



A meeting of the **CABINET** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **TUESDAY, 15 JULY 2025** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

AGENDA

APOLOGIES

1. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 10)

- (a) To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2025; and
- (b) To correct the minutes of the 15 May 2025 meeting – Minute Number 3 - to reflect that Councillor S A Howell was appointed as the Executive Councillor for Communities, Health and Leisure.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388169

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, other registerable and non-registerable interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

Contact Officer: Democratic Services - (01480) 388169

3. REGENERATION OPPORTUNITIES REPORT (Pages 11 - 38)

To receive a report seeking Cabinet approval to move forward to the next stages with a regeneration partnership with Capital and Centric (C&C) relating to sites within the Market Towns.

Executive Councillor: S Wakeford.

Contact Officer: P Scott - 07874 887465

4. INCREASING AFFORDABLE HOUSING - INSPIRED SOLUTIONS (Pages 39 - 88)

To receive a report presenting the proposal to work alongside Inspired Solutions to deliver various development sites across Huntingdonshire to support housing delivery, in particular affordable housing responding to housing need.

Executive Councillor: S Wakeford.

Contact Officer: P Scott - 07874 887465

5. ONE LEISURE INDEPENDENT REVIEW UPDATE (Pages 89 - 202)

To receive a report presenting an update on all of the recommendations illustrated in the Independent Review and to close out that particular action from the original report dated 19 March 2024.

Executive Councillor: S Howell

Contact Officer: G Holland - (01480) 388157

6. REVISED CLIMATE ACTION PLAN (Pages 203 - 246)

To receive a report presenting the ongoing progress made towards achieving a carbon net zero Council by 2040, as set out in the Council's Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

Executive Councillor: L Davenport-Ray.

Contact Officer: H Robinson - (01480) 388388

7. HUNTINGDONSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY (Pages 247 - 292)

To receive a report presenting the refreshed Economic Growth Strategy (EGS).

Executive Councillor: S Wakeford. –

Contact Officer: R Tomlin - (01480) 388534

8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To resolve –

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).

9. 3C SHARED SERVICES PARTNERSHIP RENEWAL AGREEMENT (Pages 293 - 352)

To receive a report presenting the case for renewing the agreement of the shared service for the provision of Building Control, ICT and Legal.

Executive Councillor: L Davenport-Ray.

Contact Officer: J Taylor - (01480) 388119

7 day of July 2025

Michelle Sacks

Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and other Registerable and Non-Registerable Interests.

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

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Please contact Democratic Services, Tel No: (01480) 388169 / e-mail: Democratic.Services@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 Committee/Panel.

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

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the [District Council's website](#).

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 17 June 2025

PRESENT: Councillor S J Conboy – Chair.

Councillors L Davenport-Ray, S W Ferguson, J E Harvey, S A Howell, J E Kerr, B A Mickelburgh, T D Sanderson and S Wakeford.

12 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15th May 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

13 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

14 GREAT STAUGHTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION OUTCOME AND PROGRESSION TO REFERENDUM

A report by the Planning Policy Team Leader was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which sought agreement to act upon the Examiner's report into the Great Staughton Neighbourhood Plan leading to a referendum on whether or not it should be brought into force as part of the statutory development plan. It also set out a timetable for this process.

Whilst setting out the report, the Executive Councillor for Planning commented that Great Staughton Parish Council had been very proactive and transparent with the local community as part of this process.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet agreed that the District Council should act upon the Examiner's report to accept the recommended modifications and progress the neighbourhood plan to referendum.

15 DISCRETIONARY CHARGES IN PLANNING INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

A report by the Head of Planning, Infrastructure & Public Protection was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) explaining the reasons for reviewing and implementing changes to discretionary Charges in Planning, Infrastructure and Public Protection, focusing on enhancing service delivery, covering rising operational costs, reacting to national government changes and ensuring the sustainability of the services

In setting out the report, the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources referred to the comments made by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth), particularly in relation to their concerns regarding the wording of recommendation B. He noted that the Panel were widely in favour of the proposal but agreed with their recommendation that the wording of recommendation B needed to clarify that the delegated authority would be until the end of the current financial year. However, with regards to the Panel's recommendation to extend the delegation to the Shadow Executive Councillors for Planning & Finance, he commented that this was not something recognised by the Constitution. As such, he was nervous about acknowledging that which did not exist Constitutionally. Although he had no problem with Councillors keeping an eye on the governance checks and balances, proceeding via the method of involving Shadow Cabinet within that delegation was not accepted.

Similarly, the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing agreed and stated that informal discussions or briefings behind the scenes in the usual way would give Scrutiny colleagues some reassurance.

A question was raised by the Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation and Workforce regarding whether the views of developers had been sought with regards to the charges proposed to be introduced. Furthermore, she asked that if the approval was for one year, whether there would opportunity after that to go back again to developers to gauge their thoughts.

In response, the Executive Councillor for Planning was happy to take that back to the Planning Department to seek clarification. The Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources stated that this would fall into the normal Fees and Charges schedule, and during the course of the normal budget round, if there were lots of pushback or concerns, although this was unlikely, they would appear in the Fees and Charges.

The Cabinet agreed that the wording of recommendation B in the report should be amended to reflect that the delegated authority was for the current financial year, and it was

RESOLVED

- (a) the contents of the report be noted;
- (b) that the Council be recommended to approve the review of Discretionary Charges within Planning, Infrastructure and Public Protection, and authority be delegated to the Head of Planning, Infrastructure and Public Protection, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources, to implement changes; and
- (c) that the Council be recommended to delegate authority to the Head of Planning, Infrastructure and Public Protection, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources, to undertake the following, for the current financial year
 - i. Introduction of new fees.
 - ii. Modification of existing fees.

- iii. Updating/adjusting of fees.
- iv. Waiving of fees.

16 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2025/26

A report by the Head of Policy, Performance & Emergency Planning was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which presented the targets and tolerances for the key performance indicators against which the performance of the Council's services would be monitored. The indicators were agreed by Cabinet on 15th April 2025 as part of the Corporate Plan refresh.

In setting out the report, the Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance noted the comments from the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth), particularly that they were highly supportive of these targets and grateful they had been listened to, and that the changes they had suggested in April had been incorporated into the Performance Indicators.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the proposed target and tolerances for the key performance indicators 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 1 be endorsed; and
- (b) that the Council be recommended to approve the proposed target and tolerances for the key performance indicators 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 1.

17 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT, QUARTER 4 2024/25

A report by the Head of Policy, Performance & Emergency Planning was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which presented an update on the progress of the Corporate Plan Actions and Corporate Performance Indicators during Quarter 4 (January to March 2025).

In setting out the report, the Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance stated that the Council was making very strong, measurable progress against its goals, which was a reflection of the hard work, dedication and focus of officers and teams across the Council. Furthermore, he thanked all officers who had contributed to that success.

He noted the comments made by the Overview & Scrutiny (Performance & Growth), particularly their concerns around the bin collection statistics. He responded that difficulties had been faced with regards to losing a number of highly experienced operatives, however if the numbers were compared with most authorities in the country, the Council had still done a very good job. It had been a single less than perfect year from a service that consistently delivered very good results.

Additionally, he explained that much of the Panel's concern around food waste would be rectified in the new year when the weekly food waste collection team would be introduced.

The Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources similarly commented that the average number of missed bins compared to peer Council's were on average 47% better, and additionally the financial performance from the waste collection point of view was very strong.

In response to a comment from the Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation and Workforce, the Cabinet agreed to think how the report and the performance of contracts was presented moving forward, to help residents better recognise and understand the performance of the Council's projects. Doing so would allow the Council to better communicate this information to the public, but also allowed Members to recognise the complexity and multi layered elements of some of the areas which were contained within a single red/amber/green format.

The Leader, on behalf of the Cabinet, thanked all of the staff involved for their achievement and that they should be proud of their accomplishments.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet considered and commented on progress and performance during Quarter 4, as summarised in the Corporate Performance Report attached and detailed in Appendices A, B, C and D.

18 FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT - PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2024/25

A report by the Corporate Director – Finance & Resources was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing details of the Council's provisional outturn for 2024/2025.

Having set out the report, the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources made reference to the comments from the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth). He responded that the Council had invested and given money to services that made them perform better, making them more effective which in the longer run was cheaper. He cited the examples of One Leisure who had made a surplus for the first time, which was because the Council had invested in it; St Ives Indoor Centre which was generating a third of its own electricity from the solar canopy, which was a big cost saving and which would not have happened without investing the time and effort in to the Grant; and Sawtry Swimming Pool. He concluded that the fact there had been a surplus was because the Council had been pro-active and forward thinking.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet considered and commented on the following -

- the revenue financial performance for the financial year 2024/25, as detailed in Appendix 1 and summarised in paragraph 3.2;

- the capital financial performance for the financial year 2024/25, as detailed in Appendix 2 and summarised in paragraph 3.3; and
- the requested rephrasing of capital budgets from 2024/25 to 2025/26 as detailed in Appendix 2.

19 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2024/25

A report by the Head of Finance was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing an update on the Council's treasury management activity during 2024/25, including investment and borrowing activity and treasury performance.

The Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources drew attention to the comments from the Overview & Scrutiny Panel and similarly commended how readable the report was.

He also made reference to a response to a question put to the Financial and Treasury Accountant during the Overview & Scrutiny Panel, which was that with DMO where it was, and with a lot of the Council's money being in there and outperforming the money market he was comfortable with the status. Accordingly, the Cabinet were particularly pleased to note that the Financial and Treasury Accountant was equally content.

The Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources further commended the professionalism and quality of the team and the work they were doing.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet considered and commented on the treasury management performance for 2024/25 and recommends the report to Council for consideration.

20 HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP MINUTES

The Cabinet has received and noted the Minutes of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group meetings held on 2nd April 2025 and 25th April 2025.

Chair

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Public

Key Decision – Yes

* Delete as applicable

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Regeneration Opportunities Report
Meeting/Date:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Performance and Growth) 8 July 2025 Cabinet 15 July 2025
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing – Cllr Sam Wakeford
Report by:	Head of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Delivery
Ward(s) affected:	Various – specific wards unknown at this time.

Executive Summary

This is a report to seek Cabinet approval to move forward to the next stages with a regeneration partnership with Capital and Centric (C&C) relating to sites within the Market Towns. This project seeks to bring forward economic and housing led opportunities which will contribute positively and create new homes, jobs and other benefits.

Recommendations:

Officers are seeking Cabinet approval:

- To support Officers identifying and working up proposals for regeneration opportunities in the Market Towns, which could be brought forward for development in conjunction with C&C as a private sector partner – noting the benefits of the C&C operating model as listed within the appendix to this report.
- Endorse the principle of working with C&C as a partner to develop and potentially deliver identified proposals – noting the appointment via a Direct Award from the 'Bloom' Framework – and based on the advice of the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151) advice supports the use of funding from Reserves to work up proposals to enable consideration of more detailed proposals.
- To endorse Officers proceeding to undertake engagement with stakeholders relating to any identified opportunities and potential developments as part of business case development.
- To support the principle of Officers engaging in efforts to acquire land and buildings in connection with the principle of regeneration in the Market

Towns, where this would align with the principles of delivering economic or housing led regeneration.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Following the Council's attendance at UKREiiF in 2024 with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, (CPCA) discussions commenced with C&C about the opportunity for regeneration opportunities within Huntingdonshire's Market Towns.
- 1.2 The Council is already delivering a number of regeneration schemes throughout the Market Towns under the Market Towns Programme, the main element of this work has focussed on St Neots, following the allocation of Future High Streets Funding, which enabled further funding to be secured from the CPCA and Highways England. Whilst these schemes are aiming to bring significant change to the towns, the Council believes that we can do more and is looking to partner with suitably qualified and experienced regeneration specialists.
- 1.3 C&C are property developers based in Manchester and responsible for some of the most innovative and exciting new developments in the City, as well as developments under way in Stockport, Stoke-on Trent and Newcastle under Lyme. They are experienced in an engagement led design/development approach, and work regularly with Homes England to secure funding and investment. A particular characteristic of C&C is that once construction and fit out of a development has been completed, they continue to manage the development, as owners, to ensure it remains successful in terms of end user experience and satisfaction. C&C believe in creating sustainable change not just in the communities they create but also in the areas that they work in. They consider themselves to be a Social Value Developer, examples of this are a homeless initiative called Embassy Village that supports vulnerable individuals with homes and wraparound support, a further example is the Regeneration Brainery a mentoring programme to support young people from disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds and have helped over 5,000 people to date. This approach also enables them to bring forward innovative approaches to securing economic outcomes for example supporting community cafes, pop-up food outlets, and loss-leading approaches where they deliver place benefits and outcomes.
- 1.4 The C&C approach, whereby they retain ownership and management of developments once completed has a significant positive impact for the Council in terms of both financial and operational risk:
 - The model requires only short-term financing by the Council, rather than long term borrowing. This reduces interest costs from c.40 years to 2-3 years; this model reduces potential exposure for the Council in respect of funding and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) exposure. Additionally, this model reduces end risks relating to future ownership of the completed development, as the asset would transfer ownership once complete.

- The model shifts the ongoing risk of maintaining occupancy of the finished development away from the Council and onto the operator.
- 1.5 Further information on this proposal from C&C is included as an appendix at the end of this report. At this stage it is not possible to advise on particular sites or specific opportunities (and in any event this would need to be treated with commercial confidentiality in mind), save to say that Officers and C&C have identified a number of potential locations within our Market Towns.
- 1.6 Officers have undertaken a significant degree of due diligence overtime since first connecting with C&C. This has included Officer and Member visits to their offices and existing schemes; statutory Officer engagement with counterparts at other Councils working with C&C; and consideration of initial proposals for a series of identified sites. Member feedback has been positive. Officers also note that Homes England see C&C as a credible partner, and have recently appointed them on the town centre proposals for Northstowe. We are also aware that C&C are in discussions with other Councils within our region.

2. ANALYSIS

- 2.1 This is a new project that Officers are proposing should be taken forward. The potential to further demonstrate place leadership through a combination of 'do, enable and influence' in respect of regeneration projects in our Market Towns would align with our Corporate Plan aims; Place Strategy; and would serve as an extension of the established Market Towns Programme. Significantly, such opportunities would have the potential to create jobs, secure investment, provide homes, revitalise parts of our towns, and create new places that our communities and businesses can be proud of. There are various opportunities within our Town Centres which represent potential chances to address the current and historic challenges they have faced and bring forward investment.
- 2.2 A series of initial proposals have been identified and worked up in concept to demonstrate credibility. Officers consider that these should be developed further based on the RIBA approach and Gateway approach set out by C&C. This does not necessarily mean that the Council is committed to taking forward any or all of the sites at this stage, that will be subject for later decisions. It does not also rule in or out any other opportunities, and Officers consider it would be appropriate for Members to consider supporting the principle of the Council looking at further asset acquisitions (where appropriate) where they would support regeneration potential or be of benefit to identified sites. It should also be noted that C&C have advised that they would be in a position to support such acquisitions, or indeed work alongside the Council to secure any identified land or buildings themselves where it would be of benefit to the parties and the project aims – their experience and network in this space is also considered to be a benefit.
- 2.3 Officers are confident that the model proposed by C&C is a good fit with the Councils objectives as set out within the Corporate Plan and Place

Strategy. We are also heartened to note that C&C have been appointed by Homes England within the region, to bring forward development at Northstowe.

- 2.4 We note that C&C want to work with the Council as a partner of choice due to the alignment between our Place Strategy objectives, and C&C's own strategic aims. They are also keen to work with us as an ambitious, pro-growth location, and see the potential to unlock some of the challenges faced by our Market Towns. This is demonstrated by their continued dialogue with us over a period of many months, their responsiveness to questions and queries, and ability to provide answers and solutions to challenges we have posed.
- 2.5 C&C are committed to engagement, and understanding of the challenges faced by regeneration schemes in urban contexts – particularly those involving town centres. Examples include the inclusion of social spaces within developments, or the provision of makers-markets or 'loss leading' uses that are necessary to ensure creation of high quality places and delivering beneficial outcomes such as jobs and local spend. This is a good fit with the Councils preferred approach to development. They are also experienced in looking at challenging or difficult sites; with a flexible and solution-focused outlook.
- 2.6 It is considered that their ability to deliver at scale, at pace, and to a high standard, are all positive traits which are exemplified by their track record. They place a significant emphasis on creation of place, and seeking to ensure vibrant and active schemes; that are shaped by the community and create new places people want to be.
- 2.7 The Council has considered the procurement route for this project, and have identified a pathway which allows us to work with them in a compliant way. Initially this will be via a Direct Award from the Bloom Framework to enable proposals to be worked up to more detailed business cases. This is with a view to a future approval via the Pagabo Framework in 2026 (C&C are not on the Pagabo framework in our area - although they are for other parts of the Country). They expect to be on Pagabo in our area in 2026.
- 2.8 Whilst the C&C model envisages taking developments through to completion and then purchasing the completed development and assuming the lead role in managing the operation of the development, as with all developments, there are a series of gateways through which schemes must pass to assure their viability.
- 2.9 These are based upon agreements through the Bloom and Pagabo Framework and once each stage is complete a subsequent agreement is signed for the next stage of the project development:
 - Once feasibility is assessed then a new agreement to take the scheme up to planning permission and a cost envelope are obtained.

