by the Conservation and Environment Team Leader (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book).

Following debate on the matter and having been satisfied with the responses provided by the Managing Director, it was

RESOLVED

that the recommendation contained within the exempt report now submitted be approved by the Cabinet.

Chairman

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Healthy Open Spaces Strategy

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 22nd October 2020

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment, Councillor Marge Beuttell

Report by: Development Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

What is the report about?

To document the journey undertaken to develop a Healthy Open Spaces Strategy for Huntingdonshire. The report will set out the evidence base and subsequent 10-year action plan which will ensure HDC is focussed on delivering healthy open spaces for our communities to enjoy, to include play, nature, access and provision.

Why is it important?

The Strategy sets the direction of focus, development and investment in the Open Spaces in Huntingdonshire. It will demonstrate through an evidence-based approach how Open Spaces support local people to live healthier lives, improve their mental health and wellbeing contribute to the fight against climate change and address social isolation

Since August 2019 a targeted Public and Stakeholder consultation has taken place to inform the themes and Vision of the strategy. Each theme identifying new and innovative way to connect with our communities and shout about our amazing Open Spaces

Vision – Embrace Your Space

Themes; Shape you Space; Create your Space; Celebrate your Space; and Reinvigorate your Space

The Vision and Themes were tested through a second round of stakeholder consultation and drove the comprehensive and collaborative Action Plan

The Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED

to endorse the 'Healthy Open Spaces Strategy' and the proposed 10-year action plan.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek endorsement of the Healthy Open Spaces Strategy and its vision of 'Embrace Your Space'
- 1.2 Endorse the proposed Action plan.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY

- 2.2 Twelve months ago we embarked upon a journey to acknowledge and develop the role of our park and open spaces in our communities. We hoped to connect the more traditional approaches to outdoor play to our desire to encourage and nurture our green environment.
- 2.3 Parks and Open spaces are an essential part of what makes Huntingdonshire a special place to live and work, with 96% of our population live within a 10-minute walk of a park or Open Space. When asked, 96% of our Open Space users said they thought Open Spaces made them and others happier.
- 2.4 The Strategy both qualitatively and quantitatively explores the 500+ open space network in Huntingdonshire, whilst acknowledging that this is not a statutory service. It is hoped that the Strategy will be able to springboard a 10 year Action Plan of innovative projects and schemes to look after our spaces for the benefit of the community now and in the future.
- 2.5 The Strategy clearly demonstrates an evidence driven and tested Vision and Strategic Themes. Each theme is designed to support the vision and benefit our populations health and well being.

Vision – Embrace Your Space

Shape your Space

Shaping the future of parks, open spaces and play through a community asset based approach to development = local people embracing and shaping space

Create your Space

Creating Communities through parks, open spaces and play – tackling social isolation, improving physical health and supporting wellbeing.

Celebrate your Space

Celebrate parks, open spaces and play – shout about their hidden values and increase usage by enabling people to have a life long relationship with these spaces.

Reinvigorate you Space

Think differently about the delivery of parks, open spaces and play both operationally and strategically.

- 2.6 In support of the Vision and identified themes the Strategy includes a 10 year Action Plan to be reviewed on an annual basis, alongside a Year 5

evidence base refresh. The recent Pandemic has shown how important it is to keep the Action Plan realistic and relevant to our communities. Open Space user priorities can very quickly change and the demand to use Open Space can fluctuate immensely based of social and economic factors. The Action Plan will form part of the Open Spaces Service Plan to ensure accountability and recognised progress.

- 2.7 In support of the Strategy delivery a 'Strategy on a Page' (SOAP) has been developed to quickly and concisely illustrate the development and implementation. To underpin the SOAP a 'Pledge' approach similar to the 'Wigan Deal' has been used to articulate the main parts of the action plan along with a 'Your Pledge' section to incubate community driven change.

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The Panel discussed the Healthy Open Spaces Strategy at its meeting on 8th October 2020. Prior to that, some Members of the Panel had met with Officers a number of times to consider the terms of the Strategy, and a number of the areas discussed have been incorporated into it.
- 3.2 In discussing its overall orientation Members have stressed the importance of achieving a balance between the accommodation of wildlife in green spaces and public use. It has been confirmed that wildlife habitats will be protected within the District's open spaces.
- 3.3 Members welcomed the fact that open spaces can be used for social prescribing and helping residents to improve their mental health. Furthermore, the Strategy could help community groups with their open space aims.
- 3.4 Open spaces could be more well used if the Council acts to attract visitors to the less well know open spaces in the District. The Panel will monitor the extent to which the Council is able to expand upon use of the more high-profile open spaces to grow the profile of all open spaces within Huntingdonshire. On a related subject, Members have noted the intention to explain clearly how indirect charging contributes towards the upkeep of open spaces.
- 3.5 The sample of primary school children spoken to is not representative of District. It is accepted that the primary schools visited were the only ones to respond to the offer of a visit. It is suggested that many Members are school governors or have links to schools in other ways and these avenues could be used to achieve greater coverage of communication between Council Officers and pupils.
- 3.6 The Panel has discussed the implementation of the Strategy. Assurances have been received that it has buy-in from Executive Councillors and Senior Officers. Moreover, it reflects the importance residents attach to open spaces and by articulating how they will be run, it will ensure they are well managed. This is because the Strategy will facilitate monitoring, which is something that the Panel will have a role in. The Strategy covers a ten-year period with a review on an annual basis and then a refresh in

five years. Again, the Panel would wish to be involved in these processes.

- 3.7 Members have drawn attention to the enthusiasm of the team and the impressive community engagement that has been undertaken. On the grounds that it is a high-quality piece of work, which has had significant input by Members of the Panel, the Cabinet is recommended to approve the Strategy.

4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 4.1 Failure to endorse the evidence-based strategy presented will impact the development and direction of the strategic management of Huntingdonshire's Open Spaces in their support for local communities health and wellbeing.

- 4.2 Based on Fields in Trust's Revaluing Parks and Open Spaces Report in 2018 to demonstrate the importance of our Open Spaces,

- The Total Economic Value of the Parks and Open Spaces in Huntingdonshire will be over **£5.3 million per year** per year including benefits gained from using local park or green space and non-use benefits such as the preservation of parks for the future.
- The Wellbeing Value associated with the frequent use of local parks and green spaces by Huntingdonshire's residents is worth **£172.7 million per year** to the population of Huntingdon.
- Parks and green spaces provision in Huntingdon is estimated to save the NHS around **£560,432 per year** based solely on a reduction in GP visits and excluding any additional savings from prescribing or referrals.

5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 PLACE – Create, protect and enhance our safe and clean built and green environment.
- 5.2 PEOPLE – Support people to improve their health and well-being.
- 5.3 Leaders new vision to incorporate – Maintain Pride of place, re-prioritise and re-shape service delivery.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 **Phase 1** – Focused on understanding peoples use and perception of Parks and Open Spaces aswell as their aspirations for the future through various media:-

Questionnaire (713 completed),

Over 500 Conversations with 4yrs-94yr olds (events, phonecalls, targeted focus groups – schools etc)

- 6.2 **Phase 2** – Following development of draft strategy we entered a second phase to test Vision, Aims and Actions. This phase took place during the Covid-19 restrictions and therefore took place online.
- 6.3 Targeted groups for consultation included Children, Young People, Families, Older People, the wider Communities and Non-users
- 6.4 At two different points in the development of the Strategy we have had the benefit of the comments of an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group which helped to finalise the key Themes
- 11th March 2020 – Emerging Themes and developing Action Plan
 - 29th July 2020 – Feedback on supplementary documents to enhance the Strategy delivery using a ‘Strategy on a Page’ and ‘Walk in a Park’

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 To continue to support the current revenue funding for Parks and Open Spaces to ensure the successful implementation of the Strategy and its Action Plan.
- 7.2 In line with the strategy’s Action Plan additional revenue bids may be bought forward in the future to support the implementation of projects and facilities. These would be evidence driven and approved by the Portfolio Holder at the time.
- 7.3 To further enhance the strategy and drive forward the operational management of each of our Strategic Open Spaces, a series of localised prospectus’ will be developed. Each forming a further building block of evidence to support the strategy and the parks operational needs.

8. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 81% of our residents, following Lockdown, believe that parks and open Spaces are keeping them fit and healthy.
- 8.2 The Health benefit of using open spaces is well documented and acknowledged by our communities. However, those who would most likely benefit are amongst the least likely to use them. The Strategy seeks to deliver partnership working with links such as Public Health, Active LifeStyles and the Living Sport County Sports Partnership to achieve health and wellbeing outcomes
- 8.3 There are physical and environmental benefits from green infrastructure including improved air quality and less noise pollution. There are also benefits to active users of these spaces, positively impacting health and

mental wellbeing. Strong evidence now supports the fact that green space improves public's health.

8.4 Improving Access to Green Spaces (Public Health England - 2014) captured and evidenced the health benefits from higher levels of physical activity, improved mental health and wellbeing as well as positive physiological effects of better quality environments. A recent analysis and report 'Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces' (Fields in Trust - 2018) again captured and demonstrated these benefits.

8.5 The Local Authority Health Profile (2018) identifies that health of people in Huntingdonshire is generally better than the England average. However excess weight in adults showed significantly worse than England average. Public Health England has identified the priorities in Huntingdonshire to be:

- Reducing excess weight in adults and children
- Improving mental wellbeing in adults and children and
- Supporting older people to live independently safe and well

8.6 Public Health England's 'Everybody Active, Every Day' report in October 2014 set out clear guidance for public sector bodies to promote physical activity, under the four themes of:

- Active society: creating a social movement
- Moving professionals: activating networks of expertise
- Active environments: creating the right spaces
- Moving at scale: interventions that make us active

8.7 In the recent launch of the Tackling Obesity Strategy (2020), the Government has made clear links between living with excess weight and an increased risk of death or serious illness due to Covid-19. Whilst GP's will be actively encouraged to prescribe exercise and more social activities to help people keep fit, the government will keep the health agenda at the heart of its decision making. In turn these interventions will proactively tackle the burden of preventable ill health and empower everyone to make the healthy behaviours they want to make.

8.8 Our Strategy seeks to ensure that our population has access to Open Spaces and their associated communities to support and enhance their health and wellbeing. The Strategy forms part of matrix of policy that cuts across other subject to form part of their foundations, to include the Environment Agenda and planning policy.

8.9 *"Public parks all over the world have become a much-needed pressure valve, through which we can not only get exercise and access to nature and fresh air, but also see and interact with others in movement and from a safe distance. Along with the doorstep Thursday clapping for the NHS and the angst of queuing for essential shopping, visiting a park is one of few public spaces where we can share a moment of humanity."*

(Gilmore, Institute for Cultural Practices, 2020)

9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Climate Change – Research shows that (Schottland, 2019)

“while the impacts of climate change are daunting, there is growing recognition that parks can be part of the climate solution. Parks reduce harmful carbon pollution that is driving climate change; they protect people and infrastructure from increasingly severe storms, sea-level rise, heat waves and droughts; and they also directly reduce some of the primary public health challenges that are exacerbated by climate change.”

9.2 This strategy will look at defining the role of our Open Spaces in addressing climate change. Our parks and open spaces can be used as a starting point for new projects or innovative ideas to co-exist facilities and experiences that will support this agenda.

9.3 Wildlife and Nature – Natural Cambridgeshire and its partners have a vision to double nature in Cambridgeshire and our Open Spaces again provide a canvas for projects to base themselves in to support our varied biodiversity in Huntingdonshire.

“that by doubling the area of rich wildlife habitats and natural green-space, Cambs and Peterborough will become a world-class environment where nature and people thrive, and businesses prosper.”

9.4 Community engagement, during the development of this Strategy, has illustrated a desire to see parks and open spaces support local wildlife which the strategy seeks to support. In an Online vote during lockdown, ‘Wildlife and Nature’ won as the priority for residents, above key themes such as access and climate change.

9.5 In support of the Natural Cambridgeshire Vision and how we will connect with it, the Strategy seeks to push Wildlife and Nature into decision making across the Council whilst recognising that they are non-statutory services which need to be sustained and recognised for their value and impact on our lives.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

10.1 In the development of the Healthy Open Spaces Strategy, we have identified and tested our Vision and Action Plan through rigorous Stakeholder Consultation.

10.2 The Strategy demonstrates a clear Action Plan informed through an understood environment and an objective view of resources.

11. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Strategy on a Page – Healthy Open Spaces Strategy

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Helen Lack (Development Manager for Operations)
Email: helen.lack@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

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HEALTHY OPEN SPACES OUR STRATEGY ON A PAGE

Take a walk in the park with us.....

EMBRACE 
YOUR SPACE

More people using and enjoying our parks, open spaces and play areas to benefit their health and well-being

HEALTHY OPEN SPACES

OUR STRATEGY ON A PAGE

1 WHY WE NEED A STRATEGY

Huntingdonshire has almost **600** parks and open spaces where our community and visitors can relax, play, enjoy nature and be active.

The Healthy Open Spaces Strategy seeks to protect our parks and open spaces for the future and explore how they can help our community stay fit and healthy, improve local people's mental health and well-being and contribute to the fight against climate change.

2 TALKING TO THE COMMUNITY

We listened to local people. Our questionnaire was completed by over **700** people and we had over **500** conversations with members of the public aged from **4** to **94** years of age.

Did you know? The **Wellbeing Value** associated with frequent use of local parks and green spaces is worth **£34.2 billion per year** to the entire GB population

3 THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Community engagement, talking to experts and visiting our local parks and open spaces made us think about...

- How we can work with **communities**
- The ways in which parks and open spaces can support local people to live **healthy lifestyles** and enjoy where they live
- Retaining and enhancing **quality and value** of provision
- Making sure everyone can **access** & enjoy parks and open spaces
- Working in **partnership**
- The role of parks and open spaces in addressing **climate change**
- Protecting local **nature and wildlife**

4 A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Our Embrace Your Space vision is supported by four key themes:

SHAPE YOUR SPACE: Shaping the future of parks, open spaces and play through a community asset based approach to development.

CREATE YOUR SPACE: Creating communities through parks, open spaces and play areas, tackling social isolation, improving physical health and supporting wellbeing.

CELEBRATE YOUR SPACE: Celebrate parks, open spaces and play – shout about their hidden value and increase usage by enabling people to have a life long relationship with these spaces.

REINVIGORATE YOUR SPACE: Think differently about the delivery of parks, open spaces and play both operationally and strategically.

EMBRACE YOUR SPACE

More people using and enjoying our parks, open spaces and play areas to benefit their health and well-being

5 OUR PLEDGE

We're making a pledge to support our network of parks and open spaces.

The Healthy Open Spaces Strategy has an action plan of projects and changes we're going to make over the next 10 years. Our pledges are taken from that action plan.

6 DO YOU WANT TO MAKE A PLEDGE?

We can't make changes on our own, we need to work together. What could you do to support your parks and open spaces? We're asking local people, businesss and organisations to make a pledge, big or small, committing to doing something to help.

Find out more at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/

Did you know? **98%** of people in Huntingdonshire think parks and open spaces make themselves & other people **happier**

Did you know? Parks and greenspaces are estimated to save the NHS around **£111 million per year** based solely on reduction of GP visits and excluding any additional savings from prescribing or referrals.

Did you know? **96%** of people living in Huntingdonshire live within a **10 minute walk** of a park or open space.

Did you know? The cost of Huntingdonshire's Parks and Open Spaces is **£16.38** per household per year

OUR PLEDGES

We will find ways for our parks and open spaces to join the fight against **climate change**

We will **connect** local people with the wildlife and nature that surrounds them

We will work with GPs, charities and other experts to create **projects** and **activities** that enable local people to keep fit and healthy in local parks

We will **contribute** to Natural Cambridgeshire's aspiration to double nature

We will keep parks and open spaces **clean & maintained**

We will celebrate the contribution of our Friends Groups and support them by creating a **Friends and Volunteer Groups Forum**

We will look for ways that our parks and open spaces can **tackle issues** that effect our community including mental health and social isolation

We will provide flexible **opportunities** for local people to **volunteer**

We will **make it easier** for communities and organisations to use parks and open spaces for events and activities

We will create a **destination play area**

We will work with **local people** to make decisions about their parks and open spaces

We will develop an **"everyone welcome standard"**

We will contribute to Natural Cambridgeshire's aspiration to double nature

We will find ways for our parks and open spaces to join the fight against climate change

We will work with GPs, charities and other experts to create projects and activities that enable local people to keep fit and healthy in local parks

We will provide flexible opportunities for local people to volunteer

We will make it easier for communities and organisations to use parks and open spaces for events and activities

We will create a destination play area

HDC HEALTHY OPEN SPACES STRATEGY

2020



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parks, open spaces and play areas are part of what makes Huntingdonshire a special place to live and to visit. They provide spaces that benefit our health and wellbeing, where we can use our imagination and enjoy the great outdoors. Huntingdonshire has a network of over 500 greenspaces ranging from parks and play areas to village greens and nature reserves. The provision of parks and open spaces is not a statutory service and austerity and budget cuts has impacted on how we, and our partners, look after our spaces for the benefit of the community.

We have developed a Healthy Open Spaces Strategy to ensure that our spaces continue to be used and valued by our community and also explore how they can support wider positive change. We have set out to understand how greenspaces across Huntingdonshire can support our local people to live healthier lives, improve their mental health and wellbeing, contribute to the fight against climate change and address social isolation.

In the process of developing this strategy we have heard from over 1,000 members of the community and had discussions with a range of potential and existing partners. We have heard why people think parks and open spaces are essential to their lives and about the reasons why some people do not use them.

"Our local park is really important to us. It's a place we can enjoy as a family. Where we can be running around and having fun... or have quiet time relaxing and being close to nature. Our local park is like a different world for us to explore and enjoy!"

EMBRACE YOUR SPACE



More people using and enjoying our parks, open spaces and play areas to benefit their health and wellbeing.



Shape Your Space

Shaping the future of parks, open spaces and play through a community asset based approach to development – local people embracing and shaping their space.



Create Your Space

Creating communities through parks, open spaces and play areas – tackling social isolation, improving physical health and supporting wellbeing.



Celebrate Your Space

Celebrate parks, open spaces and play – shout about their hidden value and increase usage by enabling people to have a life long relationship with these spaces.



Reinvigorate Your Space

Think differently about the delivery of parks, open spaces and play both operationally and strategically.

FIGURE 1:

*Embrace Your Space:
A Vision for the Future*



This approach will support a rethinking of how our parks, open spaces and play areas are managed and maintained, with a focus on the value and benefits they bring for local people and visitors to the area. It will help us to enhance the quality, value and accessibility of our provision for the benefit of existing and new audiences. Thinking strategically and entrepreneurially about our greenspaces means we can explore how to make the most efficient use of our resources and consider opportunities for income generation to make key sites self-sustaining, whilst maintaining free to access provision.

It is an exciting time for our parks, open spaces and play areas and meaningful change will require collaboration. Working in partnership will enable new voices and ideas to shape our greenspaces, enabling us to explore different way our parks can benefit our communities and to encourage new groups and organisation to use these spaces. The future of our parks, open spaces and play areas will be driven by the desire to use them to benefit our community.

PARKS, OPEN SPACES & PLAY IN CONTEXT

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02

2.1 What we mean by Parks, Open Spaces & Play Areas?

The Heritage Lottery Fund describes a park as “an existing designed urban or rural greenspace, the main purpose of which is informal recreation and enjoyment.” The term open spaces is more broad and includes a range of managed and maintained spaces including natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces, green corridors and outdoor provision for children and teenagers.

Huntingdonshire and its communities’ benefit from a wealth of greenspaces. The Ordnance Survey National Greenspace Map has mapped parks, open spaces and play areas across Britain. This helps to understand provision that is and isn’t managed by the District Council. Figure 2 summarises what the green space map tells us about provision in Huntingdonshire.

592

mapped
green
spaces

1,534

hectares of
green
space

1.7%

of the
district is
green
space

523

hectares
of public
parks &
gardens

186

play
spaces

16

hectares

8.7


hectares
of green
space
per 1k
population

87m² of green space per person compared to **35.22m²** of green space per person in Great Britain and **42.75m²** of green space per person in the East of England



FIGURE 2:

*National greenspace
map infographic
summary*



The total economic value to an individual is £30.24 per year (£2.52 per month), and this includes benefits gained from using their local park or greenspace and no-use benefits such as preservation of parks for future generations.

Parks and greenspaces are estimated to save the NHS around £111 million per year based solely on reduction of GP visits and excluding any additional savings from prescribing or referrals.

The Wellbeing Value associated with frequent use of local parks and greenspaces is worth £34.2 billion per year to the entire GB population.

The Fields in Trust Revaluing Parks and Greenspaces (Revaluing Parks and Greenspaces, 2019)



FIGURE 3:

The Strategic Context

This strategy seeks to look beyond how these spaces are managed and maintained to look at their value and the contribution they can make to the lives of local people and visitors.

It is important to acknowledge that parks, open spaces and play areas are non-statutory services. Understanding and appreciating their value is key to supporting a sustainable future. Moving from an operational to a strategic approach will ensure that greenspaces continue to be available for communities and ensure a focus on how these spaces can enrich and benefit people's lives. This strategy seeks to ensure sustainable quality provision is available and accessible for all members of the community and that access to greenspace will improve the wellbeing of individuals and the wider community and visitors, delivering on what *Revaluing Parks and Greenspaces* (Revaluing Parks and Greenspaces, 2019) describe as parks and greenspaces' ability to:

- Contribute to a preventative health agenda
- Reduce future Exchequer expenditure
- Reduce health inequalities
- Increase social cohesion and equality

This plan has not been developed in isolation as shown in figure 3 a number of policies and strategies have influenced and will be influenced by the Healthy Open Spaces Strategy. Appendix 1 provides a summary of key local, district and regional strategies that we have considered in the development of this plan.

03

**PLACES,
PEOPLE AND
MANAGEMENT****3.1 Introduction**

Creating and sustaining successful and vibrant parks, open spaces and play areas balances three key elements

- The **places** (the parks, the open spaces, the play areas),
- The **people** (those who use and enjoy these spaces) and,
- **Management** (how these parks are maintained and managed).

The Healthy Open Spaces Strategy has to find a way to balance these three elements by exploring various combinations.

3.2 Community Engagement

Key to the strategy was understanding how local people use and perceive the District's parks, open spaces and play areas. A local understanding would also enable us to compare Huntingdonshire to national data and research. To do this we undertook a programme of community engagement.

Phase 1

Focused on understanding people's use and perception of parks and open spaces, as well as their aspirations for the future. This included a questionnaire which was completed by 713 people. In addition we had over 500 conversations with members of the public aged from 4 to 94 years of age, at community events and targeted focus groups across the District.

Phase 2

Following the development of the draft strategy we entered a second phase of community engagement providing local people with an opportunity to comment on the strategy and its vision, aims and actions. This phase took place during the COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing and therefore took place online.

Appendix 3 provides details all the community engagement events undertaken to support the development of this strategy.

For parks, open spaces and play areas to be vibrant they need to be used and enjoyed. The community of Huntingdonshire District Council are users of the spaces and do value these spaces. Existing users understand and appreciate what greenspaces add to their lives. However, we need to work with non users to illustrate the benefits of spending time in these spaces and bring a more diverse range of people into our parks, open spaces and play areas.

”

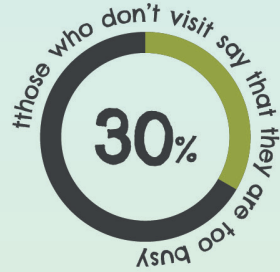
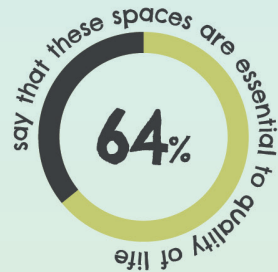
“Getting into a green area and away from the computer allows me to get moving which increases my breathing and heart rate and makes me feel much better. Being around nature also makes me feel better.”

”

HEALTHY OPEN SPACES AND PLAY STRATEGY

What the community thinks about Huntingdonshire's parks open spaces & play areas

USING OUR GREEN SPACES



HOW PEOPLE GET THERE:



9%



32%



58%

WHY PEOPLE USE OUR SPACES

*Please note, people could choose multiple answers

40% EXPERIENCE NATURE

46% CHILDREN'S PLAY PROVISION

37% STAY FIT AND HEALTHY

53% GO FOR A WALK

38% TO RELAX



WHEN PEOPLE USE OUR SPACES



On average during Spring/Summer, a person will visit once or twice a week & stay for 1 - 2 hours



In Autumn/Winter a person will visit less often & stay for less time (30mins - 1 hour)

KEEPING HEALTHY IN OUR SPACES

86% believe that these spaces encourage them to keep fit and healthy

71% regularly use these spaces to keep physically fit and healthy

MENTAL HEALTH

86% believe that these spaces improve their mental health

78% visit these spaces to improve their mental health

98% think that these spaces make themselves & other people happy

*Based on 710 questionnaire responses

Figure 4:
Community
Questionnaire
Results



Children

8% of the population of Huntingdonshire are Primary School aged children. To understand their perception about parks, open spaces and play areas and aspirations for these spaces we undertook a programme of focus groups. This enabled us to have in depth discussions with 65 children from Crosshall Junior School and Thorndown Primary School.

This process highlighted that whilst children appreciate and understand that green and open spaces provide places that enhance the environment, provide homes for wildlife and contribute to the community, the key focus is play. Play is the primary reason they use and visit these spaces, this includes using fixed play equipment, using the space as a place to unleash their imagination, and specific sports activities such as football. This is also reflected in one of the key barriers to use of these spaces, a preference for playing in other spaces or through different means. For example a preference for, *"...staying in and playing Fortnite..."* was a barrier to some children,

"...playing Fifa online means I can still talk to my friends I do not need to go out and kick a ball about."

When asked to create their ideal park or open space the idea of "gamifying" these spaces was often incorporated with children developing areas such as tree house where you can play on your x-box.

Other barriers include parents or carers being "too busy" to take children to the park, and the weather.

The idea of there not being parks, open spaces and play areas in their local area makes them angry, sad and frustrated. As previously discussed children appreciate and value the contribution that greenspaces make to their communities and their environment,

"...having a park makes it a nicer place to live."

They also believe these spaces support physical and mental health,

"...you can move and run around down the park... have fun and exercise"

and, *"...I feel happy when I'm outdoors."*





FIGURE 5:

Perfect park drawing



Young People

We spoke to 103 young people (aged 12 – 21) through a range of community events and focus groups with local youth clubs. There is a perception among this groups that you ***“kinda just grow out of going to the park”*** and whilst younger children have play, there is less of a clear 'driver' to bring young people into these spaces. Warm weather in the summer months and organised sports or events are the exception to this rule.



“I go to the park to play, we live in a flat and do not have a garden. The park is like my garden where I can play with my friends.”



There is also a belief that young people are not welcome in parks, open spaces and play areas and that their presence in these spaces is always interpreted as anti-social behaviour **"we often get told to move on, when we're not doing anything."**

Young people spoke of the equipment and facilities, specifically in relation to play, being focused on younger children, **"...you can't just put a skate ramp in the park and assume that's what we want. I'm not interested in skate boarding, I would just**

like a place to hang out with my friends."

The majority of the young people we spoke to said they wouldn't class themselves of regular greenspace users. However, they think they are important **"we are lucky to live in a very green part of the country. I do not go for walks, I'm not outdoorsy but I do appreciate that."**

They associate these spaces with their contribution to the environment and also appreciate that they can aid physical and mental health – **"I'm sure you can do all types**

of exercise down the park, but I'd rather go to the gym I'm not sure I could convince my mates to work out in the park."

The key questions we need to answer for this group is why they should be using our parks and open spaces, by showing them what they can do in these spaces and how they can benefit from them.



“It makes my children run and play in the wide open spaces and gets them using their imagination by making up games, building dens in the woods or collecting conkers and other woodland treasures.”



Families

Families are a key audience for Huntingdonshire's parks and open spaces. The questionnaire results showed that **46%** of people use parks to access children's/young people's play areas and **34%** use them to meet family and friends. A number of people we spoke to suggested that greenspaces are "places you use when you are a child or you have a child."

Among this group parks, open spaces and play areas provide,

"...a free and easy way to entertain the children. I'm lucky enough to have a good play area on our estate and if the weather is good we'll be there. In the summer we can be there every day."

This group also appreciates greenspaces for bringing communities together,

"...you can always find another mum to have a chat with down the park, people just seem more open to having a chat in a play area" and "we use our space for community events and activities throughout the year it provides a space for people to get together."

Consistently this group would reflect on being ***"very lucky in this area we have a lot of outdoor places to use as a family."*** However, there was a concern among some about perceived anti-social activities in these spaces, usually litter but occasionally there were references to anti-social behaviour for example ***"we do not let our sons go to the skate park at Riverside without us anymore and never in the evening. It's too dangerous, there are people using it for nefarious reasons."***

Greenspaces are seen as a way to introduce children to exercise and activity, ***"when they're playing they're running around and exercising without realising it. They're learning how to be active and enjoy themselves."*** Being active as a family was also valued with participants talking about walking, running and playing games in these spaces as a family.

The idea of parks and open spaces as a free to access resource is critical. It must be

acknowledged that parking charges, at some sites, were seen as a barrier to use and interpreted as a cost of visiting. Family groups are more likely to travel by car in part because it's easier ***"I have two children with me and a dog and all the stuff that comes with them. Walking or public transport is nice idea but not practical I have to drive and then I have to pay to park so we do not go as often."***

Among ideas for the future free events and activities were the most popular.

The perceived gap among this group is destination play, ***"the type of play where you can make a day of it."*** Splash or water play was particularly popular with this group.

"Walking is a great part of my life for my wellbeing due to having cancer. I also like to take my children to play and have fun. This is great family bonding time and a great place for children to play safe and have fun as kids should. We as a family also walk the dog so it's nice to do all the above as a family together."



Older People

Huntingdonshire has an aging community (Public Health Intelligence, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, 2018/19), *“between 2016 and 2026 the older age groups, particularly the over 75 year age groups are expected to have the most population growth across Cambridgeshire.”*

We spoke to older people at a range of events and activities to understand how they perceive and use parks, open spaces and play areas, and the barriers that keep them from using these spaces. This process illustrated that they are nostalgic about these places, connecting them with their childhood. In addition a number of participants spoke of moving to the area to retire because *“it is the very definition of green and pleasant around here.”* Parks, open spaces and play areas contribute to their lives and their perception of where they live. How and why they use them is dependent on a range of factors. For example, those with grandchildren will look for spaces and places that provide for the children offering play provision and/or a safe space to spend time.

“I spent my childhood down the park, I would love to spend more time outdoors now.”



Older people's health and therefore their ability to get to and around open spaces was a key issue. People spoke of their decision making process and what they look for in terms of facilities:

"...when we're thinking about somewhere to go we need to know we can park, we need to know there's a toilet, we need or rather want to know we can get a good cuppa and a piece of cake!"

They need clarity about what facilities are available so they can make a decision as to whether it's appropriate, for example a number of people felt they would be more likely to visit Hinchingsbrooke Country Park after we told them electric wheelchairs are available to hire and there is a café and toilet provision on site. Active older people are using these places, and programmes such as Healthy Walks are encouraging them to get outdoors and exercise in Huntingdonshire's network of open spaces.

"How would I get there? I do not drive, I can't walk very far, I have to rely on my friends to take me anywhere!"

When speaking to this group they told us we need to consider two key elements access and infrastructure, to support this there is much to learn from the approaches of others.



The Wider Community

People's use and relationship with parks and open spaces changes throughout their lives. As we explored earlier in this section children and play are among the key drivers. For other adults exercise, recreation and wellbeing are among the reasons for using parks and open spaces. Parks and open spaces can also be part of people's everyday commute; ***"I park my car at Riverside and walk through the park to the office. Those few minutes in the park are a great start to the day and a way to wind down at the end of it."***

We engaged with members of the BAME community by working with Huntingdon Community Group and members of the Ghanaian community. They view the District's network of parks, open spaces and play areas as important community facilities specifically for family activities and sport "it's where we go as a family to play sport together". During discussions they spoke of the importance of play to family relationships and the development of their children, appreciating that outdoor

play provision, and spaces to play, aid learning and enable children to make friends.

They spoke of feeling welcome and safe in these spaces, with 'being too busy' being cited as the key barrier. As with other groups non-users need clear reasons to visit and use greenspaces, specifically those without children. Events and activities are one way to bring non-users into these spaces or introduce them to new experiences.

Non Park Users

For this group engagement suggests it isn't so much about barriers to using these spaces, as it is about lacking a reason to use these spaces. Whilst 29% of non-parks users said being "too busy" prevented them from using these spaces, 26% said "I'm not interested in parks" and 25% said they are too far away. The Ordnance Survey Greenspace mapping suggests that 96% of the population, of Huntingdonshire, live within a ten minute walk of greenspace. To an extent for this group the question the strategy needs to answer is "why should I use parks and greenspaces?"

Non users are more likely to have no (or older) children and therefore have a perception that there is no reason to use these places. They are more likely to be using indoor facilities such as gyms or swimming pools for exercise and wellbeing.

■■■■

"I moved from London to here so I could access the countryside so I could spend more time outdoors."

Engagement with non-park users shows a need to help this group understand the value and benefits of using parks and open spaces. They also need help in finding their nearest, accessible quality provision and to be shown that these spaces offer more than the traditional view of a park or open space and the activities which take place within them.

“If I’m really honest it just doesn’t occur to me to go. I do not have a dog to walk, or children to take to a play area so I’m not sure what I would do there.”

3.3 Stakeholder Engagement

Appendix 4 provides an overview of stakeholder engagement to support the development of the Healthy Open Spaces Strategy. This process focused on understanding the current situation, identifying opportunities for change and exploring how parks, open spaces and play areas can deliver positive outcomes around wider agendas. The Communities and Local Government work on Public Parks (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2017) states ***“we strongly agree with those who have emphasised the importance and value of parks to individuals, communities, and to wider national agendas such as public health, and climate change and flood risk mitigation. Parks are a treasured public asset, which are greatly valued by their communities. They help to bring communities together, and should remain freely accessible to everyone.”***

Stakeholder engagement showed a willingness to work in partnership on the basis that accessible quality parks, open spaces and play areas can contribute to a range of outcomes. It should be acknowledged that parks, open spaces and play areas across the District are already maintained, managed and sustained in partnership. Town Councils, Parish Councils and Friends Groups are all key partners and make significant contributions to provision across the District. Stakeholders spoke of a need to see ***“more meaningful partnership working”*** between existing partners and also look to new and wider partners who can support change, for example ***“can we involve the business community in our parks and open spaces? How can we broaden the range of people we work with?”***

“I do not have time to go, there’s other things I would rather do.”



A fundamental area of concern for stakeholders was funding ***“we have less money, so there is less support from staff and more and more the Friends are being asked to fill the gap”***. There is a need to find new ways to sustain and enhance provision and the potential conflict between parks being a tool to generate income to support themselves and the community perception that they should be free. Cambridgeshire, and therefore Huntingdonshire’s, involvement in the Future Parks Accelerator (please refer to Appendix 1) were also discussed in this context.

The role of communities was discussed, with the potential for a 'Wigan Deal' style approach being discussed. Whilst some stakeholders expressed a desire for this approach to be explored within the context of the strategy, others, specifically existing Friends Groups expressed concern about ***“relying on communities when we’re struggling to find enough volunteers.”***

In online focus groups (please refer to appendix 3, that took place during the COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing, there was an interest in volunteering and a desire to see communities support their parks and open spaces through volunteering. These conversations also highlighted a range of barriers we need to address to encourage and enable more community involvement.

These included:

- Easy to find information about volunteering opportunities;
- Co-ordination;
- Flexible options;
- Activities for children to enable parents and carers to volunteer.

Stakeholders also highlighted that the deprived and inactive communities that are most likely to benefit from Huntingdonshire’s network of parks, open spaces and play areas are the least likely to use them. Engagement with stakeholders explored ways of bring new users in to greenspaces, with a targeted focus on those most likely to benefit. Our community engagement with people from deprived communities illustrated a need to break through the perceptions that ***“parks are not for me”*** and show clear benefits to families and individuals of using these spaces.

3.4 Emerging Themes

Listening to communities and stakeholders highlighted a range of key themes and associated outcomes to be explored in the context of developing this strategy. These are:

Spaces for Health & Wellbeing

How do we build on participation in initiatives such as Park Runs, Healthy Walks and other programmes, and embed physical health and wellbeing, in how we manage and deliver greenspaces?

Connecting Communities to the Benefits of Parks, Open Spaces and Play Areas

How do we help communities to understand and appreciate the benefits of using parks, open spaces and play areas, to them as individuals and families, as well as the value to the community?

The Role of Communities

How do we give communities a meaningful role in shaping the future of parks, open spaces and play areas, that they will participate in?

Gaps in Provision

Community engagement has shown perceived gaps in provision, section 4 explores this further. How do we prioritise change to address these gaps in provision?

Funding

Should we take a different approach to funding the future of Huntingdonshire's network of parks, open spaces and play areas?



I would love to volunteer in my local park but it always seems to be during the week when I'm at work"



04

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THE VALUE OF OUR PARKS, OPEN SPACES & PLAY AREAS

4.0 The Communities and Local Government work on Public Parks (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2017) posits a need for *“greater recognition of the value and benefits of parks, and appropriate prioritisation in local authority planning and funding decisions.”* This section of the strategy seeks to support this by illustrating the quality and value of parks, open spaces and play areas in Huntingdonshire.

4.1 To The Community

Our survey results suggest 68% of the population of Huntingdonshire visit greenspaces on a regular basis (at least once a fortnight) compared to national research (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2019) which suggests ***“57 per cent of the UK population - regularly use park in the UK.”*** Figure 6 illustrates the results of our questionnaire to highlight why greenspaces are important.

Even 76% of non-users say that having parks, play areas and open spaces in their communities “make me, and other people, happy and 86% think they make their local area “a better place to live”. Our quantitative and qualitative research shows that the people of Huntingdonshire value and appreciate their greenspaces, but they do not think they’re perfect. Litter, anti-social behaviour and parking charges (at some parks) are areas of concern and frustration.

As shown in the survey infographic, the community associates greenspaces with opportunities to be healthy and active.

Community engagement also highlighted the value of parks and open spaces as places to meet people and have a conversation ***“I’ve recently separated from my husband and I have been feeling lonely, one thing I really like about our local play area is if I take the children they can play and there’s usually another parent who’ll be there to chat with.”***

Social isolation and loneliness is a growing issue, Cambridgeshire County Council (Cambridgeshire Insight, 2019) defines loneliness as ***“a subjective feeling about the gap between a person’s desired levels of social contact and their actual level of social contact. It refers to the perceived quality of the person’s relationships.”***

Parks and greenspaces can play a vital role in bringing communities together and tackling social isolation.

We are lucky to have great spaces for families and friends to meet, socialise, exercise and enjoy the facilities.”