- Upon receipt of planning permission, the final construction drawings are produced, and a contract sum is agreed.
 - Construction will then commence to an agreed plan / design and cost.
- 2.3 At this stage, the commitment to C&C extends only to Stage 1 after which the Council would need to take a formal decision to progress to Stage 2 and incur the expenses for full planning drawings and submission to gather planning approval and new target cost. The final decision on whether or not to commit to borrow and develop is then taken before the final Stage 3.
- 2.4 A critical part of this final stage would be determining which of the elements would remain in Council ownership, and which would be bought by C&C. Critically, the model which involves C&C purchasing the end development is highly significant in terms of the Council's approach to funding potential schemes. This helps to reduce risk exposure both in terms of the necessary financial implications, but also in securing an end owner of the asset. Thus it helps to mitigate some of the traditional challenges with Council-led regeneration projects. It is considered that based on the due diligence to date, C&C are a credible partner, and this is reinforced by their recent appointment by Homes England in the region. Throughout, the Council and C&C would also work to leverage other funding opportunities through bodies such as Homes England where this would be of benefit to specific projects

As a result of the above, it is recommended that a series of in principle decisions are made to enable further, more detailed work to be undertaken, with a view to creating a more formalised partnership with C&C and to actively pursue development opportunities.

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS

- 4.1 It will be necessary for the Council to consider the risks at each relevant stage of the project and to monitor them on a regular basis. A thorough Risk Assessment will be undertaken for the project and this will be included as part of the next update on the scheme.
- 4.2 On a high level basis, there are no significant risks which cannot be managed or mitigated which would in turn pose a concern in relation to the recommendations of this report.

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

- 5.1 The delivery of Regeneration Schemes is aligned with “Priority 2 Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations through Forward Thinking Economic Growth and Improving Housing” it is expected that these schemes will not only drive economic benefits for the District but will support the Councils aim of increasing housing supply and support our key performance indicators in number of homes delivered.
- 5.2 The delivery of this project will also support the Council’s Place Strategy, specifically the Pride in Place and Inclusive Economy journeys through the regeneration of our Market Towns and the delivery of new homes. It will also support the Council’s Housing Strategy in the delivery of both market and affordable housing and the Economic Growth Strategy by encouraging new businesses into the area and supporting existing companies to thrive.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This project will contain multiple elements where legal advice and guidance is required as part of delivery. Officers have appointed Devello Group to support the Council’s Legal team to ensure appropriate legal oversight and advice is provided when relevant including the appointment of specialist to support the Council’s decision making.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This project will be resourced by the Council’s Regeneration Team, with support from the Corporate Director of Place and Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151). As and when required other specialist consultants including legal and property professionals will be required to support decision making.
- 7.2 The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151) has confirmed that they are in agreement with the use of reserves to fund the initial work identified, with recognition that future decisions will be required once detailed business cases are available. These can be appraised on a case by case basis. Further, there is recognition that if projects are taken forward, they can be built in to the Councils Capital Programme at the appropriate time through budget setting etc.

8. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 8.1 The delivery of this project will support the Council’s aims under the Priority 2 of the Corporate Plan, as well as wider objectives as set out in the report.

9. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Capital and Centric additional information

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Pam Scott, Head of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Delivery
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Email: pamela.scott@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE BUSINESS CASE.

CAPITAL&CENTRIC

A photograph of a modern urban courtyard. In the foreground, a blue narrowboat named 'Firefly' is docked in a canal. The boat has white trim and a small cabin. Behind the boat is a paved courtyard area with some greenery and a small tree. In the background, there are several buildings: a modern building with large windows and a curved roof on the left, a multi-story brick building in the center, and another brick building on the right. The text 'WE ARE SOCIAL MISSION DEVELOPERS' is overlaid in large white letters. A small 'KAMPUS' logo is visible in the top right corner.

WE ARE SOCIAL MISSION DEVELOPERS

INTRODUCTION.

Huntingdonshire District Council ('HDC') are looking to appoint Capital&Centric ('C&C') as development partner to bring forward place making regeneration in the towns of Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neotts.

The redevelopment of the towns provides an incredible opportunity to act as a catalyst for, and a symbol of the region's renaissance.

Like all towns across the UK, all three have seen a decline in their high street and a shift in population demographics caused by several key issues including internet shopping, Covid and high inflation. The impact of these seismic macroeconomic changes has not been as devastating in St Ives, St Neotts and Huntingdon as other towns across the UK, but it has still led to empty retail units, a lack of quality operators and a reduction in footfall leading to a need to make a change. There has also been a lack of quality development in the towns themselves which has led to a failure to attract young graduates and economically active people who will form the next waves of long terms residents in the towns.

The developments Capital&Centric bring forward will be pivotal in the resurgence of the town centres, providing a mix of uses, all tied together by new verdant public spaces. Anchored by aspirational residential accommodation and an independent led commercial offer, the proposals will extend the towns appeal as a place to live and visit, creating jobs and supporting local businesses.

Further still, our plans will make a new market in all three towns, proving that developments of this nature can be delivered in regional market towns, which will unlock inward investment and bring forward the development of other key sites.

Through our focus on award winning architecture and community curation, we will widen the demographic of the town centres, drawing in graduates and young professionals who are currently leaving the towns and choosing not to settle there. With a focus on luring highly skilled and educated workers from the Oxford Cambridge tech corridor, we will create homes and active ground floors full of market leading operators that will bring this new wave of resident into the towns.

By bringing national press coverage to the area, we will raise the profile and bring new visitors, and lure back existing residents, raising the discretionary spend and bolstering the economy.



INTRODUCTION.

As with all C&C developments, our focus on social impact will ensure that we leave a lasting positive legacy for the people of St Ives, St Neotts and Huntingdon.

C&C have a proven track record of delivering market leading and multi award winning regeneration projects, creating places people want to live, work and play, the detail of which can be found in the corporate track record document in appendix A which is appended to this document.

The Business Plan aims to address three key points which are as follows:

- **Why is the development needed?**
- **How would the proposed development address these needs?**
- **How do we deliver the project**



THE OPPORTUNITY.

WHY IS THE DEVELOPMENT NEEDED?

C&C have for some time been conscious that, unlike core locations such as central Manchester, Birmingham and London, smaller towns and cities struggle to attract developers and funders willing to deliver high quality, high density urban homes. Part of the reason for this is that often the economics simply do not always work. However, there is also a perception, particularly from London or internationally based funds, that they don't want to invest in smaller market towns as they don't understand the market or see how they will obtain critical mass, and hence do not see them as attractive a place to invest in.

However, Huntingdonshire is a region with so many positives, including existing affluence, wonderful towns and villages and great connectivity to London and surrounding cities like Peterborough and Cambridge. It is perfectly placed to capitalise on these assets to maximise the potential of the towns and wider region.

Town centres are going through rapid change, large retail footprints are no longer required, and this is a trend that is not going to be reversed. In light of this, traditional town centres need to find a new purpose, and they need to find ways of encouraging residents back into them in order to support remaining and new retailers, but also to support the switch to leisure and cultural offerings.

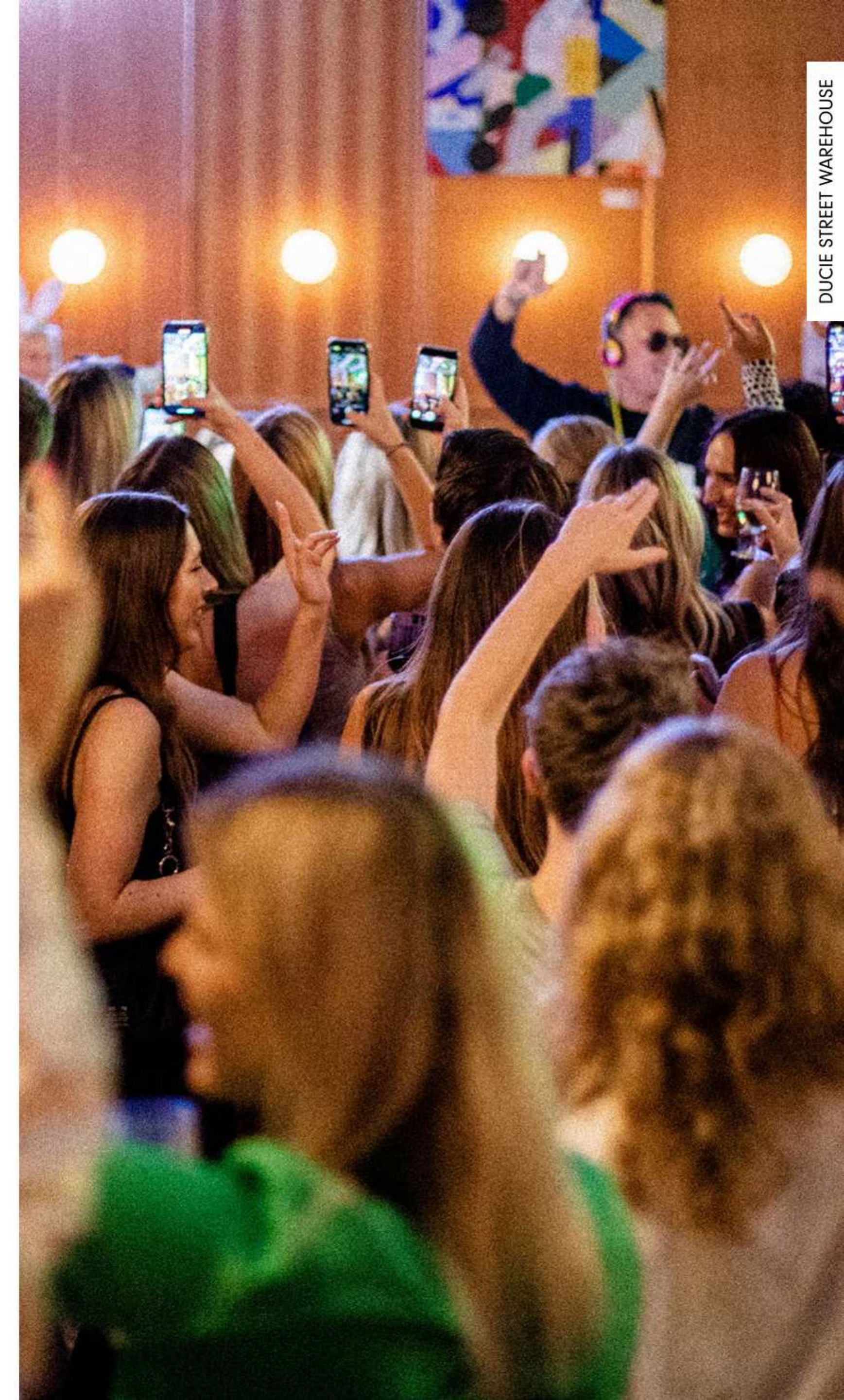
Progressive towns and cities are driving policies forward that deliver homes and businesses right back into the heart of these centres. It will be the increased footfall and dwell time both during the daytime and evening that results from these policies, that will underpin the future of their traditional hearts, securing the amenities that we need from our built-up areas.

We need to provide a mix of tenure in our towns and in Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neotts' case, this should also include a high-quality rental product. People are marrying and often buying homes later in life. The average age of a first-time buyer in the UK is now 34 years old, which is 4 years older than in 2018. Market towns such as these need to accommodate this demographic and attract them to start off their adult lives in the town itself, instead of perhaps for example being tempted to move to Cambridge or Peterborough.

It's harder to attract these higher earners back to towns such as these three once they have already settled down and put down roots in other parts of the region or UK. Providing great quality rental accommodation will hopefully encourage a lot of residents to stay within the urban area, and in the coming years move to owner occupier developments and houses in the immediate surrounding areas. It will also encourage those with jobs in Cambridge and the wider tech corridor to move to and put down roots in the region.

Each year thousands of graduates from Cambridge University and other academic institutions make a decision as to where to put down their roots, and our plan is to give them a reason to choose to do so in either St Ives, St Neotts or Huntingdon town centres. With each town bringing something a bit different, it provides the perfect opportunity to deliver a range of schemes that will appeal to a variety of people.

According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) over the last ten years, Huntingdonshire has seen an increase of 27.9% in the 65-74 age demographic bracket, and a decrease of 7.4% in those aged between 35-49. Developments of this nature and calibre, will be instrumental in rebalancing this demographic shift and securing the long-term future of the region.



THE DESIGN APPROACH.

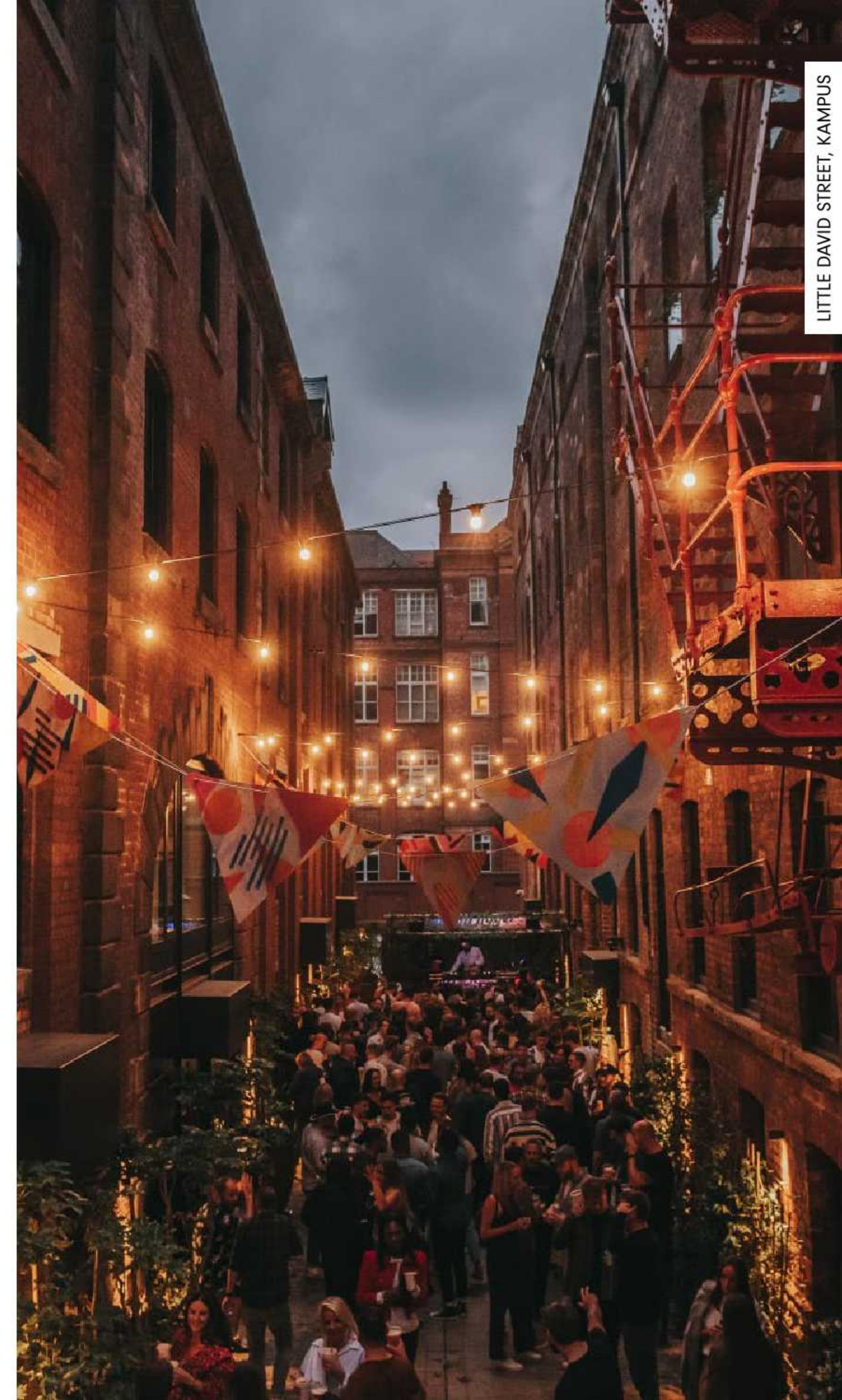
The key to this development is quality and appropriateness. Many towns and cities have been ruined by inappropriate and cheap development which, whilst it provides an initial buzz, quickly leaves the place in no better position, in fact arguably worse as poor quality buildings stand for decades to come.

This is particularly the case with the fractional overseas investor led residential model which, by its very structure, encourages extensive value engineering once the homes are sold, meaning the scheme delivered is far poorer quality than the original proposals. Then once complete, as landlords never actually visit the asset, they tend not to be managed as well, and so visually deteriorate over time.

However, our approach is wholly different, and we want to ensure that these developments stand for decades to come as a testament to what high quality development can do for a town, so the fractional sales model is something we will never employ. Every residential development we deliver, will either be exclusively for sale to owner occupiers, or institutional Build to Rent which we will retain ownership and control over, ensuring they're well maintained long into the future.

All three towns have amazing historic assets and are all very attractive market towns. Our plans will be sympathetic to the towns history while also meeting our brief of aspirational, award-winning architecture. We hold a core principle that all public realms should be as well designed and delivered as the private realm, and this equality of design extends geographically too, so that any development we deliver in Huntingdonshire is of exactly the same calibre that we would deliver in Birmingham or Manchester city centre.

Placemaking is at the heart of everything we do, and through our in-house marketing and animation expertise, we'll ensure that not only do our developments look fantastic, but there's also always a new reason for people to come into the town centre to enjoy them.



LITTLE DAVID STREET, KEMPUS

OUR TRACK RECORD.

Of course, all of this is easy to talk about, it's the seeing it through that is more difficult. But we're doing this elsewhere on developments that are either completed or coming up to completion. We've appended a document in appendix A that summarises C&C's track record with photographs and images of what we're creating elsewhere.

At Tempest, we created Liverpool's first roof top garden for office workers in the city. Doubling as a bar and event space on warmer evenings, it also provides outdoor space for our office residents to enjoy free fitness classes or corporate cinema nights whilst the BBQ is cooking away in the background.

We also took the decision to invest our own money to fit out the top floor of the building as a co-working space for a charity, who previously hadn't expanded outside of London. As part of their operation, they provide 30% of their desks free of charge to people from disadvantaged backgrounds, in order to encourage a wider participation in start-ups. Out of this space, businesses have grown which are now worth over £800m, including the sportswear brand Castore.

At Crusader Mill, we made the bold decision to only sell the 201 loft apartments in that development to owner occupiers as we'd noticed that the majority of Rightmove adverts for the city at the time were excluding them in favour of investors. We did the exact opposite of the market, and as a result ended up with the first queue of buyers seen in the city for a decade, all waiting to acquire a unit in a building that wouldn't be ready for two years.

In order to achieve this, we realised that owner occupiers wouldn't be able to purchase an apartment off plan unless they were able

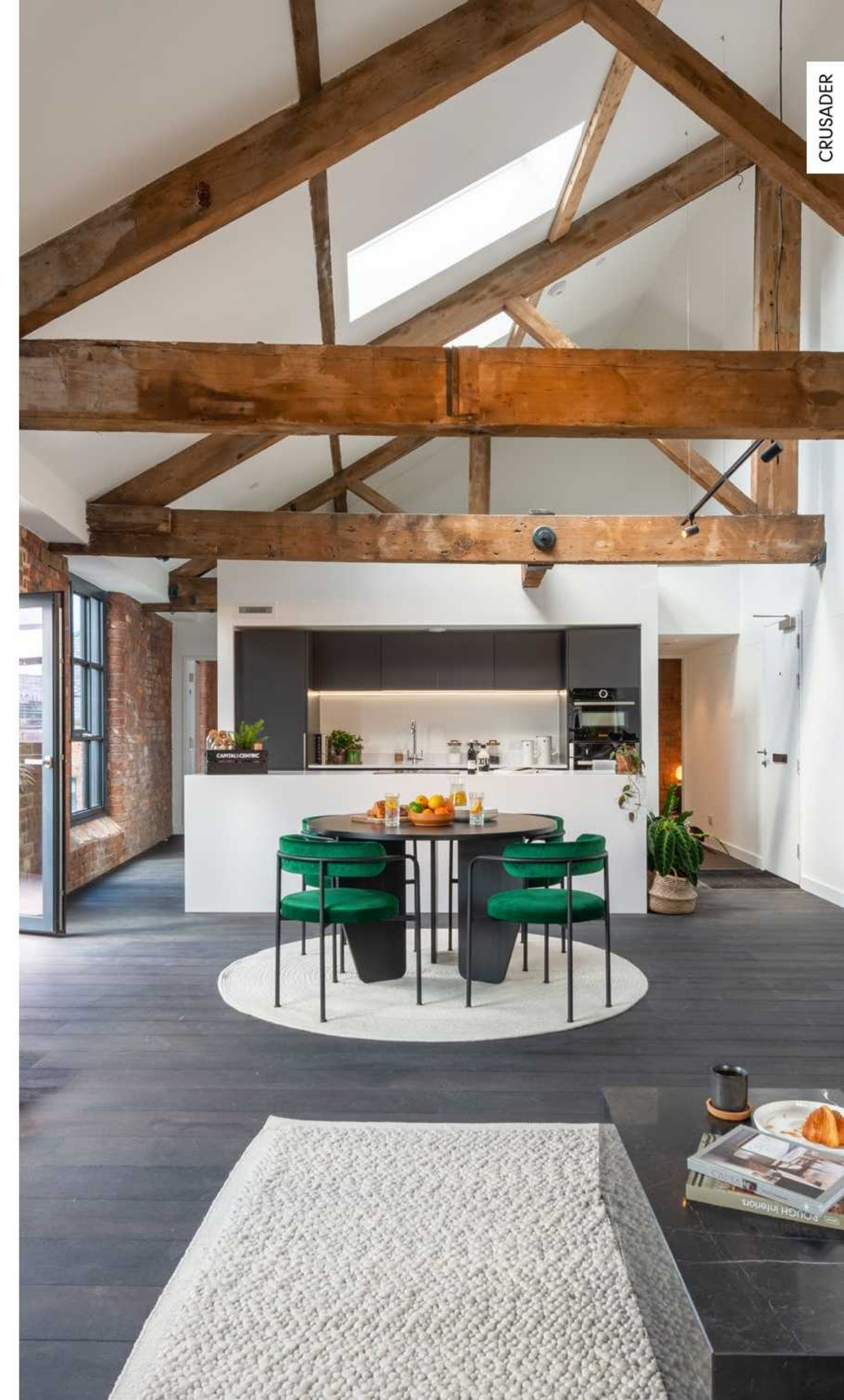
to view the finished product, so we created a full virtual reality experience in which potential purchasers could view the finished scheme, with its exposed brick walls and timber beams.

Character is an increasingly valuable commodity in a market where so many new build apartment buildings are so uniform, and so in addition to exposing as many original features as possible, we also wrote and produced a book which educated our purchasers about the 200-year history of the building they would be living in.

In order to keep our purchasers emotionally invested in their purchase we repurposed a bunch of 200-year-old keys which we found when clearing the building out, and had a metalsmith turn them into Crusader keyfobs which we gave to all our purchasers.

Again at Crusader, instead of following the crowd and filling the courtyard with car parking spaces (despite the majority of city centre residents not needing to own a car!), we decided to create a verdant courtyard garden. Far more sustainable and far more in tune with what people need today.

At Kampus, a 500+ unit Build To Rent development, our residents have the choice of new build, a 1960s conversion or old 1800s shipping warehouses to live in. But they also all share another lush garden which has palms, giant tree ferns and other exotic plants, creating a mature oasis in the heart of the city. We've also retained the old 1960s brutalist concrete security cabin next to the canal as a pop-up restaurant and event space. The commercial offer focuses on independent bars, restaurants and bakeries making it destination that attracts visitors from throughout Manchester and further afield as well as providing amazing amenities for the residents.



RAISING THE PROFILE.

Consistently, our communities have featured in national media 'best places to live' guides, with our developments often seen as an anchor in the renaissance of a town or up-and-coming area. Our ability to play this catalytic role and put the national spotlight on local regeneration ambitions is a major strength.

Take our work in Sheffield, where we convinced an internationally renowned production company and Channel 4 to base their new primetime interior design show, despite previously considering other cities. The design series 'The Big Interiors Battle' aired in Spring 2023 and shone a spotlight on the historic Eyewitness Works and contestants got involved with local charities and small businesses as part of their weekly design challenges. All in all, it showed Sheffield as a vibrant place to build a life.

Our aim is to use the regeneration of these sites as a platform to shout about Huntingdonshire, further raising its profile, enabling the Council to secure greater support from central government, and draw in greater inward investment, thereby assisting the Council in achieving its regeneration objectives.

This type of development, and the funding structure which is laid out in this business case is a formula which has already been deployed to good effect in other towns. We have highlighted here two specific examples.



RELEVANT CASE STUDIES.

GOODS YARD, STOKE-ON-TRENT.

Goods Yard occupies a highly prominent location adjacent to Stoke-on-Trent Railway Station and the Trent & Mersey Canal in the heart of Stoke Town centre.

The development is a mixed-use scheme that will re-purpose a listed goods shed, and over one acre of brownfield land, to create a vibrant destination neighbourhood. The development comprises the following:

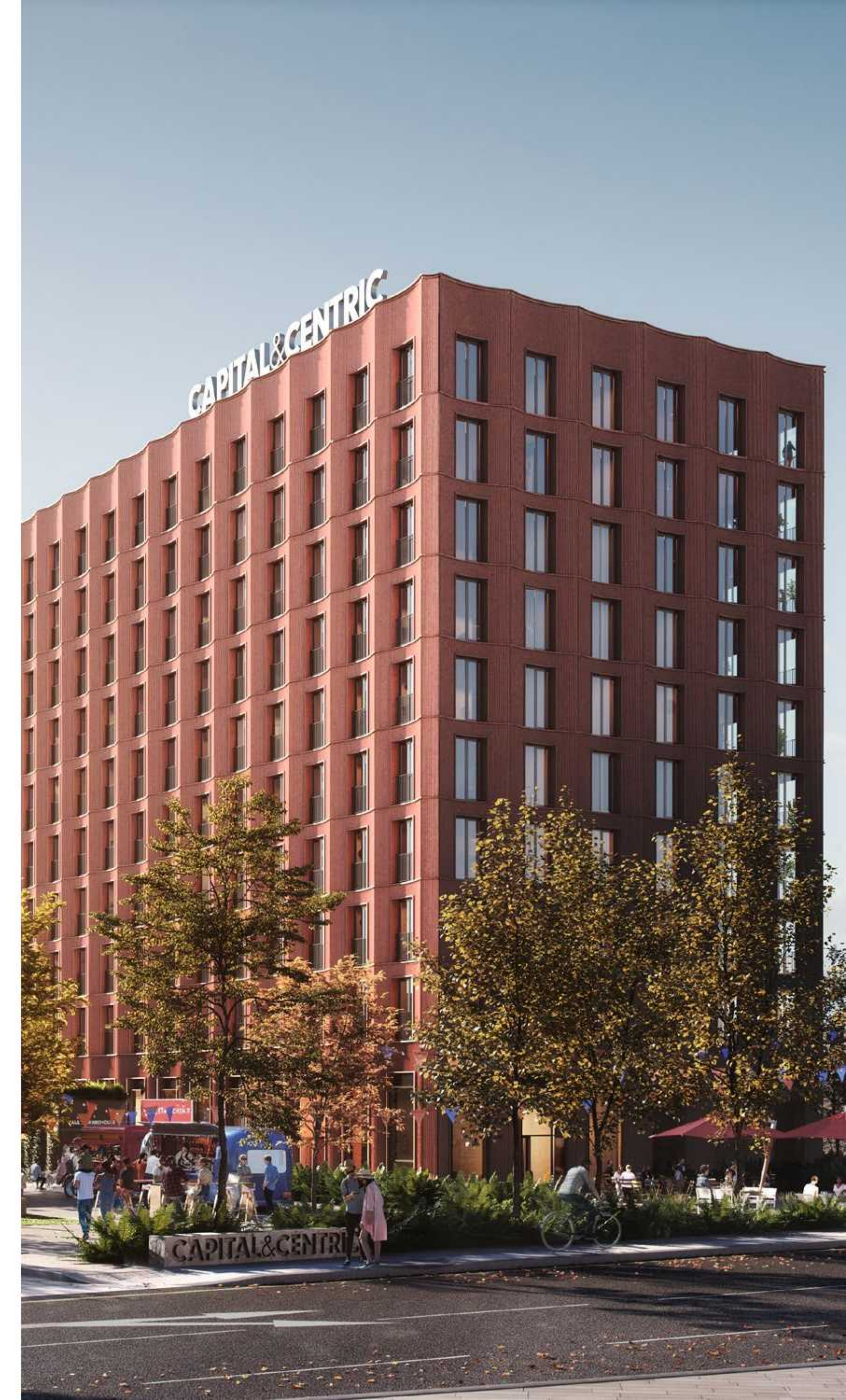
- **35,000sq.ft. of commercial and leisure space**
- **174 apartments**
- **20,000sq.ft. vaulted goods shed fronting onto the canal**
- **2,500sq.ft. signal box**
- **10,000sq.ft. new two-storey contemporary office building**
- **Half an acre of new public realm.**

Goods Yard will provide Stoke-on-Trent with an area they can be proud of, contributing to the enhancement of the local architecture, as well as creating a neighbourhood with real identity, one that nods to the city's rich heritage but writes a new, exciting chapter. A genuine community will be created with everything available to support a city centre lifestyle.

People calling the Goods Yard home will have shops, bars, cafes, businesses, and green outdoor spaces to meet up on their doorstep. The Goods Yard is a strategic priority for Stoke-on-Trent City Council, and accordingly the project was awarded £16m of levelling up funding in 2022.

As a result of this grant funding support, C&C is able to deliver a premium product which incorporates an industrial feel to apartments with exposed concrete soffits and exposed services, providing a 'New York loft' feel interior with generous floor to ceiling heights. The design of the Build To Rent building incorporates a strong historic link to Stoke-on-Trent's pottery heritage, from both an internal and external architectural perspective.

The development secured planning approval in April 2022, and construction began in September 2022, with Bowmer and Kirkland appointed to deliver the whole development under a JCT Design & Build contract.



RELEVANT CASE STUDIES.

WEIR MILL, STOCKPORT.

Weir Mill is a two-and-a-half acre site at the heart of Stockport town centre, home to a complex of dilapidated mill buildings and dissected by a Grade I listed railway viaduct. The site fronts onto the River Mersey and is just a two-minute walk to Stockport Interchange, which is on the direct West Coast Mainline between Manchester and London Euston. The buildings offer stunning original features, such as brick vault arches, cast-iron columns, and a vast expanse of bare brick, while the ground floor spills out directly onto the waterside. It is bounded to the west by the iconic brick viaduct – a truly prominent and iconic site for the town.

C&C is securing a future for the two historic textile mills, creating a new chapter in their story, and delivering 253 design-led new homes. The project will feature a mix of one, two and three-bedroom apartments across the mill conversion and new build block, providing real choice and diversity of product. Weir Mill will boast a tenants' lounge and private dining space, which will spill out onto a rooftop terrace, with such high-end amenity adding further significant value to each apartment.

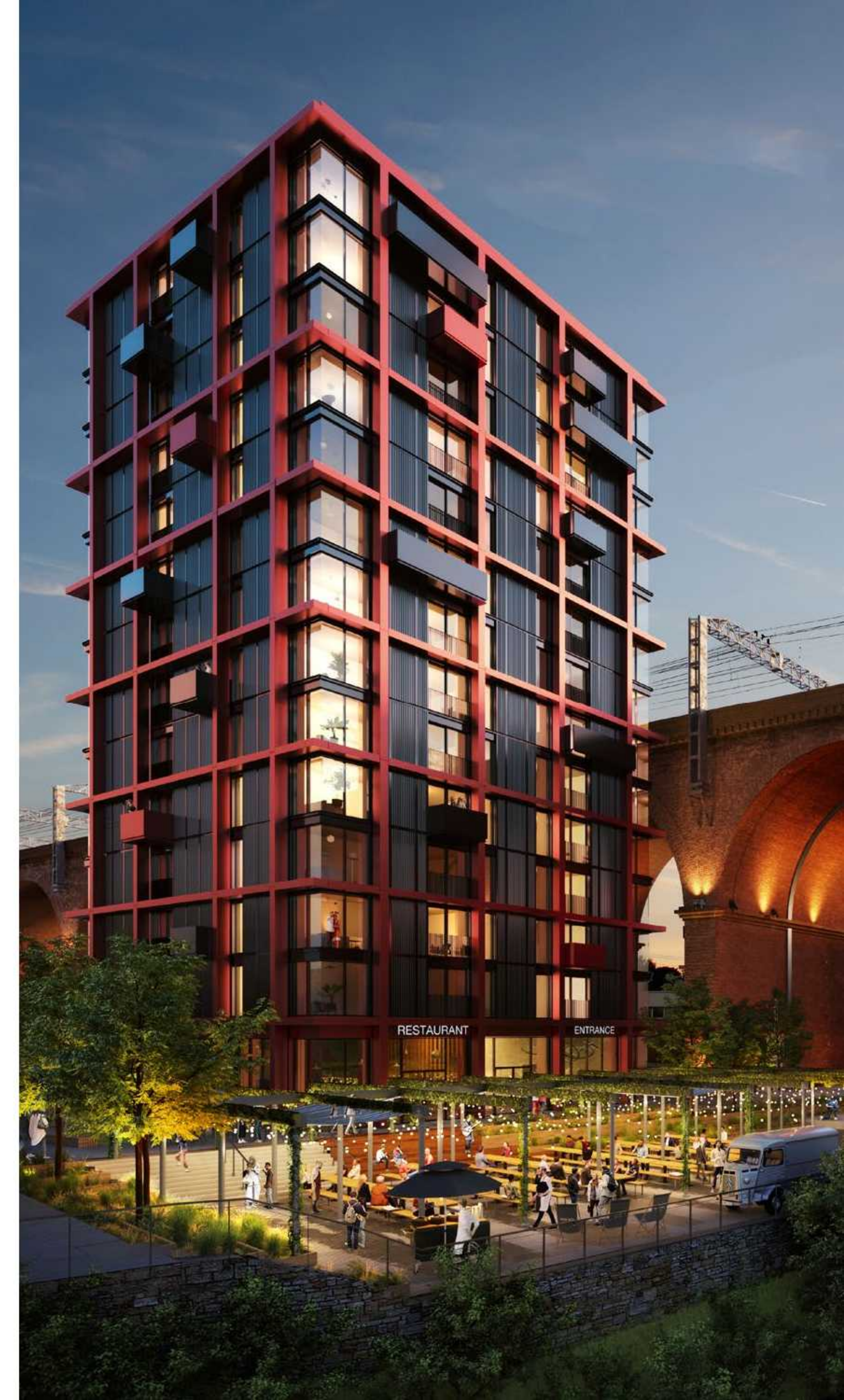
At ground level there will be 25,000sq.ft. of retail and leisure space, set around expansive public realm extending down onto the waterfront, which will be filled with the best local independents. C&C have already been approached by fantastic local companies who want to ensure they get in early. The public realm extends to over 60,000sq.ft. across three distinct areas:

- **Weavers Square, an animated public space that will house makers markets and other events to draw people into the neighbourhood**
- **Several large outdoor performance spaces underneath the viaduct arch, which will play host to live music and theatre**
- **A more intimate courtyard, with mature landscaping and secluded seating, offering residents a sheltered space away from the bustling Weavers Square.**

Weir Mill is a strategic priority for both the local authority, and also Homes England and GMCA who have collectively provided over £10m of grant funding.