Figure 6: How Huntingdonshire Values Its Parks, Play Areas and Open Spaces



4.2 Understanding Existing Provision

The Ordnance Survey National Greenspace Map records 583 greenspaces across the District including parks, play areas, church yards, allotments and other accessible provision. Part of understanding existing provision is understanding usage, below are the most popular provision in the district based on questionnaire responses.

The most popular parks and open space in Huntingdonshire based on questionnaire response

1. Hinchingsbrooke Country Park
2. Priory Park
3. Paxton Pits
4. Riverside, Huntingdon
5. Hill Rise

Alongside community and stakeholder engagement we wanted to understand what parks, open spaces and play areas provide in terms of their quality and value. To support the strategic process we visited a selective sample of 47 sites, from across the District, primarily owned or managed by Huntingdonshire District Council. Appendices 4 and 5 provides a summary of findings from these assessments. These assessments focused on understanding the quality and value of existing provision. Each of the sample of sites assessed in the development of this strategy received a quality and value score. The criteria used for these assessments built on existing mechanisms such as the Green Flag Award and was developed in partnership with stakeholders through the parks and open spaces workshop.

4.2.1 Quality of Existing Provision

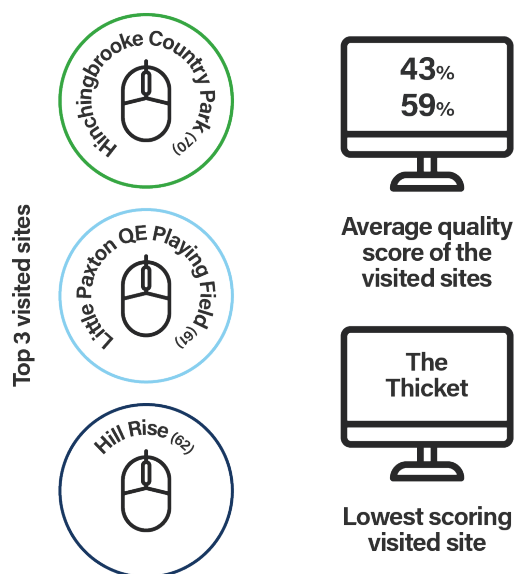
- 79% of park users who completed our survey described their last experience of visiting their local park, open space or play area as good or very good.
- 6.5% of non-users said that anti-social behaviour prevented them from visiting a park or open space in the last 12 months.
- 3.2% were put off by dog fouling and the same proportion by the quality of the facilities.

Overall data from park users showed that provision is considered to be of good quality. Qualitative engagement with non-park users suggests that the quality of the facilities themselves are not considered to be a barrier, rather a feeling that these spaces are not for them and / or other options are preferable.



We visited a structured sample of sites. Each of which was given a quality score, based on the provision within the site. The criteria for this score was based on benchmarks including the Green Flag Award and Play England's play standards alongside factors the community told us were important, such as bins, benches and toilets. The scoring system can be found in appendix 5 and the highest score a site could attain was 77.

Figure 7. Quality of Parks, Open Spaces and Play Areas in Huntingdonshire



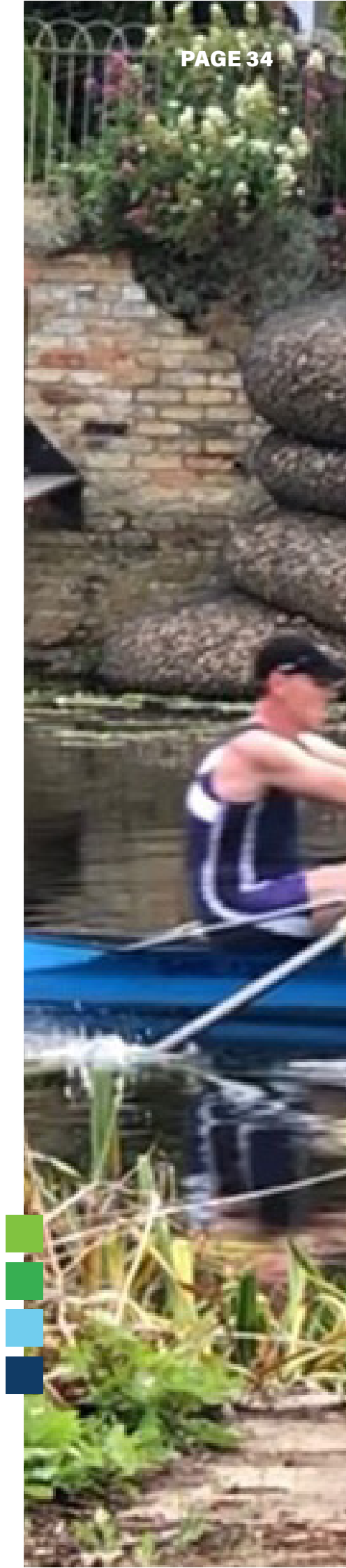
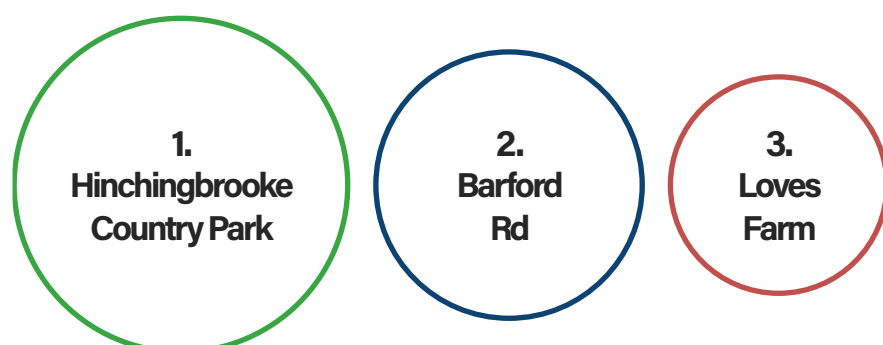
It is important to acknowledge that not every site can have everything. The presence of toilets contributes to the quality scoring process, but it is not suitable or possible for every site to have toilet provision. As a result parks with facilities and equipment will score higher than natural open spaces, this is illustrated by country parks being the highest scoring primary typology (average 70) and compared to natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces which have an average score of 40. The lowest scoring site, The Thicket, is a natural woodland space with very limited infrastructure, which contributes to its low score but it is also lacking in identity. Overall the quality assessments show a strong baseline of provision across the District and highlight areas for consideration moving forward.

4.2.2 Value of Existing Provision

If quality is about the specific site, value is about the context in which the site is located and the contribution it makes to its community. Value considers factors including accessibility, proximity to other provision, usage, deprivation and its landscape, biodiversity and heritage. It also considers the sites role in the wider green infrastructure network and the mechanism available for the community to engage with the site. For example, sites in areas of deprivation receive a higher score in the context of health and wellbeing, to reflect the needs of that community and the benefits they can receive from the space. Appendix 6 provides the value scoring criteria and the scores the sites visited during the assessment process. The highest available weighted value score is 170.

Figure 8. Value of Parks, Open Spaces and Play Areas in Huntingdonshire

Highest value sites:



4.2.3 The Performance Parks and Open Spaces

The Association of Public Service Excellence (ASPE) monitors Local Authorities year on year performance in relation to the performance of parks and opens services. This monitoring also considers performance in the context of a family group of other Local Authorities. This is a robust matrix for understanding how provision is managed and maintain in relation to other Local Authorities. Figure 9 below summarise key performance indicators from the 2018/19 performance at a glance.

Key Performance Indicator	Performance 2018/19	Improved Since 2017/18
Hectares of maintained public open space per 1,000 head of population	●	—
Number of hectares maintained per FTE front line employee	●	▲
Quality assurance and consultation process score	◆	▼
Maintenance cost per household (including CEC)	●	▼
Maintenance cost per household (excluding CEC)	●	▲
Maintenance cost per hectare of maintained land (including CEC)	●	▼
Maintenance cost per hectare of maintained land (excluding CEC)	●	▲
Maintenance cost per 1,000 head of population (including CEC)	●	▼
Maintenance cost per 1,000 head of population (excluding CEC)	●	▲
Hectareage of local nature reserves (LNR) per 1,000 head of population	●	—
Average NPFA play value score of children's playgrounds	●	—
Number of public events per 1,000 head of population	●	N/A
Countryside management	●	▼

Figure 9. ASPE Parks Performance at a Glance 2018/2019

- Performance is better than the family group average
- ◆ Performance is not as good as the family group average
- Performance for 2018/19 is within 5% of the 2017/18 results
- ▲ Performance has improved year on year
- ▼ Performance has declined year on year



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4.2.4 The Impact of COVID-19

The majority of this strategy and the community and stakeholder engagement that shapes it took place before the outbreak of COVID-19. It must be acknowledged that the pandemic has had an impact on how the community is using public open space.

"Public parks all over the world have become a much needed pressure valve, through which we can not only get exercise and access to nature and fresh air, but also see and interact with others in movement and from a safe distance. Along with the doorstep Thursday clapping for the NHS and the angst of queuing for essentials shopping, visiting a park is one of few public spaces where we can share a moment of common humanity."

(Gilmore, Institute for Cultural Practices, 2020)

The new normal, is likely to be a different normal for parks and open spaces. Events and activities that have traditionally brought people into these spaces and been a mechanism for generating income are not likely to return in the short to medium term.

Figure 10. Huntingdonshire District Council Four Actions to Respond to COVID-19

Four actions can address immediate customer needs and prepare for the future.





 <p>Focus on care and concern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out, but with support, not marketing Make a priority of employees and community Stay true to company purpose and values 	 <p>Meet your customers where they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovate digital models to help customers weather the crisis safely from home Expand home delivery options Consider contactless operations 	 <p>Reimagine the post-COVID-19 world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic hard times will force cost cuts Migrate customers to digital channels to save money and boost satisfaction Brick and mortar stores may look very different post-crisis 	 <p>Build agile capabilities for fluid times</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tap social media, not surveys, for quick customer readings Solicit employees for ear-to-the-ground insights Save time with "test and scale" labs Pay attention to "failure modes" indicating that you've missed customer signals
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Figure 10 summarises Huntingdonshire's District Council's key actions for responding to the needs of its community in response to COVID-19. Elements of this have been embedded into the development of this strategy for example we used social media and online engagement to give local people a mechanism for commenting on the draft strategy. The challenges around funding that parks have faced will continue and the opportunities for income generation are likely to be restricted for some time. This is the new reality that must be faced and empathises the need to promote the value and benefits of Huntingdonshire's parks and open space.

During the COVID-19 restrictions and social distancing a short online questionnaire was used to enable a level of understanding of how it was impacting on people's use and perception of parks and open spaces. Completed by 248 people figure 11 below summarises the key results of this survey.

Figure 11. COVID-19 Summary Questionnaire Results

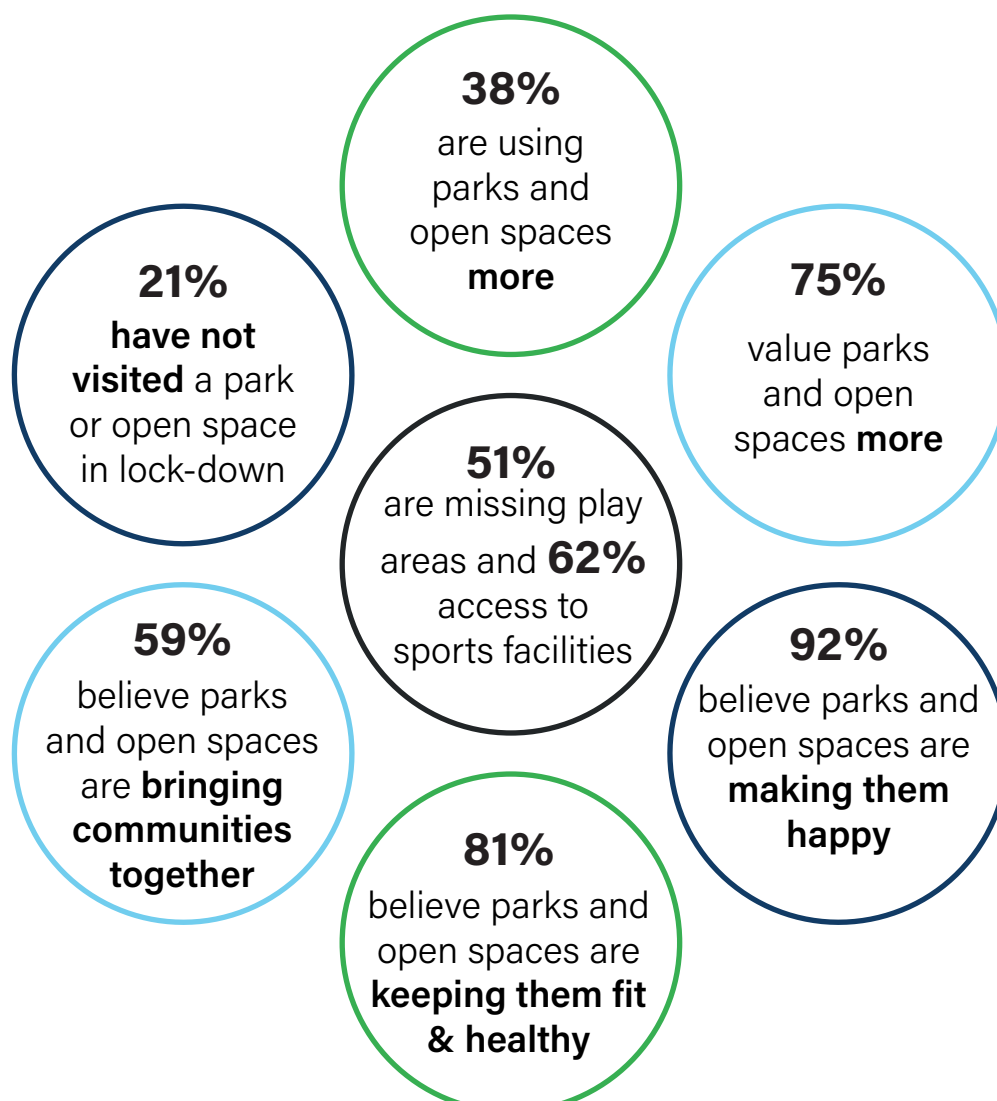


Figure 11 shows that during the lock-down the percentage of people who believe parks and open spaces are keeping them fit and healthy has increased from 71% (when we did our original survey) to 83%. It is interesting to note that while 38% are using them more, 35% believe they are using them less. Three quarters of respondents are valuing parks and open spaces more as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting social distancing measures.

4.2.5 The Future

There are already proposals and development in place to enhance and develop the provision of parks and open spaces across Huntingdonshire. In part this a result of development to meet housing and other needs. The current Local Development Framework (Huntingdonshire District Council, 2011) sets out the requirements for the "provision of children and young people's play equipment, parks and gardens, allotments/community gardens" depending on the type and size of development. Key proposals for the future include:

Hinchingbrooke Country Park

Proposals have been developed to strategically enhance Hinchingbrooke Country Park for the benefit of the community. These proposals include destination play provision, improved café provision, additional parking and other strategic development. The aim is to enable the site to generate an income to support its sustainability and improvements, whilst still providing a quality 'free to access' park provision. At the time of developing this strategy it was unclear when work would commence on site due to ongoing negotiations with Cambridgeshire County Council regarding the lease / ownership of the Country Park.

Paxton Pits Extension

The Friends of Paxton Pits (Friends of Paxton Pits, 2019) have secured "the expansion of the Reserve from its current 192 acres to more than 700 acres during the next 10 years ." This expansion will result in improved visitor and education facilities to support the site.

Prestley Country Park

The Alconbury Weald housing development has already resulted in a range of additional play provision in The Stukeleys. A future phase of development (Urban & Civic, 2019) includes a 63 hectare country park. "The Country Park represents an important greenspace for the wider area, as well as acting as a permanent buffer between the Stukeleys and Alconbury Weald."

St Ives Park

Proposals are being developed to create a naturalised park in St Ives. The park will bring together existing green infrastructure, resulting in a space for recreation and nature with enhanced biodiversity and a naturalised approach to greenspace management.

Environment Agenda

Huntingdonshire District Council is exploring approaches for contributing to the fight against climate change. Parks and open spaces will undoubtedly have a role to play and opportunities are explored within this strategy.



4.3 Areas for Improvement

Based on the engagement and research we have identified the following as the key areas of focus for this strategy and its action plan.



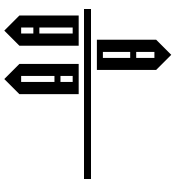
Retain and Enhance Quality and Value

The site assessment sample we undertook showed that parks, open spaces and play provision is of a relatively good standard. This alongside community and stakeholder engagement, and research showed our spaces are valued and add value to Huntingdonshire. The action plan in this strategy explores how to maintain and raise quality and value. The data collated during this process will enable the prioritisation of specific geographic areas and typologies of provision which have the highest impact.



Creating Destination Play

There is a wealth of play provision across the District that is well used by families and visitors. However, there is arguably the lack of a destination play space that can provide a day out and attract people from a wide catchment area. This was reflected in qualitative engagement with communities that highlighted a desire for high quality play provision particularly splash play.



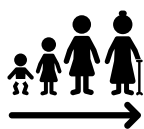
Geographical Gaps

According to the Fields in Trust Greenspace Index (Fields in Trust, 2019), (which maps all accessible greenspace not just those managed by the District Council), 79 of the District's 106 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) have less than the minimum standard of provision. Communities do not think in terms of LSOA's so perhaps a more useful benchmark is the following:

Percentage of the Population who don't live within a 10 minute walk of a greenspace

- 4.4% of the population of Huntingdonshire.
- 5.07% of the population of the East of England.
- 4% of the population of Great Britain.

The data mapping developed to support this strategy will enable geographical gaps in terms of quality, value and accessibility to be identified and prioritised. Chances to planning guidance and the updating of the Greenspace Supplementary Planning Document will be key mechanisms for addressing this.



Provision for All Ages

As part of the site assessment process, details of the suitability and appeal of provision for different age groups was recorded. This process is summarised in table 1 below.

Table 1: Age Groups

Age Group	N° of Sites from the sample
Pre School 0 to 4 years	42
Children 5 to 12 years	39
Teenagers 13 - 18 years	29
Young working age 18 - 44 years	24
Older working age 45 - 64 years	25
Retired 65+	21



Community engagement suggests a perception that there is a shortage of provision for teenagers, however there are a number of sites that provide provision such as multi-use game areas and skate parks. This suggests that moving forward provision for young people needs continue to be developed in partnership with the young people in those communities and look for ideas and opportunities for this age group. As one teenager describes ***“adults tend to assume they know what we want. Can't they talk to us about what we want.”***

The aging population in Huntingdonshire is a community that appears to be under-served, and older people have asked that consideration be given to how we can support them to access and use parks and open spaces.



Accessibility for All

Based on the sample of sites visited there is a noticeable gap in provision for people with disabilities and additional needs. Community engagement has highlighted requests for a changing place, disability play provision and improve pathway networks. Targeted engagement and partnership working needs to be undertaken to address this shortfall and look for innovative and inclusive approaches that ensure everyone can enjoy Huntingdonshire's parks, open spaces and play areas.



Working in Partnership

Huntingdonshire District Council maintains 6,755 elements of greenspace across the district ranging from amenity grass to shrub beds. These sites are managed, owned and supported by a range of organisations. The development of this strategy has highlighted a need to build on existing relationships and work in partnership to deliver positive change.

Working in partnership is key to the future of greenspace in Huntingdonshire. The Future Parks (Heritage Fund, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and National Trust, 2019) puts an emphasis on ***“building lasting cross-sector partnership solutions, identifying sustainable sources of funding and investment, identifying***



partnership models, building community 'ownership' and involvement and by providing skills and training to grow our greenspaces." This approach is reflected and built upon within the action plan for this strategy and will enable more partnership working with a range of organisations such as the Great Ouse Valley Trust, Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs & Northants and the Forestry Commission.



Parks and Open Spaces Supporting Health and Wellbeing

The community understands and appreciates the contribution parks and greenspaces make to their health and wellbeing. However, those who would be most likely to benefit are among those least likely to be using them. The management and maintenance of parks and open spaces has traditionally taken an operational approach, moving to a strategic approach with a focus on how greenspaces can support the wider agenda will require a change. Part of this will be delivered through partnership working, for example links with Public Health, Active Lifestyles and the Living Sport County Sports Partnership, will be key to achieving health and wellbeing outcomes.



Climate Change

Research shows that (Schottland, 2019) "while the impacts of climate change are daunting, there is growing recognition that parks can be part of the climate solution. Parks reduce harmful carbon pollution that is driving climate change; they protect people and infrastructure from increasingly severe storms, sea-level rise, heat waves and droughts; and they also directly reduce some of the primary public health challenges that are exacerbated by climate change." This strategy will look at defining the role of Huntingdonshire's parks, open spaces and play areas in addressing climate change.



Wildlife and Nature

Natural Cambridgeshire and its partners have a vision to "**that by doubling the area of rich** wildlife habitats and natural green-space, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will become a world-class environment where nature and people thrive, and businesses prosper." Community engagement has also illustrated a desire to see parks and open spaces support local wildlife. There are clear opportunities for our parks and open spaces and our wider green infrastructure to contribute to doubling nature and supporting initiatives around establishing green linkages and wildlife corridors.

05

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FUNDING OUR SPACES AND PLACES

5.0 It must be acknowledged that provision of greenspace is not a statutory service and austerity has impacted on parks, open spaces across Huntingdonshire. This strategy has to be a realistic proposition for the future so it is important to consider available funding and resources.

5.1 Funding

Funding for parks and greenspaces has been reduced across the country. In 2018/19 Huntingdonshire District Council invested £1.8 million (excluding central establishment charges) in parks, open spaces and horticulture services. Alongside this just over £500,000 was generated in income. Figure 12 illustrates how this money was invested and generated.

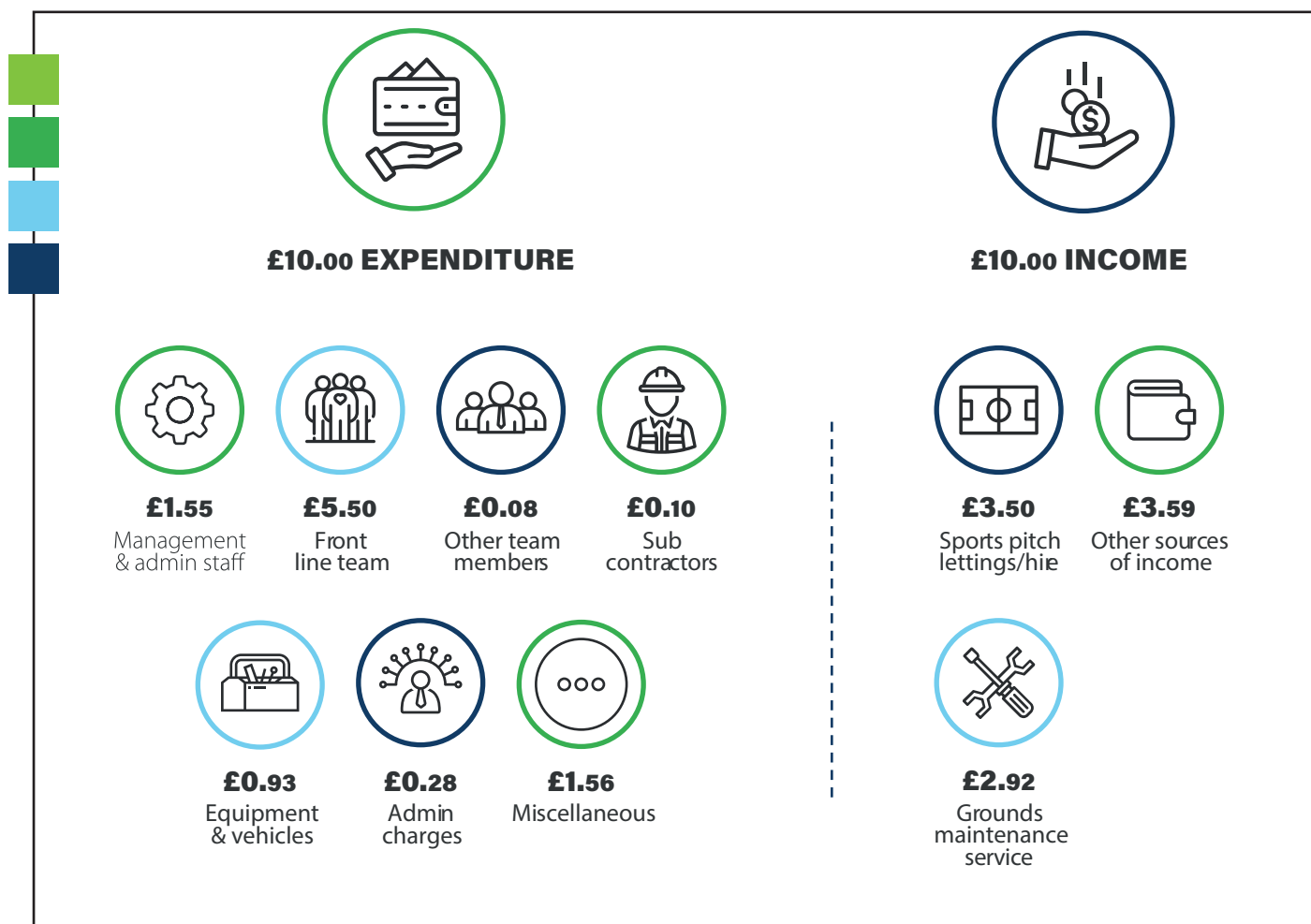


Figure 12. Income and Expenditure - Huntingdonshire's District Council's Parks and Open Spaces (excluding central establishment charges CEC)

ASPE Parks Performance at a Glance 2018/2019 compares Huntingdonshire District Council's to other similar authorities. This performance matrix shows that Huntingdonshire District Council's **cost of service per household is £16.38** (excluding CEC) compared to the family group average of £25.86. The **cost of service per hectare of maintained land in Huntingdonshire £3,035** (excluding CEC) is also below the family group average of £4,588.

The sample site assessments show that the majority of sites are well maintained, however if budgets continue to be reduced there will inevitably be a point where poor maintained sites' costs become more expensive to restore and sustain. This can result in other issues, for example evidence provided by stakeholders as part of the Public Parks (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2017) shows that anti-social behaviour increases in greenspaces where maintenance standards have fallen. The community has also expressed concerns about what they consider to be the cost of visiting parks and greenspaces. Car parking charges were consistently raised and criticised at community engagement events. In terms of ideas to encourage people to use open spaces, from the questionnaire, removing car parking charges was the most popular request. This strategy seeks to find a balance that maintains parks and open spaces as free to access places to enjoy, with an entrepreneurial approach that ensures efficient management and appropriate income generation.

5.2 Staff

The role and remit of the staff who manage and maintain parks has changed considerable over time. Figures 13a and 13b (O'Brien, 2019) show how the traditional parks manager role has changed.

The current staffing structure can be found in appendix 7.

Figure 13a. Traditional Parks Manager



Figure 13b: Modern parks management

These structures reflect the current operational approach to management and maintenance of parks, open spaces and play areas. This strategy puts forward a change of approach with an emphasis on community development and the health and wellbeing agenda. Moving forward the staffing structure will need to respond to this approach.

5.3 Volunteering

The Council's Countryside Services works with Friends Groups at Holt Island Nature Reserve, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Paxton Pits Nature Reserve and Sudbury Meadows. In addition there is a Friends Groups at Priory Park. A range of groups and organisations also work in Huntingdonshire's parks, open spaces and play areas including Park Run, Riverside Miniature Railway, the Wildlife Trust and a range of sports clubs and community groups. They all make an invaluable contribution across the District.

Within Countryside Service's team is a part time Volunteer Co-ordinator, whose main focus is supporting volunteering at Paxton Pits to ensure the visitor centre is able to open. Engagement with volunteer and community groups has raised a concern about finding volunteers and encouraging meaningful community engagement ***"there's been a change in the culture, we were brought up to give back. Young people do not feel that way"*** and ***"if you walk down the high street every charity shop is asking for volunteers, we're competing in a smaller pool and I'm concerned about the future of our group."***

Only 16% of questionnaire respondents expressed an interest in volunteering and during community engagement interest was limited.

In online focus groups, carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic the majority of participants felt volunteering was important for the future of parks and open spaces. In addition most people spoke of a desire to volunteer but highlighted a range of barriers, which range from time of day to level of commitment. Exploring mechanism for developing volunteer opportunities that benefit people health and wellbeing as well local public open spaces is one of the key roles of this strategy.

I've been looking to volunteer but it is hard to find out where you can go and what you can do"



06

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EMBRACE YOUR SPACE: A VISION FOR OUR FUTURE

6.0 Huntingdonshire's community feels "very lucky to have the green and open spaces we do" and they add to what makes the area special. We want more people using, benefitting from and contributing to our network of greenspaces and our vision for the future is

EMBRACE YOUR SPACE



More people using and enjoying our parks, open spaces and play areas to benefit their health and wellbeing.



Shape Your Space

Shaping the future of parks, open spaces and play through a community asset based approach to development – local people embracing and shaping their space.



Create Your Space

Creating communities through parks, open spaces and play areas – tackling social isolation, improving physical health and supporting wellbeing.



Celebrate Your Space

Celebrate parks, open spaces and play – shout about their hidden value and increase usage by enabling people to have a life long relationship with these spaces.



Reinvigorate Your Space

Think differently about the delivery of parks, open spaces and play both operationally and strategically.

FIGURE 14:

Embrace Your Space: A Vision for the Future



The vision is supported by four strategic themes. These themes contain a range of high level actions which have been shaped by research and consultation. These actions will be delivered over the lifetime of the strategy through collaboration with the community and partners.



6.1 Shape Your Space

Shaping the future of parks, open spaces and play through a community asset based approach to development – local people embracing and shaping their space.

Huntingdonshire District Council will collaborate with partners and communities to:

- Strengthen partnership working and identify new stakeholders.
- Create a mechanism for engagement with park users.
- Establish a network for Friends and Volunteer Groups.
- Remove the perception of “red tape” as a barrier to communities using spaces for events and activities.
- Pilot participatory budgeting to give communities a chance to understand and shape how money is spent.
- Take a community asset based approach to develop park plans in medium-term and then longer term to create and enhance spaces.
- Create new friends groups for priority sites.
- Through collaboration better engage our communities and attract new people to volunteering.
- Develop an “Everyone Welcome” standard to ensure people of all ages and abilities can access parks, open spaces and play areas.

6.2 Create Your Space

Creating communities through parks, open spaces and play areas – tackling social isolation, improving physical health and supporting wellbeing. Huntingdonshire District Council will collaborate with partners and communities to:



- Partnership working to identify and address community health and wellbeing issues and opportunities.
- Test methods for monitoring physical activity in parks and open spaces.
- Connect local people with their environment and wildlife.
- Give parks and open spaces a defined role in addressing climate change.
- Work with Public Health to explore social prescribing of time in parks and open spaces



6.3 Celebrate Your Space

Celebrate parks, open spaces and play – shout about their hidden value and increase usage by enabling people to have a life long relationship with these spaces.

Huntingdonshire District Council will collaborate with partners and communities to:

- Make information about parks and open spaces accessible and easy to find.
- Use a range of methods to market and promote our network of parks, open spaces and play areas.
- Outreach projects, delivered in partnership, to connect targeted communities to the value of parks, open spaces and play areas.
- Build an events strategy with a focus on health and wellbeing.
- Support people to create lifelong relationships with parks and open spaces.
- Explore community open spaces management.



6.4 Reinvigorate Your Space

Think differently about the delivery of parks, open spaces and play both operationally and strategically. Huntingdonshire District Council will collaborate with partners and communities to:

- Re-evaluate and restructure to create a single “parks & open spaces” team and support staff to develop new skills in response to the strategy.
- Identify capital investment priorities with a focus on health and well-being.
- Use resources effectively and efficiently.
- Take a strategic approach to income generation.
- Think differently.

6.5 An Action Plan for Change

This following ten year plan sets out a journey for the future of the District's parks and open spaces. It puts forward a route to delivering the Embrace Your Space vision, through actions to support each of the four key themes and the aims within them.

FIGURE 15:
















Ten Year Action Plan

Involving	Year 1	Years 2 - 3	Years 4 - 7
Strengthen partnership working & identify new stakeholders.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDC • Active Lifestyles Living Sport • Partners • Local Business 	<p>Establish a Healthy Open Spaces & Play Forum Create a mechanism for partners to come together to share ideas and deliver the strategy in partnership. Establish a resource hub to share information and support across the forum.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDC • Town Councils • Parish Councils • Countryside Services 	<p>Complete the site assessment process developed as part of this strategy Assess sites that haven't been visited as part of the development of this strategy. Review assessment criteria with Parks and Open Spaces Forum partners.</p>		<p>Update Site Assessments Update site assessment and resulting quality and value scores.</p>
Create a mechanism for engagement with park users.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDC 	<p>Understand community satisfaction levels. Develop an annual survey for understanding community satisfaction both for specific sites and the District as a whole.</p>	Set appropriate targets for increasing visitor and community satisfaction.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDC • Partners 	<p>Enable people to share their views and ideas. Establish a variety of mechanisms such as virtual "parkies" and token voting to enable the community to share their ideas.</p>	<p>Create a clear pathway for community Engagement Develop a strategy for community engagement with a particular focus on disengaged hand hard to reach.</p>	
Establish a network for Friends and Volunteer Groups.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDC • Friends Groups 	<p>Set up Friends Network This network will be a mechanism for friends groups to share skills and knowledge. It will also enable partnership working for example on funding applications, marketing and events. It will also enable improved lines of communication between friends group and HDC.</p> <p>Work with Future Parks and other partners to explore opportunities for regional network to support information sharing and best practice.</p>		Review the outcomes of the network.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends Groups • HDC 		<p>Friends Group Day An event to celebrate and share the amazing work of local friends groups.</p>	
Remove the perception of "red tape" as a barrier to communities using spaces for events and activities.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HDC 	<p>Reduce the "red tape" Let community groups and organisations know that parks and opens spaces are available for events and activities. Move the events application process online. Reduce the perception "red tape" prevents the use of green spaces.</p>		

Years 8 - 10	Strategic Themes			
	Shape	Create	Celebrate	Regenerate
				
				
				
each audiences.				
				
				
				

















Involving	Year 1	Years 2 - 3	Years 4 - 7
Pilot participatory budgeting to communities a chance to understand and shape how money is spent.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Community groups 		<p>Understand the unit cost of maintaining each individual site. Breakdown the cost of maintaining each site to support informed decision making in partnership with communities.</p>	<p>See if participatory budgeting is a viable option. Select a destination or district level park and undertake a participatory review and set the budget priorities for the site.</p>
Take a community asset based approach to develop park plans in medium-term and then longer term to create and enhance spaces.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Community groups Friends groups 	<p>Community Led Parks Plans for 5 key sites Identify 5 sites, ideally with low quality and value scores, develop community led parks plans. These plans should be shaped by the community, identifying roles/actions for local people in delivering change and setting out appropriate mechanisms for income generation. These plans do not need to be to Green Flag standard but focus on a community led shared vision for the sites future and a plan for delivering positive change.</p>		<p>Review impact or approach, if successful target a further 5 plans per</p>
Establish a mechanism for celebrating the quality of parks and open spaces.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Community groups Friends groups 	<p>Support more staff to become Green Flag Judges Support continuing professional development and learning from best practise by enabling members of staff to become Green Flag Judges.</p>	<p>Increase the number of sites with a Green Flag in Huntingdonshire Encourage and support Parish, Town Councils and Community Groups to apply for Green Flag Awards. Consider applications for key HDC sites.</p>	<p>All main Huntingdonshire District Council sites to have achieved</p>
Create new friends groups for priority sites.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Future Parks 		<p>Establish new friends groups for 3 new sites. Improve community engagement and involvement through establishing and supporting new friends groups.</p>	<p>Review impact of approach, if successful target a further 2 friends gro</p>
Through collaboration better engage our communities and attract new people to volunteering.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Community groups Friends groups 	<p>Pledge Your Part Launch a campaign for people and organisations to make a public pledge to support parks and open space. Pledges can be small or large and will be shared and celebrated through social media.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Community groups Friends groups CVS 			<p>Establish community engagement and volunteering team. Work with the Countryside Service and other partners to create a team for community engagement, but also up skill local people. Support coordination of v</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 			

Years 8 - 10	Strategic Themes			
	Shape	Create	Celebrate	Regenerate
<p>ory budgeting pilot, where by local people and community groups</p>				
<p>year.</p>				
<p>d a Green Flag.</p>				
<p>roups per year.</p>				
				
<p>m with a focus on not only increasing volunteering and community volunteer activity.</p>				
<p>Set up a web and app based mechanism for volunteers. Enable people to quickly find out about and sign up for volunteering opportunities.</p>				

























Involving	Year 1	Years 2 - 3	Years 4 - 7
Develop an "everyone welcome" standard to ensure people of all ages and abilities can access parks, open spaces and play areas.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 		<p>The everyone welcome standard improves accessibility and connects people with their parks, Work with the community to establish a standard that ensures that parks and open spaces are accessible by 2030 and all open spaces by 2040. Create spaces that can meet the needs of all ages and respond to</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Partners 		<p>Accessible Activities Pilot Work with Healthy Lifestyles, One Leisure, Countryside Services and other partners to create a pilot project that is enjoyable for all. If successful roll out across the District.</p>	
Partnership working to identify and address community health and wellbeing issues and opportunities.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Town councils Parish councils Friends groups Partners 	<p>Reflect the aspirations of the Healthy Open Spaces Strategy in the design and development of future provision. The approach of this strategy should be embedded in the development of all future provision sites, including those projects that have completed</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Active Lifestyles Living Sport Other partners 	<p>Bring existing Health and Wellbeing projects into parks and open spaces. Through cross department engagement encourage existing projects and organisations to use parks and open spaces as a delivery mechanism for healthy activity.</p>	<p>Establish new health and wellbeing new projects In partnership develop and deliver specific health and wellbeing projects</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Active Lifestyles Cambridgeshire County Council 	<p>Support the CCC/PCC Physical Activity Campaign for over 65 Promote the campaign via parks and open spaces social media. Create parks and open spaces friendly versions of activities for those who are confident enough to exercise outside.</p>	<p>Work with the campaign to promote parks and open spaces activities and give older people the confidence to try the.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Friends groups Community Groups Local Sports clubs Active Lifestyles Living Sport 			<p>Pilot an activity hub at the Riverside Parks Create an activity hub where parks visitors can access in health activities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Active lifestyles Living sport Other Partners 		<p>Address childhood inactivity in deprived areas. Link with local schools and other partners to pilot an Oxmoor active kids project, getting inactive children into open spaces. Work with them to plan the future of these spaces for their benefit.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Active lifestyles Living sport Other Partners 		<p>Encourage people to use parks and open spaces as a route to a healthy lifestyle Develop a pilot, in partnership with physical and mental health organisations, to use parks and open spaces as a route to a healthy lifestyle and improve their physical and mental health through exercise, healthy eating and other lifestyle</p>	

Years 8 - 10	Strategic Themes			
	Shape	Create	Celebrate	Regenerate
<p>open spaces and play areas. Accessible to all. Develop a plan for ensuring all parks are accessible by the aging population.</p>				
<p>Project with a focus on health activities that are accessible and</p>				
<p>Commenced before the development of this strategy.</p>				
<p>Projects.</p>				
<p></p>				
<p>Activities at St Neots and Huntingdonshire's Riverside Parks.</p>				
<p>Children and young people in to local and accessible parks and open</p>				
<p>Spaces as a mechanism for supporting people to maintain a healthy lifestyle changes.</p>				

















Involving	Year 1	Years 2 - 3	Years 4 - 7
Test methods for monitoring physical activity in parks and open spaces.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 		<p>Paxton Pits visitor monitoring pilot. Funding has been secured to pilot a tap in, tap out scheme to monitor and understand visitor numbers.</p>	Learn from this pilot and consider for other destinations and district targeted decision making.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 			<p>Establish a mechanism for monitoring levels of physical activity Set targets based on this process.</p>
Connect local people with their environment and wildlife.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural Cambridgeshire HDC Partners 	<p>Doubling Nature Commit to supporting Natural Cambridgeshire's Doubling Nature through parks and open.</p>	<p>Big Tree Plant Work in partnership with the Woodland Trust and support the aspirations of the District Council's Tree Strategy through an annual big tree plant event.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural Cambridgeshire HDC Cambridgeshire County Council Partners 			<p>Green routes Develop a network of routes using rights of way and green corridors to connect people to their parks and open spaces through active travel based around green infrastructure.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Wildlife trust Schools 		<p>Connect with wildlife Work with local schools and organisations to create a project that connects local children with local wildlife.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 			<p>Create a pictorial meadow maze at St Neot's Riverside to celebrate Embrace Your Space and The selection of the site should be suitable for the maze, but should also seek to give a site a sense of</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 	<p>Build on the success of wildflower planting Introduce appropriate wildlife mixes to new sites and areas.</p>	<p>Support people to create wild-flower spaces at home. Connect with Love Parks Week, distribute wild-flower seed packages as part of event, activities and promotions.</p>	
Give parks and open spaces a defined role in addressing climate change			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC CCC Partners 		<p>Explore opportunities for parks to play and open spaces to play a role in addressing climate change. Work with partners and experts to identify feasible projects and opportunities.</p>	<p>Deliver projects in partnership based on research.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC CCC 		<p>Monitor the impact of parks and open spaces on the environment. Explore the possibility of mechanism to measure and share the positive impact of parks and open spaces on climate change. Connect to the Tree Strategy, Doubling Nature and the Environment</p>	

Years 8 - 10	Strategic Themes			
	Shape	Create	Celebrate	Regenerate
t level provision. Visitor information can then be used to support				
in parks and open spaces.				
				
				
				
ncourage people to explore. identity and value it currently lacks.				
				
				
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Involving	Year 1	Years 2 - 3	Years 4 - 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 		<p>Establish a design criteria that ensures new and enhanced provision supports the climate change objectives Embed the Trust for Public Land's Climate-Smart Cities (Schottland, 2019) four objectives cool, absorb, connect and thrive.</p>	
Work with public health to explore social prescribing of time in parks and open spaces.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Public health 		<p>Work with the wider Local Authority to develop Mental Health Project with meaningful measures Work across the Authority to establish a project that enhances the mental health of local people and communities. Explore opportunities for delivery existing programmes such as mental health training in parks and open spaces. Throwing With Nature Guidebook.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Public health 			<p>Research existing parks and open spaces based social prescribing models. Develop a pilot approach in partnership with One Leisure to build on their existing offer.</p>
Make information about parks and open spaces accessible and easy to find.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Friends groups Community groups 	<p>Make information easy to access The development of this strategy has brought together a wealth of information about the sample of sites across the District. Work with Countryside Services, One Leisure and other partners to ensure this information should be made easily accessible for the community and visitor ensuring communities can find the information they need to plan a visit. For example make it easy to find out which parks have toilet facilities. This should also ensure people can be inspired in terms of what they can do in our spaces and have a clear picture of the equipment available.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 	<p>Promote active travel and highlight the wealth of the way people can reach and travel between the parks and open spaces network. Promote a wide variety of travel options from taking a walk to riding a horse. Provide information on routes and infrastructure, connect with organisations such as the Great Ouse Valley Trust and Cambridgeshire County Council Rights of Way. Support with positive signage for example number of steps a mechanism for measuring distance between sites.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Town and Parish Councils 			<p>Parks People Podcast Capture people's memories and experiences of parks on a podcast from grounds maintenance staff to members of the public, share the love of parks. Explore opportunities for funding this project and develop in partnership for example with a local college.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Local businesses 		<p>Help park visitors to find out where to spend a penny... Build links with local businesses such as public houses and restaurants. Creating a mapping system/app that enables parks visitors to find nearby toilet facilities they can use.</p>	

Years 8 - 10	Strategic Themes			
	Shape	Create	Celebrate	Regenerate
<p>Change agenda. , protect and connect.</p>				
<p>able outcomes. ouncil staff through connecting them with parks and open spaces. en spaces. Link with the WWF and Mental Health Organisation's</p>				
<p>Implement parks and open spaces social prescribing pilot.</p>				
				
				
				
				

















Involving	Year 1	Years 2 - 3	Years 4 - 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 			<p>Develop a strategy to respond to demand for toilet provision. Target key sites based on community engagement and usage. Explore toilet provision.</p>
Use a range of methods to market and promote our network of parks, open spaces and play areas.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Friends groups Community groups 	<p>Embrace Your Space Online Engagement Continue to use #EmbraceYourSpace as mechanism for community engagement, social listening and to raise awareness of parks and open spaces.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Friends groups Community groups 		<p>Embrace Your Space Day Establish an annual Embrace Your Space day with events taking place at sites across the district including a cross district scavenger hunt.</p>	Monitor attendance and participation by friends and community groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Community Groups 		<p>Memory Bank Encourage local people to share their memories of local parks by sharing photos and stories through an online portal.</p>	<p>Memory Day Tell local history through our parks an annual event to share memories of lives. Promote parks and what they can do for people through the website.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Community Groups 	<p>Parks After Dark Learn from the success of the national Museums After Dark event, identify appropriate events and activities in appropriate sites that encourage evening use.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Town and Parish Councils Friends groups Community groups 	<p>Create a brand for Huntingdonshire's parks and open spaces. Celebrate and share the value of the network through a brand that highlights what parks and open spaces give to the local community. Link with existing brand platforms such as Love Huntingdonshire.</p>	<p>Develop the brand on sites through the creation and implementation of signage. Focus on positive informative signage and interpretation. Have a clear message on the site. Where appropriate use positive signage to encourage activities.</p>	
Outreach projects, delivered in partnership, to connect targeted communities to the value of parks, open spaces and play areas.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Community groups 		<p>Engage missing communities and introduce them to parks and open spaces. Targeted community engagement with a focus on BAME communities, young people and people living in areas of deprivation. Build links in relevant groups and projects to take non users to the park.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Community groups 		<p>BAME community engagement Build links with the BAME community</p>	Create events and activities targeted at bringing BAME communities into parks.

Years 8 - 10	Strategic Themes			
	Shape	Create	Celebrate	Regenerate
e options such as "portable posh loos" at peak periods and charged				
open spaces.				
ups				
ies and experiences of parks and how they have shaped people's words of the community.				
able people to safely experience parks after dark.				
ation of a signage and interpretation strategy. ear brand across the district will elements that can be nuanced to ty for example "do play here" and 1000 steps to the next bench.				
				
				

























Involving	Year 1	Years 2 - 3	Years 4 - 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Schools 	<p>Develop engaging initiatives to bring families in our parks and open spaces. Provide inspiration for families, show them the activities and fun they can have in our parks and open spaces and provide the tools they need. Create and distribute projects in partnership with local schools.</p>		<p>Parks Passport Encourage people to visit more of our parks and open spaces. Create a passport app, where families can collect a virtual stamp for each site they visit. Use the app to give ideas for activities they can do in each location.</p>
Build an events strategy with a focus on health and wellbeing			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC All partners 		<p>Collaborate on an events strategy Develop an events strategy that delivers a diverse range of events across a wider variety of parks and open spaces.</p> <p>Events should range in scale and include a mix of "free to enter" and income generating events and look to attract a range of audiences including non-users.</p>	
Support people to create lifelong relationships with parks and open spaces.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Community groups 	<p>Let people know that parks are a great place to have a chat and meet new people. Develop and implement a programme of low key "meet up" events in parks and open spaces that provide opportunities for people to meet walking to "meet ups" for people who fancy a chat.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Education 	<p>Park Twinning Link with Forest Schools to create a scheme for schools to find and "twin" with a local park or open space. Enabling schools to use their local environment and building childhood experiences that will last a lifetime.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Partners 	<p>Adapt to the COVID-19 New Normal Encourage those people who've found their local park as a result of the pandemic to keep using them. For example "your parks need you... When you needed them they were there, now our parks need you." Use this to stimulate volunteering and community participation.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Living sport Local colleagues 			<p>Explore the possibility of "gamifying" the experience of visiting Take a new approach to the outdoors with a focus on the time when</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Older People's Groups 		<p>Engage with local care homes and older people projects Work in partnership to deliver activities together in parks for the benefit of older people.</p>	

Years 8 - 10	Strategic Themes			
	Shape	Create	Celebrate	Regenerate
				
				
meet up with like-minded people. These could range from dog				
				
open spaces to engage and attract young people. people think they are growing out of going to the park.				
				














Involving	Year 1	Years 2 - 3	Years 4 - 7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Schools Older people groups Care homes 			<p>Intergenerational play project Work with schools and older people community projects, to pilot an people's project and local school.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Community groups 			<p>Pilot Experience the Outdoors Days Scheme Pilot a project to create a monthly play day, which provides opportunities to experience new types of play and activities for people of all ages. A type of park run for experiences where people know it's going to happen on a regular basis. The event would move from site to site introducing new audiences to new spaces and activities but happen at a consistent point in each month.</p>
Explore community open spaces management			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Schools Local businesses Community groups 			<p>Adopt an open space. Establish a scheme for local groups, organisations and businesses to adopt a space. Adopters can support the space through financial or in kind contributions such as volunteering, promotion, education programmes or supporting projects within the site.</p>
Re-evaluate and restructure to create a single "parks & open spaces" team and support staff to develop new skills in response to the strategy.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 	<p>Restructure and refocus the team/s Ensure a team is in place that can deliver and support this strategy. Have members of the team who can celebrate and champion parks.</p>		<p>Review progress made and consider combining operations and countryside services to form one team.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 	<p>Put parks in the job title Identify people who work in and influence parks and open spaces.</p>		<p>Give parks a face and point of contact to improve and enhance community engagement and maintenance standards. Pilot two "park people" in key sites not currently supported by Countryside Services. The role will balance community engagement and relative/low level maintenance.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Partners 	<p>Identify the needs of staff for training and skills development. Undertake a skills assessment based on the requirements of this strategy.</p>	<p>Based on the skills analysis develop a staff training and development programme. To support identified initiatives and strategic approach, for example encourage more staff to become G</p>	
Identify capital investment priorities with a focus on health and well-being.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 	<p>Ensure a diverse range of provision is available across Huntingdonshire. Use the strategy to ensure different levels and types of experience across the District. For example from a play perspective offer a range which meet the needs of families and children of all ages. Use the wider context for investment to create different levels and types of ex</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Partners 		<p>Identify capital investment priorities with a focus on health and wellbeing. Work with partners who specialise in health and wellbeing to identify targeted investment that will benefit health and wellbeing. Engage with the community to understand their perspective and inform them of change.</p>	

Years 8 - 10	Strategic Themes			
	Shape	Create	Celebrate	Regenerate
intergenerational play project in partnership with an existing older				
				
				
				
				
Green Flag Judges.				
e of provision from destination play through to local areas of play experiences to meet different needs and attract different audiences.				
				









Involving	Year 1	Years 2 - 3	Years 4 - 7
Use resources effectively and efficiently			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 	<p>Understand and prepare for the financial impact of COVID-19 Review existing budgets and resources to prepare for the future and the impact of COVID-19. Review this on an annual basis.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 	<p>Reduce Litter Explore opportunities for piloting new approaches that connect with the aspirations of the litter minimisation strategy.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Partners 			<p>Infrastructure investment programme Use park plans and site assessments to identify and target infrastructure improvements and enhancements including bins, benches and pathways. Explore options for achieving economies of scale through district wide investment and partnership working with Town and Parish Councils.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 	<p>Protect and maintain trees across our network of parks and open spaces. Use the HDC Tree Strategy to shape the approach across in parks and open spaces.</p>		
Take a strategic approach to income generation.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 		<p>Create a destination play space Respond to the identified need for destination play space. Use destination play to attract new audiences and create days out that will result in secondary spend both on and off site.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Community groups Friends groups 		<p>Post Pandemic identify opportunities for income generation. Use the parks plans and site assessment process to identify opportunities for income generation. Prioritise and take into account the short, medium and long term impact of COVID-19.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Friends groups Partners 			<p>Review what has been achieved at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park to be self-sustaining. Plans are in place for Hinchingsbrooke Country Park should be self-funding by this point the life of strategy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Friends groups Partners 			<p>Strategy for another destination park to become self-sustaining. Learn from Hinchingsbrooke Country Park and develop proposals to...</p>

Years 8 - 10	Strategic Themes			
	Shape	Create	Celebrate	Regenerate
				
				
				
				
				
critise based on impact and implement. These proposal should				
				
make 2 further destination site self-funding.				



Involving	Year 1	Years 2 - 3	Years 4 - 7
Think differently.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 	<p>COVID-19 Use the impact, in terms of usage and perceived value of parks, resulting from COVID-19 as an opportunity to think differently and make a stronger case for the impact and value of accessible greenspace from a health perspective.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC 	<p>Work with planning to review and define planning standards that support quality and accessible across the District. Identify the link between parks, open spaces and play areas and the key areas of housing growth within the city, and ensure targeted investment in adjacent sites is the beneficiary from any development and planning gain. Adjust the focus of planning policy to support quality and accessible provision. Recalculate financial contributions and move towards developers taking on management and maintenance responsibility of future provision. Explore opportunities for natural play and new types of provision to meet local need.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC Oxmoor based community groups Local Community 	<p>Establish an Urban Park in Oxmoor Connect existing greenspaces and infrastructure to develop an urban park in Oxmoor. Work closely with the community to enable the space to respond to local need and encourage the usage.</p>		

Years 8 - 10	Strategic Themes			
	Shape	Create	Celebrate	Regenerate
				
				
				



6.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Performance management is reliant on the collection of baseline data as part of the proposed objectives associated outcome and will be reviewed as part of the annual review process.

Figure 16. Performance Management and Monitoring Schedule

Performance Indicator	Description	Baseline Year 1	Year 2		Year 3	
			Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Visitor satisfaction	Percentage of user sample satisfied or very satisfied with the management and maintenance of Silver Jubilee Park.					
Health and Wellbeing	Number of organisations and initiatives using parks and open spaces for health and wellbeing activities.					
External income	Level of income derived from external funding sources.					
Awards and recognition	Achieve and retain awards for quality / good service.					
Green Flag Awards	Nº of sites with Green Flag Awards across the District.					
Volunteers	Nº of volunteer hours contributed to the site per annum.					
Action	Percentage of actions completed as part of the five year action plan.					
Partnerships	Nº of partnerships developed with local organisations, groups and businesses.					
Diversification	Diversification of audience/s, measured using annual survey					
Events	Increase attendance and participation at events.					
Doubling Nature	Progress towards aspiration to "Double Nature".					
Community Engagement	Level of engagement via social media.					
Workforce Development	Participation in training and development by parks workforce.					
Friends Groups	Number of Friends Groups.					
Adopt a Space	Number of site adopted by local schools / businesses					

s discussed within section three. The following targets have been selected to reflect the objectives and

	Year 4		Year 5		Year 6		Year 7		Year 8		Year 9		Year 10	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual

07

THANK YOU



This strategy has been shaped, supported and enhanced by a wide variety of people and originations. Every person who took part in the conversation has played a part in shaping the future of our parks, open spaces and play areas.



08

CAVEATS

The Healthy Open Spaces Strategy is based on information supplied by Huntingdonshire District Council and a range of stakeholders. This report brings together information from a range of sources, Information provided by stakeholders has been received and evaluated in good faith and Pleydell Smithyman Limited cannot be held responsible for any omissions, errors or inaccuracies which may have an impact on future plans.



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01 SUMMARY POLICY REVIEW

This appendix summarises a selection of key policies that connect with this strategy and will impact on its implementation.



The Huntingdonshire District Council Corporate Plan 2018 - 2022

The Corporate Plan (HDC: Corporate Plan 2018 - 2022, 2018) sets out a vision to “support a safe and healthy environment, deliver economic growth and provide value for money services for the people of Huntingdonshire.” This vision is supported by two key focuses:

People: *“We want to make Huntingdonshire a better place to live, to improve health and wellbeing and support people to be the best they can be.”*

Place: *“We want to make Huntingdonshire a better place to work and invest and we want to deliver new and appropriate housing.”*

The ability of parks, open spaces and play areas to deliver wellbeing value and improve people lives clearly connects with the aspirations of the corporate plan. For example Revaluing Parks and Greenspaces (Jump X Simertrica for Fields in Trust, 2018) posits that,

*“...an individual would need to be compensated **£974 a year** to replace the life satisfaction they would have gained from their local park or greenspace (more than once a month). There is no question that Huntingdonshire’s greenspaces contribute to “a healthy environment”*

and

“make Huntingdonshire a better place to live, to improve health and wellbeing and support people to be the best they can be.”

This strategy explores how they can play more of a role in delivering the vision of the Corporate Plan for the benefit of people and places across the district. The Healthy Open Spaces Strategy seeks to go beyond a traditional park and play strategy. There is a specific focus on developing specific actions and outcomes that can benefit the health and wellbeing of people. For example the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA, 2019) found that **“people living more than 1 kilometre away from a greenspace have nearly 50 percent higher odds of experiencing stress than those living less than 300 meters from a greenspace.”** Economists estimate that globally national parks contribute £4.67 trillion in mental health benefits (Whipple, 2019), suggesting they **“provide services amounting to a significant proportion of global GDP. And that is before you consider the other environmental services they offer.”** Research, and community and stakeholder engagement has been used to shape this strategy and set out how Huntingdonshire’s parks, open spaces and play areas can continue to support the health and wellbeing of its community.

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036

The Local Plan (Huntingdonshire District Council , 2019) "sets out the Council's approach to securing sustainable development from 2011 to 2036 in order to meet identified needs." This includes policies related to the protection of open spaces, biodiversity and geodiversity, and trees, woodlands, hedges and hedgerows. The Local Plan seeks to protect existing open space by ensuring that development does not result in the loss of valuable public open space. Any development should support and enhance open space. The Local Plan stipulates that,

"...in order to ensure that compensatory measures provide net benefits to the community the proposal will be expected to include enhancement of any remaining open space in cases of partial loss, the enhancement of other existing spaces or new provision that would serve the same community as that being lost. New provision for the loss of sports or recreational open space should be in a form that best meets an identified existing need, as agreed with the Council."

This strategy explores how we define need in relation to parks and open spaces. Traditional models such as the Fields in Trust 6 acre Standard have focused on the amount of accessible space available, this strategy seeks to also consider quality and value of provision.

Future Parks Accelerator

The Future Parks Accelerator (FPA) (Heritage Fund, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and National Trust, 2019) is a joint initiative between the National Trust, The National Lottery Fund and Local Authorities, with financial support from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Future Parks Induction Pack explains:

"...an accelerator approach has been chosen deliberately to enable fast and agile development of innovative solutions in the most efficient & effective way."

The FPA is focused on eight urban areas including Cambridgeshire. The focus of the project is to ***"secure the future of Cambridgeshire's parks and greenspaces by building lasting cross-sector partnership solutions, identifying sustainable sources of funding and investment, identifying partnership models, building community 'ownership' and involvement and by providing skills and training to grow our greenspaces."*** This Healthy Open Spaces Strategy has been developed within the context of the Future Parks Accelerator. It explores how Huntingdonshire can both contribute to, and benefit, from the FPA process.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020-24 (DRAFT)

The strategy outlines the role of the Health and Wellbeing Board which brings together *"politicians, health and social care professionals and other leaders across the system work together to solve problems and lead change to benefit our residents."*

The strategy is based around the following priorities:

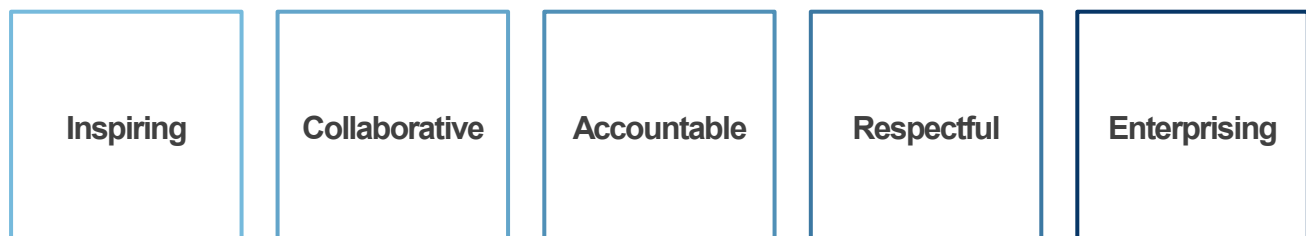
- Priority 1: Places that support health and wellbeing**
- Priority 2: Helping children achieve the best start in life**
- Priority 3: Staying healthy throughout life**
- Priority 4: Quality health and social care**

Parks and open spaces have a role in supporting and delivering this priorities. The strategy is based around a 'Think Communities' approach which *"means freeing up local staff to work together across organisations and with communities to solve problems and achieve the outcomes local people want. The approach aims to build relationships locally and address situations where 'care is not joined up' and 'systems not talking to each other', described in the HealthWatch What would you do? report. Small voluntary sector organisations can be key to the Think Communities approach - which aligns with the skills and assets already held within communities and neighbourhoods."*

Parks and open spaces have a role in supporting and delivering this priorities. The strategy is based This community based approach has also been explored in this strategy, in the context of parks and open spaces. With a focus on working with communities to understand need and exploring partnership working to deliver change.

iCare

Huntingdonshire District Council aims to provide a high quality service for its community, to support this aspiration they have developed the iCare values. These values have shaped the creation of this strategy and will play a role in its implementation.



The Wider Policy Context

Parks, open spaces and play areas make a valuable contribution to our communities, but their value has not been reflected in terms of funding. The People, Place and Policy Review – The Future of Public Parks in England (Crowe, 2018) cites research by the Association of Public Service Excellence which,

“...provides a stark overview of local authorities’ declining resources, confirming that they face a funding gap of £5.8 billion by 2020 due to government austerity measures (a loss of 75p in every £1 of core funding). This creates huge challenges for local government, with a wider range of competing priorities, including many social services with a much greater public profile and expectations than greenspace and parks services.”

A 2016 UK Parliamentary Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee resulted in a range of recommendations (Crowe, 2018) including,

“...encouraging local authorities to look beyond public funding to initiatives such as independent trusts, private sector investment models, and funds from the health sector. They recommend further volunteer involvement and community engagement, and working in partnership with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and others.”

The recommendations of this inquiry have been considered in developing this strategy. It is notable that the inquiry stopped short of making the provision and maintenance of parks a statutory duty stating (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2017),

“...we recognise that reductions in local authority Public parks budgets may disproportionately disadvantage discretionary services, such as parks. However, we are not persuaded that such a statutory duty, which could be burdensome and complex, would achieve the outcomes intended. Instead, we recommend that the Minister publishes guidance to local authorities that they should work collaboratively with Health and Wellbeing Boards to prepare and publish joint parks and greenspace strategies that clearly articulate the contribution of parks to wider local authority objectives, and set out how parks will be managed to maximise such contributions.”

This strategy brings together research and engagement to articulate how parks, open spaces and play areas contribute to the health and wellbeing of local people and visitors. As well as exploring how these valuable and important places can contribute to the delivery of the Huntingdonshire District Council Corporate Plan.



02

THE COMMUNITY

This appendix summarises population data and demographic information.



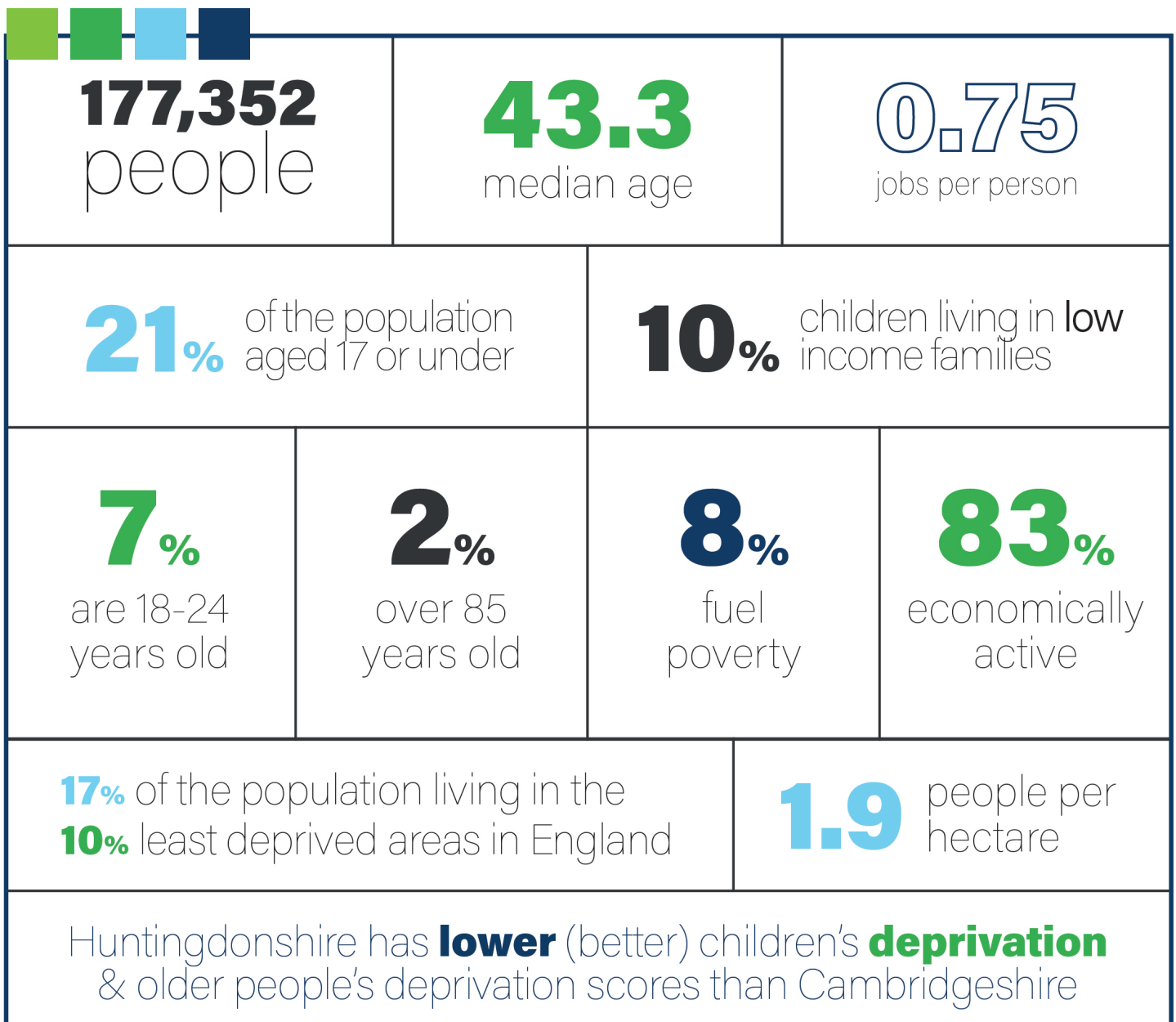
Understanding the Population

Parks, open spaces and play areas will need to respond to changing communities and changing needs. These spaces also need to find the balance to service the different needs of a more diverse community. As of June 2018 Huntingdonshire, had a population of approximately 177,350 people (Huntingdonshire District Council, 2019). The population reflects the rural nature of the district with just 1.9 people per hectare compared to 30.4 people per hectare in Cambridge City. In the period between the 1991 and 2011 censuses the population grew by 20% (Huntingdonshire District Council, 2019).

"...partly in response to housing market pressures in and around Cambridge."

FIGURE 1:

Huntingdonshire Population Summary (Office of National Statistics, 2019 & Cambridgeshire Insight, 2019)



Housing growth is projected to continue, Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Huntingdonshire District Council, 2019) projects a need for 20,100 additional houses to meet population growth. The type of people living in Huntingdonshire is forecast to change, for example a,

"...decline in the working age population as a proportion of the total population" is projected. The Local Plan sets out a need **"to create a more balanced and diverse local population and encourage more young people to stay or move here."**

Fields in Trust Revaluing Parks and Greenspaces (Revaluing Parks and Greenspaces, 2019) used national survey data to develop an understanding of who is and isn't using parks.

FIGURE 2:

Parks Users Socio-Demographic Characteristics

TABLE 4.1 SAMPLE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS: PRIMARY SURVEY (2017)

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS (CONTROL VARIABLES FOR ANALYSIS)	PARK AND GREEN SPACE USERS (MEAN)	NON-USERS (MEAN)	TOTAL SAMPLE (MEAN)
Male (%) (reference = female)	48.6% (1288/2648) *	44.3% (613/1385) *	47.1% (1901/4033)
Mean age	47.0 *	50.0 *	48.0
Mean household income (£)	£33728 *	£28576 *	£31980
With children (%) (reference = other)	32.6% (862/2643) *	17.7% (245/1381) *	27.5% (1107/4024)
Married / partnership (%) (reference = other)	49.3%(1287/2609) *	43.3% (596/1377) *	47.2% (1883/3986)
Higher education (%)	51.4% (1345/2618) *	39.0% (537/1376) *	47.1% (1882/3994)
CV and NHS cost savings			£1,872,900,000
Employed (%) (reference = other)	56.3% (1480/2630) *	44.4% (610/1374) *	52.2% (2090/4004)
Live in London (%) (reference = other)	12.8% (339/2648) *	7.8% (108/1385) *	11.1% (447/4033)
BAME (reference = white)	7.7% (201/2616)	7.6% (105/1373)	7.7% (306/3989)
Members of park/cons. org. (%)	21.8% (576/2648) *	12.9% (179/1385) *	18.7% (755/4033)
Rural (reference = urban/suburban)	20.4% (541/2643)	20.2% (280/1378)	20.4% (821/4033)

Sample restricted to residents in UK (incl. Northern Ireland) aged 16 and over. National representative sample using age, gender, and region quotas. Sample excludes speedsters (n=65), those who indicated that their parks required an entry fee (n=282), and those giving invalid names for their local park (n=141). User defined as used park or green space once a month or more in past 12 months. Notes: Gross annual household income: averages computed using the midpoints of the income and age categories. Legend: * p<0.10 significant difference between user and nonuser samples (t-test).

Demographic data suggests that Huntingdonshire District Council has a population that is typical of the demographic that would use parks and open spaces. For example Fields In Trust Research (Fields in Trust, 2018) found that **"over half of the park and greenspace users have completed higher education (51%), a significantly higher proportion than among non-users (39%), while a higher proportion of park and greenspace users are in employment (56%), compared to 44% of non-users."** At the time of last census 40.8% of Huntingdonshire's population had completed higher education.

Communities within the community also need to be considered, The Communities and Local Government (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2017) also found BAME communities use parks more often with 71% using them at least once a month compared to 56% of people identifying as white.

Data for Huntingdonshire shows 73% of BAME respondents use a park or open space at least once a month compared to 84% of those identifying as white. 5.2% of Huntingdonshire's population is from BAME backgrounds, compared to 7.4% in England, however our research and national data suggests a need for this strategy to build links with BAME communities and connect them with local parks, open spaces and play areas.

on a national level Fields in Trust Revaluing Parks and Greenspaces (Revaluing Parks and Greenspaces, 2019) found that BAME people living outside of London on average gave their local park a 'satisfaction with quality score' of 4.14 out of 5, compared to 4.24 across all communities. The results of the Healthy Open Spaces Strategy questionnaire showed that 67% of BAME respondents rated their last visit to a park or open spaces at good or very good compared to 80% of those who identify as white. This suggests the BAME community are less satisfied with the quality of provision, in discussions with this group there was concern around levels of litter and the appearance of some parks and open spaces, which connected to these results.

The Communities and Local Government work on Public Parks (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2017) found park usage is ***"higher among those living in urban areas than those living in rural areas (61 per cent compared to 51 per cent use their park at least once a month)."*** Huntingdonshire is a rural district where regular park and open space usage is higher than the national results. This supports the argument that they are valued and appreciated by the local community.

Health& Wellbeing

Overall (Public Health Intelligence, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, 2018/19) ***"health outcomes in Huntingdonshire are broadly very good and often statistically significantly better than national averages"***. Areas for concern in relation to health outcomes ***"include alcohol abuse in young people, excess weight in adults and the prevalence of respiratory disease."***

It is interesting to note that (Public Health Intelligence, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, 2018/19) ***"Huntingdonshire has statistically significantly better levels of excess weight in children and statistically significantly worse levels of excess weight in adults than the England averages."*** Levels of physical activity in 15 year olds in Cambridgeshire (Huntingdonshire level data is not available) are statistically similar to England as a whole, with physical activity among adults in Huntingdonshire at 75.1% significantly higher than England (66%). This suggests people in Huntingdonshire are more likely to be active but also more likely to be overweight or obese. This suggests a role for parks, play areas and open spaces in addressing this imbalance and supporting healthy lifestyles.

"In terms of mental health conditions in Huntingdonshire, rates of Schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder, and other psychoses, and depression, are at levels statistically significantly lower than England averages. Rates of dementia and learning disabilities are statistically similar to national averages" (Public Health Intelligence, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, 2018/19). Mental health and emotional disorders are impacting on children and young people data suggests (Public Health Intelligence, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, 2018/19) ***"One in eight (12.8%) 5 to 19 year olds had at least one mental disorder when assessed (equivalent to approx. 3,810 children and young people in Huntingdonshire)"*** and ***"emotional disorders were the most prevalent of the disorders (8.1%) (equivalent to approx. 2,410 children and young people in Huntingdonshire)."***

From a national perspective research by ResPublica (ResPublica , 2017) found that ***"61% of respondents who felt they had good access to green and open spaces were satisfied with their physical health, versus only 44% of respondents who felt they had poor access to such spaces. Similarly, only 14% of respondents who felt they had good access to such spaces were dissatisfied with their mental health as opposed to 22% of respondents who felt they had poor access to such spaces."*** Engagement with communities in the development of this strategy should reflect the value that local people places on parks, open spaces and play areas in the context of their mental health as one respondent explained ***"outside time and nature times creates calm, and gives perspective. Fresh air boosts metabolic performance which aids mental health. Mixing with other people. Creating distraction and stress free time."***

Volunteering

The 2018/19 Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport Community (DCMS) Lifestyle Survey (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2019) found that 22% of adults (16+) formally volunteered, giving unpaid help through clubs or organisations, once a month and 36% in the last year. The DCMS research also shows that ***"people living in rural areas were more likely to formally volunteer than those in urban areas"*** and that people aged over 65 are the most likely to volunteer and those aged 25-34 the least. Rates of formal volunteering are 15 percentage points higher in the least deprived areas than the most deprived, however informal (giving unpaid help to individuals who aren't relatives) is relatively consistent across the scale of deprivation. This demographic data suggest a relatively strong pool of potential volunteers across the District.



03

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This appendix summarises the approach to community engagement.



Phase 1

Phase one of our programme of community engagement was designed to provide an understanding of how local people and visitors are currently using parks and open spaces, their perception of these spaces and how they feel they contribute to their health and well-being. Below is a summary of the events and activities we undertook during this phase.

Community Events

Attending community events enabled engagement with a range of people, including some who might not participate in a specific consultation activity. During the summer of 2019 a pop up community engagement activity was taken to four events:

- Huntingdon Carnival and Live in The Park, Saturday 10th & Sunday 11th August 2019
- St Neots Dragon Boat Race, Saturday 17th August 2019
- Hinchingsbrooke Country Park 30th Birthday Celebrations Part 2, Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th August 2019
- Love Farm Big Lunch, Sunday 8th September 2019

Interactive displays and a quick complete survey were used to obtain feedback from participants on how they use parks and open spaces, their perceived value of the spaces and aspirations for the future. This process began the conversation with local people and informed later phases of engagement.

Questionnaire

713 people completed a questionnaire that was available online with hard copies at events, in community locations including parks, libraries and leisure centres. Respondents came from across Huntingdonshire and results of this questionnaire are presented and analysed in the main report.

Focus Groups

During summer 2019, in partnership with local groups, schools and organisations, a programme of focus groups and discussions. This process ensured the strategy had representation from a range of target groups including:

- Children at Primary School
- Young People in Secondary School and College
- Retired People
- People from Diverse Backgrounds
- People with Additional Needs
- People who are not currently engaged in exercise

Social Media

Huntingdonshire District Council and a range of partners including Friends Groups, Parish Councils and Town Councils promoted opportunities for community engagement through social media. During October half term 2019 an #EmbraceYourSpace social media campaign was launched to encourage members of the local community to share photographs capturing images of parks and open spaces. This provided an insight into how the community was using local parks and open spaces during this week. Photographs from the #EmbraceYourSpace campaign have been included in this report.

Phase 2

Phase one of our programme of community engagement focused on understanding how local people use and value parks, open spaces and play areas. This information informed the development of the strategy. Phase 2 of the engagement process was an opportunity for the community to sense check and comment on the proposals and ensure that it reflected their needs and expectations.

Initially the plan was to hold five community events across the District at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Paxton Pits, Ramsey Leisure Centre, St Noets Farmers Market and St Ives Market. This was proposed to take place during the Easter holiday period to maximise footfall and opportunities for participation. However, COVID-19 restrictions resulted in the cancellation of these events and community engagement was moved online.

Social Media -----

As part of our digital engagement social media was used to raise awareness of opportunities to get involved. In addition, as shown in figure 1, local people were asked to participate in a vote bracket to help us understand priorities. This resulted in changes to the strategy to put an increased level of emphasis on wildlife and nature.

As events were not possible, information about the draft strategy and its aspirations was made available via the Huntingdonshire District Council alongside mechanism for leaving comments, feedback and queries.

Questionnaire

It must be acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent local down and social distancing measures has had an impact on the use and perception of parks and open spaces. The Parks Management Forum (<https://parksmanagementforum.co.uk> June 2020) estimates "the use of parks over the last 4 months (February to May 2020) has increased over 136% nationally and some in localities even more." The impact of COVID-19 will be felt moving forward both in terms of how communities use parks and open spaces are how they are managed. 248 people completed a short questionnaire, the result of which are summarised in figure 2.