The development secured planning approval in October 2021, and construction began in May 2022, with John Sisk and Son appointed to deliver the whole development under a JCT Design & Build contract.

Both the Goods Yard and Weir Mill are particularly relevant to Spode, as Capital&Centric has demonstrated expertise in revitalising large heritage assets. Through the restoration of these historic sites, they have been transformed into vibrant mixed-use developments, seamlessly blending residential, commercial, and community spaces. This approach not only preserves the character of these historic landmarks but also fosters regenerative placemaking, creating dynamic, sustainable environments that enhance the surrounding area, which is the fundamental objective of the Spode development.



HOW WE DELIVER.

Our vision is to create a development that compliments the surrounding area and integrates the surrounding historic assets and market town feel with phenomenal new buildings that change people's perceptions of the area. This is an exceptional opportunity to bring forward several transformational residential offers with vibrant, active and placemaking commercial space.

Through the proposed works we want to achieve the following:

- Page 29
- **Celebrate the existing assets in the towns including rivers, parks and heritage assets**
 - **Provide verdant landscaping within the town centres.**
 - **Develop exceptional architecture that changes perceptions of the market towns.**
 - **Bring new independent F&B operators into the towns and create a symbol of the resurgence of Huntingdonshire, as a place which is creating an aspirational future.**
 - **Provide a market leading F&B offer of independent operators to drive new visitors and capture additional discretionary spend.**
 - **Create an industry leading Built To Rent product, which not only draws institutional focus to the area, but also helps in reversing the brain drain and attracting young professionals and graduates into the towns.**
 - **Create public spaces for local residents to enjoy.**

We envisage the development in all three towns being brought forward in two stages:

STAGE 1- PLANNING APPROVAL.

This stage involves creating a masterplan for the three sites taking the design to RIBA Stage 3 and a business plan for each. The two gateways are the submission of a pre-planning application followed by the second gateway of submission of a full planning application. We propose that to deliver this stage C&C will be appointed as development manager under the Bloom Framework as detailed later in this business case.

STAGE 2- PROJECT DELIVERY.

Design development for each of the three sites, through RIBA stage 4 to a fixed price building contract and project delivery. The stage involves three gateways, securing a fixed price building contract, practical completion of the projects and the project launch period prior to disposal.

FINANCIAL STRUCTURE.

We all acknowledge that there are financial challenges here as values in town centres in Huntingdonshire are generally lower than those of larger more established cities, despite building costs being broadly comparable.

The parties acknowledge therefore that innovative funding structures are needed with local government support, to overcome the lack of confidence from traditional funders. This also provides the comparable evidence that will allow future developments to obtain funding more easily.



HOW WE DELIVER.

The structure proposed here is for HDC to provide funding to allow C&C to develop the design to planning prior to appointing C&C as developer under a development agreement to further develop the design and deliver the projects.

SECURITY.

In all scenarios, HDC will have reliance on all work undertaken via collateral warranties and full control of the expenditure through a series of Gateways.

COSTS AND GATEWAYS.

All projects will be split into five key stages with a gateway at the end of each stage to enable HDC to review the status of the project and approve progression to the next stage.

This business case covers the work to the end of Gateway 2, the submission of a planning application. A full breakdown of all costs up to RIBA Stage 3 is summarised below.

The costs detailed below are a budget to be controlled by HBC to bring forward the design and planning application.

Gateway	Stage Description	Total
Gateway 1	RIBA Stage 1 Concept design	£1,000,000
Gateway 2	RIBA Stage 2 Planning design & submission	£1,000,000
Total		£2,000,000



HOW WE DELIVER.

GATEWAY 1 - CONCEPT DESIGN.

This includes the initial conceptual design work which reflects RIBA stage 1 and 2. Other costs including surveys, site investigations and a placemaking event. The output from this stage will be the submission of a pre-planning application.

GATEWAY 2 - PLANNING.

The planning stage allows the development of the detailed planning design of RIBA stage 3. During this stage the concept design will be developed to allow submission of a planning application.

GATEWAY 3 - DETAILED DESIGN AND PROCUREMENT.

This stage sees the development of detailed design including RIBA stage 4 to develop sufficient information to allow procurement of a fixed price design and build contract. The output at the end of the stage will be the completion of the Stage 4 design and the procurement of a main contractor.

GATEWAY 4 - PROJECT DELIVERY.

This stage is the delivery of the project following the appointment of the main contractor. It will see the development of the RIBA stage 5 design and the completion of the project ready for launch and occupation.

GATEWAY 5 - PROJECT LAUNCH.

The project launch period occurs following completion of the development until the project is stabilised, whereby 95% of the residential units are occupied and 50% of the commercial units. This will facilitate the acquisition of the scheme by the core fund.



THE PROPOSALS.

COUNCIL CONTROLS.

HDC would have complete control over the process and C&C will be required to pass through clear gateways before we can progress to the next stage. How those controls are managed and reported on is bespoke to the council, but we envisage the following measures will be put in place:

1. GATEWAYS.

We have shown two key Gateways under the appointment. These are key points in the project where C&C cannot continue to progress work until they have received formal approval from HDC that they are satisfied with the work completed. The gateways are explained in more detail earlier in this business case.

2. PROJECT BOARD.

We would look to set up a project board which would have key members of HDC team and progress would be reported on a regular basis to suit the council. Key decisions and progress would be reported.

3. WORKING GROUP.

C&C will work autonomous but would look to have in place a working group of relevant officers who would be able to input into the scheme and be provided with an update and an opportunity to influence the development.

4. FINANCIAL REPORTING.

C&C would provide monthly update reports which would include financial reporting against the budget.

The purpose of the above measures is to ensure HDC have control over the outputs from the development and to ensure the councils objectives are met. The agreement entered between the parties will allow the council to stop or terminate works during the process if macro conditions change and they no longer wish to continue with the schemes.



THE PROGRAMME.

Assuming C&C are appointed by May 2025, we have assumed a 10-month programme to complete stage 1 and submit a planning application. The current programme is as follows:

Gateway	Start	End	Months
Gateway 1 - pre-ap	Aug 2025	Dec 2025	5
Gateway 2 - planning	Jan 2026	May 2026	5

STRATEGIC PLAN.

The plan is to develop a best-in-class placemaking development that re-energises the three towns with market leading animation to the ground floor that encourages local residents and new visitors into each town. This will be supported with high quality rental accommodation that rejuvenates the towns economies. It will be a prestigious address which will exceed market rents due to its reputation for high quality design, amenities, and location.

Our plans for the site will create ‘game changing schemes’ across Huntingdonshire that will set a new benchmark development in the region and drive the strategic growth of towns.

PLACEMAKING.

C&C will seek to partner with the best that the region has to offer to create a new destination in the town centres that will complement existing businesses and help attract more people to the towns.

The developments will maximise their potential and create a new commercial offer that will compete with those found in cities like Cambridge and Manchester.

A carefully considered management plan including events aimed at bringing amination to the sites and surrounding areas for the community and visitors to the towns, will ensure increased footfall to the area and catalyse the wider development and regeneration of Huntingdonshire.

ADVERTISING.

- **Full Strategy to be developed through design development and construction**
- **Marketing the schemes throughout the design phase to create a buzz – press releases, local interest, social media etc**
- **On-site branding showing the change to the region**
- **Meanwhile use**
- **Strategic partnerships – High quality local independent businesses**

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

C&C will provide a programme of Regeneration Brainery’s targeted primarily at the local schools and colleges of Huntingdonshire and the surrounding area. The Brainery will provide opportunities for children from disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds to engage in the built environment and be offered an insight into the various careers and opportunities it offers.

Once the scheme progresses, C&C and the chosen main contractor will work together to try and provide more opportunities for apprenticeships to local people. C&C and the chosen main contractor will engage in discussions with local charities and organisations to offer additional opportunities for people in the local area to get back into work.

We understand that the three projects need to be brought forward with the support of the local community. As such, we will undertake community engagement prior to submission of a pre-planning application and the planning submission. We will hold community events in each town and target a wide range of the local community to understand their concerns and gain their trust and support.

By selling the vision of what we are trying to bring to their towns, and listening to their feedback, we will deliver projects that change perceptions of each town. We will ensure the events are fun and accessible to all with food and drinks being provided to entice a wide range of residents who will all bring with them a unique take on our proposals.

SOCIAL VALUE.

Rather than sit on the side-lines and bemoan the lack of diversity in the property sector and access to careers for young people, we did something about it. We founded the Regeneration Brainery – a not for-profit academy to inspire a diverse generation of young adults into careers in the built environment.

Starting with in-school masterclasses which inspire those listening to attend our regular week-long intensive ‘brainery’ bootcamps; we then put all our ‘Brainees’ into a graduate club where they can benefit from mentor matchmaking and industry placements. What started as our passion project has blossomed into a major force in the industry with over 6,000 students across 5 major cities, with over 500 industry mentors actively involved. It’s non-stop for the team, with plans to expand into new locations including Huntingdonshire if C&C are appointed.

MEET SAMI.

Sami Mhar (18) is just one of the 6000+ young people who credit the Regeneration Brainery as being instrumental in their future. He knew the science and medicine path many of his classmates were taking wasn’t for him.

Attendance at a week-long Brainery fanned an initial flame to explore the sector. Whilst the hands-on tasks put him out of his comfort zone, the unparalleled access to industry experts through the week and subsequent networking events saw his determination to secure a job grow. He’s just secured and started a full-time apprenticeship with a land and property company, linked to a degree at the University of Salford. “You get out what you put in. I threw myself into the Brainery and I owe so much to it as a result” says Sami.

We will put on regular Regeneration Brainery bootcamps in Huntingdonshire to engage and inspire the next generation of property professionals. We will engage with local schools and visit them to conduct masterclasses which seek to inspire students who are currently disengaged with the education process. We’ll also be seeking to engage local community groups and other charities, to help establish links between students and employers, or from start-ups to angel investors for example. More detail on Regeneration Brainery is included in appendix D.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING.

This is a core ethos at C&C and carries through to how we deliver each of our developments.

In Manchester we funded the conversion of a former tour bus into a safe and secure bed for the night for the homeless and then went on to plan Embassy Village. A UK-first, the community planned for disused rail arches in Manchester city centre will provide safe, secure homes for homeless people.

Far beyond a warm bed, Embassy Village is currently being delivered on site and will provide a community hub, outdoor spaces and, crucially, the support and training needed to end the cycle of homelessness. It will provide long term support and structure to help those in need back into work.

We’re proud to have helped assemble some of the best in the business to work pro-bono to make our vision a reality. We helped secure a £3.5 million donation from the Moulding Foundation to fund the project, with construction on site and due to be completed soon.



SAMI MHAR

SOCIAL VALUE.

We don't shy away from bucking trends in order to create something special. We hit the headlines in 2017 when our first homes at Crusader Mill came to the market, where we made them just available to owner occupiers. It was an intentional move to help build a genuine community where people lived, built their lives and got to know the neighbours. It was the antithesis to the anything else on the market, where fractional ownership was creating barriers to community cohesion.

At the time, it was a bold move, and one that didn't come without risk. But we stuck to our guns and the results were worth it. Crusader is now a place where residents chat on shared Whatsapp groups, hang out in the communal gardens, go on dog walks on their lunch breaks and even plan neighbourly mini breaks. Of their own accord, they've also formed groups to assist police in tackling anti-social behaviour and do ad hoc gardening in the green shared spaces.

At Kampus, The Bungalow – our brutalist village hall on stilts – has been given for free as a residency space to budding restaurateurs, breweries, and makers, as a city centre shop window for their business.

Elsewhere, we've given over our derelict sites for use as temporary bars and restaurants whilst we went through the planning process. On top of that, we've also capitalised on the generosity of a city.

During Covid-19 lockdowns, our former MOT garage on Manchester's Swan Street was used as a supplies depot, where over £500,000 worth of supplies were donated to local charities.

These things are not money-spinners, but something we see as our role in giving back.



KEY OBJECTIVES.

COMPETES WITH OTHER THRIVING REGIONS.

The Covid 19 Pandemic has had a significant impact on people's working lives in many cases providing greater freedom, with people spending far more time at home both socially and professionally, with flexible working being the norm.

This move sees people's proximity to the office becoming less important, being replaced with a desire for alternative living spaces with access to amenities and experiences which will be provided in these developments across St Ives, St Neotts and Huntingdon.

The commercial offering on the site will be focused on targeting quality, local independent businesses who will provide a city centre quality product. This will be targeted at town centre residents and those from the local surrounding area, giving people a reason to visit the towns and then stay and increase spending for the benefit of the wider local economy.

This new standard of accommodation will also help to retain Huntingdonshire's talent pool including graduates, that it would otherwise lose to competing local and national city centres and bring residents with a higher discretionary spend back to the town centres boosting the local economy.

PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT.

The wider city centre masterplan will require a significant level of private sector investment. The current city centre rental market data does not support this level of investment, however that's only because there isn't an aspirational product on offer currently. These developments will exist to make a market, not to serve an existing one.

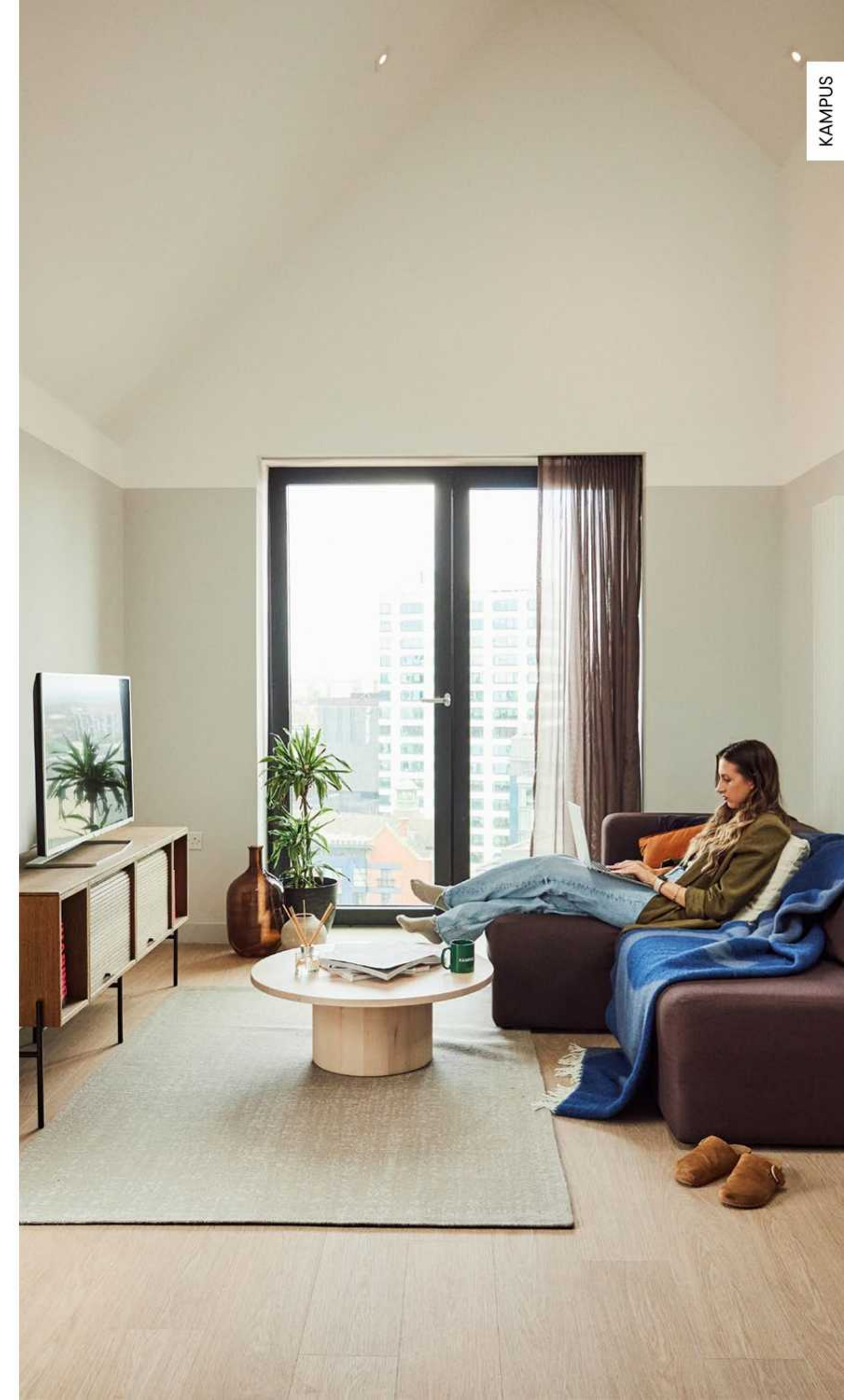
The strategic partnership between C&C and HDC, with support from other public sector bodies, enables the development of a scheme that would otherwise fail due to viability, with costs exceeding the investment value.

Once complete and stabilised, a development of this calibre will set a rental tone which will encourage further institutional investors into the local Built To Rent sector. In turn this will assist the council to access funds such as greater council tax and business rate revenue to support the wider regeneration of Huntingdonshire.

Furthermore, we believe that a market leading placemaking development will begin to bring further institutional interest to the region as others aspire to deliver developments of a similar nature. It will also provide homes and places to dwell for the new jobs created in the tech corridor and local region.

INCREASED REVENUE.

The delivery of over 300 homes and commercial space will increase the number of residents and businesses in Huntingdonshire, leading to increase discretionary spend in the region and more activity. More than that, the increase in residents and companies locating there will lead to an increase in council tax and business rate revenue for the council.



THE APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A - C&C TRACK RECORD

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APPENDIX A.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Increasing Affordable Housing – Inspired Solutions

Meeting/Date: Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Performance and Growth) – 8 July 2025

Cabinet – 15 July 2025

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing – Cllr Sam Wakeford

Report by: Pam Scott – Head of Economy, Regeneration and Housing Delivery

Ward(s) affected: All

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report details the proposal to work alongside Inspired Solutions to deliver various development sites across Huntingdonshire to support housing delivery in particular affordable housing responding to housing need. In essence the sites will be delivered by Inspired Solutions on behalf of the Council.
- 1.2 The Council continues to face considerable pressure and demand for housing with circa 3000 applicants on the Council's Housing Register.
- 1.3 Inspired Solutions is an investment and development company looking to improve affordable housing supply across the UK. The Council would effectively form a partnership to deliver affordable housing, which would be provided by Inspired Solutions via long lease agreements for a period of 40 years. The properties would be underlet to a company associated with Inspired Solutions, who would then manage the homes, and the Council would be able to nominate individuals from our housing register to support our housing need and homelessness function. They are one of a number of new and innovative models of affordable housing delivery which the Government is seeking to encourage, their interest lie in developing on private or public land and then subsequently leasing to the Council at Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Levels. The objective of working with Inspired Solutions is to secure a sustainable supply of affordable homes, all priced at LHA rates and market rents. The Council would also have the option to acquire development for a nominal sum after the 40-year lease.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1** To agree in principle to establish a working partnership with Inspired Solutions to deliver affordable homes within the district on various sites – noting an initial aspiration for circa 200 homes.
- 2.2** To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151 Officer), in consultation with the Corporate Director of Place to negotiate and draft the following agreements:
- i. Heads of Terms, Agreement for Leases and eventual Leases with Inspired Solutions
 - ii. Heads of Terms, Agreement for Underleases and eventual Underleases with a company associated with Inspired Solutions
 - iii. Nomination Agreements for 100% nomination rights for all residential units for the period of the underleases

3. BACKGROUND AND DETAILS

- 3.1** Huntingdonshire Council were initially approached by Inspired Solutions at the 2024 UKREiiF Conference where they demonstrated their capital and delivery expertise. Since this point, Officers have met to discuss the possibility of building a working partnership with Inspired Solutions.
- 3.2** Inspired Solutions are a developer/investor with an aim of increasing affordable housing supply. Inspired Solutions are the partner organisation to Inspired Community Homes who lead on the development. A completed company organisational structure and additional information has been provided in Appendix A. They are one of a number of new and innovative models of affordable housing delivery which the Government are looking to support – most notably this is due to their ability to secure alternative financing and a limited reliance on Government grant funding.
- 3.3** Although Inspired Solutions has not yet completed any developments, they are in contract with several other Local Authorities and have agreements in place to deliver 752 homes. Officers have undertaken necessary discussions to confirm the accuracy of this as part of due diligence. There is an initial aspiration for circa 200 homes in the District.
- 3.4** Once sites have been identified, schemes are expected to be made available to the Council within a period of 36 months from the date of agreement for lease. Inspired Solutions would be responsible for securing the land, necessary permissions, and development delivery.
- 3.5** It is likely that the Council would be looking at several sites across the district as it is not expected that there will be one site meeting the 200 home level. Prior to entering the final Leases for the properties, the Council would undertake due diligence to ensure that all Fire Safety standards are met to be in line with Council policy and requirements as well as Building Safety Standards.
- 3.6** The aim of building a working partnership with Inspired Solutions is to increase the availability of secure affordable homes in the district for residents and to improve housing provision. We anticipate that some homes will be able to support the Council's Homelessness duty, as well as presenting opportunities to deliver more specialised forms of accommodation to meet the needs of individuals with specific challenges.

- 3.7** The Council would not be liable for any upfront payments towards a development, nor would the Council be taking any planning or development risk. The Council would only need to fund its administration, legal and other advisory costs. The properties would be underlet as a back-to-back transaction to another private provider, associated with Inspired Solutions, that would then be responsible for management of the tenancies and repairs and maintenance of the buildings.
- 3.8** The developer or their associated entity would be responsible for all repairs and maintenance without charging the Council for this. Inspired Solutions have a mechanism to draw down from Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to cover service charge costs and have identified three further sources of income generation associated with the energy generation from their developments. These approaches reduce risks associated with service charges being passed on to residents.
- 3.9** Inspired Solutions propose to generate income from the sale of discounted green energy to tenants (under their 'GREAT' scheme), carbon credits, sale of surplus energy to the grid, and eligible service provisions set out and paid by the DWP. These funding sources provide sufficient income to the underlessee to pay for all property related costs. The developer would also be responsible for all lifecycle and major works (including fire and building safety) related to the building for the term of the lease. The Council would only be responsible for void risk, arrears by tenants, although we would have the ability to cover this and recharge the residents and any damage, accidental or deliberate, by the tenant.
- 3.10** The rents for both the headlease and the underlease would be set at LHA rates provided in April for each financial year. The Council would need to set aside a budget for potential void risk, arrears and damage caused by tenants. Officers consider that this risk can be mitigated acceptably and built into future budget setting. The Councils Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151 Officer) has been involved in the due diligence of this proposal to date and has confirmed their agreement to the approach.
- 3.11** After the 40-year period the Council would have the option to acquire the units for a heavily discounted sum. This could enable the Council to work in partnership with a Registered Provider to enable the homes to continue to deliver low cost housing.

4. Operational Considerations

- 4.1** The Council would not be responsible for development delivery. Once complete, the aim is to underlet the units to another provider and the Council would hold nomination rights. The Council would not have any risk related to the property unless there is damage caused by the tenant. This has the benefit of not giving the Council any property management duties.
- 4.2** The Council would need to ensure that there are no void costs and that operations related to placing and assessing tenants is done efficiently. This is considered to be achievable given the levels of housing need across the District.
- 4.3** The proposal includes a 'Green Renewable Energy Affordable Tariff' (GREAT). Inspired Solutions are indicating that this technology will result in significantly reduced energy costs for residents.

- 4.4** The progress of this proposal is subject to contract and legal due diligence; the Council has appointed Devello as its legal advisors and an update is awaited. In the event that significant issues are identified, the Council would not move forward. .
- 4.5** The proposal by Inspired Solutions is for the Council to enter into an Agreement for Lease for each site brought forward, which will unlock funding for the developer and allow them to proceed towards planning and development. At the same time the Council will sign an Agreement for Underlease for each site with the underlease organisation.
- 4.6** Once the scheme has been completed a formal Lease Agreement will be signed with the developer for a period of 40 years and at the same time an Underlease Agreement will also be signed.
- 4.7** The Council will also, at completion of each development, enter into a Nomination agreement with the Underlessee allowing the Council to have 100% rights over the units.
- 4.8** The income from the Underlease, less deduction for voids and tenant damage will be used to pay for the Headlease payments. The Council is taking a long-term commitment and will be responsible for funding the leases for 40 years.

5. RISKS

- 5.1** This proposal has several risks that need to be considered as part of the wider decision making and could have an impact on the delivery and financial outcomes for the Council.
- 5.2** Inspired Solutions have not completed delivery of any schemes but have indicated they have the financial means and experience to deliver the schemes and are already in contract with several other Local Authorities.
- 5.3** Nonetheless, it is a risk in the event they fail to complete the delivery of the schemes, the council will have lost the opportunity to acquire other schemes that can be delivered. However, Inspired Solutions is part of an organisation called Trebbie, which have the experience and resources to construct residential schemes. Further group company and related parties' structure has been provided in Appendix A. However, if schemes are not delivered the Council would not be under any obligation to take Leases of those schemes and so would not incur any financial costs apart from costs associated with entering into agreements which are typically minimal.
- 5.4** The developer will include technology and building design that will enhance the provision of energy through self-generation methods. The incorporation and building approach to make this viable requires specific technology. At the end of the 40 years the Council would need to discuss this with Inspired Solutions to see how this could be transferred as part of the purchase of the homes, as the Council does not currently manage housing, this activity could be passed on to another organisation.
- 5.5** A decrease in future demand may result in these units being underutilised while the Council remains responsible for lease payments. Whilst we do not believe that the demand for housing at affordable rents will decrease in Huntingdonshire, if this is the case the Council will have the option to request that the properties be turned into private rent units.

- 5.6** With Local Government Reorganisation in 2028, it is anticipated that any contracts signed in relation to this proposal and entered into by the Council will be transferred to the responsibility of the new authority. To further mitigate the risk of insufficient occupancy in the units, future demand is expected to be supported across the broader area encompassed by the new strategic authority, thereby providing a wider area of housing demand.

6. Financial

- 6.1** The aim of building a working partnership with Inspired Solutions is to reduce reliance within the private rented sector for provision of housing.
- 6.2** The proposals presented to the Council do not require any capital investment by the Council and protects the Council against operational repairs and maintenance costs, although as stated in 3.10 the Council would be expected to cover void risk and vandalism. The Council would have 100% nomination rights on the units under lease.
- 6.3** A follow-up report will be made available with a detailed breakdown of costs and savings once specific sites are identified.
- 6.4** The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (S151 Officer) has been involved with this project from the beginning, there will be a need to create a fund as a reserve to cover the risks associated with damage, arrears or long term voids.

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

- 7.1** The delivery of housing is aligned with the principles and key objectives of HDC's Corporate Plan, specifically it links to Priority 2: Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations, through Improving Housing, this project would enable additional high quality homes to be provided across the District.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The progress of this proposal is subject to contract and legal due diligence; the Council has appointed Devello as its legal advisors and an update is awaited. In the event that significant issues are identified, the Council would not move forward.

9 EQUALITIES

The Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The delivery of good quality affordable housing aligns with the Council's existing housing procedures.

10 ENVIRONMENTAL

The Council has a duty to ensure we continue to promote an environmentally positive recovery in Huntingdonshire following the impacts of COVID 19. We also have a duty to deliver sustainable place making. In December 2021, the Council adopted a core set of environmental principles. In October 2022, the

Council passed a Cost of Living and Climate Change motion that recognises that the current cost of living, and climate crises require joint attention to support the wellbeing of residents and businesses. In February 2023 Council formally recognised the Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency, adopted the Council's Climate Strategy underlining the organisations commitment to:

- setting a positive example through its actions to be a net carbon zero Council by 2040
- an enabler supporting action within our communities and across our partners.
- an encourager to those that live, work, and visit Huntingdonshire to take climate action and reduce carbon emissions.

The Council has direct control of only a tiny proportion of all the carbon emissions within Huntingdonshire, but we can adopt a key role to influence the district, demonstrating good practice whilst setting policies and strategies to influence businesses and communities to tackle climate change whilst enabling sustainable living and growth.

11 LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

1. Inspired Solutions 2024
2. Home Angel
3. GREAT
4. Letter of Intent



inspired**solutions**

Creating homes
together

Private & Confidential

Welcome to a new future for social housing

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The highlights

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Summary

- Inspired Solutions is a collaboration between industry leading experts who share a vision to provide a fully funded solution to the social housing crisis and deliver high quality, inclusive homes to those in need
- Inspired has found an innovative new way to fund and deliver high quality social homes, putting tenant wellbeing at the heart of our strategy
- We build or refurbish high quality, inclusive homes for local authorities that address their social housing needs, at no cost to the local authority
- The relationship with the local authority provides a level of confidence to investors that the buildings will always have tenants
- The rents on the homes offer return on investment and long-term income for Inspired's pension customers
- Rent will always be at or below local housing allowance rates
- All homes are delivered, serviced and maintained to the highest level at no cost to the local authority and the local authority will never have financial exposure
- At the end of the lease term, the building will transfer to the local authority for a peppercorn sum
- Tried and tested technology from other industries provides all homes with inclusive and innovative management systems and green energy



What we do

- We fund new-build and redevelopment projects that provide high quality social housing to those in need, at no cost to the local authorities
- We partner with organisations that share our vision and we have the capability to build or refurbish high quality, inclusive homes that meet everyone's needs
- We design, build and finish homes that last, with tenant wellbeing at the heart of our strategy
- We include green energy in everything we do, making our homes cheaper to run and more sustainable
- We provide homes to people in need
- We deliver and maintain new build and renovation social housing for local authorities and registered providers, who can implement how they want to use our homes for their tenants





How we do it

- We use private sector funds to deliver high quality, inclusive properties to local authorities, housing associations and registered providers
- The rent on the building offers return on investment and long-term income for Inspired Solutions' pension customers, reducing the risk and exposure created by traditional market volatility
- We listen to the issues and we do our research. By bringing together the very best available technology in building and maintaining our homes, we make them cheaper to run, to everyone's benefit
- We have sought out technology and initiatives from other industries to provide the best solutions for tenants. We will use these to provide cost and energy savings, meaning we provide very affordable homes that ensure sustainability and efficiency
- We create financial benefits through green energy. These are shared between our pension customers, our partners and tenants through our Green Energy Tariff, and re-invested in maintaining our buildings

Who benefits?

Tenants

- High quality spaces that people are proud to call 'home'
- Affordable energy tariff to help with cost of living
- Inclusive, safe and welcoming communities
- Homes that are built with tenant requirements in mind
- Technology that makes life easier and safer



Local Authorities

- High quality homes that meet social housing needs and reduce waiting lists
- Increase in income from rents
- Rents are never above local housing allowance rates
- No financial exposure, now or in the future
- No ongoing maintenance costs
- All properties are maintained to a high standard
- The building transfers for a peppercorn sum at the end of the lease
- Green energy helps deliver on net zero targets



Inspired Solutions

- The relationship with the local authority provides a level of confidence that the buildings will always have tenants
- Rents from the tenants provide long-term income for Inspired's pension customers
- Rent on the buildings offers return on investment
- The impact of market volatility is reduced for pension customers
- Assists Inspired in achieving its ESG targets



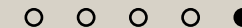
Local Places

- Job creation for local people, both direct and through the supply chain
- Opportunities to supply goods to the project
- Increased economic activity in the local area
- Local skills development
- Investment in local communities and their spaces
- Infrastructure improvements
- Shared best practice and knowledge transfer
- Support for local small businesses



Pension Customers

- More reliable income stream
- Reduced reliance on state provision in difficult economic conditions
- Reduced reliance on local authorities for welfare provision
- Guaranteed 40 year pension



Working with local authorities

The local authority commits to:

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- Introducing tenants in need of high quality, social housing, whose rental obligations are funded by the DWP
- Fostering a mutual partnership that secures the best outcomes for local areas during the planning process
- Long term leases that grant financial predictability for Inspired's pension customers

Inspired Solutions commits to:

- Providing homes to people in need
- Funding new-build and redevelopment projects that provide high quality social housing to those in need, at no cost to the local authorities
- Designing, building and finishing homes that last, with tenant wellbeing at the heart of our strategy
- Including green energy in everything we do and sharing cost benefits with partners and tenants through the Green Energy Tariff





The details

Our vision

To provide a fully funded solution for social housing and deliver high quality, inclusive homes and communities to those in need.



Our story

In 2020 a think tank of financial experts from the world of banking and investment came together to solve the problem of volatility on assets held within pension funds. They realised that the rental income from social housing was the perfect fit and solution, while also providing high quality homes for those in need.

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Since this beginning in 2020 Inspired Solutions has gathered together a team of industry leaders from finance, construction, property management and local government to provide high quality homes for people in need.

We are passionate about creating inclusive and modern spaces for people and families, so we put tenant wellbeing at the heart of our strategy.





Our guiding principles

Everything we do is guided by some basic beliefs. These support our vision to provide a fully funded solution to social housing and deliver high quality, inclusive homes to those in need.

They shape our actions and guide our solutions, every day:

- We always put tenant wellbeing at the heart of everything we do
- We ensure all people and families feel safe and secure in their homes
- We create high quality spaces that people and families are proud to call 'home'
- We deliver homes, not just houses, creating thriving communities
- We use the very best, proven technology to design out problems, create better buildings and reduce maintenance costs
- We help release local authorities from their financial burden
- We help with the energy crisis by creating energy efficient homes
- We create real and lasting social impact and benefits to the community
- We enable housing associations and regulated providers to give an exceptional service
- We do good, by doing good business and supporting charities that share our goals

Tenant focused solutions

Having created the funding proposition, we turned our attention to the details of delivering homes to the very highest standards. We took time to listen and understand the impacts on of the shortages in social housing and supported living on local authorities, communities, people and families.