Help us understand your priorities for the future of local parks and greenspaces...

We've been working on a Healthy Open Spaces Strategy to shape the future of our parks and greenspaces for the benefit of our community.

Huntingdonshire District Council spends the equivalent of just under £24 per household, per year (excluding council recharges), on our parks and open spaces. If you were making the decisions, how would you invest that money?

To help us understand the communities priorities we'll be asking you to select where you would spend the money, if it was your decision. This isn't a vote, but is about us seeing what the community values.

Over the next seven days we'll be polling you based on the bracket below, let us know what you think is the most important and would improve parks for you and your family. The ideas for investment below are taken from community engagement and the results of our healthy open spaces community survey.

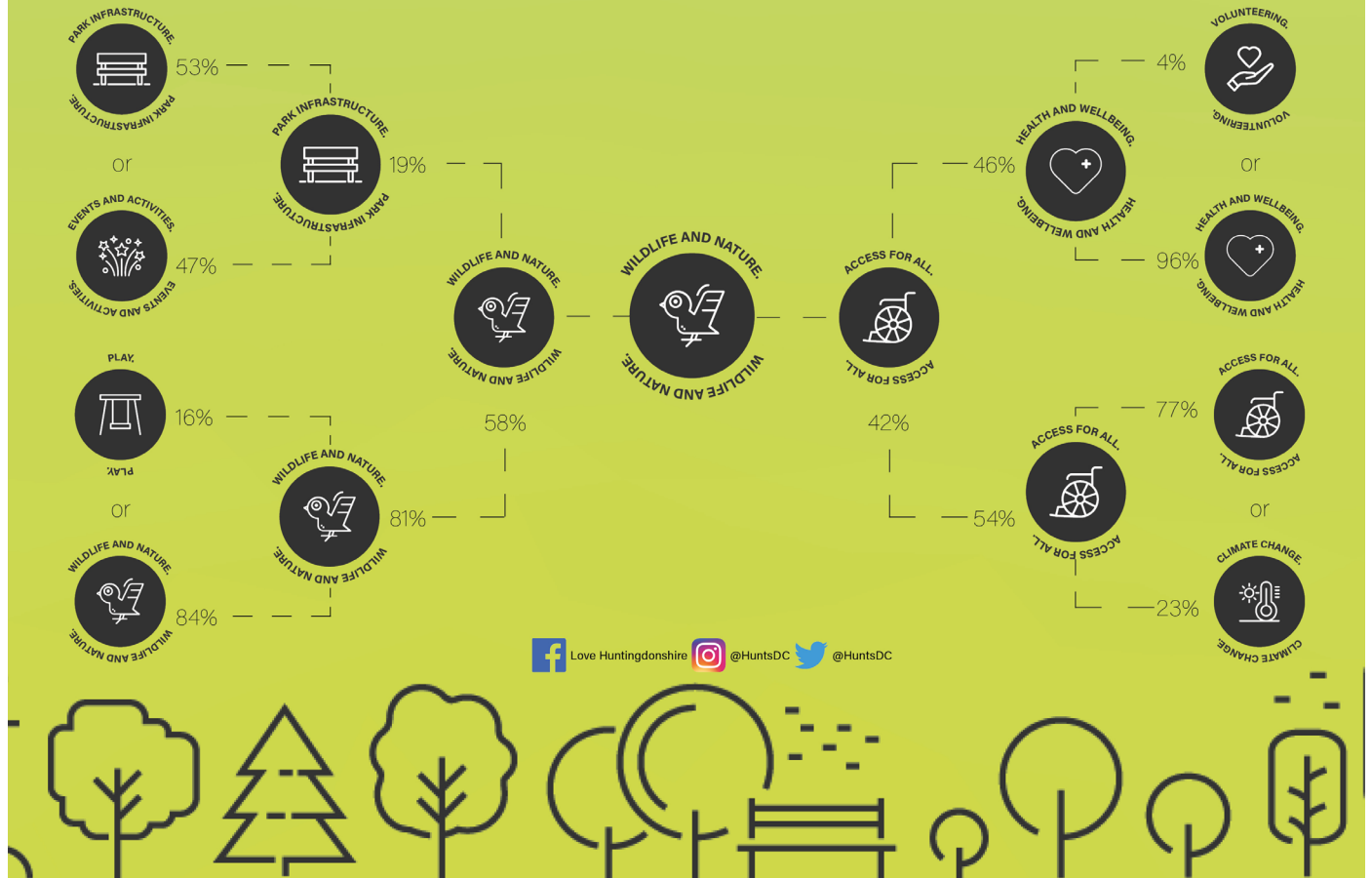


FIGURE 1:
Social Media Bracket

Online Focus Groups

We undertook a programme of five online focus groups attended by a total of five focus groups attended by 31 members of the public ranging in age from 21 to 73. The focus group sessions were based around a discussion of the vision and strategic themes. These open and honest discussions resulted in additions and amendments to the action plan particularly around working with schools, encouraging people to volunteer and working with communities. It should be acknowledged that because these activities took place online it limited participation to those who had access to the internet.

FIGURE 2:

COVID-19 Survey Summary





COVID-19 Short Survey

248 people completed a short survey about their use of parks and open spaces during COVID-19 and social distancing restrictions.



Keeping healthy

81% think access to open space encourages them to keep healthy. 92% think parks and open spaces are improving their mental health and well-being.

Because I'm happy

92% say access to parks and open spaces during covid-19 restrictions and social distancing is making them and over people happy.



04 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

This appendix summarises the approach to stakeholder engagement.



Introduction

In the context of this strategy, a stakeholder is a person, group or organisation that has interest or concern in Huntingdonshire's Parks and Open Spaces. Stakeholders can affect or be affected by the strategy's actions, objectives and policies¹. They are the persons, groups or organisations that will work in partnership with Huntingdonshire District Council's Parks and Recreation team to deliver the action plan. They include Friends and Community Groups, Parish and Town Council, other departments from across Huntingdonshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and the third sector.

The approach to engagement commenced with a mapping exercise to identify existing and potential stakeholders, with a focus on understanding their interest / influence. This mapping process was developed into an engagement plan, with a focus on ensuring stakeholders were able to participate and believed that it would be a beneficial process. Alongside targeted stakeholder engagement events and activities, stakeholders were also invited to attend community events. Stakeholders also played a vital role in raising awareness of the strategy and promoting opportunities for communities to participate in engagement.

Phase 1

The first phase of engagement was focused on ensuring a rounded understanding of the current situation and aspirations for the future from stakeholders perspectives.

Workshop

The initial workshop was an opportunity to bring stakeholders together, to launch the development of the strategy and set clear parameters. The workshop used interactive tools and activities to create a shared understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the current approach. It also explored stakeholders aspirations for the future and initiatives that could be connected to the strategy, as well as giving participants an opportunity to shape the criteria for the site assessment process. The final element of the workshop focused on creating a shared vision and lead to #EmbraceYourSpace.

Interviews, Meetings and Site Visits

Stakeholders had the opportunity to request a one to one or small group discussion of the strategy and their potential role in shaping and delivering change. A number of individuals and organisations took up this offer, with discussions taking the form of interviews, meetings and sites visits.

Friends and Community Groups Workshop

Friends and Community Groups are vital to parks and open spaces. A workshop was held specifically for these groups, with a focus on the current situation, understanding the role of these groups and their aspirations for the future. This was an open and honest discussion that enabled an informed understanding of the groups roles, plans and frustrations.

¹ <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/stakeholder.html>

Phase 2

This stage of the stakeholder engagement process was focused on sharing the draft strategy and providing mechanisms for comment and feedback. The way in which this phase was delivered was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting social distancing, therefore elements of the engagement took part online.

Workshop

The phase 2 stakeholder workshop presented the findings of the research and engagement, alongside the draft vision, themes and a range of potential projects. Attendees were encouraged to question and feedback on the findings, as well as to work together to develop potential projects for the action plan.

Pop Up Event

A drop in session was held at Pathfinder House, to enable anyone who worked for Huntingdonshire District Council to pop in and find out about the strategy and proposals for the future. This diversified the range of people who had an opportunity to comment, beyond those whose work for the Council connected directly with parks and open spaces.

Member Working Group

The Healthy Open Spaces Strategy Working Group met in early March 2020, to review and question the findings of the strategy. In addition Members were able to put forward potential projects and aspirations for the action plan.

Online Engagement

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting restrictions further face to face engagement with stakeholders was not possible. Digital engagement opportunities were developed with online presentations and feedback sessions for Town, Parish and District Councils and Members. In addition stakeholders were signposted to a video presentation and digital comment cards which were made available via Huntingdonshire District Council's YouTube page.



05

UNDERSTANDING QUALITY

The criteria that was used to assess the quality of a sample of Huntingdonshire's Parks and Open Spaces.





**HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
HEALTHY OPEN SPACES & PLAY STRATEGY
SCORING CRITERIA - QUALITY ASSESSMENT**

M18.186.R.013



Attributes	Description/s	Score
Sense of Welcome and Arrival	A welcoming place score of 9+	4
	A welcoming place score of 7 to 8	3
	A welcoming place score of 5 to 6	2
	A welcoming place score of 4 or under	1
Healthy, Safe and Secure	A healthy, safe and secure score of 9+	4
	A healthy, safe and secure score of 7 to 8	3
	A healthy, safe and secure score of 5 to 6	2
	A healthy, safe and secure score of 4 or under	1
Well Maintained and Clean	A well maintained and clean score of 9+	4
	A well maintained and clean score of 7 to 8	3
	A well maintained and clean score of 5 to 6	2
	A well maintained and clean score of 4 or under	1
Road, paths, cycle ways and access	Suitable materials, level for safe use, some disabled access.	3
	Suitable materials but with some faults, disabled access poor.	2
	Roads / paths in correct place but in need of obvious repair, disabled access poor and very restricted.	1
Facilities: Bins	Numerous for the site and in good condition.	5
	Numerous for the site and in average condition.	4
	Adequate number in good / average condition.	3
	Insufficient number but in a good condition.	2
	Insufficient number in a poor condition.	1
Facilities: Seats	Numerous for the site and in good condition.	5
	Numerous for the site and in average condition.	4
	Adequate number in good / average condition.	3
	Insufficient number but in a good condition.	2
	Insufficient number in a poor condition.	1
Facilities: Toilets	Provided within the park, easy to access, signed and well maintained.	5
	Provided within or adjacent to the park, difficult to find maintenance / condition is average.	4
	Provided with the park or adjacent to it and visible, but not well cared for an generally uninviting.	3
	Provided within the park or adjacent to it but in very poor condition and generally avoided by park users.	2
	Temporary toilet provision for events / facilities e.g. cafe are open.	1

Attributes	Description/s	Score
Parking	Parking provided integral to, or adjacent to the space. Adequate spaces, site clean, tidy, in good condition and well signed.	5
	Parking provided integral to, or adjacent to the park, adequate spaces but maintenance could be better.	4
	Parking provided integral to, or adjacent, to the park, limited spaces, maintenance good or reasonable.	3
	Parking provided integral to, or adjacent to the park, limited space, maintenance poor.	2
	Parking provision is very limited.	1
Information	Information is available on site for locals and visitors.	3
	Information is available online for locals and visitors.	2
	Limited information about the park is available.	1
Facilities: Additional	Cafe / food offer	5
	Disability facilities / provision	5
Play: Availability	Play provision is well located, in good condition and easy to find.	5
	Play provision is hard to find and in good condition.	3
	Play provision is available but is need of improvement.	1
Play: Quality	An average score of 9+	5
	An average score of 7 to 8	4
	An average score of 5 to 6	3
	An average score of 4 to 3	2
	An average score of 2 or under	1
Physical Health	Facilities for physical activity are available (e.g. pitches or changing rooms) and promote on site.	5
	Physical activity is promoted and encourage on site.	4
	Facilities are available on site.	3
	There is potential for physical activity on site.	1
Mental Health and Well Being	There is evidence of activity related to mental health and well being taking place on site.	5
	The sites potential to support mental health and well being is promoted on site / online.	3
	There is potential for the site to benefit people's mental health and well being.	1
Quick Green Flag Score Average	An average score of 9+	4
	An average score of 7 to 8	3
	An average score of 5 to 6	2
	An average score of 4 or under	1
Management Plan	Evidence of management plan	5

ID	The Site				General				Facilities						Play		Health		Green Flag		Quality	
	Site Name	Postcode	Ward	Primary Typology	Sense of Welcome and Arrival	Healthy, Safe and Secure	Clean and Well Maintained	Roads, Paths, Cycle Ways and Access	Bins	Seats	Toilets	Parking	Information	Additional	Availability	Quality	Physical Health	Mental Health	Quick Score	Management Plan	Score	%
1	Holt Island Nature Reserve	PE27 5BY	St Ives South	Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces	1	3	4	3	0	4	0	0	3	0	0	0.00	5	1	7	0	31	46.83
2	Falcon Drive	PE29 1LP	Huntingdon East	Amenity green space	2	3	3	0	3	4	0	0	1	0	1	4.50	1	1	7	0	30	39.18
3	Garner Court	PE29 1GE	Huntingdon North	Amenity green space	1	3	3	3	3	4	0	4	1	0	5	6.22	0	1	6	0	41	52.67
4	Coneygear Park	PE29 1GB	Huntingdon North	Urban Park	3	3	3	2	3	4	0	0	1	5	5	7.57	5	1	8	0	51	65.68
5	Flamsteed Park	PE29 6JG	Brampton	Urban Park	3	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	5	5	6.00	5	1	8	0	42	54.55
6	Sapley Playing Field	PE28 2GA	Huntingdon North	Urban Park	3	3	3	0	3	3	0	4	1	0	5	6.30	5	1	8	5	50	65.32
7	Mayfield Crescent	PE29 1UJ	Huntingdon East	Urban Park	2	3	3	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	3	5.33	0	1	6	0	28	35.93
8	Stukeley Meadows Linear Nature Reserve and Play Areas	PE29 6UF	The Stukeleys	Urban Park	3	3	3	2	3	5	0	0	3	5	3	6.70	5	1	6	0	48	62.69
9	King George V Field, Sapley Road	PE29 3RP	Huntingdon East	Amenity green space	3	3	3	0	3	3	0	0	1	5	5	6.20	5	1	7	0	45	58.05
10	Huntingdon Town Park - Bloomfield Park	PE29 3LF	Huntingdon North	Urban Park	3	3	3	2	3	5	0	0	3	5	5	6.60	5	1	7	0	51	66.69
11	Priory Park	PE19 1DY	St Neots Priory Park & Little Paxton	Urban Park	3	3	3	2	3	3	1	5	1	5	5	7.56	1	1	8	5	56	73.23
12	Love Farm - 3 Camp Ground	PE19 6GS	St Neots East	Provision for children and teenagers	3	3	3	2	3	5	0	0	3	5	5	7.67	1	0	8	0	49	63.20
13	Loves Farm - Train Station	PE19 6GS	St Neots East	Provision for children and teenagers	2	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	5.20	0	0	5	0	26	34.35
14	Love Farm - Bawlings	PE19 6GD	St Neots East	Provision for children and teenagers	1	3	3	2	0	5	0	0	1	0	5	3.22	0	0	7	0	30	38.60
15	Loves Farm - 1	PE19 6SL	St Neots East	Provision for children and teenagers	3	3	3	2	3	0	0	0	1	0	5	5.60	5	5	8	0	43	56.19
16	Love Farm - 4 (Pirate Ship)	PE19 6GL	St Neots East	Provision for children and teenagers	3	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	5	5	7.22	1	0	8	0	38	49.64
17	Love Farm - 2 (Hull Way) & Furrow Fields	PE19 6GS	St Neots East	Provision for children and teenagers	2	2	3	2	3	5	0	0	1	0	5	4.78	1	1	7	0	37	47.76
18	Henbrook	PE19 2ED	St Neots Eynesbury	Provision for children and teenagers	2	2	3	2	3	3	0	4	1	0	5	4.89	1	0	6	0	37	47.58
19	Barford Road	PE19 2SA	St Neots Eynesbury	Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces	3	3	3	2	3	3	0	4	3	0	5	7.33	5	1	7	5	54	70.56
20	Dumock Way, St Ives	PE27 5EX	St Ives South	Provision for children and teenagers	3	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	5.22	5	0	7	0	35	45.09
21	Hill Rise, St Ives	PE27 6HR	St Ives West	Urban Park	3	3	3	2	3	4	0	4	3	5	5	5.78	5	5	7	5	62	81.10
22	Fire Station Play Area, Huntingdon	PE29 3RQ	Huntingdon North	Provision for children and teenagers	2	2	3	2	3	3	0	0	1	5	5	5.00	5	0	6	0	42	54.87
23	Riverside Huntingdon	PE29 3RP	Huntingdon East	Urban Park	1	2	2	2	2	3	0	5	3	5	5	6.11	5	1	5	5	52	67.68
24	Little Paxton - QE Playfield	PE19 6EY	St Neots Priory Park & Little Paxton	Urban Park	3	2	3	2	3	3	0	5	1	10	5	0.00	5	5	7	0	54	69.70
25	Paxton Pits	PE19 6ET	St Neots Priory Park & Little Paxton	Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces	4	3	3	3	3	2	5	5	3	5	0	0.00	5	1	8	5	55	81.53
26	Somersham - Memorial Hall (Victory Hall)	PE28 3HE	Somersham	Urban Park	3	3	3	2	3	3	0	5	1	10	5	6.67	5	1	7	0	58	74.89
27	King George V Field, Ramsey	PE26 1GB	Ramsey	Urban Park	3	3	3	2	3	3	0	0	1	0	5	6.56	5	1	7	0	42	54.94
28	Signal Road, Ramsey	PE26 1NG	Ramsey	Provision for children and teenagers	3	3	3	2	3	0	0	0	1	0	5	5.11	0	0	7	0	32	42.03
29	Sawtry, Rowell Way	PE28 5WA	Sawtry	Provision for children and teenagers	3	3	3	2	3	3	0	0	1	5	3	7.30	1	0	7	0	41	53.64
30	Yaxley, Park Close	PE7 3WJ	Yaxley	Urban Park	2	3	3	2	3	3	0	3	1	5	5	6.33	5	1	6	0	48	62.51
31	Stilton Community Rec Field	PE7 3RP	Stilton, Folksworth & Washingley	Provision for children and teenagers	3	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	5	5	6.40	5	0	7	0	41	52.79
32	Brampton Memorial Hall	PE28 4QR	Brampton	Urban Park	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	5	1	5	5	6.60	5	1	7	0	57	73.77
33	Stokes Drive 2	PE29 2UV	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	Provision for children and teenagers	3	3	3	0	3	3	0	0	1	5	3	5.67	0	0	7	0	37	47.62
34	Stokes Drive - 1 (Opposite Green Acre Close)	PE29 2UW	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	Provision for children and teenagers	2	3	3	0	3	3	0	0	1	0	3	4.67	0	0	7	0	29	38.10
35	Wigmore Farm	PE29 2AR	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	Provision for children and teenagers	3	3	3	2	3	3	0	0	1	5	5	5.80	1	1	7	0	43	55.58
36	Huntingdonshire Community Nursery	PE29 2AG	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	Allotments, community gardens and city (urban) farms	3	2	2	2	3	3	0	3	3	5	0	0.00	1	1	6	0	34	51.00
37	The Thicket	PE27 6DT	St Ives South	Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces	2	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0.00	1	1	5	0	19	28.36
38	Hinchingbrooke Country Park	PE29 6DB	St Ives South	Country Park	3	3	3	3	3	5	5	3	3	5	5	5.89	5	5	8	5	70	90.44
39	Spring Common	PE29 1TQ	Huntingdon North	Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces	1	1	2	2	3	3	0	0	1	10	0	0.00	0	1	4	0	28	42.29
40	Sudbury Meadows	PE19 7AB	St Neots Priory Park & Little Paxton	Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces	3	3	3	2	3	3	0	0	1	5	0	0.00	5	5	8	5	46	68.10
41	Alconbury Weald Skatepark & Play Space	PE28 4XG	The Stukeleys	Provision for children and teenagers	3	3	3	2	3	3	0	3	1	5	5	7.70	5	0	8	0	51	66.71
42	Oxmoor Estate	PE29 7BB	Huntingdon North	Urban Park	2	2	3	2	3	3	0	0	1	0	3	5.71	5	1	6	0	37	48.11
43	Judith's Field	PE29 2WB	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	Urban Park	3	3	2	2	3	3	0	2	3	5	5	7.30	5	1	6	0	51	65.76
44	Coneygear Park, St Neots	PE19 2TL	St Neots Eynesbury	Urban Park	2	2	3	2	3	3	0	3	3	5	5	5.78	1	1	6	0	45	58.48
45	St Neots - Skate Park	PE19 7SB	St Neots Eatons	Provision for children and teenagers	3	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	5	5	5.80	5	0	7	0	40	51.95
46	Riverside, St Neots	PE19 7SB	St Neots Eatons	Urban Park	3	3	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	0	5	6.70	5	1	6	5	56	72.66
47	Co-op Play Area	PE29 2PA	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	Provision for children and teenagers	3	3	3	2	3	3	0	0	1	0	5	6.00	0	0	7	0	36	46.75



06

UNDERSTANDING VALUE

The criteria that was used to assess the value of a sample of Huntingdonshire's Parks and Open Spaces.





**HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
HEALTHY OPEN SPACES & PLAY STRATEGY
SCORING CRITERIA - VALUE ASSESSMENT**

M18.186.R.014



Factor	Criteria	Rationale	Measure	Score	Weighting
Context	Accessibility	Based on audit.	Unrestricted	10	x1
			Limited	5	
			Restricted	0	
	Proximity	Based on GIS analysis using 400m buffer zone for open space.	No overlap	10	x1
			1 overlap	9	
			2 overlaps	8	
			3 overlaps	7	
			4 overlaps	6	
			5 overlaps	5	
			6 overlaps	4	
			7 overlaps	3	
			8 overlaps	2	
			9 overlaps	1	
Quantity	Fields in Trust Greenspace Index GIS Score	less than 1 / less than the minimum standard	10	x1	
		1 - 2	7		
		3 - 4	5		
		5+	3		
Level and type of use	Hierarchy	Based on prescribed hierarchy	Destination	10	x1
			District	7	
			Neighbourhood	5	
			Local	3	
	Level of use	Number of people observed using the site during visit	50+	10	x1
			30 - 49	8	
			15 - 29	5	
			5 - 14	3	
			4 and under	1	

Factor	Criteria	Rationale	Measure	Score	Weighting
Wider Benefits	Landscape	Statutory designations for protected landscapes.	Within protected landscape	10	x1
			View(s) with appeal	5	
			No landscape value	0	
	Biodiversity	Formal designation	NNR	10	x1
			SSSI	8	
			LNR	5	
			SINC	3	
			pSINC	2	
			No designation	0	
	Heritage	Features associated with the site	SAM	10	x1
			Registered parks and gardens	7	
			Within conservation area	5	
	Community		Friends / community group	10	x2
			Community projects e.g. allotments associated with site	5	
			Regular events and activities	3	
	Life Long Learning	Number of education establishments within a 400m butter	>5	10	x2
			3-4	7	
			2-3	5	
			1	3	
			0	0	
Health & Well Being	Indices of Multiple Deprivation at LSOA Level	20% most deprived	10	x2	
		21 - 40%	7		
		41 - 60%	5		
		61 - 80%	3		
		81 100%	1		

Factor	Criteria	Rationale	Measure	Score	Weighting
Green Infrastructure	Connectivity	Direct contact with other green spaces even if restricted or limited.	>5	10	x3
			3-4	7	
			2-3	5	
			1	3	
			0	0	

ID	The Site			Context				Level and Type of Use			Landscape
	Site Name	Postcode	Ward	Accessibility	Proximity	Quantity	TOTAL	Hierachy	Level of Use	TOTAL	
38	Hinchingsbrooke Country Park	PE29 6DB	St Ives South	10	2	3	15	10	10	20	0
19	Barford Road	PE19 2SA	St Neots Eynesbury	10	3	7	20	7	3	10	0
15	Loves Farm - 1	PE19 6SL	St Neots East	10	2	10	22	3	3	6	0
16	Love Farm - 4 (Pirate Ship)	PE19 6GL	St Neots East	10	2	10	22	3	3	6	0
11	Priory Park	PE19 1DY	St Neots Priory Park & Little Paxton	10	1	5	16	10	8	18	0
4	Coneygear Park	PE29 1GB	Huntingdon North	10	6	10	26	7	3	10	0
21	Hill Rise, St Ives	PE27 6HR	St Ives West	10	6	5	21	7	3	10	0
36	Huntingdonshire Community Nursery	PE29 2AG	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	10	2	10	22	7	3	10	0
17	Love Farm - 2 (Hull Way) & Furrow Fields	PE19 6GS	St Neots East	10	5	10	25	3	3	6	0
12	Love Farm - 3 Camp Ground	PE19 6GS	St Neots East	10	4	10	24	3	3	6	0
13	Loves Farm - Train Station	PE19 6GS	St Neots East	10	4	10	24	3	3	6	0
39	Spring Common	PE29 1TQ	Huntingdon North	10	6	10	26	5	1	6	0
1	Holt Island Nature Reserve	PE27 5BY	St Ives South	5	1	10	16	7	1	8	5
14	Love Farm - Bawlins	PE19 6GD	St Neots East	10	4	10	24	3	1	4	0
18	Henbrook	PE19 2ED	St Neots Eynesbury	10	2	10	22	7	3	10	0
27	King George V Field, Ramsey	PE26 1BE	Ramsey	10	10	10	30	5	3	8	0
24	Little Paxton - QE Playfield	PE19 6EY	St Neots Priory Park & Little Paxton	10	7	10	27	5	3	8	0
25	Paxton Pits	PE19 6ET	St Neots Priory Park & Little Paxton	10	7	10	27	5	3	8	0
30	Yaxley, Park Close	PE7 3WJ	Yaxley	10	7	10	27	3	1	4	0
37	The Thicket	PE27 6DT	St Ives South	10	5	10	25	5	1	6	0
42	Oxmoor Estate	PE29 7BB	Huntingdon North	10	7	7	24	5	3	8	0
7	Mayfield Crescent	PE29 1UJ	Huntingdon East	10	7	10	27	7	1	8	0
43	Judith's Field	PE29 2WB	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	10	5	10	25	7	8	15	0
31	Stilton Community Rec Field	PE7 3RA	Stilton, Folksworth & Washingley	10	10	7	27	5	0	5	0
40	Sudbury Meadows	PE19 7AB	St Neots Priory Park & Little Paxton	10	1	3	14	7	1	8	0
8	Stukeley Meadows Linear Nature Reserve and Play Areas	PE29 6UF	The Stukeleys	10	9	10	29	7	3	10	0
44	Coneygear Park, St Neots	PE19 2TL	St Neots Eynesbury	10	3	10	23	5	3	8	0
35	Wigmore Farm	PE29 2AR	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	10	10	10	30	5	1	6	0
45	St Neots - Skate Park	PE19 7SB	St Neots Eatons	10	5	3	18	10	5	15	0
46	Riverside, St Neots	PE19 7SB	St Neots Eatons	10	5	3	18	10	5	15	0
3	Garner Court	PE29 1GE	Huntingdon North	10	7	7	24	3	1	4	0
41	Alconbury Weald Skatepark & Play Space	PE28 4XG	The Stukeleys	10	7	7	24	5	1	6	0
23	Riverside Huntingdon	PE29 3RP	Huntingdon East	10	1	10	21	10	5	15	0
26	Somersham - Memorial Hall (Victory Hall)	PE28 3HE	Somersham	10	8	10	28	5	3	8	0
29	Sawtry, Rowell Way	PE28 5WA	Sawtry	10	9	7	26	3	3	6	0
6	Sapley Playing Field	PE28 2GA	Huntingdon North	10	4	7	21	5	3	8	0
20	Dumock Way, St Ives	PE27 5EX	St Ives South	10	10	10	30	5	1	6	0
47	Co-op Play Area	PE29 2PA	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	10	4	3	17	10	1	11	0
28	Signal Road, Ramsey	PE26 1NG	Ramsey	10	9	10	29	5	3	8	0
9	King George V Field, Sapley Road	PE29 3RP	Huntingdon East	10	1	10	21	5	1	6	0
10	Huntingdon Town Park - Bloomfield Park	PE29 3LF	Huntingdon North	10	3	5	18	7	1	8	0
5	Flamsteed Park	PE29 6JG	Brampton	10	6	3	19	3	1	4	0
22	Fire Station Play Area, Huntingdon	PE29 3RQ	Huntingdon North	10	1	10	21	3	1	4	0
32	Brampton Memorial Hall	PE28 4QR	Brampton	10	7	10	27	5	1	6	0
33	Stokes Drive 2	PE29 2UV	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	10	7	10	27	3	3	6	0
34	Stokes Drive - 1 (Opposite Green Acre Close)	PE29 2UW	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	10	7	10	27	3	3	6	0
2	Falcon Drive	PE29 1LP	Huntingdon East	10	9	7	26	3	1	4	0

ID	The Site			Wider Benefits						Green Infrastructure	Value	
	Site Name	Postcode	Ward	Biodiversity	Heritage	Community	Life Long Learning	Health & Well Being	TOTAL	Connectivity	Score	%
38	Hinchingbrooke Country Park	PE29 6DB	St Ives South	0	7	20	10	6	43	0	78	45.88
19	Barford Road	PE19 2SA	St Neots Eynesbury	5	0	20	10	10	45	0	75	44.12
15	Loves Farm - 1	PE19 6SL	St Neots East	0	0	20	6	10	36	9	73	42.94
16	Love Farm - 4 (Pirate Ship)	PE19 6GL	St Neots East	0	0	20	6	10	36	9	73	42.94
11	Priory Park	PE19 1DY	St Neots Priory Park & Little Paxton	0	0	20	14	2	36	0	70	41.18
4	Coneygear Park	PE29 1GB	Huntingdon North	0	0	20	6	6	32	0	68	40.00
21	Hill Rise, St Ives	PE27 6HR	St Ives West	0	0	20	6	2	28	9	68	40.00
36	Huntingdonshire Community Nursery	PE29 2AG	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	0	0	20	6	10	36	0	68	40.00
17	Love Farm - 2 (Hull Way) & Furrow Fields	PE19 6GS	St Neots East	0	0	20	6	10	36	0	67	39.41
12	Love Farm - 3 Camp Ground	PE19 6GS	St Neots East	0	0	20	6	10	36	0	66	38.82
13	Loves Farm - Train Station	PE19 6GS	St Neots East	0	0	20	6	10	36	0	66	38.82
39	Spring Common	PE29 1TQ	Huntingdon North	0	0	14	14	20	34	0	66	38.82
1	Holt Island Nature Reserve	PE27 5BY	St Ives South	0	0	20	6	10	41	0	65	38.24
14	Love Farm - Bawlins	PE19 6GD	St Neots East	0	0	20	6	10	36	0	64	37.65
18	Henbrook	PE19 2ED	St Neots Eynesbury	0	0	14	14	14	28	0	60	35.29
27	King George V Field, Ramsey	PE26 1BE	Ramsey	0	0	0	6	14	20	0	58	34.12
24	Little Paxton - QE Playfield	PE19 6EY	St Neots Priory Park & Little Paxton	0	0	20	0	2	22	0	57	33.53
25	Paxton Pits	PE19 6ET	St Neots Priory Park & Little Paxton	0	0	20	0	2	22	0	57	33.53
30	Yaxley, Park Close	PE7 3WJ	Yaxley	0	0	6	10	10	26	0	57	33.53
37	The Thicket	PE27 6DT	St Ives South	0	0	0	6	10	16	9	56	32.94
42	Oxmoor Estate	PE29 7BB	Huntingdon North	0	0	0	10	14	24	0	56	32.94
7	Mayfield Crescent	PE29 1UJ	Huntingdon East	0	0	0	10	10	20	0	55	32.35
43	Judith's Field	PE29 2WB	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	0	0	6	6	2	14	0	54	31.76
31	Stilton Community Rec Field	PE7 3RA	Stilton, Folksworth & Washingley	0	0	10	0	2	12	9	53	31.18
40	Sudbury Meadows	PE19 7AB	St Neots Priory Park & Little Paxton	0	0	20	0	2	22	9	53	31.18
8	Stukeley Meadows Linear Nature Reserve and Play Areas	PE29 6UF	The Stukeleys	5	0	0	6	2	13	0	52	30.59
44	Coneygear Park, St Neots	PE19 2TL	St Neots Eynesbury	0	0	0	6	6	12	9	52	30.59
35	Wigmore Farm	PE29 2AR	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	0	0	0	0	14	14	0	50	29.41
45	St Neots - Skate Park	PE19 7SB	St Neots Eatons	0	0	0	0	2	2	15	50	29.41
46	Riverside, St Neots	PE19 7SB	St Neots Eatons	0	0	0	0	2	2	15	50	29.41
3	Garner Court	PE29 1GE	Huntingdon North	0	0	0	6	14	20	0	48	28.24
41	Alconbury Weald Skatepark & Play Space	PE28 4XG	The Stukeleys	0	0	0	12	6	18	0	48	28.24
23	Riverside Huntingdon	PE29 3RP	Huntingdon East	0	0	0	0	10	10	0	46	27.06
26	Somersham - Memorial Hall (Victory Hall)	PE28 3HE	Somersham	0	0	0	6	2	8	0	44	25.88
29	Sawtry, Rowell Way	PE28 5WA	Sawtry	0	0	0	6	6	12	0	44	25.88
6	Sapley Playing Field	PE28 2GA	Huntingdon North	0	0	0	0	14	14	0	43	25.29
20	Dumock Way, St Ives	PE27 5EX	St Ives South	0	0	0	0	6	6	0	42	24.71
47	Co-op Play Area	PE29 2PA	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	0	0	0	6	6	12	0	40	23.53
28	Signal Road, Ramsey	PE26 1NG	Ramsey	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	39	22.94
9	King George V Field, Sapley Road	PE29 3RP	Huntingdon East	0	0	0	0	10	10	0	37	21.76
10	Huntingdon Town Park - Bloomfield Park	PE29 3LF	Huntingdon North	0	0	0	0	10	10	0	36	21.18
5	Flamsteed Park	PE29 6JG	Brampton	0	0	0	6	6	12	0	35	20.59
22	Fire Station Play Area, Huntingdon	PE29 3RQ	Huntingdon North	0	0	0	0	10	10	0	35	20.59
32	Brampton Memorial Hall	PE28 4QR	Brampton	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	35	20.59
33	Stokes Drive 2	PE29 2UV	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	35	20.59
34	Stokes Drive - 1 (Opposite Green Acre Close)	PE29 2UW	Godmanchester & Hemingford Abbots	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	35	20.59
2	Falcon Drive	PE29 1LP	Huntingdon East	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	32	18.82



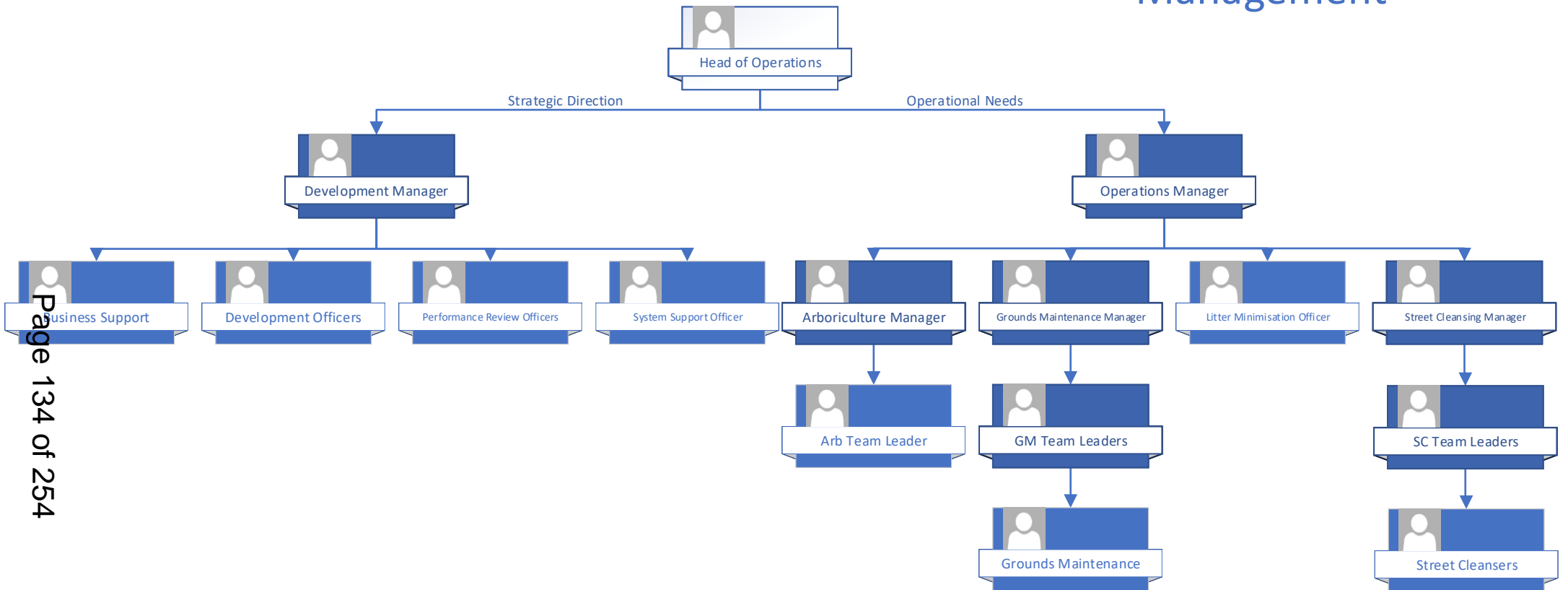
07

STAFF STRUCTURE

The staff structure at the time the strategy was developed.



Parks and Open Space Management



PleydellSmithyman



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Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Planning for the Future White Paper Consultation Response

Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 22nd October 2020

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning, Councillor Jon Neish

Report by: Planning Policy Team Leader

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

A White Paper 'Planning for the future' was published for consultation commencing on 6th August 2020. Fundamental reforms to the planning system in England are proposed. These include proposals for Local Plan reform and changes to both developer contributions and development management. The proposals would require primary legislation to bring them forward followed by secondary legislation along with further changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

The 'Planning for the future' reforms would have substantial implications for how the planning system would operate in Huntingdonshire and throughout England. They would alter the strategic planning relationship with neighbouring authorities and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority by removing the formal 'duty to cooperate' when preparing development plans. The proposed changes would have significant impacts on the nature, timing and amount of public engagement opportunities in the planning system and alter the role of elected members in the decision-making processes for both the Local Plan and for development management applications.

The reforms would have significant financial implications too, potentially substantially increasing the costs of preparation of the Local Plan and associated documentation, whilst reducing income from planning application fees.