We understand the psychological damage that uncertainty brings to people and families. Putting tenant wellbeing at the heart of our strategy means that people and families are proud to call our affordable, high quality spaces 'home'.

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Having researched the issues that are most important to tenants, we designed out the factors that we know affect their wellbeing and designed in lasting solutions. We have looked at current and future needs, researching the very best of the available proven technology to design and create high quality, inclusive homes that have the highest possible energy efficiency.

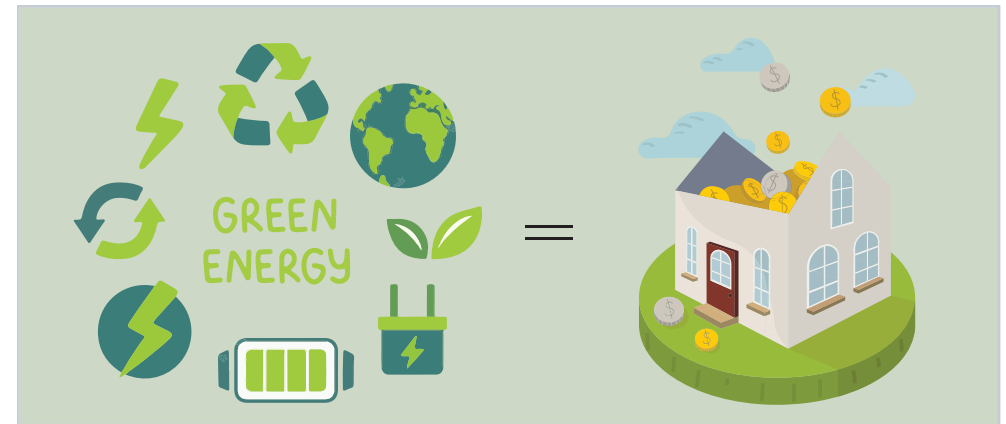


Fuel poverty & cost of living

Rising fuel prices affect everyone, but particularly the most vulnerable. This is why we have invested in research to find real solutions for our tenants. The result is our Green Energy Tariff. Green energy is cheaper than buying from the grid and provides a tangible cost saving for people and families, but it requires an up-front investment that few can afford.

Our funding model allows us to build energy efficiency into our homes from the outset and we share cost savings with tenants and partners from day one. We have identified and secured green energy technologies from other sectors - including hotels, leisure, transport and manufacturing, and adapted them for use in our homes.

Green energy is improving all the time and we are committed to staying ahead of developments. We will constantly scan the market, joining with partners who offer the best available solutions for every home. Green energy solutions are affordable, sustainable and support our goal to target carbon zero in all our homes.



The use of Green energy creates substantial financial benefits for Inspired Solutions.



We share this with our partners & tenants, who pay for their energy through our Green Energy Tariff, which is cheaper than buying from the grid.



We also use these funds to finance the ongoing maintenance of our homes.

Bringing our vision to life

We have the experience, passion and commitment to make a difference and to provide a fully funded solution to social housing and deliver high quality, inclusive homes and communities to those in need.

We will create a new generation of homes, with a focus on raising the benchmark for social housing and supported living. We combine a forward-thinking approach to social housing and supported living issues, while remaining true to our social responsibilities and sensitive to the needs of our environment.

To achieve this, we have created a substantial funding proposition with our banking counterparts (JP Morgan) tailored to the specific needs of the social housing and supported living and sectors.

We will fund the redevelopment of existing stock as well as new build projects. Given the current economic climate and the pressures on scarce resources, we understand the urgency in delivering these much-needed homes and how to do so within local housing allowance rates.





Technology

Our extensive research and adaptation of existing technologies means that our homes will be designed, constructed, and finished with longevity and clean energy in mind.

We have developed our technology package in line with our guiding principles and our focus on tenant wellbeing.

Each home will be equipped with multiple systems to protect tenants and support their welfare. Our technology will also enable proactive maintenance and stop issues before they happen. Not only does this mean minimal maintenance is required, it creates a more positive environment and supports tenant wellbeing.

Examples of technology in use:

Solar and wind power will sit alongside technology to monitor fuel usage, condensation, dampness, and mould. Humidity detection will link to mechanical extraction systems, and raised humidity will trigger extraction before it results in mould in the home.

Community spaces

Providing quality community spaces supports our principle of putting tenant wellbeing at the heart of what we do.

As part of our commitment to providing new homes, we will work with local authorities, charities and community partners to find ways to provide spaces that support the needs of the communities where we're based. From community centres and playgrounds to community gardens, we work with appropriate local and national charities to make spaces where the community can thrive and grow together.



How we deliver

We use private sector funds to deliver off-balance sheet (local authority) property solutions to local authorities, housing associations and registered providers and have created a package of tailored solutions to support their placemaking initiatives.

We understand that local authorities and their tenants have specific needs and we continue to work closely with them, alongside housing associations and registered providers, to give the best solutions for people and families. It is within our guiding principles to deliver homes, not just houses, within thriving communities. We will continue to foster relationships with authorities throughout the UK to understand different places, recognising that everyone's needs are different and respecting the diversity of social needs for each area.

The homes we build will be designed, constructed, and finished with longevity and clean energy in mind. By bringing together the very best available proven technology under our roofs, we are able to provide very affordable homes that ensure sustainability and efficiency. Our unique design and proven technology enable us to create homes for today that not only exceed EPC standards of conventional buildings, but will future proof our homes with a zero-carbon target.



How the model works

Inspired Solutions will provide high quality, inclusive social housing at no cost to local authorities, creating an immediate and permanent solution to housing shortages while supporting economic growth. Inspired helps solve social housing shortages by providing energy efficient homes with low rents that will never exceed the local housing allowance.

Our leasehold model, in collaboration with JP Morgan and Inspiring Community Homes (Part of Trebbi Group), provides the funding mechanism to build, refurbish and deliver the highest quality new-build social housing. We enter a long dated reversionary lease with the local authority, starting on the date of the practical completion of a building. The rent on the building offers long-term income for Inspired Solutions' pension customers and the council has high quality homes that address its social housing needs. At the end of the lease term, the building will transfer to the council at a 'peppercorn' cost.

A key aspect of our proposal is setting rent no higher than the local housing allowance rate determined by the DWP. This means that there is no liability for the local authority, now or in the future. Our goal is to reduce the need for maintenance throughout the home's lifespan. We provide options to maintain the property on behalf of the local authority, which can save costs for the council in both the short and long-term.



Fire safety

Fire safety is an important factor in our ability to build new homes. We ensure that the use of materials meets all necessary building regulations.

The use of fire consultants and quality assurance procedures on fire safety is always a primary objective in the new homes we build.





Ecology

We will design and construct our new homes in the most sustainable manner possible and with care for the environment.

We take care to protect existing habitats, introducing new or alternative habitats as appropriate to each project.

We employ specialist ecologists to conduct site surveys and impact assessments, working with our design and construction teams to advise on all aspects of habitat management and creation.



Warranties & third party guarantees

Our homes will have a suitable 10 year structural warranty. This will be through the NHBC or similar. All certification will be provided to the local authority to ensure adequate cover in the event of a defect.

All subcontractors and professionals will have third party collateral warranties with the local authority. Again, adding additional contractual protection in the event of a latent or patent defect.

All of our products come with different lengths of warranties and will be allocated to the local authority to draw upon in the event of an issue.

How far have Inspired got so far

Inspired has 8 sites at the LOI stage, of which 5 have progressed to HOT's and have been publicly announced as of the 23rd September. Upon approval, Inspired will start to deliver 752 homes across 8 sites.



The team

Simon Smith
(Board)



- Managing Director, Inspired Solutions
- Financial consultant providing regulated investment management and advice

Charles Benson
(Board)



- Founder and Director, Inspired Solutions
- Lawyer, investor and entrepreneur who is passionate about social housing

Craig Hibbert
(Board)



- Managing Director, Trebbi Group
- Expertise in all aspects of construction delivery

Carsten Sennov
(Board)



- Group COO, Inspired Solutions
- Expertise in Start-ups, Energy & Technology as well as Operational structure

Bill Pollard



- Specialist in residential, destination and commercial property
- Leads complex transformation projects and acquisitions

Adam Tyas



- Managing Director, Inspiring Community Homes
- Expertise in large scale residential construction and social housing

John Jory



- Specialist in local government
- Former council Chief Executive

Kevin Stewart



- President of IRRV
- 40+ year in local government. Specialist in revenues and benefits

Geoff Brooks



- Founder and CEO, Alpha Beta Partners
- Specialist in retirement solutions

Andrew Thompson



- Founder, Alpha Beta Partners
- Specialist in corporate financial structuring and compliance

Richard Garrod



- Founder, Inspired Solutions and Trireme Pension Services Ltd
- Specialist in tax issues and reliefs specific to property sector



For more information visit
inspired-solutions.uk





Inspired Solutions

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Inspired Solutions: Home Angel – Tenant Protection

Introduction

Our vision is to provide a fully funded solution for housing and deliver high quality, inclusive homes, and communities to those in need. We always put tenant wellbeing at the heart of everything we do, and we ensure all people and families feel safe and secure in their homes. Therefore, we are providing this at no cost to the local authority or the tenant.

We use the very best, proven technology to design out problems, create better buildings and reduce maintenance costs and we have listened to understand the current challenges in housing. Having researched the issues that are most important to tenants, we designed out the factors that we know affect their wellbeing and designed in lasting solutions.

We have looked at current and future needs, researching the very best of the available proven technology and found innovative ways to proactively address these issues and safeguard tenants, neighbours and the properties involved.

Current Situation

In any types of residential setting, including social housing, events and incidents can occur, such as water leaks, mould and damp, fires, instances of domestic abuse, emotional distress, narcotics related issues and subletting leading to overcrowding. Each and all of these events can have a negative impact on the wellbeing of the tenant, the condition of the property and surrounding neighbours.

It is within our guiding principles always to put tenant wellbeing at the heart of everything we do and to ensure all people and families feel safe and secure in their homes.

‘Home Angel’ has been developed by Inspired Solutions and our IoT partners as an innovative new way of achieving this goal.

What is the ‘Internet of Things’ or ‘IoT’?

The Internet of Things (IoT) is a network of interconnected physical devices and objects embedded with sensors, software, and internet connectivity, enabling them to collect and exchange data. This network can encompass a wide and diverse range of applications, from smart home devices like thermostats and cameras to industrial machines and healthcare sensors.

We have partnered with experts in this field to create a network of such devices to make our homes safer for people and families. We call this innovative system ‘Home Angel’.

Our Solution: Home Angel

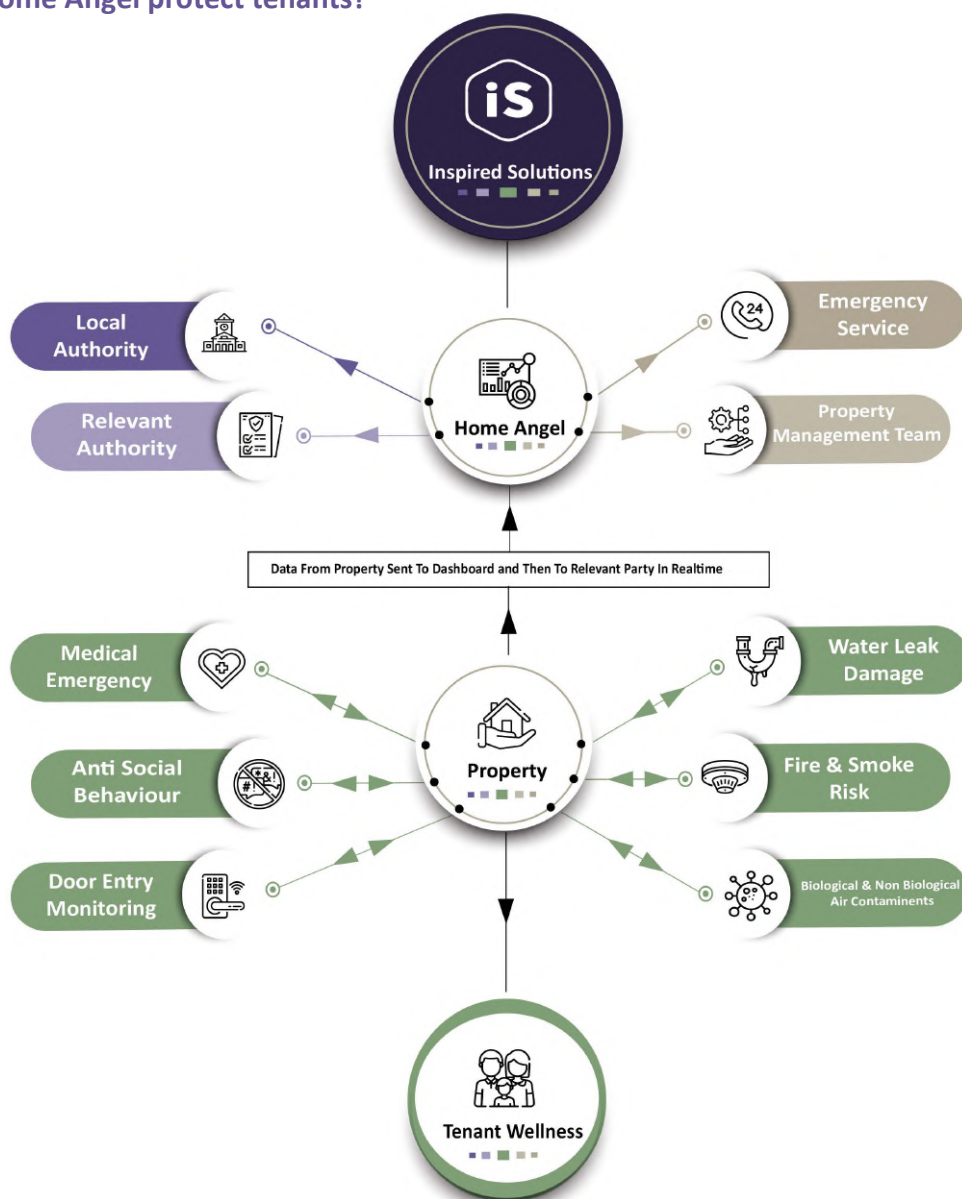
Home Angel is an Internet of Things (IoT) Development Software that Inspired Solutions has developed in collaboration with our expert partners. We will install multiple devices within our properties to enhance tenant safety and provide technological measures to prevent or avert potential issues that could have significant and detrimental consequences for tenants and their wellbeing.

Home Angel allows tenants to report any issues to the Property Management Team. This enables a fast response to carry out any minor or major repairs.

Inspired Solutions puts tenant wellbeing at the heart of everything we do, and the devices built into our homes from Home Angel can help make this guiding principle a reality.

Home Angel is included in all our properties at no cost to the local authority or the tenants.

How does Home Angel protect tenants?



**HOME ANGEL IS PROVIDED AT NO CHARGE TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY OR TENANT
AND IS FULLY GDPR COMPLIANT WITH TENANT IDENTITY PROTECTED**



Fire Prevention: Predictive and Sensor Active Technology

All our homes are built with fire detectors as standard to building regulations. However, our devices have patented technology which enables Home Angel to detect a pattern of false alarms or issues in the home with smoke detection. Based on the nature of the alert it can relay information directly to the Property Management Team or appropriate authority or local fire service to carry out a home visit. This preventative technology can help deal with the issue before it could become a life threatening fire and may cause serious harm to the individual or neighbours.



Fire Reactive Technology

In apartment high rise properties, appropriate sprinkler systems will be installed in accordance with building regulations. In the event of a fire, detectors will notify tenants, prompting evacuation. We have introduced mains connected pressurized water mist devices in the kitchens, living rooms and main entrances of our homes, where data shows most fires originate. This system is designed to assist in extinguishing fire, reducing impact and damage, as well as providing more protective assistance for occupants to escape to safety.



Condensation, Damp and Mould

The devices in the property can monitor humidity, air toxin, CO2 levels and moisture levels. This technology will highlight to the Property Management Team that there could be an issue in the property and it needs a home visit. Also, when the humidity levels reach a specific threshold, the system will automatically activate the ventilation extraction in that particular room to eliminate the excess moisture.



Occupancy

Unauthorised subletting can lead to occupancy numbers exceeding intended limits for the home. This poses potential health hazards and safety risks. Our devices enable us to monitor whether properties exceed approved occupancy limits and promptly alert the Property Management Team in the event of such occurrences. Our devices also help prevent 'cuckooing' (where individuals take over the homes of vulnerable tenants or unlawfully occupied vacant properties without legitimate rights to do so).



Emergencies

The technology in our homes not only listens but understands need for assistance. By speaking a simple keyword Home Angel can instantly reaching out to emergency services when you need them the most. No buttons, no complications.



Death

It is unfortunate reality is that there have been instances where individuals have passed away and remained undiscovered for prolonged periods. This doesn't just affect the immediate surroundings but deeply impacts the community and neighbors. Home Angel, with its advanced sensing capabilities, can detect atmospheric changes consistent with such unfortunate events. While technology can never replace genuine human connection, our goal with Home Angel is to add an extra layer of care and concern, ensuring the well-being of all residents in our community.



Narcotics

Home Angel is built with the capability to detect the presence of non-biological air contaminants. It can differentiate between different types of narcotics, whether for personal consumption or being produced within the property for distribution. This feature allows the Property Management Team to promptly report suspicious activities to the appropriate authorities.



Domestic Abuse & Anti Social Behaviour

Home Angel will detect any loud decibel sounds of a specific nature and certain specific occurrences, which can help ensure the relevant authorities are informed of this pattern of behaviour.



Door Entry

Forget the worry of misplaced keys, our properties have incorporated keyless fob entry to ensure both convenience and security for our tenants.

Misplaced key? With a quick request, a tenant will receive a unique pin code granting immediate access to your home. This temporary solution ensures tenants are never locked out.



Water Leak Detection

In our homes there are multiple leak detectors. In the event the device becomes wet then the mains water is shut off. This prevents any bursts or leaks damaging the property.



Web Application

In today's digital age, clear and compassionate communication is more vital than ever. Our web application is not just about data; it is about ensuring you have a clear picture of your building's well-being. We understand the responsibility and trust you place in us, and that's why our platform not only keeps you updated about the present but also anticipates the future to allow for preventative measures by highlighting potential problems.



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Green Renewable Energy Affordable Tariff

Introduction

Inspired Solutions has created a dynamic new way to provide affordable energy to our tenants, using proven green energy technologies from other sectors - including hotels, leisure, transport, and manufacturing – and adapted them for use in our homes.

We always put tenant wellbeing at the heart of everything we do. We have looked at current and future needs, researching the very best of the available proven technology to design and create high quality, inclusive homes that have the highest possible energy efficiency.

As part of our tenant focused strategy, we decided that our tenants should be able to heat their homes throughout the year without the fear that they may not be able to afford it.

So, we built the Green Renewable Energy Affordable Tariff.

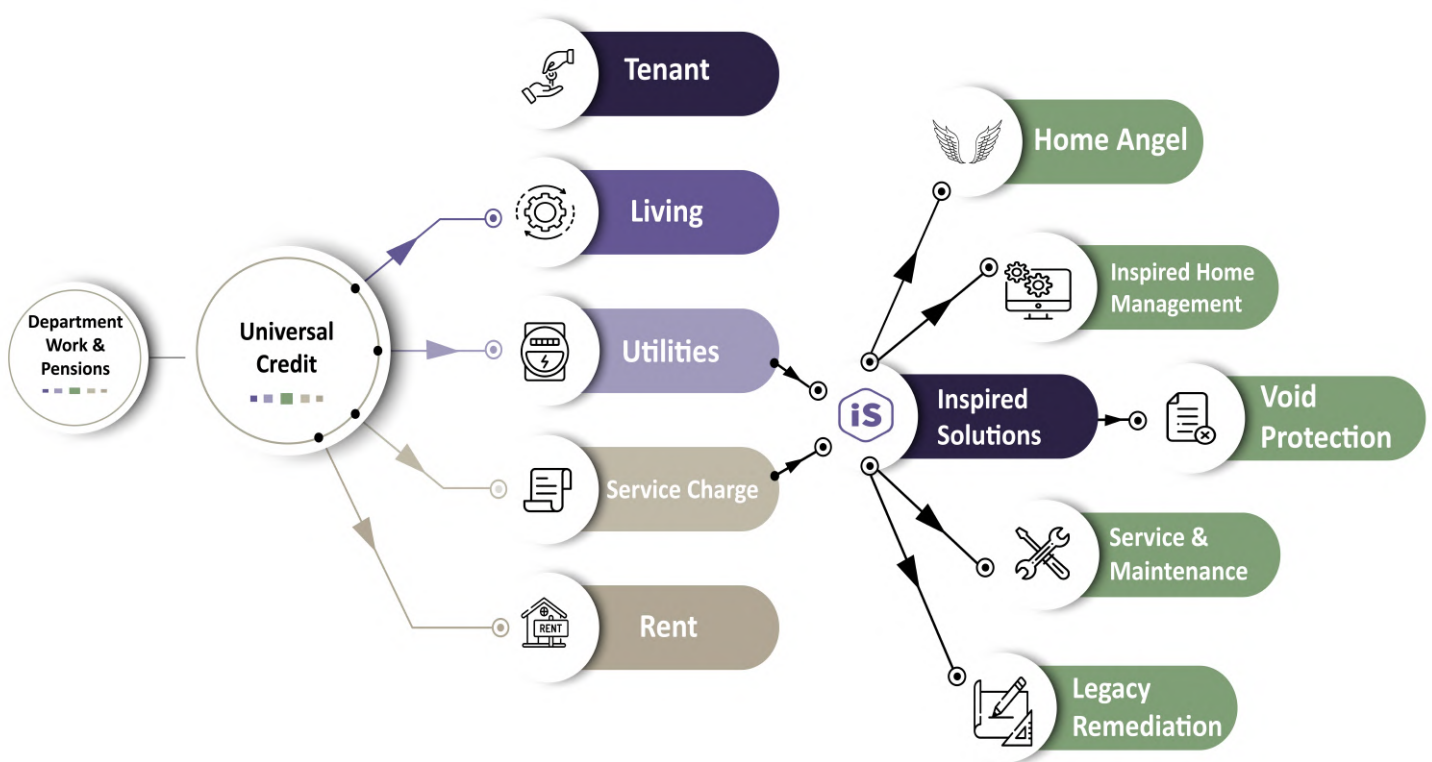
Current Situation

Rising fuel prices affect everyone, but particularly the most vulnerable. People and families, the elderly and those on the lowest incomes are being forced to choose between food or heating. The physical and psychological damage that this causes tenants is leading to many health problems that the National Health Service are struggling to cope with. According to [a report by Age UK](#), health conditions related to lack of heating cost the NHS £1.36 billion each year and an estimated 27,000 excess winter deaths.

There are two key issues that urgently need to be addressed in order to remedy this situation:

1. People and families cannot afford the energy prices and the cost of living crisis is forcing them to make impossible decisions.
2. The homes are so poorly insulated that it costs significantly more to heat the home than a new build home of the same size.

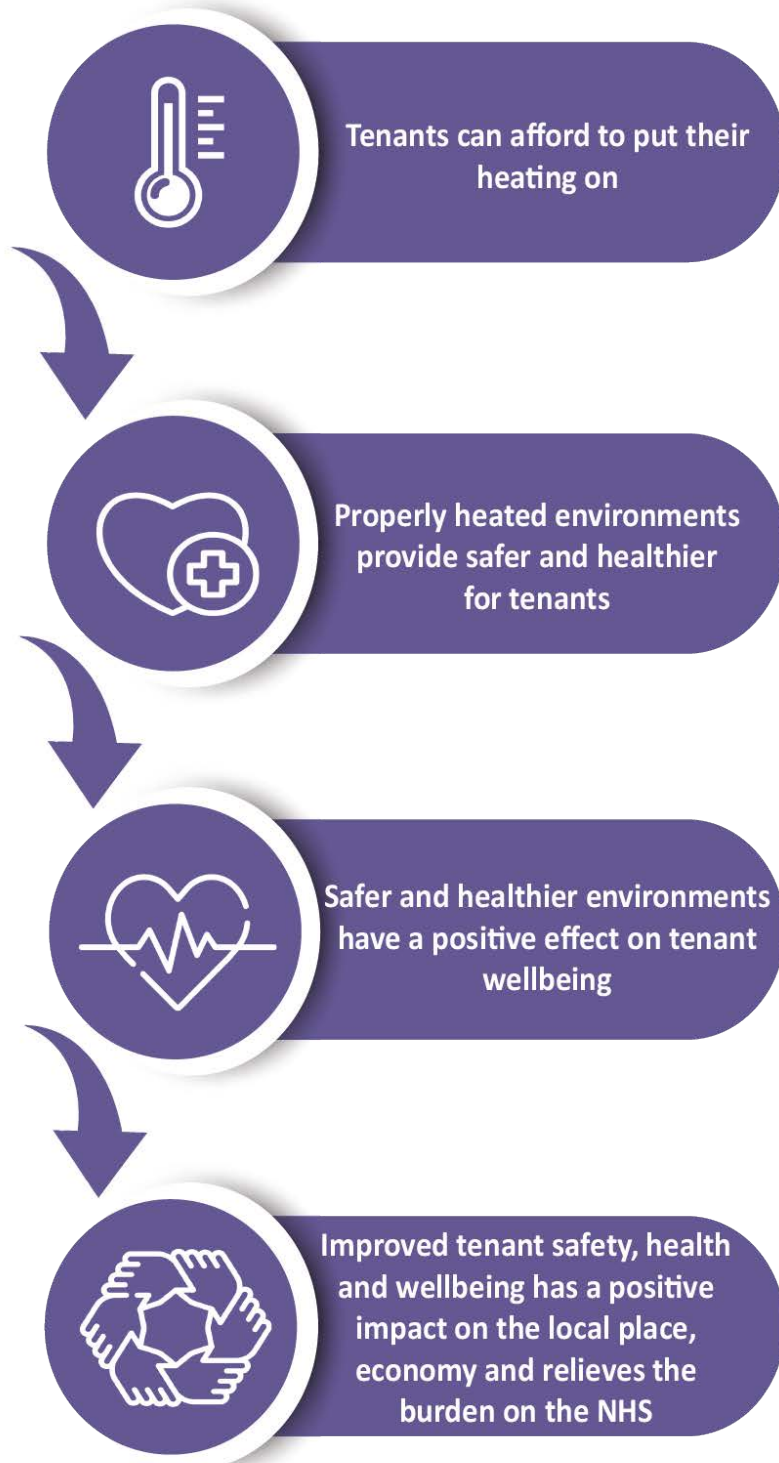
Our Solution: What Does Inspired Solutions Do With The Green Energy Utilities Service Charge?



Green Renewable Energy Affordable Tariff

The Green Renewable Energy Affordable Tariff has been created to allow tenants to afford electricity and heating in their homes. Through the combination of multiple proven technologies it will enable the tenant to have a minimum of 40% cheaper energy than the grid would normally charge.

The benefits of the tariff are:

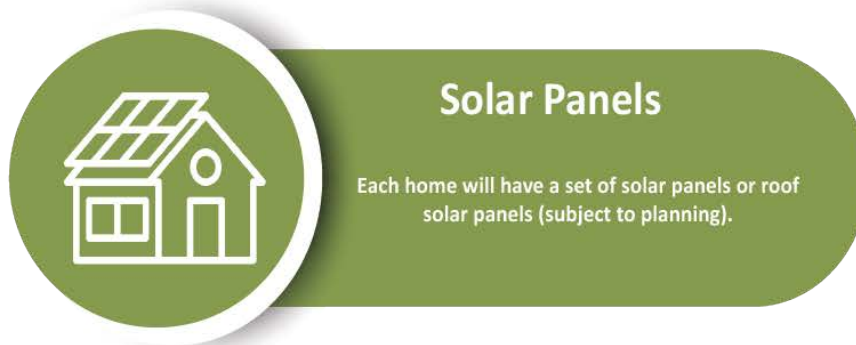
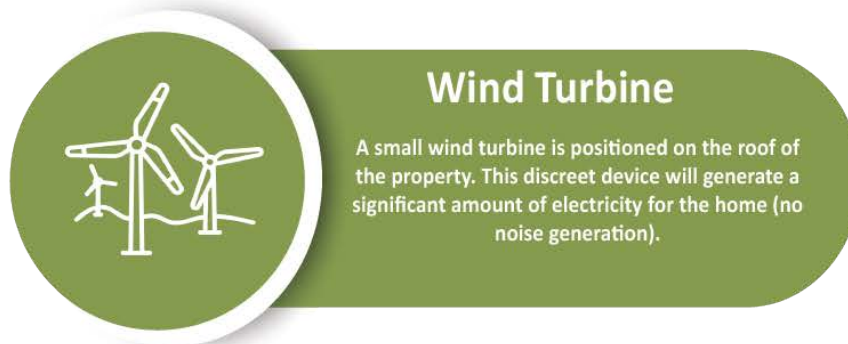


All our homes will be insulated in accordance with SAP/TFEE and SBEM standards as outlined in the building regulations. We go above and beyond this, by combining multiple renewable technologies to create our Green Renewable Energy Affordable Tariff.

Sites may vary due to restrictions in the area, but the elements of our strategy can be combined in multiple scenarios to address any constraints as required.

Each home has a selection of solar panels and small wind turbines which will generate a significant amount of electricity into the home. The organic waste produced from humans is collected and biogas is created through our onsite production centre. This feeds the Combined Heat and Power engine to produce electricity. If Biogas capacity is low it will use natural gas.

A typical combination in a housing scheme is as follows, in the order of hierarchy of use:





Solar Panels

The combined heat and power unit will create electricity. This will be fed via biogas or natural gas.



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Letter of Intent made between Huntingdonshire District Council and Lucra Asset Management Limited and Inspired Structured Solutions Limited in relation to the provision of 200 social homes within the district.

Following extensive and determined discussions, the parties have reached a mutual understanding and a firm decision to engage with each other. This letter of intent is a recital of the matters contained in the Heads of Terms and lease agreements.

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) is prepared to enter into a long-dated lease for 40 years without break clauses with Inspired Structured Solutions (“ISSL”) nominated subsidiary (SPV). The terms of this lease are to be set out in a separate lease agreement. This Letter of Intent is conditional in that it is subject to Huntingdonshire District Council securing internal approvals and Cabinet approval on 17th June to enter into lease agreements to provide 200 social homes.

Inspired will provide 200 sustainable homes at no capital cost to HDC with the location, specification, bedroom mix, timetable, and space standards being agreed by HDC, and the homes being provided within its spatial area.

HDC are responsible for placing tenants from their waiting list into the homes which qualifies for Housing Benefit or Housing Allowance or Universal credit.

HDC is responsible for insuring the homes (building insurance).

The rent will not exceed the LHA rates stipulated by the DWP for that postcode district during the period of the lease. Indexation will be limited to and track the rates set by the DWP.

Inspired or its nominated company will collect the social/affordable rent and service charge from the tenants and pay the LHA rates and Service Charge to JP Morgan. Any shortfall in rent collected (bad debts) will be paid by HDC.

All general repairs, major repairs and replacements will be borne by an Inspired nominated company, and at no cost to HDC.

Inspired will indemnify HDC from any rent voids that are caused by a defect that results in uninhabitable homes (in absence of a reserve home being available to tenants). Any other voids costs or bad debts will be paid by HDC.

Inspired will be responsible for all maintenance, general upkeep and life cycle remediation of the properties and common parts throughout the term of the lease at its own cost.

Any damages or breaches of the tenancy agreement that cause a cost of repair will result in reimbursement by HDC. All expenditure will be pre-approved between Inspired and Local Authority.

HDC shall have the right to use the property as it sees fit provided always that it ensures rents that are linked to LHA and are paid in full to Inspired.

Inspired has the right to supply, electricity, fresh water and used water treatment services to the properties.

Inspired will offer HDC the following three options to be expedited before the final year of the 40-year Agreement -

- The purchase of the properties at the end of 40th anniversary of the Agreement for a heavily discounted sum, or
- HDC chooses not to exercise its option to purchase (the properties will need to be vacated by the 40th anniversary of the Agreement) or
- HDC elects to extend the existing Agreement by a further of period on the same terms (minimum period 25 years). Notification and signed agreement for the extension of the Agreement needs to be completed prior to expiry of the existing Agreement.

Inspired has the right to access the properties to repair or replacement of the property.

Inspired has the right to install systems and upgrades whilst allowing access to IOT (Home Angel and G.R.E.A.T).

In the event Inspired Solutions seek grant funding from Homes England, HDC will support such bids.

Huntingdonshire District Council

Authorised Signatory

Name

Lucra Asset Management Limited and Inspired Structured Solutions Limited

Authorised Signatory

Name

Public
Key Decision – Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	One Leisure Independent Review Update
Meeting/Date:	Overview & Scrutiny - (Environment, Communities & Partnerships) – 10 th July 2025 Cabinet – 15 th July 2025
Executive Portfolio:	Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Health – Councillor Sally Howell
Report by:	Head of Leisure, Health & Environment – Gregg Holland
Ward(s) affected:	All Ward(s)

Executive Summary:

The Council commissioned First Point Management & Consultancy Limited (First Point) in September 2023 to undertake an Independent Review of the One Leisure Long Term Operating Model and its in-house leisure function. The Independent Review included as **Appendix 1** focussed on:

1. Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years)
2. Staff Review
3. Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies
4. Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)

The One Leisure Long Term Operating Model Independent Review was presented to and approved by Cabinet on 19th March 2024. As part of the Independent Review it stated:

“A transformed in-house option is the recommended approach for the short term; this should allow sufficient time to optimise the service before considering medium and long-term delivery options”.

In addition to this the Independent Review (**Appendix 1**) also provided a number of recommendations that One Leisure and the Council should consider for implementation. These can be seen in the Independent Review on pages 50 – 51.

As part of the Cabinet report presented to and approved by Cabinet on 19th March 2024 it stipulated that the Head of Leisure, Health and Environment would provide Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet a 12-month update.