This report provides an overview of the proposed changes although it should be noted that the consultation document focuses on 24 relatively high level proposals for change which will need substantially more detail before more certainty can be obtained on the full implications for Huntingdonshire. The

proposals are accompanied by 25 questions on which the government is seeking responses.

The proposed responses to the questions are presented in a bullet point format as they were prepared in the week ending 25th September. They will be presented in a more formal, paragraph based style when submitted to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government after agreement with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy.

The consultation runs until 30th October 2020 and full details of the consultation document can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED

To provide comments on this consultation and the proposed responses and to delegate authority to finalise and submit the Council's consultation responses to the Service Manager – Growth and the Planning Policy Team Leader in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an outline of the proposals set out in the government's White Paper 'Planning for the future' and draft consultation responses highlighting how the proposals might affect the district and the Council's corporate priorities and objectives. Approval is sought for the detailed responses and their submission to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Consultation on a White Paper proposing substantial changes to the planning system was launched on 6th August 2020 and closes on 29th October 2020. A briefing note was sent to all Councillors on 8th August accompanied by a briefing note sent to all Parish Council to raise awareness with them of the consultation and encourage Parish councils to consider the proposals and respond individually. This set out the fundamental nature of the proposed reforms, the three key foci for change, indications of the anticipated delivery of reforms and how the White Paper sat amongst two other consultations issued concurrently.

3. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE WHITE PAPER – AN OVERVIEW

- 3.1 As a White Paper this provides the basis for consultation before proposals for future legislation are set out in a draft Bill. It seeks a fundamental reform of the planning system and replacement of all current plan-making law in England.
- 3.2 The government contends that the current planning system is complicated and often results in delays in delivering new homes. The White Paper proposes a complete overhaul of the planning system with the aspiration of transforming the way communities are shaped and increasing the number of new homes built and the speed at which they are delivered.
- 3.3 The proposals are very heavily dominated by housing provision and the revisions to Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements. It gives little or no attention to the local economy, the interrelationship between development and infrastructure, the natural environment and open space, the quality of life for local people, and other necessary matters such as minerals and waste planning. The key proposals are summarised below.
- 3.4 Local Plans will become the focus of public involvement in the planning system with reduced opportunities for consultation at the planning application stage. The White Paper indicates local planning authorities should radically rethink how they engage with the public during preparation of the Local Plan, however, no proposals for how this might be achieved are put forward. There is a great emphasis on taking a digital approach to engagement.

- 3.5 The 'Duty to Cooperate' with neighbouring authorities is removed with no clear proposals on how cross boundary strategic planning could be effectively achieved. The White Paper acknowledges that further consideration will be needed on how strategic cross-boundary issues can be planned for and the appropriate scale at which plans should be prepared in areas with significant strategic challenges.
- 3.6 The current Examination system would be replaced by a single statutory 'sustainable development' test. This would replace the current tests of soundness, the Sustainability Appraisal and consideration of deliverability. No clarity is provided on how the approach would allow for consideration of alternative strategies or development proposals.
- 3.7 The primary focus of Local Plans will be to identify areas for development and protection. Local Plans will designate land into one of three categories:
- Growth areas 'suitable for substantial development' where development will be approved with the equivalent of outline permission being established at Local Plan stage
 - Renewal areas 'suitable for development' where development proposals which meet design and other prior approval requirements will be deemed to gain automatic consent; other development will need to seek planning permission via an application
 - Protected areas where development will be restricted as a result of their environmental or cultural characteristics, including conservation areas, areas of flood risk and areas of open countryside. Some protected areas will be designated at the national level.
- 3.8 In designated Growth Areas for substantial development it is suggested that detailed planning permission might be obtained in one of three ways:
- A reserved matters process for outstanding matters
 - A Local Development Order be prepared by the Council in parallel with the Local Plan and linked to a masterplan and design codes
 - For exceptionally large sites a Development Consent Order under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects route could be taken
- 3.9 Local Plans will be expected to be visual and map based. They should be supported by a new standard template and based on the latest digital technology.
- 3.10 Development management policies will primarily be established at a national level with the National Planning Policy Framework becoming the primary source of development management policies. Local Plans will be expected to set clear rules rather than policies for different types of development. This limited role will focus on necessary site or area specific requirements such as height, scale and density of development within growth or renewal areas.

- 3.11 To support the transition to the new system a statutory timetable is set out for preparation of Local Plans. The timetable will vary depending on the age of the authority's adopted Local Plan. Where the Local Plan is more than 3 years old a maximum of 30 months will be allowed from the date the legislation is brought into force to prepare, submit, examine and adopt a new plan. Where a Local Plan has been adopted within the previous 3 years or has already been submitted for examination a maximum of 42 months is allowed. The timeline for updating Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 under the proposals would depend upon the date at which new legislation is brought into force. Three years from the date of its adoption would be 15th May 2022.
- 3.12 A radical digital-first approach is proposed to modernise the planning process both for Local Plans and for decision-making. This will involve facilitating people's inputs to the planning system via social media and mobile phones. Planning application processing software should be modernised and routine processes automated to speed up decision-making.
- 3.13 The White Paper heavily emphasises the government's intentions to enhance the focus on design and sustainability. Mandatory national policy will be used to address climate change mitigation and adaptation and facilitate environmental improvements. The proposals emphasise environmental sustainability, however, economic and social aspects of sustainability are neglected.
- 3.14 Neighbourhood plans are to be retained but the proposals explore whether their scope should be narrowed to focus more on design issues which poses a potential disincentive to Town and Parish Councils to prepare them.
- 3.15 The proposals suggest a significantly enhanced role for design guides and codes to provide certainty and reflect local character and preferences about the form and appearance of development. These should be prepared in conjunction with the local community to ensure residents can shape the design of future development. Once in place, design codes will be binding. The expectation is that these will be produced in tandem with the Local Plan either for including within it or as supplementary planning documents. The White Paper suggests automatic planning permission be granted for proposals which reflect local character and preferences. Each local authority would be expected to have a chief officer for design and place-making.
- 3.16 Within 'Renewal areas' pattern books of acceptable designs could be used to allow pre-approval of popular and replicable designs. A limited nationally set list of form-based development types would be approved and benefit from permitted development rights. Local orders could be made to modify these based on local evidence of what options are most popular with local residents.
- 3.17 The proposals highlight the imperative of having the right people and skills within local authority planning departments to be able to

successfully implement the reforms. The need for design skills features heavily in the proposals. The White Paper states that the government will develop a comprehensive resources and skills strategy for the planning sector. The proposals anticipate some ability to refocus professional skills by stream-lining processes allowing for a more proactive approach to planning.

- 3.18 A fundamental revision of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and S106 obligation mechanisms for funding infrastructure is also included in the White Paper. These will be combined into a single nationally set value-based flat rate charge, although the White Paper does note that either a single, or varied rates could be set. The aspiration is for this 'Infrastructure Levy' to deliver more revenue for infrastructure and on-site affordable housing provision than currently and remove the need for negotiation of consideration of site viability. Current CIL exemptions may be removed.
- 3.19 A revised standard method for calculating housing requirements is proposed aimed at stopping housing supply being a barrier to building new homes. The number would be set nationally as a means of distributing the national housebuilding target of 300,000 new homes per year and would be a binding figure to be provided through Local Plans. Land constraints and opportunities should be factored in when requirements are identified. The 5 year housing land supply test would be removed but the housing delivery test would remain.
- 3.20 Speeding up the delivery of housing is also a key factor in the proposed reforms. Masterplans and design codes prepared for substantial development sites should facilitate more rapid delivery by inclusion of a variety of development types suitable for provision by different builders to allow multiple phases to come forward together.

DRAFT RESPONSES

- 3.21 The White Paper contains 24 formal 'Proposals' of changes to be made with varying levels of detail set out under each as to what the intention of the proposal is, why the change is sought and how new legislation might effect change. Some sections also include alternative options on how changes might be made. Accompanying the proposals are 25 questions, many with multiple parts. An initial response of 'yes/ no/ not sure' is sought for many followed by a request for provision of a supporting statement setting out the rational for the response. Five questions (Q 4, 15, 16 and 21) seek identification of priorities when considering a particular factor.
- 3.22 Proposed responses to the White Paper have been prepared and are attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) discussed the draft response to the White Paper on 7th October. Members have

made clear there is a need to emphasise strongly the Council's preference for a locally set levy. They have also drawn attention to the significant level of risk that might be incurred by borrowing against future income from the infrastructure levy. The draft responses have been amended to reflect these points. Concern was also raised around managing change and phasing in relation to large scale developments; additional reference has been added to the response to question 14 regarding this.

- 4.2 The Panel has discussed land banking by developers, though no changes to the draft responses were sought with regard to this. Clarity was also sought on the value of submitting a response to MHCLG and Members were reassured that the consultation is genuine, and the government could alter the proposals contained in the White Paper.

5. KEY IMPACTS

- 5.1 Substantial impacts will arise from implementation of the proposals in the White Paper. As this is a consultation document and the proposals may be revised and will require further legislative changes to facilitate their delivery the exact impacts and risks cannot currently be identified. As drafted the proposals could have significant impacts by increasing the cost of Local Plan production, reducing revenue from planning applications, result in greater uncertainty over the delivery of affordable housing and replace the locally prepared Community Infrastructure Levy with a national approach.

6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN

- 6.1 If the recommendations are approved a formal response will be submitted before the close of the consultation period on 30th October 2020.

7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 7.1 The proposals contained within the White Paper will ultimately have significant implications for the Corporate Plan and its objectives which will cut across the 'People' and 'Place' aspirations of the Corporate Vision and how the Council will achieve its aspirations regarding 'Becoming a more Efficient and Effective Council'. However, as a consultation document the implications are uncertain as yet.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None at this time as this is a consultation response.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None at this time as this is a consultation response. However, resource implications will be substantial if the proposals in the White Paper are taken forward into legislation exactly as drafted. Local Plan preparation

and examination will be substantially more expensive due to the need to prepare detailed design codes and guides as part of the process. The resultant reduction in outline planning application fees arising from 'Growth Area' status being ascribed to strategic scale development proposals will negatively impact on Development Management receipts. Substantial investment will be required into technology both for hardware and software to meet the machine readable aspirations of all policy documents and planning applications.

10. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The White Paper proposals focus very heavily on housing provision and the environmental aspects of sustainable development. Very little detail is set out on how the economic and social aspects of sustainable development will be taken into account in the new system which may reduce the level of consideration paid to the health implications of new development proposals.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 11.1 The White Paper provides the potential to fundamentally alter the way the planning system operates throughout England. The introduction to the White paper sets out a series of criticisms of the current planning system. It is acknowledged in the draft responses that some elements have been overly complex and lengthy. However, the current planning system consistently delivers more planning permissions nationally than are built, indicating that other factors are impeding delivery.
- 11.2 The proposed changes would have substantial implications for how the planning system would operate in Huntingdonshire. They would alter the strategic planning relationship with neighbouring authorities and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.
- 11.3 They could substantially increase the costs of preparation of the Local Plan and associated documentation whilst reducing income from planning application fees. The changing emphasis between Local Plans, design and development management would necessitate a significant re-prioritisation of resources within the Planning teams.
- 11.4 The proposed changes would have significant impacts on the nature, timing and amount of public engagement opportunities in the planning system. They would alter the role of elected members in the decision-making processes for both the Local Plan and for development management applications.
- 11.5 It is recommended that Cabinet provide comments on the proposed responses to this national consultation and delegate authority to agree and submit the Council's final consultation responses to the Service Manager – Growth and the Planning Policy Team Leader in consultation with the the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning.

12. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Huntingdonshire District Council’s draft Consultation Response to the ‘Planning for the future’ White Paper.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

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APPENDIX 1: DRAFT PROPOSED CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO THE WHITE PAPER 'PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE'

The full document can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>

The consultation closes on **29th October 2020**.

Note: The below responses are in draft format for the purposes of consideration by Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) Panel. A full response will be provided for consideration through Cabinet.

1. What three words do you associate most with the planning system in England?

- Sustainability
- Democracy
- Community engagement

2(a). Do you get involved with planning decisions in your local area?

[Yes / No]

- This response is on behalf of the Local Planning Authority Huntingdonshire District Council.

2(b). If no, why not?

[Don't know how to / It takes too long / It's too complicated / I don't care / Other – please specify]

- N/A

3. Our proposals will make it much easier to access plans and contribute your views to planning decisions. How would you like to find out about plans and planning proposals in the future?

[Social media / Online news / Newspaper / By post / Other – please specify]

- Email at local.plan@huntingdonshire.gov.uk and development.control@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

4. What are your top three priorities for planning in your local area?

[Building homes for young people / building homes for the homeless / Protection of green spaces / The environment, biodiversity and action on climate change / Increasing the affordability of housing / The design of new homes and places / Supporting the high street / Supporting the local economy / More or better local infrastructure / Protection of existing heritage buildings or areas / Other – please specify]

All of the above and more are priorities within Huntingdonshire but if only three priorities were to be chosen, they would be:

- affordable housing,
- supporting the local economy and
- the environment, biodiversity and action on climate change.

5. Do you agree that Local Plans should be simplified in line with our proposals? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

No.

- The principle of simplifying Local Plans is commendable, however, it is essential to ensure all issues required by national legislation are addressed. The proposals as drafted do not do this so either corresponding amendments to other legislation will be required or further material retained within them.
- The White paper is not clear about the fact that key aspects of current plan preparation and decision making will continue to be integral to the system. Consequently, it gives the impression that there will be much less work to preparing plans than will in fact be the case.
- It will continue to be crucial that a clear strategy is set out for the area, which addresses the key issues and explores the real choices available, to set out the framework which underpins all that follows.
- There is no mention of how alternatives will be considered but this is essential to ensure that any plan provides the best available growth strategy. Developers and landowners will want to have their sites fairly and transparently considered. Such important decisions will need to be properly evidenced.
- The large-scale designation of zonal areas of planning will present many issues in for larger rural planning areas in terms of numbers and boundaries and the extensive resources required to establish the 'rules' that will guide the submission of a planning application. Each designation will require significant supporting detail to ensure high quality, locally appropriate development.
- Designating areas front loads the Local Plan further which means that significant additional funding and resources will be required to prepare local plans with no prospect of income generation.
- Designating areas in this way also restricts the development industry by limiting the scope and layout of developments to those agreed in the Local Plan. This could extend the duration and cost of examinations and reduce the ability to respond to changing circumstances over time.
- There is concern that this approach overlooks small-scale development in rural communities to support local services and communities. It states that small sites can be identified within or on the edge of villages. Further clarity is required to make the most of the transformative impacts small scale sustainable growth can have on local communities under this approach and how rural districts like Huntingdonshire can best utilise these three land types to support sustainable development across the district and respond to varying contexts, needs and opportunities.
- The requirements for assessments (including on the environment and viability) are proposed to be updated. It is expected that significantly more assessments would be required especially in relation to more in depth site specific assessment. This could potentially require extensive guidance to avoid lengthy interrogation at examination. As a full list of evidence based requirements is not listed in the document it is difficult to assess the impact of this measure.
- It is unclear how other planning applications that are not identified in the plan fit into this system e.g. how would expansion or diversification for

rural businesses be accounted for if they are within a designated protected area.

- Development management income will be reduced through reduced demand for pre-application advice and outline applications.

6. Do you agree with our proposals for streamlining the development management content of Local Plans, and setting out general development management policies nationally?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

No

- The removal of general development management policies from local plans restricts the opportunity for Local Authorities to provide locally specific solutions to ensure sustainable development.
- The proposals go too far in removing development management policies from Local Plans as it effectively assumes that all that will be needed to be able to deal with planning applications will be the assignment of sites to the three proposed categories, masterplans and design codes and the proposed national development management policies.
- Some development management policies are unsuitable for forming national level rules. These include policies which quantify requirements such as the percentage of affordable housing, those which delineate the area over which a policy will apply and those which respond to specific local circumstances.
- There is a significant risk that national policies would be so generic that they will be of little practical use in determining actual planning applications and may not provide adequately locally responsive guidance.
- Proposals do not identify how optional building regulations could be taken into account.
- Determination of small scale applications such as householder applications or infill development with locally led solutions will become more difficult unless a neighbourhood plan is in place and has clear policies against which to determine development. However, neighbourhood plans are not mandatory and are not required to include everything which would be in a current Local Plan, therefore they would offer some but not a comprehensive alternative for local development.

7(a). Do you agree with our proposals to replace existing legal and policy tests for Local Plans with a consolidated test of “sustainable development”, which would include consideration of environmental impact?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Not sure

- A single test is supported in principle but should ensure that not only environmental but also the economic and social aspects of sustainable development are addressed. The White Paper places a very strong

emphasis on the environmental aspects of sustainability but neglects the economic and social aspects of sustainable development.

- The proposal for a single sustainable development test leaves significant uncertainty over whether there will be testing of whether:
 - Appropriate alternative approaches have been considered to ensure that the plan proposes a coherent strategy for the area supported by locally produced evidence
 - The plan conforms with national policy and legislation
 - Identified needs can be successfully delivered, particularly within the shortened plan period and the challenge of replacing site specific development allocations with broad growth or renewal areas.
- Removal of the current test of conformity with national policy could give the Inspector significant challenges if faced with a local Plan which clearly did not meet national policy.
- The alternative proposal of identifying a stock of reserve sites poses many questions on how this could be achieved within the three categories proposed.

7(b). How could strategic, cross-boundary issues be best planned for in the absence of a formal Duty to Cooperate?

- An equivalent to the Duty to Cooperate should be instated to ensure that cross boundary issues including major infrastructure, strategic sites, landscape impact, environmental concerns and climate change are addressed. It is also important that that development in one local authority is not counter-productive to development in another as this could impact on market absorption rates in both authorities.

8(a). Do you agree that a standard method for establishing housing requirements (that takes into account constraints) should be introduced? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes but,

- Use of a standard methodology should, in theory, be beneficial as it provides greater clarity and certainty, would help speed up local plan examinations and provide a responsive distribution of housing nationally. However, once constraints are taken into account, as proposed, many local authorities will be unable to accommodate their calculated need and without a formal duty to cooperate no mechanism is presented by which unmet need would be redistributed.
- It is difficult to understand how qualitative constraints would be able to be incorporated into a mathematical calculation. The assessment of the constraints would require qualitative and quantitative evidence to justify an amendment to the standard method figures.
- Clarity would be required over how the land requirements for types of development other than housing would be quantified without substantial evidence and work to assess needs or targets to be set.
- The suggestion that a Local Plan should focus on meeting needs for just a 10 year minimum period rather than the current 15 years is opposed as this will not encourage provision of a long-term sustainable development strategy.

8(b). Do you agree that affordability and the extent of existing urban areas are appropriate indicators of the quantity of development to be accommodated?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes but,

- They should not be used in isolation or as sole indicators. This approach over-simplifies the decisions made on where development is appropriate and most needed to contribute towards sustainable development.
- This approach gives the affordability indicator too much influence on determining housing numbers where there may not be land to meet the target. For example, London Boroughs and areas with environmental designations protected under law.
- Other indicators such as constraints, current infrastructure capacity, population profiles and land availability must also be used to fully assess where development can sustainably be placed when meeting the overall set target.
- The suggestion that flood risk be set as an absolute constraint gives cause for concern where the majority of the district's man towns all face significant flood risk and a balance between flooding and prevention or mitigation as provided for in the NPPF's sequential approach could provide solutions facilitating development in sustainable locations.

9(a). Do you agree that there should be automatic permission for areas for substantial development (Growth areas) with faster routes for detailed consent?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

No

- The decision on where growth areas will be identified will need to be taken first to ensure an equitable consideration of all potential large scale development proposals. The scale of work required to achieve the equivalent of growth area status and thereby outline planning permission will be substantial and may serve as a significant deterrent to developers and promoters of large scale strategic sites without the certainty of a pre-existing in principle allocation.
- To facilitate a successful outline planning permission matters fundamental to the grant of permission must be addressed and resolved at that time, they cannot be left for reserved matters. For the plan to confer outline planning permission all such matters would need to be resolved at the time the decision is made to allocate land as a growth area. To ensure such outline permissions are deliverable would, in all likelihood, necessitate more work than to demonstrate the acceptability in principle of a development allocation within the present Local Plan system.
- Elected members and community groups will be aware that there is no further opportunity to address matters relating to the principle of development will be concerned to ensure that nothing of relevance is missed or inadequately covered. This will increase the scrutiny applied to

proposals for growth areas which is inadequately provided for in the proposed public engagement arrangements.

- Concern that a lot of work that is usually done by applicants at outline planning application stage will be transferred to LPAs who also miss out on the associated outline planning fees.
- Outline planning permissions for strategic scale development proposals usually include a significant number of necessary conditions addressing issues which will need to be resolved. A mechanism will be required to bring these into the Local Plan which could take the form of site specific requirements but their scope will need to go beyond that suggested in the White Paper.
- The White Paper indicates that the plan would set out suitable uses and limitations on height and density if needed but does not reflect on all the other plan making considerations commonly covered when land is allocated such as the proportion of affordable housing, supporting infrastructure, areas to be reserved for open space or noise attenuation, prior investigation for archaeology or heritage assets and areas for flood protection measures.
- Concern that by granting automatic permission for substantial development will not allow the flexibility currently allowed in Local Plans and would make it difficult for the resulting proposal to reflect changing economic circumstances. For example, if the condition of a listed building on a substantial development deteriorates or if the identified use within the masterplan is no longer appropriate or viable.
- The practical question of how biodiversity net gain will be addressed will need to be resolved. Details of a developer's overall scheme will be required to be able to demonstrate that the means of achieving net gain on site are deliverable before the outline permission is created through designation as a growth area.

9(b). Do you agree with our proposals above for the consent arrangements for *Renewal* and *Protected* areas?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Not sure

- If Councillors are to have less discretion and planning application stage, they may need to take additional time during the Local Plan preparation phase to be absolutely certain proposals are right slowing down plan preparation.
- Concern that using national policy to determine general development management matters does not allow for local contexts, design etc. to be sufficiently considered, particularly for renewal areas.
- Concerns arise over how villages would be addressed within the proposed system. Criteria definition approach is currently applied in Huntingdonshire to the built up area. To have to delineate specific boundaries around over 80 villages would add considerably to the scale of work required in Local Plan preparation and to the duration of the examination as a vast number of landowners could reasonably be expected to challenge which category their land is designated as depending on their preferences towards development or protection.

- For this to work it will be critically important to get clarity on the following points:
 - Planning Matters / issues that will be classed as 'binary issues' (ie either 'yes' or 'no' matters)
 - Planning Matters / issues that will be covered in a 'rule book'/design codes
 - The remaining Planning Matters / issues that are balanced matters/discretionary/ site-specific technical issues.
- Within existing built up area development proposals usually have implications for adjoining properties which, along with other material considerations are addressed through the detailed consideration of the scheme. There is a lack of clarity over how detailed concerns might be addressed without which Councillors may be reluctant to designate renewal areas within a Local Plan.
- To ensure sufficiently nuanced development schemes are delivered rather than designate single large areas to a particular status many smaller areas are likely to be necessary. Only through this can local characteristics be adequately responded to.
- A limited range of examples are set out to illustrate the nature of land that would be considered suitable for designation as a protected area. Clarity will be required on the approach to typical urban fringe uses such as sports grounds and whether they would justify being designated as protected areas on the basis that they are not identified for growth or renewal.
- Green infrastructure within urban areas appears to be at significant risk through application of the three categories. Playing fields, parks, amenity greenspace and allotments are all of value to community life and people's well-being. The implication is that they would be included within renewal area but within these there would be a presumption in favour of development which could give rise to substantial losses of these valuable assets.
- Conservation areas are noted as an example of a protected area. Large parts of many town and village centres are designated as conservation areas. The proposals would give rise to conflict over the status of such areas, particularly for instance, where town centres might be appropriate for designation as a growth or renewal area but also as a protected area.

9(c). Do you think there is a case for allowing new settlements to be brought forward under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Not sure

- Disadvantage could be the lack of local control over location of a new settlement and loss of the ability to work with neighbouring LPAs to ensure competing schemes are avoided where this might be detrimental to the delivery of one or both.
- Advantage may be if this guaranteed funding for infrastructure to unlock development.
- There is likely to be conflict between some protected areas and aspirations for growth within them. For instance, conservation areas are proposed to be classed as protected areas but all of Huntingdonshire's

town centres are also designated as conservation areas which could significantly impeded growth within them.

10. Do you agree with our proposals to make decision-making faster and more certain?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

No

- It is agreed that there are elements of the planning system that could be amended to assist in quicker and more certain decision-making, however, the Council has concerns over some of the proposals to modernise the planning systems outlined in the White Paper.
- Standardisation and simplification of planning applications is supported where the replacement proposals will result in an equal or better level of community service, development quality and efficient decision making.
- Proposals for data rich, machine readable applications are supported along with digital innovation. However, there is a complete lack of clarity on the provision of new software and digital capacity across LPAs. This has a significant impact on the potential delivery timelines for new processes.
- More complex planning applications typically comply with some policies and conflict with others raising issues specific to the individual location and scheme necessitating a balance being drawn when reaching a decision on a proposal. It should be clearly recognised that automation of determination of planning applications would not be appropriate in such circumstances.
- Given budgetary constraints the proposals will force LPAs to prioritise which aspects of the new system to invest in first.
- The standardisation of technical supporting information could increase the quality of some submissions and provide a consistent baseline against which to determine planning applications and address some of the causes of delays in the planning system. However, limitations may lead to omission of technical information which is significant to the decision making process.
- There is a significant risk of marginalising sectors of the community who are unable to access digital information.
- The proposals wish to incorporate greater technology to speed up decisions-making by quickly determining if planning proposals are within the rules.
 - This approach would probably work best with permitted development
 - There may be time and resource implications that would need to be addressed to incorporate the system and it would need to be flexible enough to take into account Local Plan designations and neighbourhood plans as they are approved.
 - It is unclear how effective this would be for major development and it is anticipated that case by case judgement still be required for those applications where the standard rules do not apply.
- At planning application stage there is likely to be forensic examination of a scheme's level of compliance with masterplans and design codes from people who remain opposed to the principle of the development. Such objections will need careful consideration so the aspiration to reduce the

workload involved and speed up determine of applications may not be achieved, particularly for contentious proposals.

- The suggestion is put forward that where a planning application is not determined within the specified time limit the fee should automatically be refunded. This is unreasonable as in many cases the delays arise from poor quality or absent information from applicants or from issues raised by consultees which then need further investigation. This could result in the perverse outcome of substantially more applications being refused rather than the necessary time being taken to negotiate changes which would improve the quality sufficiently to allow the proposal to be approved.

11. Do you agree with our proposals for digitised, web-based Local Plans? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes but,

- The principles are supported provided that alternative access forms are retained to prevent marginalisation of communities who cannot access digitally provided services. From a digital perspective software must also be disability accessible e.g. be able to be used by the blind or those with sight impairments.
- To promote consistency nationally led and locally informed software should be commissioned. This would aid developers looking at proposals across wider areas and save time and money in commissioning new systems whilst stimulating the economy by providing a national open data source for entrepreneurs and researchers.
- The same concept should also be applied to digital consultation software.

12. Do you agree with our proposals for a 30 month statutory timescale for the production of Local Plans? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

No.

- Whilst supporting the aspiration to speed up the preparation of Local Plans the Council has significant concerns about the resource implications to achieve this ambition and the lack of flexibility it provides to respond to changes in circumstances or particularly contentious issues raised by local communities.
- Very significant concern should be expressed over the likely incompatibility between the timescales proposed and the ability to ensure substantial community engagement in the preparation of the local plan. No opportunity is presented for public engagement on a full draft plan stage where normally the community, landowners and developers make substantial representations on the detailed contents of the plan leading to amendments and resolution of many issues before submission. Without this opportunity there is a strong likelihood that local communities will feel disenfranchised from the system.
- The burden of resolving all the detailed issues raised will fall to the examination of the plan and be removed from the control of locally

elected Councillors who may wish to propose changes to the submitted plan in light of comments received. Given that this will be the only opportunity for all comments on the actual content of draft plan to be considered it is expected that developer, landowner, stakeholder and residents' comments will be extensive. The anticipated timetable of just 9 months for all comments to be considered and resolved by the Inspector and a report issued seems unrealistic.

- The proposals do not address whether there could really be a material reduction in the amount of evidence required to produce a robust Local Plan so any savings in time and cost for this may not be realistic. The need to prepare detailed design codes alongside the Local Plan for any growth areas will add to the burden of supporting material required.
- In the first instance a greater amount of time to develop a new style local plan would be required to adapt to a new process and to understand the evidence required. In addition, adequate time for the Government to implement, refine and publish appropriate and clear guidance, standard templates and digital tools (if taken forward) would be required.
- As the proposal stands at the moment the Government expects all local plans to be adopted around the same time, there is significant concern that there is not sufficient capacity at the Planning Inspectorate to process this number of plans within the timescale due to resource issues. This wave of plans being submitted for examination would also recur frequently due to the need to regularly review plans.

13(a). Do you agree that Neighbourhood Plans should be retained in the reformed planning system? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes

- Neighbourhood plans should be retained to maintain community empowerment and any changes made to the Local Plan system should be reflected in the Neighbourhood Planning system to ensure they remain compatible.
- If the revised Local Plans do not have locally specific development management policies, then Neighbourhood Plans would be the only option to set detailed local policies for sustainable development. Determining small scale applications such as householder applications or infill development with locally led solutions would be more difficult unless a Neighbourhood Plan has clear policies to determine development criteria. As neighbourhood plans are not mandatory this could result in inconsistent decision making.
- It is unclear whether the planning system will set the same standardisation proposals and timelines to Neighbourhood Plans to ensure they are of a minimum quality.
- There is little guidance in the White Paper to address what should be included within a Neighbourhood Plan.

13(b). How can the neighbourhood planning process be developed to meet our objectives, such as in the use of digital tools and reflecting community preferences about design?

- A more digital system will be beneficial to some but will alienate sections of the community.
- Not all neighbourhood plan groups will have the resources to utilise digital tools, some would be keener than others and there may be greater demand for consultants to assist groups with this.
- Including design guides and development management policies within neighbourhood plans may lead to a tendency towards safe architecture excluding innovation. It is believed that the Local Authority is best placed with the local knowledge and expertise to guide neighbourhood planning groups in policy development. There is a risk otherwise that Neighbourhood Plans may become too generic.
- It is unclear whether LPAs will still be required to support neighbourhood plan groups especially in relation to setting local policies that correspond to national policies in the absence of LPA development management policies. More guidance will be required to support Neighbourhood Planning Groups.
- The proposal for pilot projects and data standards to assist neighbourhood planning groups make better use of digital tools is supported.

14. Do you agree there should be a stronger emphasis on the build out of developments? And if so, what further measures would you support? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes

- Increased delivery rates and provision of a diverse range of types, sizes and tenures of properties that respond to the needs of the local community area supported. However, delivery must not be sped up at the expense of high-quality sustainable developments.
- Within growth areas additional complexities will be experienced in the planning and delivery process. Where multiple housebuilders may be delivering properties concurrently it will be essential to ensure adequate integration of infrastructure and seamless transition between parcels within and adjoining the development. This is important to deliver the overall development vision and a sustainable development integrated both internally and into the wider area.
- Delivery must be undertaken at a sustainable pace. For instance, for large scale strategic sites involving potentially several thousand new homes, it would be unsustainable to build new homes before there is sufficient community and transport infrastructure in which to provide for the increase in population and support neighbouring communities and community resilience. Any future proposals should include mechanisms to facilitate the phasing of large scale sites to facilitate infrastructure provision and integration with the existing community.
- Greater emphasis must be made on ensuring planning permissions that are granted are implemented and ultimately delivered. To do this, changes to planning conditions and legislation could be made whereby developments must be completed within a specified number of years

following commencement unless there are robust reasons it was not able to (an appropriate timeframe could be set based on the scale of development permitted).

- The current system is a permissive one within which 90% of planning applications are approved. In the year to June 2019, 377,000 full residential planning consents were granted across England. If these planning consents were all turned into homes, nearly two million houses could be delivered over the course of just five years. According to the TCPA, there is also a cumulative backlog of over 800,000 permissioned homes that have never been built. The LGA puts the figure at closer to 1,000,000. In more cases than not the issue is a result of landowners, developers and promoters. Evidence suggests that housebuilders have around 1 million unimplemented building plots with planning in addition to thousands of hectares of 'strategic' land in their land banks.¹ By 'stockpiling' land and options house and land prices are kept artificially high by ensuring that the supply of land is constrained undermining the strategic planning of Local Authorities objectives of building sustainably located developments and housing at affordable levels.

15. What do you think about the design of new development that has happened recently in your area? [Not sure or indifferent / Beautiful and/or well-designed / Ugly and/ or poorly-designed / There hasn't been any / Other – please specify]

- Propose no comment from HDC, this question is geared towards the general public's opinion of the planning system.

16. Sustainability is at the heart of our proposals. What is your priority for sustainability in your area? [Less reliance on cars / More green and open spaces / Energy efficiency of new buildings / More trees / Other – please specify]

The options focus on more environmental sustainability proposals. It would be useful to highlight social and economic ones too which tie in with political objectives. Other priorities would include access to services and facilities to ensure community resilience, accessible and adaptable homes and energy efficient homes.

Scant reference is made to the importance of nature, wildlife and accessible green spaces to enhancing both the environment and social sustainability of areas. There is no indication of how natural and accessible green spaces can be accommodated within the proposed Growth areas or Renewal areas.

17. Do you agree with our proposals for improving the production and use of design guides and codes? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

- Support the idea of improving the production of design guides and codes and for greater local involvement in their production particularly for neighbourhood plans to enable richer policies and guidance at the most local level to empower communities.

- Proposal states that design codes will only be given weight if they can demonstrate they have undergone community consultation and have used empirical evidence. Further clarity is required on what level of evidence is needed to demonstrate that these have been achieved. This could be an additional resource implication on neighbourhood plan groups and LPAs. Will this be open to challenge by applicants who disagree with the principles in the design code/guide and face planning refusal?
- Concern exists over the use of national guides and codes as these will not reflect local contexts and may result in uniform developments across the country with no reflection of their locality. These are likely to result in conservative design solutions suppressing innovation and modern design and negatively impacting on introduction .
- Will improving the production of design codes/guides include any time limits – for example, the guide/code must have been produced within x years otherwise outdated ones may be used which are no longer reflective of the local area or promote design that is no longer popular.

18. Do you agree that we should establish a new body to support design coding and building better places, and that each authority should have a chief officer for design and place-making?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

No

- A new body to support design coding and building better places is unnecessary. There are ample existing skills amongst professional bodies covering urban design, conservation, planning, infrastructure and landscaping to facilitate the level of improvements sought provided local authorities are adequately funded to implement them.
- It is the role of an individual local authority to determine the structure of its Chief Officers; this should not be determined nationally.

19. Do you agree with our proposal to consider how design might be given greater emphasis in the strategic objectives for Homes England?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes

- An increased role for Homes England in championing high quality design is to be commended. However, this should not be at the expense of sustainable development or a reduction in infrastructure provision.

20. Do you agree with our proposals for implementing a fast-track for beauty?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

No

- The proposals appear to massively over-simplify the reality of the development management decision making process. There are many aspects other than external appearance which need to be taken into consideration before a judgement can be reached on whether a development proposal is appropriate.

- The promotion of ‘popular and replicable’ forms of development through additional permitted development rights is likely to hinder rather than, as suggested support, innovation in housebuilding and use of modern construction methods leading instead to introduction of standardisation forms of development with little or no regard for their local context.
- Approving a development based on the national design guide or pattern book in the absence of local design guide is concerning. The buildings constructed may not be suitable or out of context with the local area particularly over time as areas evolve. Decisions on whether developments meet the design code or local context should be made at local authority level. An application containing a ‘beautiful’ home must still go through community consultation and policy analysis, potentially meaning that the application is not fast tracked. Although this ensures checks and balances are in place.
- Some flexibility will be required for anomalies not covered in the code and how can it be addressed these have been sufficiently consulted on – do these anomalies then undermine the weight of the code in decision making. However, if all eventualities are covered then the code become very long and perspective.
- There is considerable lack of clarity in the proposals, particularly regarding the level of detail required for masterplans and design codes for growth areas.
- It is unclear how a fast track to beauty will be enforced and whether specific evidence would need to be provided to ensure developers are meeting the design codes or pattern books.
- In relation to Proposal 17: Conserving and enhancing our historic buildings and areas in the 21st century and Securing consent for routine works it is noted that there is already a scheme (consent orders) for this but little appetite. If the scope of these orders were increased this could cause significant harm.
- It is not supported that suitably experienced architectural specialists could earn autonomy from routine listed building consents as this would present a conflict of interest by representing their client and at the same time doing the best for the building. There is also an insufficient number of suitable specialists.

21. When new development happens in your area, what is your priority for what comes with it?

[More affordable housing / More or better infrastructure (such as transport, schools, health provision) / Design of new buildings / More shops and/or employment space / Green space / Don’t know / Other – please specify]

Our priorities for development within the district are to create sustainable developments, not just environmentally but also economically and socially. Priorities include the provision of:

- Affordable housing
- Associated infrastructure provision to support all forms of development including health, education and community uses.
- Green infrastructure

- Services and facilities to ensure community resilience

22(a). Should the Government replace the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 planning obligations with a new consolidated Infrastructure Levy, which is charged as a fixed proportion of development value above a set threshold?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Not sure

- Huntingdonshire was one of the first authorities to become a CIL charging authority. The CIL has worked well alongside S106 and ensured effective collection of monies to support the delivery of necessary infrastructure. The twin tracking of CIL and S106 based on viability allows a clear system that has the flexibility to work for the benefit of the local area and the specifics of a site.
- Developers, particularly of strategic sites, often like the certainty that provision of key infrastructure themselves through S106 provides as it ensures gives them security that infrastructure will be delivered in a timely manner which is a significant selling point when marketing the site.
- Concern is expressed over the potential longevity of any revised scheme given the number of changes to the CIL scheme since its introduction in 2012. There is a significant risk that landowners will withhold land from coming forward for development if they consider the new levy to be too burdensome and wait for another change in approach. This could be severely detrimental to the delivery of new development.
- Whilst it is agreed in some areas that S106 agreements can cause delay legal agreements can be very straight forward in the majority of cases. At Huntingdonshire District Council a standard S106 is available to be used and could be completed very quickly if it was not for developers/legal advisors trying to re-negotiate that standard wording and/or triggers. Similarly for strategic sites a standard agreement is available as the backbone of the finally agreed document, although it is accepted that strategic sites are very complex and, as such, will need further detail and consideration for the benefit of both the LPA and the developer.
- It is unclear what the benefit will be to existing Charging Authorities if a new consolidated levy is introduced. What evidence is there that the level of monies or provision of infrastructure will remain the same or increase through a consolidated Infrastructure Levy? The current system enables a suitable blend of CIL and site specific mitigation. If all is covered in a nationally set Infrastructure Levy, LPAs will need to be reassured that this will only help to maintain or improve the infrastructure delivery for their area.
- A significant proportion of infrastructure is currently provided (delivered) by the developers of a site rather than supplying money. There is no clarity over how or whether this will be captured appropriately under the new proposals. Developers are often more able to deliver a range of infrastructure items, to an agreed specification, at a more competitive

price than the LPA/infrastructure provider due to the economies of scale they have in their purchase power.

- What assessments have been undertaken to consider the minimum threshold level below which the levy would not be charged and for those over it would only be charged on what is over? Where reference to this reflecting average build costs per square metre, how would this be determined? Currently build costs are very different between smaller and larger developers, with the later having considerable economies of scale reducing value. In addition, just within housing alone there are differing costs depending on nature of development such as estate build. No details of how this is to be calculated with worked examples is given. Huntingdonshire District Council is a pro-growth authority but this needs to be sustainable growth supported by all necessary infrastructure that every new unit brings with it. The CIL at present ensures that all new housing is liable irrespective of size, recognising that all have an infrastructure requirement. Unless this is to be met by the developer, will the government be providing the funding to meet this need?
- It is noted that the aim is to increase revenue levels but that is at national level. How would this be guaranteed for all areas as oppose to as a collective nationally?
- Removing S106 totally from the planning process will impede delivery of the Government's First Homes scheme which is wholly reliant on the S106 system. The proposals within the 'First Homes Summary of responses to the consultation and the Government's response' document notes that "Further proposals are being developed for an Infrastructure Levy, which would replace the Community Infrastructure Levy and section 106 planning obligations." However, the level of detail expanding on this within the Planning for the Future white paper provides no way to effectively assess how Local Authorities will be able to secure First Homes without a S106 agreement as a transitional approach is not set out in the white paper.

22(b). Should the Infrastructure Levy rates be set nationally at a single rate, set nationally at an area-specific rate, or set locally?

[Nationally at a single rate / Nationally at an area-specific rate / Locally]

Locally set

- A nationally set Infrastructure Levy rate raises many areas of concern. No detail is provided to show how this would work within a LPA or any comparison given of how the result of that would compare to the current system and ensure the provision of the necessary infrastructure to support the growth of the area.
- How would the Levy be calculated? How would that take account of the huge variances not only nationally, regionally but also across counties. Furthermore, many Charging Authorities have introduced zones to take into account the varying values within their own district. If this is not done, then to achieve affordability across an area, the areas able to meet a higher requirement, whilst maintaining an acceptable profit level, will be asked for less due to the rate being reduced to ensure the less valuable areas can afford to pay. How is it proposed that the land value uplift is

calculated? Again, worked examples of this for areas would be helpful to be able to provide a clearer response to the consultation.

- How will consideration of the final value be ensured to be accurate if that was used? It is already known that developers will look to reduce the value but saying that certain standard fixture and fittings (a necessity of a unit) will be provided at cost or outside sale value due to tax threshold requirements.
- When will the Levy for a development be set? Will it be set at the point of planning permission or if not until occupation at that time? The important to note that if a rate is set at the point of permission but the development of a phase is not built until a number of years later, or even over a decade later on a strategic site, the cost of infrastructure at that point could be much higher. Would this be able to be indexed to the date of occupation?
- The current CIL enables local values and requirements within a district or borough to be recognised to support delivery of housing and associated infrastructure. The proposal is not showing how this will ensure that the current levels can be maintained or improved. Consequentially, Huntingdonshire District Council's strong preference is for a locally set infrastructure levy.

22(c). Should the Infrastructure Levy aim to capture the same amount of value overall, or more value, to support greater investment in infrastructure, affordable housing and local communities? [Same amount overall / More value / Less value / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Same amount overall

- If a new consolidated Infrastructure Levy is introduced it must capture at least the same amount of value overall. Noting the point that much infrastructure is delivered by developers and not issued as a payment to LPAs, how has this value been considered?
- How does the government intend to ensure that the cost of this is borne by the landowner/developer through the value of the land (i.e. a tax on the land) and not enabling developers to increase value of land unnecessarily through bids at the cost of the infrastructure provision provided / viability.
- Whilst flexibility to enable spend of the levy of wider infrastructure, at the LPAs discretion, is supported, the requirement for the levy to cover the cost of provision of matters such as affordable housing outside of the S106 is a concern. This would entail the LPA needed to purchase parcels on developments in order to build the affordable housing on site and take on responsibility for the building of the majority of affordable housing, with partners. This will bring significant additional work on the LPAs and RSLs to achieve this. Furthermore, if parcels are not purchased / made available on site the result will be developments that are not sustainable and mixed in nature with affordable housing having to be provided in areas potentially with less infrastructure provision. Even if the Levy could capture the same or above current combined value, this will be much later on occupation. Furthermore, if this is not until the scheme as a whole is completed this could be significantly later. The current CIL system enables developments, particularly relevant for larger

ones, to have phased permissions. This ensures that CIL payments, payable from commencement but, in most areas, via an approved supportive instalment policy are done so in a timely manner to support the delivery of infrastructure as soon as possible. If the levy was not required until occupation how would this be determined? On the occupation of the first unit for the whole site or not until all sites occupied? If not the former then it is considered that would have a detrimental impact on the timely delivery of infrastructure.

22(d). Should we allow local authorities to borrow against the Infrastructure Levy, to support infrastructure delivery in their area? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes

- The flexibility for local authorities to borrow against the Infrastructure Levy is welcomed. However, the government cannot expect LPAs to do that as a normal cause of action to deliver infrastructure early in the way current S106 agreements enable through trigger setting. With any borrowing against levy receipts there is/would be a very significant level of risk to the local authority as there is no certainty that the planning permission will be implemented at all or fully. As the consultation itself identifies “local authorities should assure themselves that this borrowing is affordable and suitable”. The result of this is that many LPAs are unlikely to borrow and so infrastructure will be delivered much later, due to payment not being required until later, and so communities will be infrastructure poorer than in the current system.

23 Do you agree that the scope of the reformed Infrastructure Levy should capture changes of use through permitted development rights? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes

- Developments undertaken through permitted development routes, particularly office to residential conversions, can generate significant levels of additional demand on infrastructure services to which they do not currently contribute.

24(a). Do you agree that we should aim to secure at least the same amount of affordable housing under the Infrastructure Levy, and as much on-site affordable provision, as at present? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes

- Whatever mechanism is ultimately introduced to support the provision of affordable housing it is imperative that at least as much affordable housing is provided as at present to meet the high level of need and that this provision is on-site to ensure mixed and inclusive communities

24(b). Should affordable housing be secured as in-kind payment towards the Infrastructure Levy, or as a ‘right to purchase’ at discounted rates for local authorities? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Not sure

- If affordable housing were to be secured as an in-kind payment forming part of the infrastructure Levy it could remove the need to negotiate affordable housing provision through S106 on an individual application basis which may speed the process up. However, use of a standardised S106 agreement format can make this an effective solution
- The requirement for the Infrastructure Levy to cover provision of affordable housing is a concern as it could necessitate the local planning authority purchasing parcels of land within developments in order to build the affordable housing on site and to take on responsibility for the building of the majority of affordable housing, with partners

24(c). If an in-kind delivery approach is taken, should we mitigate against local authority overpayment risk? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes

- Given the level of demand for infrastructure provision will always exceed the amount of funding raised through any form of infrastructure levy and the pressure experienced by local authority budgets it is essential that a mechanism is incorporated to ensure that local authorities are protected from the risk of over paying for affordable housing provision. However, this needs to be in a form which ensures that the overall provision of affordable housing is not detrimentally affected.

24(d). If an in-kind delivery approach is taken, are there additional steps that would need to be taken to support affordable housing quality? [Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes

- Procedures will be required to ensure clear specification of build standards for affordable homes to prevent any risk of substandard homes being built that are then unsuitable for acquisition by a registered provider.
- If an in-kind delivery approach is taken it will be essential that adequate mechanisms and safeguards are put in place to ensure that on-site provision of affordable homes is effective and that no loopholes are left that risk reducing the level of provision or recreate the need for case by case negotiation.

25. Should local authorities have fewer restrictions over how they spend the Infrastructure Levy?

[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]

Yes

- It is important that the Levy is spent on infrastructure but the ability to spend that on infrastructure more freely would be supported. For example, with the continuing change of how the NHS operates and the introduction of Integrated Neighbourhoods certain health services, particularly the more specialised, may not be provided in the immediate local area of the development but the next town or further afield. The

flexibility to spend this in those ways is positive and yet would enable the LPA to ensure that wherever spent it was the support of its area. The current CIL enables this but more flexibility would be welcomed.

**25(a). If yes, should an affordable housing ‘ring-fence’ be developed?
[Yes / No / Not sure. Please provide supporting statement.]**

Not sure

- Without details on the proposals, the LPA is not convinced the removal of the current S106 system is appropriate. However, should that happen and even though affordable housing is a priority for this council, it should be for the LPA to decide on how the levy is best spent and the infrastructure priorities at the time.

26. Do you have any views on the potential impact of the proposals raised in this consultation on people with protected characteristics as defined in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010?

The proposals may have detrimental impacts on people with the defined protected characteristic of ‘age’ by reducing their opportunities to interact with planning consultations through the emphasis on digital only systems which some older people may find challenging to engage with.

Other points to note:

- The Alternative Option is noted although no question is asked about this. Is the optionality purely based on whether you implement it? If an LPA chose not to, could it continue with the current CIL and S106 system or is the only option you have the consolidated Infrastructure Levy or nothing at all? Would it not be simpler to address the fact that where LPAs have not introduced the CIL that they are required to do so, i.e. making the CIL mandatory?

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Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Community Infrastructure Levy Governance
Meeting/Date: Cabinet – 22nd October 2020
Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning
Report by: Service Manager (Growth)
Wards affected: All

Executive Summary:

This report sets out the details of a proposed new process for the governance of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies received by the Council. It provides a summary of the background relating to funding through the Council's CIL budget and the reasons the system for allocating these funds is no longer considered best suited to meet the Council's strategic aims.

CIL funding is divided into three 'pots.' One is the 'Meaningful Proportion' that is allocated to Town and Parish Councils to spend; the second a 'Strategic' portion that is allocated by the Council; and a final small pot, defined in legislation, to cover the administration of running the Charging Authority. This report primarily focuses on the process for allocation of the 'Strategic' portion but also includes details of how monies for non-Parished areas will be allocated.

The proposed process enables the control of the allocation of CIL funds from the Strategic Proportion and to better align funding with the Council Corporate objectives, particularly supporting delivery of growth within the district. It provides a degree of flexibility that is not currently available. It proposes that proposals seeking £50,000 or less be agreed by Corporate Director (Place) and the Service Manager (Growth) in consultation with the Leader and Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning. Where more than £50,000 funding is being sought, Cabinet would be required to approve the allocation. On a twice annual basis, the Council will encourage and consider the submission of applications for CIL funding (except in 2020-21 when, due to the time elapsed, one round is proposed).

A proforma, to be completed by those seeking CIL funding, and guidance has been updated to reflect the proposed new processes. The guidance is updated to assist Town and Parish Councils in understanding their obligations in relation to CIL spend.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is recommended to support the introduction of a new process for the allocation of CIL funding, including:

1. Introduction of a new application form and guidance (Appendices 2 & 3).
2. Delegating authority to the Corporate Director (Place) and the Service Manager (Growth) in consultation with the Leader and Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning for allocation of CIL funding for smaller funding applications in the Local Bids category (£50,000 or less) including those from non-parished areas. Those decisions will be notified to Cabinet twice yearly.
3. Approving the process requiring applications requesting more than £50,000 in the Strategic Bids category to be approved by Cabinet.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To review and agree future governance arrangements for the spending of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Huntingdonshire District Council implemented CIL in May 2012. CIL governance was originally agreed by Cabinet in October 2012 and subsequently updated in December 2015 working with the Huntingdonshire Growth & Infrastructure (HG & I) group, which made recommendations to Cabinet. Over time, issues relating to governance arrangements have been identified, prompting a review of these.

2.2 Local authorities must spend the levy on infrastructure needed to support the development of their area. This helps to deliver across a number of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities for 2018 – 2022 but specifically:

- Support development of infrastructure to enable growth
- Improve the supply of new and affordable housing, jobs and community facilities to meet current and future need

2.3 CIL collected is broken down into funding 'pots' including administration costs (up to 5%), 'Meaningful Proportion' to Town/Parish (15 – 25%) and 'Strategic Proportion' (70-80%).

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

3.1 As there is no 'best practice for CIL governance, other Charging Authority arrangements have been analysed and a few options have been considered (see Appendix 1). It was considered that Option 4, where all governance would be undertaken by the Council, is most appropriate to safeguard delivery of its priorities. Most of the Strategic Portion would be allocated by Cabinet to projects linked to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) or for projects within the HDC Corporate Plan related to growth. The remaining amount would be allocated through delegated authority to enable smaller scale bids, usually with quicker delivery times, to be considered.

3.2 The table, below, sets out the proposed process:

STAGE 1	PROJECT PROPOSALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invite submission of proposals (date to be confirmed).• Applicants complete form and submit with supporting evidence (6 weeks).
STAGE 2	CONSIDER PROJECT PROPOSALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Officer's review proposals (1 month).• For non-parished areas, if no project is proposed for funding received, officers would suggest an appropriate infrastructure project for consideration.• Officer's report to Planning Service Manager (Growth) & Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning / Cabinet recommending successful

3.3

		proposals.
3 t h e r p o i n t s	STAGE 3 APPROVAL OF PROPOSALS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Bid proposals (£50,000 or less) including those proposed for non-parished areas to be considered by the Corporate Director (Place) and the Service Manager (Growth) in consultation with the Leader and Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning. The total amount of funding to be considered for allocation in a financial year will not exceed £500,000 and any decisions made since the last reporting period shall be reported to Cabinet as part of the next Strategic bid allocation report. Strategic Bid proposals to be considered by Overview & Scrutiny & Cabinet (more than £50,000 funding requested) (timescale to be confirmed).
4	STAGE 4 CONTRACTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contract written, signed and sealed (timescale to be confirmed).
5 t e :	STAGE 5 PAYMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue payment to success projects (timescale to be confirmed). Notify and advise, where possible, unsuccessful projects (timescale to be confirmed).

- a) The application form and guidance have also been updated (see Appendices 2 and 3). The guidance explains:
 - The Statutory Requirements and what can CIL be spent on.
 - Governance Arrangements for the Strategic fund, including for non-parished areas, and for Neighbourhood allocations.
 - The Decision-making Process (see 3.2, above).
 - It explains that a contract (if non-HDC projects) is required once a funding decision has been made.
 - It sets out the monitoring and review processes.
- b) The process would be overseen by the Implementation Team (Growth).
- c) Twice yearly opportunities to apply (one in the year 2020-21 due time lapsed and practicalities).
- d) Exceptionally, urgent requests could be considered outside of this twice-yearly cycle, following the prior agreement of the Executive Councillor for Planning. If the request is for less than £50,000 it would be considered at the earliest opportunity by the Leader, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning, Corporate Director (Place), and Service Manager – Growth. If a request is for more than £50,000 and considered to be urgent it would be considered at the next monthly Cabinet meeting.

3.4 Applications would be assessed based on factors including:

- a) HDC's Corporate Objectives, Local Plan objectives, Infrastructure Delivery Plan and other projects that support demonstrable growth in the District.

- b) Levering in other monies or where CIL will result in match funding will be viewed favourably.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The Performance and Growth Panel received a report on Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Governance at its meeting on 7th October 2020. Their review included consideration of how equitable the process was and whether Parishes were encouraged to bid. Having received confirmation that Parishes could submit bids, it was noted that growth varied in different parts of the District and therefore, so did the distribution of levy funding. It was recognised that levy funding should be for infrastructure projects, which supported an overall growth benefit for the District.
- 4.2 Going into detail, the Panel examined what would classify as an urgent and unforeseen infrastructure requirement and was content that such circumstances are appropriately covered. The Panel also discussed monitoring of the governance process. There will be a full monitoring report presented to Cabinet twice a year. The Panel will take an interest in the report.
- 4.3 The Panel concluded that the proposed governance arrangements appear to be more transparent and that the Cabinet should be recommended to approve them.

5. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 5.1 The key impact from not reviewing the governance process will be the potential for certain infrastructure projects not being delivered due to CIL funding not being allocated appropriately and in a timely manner.
- 5.2 Service areas will be required to make applications for funding which, in some cases, may be abortive work if unsuccessful; and partnership challenges due to non-allocation of funding to their priorities could follow. By being clear about the process and where the Council's priorities lie, such issues can be minimised or avoided. Officers will continue to liaise with colleagues and partners to assist them where needed.

6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1 The following actions are proposed:
 - a) Update the CIL webpages (prior to the first round commencing in the Autumn).
 - b) Notify partners of the process (Autumn 2020).
 - c) Invite submission of projects for funding, including from those who have already contacted officers (Autumn 2020, thereafter, twice-yearly).
 - d) Recommendations for funding of projects considered by the Corporate Director (Place), Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning, and Service Manager - Growth (if for £50,000 or less) or Cabinet (if it is for over £50,000.00) for approval for the release of

further funds at the earliest opportunity (late 2020 - early 2021, thereafter twice-yearly).

- e) Partners informed of decisions (early 2021, thereafter twice-yearly) and contracts agreed for infrastructure delivery to commence.

7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 7.1 The allocation of CIL links to the Council's priorities for 2018-2022 including those relating to growth, health and well-being, and infrastructure.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Regulation 59 (1) of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) require a charging authority to apply CIL to funding the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure to support the development of its area. It may also, under Regulation 59 (3) support infrastructure outside its area where to do so would support the development of its area.

- 8.2 Passing CIL to another person for that person to apply to funding the provision, improvement, replace, operation and maintenance of infrastructure is also permitted under Regulation 59 (4).

- 8.3 Section 216 (2) of the Planning Act 2008 as amended by Regulation 63 of the Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 (as amended) stated that infrastructure" includes [*and is therefore not limited to*]:

- (a) roads and other transport facilities,
- (b) flood defences,
- (c) schools and other educational facilities,
- (d) medical facilities,
- (e) sporting and recreational facilities,
- (f) open spaces

- 8.4 The levy may not be used to fund affordable housing.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Resources required are for officer time and include:
 - a) Existing resources of the Implementation Team, which is part of the Growth Service for administration.
 - b) Other sections within the Council - preparation of funding applications.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 10.1 The proposed process is considered the best option available to ensure that CIL funds are allocated according to the Council's priorities and allows some flexibility to ensure that there is appropriate distribution of funding.

11. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 - Options Explored

Appendix 2 - New Application Form
Appendix 3 - Updated Guidance

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

National Planning Policy Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

Section 216 of Planning Act 2008

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/section/216>

The Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2019, which amend the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (“the 2010 Regulations”) which were introduced through the Planning Act 2008.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/948/contents/made>

Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2694/infrastructure-delivery-plan.pdf>

Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan – Infrastructure Schedule

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2693/infrastructure-schedule.pdf>

Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan Addendum

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/media/2861/infrastructure-delivery-plan-addendum.pdf>

Corporate Plan 2018 – 2022 (as refreshed September 2020 – see Agenda Item 3)

<http://applications.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=256&MId=7791&Ver=4>

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APPENDIX 1: CIL Governance Options

Option	Benefits	Risks
<p>Option 1. Services and potentially other relevant bodies bidding for funds for priority projects as identified in the IDP and the HDC Corporate Plan related to growth. Bids considered by the Huntingdonshire Growth & Infrastructure (HG&I) group to make recommendations to Cabinet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allows CIL money to be targeted towards highest priority infrastructure in line with Council objectives. ▪ Should help ensure CIL money is spent in a timely manner to deliver necessary infrastructure rather than sitting in an account earning little interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education and transport schemes may always be higher priority than other schemes. This could mean some important, but less urgent or lower priority schemes never get to the top of the funding list. ▪ Requires service areas to engage in bidding which in some cases may be abortive work. ▪ HDC have limited control due to the governance voting via the HG&I. Although ultimately it would fall to Cabinet, the non-acceptance of HG&I recommendations would require feedback, create reputational risk and take further time.
<p>Option 2. The majority of available CIL funds (amount to be agreed) is allocated through a priority bidding process relating to defined projects in the IDP linked to information on the timing of construction. Bids considered by the HG&I to make recommendations to Cabinet. Of the remaining amount, a smaller agreed proportion is allocated to each service area or other relevant body.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides flexibility to allocate funds to priority projects for the majority of CIL income. ▪ Ensures that some funding is available to all service areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Requires service areas to engage in bidding which in some cases may be abortive work. ▪ A form of weighting/points system would need to be agreed, which makes the process more complex than other options and could result in recommendations not being in line with HDC aspirations at the time. ▪ HDC have limited control due to the governance voting via the HG&I. Although ultimately it would fall to Cabinet, the non-acceptance of HG&I recommendations would require feedback and take further time.
<p>Option 3. An agreed percentage proportion for each service (e.g. education, libraries, built sports, community facilities) or other relevant body (health, police etc).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each service gets an identified percentage amount of funding relevant to the infrastructure type e.g. education might receive 25% whilst libraries 5%. ▪ There is certainty within each service knowing what proportion they are guaranteed. ▪ No need for a bidding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allocation on this basis would be unlikely to reflect the actual needs and spending priorities over a given period. ▪ Might take service areas a long time to accrue enough money for their projects, delaying delivery. ▪ May not provide sufficient funding for some key service areas such as transport and education that may need larger proportions to reflect the scale and priority of projects to be

	<p>process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transport and Education get larger proportions of the funds which would better reflect known spending needs 	<p>delivered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Once percentage set, HDC could lose control of how that money is then spent within the district on what it feels are the priorities for that infrastructure type. ▪ Does not allow flexibility to match spending with changing needs over time. ▪ Does not ensure timely delivery if monies issued to the service with no contractual agreement for delivery of specific projects. ▪ Does not leave any funding left for specific local priorities or unexpected / changing needs.
<p>Option 4. Similar to option 2, The majority of available CIL funds is allocated relating to defined projects either in:</p> <p>a) the IDP as an infrastructure type or project, linked to information on the timing of construction; and/or</p> <p>b) relating to projects within the HDC Corporate Plan related to growth. Projects proposals – not bids - to be submitted with project detail, including a Business Plan [ideal to have but to date been difficult to get so probably do not want as a full requirement] where feasible, to be considered by the Implementation Team (Growth) for recommendation to Cabinet. Of the remaining amount a smaller agreed proportion is allocated to enable smaller scale bids, usually with quicker delivery times, to be considered with delegated authority to PSM (Growth) in liaison with portfolio holder.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides flexibility to allocate funds to priority projects for the majority of CIL income. ▪ Ensures that some funding is available to all service areas. ▪ Enables HDC to be fully in control over the allocation of funding. ▪ Through the submission of a project proposal, rather than a formal bidding round, there is more flexibility on allocation as opposed to it being tied to a set criterion and scoring system. ▪ Provides flexibility to respond to local priorities including AGS themes and any additional new areas of work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Requires service areas to engage in bidding which in some cases may be abortive work. ▪ Could cause partnership challenges due to non-allocation of funding to their priorities ▪ More complex than option 3.

CIL: Project Funding Application

General Nature of Project	1.	<p>Organisation:</p> <p>Lead contact's name, email and tel. no.:</p>
	2.	Project name:
	3.	Project Type:
	4.	Brief description:
	5.	Project Location / Coverage (Spatial Planning Area / Key Service Centre / Local Service Centre / Other):
Project Requirement	6.	How delivery of the project links to the Local Plan for Huntingdonshire and / or provides infrastructure to support development within Huntingdonshire. Is it critical, essential or desirable (refer to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan)?
	7.	How delivery of the project addresses the additional demands placed on infrastructure as a result of new development. Outline the number of units delivered / people / businesses affected by the project.

	8.	Confirmation on whether the delivery of the project includes maintenance of existing infrastructure or addresses deficiencies in existing infrastructure provision, and if so, what.
Linkages	9.	Links to other Projects:
	10.	Links to your organisation's strategies/priorities:
	11.	Links to HDC Corporate Plan strategic priorities, objectives, key actions and performance indicators:
Milestones and Timing	12.	Status or stage the project has reached:
	13.	Proposed Delivery Milestones (including Years):
Costs and Funding	14.	Capital Cost identified (broken into components where possible):
	15.	Identified Funding Source (Committed and / or Potential). Please provide confirmation if funding has been secured:
	16.	Has any other request for funding been turned down, if so why?
	17.	Amount of CIL Funding Requested:

	18.	Will the project generate income for its ongoing running and maintenance costs, if not how will revenue be funded?
Project Risk	19.	Project Risks and Implications
	20.	Are you legally entitled to undertake the project?
	21.	If your project involves building, do you own the land?
	22.	If your project involves building, has planning permission been granted, if so, please provide the application reference number.

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1. Introduction

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) with effect from 1st May 2012.

CIL is paid to Huntingdonshire District Council by developers after their planning permissions are commenced. Since CIL was implemented, it has become a significant means by which Huntingdonshire District Council is able to collect and pool developer contributions to deliver infrastructure improvements.

CIL is governed by the CIL Regulations 2010 (amended). In Huntingdonshire, CIL is charged on all development types in accordance with the Charging Schedule; for some developments this may result in a zero charge, for example, B use classes are £0 rated.

CIL is just one funding stream that can be used, in conjunction with others, to fund infrastructure projects. Alongside CIL, S106 obligations still exist. S106 obligations are required in line with the Developer Contributions SPD to mitigate the impact of the development. These can result in financial contributions or in-kind provision of infrastructure needs to mitigate the impacts of developments and to secure on-site developer requirements, such as the provision of affordable housing. Examples of how infrastructure projects can be funded can be seen in Figure 1.

This document details the governance arrangements in place at Huntingdonshire District Council for the allocation and spending of CIL. These parameters for the governance arrangements of CIL were agreed by Cabinet in **2020

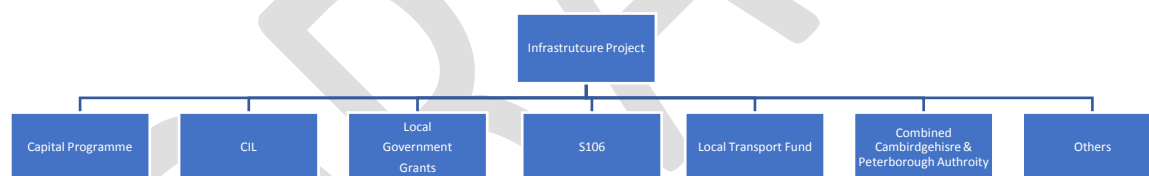


Figure 1: Funding Sources for Infrastructure

2. Statutory Requirements

Huntingdonshire District Council is the designated Charging and Collecting Authority. As a Charging Authority the Council has an obligation to:

- Prepare and publish the CIL Charging Schedule
- Determine CIL spend, ensuring it is used to fund the provision, improvement, replacement, operation, or maintenance of infrastructure to support development of its area
- Report publicly on the amount of CIL revenue collected, spent, and retained each year.

Huntingdonshire District Council is required in the CIL Regulations to identify the types of infrastructure or projects it wishes to fund in whole or in part by CIL monies and report this in the annual Infrastructure Funding Statement, with effect from December 2020. These will usually be based upon Local Plan and the Corporate priorities of Huntingdonshire District Council.

Huntingdonshire District Council's CIL Charging Schedule and annual report detailing CIL receipts, balances and expenditure for each financial year can be found on the Council's CIL webpage: <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/planning/community-infrastructure-levy-cil/>

3. What can CIL be spent on

CIL Regulations set the context for the spending of CIL funds on infrastructure. The regulations encourage the accumulation of CIL funds into a 'pot'. Unlike other obligations or charges, CIL spending does not need to be directly related to the donor development and can address infrastructure needs in general across the Council's administrative area.

The key points set out by the CIL Regulations (see Regulation 59 (1)) and Guidance (see Paragraph: 144 Reference ID: 25-144-20190901) relating to CIL funding are:

- CIL should be spent on infrastructure including roads and other transport, schools and other education, community facilities, health, sport / recreation, and open spaces.
- The infrastructure funded must support the development of the area.
- CIL can be used to increase the capacity of existing infrastructure or to repair failing infrastructure, if needed to support the needs arising from development.
- CIL and Section 106 can be used as different funding streams to deliver the same infrastructure project.

As per the CIL Regulations and Guidance, CIL is proportioned and allocated using the following approach:

- Up to 5% is retained by Huntingdonshire District Council to cover administrative costs (including but not limited to consultation on the levy charging schedule, collection of CIL, enforcing CIL, legal costs and reporting on CIL activity).
- 15%, known as the Neighbourhood Allocation, is established for spending within the neighbourhood of the contributing development (up to a maximum of £100 per existing Council Tax dwelling). This allocation can either be transferred to the relevant Parish Council or retained by Huntingdonshire District Council to be spent on neighbourhood projects where the development is not in a Parish. This allocation rises to 25% and is not capped when a Parish has a Neighbourhood Plan in place. At the present time, Godmanchester, Houghton and Wyton, Huntingdon, and St Neots have adopted Neighbourhood Plans; plans are being developed in eleven other areas. Figure 1, below, sets out the relationship between CIL and Neighbourhood Plans.
- Up to 80%, known as the Strategic Allocation, is retained by Huntingdonshire District Council to allocate to projects in accordance with the Council's Infrastructure Development Plan.

It is very unlikely that CIL will generate enough funds to completely cover the cost of new infrastructure needed to fully support planned development. As such, there will be competing demands for this funding. It is important, therefore, to ensure that there are robust, accountable, and democratic structures in place to ensure the spending of CIL funds are prioritised in the right way.

The sections that follow set out the governance arrangements and approach for how decisions are made on the prioritisation and spend of CIL.

Parish council	Neighbourhood plan	Levy
✓	✓	25% uncapped, paid to parish each year
✓	X	15% capped at £100/dwelling (indexed for inflation), paid to parish each year
X	✓	25% uncapped, local authority consults with community about how funds can be used, including to support priorities set out in neighbourhood plans
X	X	15% capped at £100/dwelling (indexed for inflation), local authority consults with community to agree how best to spend the neighbourhood funding

(Ministry of Housing, 2019) Paragraph: 145 Reference ID: 25-145-20190901

Revision date: 01 09 2019

Figure 2: Figure: relationship between the levy and neighbourhood plans in England

4. Governance Arrangements - HDC Allocation

The majority of CIL funds, the HDC Allocation, will be retained by Huntingdonshire District Council for spending on infrastructure in accordance with the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Statement (from December 2020).

The allocation of these funds will be made through a twice annual application process, which will ultimately be agreed either by the Corporate Director (Place), Service Manager – Growth in consultation with the Leader and Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning or will be considered by the Council's Cabinet, depending on the amount of funding sought. A diagrammatic summary of the governance framework for CIL is set out in Appendix 1, which shows the spending and reporting arrangements that are in place.

Annually, Huntingdonshire District Council will publicise the amount of CIL funding collected as per statutory requirements. On a twice annual basis, the Council will encourage and consider the submission of application forms, requesting CIL funding for the delivery of infrastructure projects. Proposals may be considered out of these time slots if there are exceptional circumstances to do so and if in agreement with Leader and Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning.

Key internal and external stakeholders responsible for delivering the infrastructure identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Statement will receive direct notification of the opportunity to request CIL funding. Information about the opportunity will also be available on the Council's website.

Applications will be made on a standard online template issued by Huntingdonshire District Council (see Appendix 2) and will request key information about the infrastructure project, including:

- What is the infrastructure project
- How the project relates to the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Statement
- Why the project is required (justification)
- Cost of the project
- Timing for project delivery
- Funding from other sources

Application Forms will then be reviewed by Council officers, who will ensure that all submitted forms include the key information required, meet the basic criteria and are therefore eligible for consideration for CIL funding.

The Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan and, after 30 December 2020, the Infrastructure Funding Statement set out the infrastructure projects that are eligible for Strategic CIL funding. Only infrastructure that support the growth outlined in the Council's adopted Development Plans are included or other infrastructure projects that have come forward that support growth.

In order for a project to be considered for CIL funding, the following eligibility criteria need to be met:

- The application form has been completed satisfactorily
- The organisation has the legal right to carry out the proposed project
- The project is clearly defined as 'Infrastructure' as per the CIL Regulations
- The project is listed in the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan / Infrastructure Funding Statement or is for infrastructure that supports growth of the area.

Once the application forms requesting CIL funding have been validated by a Council Officer, initial assessment of the projects will then take place. The projects will be assessed based on the following headings:

- The need for the project
- The public benefit of the project
- The deliverability of the project
- The value for money that a scheme provides

Projects will be viewed favourably if they lever in other funds that would not otherwise be available, particularly where those funds may not be available in future years, or where it makes use of match funding.

The outcome of this review of applications for funding off less than £50,000 will then be reported to the Corporate Director (Place), Service Manager – Growth, Leader and Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning. Decisions on applications seeking funding of £50,000.00 or less will be made at this point and reported for information to Cabinet twice per year. All other applications (more than £50,000.00) will be reported to Cabinet to decide. Cabinet will also be informed of the decisions already made on smaller applications in order to ensure it has the full picture.

The Corporate Director (Place), Service Manager – Growth in consultation with the Leader and Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning, and Cabinet are required to reach a balanced judgement over which projects to fund. They are requested to provide an explanation as to how that decision was reached. Cabinet will be informed of any decisions made since the last reporting period as part of the next Strategic bid allocation report. Stakeholders will be informed of decisions reached, and funds will be allocated accordingly.

There may be occasions where the release of additional CIL funds are required for urgent or unforeseen infrastructure requirements. In these cases, a decision on an application will be made by either the Corporate Director (Place), Service Manager – Growth in consultation with the Leader and Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning (if for £50,000 or less) or Cabinet (if it is for over £50,000.00) for approval for the release of further funds at the earliest opportunity.

Successful applicants of CIL funding will be expected to maintain communication with Huntingdonshire District Council on the progress of their project after a decision has been made to provide funding. Where funding has been agreed 'in principle' or where staged payments are agreed, the scheme applicant will be expected to provide information to justify funding being transferred.

Applicants should continue to provide information until the scheme has been completed and all CIL funding has been spent. As a minimum, an annual report, providing information on the progress of each scheme that funding has been allocated to, will be needed. A requirement to submit this information forms part of the agreement (Contract) that successful external applicants are required to sign between themselves and Huntingdonshire District Council.

5. Governance Arrangements - Neighbourhood Allocations

The CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended) require the 'meaningful proportion' to be used to support the development of the local area by funding:

- The provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or
- Anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area.

This provides Town/Parish Councils with a much more flexible approach for spending their CIL receipts in comparison to the powers of the District Council.

Such wider spending powers for the Town/Parish Council allow the local community to decide what they need to help mitigate the impacts of development in their area.

This may be for a local project, or the Parish may decide to contribute their proportion of the funding to the more strategic projects which are being supported by the District Council, such as an education expansion project required that will support their locality – Town and Parish Councils will need to decide what their infrastructure priorities are. They will need to consider that if they do not put forward potential support to strategic projects, that could result in not enough funding being available. Therefore, there will be difficult decisions for them to make.

Any spend of CIL funding must fit within the usual powers of the Town/Parish Council and their Powers of Competence.

Where the infrastructure to be supported is not permissible due to the responsibilities of the Parish / Town Council then this may still happen by agreeing for the money to remain / be passed back to the District Council for them to have spent in accordance with the wishes of the local community.

Decisions on the expenditure of the 'meaningful proportion' funds are at the Parish Council's discretion, if it is in accordance with the CIL regulations.

If a Town/Parish Council has failed to spend CIL funds transferred to them within a period of 5 years from the date of initial receipt, or has not applied the funds in accordance with the Regulations then the District Council can serve a notice on the Town/Parish Council requiring it to repay some or all of the receipts that had been transferred to them.

The District Council is required to make payment in respect of CIL it receives from 1 April to 30 September to the Town/Parish Council by 28 October of that financial year, and pay the CIL received from 1 October to 31 March by 28 April of the following financial year.

To ensure transparency Town/Parish Councils must publish each year by December 31st, in line with regulatory requirements, the previous financial years information on:

- Total CIL receipts.
- Total expenditure.
- A summary of what the CIL was spent on.
- The total amount of receipts retained at the end of the reported year from that year and previous years.

Reports should be placed on Town/Parish Council's website and a copy of the report is required to be sent to the District Council. Where a Parish/Town does not have a website the District Council can, upon request, publish this information on its website on the Town/Parish Council's behalf – for transparency, the District Council will publish all annual reports on its website. The CIL report must be published and sent to the District Council no later than 31st December following the reported year (the financial year). Town and Parish Councils are encouraged to use the reporting template provided by Huntingdonshire District Council.

Non-parished areas

There are eight non-parished areas within Huntingdonshire District covered by Parish Meetings. The 15% Neighbourhood Allocation, or "Meaningful Proportion", in these areas will be held separately by Huntingdonshire District Council but still has to be spent in agreement with the locality in which the development generating the funds is based.

CIL Meaningful Proportion collected for non-parished areas must be spent in accordance with Regulation 59F as below:

- '(3) The Charging Authority may use the CIL to which this regulation applies, or cause it to be used, to support the development of the relevant area by funding-*
- a) the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or*
 - b) anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area'*

The process for spend of non-parished meaningful proportion will require officers in the Implementation Team to identify projects through the HDC Infrastructure Delivery Plan or Infrastructure Funding Statement, relevant Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), Parish Website, or with HDC's Community Development Team to establish if there is a Parish Plan.

Once the project is decided, the Parish Meeting will be asked to submit a plan for delivery of the agreed project including key milestones with a timetable, detailing any other funding to be provided, when this is to be available and also advising when the funding will be drawn down for each milestone, i.e. each instalment payment, when applicable. If no other funding is identified at this time the parish must provide a timetable for when this will become available.

The process for dealing with these is as per that set out in section 4 of this guidance. In accordance with Regulation 59E, funds must be spent within a 5-year period from receipt. The Council must report separately within the published Annual Report details of the amount of funds received and how they are spent.

6. Monitoring and Review Arrangements

Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to ensuring the use of CIL is open and transparent. To this end, Huntingdonshire District Council will, as required by the CIL Regulations, publish an Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS), replacing the CIL Annual Monitoring Report. These will set out, as a minimum:

- A report relating to the previous financial year on the Community Infrastructure Levy.
- A report relating to the previous financial year on section 106 planning obligations.
- A report on the infrastructure projects or types of infrastructure that the authority intends to fund wholly or partly by the levy (excluding the neighbourhood portion).

The IFS will be published by Huntingdonshire District Council no later than 31 December each year starting in 2020.

Once the Funding Decision has been made Huntingdonshire District Council will continue to monitor the operation and implementation of CIL. The Council may periodically review of the Charging Schedule, which includes the CIL rates applicable at the time.

As noted, above, Parish Councils are also required to report on their CIL spending. The report must include—

- the total CIL receipts for the reported year.
- the total CIL expenditure for the reported year.
- summary details of CIL expenditure during the reported year including—
 - (i) (i)the items to which CIL has been applied.
 - (ii) (ii)the amount of CIL expenditure on each item.
- details of any notices received in accordance with regulation 59E, including—
 - (iii) (i)the total value of CIL receipts subject to notices served in accordance with regulation 59E during the reported year.
 - (iv) (ii)the total value of CIL receipts subject to a notice served in accordance with regulation 59E in any year that has not been paid to the relevant charging authority by the end of the reported year.
- the total amount of—
 - (v) CIL receipts for the reported year retained at the end of the reported year.
 - (vi) CIL receipts from previous years retained at the end of the reported year.

The Parish or Town Councils must publish online their CIL annual report, unless they request that the report is published on the District Council's website, and a copy of the report must be sent to the Huntingdonshire District Council, no later than 31st December following the reported year.

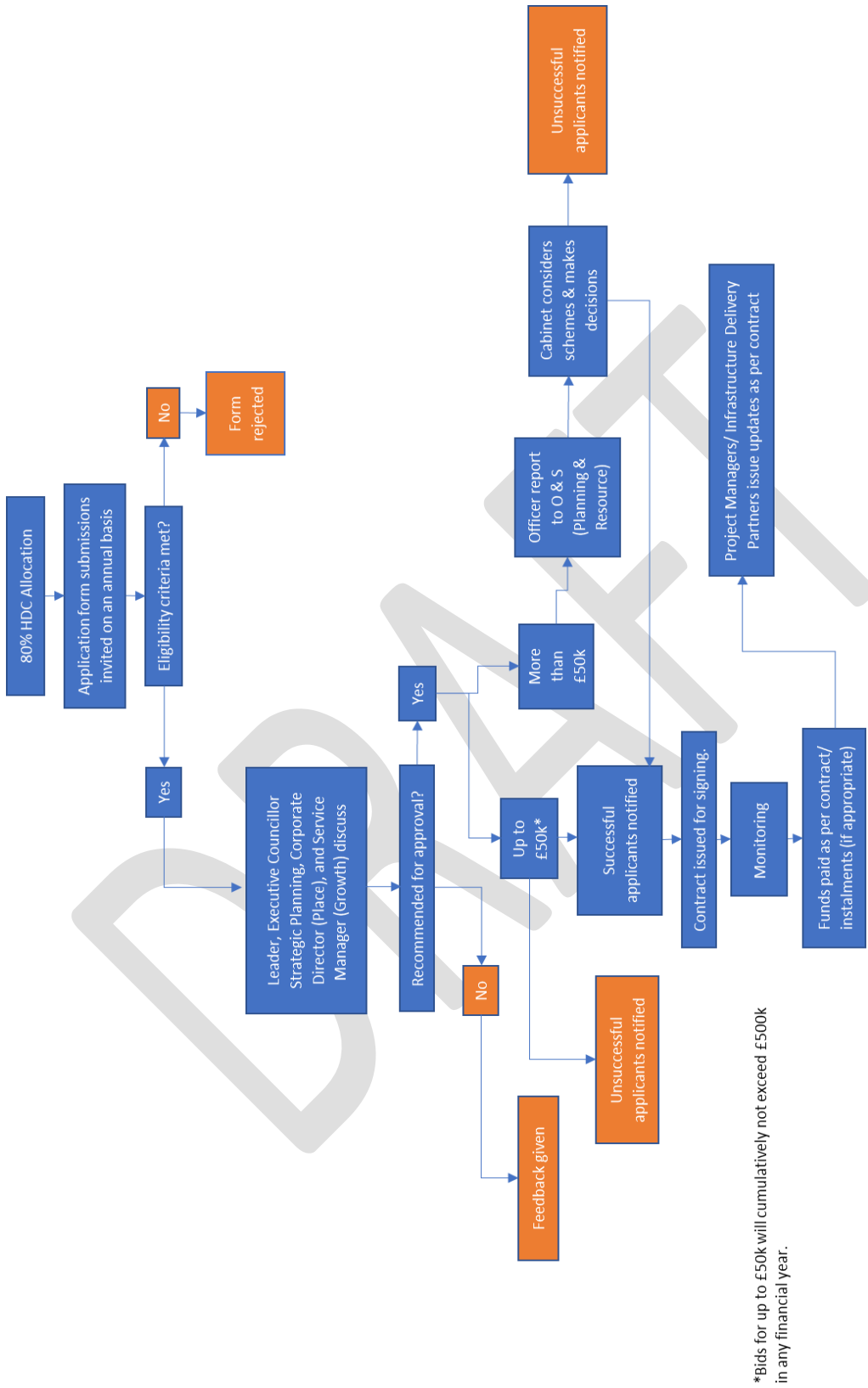
If you have any questions about this guidance, or CIL generally, please contact Huntingdonshire District Council's Implementation Team by email at implementation@huntingdonshire.gov.uk, by calling 01480 388424, or in writing to:

Implementation Team,
Planning Services,
Pathfinder House,
St Mary's Street,

Huntingdon,
PE29 3TN

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APPENDIX ONE - Governance Framework for CIL HDC Allocation



APPENDIX TWO – APPLICATION FORM FOR CIL FUNDING

CIL: Project Funding Application

General Nature of Project	1.	<p>Organisation:</p> <p>Lead contact's name, email and tel. no.:</p>
	2.	Project name:
	3.	Project Type:
	4.	Brief description:
	5.	Project Location / Coverage (Spatial Planning Area / Key Service Centre / Local Service Centre / Other):
Project Requirement	6.	How delivery of the project links to the Local Plan for Huntingdonshire and / or provides infrastructure to support development within Huntingdonshire. Is it critical, essential or desirable (refer to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan)?
	7.	How delivery of the project addresses the additional demands placed on infrastructure as a result of new development. Outline the number of units delivered / people / businesses affected by the project.

	8.	Confirmation on whether the delivery of the project includes maintenance of existing infrastructure or addresses deficiencies in existing infrastructure provision, and if so, what.
Linkages	9.	Links to other Projects:
	10.	Links to your organisation’s strategies/priorities:
	11.	Links to HDC Corporate Plan strategic priorities, objectives, key actions and performance indicators:
Milestones and Timing	12.	Status or stage the project has reached:
	13.	Proposed Delivery Milestones (including Years):
Costs and Funding	14.	Capital Cost identified (broken into components where possible):
	15.	Identified Funding Source (Committed and / or Potential). Please provide confirmation if funding has been secured:
	16.	Has any other request for funding been turned down, if so why?
	17.	Amount of CIL Funding Requested:
	18.	Will the project generate income for its ongoing running and maintenance costs, if not how will revenue be funded?

Project Risk	19.	Project Risks and Implications
	20.	Are you legally entitled to undertake the project?
	21.	If your project involves building, do you own the land?
	22.	If your project involves building, has planning permission been granted, if so, please provide the application reference number.

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Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Housing Strategy 2020-2025
Date: Cabinet – 22nd October 2020
Executive Portfolio: Executive Leader
Report by: Interim Corporate Director, David Edwards
Wards affected: All

Executive Summary:

At the end of July 2020, a revised set of core strategies and plans were discussed and agreed for the Council. Work is progressing on these documents to an agreed timetable.

The attached Housing Strategy has been developed following internal and external consultation - including a member workshop with Overview and Scrutiny in early August. External consultation has been undertaken informally and formally with a variety of housing providers and interested parties.

A separate one-year action plan has also been produced; this contains details on how the outcomes set out in the strategy will be accomplished. Given the current challenges in responding to COVID-19 and the ongoing uncertainty it was felt that providing a plan for the next twelve months was appropriate. This plan will change further depending on local and national circumstances.

Recommendation:

- (a) To agree the Housing Strategy for 2020-25 and accompanying one-year action plan.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To set out the strategic direction for housing in Huntingdonshire in the medium term.
- 1.2 To highlight the housing priorities and how these will be achieved by the Council and through working in partnership.
- 1.3 To set out a short-term action plan for the next twelve months, noting that further work will need to be undertaken to refine these details, particularly in response to COVID-19 and the likelihood of further housing related legislative change. Whilst the action plan will be updated during the next 5 years it is not anticipated that the Strategy will change significantly.
- 1.4 To request that the Cabinet agrees the attached documents which will then form a key part of the new Strategies and Plans bookcase for the Council.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/ BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members agreed a revised set of Plans and in July 2020. The table below contains the high-level documents that the Council will be using to set out future objectives, priorities and service delivery. This suite of documents will be brought together over the next 15 months.

Overarching Plans	Outcome Plans	Strategic Plans	Activity Plans
Place Strategy to 2050 (Vision for Huntingdonshire)	Local Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Management Strategy • Waste Strategy • Housing Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Corporate Plan</i> Asset Management Plan • Waste Minimisation Plan
	Community Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Strategy • Consultation and Engagement Strategy <i>Leisure and Health Strategy</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Corporate Plan</i>
	Economic Growth Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport Strategy • Climate Change Strategy • Commercial Investment Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration Plan
Vision for HDC	Core Service Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Strategy • Digital Strategy • <i>Leisure and Health Strategy</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Management Plan • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Service Plan(s) (SMs)

- 2.2 The documents printed in italics will span more than one of the outcome areas, those highlighted in bold have been identified by Overview and Scrutiny for further involvement as part of their work programme for 2020/21.

3. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 3.1 The preferred option of bringing forward the Strategy at this stage is reflected in the report. It is recognised that housing policy, need and provision is changing all the time and the document represents an evidence led approach in determining the housing priorities and objectives for the Council. Housing is a high priority and it is important that the objectives and outcomes are clearly

defined, many of which involve working with other public sector organisations, registered providers, and the private sector.

- 3.2 **Delay** - There was an option to delay in updating the Housing Strategy until a later date. However, given the importance of having a clear policy around Housing and the broad range of Council services that the elements of the strategy touch it was important to update the document now. There are also several pieces of current work including the A141 and Wyton where it would be beneficial to have an updated strategy in place. In addition, the Council currently has a vacant Housing Manager post and reviewing the strategy and identifying the immediate priority actions at this stage has helped to shape the job requirements.
- 3.3 **To present the housing outcomes in another document** – the housing objectives could be captured in one of the other documents. Whilst some high-level objectives are set out in the Local Plan this is a longer-term document and does not contain a high level of housing detail. By incorporating housing into another document would also devalue this key priority for the Council which was recognised when the planning bookcase was assembled and also by the member interest that has been shown throughout the development of this document.
- 3.4 **Do nothing** - there is always a do-nothing option, this would result in the Council not having a current strategy in place which would limit some of the wider aspirations and prioritisation of housing activity.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The Performance and Growth Panel discussed the Housing Strategy 2020-2025 at its meeting on 7th October 2020. Members have stated that the ambition of the Strategy should be recognised. Moreover, the aims and objectives contained in the Action Plan should be endorsed. While there is concern at the proposed reduction in Disabled Facility Grant spending, the Panel has accepted that better use should be made of the funding to achieve improved value for money.
- 4.2 The Panel has discussed how residents who are not eligible for a Housing Association property and who do not meet the eligibility criteria for private rented accommodation might obtain accommodation under the Strategy. Importantly, if the Council were to become a landlord of private properties then it could act in a more socially responsible way and provide accommodation for such residents.
- 4.3 After further deliberation the Panel established that the Strategy does not contain rules that would prevent the Council from working with local authority partners. It allows and even encourages the Council to take a pragmatic approach to whom it will work with according to circumstances.

5. KEY IMPACTS/ RISKS

- 5.1 **Clarity of purpose** – if the Council does not have an up to date strategy in place it makes it difficult to engage with potential partners and plan service delivery.
- 5.2 **The focus of the housing work becomes quickly out of date or has limited relevance** – mitigation is through setting a single year action plan any emerging issues will be captured. In the current climate there are challenges around meeting housing need and affordable housing, this is expected to become more acute in the short term. There are also various regional and local pieces of work underway that the strategy will inform, and which will inform future housing action plans. It is anticipated that the headline outcomes set out in the strategy will remain for the medium term
- 5.3 **The strategy does not reflect the local position and requirements** – the Council has brought in an independent expert to undertake the development of the strategy and action plan. Informal and formal engagement has taken place on the development of the documents and once an initial draft had been produced. Feedback has been positive in terms of the aspirations of the Council and the range of housing issues that have been covered.
- 6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**
- 6.1 The Corporate Plan was agreed by Cabinet in September 2020. This includes housing objectives and targets for the coming year. As with this action plan these objectives will be regularly reviewed particularly in response to the COVID-19 situation.
- 7. CONSULTATION**
- 7.1 There has been formal consultation on these proposals with a range of housing organisations.
- 8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**
- 8.1 There is a statutory duty to provide a range of housing support.
- 9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1 In delivering the work outlined in the action plan there are implications for several council departments. The Council is also currently recruiting to the vacant Housing Manager post, the successful candidate will have a key role in progressing this work.
- 10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**
- 10.1 The Council needs to have a Housing Strategy that is current and fit for purpose. The attached document reflects the latest housing context in Huntingdon and sets out a broad range of desired housing outcomes for the future. It identifies 3 overarching priorities:

1. New Homes to meet the needs of Huntingdonshire now and in the future
2. Homes to enable people to live independent and healthy lives
3. Working in partnership to achieve shared objectives

10.2 Providing a one-year action plan also provides some further information on how these priorities will be achieved, and where achievement of priority actions are dependent on the variety of ongoing and not yet completed local and regional studies that need to be considered in the district. An annual action plan was strongly supported by those who responded to the external consultation.

11. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

- 11.1 Appendix 1 – Huntingdonshire District Council Housing Strategy 2020 – 2025
Appendix 2 – Housing Strategy Annual Action Plan

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 Formal feedback responses on the final draft document have been received from:-

Councillor Wilson
Cross Keys Housing
Longhurst Group
Urban and Civic

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Huntingdonshire District Council Housing Strategy 2020 - 2025

Foreword

Huntingdonshire District Council have clear ambitions to address the housing needs of Huntingdonshire now and in the future. These are shaped by the rich diversity of the District, comprising market towns, large and small villages, and dispersed rural settlements. The growing economy is also shaping future housing needs, with the area connected to Greater Cambridge in the south, the Peterborough economy in the north and the Fens to the north eastⁱ. Looking to the future the District forms part of the Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Oxford Arc, identified as a significant area for future economic growthⁱⁱ, with the mixed use Enterprise Zone development at Alconbury significant nationally. Improvements in transport links, the rerouting of the A14, planned improvements to the A428 and A141 and the potential for an East/West rail link with a station at St Neots, improve the connectivity of Huntingdonshire both within the District, and to other destinations.

With economic growth come new housing pressures to provide homes for a growing workforce, in a range of tenures that can be afforded, of a quality that will attract businesses concerned with the housing options for their future employees. The Huntingdonshire Local Planⁱⁱⁱ shows the need for 20,100 additional homes between 2011 and 2036 with a 40% requirement for affordable housing on sites of 11 or more units, subject to viability. The Huntingdonshire Local Plan demonstrates that this is achievable and deliverable.

Future housing needs must be balanced with addressing the needs of the existing population in Huntingdonshire. With the 20% of the population over 65, and a prediction that these numbers will grow significantly over the next 10 years^{iv}, anticipating the future housing needs of older people will be important. At the same time prices for both rented and market housing remain unaffordable for those on lower or average earnings and the need for affordable housing will grow, whether because the economy grows and house prices increase or the economy suffers a downturn and incomes drop. Homelessness remains a challenge.

Huntingdonshire District Council have a pivotal role to play in shaping the housing market in Huntingdonshire. In addition to their statutory role as the planning authority the Council have a wider place shaping role that requires working collaboratively with national and regional partners. This means building strong relationships with key players who are engaged in the delivery of new homes as well as those who contribute to the quality and management of existing homes and provide for the wellbeing of residents.

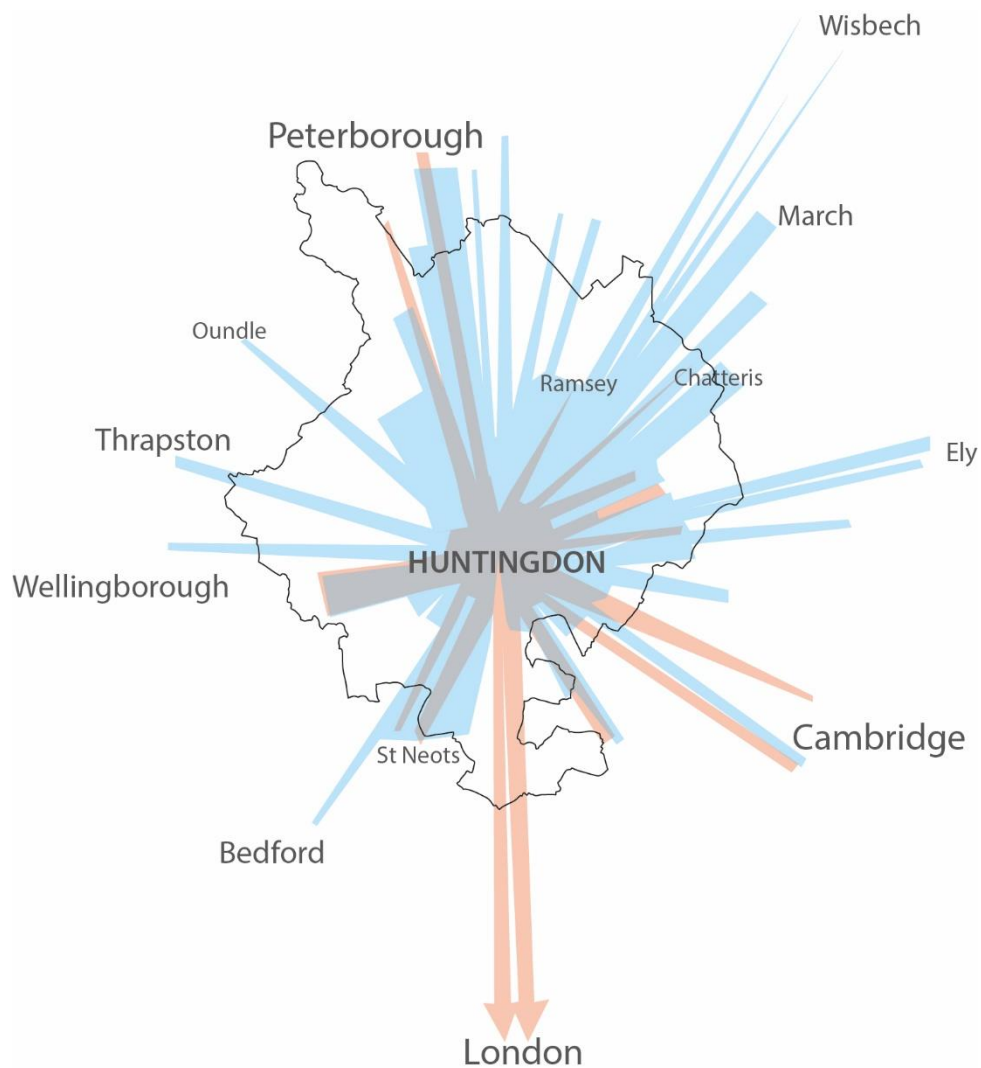
The housing strategy is being written at a time when the impact of Covid-19 on housing and the economy cannot be fully known. It is too early to predict the full impact on employment or income levels, which in turn will affect house prices for market sales, and the demand for affordable housing. The Government have also announced a suite of new policy papers relevant to housing, yet to become legislation. With this in mind the Action Plan will be drawn up for the first year and will be reviewed annually.

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Strategic Context.

This strategy has been developed to deliver the priorities agreed in the Council's Corporate Plan, summarised below, and to identify and agree actions to take forward additional emerging priorities. The Strategy is also written in the context of national and regional policy that are relevant to housing and the ambitions for Huntingdonshire and the emerging Huntingdonshire Place Strategy to 2050. The following travel to work chart, based on the 2011 census, gives an indication how the broader economy impacts on those who live in the Huntingdonshire.



Huntingdonshire Corporate Plan Housing related priorities

People

Priorities	Key Actions	Performance Indicators
<p>Enabling independent and accessible living through the provision of adaptations and accessible housing.</p> <p>Meeting the housing and support needs of the population</p>	<p>Early intervention to prevent homelessness</p> <p>New Homelessness and Letting Policy</p> <p>Eradicate the need to place homeless families in B&B</p>	<p>Numbers of homeless preventions achieved</p>

Place

Priorities	Key Actions	Performance Indicators
<p>Supporting economic growth in market towns and rural areas.</p> <p>Facilitate the delivery of infrastructure to support housing growth.</p> <p>Planning and delivering decent market and affordable housing to meet current and future needs</p> <p>Creating well designed, good places to live and work</p> <p>Ensuring a supply to meet objectively assessed needs</p> <p>Working with partners to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour</p> <p>Well-designed schemes that</p>	<p>Prepare options for redevelopment of bus stations in St Ives and Huntingdon.</p> <p>Work with partners to secure resources to facilitate the delivery of new housing.</p> <p>Prepare 'Prospectuses for Growth' for Market Towns and support the delivery of St Neots masterplan</p> <p>Adopt and deliver a Housing Strategy annual action plan</p> <p>Facilitate the delivery of new housing and necessary infrastructure</p>	<p>Number of new affordable homes delivered in 2020/21</p> <p>Net growth in number of homes with a Council Tax banding</p> <p>These have been prepared and adopted by CPCA in March 2020</p>

The Council is a member of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Sub-Regional Housing Board and has signed up to delivering against the following 4 priorities; New Homes and Communities; Homes for Wellbeing; Existing Homes; Housing Need and Homelessness

The most recent national housing policies influencing this strategy are summarised below.

The Housing and Planning Act 2016^v:

- Introduced Starter Homes as a new affordable housing product.
- Proposed the extension of the right to buy for Housing Association tenants – still in the pilot phase.
- Introduced a range of measures to tackle rogue landlords and address poor practice in the Private Rented Sector.
- Encouraged Self-build and Custom Build and required all local authorities to hold a register of applicants.

This was followed by **the Housing White Paper in 2017^{vi}** entitled ‘Fixing our Broken Housing Market’ with an emphasis on accelerating the delivery of new homes, with a target to build 300,000 new homes a year. It also widened the definition of affordable homes.

The social **Housing Green Paper in 2018^{vii}** entitled ‘A new Deal for Social Housing’ was heavily influenced by the Grenfell disaster. It had a strong emphasis on giving social housing tenants a stronger voice. It also looked at accelerating supply and a broader range of home ownership products.

Although the White Paper and Green Paper did not progress to legislation they are reflective of Government concerns to increase delivery and widen the market for entry level market housing.

The Government announced on 20th of March 2020 that they would be bringing forward several housing related papers ^{viii} - a detailed Housing Strategy, a Renters Reform Bill, a Social Housing White Paper and a Planning for the Future white paper. The last of these has been published at the time of writing, entitled **White paper: Planning for the Future^{ix}**. The White Paper is out for consultation until the end of October 2020. It proposes a radical overhaul of the current planning system, whereby Local Plans would become shorter documents, produced over a 30 month period (42 months for a Local Plan agreed within the last 3 years), showing areas zoned under 3 categories:

- Growth- suitable for substantial development, where outline planning permission would be automatically granted, with the forms and types of development specified in the plan,
- Renewal – suitable for some types of development
- Protected – where development would be restricted.

The document anticipates a faster process for seeking planning permissions, with clear rules, design codes and build standards including energy efficiency measures that anticipate the move towards zero carbon homes. Currently Section 106 agreements are the main route to delivering affordable housing, whereby the local planning authority negotiates the contribution that a developer will make. This would be replaced with a formula for an infrastructure levy which would pay for affordable housing, together with other requirements like roads, schools, and green space. The paper suggests that developments of 40-50 homes could be exempt from this levy as a temporary measure.

The White Paper consultation also promotes First Homes as a for sale product with up to a third discount. It also supports Community Land Trusts, self-builders and small and medium-sized builders' contribution to building more homes.

It is too early to know how this might translate into legislation and when, but at the earliest the requirement for a new Local Plan which may change some of the policy requirements in this Housing Strategy for Huntingdonshire is likely to be 4-5 years from now. The proposal for an Annual Action Plan relating to the Housing Strategy is designed to create flexibility to adapt to new requirements.

Other national legislation of relevance to this strategy relate to specific areas of activity:

The Care Act 2016^x required closer working between health, housing, and social care agencies to meet the assessed support needs of adults, underpinned by the pooled Better Care Fund, managed through Health and Wellbeing Boards. This incorporated the Disabled Facilities Grant, previously provided directly as a separate allocation.

The Homeless Reduction Act 2017^{xi} introduced a requirement for Councils with housing responsibilities to review homelessness in their area and formulate a Homelessness Strategy to:

- address the causes of homelessness in the area;
- introduce initiatives to prevent homelessness wherever possible;
- provide sufficient temporary accommodation for those households that are or may become homeless; and
- ensure that appropriate support is available for people who have previously experienced homelessness in order to prevent it happening again.

Regionally, the priorities of the Combined Authority for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, to accelerate delivery, create prosperous places where people want to live, and expand housing choices support the delivery of Huntingdonshire District Council's priorities. In September 2018 the Combined Authority published an **Independent Economic Review^{xii}** which identified the importance of housing in underpinning economic prosperity, and the vital role that market towns play in supporting economic vibrancy. This review is currently being updated in light of COVID-19.

Looking further afield Huntingdonshire is a part of the **Oxford, Milton Keynes, Cambridge Arc**, backed by Government in recognition that this is an area of economic strength with

huge economic potential, supported by housing delivery ambitions to create good places to live and work.

Housing Priorities for Huntingdonshire

This evidence-based Strategy has three overarching themes, shaped by the broader policy context described in the preceding section.

1. New homes to meet the needs of Huntingdonshire now and in the future
2. Homes to enable people in Huntingdonshire to live independent and healthy lives
3. Working in Partnership to achieve shared objectives

1. New Homes to meet the needs of Huntingdonshire now and in the future

Housing targets

Huntingdonshire has the greatest number of households of all the districts in Cambridgeshire, with a population set to grow by 20% in the next 20 years^{xiii}. The Council does not own and manage Council Housing, which means that their direct influence on the housing market is through working with housebuilders, developers and registered providers. In response to the requirement to build for the changing needs of the existing population, and future households, the Local Plan has an objectively assessed target to achieve 20,100 homes, an average of 804 each year, between 2011 and 2036, and ambitions to exceed this target. In previous years delivery has not been as strong as it could be and in response Huntingdonshire District Council agreed a Housing Delivery Test Action Plan^{xiv} which identified key actions that the Council would take to accelerate delivery. These relate to site constraints including land and viability related issues; supply issues that impact on the capacity to build and release new homes; planning processes including speed and accuracy of processes and the status of the Local Plan; and the delivery of key infrastructure services including transport and the provision of other essential services. The most recent housing delivery target results demonstrate that 110% of the required target was met last year.

Priority Action for Housing:

- 1.1. **The Council will continue to monitor the achievement of delivery targets in the Annual Monitoring Plan and take action as appropriate.**

Affordable Housing

The National Planning Policy Framework (2018) define affordable housing as:

- Affordable housing for rent (at social rent levels, and affordable rent levels usually at LHA rates)
- Starter Homes. (New homes or conversions to be sold at a minimum of 20% below market value with costs capped)
- Discounted market sales
- Other schemes which help prospective buyers

For many people either living or working in Huntingdonshire buying their own home or renting on the open market is not affordable. House prices in Huntingdon, although lower than in the Greater Cambridge area have seen a steady increase. In the last 5 years the average cost of buying your own home has increased by 19.6%, just below the national average of 20.9%^{xv}. Affordability is measured by looking at the ratio of earnings to prices. The latest published figures for December 2018 show that for those on the lower quartile earnings the lowest quartile house prices were 9.3 times earnings, and for median income and house prices the affordability ratio was 7.0^{xvi}. This has contributed to the current trend in Huntingdon with a net migration in from Greater Cambridge where prices are higher, but a net migration out to areas north of Huntingdonshire where house prices are cheaper^{xvii}

The picture for rental property shows the same trends with the average cost of renting a home above the Local Housing Allowance set by Government, widely used as an indicator of affordable rent.

Bedrooms	Median weekly PRS rents Dec 19 (£pw)	LHA rates for 2020/21 (£pw)
1 bed	138	130
2 bed	173	161
3 bed	207	189
4 bed	288	253

Recognising the importance of delivering affordable housing the Council has set the percentage requirement for affordable homes on all sites of 11 or more homes at 40% or 7,900 over the lifetime of the plan equating to an average of 316 a year. The delivery of

affordable housing has shown a steady increase over the last 3 years, reflecting the priority given to this target, with 440 affordable homes achieved last year.

Affordable Housing Completions

Year	Total	Affordable Rent	Shared Ownership
2019/20	440	292	148
2018/19	268	190	78
2017/18	165	134	31
Total	873	616	257

In Huntingdonshire the delivery of new build for affordable homes has focused on affordable rent as subsidy in the form of grants is only exceptionally available for social rent. Affordable rent is typically pegged at 80% of market rent or the Local Housing Allowance levels (the amount used to work out the limits for Housing Benefit or Universal Credit payment for rent), whichever is the lower. Current policy requires 70% of all affordable housing to be rented with the remaining 30% of affordable housing to be shared ownership as a discounted market housing product.

Huntingdonshire District Council expects that the majority of affordable new housing will continue to be rented and shared ownership as described above, but is keen to explore alternative and innovative models of low cost ownership to assist those that need a step up to being able to own their own homes. This will include consideration of starter homes where viable, and consideration of emerging options such as the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority £100k home^{xviii}. As these will count as affordable homes under the National Planning Policy Framework this will involve decisions regarding trade-offs in meeting different housing and infrastructure needs.

Priority Actions for Housing:

- 1.2. The Council will work with developers and registered providers to prioritise the achievement of 40% affordable housing.**
- 1.3. The Council will explore the potential and barriers for delivery of starter homes and other Discounted Market Housing models.**

Entry level housing

In some ways the needs of older people looking to downsize and the needs of younger people wanting to become homeowner coincide, in that both will benefit from smaller new

build homes, although older people will have different design requirements, as discussed in the section on specialist housing. Currently the tendency is for the market to deliver larger units for sale on new sites.

The Government have recently introduced a new provision for entry-level exception sites, to support the delivery of this type of affordable homes for sale. The Council is currently exploring the potentially for the development of an entry level site, which align with the priority given to developing options for entry level homes for sale and rent. In considering Entry Level Exception Sites the Council will need to be mindful of overlaps with Rural Exception site policy.

Shared ownership is a well-established and successful product providing entry level affordable housing in Huntingdonshire. The Council will explore a wider range of entry level products and evaluate their feasibility alongside shared ownership. These newer products include the provision of Starter Homes introduced in the Housing and Planning Act 2016, and the £100,000 home recently launched by the Combined Authority.

Priority Actions for Housing

- 1.4. To prioritise the delivery of at least one entry level site.**
- 1.5. To evaluate alternative models for entry level housing alongside shared ownership.**

Market Rent and Rent to Buy

The private rental sector makes up about 15 % of housing in Huntingdonshire.

The Council wishes to explore the options for developing good quality private rented accommodation. The options for using the Councils' own assets to secure the development of private rental properties are explored in the section on working in partnership in this report.

Build to rent is a distinct asset class within the private rented sector, at an early stage of maturity, often with institutional investment funding, with an element of affordable rent included (typically 20%). This market is well established in the student accommodation market, but less developed for other potential renters. The objective assessment of need for rented property in Huntingdonshire identifies low demand. Nevertheless Savills^{xix} predict this to be a growing market and one to keep a watching brief on, particularly in the light of the Council's ambition to create competition in the housing market to address high rents.

Priority Actions for Housing:

- 1.6. The Council will be open to exploring the options for institutional investment in the Private Rented Sector on suitable sites, including those owned by the Council.**

New homes to meet specific needs.

Some housing needs to be designed with particular needs in mind. This relates to both the size or design and designating homes for a specific group of people.

In Huntingdonshire as homes to rent or buy increase in price the retention of key workers in the District must be addressed. Early discussions with local hospitals have identified a need for key worker housing for those on lower incomes. The Council will want to look at options for providing for key workers, including on sites in its ownership and on other sites.

Older people households make up a significant proportion, one in five, of all households in the District, and in the next 20 years older households between 65-75 are likely to increase by a third.^{xx} The changing housing aspirations of this group need to be better reflected in future housing development. Studies show that whatever type of housing older people live in the majority prefer to live within mixed age communities^{xxi}.

There is a requirement for smaller units, attractive to older people looking to downsize, that are accessible and easier to manage. Older people tend to spend more time at home and may require more storage space and future proofed adaptable space. This includes smaller homes where older people can remain close to familiar networks and communities, including new build on rural exception sites, and homes within or close to market towns which benefit from being close to shops, services and social networks. The requirement in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan for new dwellings to be accessible and adaptable, and a proportion suitable for wheelchair users anticipates this growing trend. Newer models of provision will also be explored, like retirement villages which have a mix of general needs housing, supported and extra care, and care homes. For Registered Providers having a good mix of size and type of housing to offer older people helps to make the best use of housing portfolios, and gives existing and potential residents choices to downsize or move into specialist accommodation to meet their needs.

There will continue to be a requirement for specialist housing for vulnerable groups such as care leavers or younger adults who require specialist housing with some level of support. The recent draft Hearn report concludes that there is a 16% shortfall in the numbers in specialist housing. Huntingdonshire District Council's Local Plan identifies a need between 2016 and 2035 for 4000 specialist homes or older people and 2,000 extra care beds. Some existing specialist housing in the area has proved more popular than others, and lessons need to be drawn from the type and location of specialist housing, both in Huntingdonshire and elsewhere, when planning for new provision. As discussed in the next section models of care and support are evolving, with a much greater emphasis on enabling people to live independently in their own homes. Keeping abreast of models of care and support through engagement with health and social care partners will mean building the right kind of specialist accommodation for the future.

The Council will work pro-actively with developers and registered providers to deliver the right type of specialist provision, in the right locations, with the right tenure mix. This should provide for different levels of income and equity, reflecting the demographics of the area

and will include identifying external funding where available to improve the viability of building specialist accommodation.

Priorities for Actions for Housing:

- 1.7. Exploring options for key worker housing, including on own sites.**
- 1.8. Working pro-actively with developers and housing associations to achieve the targets for homes built to M4 (2) and M4 (3) standards as set out in the Local Plan (LP25).**
- 1.9. The Council will engage with Health and Social Care partners to align requirements for specialist housing with future models of care and support.**

Strategic sites and regeneration of market towns.

Market towns must be living, growing places that can thrive now and in the future. New homes for people to live in is an essential component for growing and sustaining the economic success of Huntingdonshire's market towns, keeping high street viable and providing employment in the locality. In Huntingdonshire the medium sized and larger strategic sites for housing development in the Local Plan will helping to sustain market towns as vibrant and attractive places to live, work and visit.

Successful strategic developments will bring new employers to the area, alongside existing employers and the context for this will be set out in the Council's Economic Growth Strategy. The quality of available housing, which will include new developments, is often an important consideration for companies looking to relocate to an area, together with other quality of life factors. Planning policies which ensure good design and build standards are a means to ensure a consistent approach to the quality of housing delivered.

The Council's forthcoming Climate Change Strategy will reinforce the importance of energy efficiency in new homes, as well as existing homes, anticipating changes in the energy market to meet the Government's Net Zero Carbon target. This is a fast-changing area where future policies are likely to have implications for building new homes able to accommodate the shift from fossil fuel energy sources to favour electricity and new forms of energy generation such as heat pumps. The energy efficiency of homes where it reduces costs can help lower income households to avoid fuel poverty.

The recent trend towards homeworking in response to the threat of the coronavirus pandemic has reinforced the need for good digital and fibre connections and the value placed on gardens and other green space. If the need to travel to work is reduced for many commuters, then market towns will offer many advantages in providing a valued quality of life.

The Local Plan has designated Alconbury Weald, North of Huntingdon and the developments east of St Neots as strategic expansion areas with mixed use developments delivering significant housing and employment growth on major sites in close proximity to market towns. The Council have embarked on work, sponsored by the Combined Authority to create a long-term vision for the future of all its four market towns. St Neots is the first

market town to secure support for 'Masterplanning for Growth'^{xxii} from the Combined Authority. This approach will be extended to other market town expansions in Huntingdonshire. Huntingdon is already at the first stage of having a 'Prospectus for Growth'^{xxiii} setting out an overall vision for the town. Well planned new housing settlements will be an essential element of this long-term visioning for strategic sites now and in the future.

Priority Actions for Housing:

- 1.10. **The Council will continue to work with developers to maximise delivery on sustainable strategic sites.**
- 1.11. **The Council will refresh its Design Guide**

Small sites target to meet local needs

Smaller sites for housing development in villages and towns can also play a vital role in maintaining the vibrancy of places, providing affordable homes for families who might otherwise be priced out of the area, and smaller homes to meet the needs of first time buyers and those looking to downsize. Huntingdonshire District Council will encourage the development of smaller sites that meet the needs of the local community, or a need for specialist housing, (see previous section). Thought will be given to the integration of small sites into existing communities and how new developments will relate to existing settlements.

New homes in villages can help to sustain village life, meeting the changing needs of those who live in the village and others with a local connection, and the Council will encourage the development of village housing supported by or led by the local community. Small village sites that might not otherwise get planning permission can be brought forward as Rural Exception Sites if they can demonstrate that they meet local needs. Exception Sites are intended to provide affordable housing in perpetuity. In Huntingdonshire 11 Rural Exception Sites have been completed since 2000, with a further four currently on site. There are ten in the pipeline, at varying stages of development. Gaining agreement for Exception Sites can be a lengthy process, requiring a demonstration of need, and planning permission. To simplify the planning requirements for Exception Sites Huntingdonshire District Council have set a standard 60:40 of net developable area split between affordable and market housing. This innovative approach is resulting in more sites coming forward.

Another option available to individuals wanting to build new homes is self-build or custom build homes on small plots. The interest in self-build and custom build in Huntingdonshire has been significant. By 30th October 2019 there had been 198 registrations of interest for self or custom build on since HDC instituted the register in April 2016 and 172 exemptions have been granted from the Community Infrastructure Levy on the grounds of the development being for self or custom housebuilding. The Council will consider the disposal

of small parcels of land in its ownership for self-build if they are not suitable for larger housing development.

Huntingdonshire District Council is supporting the development of the first Community Land Trust in the District at Great Staughton^{xxiv}, a development that will be owned by the local community and managed and developed by a Registered Provider, with the aim of providing a mix of affordable rent and shared ownership. The Council will evaluate the progress of the first Community Land Trust in Huntingdonshire, learning the lessons from what has worked well and less well in bringing this forward, in order to support future initiatives of this kind.

Villages, small and medium size enterprises and individuals benefit from the advice and guidance provided to them by Council officers for these various types of essentially community-based developments. This type of housing can make an important contribution to delivering much needed homes, particularly as a means of sustaining village life, and enabling villages to adapt and evolve without losing their essential character. Recognising this the Council will reflect on how we can improve the guidance we provide, including signposting to other advice hubs supporting community led housing

Priority Actions for Housing:

- 1.12. The Council expects that where affordable housing is contemplated typically Rural Exception sites will be progressed, but will also support the development of suitable smaller sites supported or led by the local community or meeting a need for specialist housing.**
- 1.13. The Council will strengthen the guidance and support provided to community led or supported sites to assist in accelerating delivery.**
- 1.14. The Council will consider the use of its own assets for key worker housing, and for self-build where these are not suitable for larger developments.**

2. Homes to enable People to live independent and healthy lives

Having a decent home of your own is the bedrock to creating stability and security in life. This section looks at various pathways through which people can achieve this, acknowledging that a home can take a variety of forms, depending on people's circumstances or preferences.

The broader environment in which people live also contributes to their sense of health and wellbeing. Building well designed good places to live which retain the vitality of towns and villages, connecting people to those things that are important to them, is a theme that ran through the first section on building new homes.

The basic requirements for a home have changed over time as expectations change. The experience of lockdown in response to the threat of a Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the importance of digital connectivity for working, staying in touch with friends and family, and providing technological support to keep vulnerable people safe in their own homes. It has also increased the value of gardens and nearby green space for a sense of wellbeing

when people are spending more time in their homes. The extent to which these changes will be long term and will require new approaches to the requirements within a home environment is a future challenge for all tenures.

Homelessness and rough sleeper prevention

Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategic Priorities for Huntingdonshire

Priority 1: Preventing Homelessness

Priority 2: Providing appropriate temporary accommodation and aiming to reduce its overall use by securing accommodation for people who are homeless

Priority 3: Establishing effective partnerships, working arrangements and support to those threatened by homelessness, to improve their resilience and reduce the risk of homelessness occurring

The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) has brought about a shift in approach to addressing homelessness in Huntingdonshire, placing a much greater emphasis on prevention and co-operation with other agencies. The Council's Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy^{xxv} sets out this new approach within the national and local context.

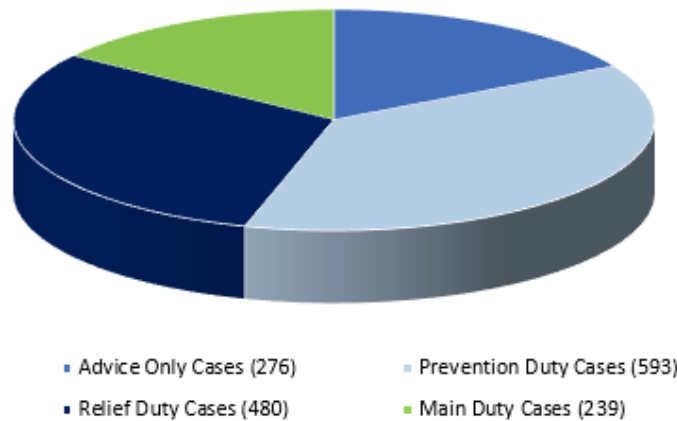
The Council invested in a restructured and increased homelessness prevention service at the time of the introduction of the new Act, working collaboratively with other public agencies engaged in the prevention and resolution of homelessness. Local policies, projects and transformative programmes, adopted in Huntingdonshire shaped the public service response to homelessness.

Key amongst these has been:

- The Homelessness Trailblazer Programme – reviewing the pathways through which people become homeless and establishing new pathways to prevention.
- Working with the County Council on their Housing Related Support Strategy and the possible opportunities to redesign or reconfigure models of delivery.
- Adopting a “Think Communities” approach which seeks to transform multi-agency working together, and “Project Pathways” which aims to restructure services for vulnerable individuals to prevent a revolving door of presentations to different agencies.

The HRA requires local authorities to go through staged interventions with households presenting as homeless. The following chart shows the split of households that were assisted at each of these stages of intervention

Number of Homeless Applications Opened At the Various Duty Stages, Huntingdonshire 2018/19



This staged approach gives the opportunity for the Council, working with other agencies, to resolve a household's potential homelessness in a wider range of ways, detailed in the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Review and Strategy. For those households that reach the relief stage and those that go on to the main duty stage, where the Council has a statutory duty to provide accommodation, the availability of socially rented housing is a key determinant to securing accommodation, underscoring the impact that housing delivery has on homelessness.

The Lettings Policy is in the process of being revised as a joint document, with other local authorities in the sub-region, in the light of the Homelessness Reduction Act, and is due for completion in 2020. The Letting Policy ensures that those households that legislation states must be prioritised, including those owed certain homelessness duties, are offered sufficient priority.

The Council has committed to ending the use of Bed and Breakfast for homeless households for whom it owes a duty to provide emergency accommodation. Huntingdonshire District Council have successfully worked with Housing Associations in the district to increase the availability of temporary housing, and also increased the use of nightly paid self-contained units and are on track to achieve this target. A further short-term let scheme is in the pipeline to be delivered in 2020 with a partner housing association, by redesigning and redesignating an outdated elderly persons scheme. This will add further to the stock of short-term units available to the Council.

The numbers of rough sleepers in Huntingdonshire are relatively small because rough sleepers tend to congregate in larger urban areas. In November 2019 the estimate was 4 men aged over 25. The Council successfully combined with East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire, neighbouring Districts with similar characteristics, to secure Government funding to pilot a homeless street outreach team, to support rough sleepers to address a range of issues. This initiative will be evaluated to consider the ongoing need for this type of service in the future.

Priority Action for Housing:

- 2.1. **The Council will monitor the achievement of the key objectives agreed in the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Review and Strategy through an annual action plan and adapt as necessary.**
- 2.2. **The Council will adopt a revised lettings policy.**
- 2.3. **The Council will evaluate the pilot Rough Sleeper Initiative.**

Housing with support

Housing with support - definitions

- General needs . People living in their own homes with or without support.
- Housing with Support. Usually with off-site or some on-site support that promotes independent living in retirement homes or sheltered housing.
- Housing with care –enhanced supported/sheltered housing with on-site support 24/7.
- Residential care bed spaces – provides intensive care and nursing support.

People can benefit from supported housing for a range of reasons where they may struggle to cope with living independently without some level of support. Sometimes this will have previously been provided by families, friends, or others. People can be supported in a number of ways, ranging from housing specifically designed with specific needs in mind to visiting support that promotes independent living. The earlier section on building new homes highlighted the necessity to work closely with Health and Social Care partners to ensure that new housing provision is designed with models of care in mind. Linked to this is the importance of Registered Providers who deliver and manage specialist housing for older people and other specialist needs being involved as partners in forward planning for future needs in Huntingdonshire.

The Council's Housing Options and Advice service is engaged in work with colleagues from the County and other agencies looking at options and future commissioning of services that help individuals or families to be able to sustain their accommodation, or set up their own homes, or live independently, or provide ongoing support. A Housing Related Support Strategy is due for publication shortly, and the implications for Huntingdonshire will need to be reviewed and understood.

Most older people continue to live in their own homes, with varying levels support to enable them to live independently. The majority of older people in Huntingdonshire are owner occupiers with 73% of 65-75-year-old householders owning their homes outright, and a further 10% owning with a mortgage. The 18% that rent are most likely to be in socially

rented accommodation, particularly if they are a single person^{xxvi} As models of care evolve it is becoming more typical for older people to be cared for in their own homes for as long as possible, and the size and design of homes is important in enabling this.

There are a range of choices for older people looking to move into accommodation that better meets their circumstances. Many are not aware that there are choices other than residential care for those finding it difficult to remain in their existing homes. To help people explore and understand the options that are available the Council will support the Housing Options for Older People (HOOP)^{xxvii} initiative to enable residents to make informed choices.

Priority Actions for Housing:

- 2.4. **When published, review the implications for Huntingdonshire District Council of the County Council's Housing Related Support Strategy.**
- 2.5. **The Older Peoples Housing Strategy will be updated to reflect changing patterns of care, identify gaps in provision, and determinants of successful schemes in Huntingdonshire District Council and elsewhere.**
- 2.6. **The Council will support and publicise the availability of the Housing Options for Older People scheme.**

Helping people to live independently in their own home

The Council is committed, working with our partners in Health and Social Care, to assist people to remain in their own homes and live independently, wherever possible. The Council has worked jointly with Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire Council to agree the 'Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations and Repairs Policy'^{xxviii}. This policy recognises the crucial role housing can play in promoting physical and mental health and wellbeing, and outlines eligibility, and the criteria for improvements funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant. The policy aims to provide for a consistent approach across the County as to how councils meet their statutory responsibilities and make judgements about the best use of resources for all agencies involved in the care and support provided to enable adults and children to live independently in their own homes.

Huntingdonshire District Council is signed up to a County wide Handy Person's scheme which is a key contributor to enabling people to live independent and health lives, reducing falls in older people, and facilitating discharges from hospital. The service delivers low level interventions such as minor repairs and maintenance tasks, safety checks around the home, and referral services for additional help or support.

The allocation for Disabled Facilities Grants is passed on to District Councils via the Government Funded Better Care Fund. In 2019/20 Huntingdonshire received an allocation of £1.3m for the year, which was insufficient to meet demand and which was topped up by

almost £1m directly from Council resources. This is a significant investment by the Council in aids and adaptations for the local population.

In Huntingdonshire residents who qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant are encouraged to have the work carried out through the local Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (CHIA)^{xxix}. The Agency will assist people to apply for grants and loans, design and organise work, obtain quotes, supervise the work on site and complete all of the administrative support required to enable a person to maximise their independence in their own home, for which they charge of fee. The staff in the agency work closely with district council officers, Occupational Therapists, and other professionals.

The following table shows how the amount spent by the Council on Disabled Facilities Grants has increased year on year, with the proportion of direct investment by the Council increasing exponentially in the last 3 years. This is for mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants only as the Council do not have the financial capacity for discretionary spend. There are historic reasons for this. Nonetheless with such a significant investment it is prudent for the Council to periodically review the reasons for this level of spend and any actions to either reduce spend or free up resources to accommodate greater flexibility.

Year	Better Care Fund Allocation	HDC DFG Budget	Final year spend	CHIA Fees (included in final year spend)
2015/16	£ 549,000	£ 1,545,000	£ 1,435,089	£ 142,756
2016/17	£ 1,018,751	£ 1,400,000	£ 1,584,398	£ 186,373
2017/18	£ 1,118,716	£ 1,418,716	£ 2,386,944	£ 325,443
2018/19	£ 1,150,583	£ 1,900,000	£ 2,395,552	£ 336,212
2019/20	£ 1,315,029	£ 2,246,000	£ 2,217,435	£ 318,795

Priority Action for Housing

- 2.7. The Council will review the reasons for higher Disabled Facilities Grant spend and scope to make changes.**

Gypsy and Traveller sites and houseboat moorings

Not everyone chooses to live in a bricks and mortar home, and in Huntingdonshire the Gypsy and Traveller Community and Houseboat dwellers will have specific requirements for their choice of living accommodation.

Huntingdonshire has well-established gypsy and traveller community and Council has an effective planning policy for granting permanent planning permission for sites which meet a criteria-based approach. 'The Cambridgeshire Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Assessment 2016' ^{xxx} assessed the need for additional pitches in Huntingdonshire. The five year target has been met by the Local Plan examination and as a consequence Huntingdonshire do not have any future sites designated for pitches. Applications for pitches in suitable locations away from existing settlements, but sufficiently close to local health services and primary schools, will continue to be considered against policy requirements.

The demand for residential houseboat moorings is relatively small and is similarly assessed against policy criteria which ensure that granting permission for permanent mooring is assessed against the impact on nearby settlements and access to services for houseboat dwellers.

A review of the Gypsy and Travellers accommodation needs is underway - including houseboat dwellers, and the findings will be taken into account once completed.

Priority Action for Housing:

- 2.8. **Continue with existing policies as agreed in the Local Plan with clear signposting to policies on the Council's website.**
- 2.9. **Have regard to the conclusions of the Gypsy and Travellers Review.**

3 Working with Partners

In the delivery of housing to meet the needs of the District the Council have a statutory role as the planning authority. But the influence that the Council can have is potentially much wider than this and depends to a large extent on the approach the Council takes to working with other agencies with a role in the provision of housing. Building strategic relationships that support the delivery of the Council's housing ambitions is part of a long-term commitment to work collaboratively with partners for the benefit of Huntingdonshire. This section selects those that will be key to supporting housing delivery and to addressing the housing needs of existing residents. Annex 2 sets out a fuller map of key partnerships and forums.

Working Strategically to accelerate delivery

The Council's housing ambitions are shared by other agencies, unsurprisingly as Huntingdonshire's housing market operates within a much broader national and regional context of housing supply that is insufficient to meet demand. This is evidenced through complementary strategies that encompass Huntingdonshire. The Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority Housing Strategy 2018^{xxxi} has a target to deliver 100,000 new homes by 2022, of which 40% are affordable. Its strategic priorities include accelerating delivery, placemaking and expanding housing choices. The Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority recently commissioned an Economic Review which confirmed the strategic importance of Huntingdonshire, particularly its market towns, for the delivery of housing to support economic growth. Looking wider the Government have set out ambitions for the Cambridge, Milton Keynes Oxford Arc identifying Huntingdonshire as an area with significant potential.

Affordable Housing in Huntingdonshire is delivered through Registered Providers, (mainly Housing Association). Registered Providers are increasingly consolidating their developments in target geographically areas, and in Huntingdonshire these are the Housing Associations which the Council wants to build and sustain a good long term working relationship with, based on an understanding that there a shared aim to deliver much needed affordable housing and low-cost home ownership in the District. A productive relationship will be built on mutual respect, an ongoing dialogue, and clarity of shared strategic objectives.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have other key fora concerned with housing issues as Annex A shows. The Housing Board for Cambridgeshire Peterborough and West Suffolk which brings together local authorities, including Cambridgeshire County Council, and housing association representatives has been notably instrumental in developing a consistent sub-regional approach where this is beneficial, and provides a forum to reflect and learn from good practice. This has provided a useful platform to agree strategic joint working between agencies, and has paid real dividends in areas like homelessness, understanding the links between housing health and social care, and delivering build standards that helping to maintain those who need support in their own homes as long as possible.

Priority Actions for Housing:

- 3.1. The Council will continue to build and sustain long term strategic relationships with key partners in the delivery of housing ambitions.**

Accessing Funding

Funding streams evolve over time, and Huntingdonshire District Council will make sure that it keeps up to date with available funding and any new or emerging funding priorities. This is

not an entirely passive process. The Council will have an ongoing dialogue with funding agencies to make them aware of ongoing housing pressures, and where funding can be best targeted. For housing delivery funding from Homes England, the Combined Authority and the National Infrastructure fund all provide potentially valuable resources to access. This can be for direct delivery of housing in the form of grants, for infrastructure and to unlock sites, and to facilitate a joint approach to housing delivery through support for Joint Ventures. The Council has worked in collaboration with Registered Providers to secure investment for 100% affordable housing on sites in the District. More can be achieved if the Council works to facilitate funding that addresses ambitions or gaps in provision in the District.

New funding streams are emerging at the time of writing to redress the economic impact of the Covid-19 lockdown. The Government have announced a Green Homes Grant to retrofit existing homes also which also contributes to the Net Zero Carbon target and have indicated the importance of construction industry contribution to re-stimulating the economy. The Government have also announced an intention to provide a decarbonisation fund for social housing.

Priority Actions for Housing:

3.2. The Council will take a pro-active approach to securing funding to assist the delivery of housing development.

Use of Assets

Huntingdonshire District Council own several small and medium sites within the District with the potential for a small number of homes. The Council is evaluating how these can be used to further the priorities for housing. A number of options will be considered, and the Council will want to make sure it makes the best use of these assets to deliver against its priorities. This is most likely to mean exploring options for delivering affordable housing and market rental housing, self-build and custom build, and key worker housing, encompassing a range of potentially different products.

In the case of market rented housing companies experience elsewhere has shown that once costs such as voids, arrears and management costs are factored in local authority housing companies with modest portfolios cover their costs but rarely make a significant profit from rents, in large part because of the requirement to pay back borrowing incurred to finance the build. (Borrowing rules for the Public Works Loans Board are also changing to make it much more difficult for local authorities to make a profit from borrowing and reinvesting). The Council will continue to explore alternative options for delivering the ambition of providing good quality market rental housing on its sites, alongside other priority tenures.

Bringing sites forward is a complex process which includes gaining planning permission, site investigations, design and build out of the site and management of the properties. The Council does not have the capacity or expertise in-house to develop or manage these sites directly itself and will be looking to do this in partnership with others. Furthermore, in

today's uncertain economic climate the Council is better able to control risk with an experienced partner.

The form of partnership working entered into will depend on final decisions as to how many sites are assessed as suitable for development, and whether this is sufficient to warrant the cost and complexity of forming a separate legal entity to deliver housing on sites, or whether better outcomes can be achieved through partnership agreements on individual sites with Registered Providers. The earlier section on productive partnership working is worth reflecting on here. Ultimately the Council will enter into the type of agreement that best delivers the housing outcomes sought. Different sites are likely to lend themselves to different mixes of tenure.

The primary motive for the use of these sites is to deliver housing, rather than to deliver a capital return from sale, unless from sales to improve the viability of schemes. The Council will agree a timetable for testing the option of a partnership with a Registered Provider, and/or other providers specialising in market rental homes, to deliver a mix of housing that reflect priorities.

The Council owns other assets which currently provide an income to support delivery of Council services. If the pandemic has an impact of the viability of these other assets the Council may want to consider using some of them to deliver its housing priorities.

Priority Actions for Housing:

- 3.3. For Council owned sites the Council will determine the optimum approach for delivering against its strategic priorities.**
- 3.4. The Council will consider partnership proposals that provide best value and maximise the delivery of the Council's objectives.**
- 3.5. Owned sites that are not viable for development with a partner will be considered for disposed for self-build**

Working with landlords

The previous housing strategy concluded that a comprehensive stock condition survey carried out in 2010^{xxxii} showed the Private Rented Sector (PRS) stock to be generally in good condition, and although there were a few homes that were unfit or in substantial disrepair, there was no special concentration and no need for an area renewal strategy. There is no evidence to suggest this position has changed.

Nevertheless, there are good reasons for the ongoing work with landlords. Typically, private sector landlords own a small number of properties^{xxxiii} and may not be aware of their obligations and responsibilities to provide accommodation that meets statutory requirements. There are estimated to be around 500 Houses in Multiple Occupation of which 47 are licenced with the Council, with a further 7 in train. (Not all HMOs are required to be licenced). Important for the rented sector in general are the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and the requirement to meet statutory energy rating

standards. The Council takes the approach of working with landlords to inform and educate about their obligations, only exceptionally taking formal enforcement action. There were 2 enforcement notices issued to landlords in the last 2 years, both speedily complied with.

A growing trend is the number of properties empty for more than 6 months in Huntingdonshire which has increased by a third in the last year to 577. The Council will monitor the interventions made by Environment Health in the private rented sector to maintain an up-to-date picture of conditions in this sector, to inform future approaches.

The Council is leading a project called the Huntingdon North Initiative^{xxxiv} with other partners focused on the Oxmoor Estate, originally built as a social housing estate for London overspill, where the main landlord is the housing association Chorus. The estate is within the most deprived wards in Huntingdonshire. This initiative takes a multi-agency approach where services work together to build community resilience, taking a 'Think Communities' approach. This involves working collaboratively with the residents to support and maintain valued aspects of life on the estate and tackle some of the underlying challenges, encouraging community led solutions and interventions. A profile of the estate shows that the population on the Oxmoor Estate have a strong sense of community, are predominantly 'financially overstretched' and have suffered historic high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. An early result of this initiative has been a fall in recorded offences, and an identification of anti-social behaviour hotspots followed by targeted interventions. This approach to working with communities under pressure is being closely monitored and the evaluation will provide useful lessons for future work, including the role that landlords can play in improving the health and wellbeing of an area.

Priority Actions for Housing:

- 3.6. **The Council will collect data on private rented sector interventions to inform future focus.**
- 3.7. **The Council will seek to understand the reasons for the increase in empty homes and what actions, if any, could be pursued.**
- 3.8. **The Council will continue to lead the Huntingdon North Initiative including the evaluation of the effectiveness of this approach.**

Delivering on priorities

This Housing Strategy sits within a suite of strategies for Huntingdonshire agreed by the Council to set clear pathways for the future. This is shown in Annex 1. The priority actions in this report are supported by an annual action plan which sets out how each priority will be delivered, responsibility for this, any key milestones, and delivery dates.

Annex 1 Huntingdonshire District Council Strategies

Overarching Plans	Outcome Plans	Strategic Plans	Activity Plans
Place Strategy to 2050 (Vision for Huntingdonshire)	Local Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset Management Strategy Waste Strategy Housing Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Plan Asset Management Plan Waste Minimisation Plan
	Community Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Strategy Consultation and Engagement Strategy Leisure and Health Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Plan
	Economic Growth Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport Strategy Climate Change Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regeneration Plan
Vision for HDC	Core Service Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce Strategy Medium Term Financial Strategy Commercial Investment Strategy Digital Strategy Leisure and Health Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Management Plan Service Plan(s)

Annex 2 Key Partnerships

Strategic	Service delivery	Housing Delivery
Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority	Cambridgeshire County Council	Developers including master developers
Oxford, Milton Keynes Cambridge Arc	Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency	Registered Providers including Housing Associations
Homes England	Letting Agents	Parishes
MHCLG	Private Landlords	Community Land Trusts
Housing Board for Cambridgeshire Peterborough and West Suffolk	Housing Associations	Self and Custom Build
	Home-link Board	Institutional Investors
Health and Wellbeing Board	Homelessness Trailblazer Programme	
Cambridgeshire Public Service Board	Project Pathways	
Planning Policy Forum	Huntingdon North Initiative	
	Registered Providers providing specialist accommodation	
	Ageing Well Board	

References

- ⁱ Cambridge and Peterborough Independent Economic Review. Final Report. www.cpier.org.uk
- ⁱⁱ The Oxford-Cambridge Arc: government ambition and joint declaration between government and local partners. www.gov.uk
- ⁱⁱⁱ Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (adopted 15th May 2019). www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk
- ^{iv} GL Hearn. Housing Needs of Specific Groups (draft April 2020, figures may change in final draft)
- ^v The Housing and Planning Act, 2016. www.gov.uk
- ^{vi} Housing white paper 2017. www.gov.uk
- ^{vii} Housing green paper 2018. www.gov.uk
- ^{viii} MHCLG Planning for the Future statement released 20th March 2020 www.gov.uk/mhclg
- ^{ix} MHCLG White Paper: Planning for the Future. 6th August 2020 www.gov.uk/mhclg
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- ^{xi} Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. www.gov.uk
- ^{xii} Cambridge and Peterborough Independent Economic Review. Final Report. www.cpier.org.uk
- ^{xiii} Hearn -add when published
- ^{xiv} Housing Delivery Test Action plan 2019. www.applications.huntingdonshire.gov.uk
- ^{xv} GL Hearn. Housing Needs of Specific Groups (draft April 2020, figures may change in final draft)
- ^{xvi} Housing Market Bulletin. Edition 40 published April 2019 (December 2018 data). www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk
- ^{xvii} See CPIER Final report
- ^{xviii} www.100khomes.co.uk
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- ^{xx} GL Hearn. Housing Needs of Specific Groups (draft April 2020, figures may change in final draft)
- ^{xxi} Older People’s housing, care and support needs in Greater Cambridge 2017 -2036. Sheffield Hallam University, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, University of Sheffield. 2017. www4.shu.ac.uk
- ^{xxii} St Neots Masterplan for Growth. www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk
- ^{xxiii} Huntingdon: A Prospectus for Growth. www.cambridgepeterborough-ca.gov.uk
- ^{xxiv} Community Land Trust – Great Staunton Parish Council. www.greatstauntonpc.org.uk
- ^{xxv} Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to be published in 2020

^{xxvi} GL Hearn. Housing Needs of Specific Groups (draft April 2020, figures may change in final draft)

^{xxvii} www.HOOP.eac.org.uk

^{xxviii} Cambridgeshire Housing Adaptations and Repairs Policy 2019

^{xxix} www.cambshia.org

^{xxx} GTAA ref needed

^{xxxi} CPCA Housing Strategy (3 parts) www.cambridgepeterborough-ca.gov.uk

^{xxxii} Huntingdonshire Housing Strategy 2017-2020 www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

^{xxxiii} The Evolving Private Rented Sector: Its Contribution and Potential 2018. Julie Rugg and David Rhodes. Centre for Housing Policy Studies. The University of York. www.nationwidefoundation.org.uk

^{xxxiv} Developing Oxmoor. Briefing paper. www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk

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1. New Homes to meet the needs of Huntingdonshire now and in the future

	Priority Action	Outcome and progress	Timeframe	Lead Service/officer
1.1	Annual achievement of housing delivery targets	Annual delivery of new homes	Annual Monitoring Report ARM published December 2020	Growth
1.2	Work with developers and Registered Providers to prioritise the achievement of 40% affordable housing	Affordable housing numbers delivered	Monitored through AMR. Action plan to be agreed if numbers fall	Growth Housing Strategy
1.3	Explore the potential and barriers for delivery of Starter Homes and other Discounted Market Housing	Report to Corporate Management Team on options when Housing Manager is in post	Not a priority for this year	Housing Strategy/ Housing Manager
1.4	Deliver at least 1 entry level exception site	At least 1 site in progress or completed	September 2021	Housing Strategy
1.5	To evaluate alternative models of entry level housing alongside share ownership	Include in report for 1.3	Not a priority for this year	Housing Strategy/ Housing Manager
1.6	Explore options for institutional investment in the Private Rented Sector	Dependant on opportunities	Not a priority for this year	Housing Manager
1.7	Explore options for key worker housing, including on own sites	Sites identified as potential sites for key worker housing	1 by December 2021	Strategic Director/ Managing Director?
1.8	Working pro-actively with developers and housing associations to achieve the targets for homes built to M4(2) and M4(3) standards as set out in the local plan	Numbers of homes built to these standards	Monitored through AMR	Growth
1.9	Engage with Health and Social Care partners to align requirements for specialist housing with future models of care and support	Link to local plan process and G L Hearn report Also: Link to final CC Housing Related Support report	Dependant on Hearn and County Council reports	Strategic Housing
1.10	Continue to work with developers to maximise delivery on sustainable strategic sites.	Related to effective partnership working	Site dependant	Growth Housing Manager
1.11	Refresh Design Guide to reflect aspirations or build standards	Refreshed document	Not a priority for this year as linked to possible legislative	Growth

			change	
1.12	Support the development of rural exception sites, smaller sites led or supported by the community, or meeting the needs of specialist housing	Follow-up on interest from road show.	Review in next Annual Action Plan	Strategic Housing
1.13	Strengthen guidance and support provided to community led or supported sites to assist in accelerating delivery	Improve information and signposting on the website	Review in next Action Plan	Strategic Housing with Growth
1.14	Use of own assets for self-build and key worker housing where these are not suitable for larger developments	Self-build sites identified and marketed. Also Council owned site identified for key worker housing	First of these dependent on marketing of other sites. KWH relates to 1.7	Development consultant/Strategic Director/MD

2. Homes to enable people to live independent and healthy lives

	Priority Action	Outcome and progress	Timeframe	Leader Service/officer
2.1	Monitor the achievement of key objectives in the Rough Sleepers Review and Strategy through an annual action plan	Achievements of objectives	Dependent on timing of final Rough Sleepers Review and Strategy	Housing Needs and Resources
2.2	Adopt a revised lettings policy	Sub-regional policy to be agreed at Housing Board prior to adoption by HDC Going through Home-Link board before each of the LAs consultation and formal adoption processes	Cabinet December 2020	Housing Needs and Resources
2.3	Evaluate the pilot street outreach service	Decide whether to continue .	By end December 2020	Housing Needs and Resources
2.4	Review implications of County Council's Housing Related Support Strategy	To inform an updated Older Peoples Housing Strategy and commissioning of homelessness services.	Following publication by the County Council	Housing Strategy/ Housing Needs & Resources
2.5	Older Peoples Housing Strategy will be updated	Report to Cabinet	As above	Housing Strategy
2.6	Publicise the availability of Housing Options for Older People scheme	Improve information and link on the Council's website	By December 2020	Housing Strategy
2.7	Review reasons for high Disabled Facilities Grant Spend	Reduction in spend for 2021/2022	By March 2021	Environmental Health /Communities
2.8	Clear signposting to Gypsy and Traveller and Houseboat Dwellers policies on website	Clear policy presentation	By January	Growth
2.9	Respond to conclusions of Gypsy and Travellers	Will depend on whether the Countywide review	Dependant on completion and	Growth

	review	requires changes	publication of report commissions through the County Council. Draft report expected December 2020.	
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3. Working in partnership to achieve shared objectives

	Priority Action	Outcome and progress	Timeframe	Lead service/officer
3.1	Build and sustain long-term strategic relationships with key partners in the delivery of housing ambitions	Clarity on key contacts and for a to maintain and build strong working relationships including the CPCA, RPS, Developers, other Councils in the sub-region.	Immediate and ongoing	MD/Leader/ Strategic Director/Housing manager
3.2	Pro-active approach to securing funding to assist the delivery of housing development	Quantifiable achievements in supporting/securing funding for the delivery of housing, including infrastructure funding if relevant	Evaluate achievements at end of 2021	Housing manager/housing strategy
3.3	For Council owned sites determine the optimum approach for delivery against strategic priorities	Report setting out approach agreed with Cabinet.	Proposal to registered providers September/October 2020. Cabinet October 2020.	Housing Development Consultant
3.4	Consider partnership proposals that provide best value and maximise the delivery of the Council's objectives	Responses to be evaluated against Council broad objectives	November/December 2020	Housing Development Consultant
3.5	Owned sites not viable for development with a partner considered for self-build	To follow evaluation of partnership proposals for sites	No action until 2021. Action for next AAP	Housing Manager/Growth
3.6	Collect data on the private rented sector to inform future focus	Agree priorities for action for the coming year	January 2021	Environmental Health/Housing Manager
3.7	Understand reasons for empty homes increase	Profile and evaluate	January 2021	Communities
3.8	Continue to lead Huntingdon North Initiative and evaluate effectiveness	Reduction in ASB and crime and other tangible benefits.	Depends on lockdown rules and easing	Communities

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Public
(Confidential (Part 2) Appendices)
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Housing Development on Council Owned Sites

Date: Cabinet – 22nd October 2020

Executive Portfolio: Executive Leader

Report by: Interim Corporate Director, David Edwards

Wards affected: All

Executive Summary:

To agree the outcome of the market testing of the small land parcels for potential acceleration of affordable housing provision and agree the final steps toward securing disposal and development.

Recommendations:

- a) To approve the list of 13 parcels of land held by Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) and reclassify them as assets for sale
- b) To approve that the Council sells the parcels of land for the delivery of affordable housing
- c) To select Longhurst Housing Group as the preferred housing development partner and enter into further discussions on each of the sites
- d) To agree the budget for the housing delivery programme
- e) To delegate authority to the Leader in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources and Interim Corporate Director (Delivery) to approve the price (subject to RICS Valuation) and execute all associated legal and contractual processes and documentation.
- f) To delegate authority to the Leader in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources and the Interim Corporate Director (Delivery) to determine private rented homes or a capital receipt is received as payment for each of land parcels
- g) To agree that any remaining small land parcels in the Councils portfolio not involved in this disposal remain under consideration for future facilitation of the objectives of the Housing Strategy and wider economic development/growth options.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To secure disposal and development of parcels of land owned by HDC for the delivery of Affordable Housing.
- 1.2 To ensure that the elements of the report and decision making can be discussed in public the details of the sites themselves have not been included in the report. To provide some context it is anticipated that the 13 sites will not deliver more than 150 homes.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/ BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The provision of affordable housing is one of the Council's priorities. This is addressed through planning policy and working proactively with a variety of registered providers and developers.
- 2.2 The number of affordable homes that have been delivered through the regulatory planning process has improved in recent years, however, demand for affordable homes remains high.
- 2.3 The Council originally identified 43 parcels of land in Council ownership where there was the potential for affordable housing to be developed and thereby help accelerate supply. There was a desire to explore potential for Private Sector Rent properties to be built as part of the developments and returned to the Council as part payment for the land assets, which would then enable a potential new revenue stream for the Council (subject to management cost considerations). Recognising that for these parcels of land to be viable this would have to be in conjunction with market housing or potentially mixed-use development.
- 2.4 The Council does not have a significant internal housing expertise resource within its capacity and bringing these parcels of land forward to development thereby necessitates working with a partner for delivery.
- 2.5 A consultant (Davey Estates) was engaged to review these parcels of land and explore the potential for development. This has involved discussions with registered providers and potential developers to explore whether there would be interest in these parcels of land. In addition, informal discussions took place with development management on the possibility of development and potential constraints. The potential for external funding including grant funding from the Combined Authority has also been explored.
- 2.6 The original list of 43 parcels of land was reduced to 13 viable sites and in August 2020 expressions of interest were sought from registered providers and local developers.
- 2.7 One of the aims was to identify a partner that would engage on all the parcels of land (recognising that many of these are small sites and potentially difficult to bring forward) and so a balanced package of 13 sites was agreed with

Portfolio Holders to bring forward a viable proposal that included parcels of land with a reasonable prospect for development overall.

- 2.8 The attached exempt appendices contain the conclusion from the consultant's analysis of the responses. These findings have been reflected in the recommendations.
- 2.9 If Cabinet is minded to agree with the recommendation to work with the preferred partner then given the value of the land, before doing so, the Cabinet also needs to agree that there are no other uses that the Councils statutory duties requires on the parcels of land.
- 2.10 There is also the opportunity to bid for funding from the Combined Authority to help a partner enable development, either sooner or in greater numbers. If agreement can be reached on the development on each of sites by the end of the 2020, potential grant funding is in principle still available via a bidding process to provide additional affordable housing provision should it be required by the partner.

3. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

Council development

- 3.1 The Council was looking for a partner that was willing to consider all the potential delivery models and had a proven track record of delivery and management of affordable housing. The knowledge, skills and experience of the team and current satisfaction with their housing management were also key considerations. Given the nature of the sites their experience of developing small infill sites was also tested along with their commitment to use local contractors. Further details can be seen in the exempt quality matrix.
- 3.2 Several development options were considered and these are summarised below:-
 - Option 1** - HDC grant a lease to a Housing Association in exchange for a fixed income
 - Option 2** - HDC sell the parcels of land to the Housing Association in exchange for:-
 - private rented affordable homes; and/or
 - a capital receipt;
 - Option 3** - HDC enter a joint venture
- 3.3 Further details of what was included in these options can be seen in the Exempt appendices.
- 3.4 Following engagement with the registered providers and potential developers it is recommended to proceed with Option 2.

Site selection

- 3.5 The Council could have put a larger number of sites out for consideration. After initial review of 43 sites it was concluded that a smaller number of sites would be put forward, primarily given the planning constraints and issues and rejecting several very small parcels of land. This option is not recommended.
- 3.6 The Council could still hold on to the sites for a longer period and then explore options on these sites later, potentially to get a greater return. Given the work that had been undertaken previously to identify the land holdings, a long list and shortlist of potential sites and the positive informal discussions it is recommended to proceed, noting there is still further detailed work to do now on each site. This option is not recommended.

Disposal

- 3.7 The Council could have undertaken a procurement process and disposed of the land on the open market to a variety of interests. However, this is not recommended as the Council would like to see more affordable homes come forward and soft market testing had indicated that there would be some appetite for looking at the sites, recognising the small sites would have limited housing capacity.

Do nothing

- 3.8 The Cabinet could decide to do nothing with these parcels of land at this stage. This is not recommended as although there is further work to undertake with the preferred bidder there is a viable scheme that includes all 13 sites.

4. COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The Performance and Growth Panel discussed the report on housing development on Council owned sites at its meeting on 7th October 2020. The consensus is that selecting appropriate sites for development makes sense and the recommendations are supported.
- 4.2 The Panel discussed the need for consultation. Members were assured consultation would occur with the relevant Ward Members and Parish Councils to establish what community use, if any, the land currently has. However, a suggestion was made that prior to a decision being taken on any individual pieces of land, the community should be consulted to ensure that the impact of a decision to dispose of the land for development would not adversely affect the community by removing its use of it. This suggestion is reported to the Cabinet for consideration.
- 4.3 Having commented that the potential to achieve an additional 91 homes within the District is positive, preference has been expressed for Option 2.

5. KEY IMPACTS/ RISKS

- 5.1 Some of these sites might ultimately not be viable for development. Mitigation: Initial work has been undertaken to assess ownership and explore potential number of homes. At this stage it is felt that these sites are viable. Agreement will also need to be reached with the preferred partner on a model of risk and reward/recovery of any costs should sites not be viable after further work has been undertaken.
- 5.2 There are potential policy and reputational risks associated with bringing forward affordable housing on these sites. Mitigation: There has been informal discussions with development management and it is felt these can be overcome, any final decision will be managed through the planning process.
- 5.3 There are a variety of sites and there is a risk that the smaller sites will be pushed to the back of the queue. Mitigation: There will be a range of considerations for each of the sites and it is envisaged that a proposal containing all the sites will come forward as the next stage.
- 5.4 Given the above, the ultimate outcome in terms of development numbers and thereby value and receipt, have a degree of uncertainty. Mitigation: Bringing these otherwise surplus sites into use for affordable housing is the correct principle given the Council's priorities and the opportunity for development.
- 5.5 The Council has not gone out for a full procurement exercise and opened up this opportunity to a wide market. Mitigation: The Council has undertaken work and will continue to undertake work to ensure that best value is achieved, and independent valuations are a core element on reviewing each parcel of land. The Council wants affordable housing and to work with a local provider that knows the area and challenges. If there had not been a positive response from the local market then the Council would have looked to expand the offer more widely. The Council also took independent legal advice from Freeths on this approach.

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 The priority to secure affordable housing is clearly set out in the Corporate Plan along with securing best value. The emerging Housing Strategy also highlights the need for additional affordable housing in the district.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Whilst consultation on these proposals has been undertaken with a range of potential partners and agencies and internally within the Council, there has been no wider public consultation at this stage. Consultation on each of the individual parcels of land will also be carried out as part of the planning process.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are a variety of legal aspects associated with this programme of work. Advice has been sought internally from the 3C Legal Service and Freeths have also been appointed to provide external legal advice which has been sought on the approach to date and in producing this paper.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Finalising the arrangements with Longhurst Housing Group will require Council resources and additional resources will be required to bring forward planning applications and assess the sites, consultation etc. How these costs are managed, including linking to “cost of sales” and cashflowed will need to be developed and finalised with the Finance department and Longhurst Housing Group.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 10.1 Increasing the level of affordable housing in the district is a key priority for the Council. This paper brings forward the opportunity to develop some of the land that the Council owns to achieve this ambition.
- 10.2 After exploring a range of delivery options and both informal and formal work to test the possible interest from registered providers a preferred provider has been identified.

11. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

(Part 2) Appendix 1 – Assessment and Selection of Housing Delivery Option and Housing Delivery Partner.

(Part 2) Appendix 2 – Shortlist of HDC sites

(Part 2) Appendix 3 – Bid Assessment Summary

(Part 2) Appendix 4 – Detailed Deliverability / Quality Scores

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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