Therefore, this report is aimed at setting out an update on all of the recommendations illustrated in the Independent Review as stated above and to close out that particular action from the original report dated 19th March 2024.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is asked to acknowledge and comment on the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDED

1. To note the progress of actions identified within this report over the last 12 months.
2. To comment on the progress that has been made on the 22 actions identified within the Year 1 – Transformation Progress Report of Actions & Recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure undertaken by First Point Management; and
3. To acknowledge and accept the key actions from the associated summary presentation and outlined within Section 4 of this report.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on the progress One Leisure and the Council have made following the recommendations made and set out within the Independent Review of the One Leisure Long Term Operating Model.
- 1.2 To provide Councillor's an opportunity to review, consider and respond to the progress One Leisure have made since the Independent Review of One Leisure was commissioned in late 2023.
- 1.3 To close out an action from (section 6.5 – point 5) from the original Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure which stated: *"A further commitment that One Leisure will return to Members and update on actions against all the recommendations made by the independent consultant"*.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Built & Playing Pitch Strategies for Huntingdonshire were commissioned in late 2022 and were then presented to [Overview & Scrutiny Committee \(Environment, Communities & Partnerships\) on 8th June 2023](#) and full approval from [Cabinet was gained on 20th June 2023](#).
- 2.2 The Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure was undertaken in late 2023 and subsequently adopted by the Council in April 2024.
- 2.3 The review focussed upon the following key areas:
 1. Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years)
 2. Staff Review
 3. Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies
 4. Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)
- 2.4 The full Independent Review for the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure can be viewed in **Appendix 1**
- 2.5 From the Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure (**Appendix 1**) it provided 22 recommendations that the Council and One Leisure should consider for implementation.
- 2.6 These recommendations are set out in **Appendix 1** on page 50 - 51

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

4. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION & COMPLETION

- 4.1 To ensure independence and provide accuracy One Leisure requested the involvement of First Point Management to undertake a “*Year 1 – Transformation Progress Report of Actions & Recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure*”. This progress report can be viewed within **Appendix 2**

- 4.2 The progress report that First Point Management undertook reviewed all recommendations and actions and their findings are summarised in the table below:

- **15** actions/recommendations have been completed (**c. 68%**);
- **5** remain in progress and span more than a single year (**c. 23%**), whilst ;
- **2 (c. 9%)** have not been progressed, primarily due the pending implementation of Local Government Reform (LGR).

Percentage %	Status
68%	Completed
23%	In Progress
9%	Incomplete

- 4.3 As part of the progress report that First Point Management undertook it also concluded the following:

- 4.3.1 Overall, the performance and ongoing transformation of One Leisure continues to be good and the trajectory towards increased participation and financial sustainability remains positive and is very encouraging.
- 4.3.2 Good progress has been made on potential major capital investments into the leisure estate, these are major projects for One Leisure with the proposed Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub at RIBA Stage 1 and all other sites due to follow during 2025-26.
- 4.3.3 Developing a robust leisure capital programme will be important in light of the pending implementation of LGR.
- 4.3.4 In addition, securing capital funding and operational agreements to re-open and manage the swimming pool and leisure facilities at Sawtry is a significant achievement, with refurbishment and mobilisation taking place in 2025-26 with a view to reopening in Spring 2026.

- 4.3.5 However, it remains important to continually monitor progress and strive for continuous improvement across all aspects of service delivery wherever possible.
- 4.3.6 It is recommended that for consistency, independent annual reviews are commissioned to assess and report progress and performance.
- 4.4 To ensure the feedback from the progress report is not only captured but acted upon One Leisure have implemented the following actions into its 2025-2026 Council Service Plan so that progress and completion can be monitored. These actions are listed below and outlined within the summary presentation:
 - a. Commission an independent review of:
 - i. One Leisure's readiness for LGR
 - ii. High level state of the market review of leisure providers across Cambridgeshire
 - iii. Options, Risks & Recommendations for One Leisure
 - b. To complete all outstanding feasibility studies for One Leisure sites to RIBA Stage 1
 - c. Gain full approval for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub (RIBA Stage 2)
 - d. Secure partnership arrangement with NHS/ICB for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub
 - e. Finalise and gain approval for One Leisure Design Principles - Vision & Customer Charter
 - f. Mobilisation & Re-Opening of Sawtry Leisure Centre
 - g. Continue working with colleagues to develop de-carbonisation plans

5. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 5.1 The work undertaken on the Built and Playing Strategies and the Independent Review both strongly support the council's new corporate plan and its key priorities which are:
 - 1. Improving quality of life for local people
 - 2. Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
 - 3. Delivering good quality, high value-for money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations
- 5.2 The Built and Playing Pitch Strategies have allowed the council to evaluate its existing leisure facilities and that of the wider district to fully gauge how it should proceed, invest, and support other stakeholders with the information they need to gain funding to develop their own clubs and groups.
- 5.3 Wider than this it demonstrates a commitment from the council that it is prepared to review its existing stock of facilities and spaces and strategically identify what the district will require over the next 20 years to ensure it supports improving the happiness and wellbeing of its residents and thus their quality of life.

- 5.4 Through utilising the Built and Playing Pitch Strategies and completing the Independent Review it has allowed senior officers to prepare and submit a suite of capital investment options that can be considered by the council. An example of this is the RIBA Stage 1 feasibility study completed for Huntingdon Leisure Centre (Hunting Sport & Health Hub). It can also be seen from section 4 specifically point 4.4.2 that One Leisure will complete RIBA Stage 1 feasibility studies on all other leisure centres across the One Leisure portfolio. This information will then be used to ascertain the best approach to capital investment across the Council and will allow the Council to make data driven informed decisions.
- 5.5 A key point from the Independent Review and in consideration of the Council's wider capital investment plans and to support the Council's Climate Plan ambition of becoming Net Zero by 2040 the review outlined the importance of considering how any new or re-provisioned leisure facilities could be de-carbonised similar to Ramsey Leisure Centre. This workstream on the feasibility of decarbonising the leisure centres will be reviewed as part of the ongoing RIBA Stage 1 & 2 works.
- 5.6 In line with the Independent Review One Leisure facilitated a staff lead review in late 2023 centred around the following key principles:
- a) More customers focus
 - b) Good quality structures
 - c) Improved value-for money services
 - d) Improved control and compliance to statutory obligations
- 5.7 Following the review the new staff structures provided greater visibility of management at our leisure centres, pathways for staff succession, improved training and development and ensured that we had efficient structures in place which supported a key metric of our staff to income ratio. This underpinned our core work and further supported the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 5.8 As noted within the original Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure the consultant recommended that One Leisure implement a more commercially focussed "Transformed In-House" operating model. Following the review and over the last 12 months One Leisure have made significant change to move from a deficit trading position to a budgeted trading surplus planned for 2025-2026.
- 5.9 The wider improvement in the One Leisure commercial journey has mainly been due to higher health and fitness membership sales, higher swim school pupil numbers, new workforce structure and a reduction of overall net costs for facilitating the Active Health service.

- 5.10 The One Leisure financial performance since 2017- 2018 can be seen in the table below. It also supports the statement made in section 5.8 where One Leisure have budgeted to move from a £230,143 net cost to a budgeted -£117,103 net surplus in 2025-2026. The statement in section 5.9 supports this journey.

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Income	-£6,751,045	-£6,798,703	-£6,686,867	-£5,261,260	-£4,777,731	-£5,471,785	-£6,045,904	-£7,292,693	-£8,596,875
Expenditure	£6,878,103	£7,078,157	£6,953,971	£5,574,027	£5,213,834	£5,925,802	£6,653,527	£7,522,836	£8,479,772
Total	£127,058	£279,454	£267,104	£312,768	£436,103	£454,017	£607,623	£230,143	-£117,103

6. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The original Independent Review acknowledged the work undertaken by the One Leisure teams by providing sport and health related activities to promote a healthy population across the district.
- 6.2 Within **Appendix 3** it provides the 2024-2025 One Leisure Annual Performance Review which showcases all of the work undertaken by One Leisure staff across the leisure centres, active health and sport development teams to support the wider communities they serve but also how One Leisure have progressed since the completion of the original Independent Review.
- 6.3 In addition to this performance and since the original Independent Review was commissioned and endorsed by the Council One Leisure have as part of the capital investment process on Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub (RIBA Stage 1) been engaging with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board (ICB) around the development of a co-located “Health Hub” into the existing dry side facilities at Huntingdon Leisure Centre. An update on this will be provided to Councillors as part of the RIBA Stage 2 report that will be presented by the Head of Leisure, Health & Environment in October 2025.
- 6.4 In June 2025 Active Lifestyle submitted a bid for the Cambridgeshire County Council’s public health team “Behaviour Change Contract” to commence October 2025 for 5 years + 2 years with a value of £1.9m. This follows the successful delivery of the Tier 1 & 2 Weight Management and Behaviour Change Service previously delivered between 2020 and September 2025. The performance of this programme can be viewed in **Appendix 3** as outlined in point 6.2.
- 6.5 Following corporate changes made to the senior management structure the leisure and health services (One Leisure & Active Lifestyles) are now positioned within the Place Directorate. The new Head of Leisure, Health & Environment now covers all leisure, health, parks and open spaces, climate and biodiversity.
- 6.6 These changes afford the Council greater opportunities to further deepen the relationship between all the services across the wider

Place Directorate to enable and deliver positive outcomes for residents, but also look at service delivery in a more commercial context thus creating the potential to make positive contributions to the wider local economy.

7. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 7.1 To fulfil the commitment made to Council that One Leisure would return and provide an update on all recommendations and actions stemming from the Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure.
- 7.2 To allow Councillors to review, comment, and feedback on the progress One Leisure have made on all recommendations and actions over the last 12 months.
- 7.3 To acknowledge the actions outlined in Section 4 of this report which One Leisure have incorporated into its service plans for completion through 2025-2026.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure

Appendix 2 – First Point Management - Year 1 – Transformation Progress Report of Actions & Recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure”.

Appendix 3 – One Leisure Annual Performance Review 2024-2025

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 [Built & Playing Pitch Strategies 2022 – 2043](#)
- 9.2 [Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure \(First Point Management\)](#)
- 9.3 [Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure \(Cabinet Report & Approval\)](#)
- 9.4 Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub Feasibility Report (RIBA Stage 1) – April 2025 – Presented & Approved Under Part 2
- 9.5 Year 1 – Transformation Progress Report of Actions & Recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure – First Point Management – **Appendix 2**
- 9.6 One Leisure Annual Performance Review 2024-2025 – **Appendix 3**

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Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure



First Point Management & Consultancy Limited

December 2023

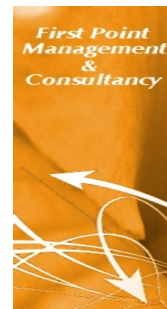


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Version	Author	Date	Comments
Draft v0.1	PA	11/10/23	Initial Draft
Draft v0.2	PA	14/10/23	Section Additions
Draft v0.3	PK	18/10/23	QA & Internal Challenge
Draft v0.4	PA	20/10/23	Updated – new LATC & HR info from client
Draft v0.5	PA	23/10/23	Minor Revisions & formatting
Draft v0.6	PA	29/10/23	Section Additions
Draft v0.7	PK/PA	30/10/23	QA & Internal Challenge
Draft v0.8	PA	04/11/23	Timelines & Exec Summary Added
Draft v0.9	PA	06/11/23	Issued to Client for Review
Prelim Draft v1.0	PA	17/11/23	Amends & Clarification – Issued to Client
Final Report	PA	20/12/23	Minor Additions following Member feedback

Executive Summary

The leisure management function of Huntingdonshire District Council has historically been delivered as an in-house service and was re-branded in 2010 to operate as *One Leisure* as is the case currently. Following the appointment of the Interim Head of Leisure Services some 18-months ago, the service is in the early stages of transformation, taking a more commercial approach to service delivery and working towards post pandemic sustainability.

This review has explored delivery options open to the council over the short, medium and longer term. In addition, the recently adopted Built Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies provide an assessment of future need as the local population continues to grow. These strategies have been considered alongside how the potential capital investment priorities could be funded and help support the sustainability of One Leisure. However, it should be remembered that these strategies span two decades and are for the entire district not just the Councils' facilities and its leisure offer.

The maturing of the leisure market over the past 30 years has seen the marketplace shift from a near monopoly of local authority provision to a much more diverse delivery landscape across the country, with the emergence of charitable leisure trusts, hybrid trusts and the private sector. More recently, in-sourcing and the implementation of the Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) model have gained some popularity.

It is unquestionable that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the leisure sector has disrupted and changed what was, pre-pandemic, an established and a mature market. Business recovery has been further hampered by the spike in energy costs and inflation that has not only increased operational costs but pressurised income as the cost-of-living crisis has impacted customers disposable income choices. The combination of all these factors has resulted in operators becoming increasingly risk adverse and reduced the opportunities to transfer risk and liability to the operator. Consequently it is considered that there is unlikely to be sufficient market tension currently to secure a best value outcome in the short term.

Recent changes to the treatment of value added tax by HMRC for in-house leisure operations, has removed this advantage previously enjoyed by non-profit distributing organisations (such as charitable trusts) over the in-house service. However, Non-Profit Distributing Organisations such as charitable trusts or carefully established LATC's have the distinct advantage of being able to secure 80% rate relief; delivering the service through this model in Huntingdonshire has the potential to reduce the operational cost by c.£500k.

Despite the attraction of seeking a market solution and an operator that may be able to avail itself of the substantial rate relief the Council are in the midst of a Terms & Condition Audit where there is currently an unquantifiable and potentially significant financial liability that is likely to increase uncertainty amongst external operators that are already risk adverse. This current issue is particularly pertinent, as external operators will often be seeking to implement changes to employment terms over the medium to long term to provide greater flexibility and reduce operational costs. If a LATC model was deployed to simply take advantage of the potential without actually delivering the charitable objectives stated within its Articles of Association, it runs the risk of being challenged.

Establishing a local trust does not negate the need to undertake a procurement exercise. A charitable trust must be independent and not influenced by the Council. A newly established trust is unlikely to be able to compete successfully in a competitive process as it will not have the necessary infrastructure or financial standing to procure the necessary support and services required to bid for a large contract even before mobilisation issues are considered.

It may be possible to create a subsidiary of the Councils existing trading company. However, the trading company does not currently manage high volume transactions or deliver customer facing services, therefore all the infrastructure requirements would need to be established in a similar way to that of a local trust and it offers no distinct advantage over the short term. It is therefore recommended that if this was a delivery model

the Council wished to deploy now or in the future a new LATC should be established; this would still negate the need for a procurement event.

A transformed in-house option is the recommended approach for the short term, this should allow sufficient time for the risk and uncertainty surrounding the Terms & Condition Audit to be resolved, and for the service to optimise the service before considering medium and long-term delivery options. It is unlikely that established operators would be interested in a short-term contract, as a 10-year term with a potential extension period is commonplace. Where capital investment is sought through the contract a term of 25-30 years may be expected.

For One Leisure to continue with and pursue a transformation agenda, it will be essential it is appropriately resourced and continues to be led and driven by its management team. The proposed staff review should be progressed as it is designed to make the service more effective, more commercially focussed and ultimately more financially sustainable that provides best value.

Proactively developing meaningful partnerships with the health sector and the regional Integrated Care Board is essential for both One Leisure and the Council per se. The importance of a close relationship between public leisure and public health is increasingly acknowledged as an important element of future service provision and will require a broadening of the leisure offer into community settings, which will in turn need One Leisure to utilise its expertise and think beyond the leisure centre.

The Transformed In-House model is heavily reliant on some key individuals to drive the service forward. This in itself creates a continuity risk, should these key roles be vacated; recruitment in local government is proving to be challenging currently across the country and recruiting to a position at this level is unlikely to be a quick process and risks momentum being lost. Additional capacity either internal or external will be needed to support the transformation and provide delivery assurance.

Undertaking an Early Market Engagement exercise will assess operators' growth appetite and stance on contract terms, risk transfer, investment and the probable financial returns or subsidy requirement and help inform the optimum approach for the future. This exercise should be considered to provide additional reassurance to the Council as part of its due diligence obligations, this could be done in parallel to the on-going Terms & Conditions Audit. It is good practice to periodically review the operating model.

The Council has a lead facilitation role to play in implementing and addressing the deficiencies in provision identified in the Built Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies as far as possible. However, clubs and other sport and leisure organisations must be proactive in fund raising and securing third party grant funding themselves also. These strategies span two decades, therefore there is a need to consider capital investment over the long term and be responsive to opportunities and changes in future demand projections and market trends.

It will be important to invest in existing facilities, refurbishing, re-configuring, expanding or replacing completely. The decarbonisation of One Leisure sites has commenced at Ramsey and should be a priority, continuing through the leisure estate at pace. Major refurbishment or new build schemes should consider adopting the most carbon efficient construction methods such as building to Passivhaus standards; where the potential net benefits of this approach can be assessed within the Outline Business Case.

Feasibility work on existing One Leisure facilities is required to determine what challenges and options exist, it is suggested this starts as soon as possible so the scale of investment is quantified, a project pipeline developed and capacity to deliver is in place and managed appropriately. Capital investment does not necessarily need to be conflated with decisions over the service delivery model. The assets will remain in the ownership of the Council under most circumstances and access to the preferential lending rates of the Public Works Loan Board will remain accessible to the Council.

It is not considered that capital investment is likely to be a determining factor of the operating model of HDC's leisure offer unless: access to the relatively low cost of borrowing through the PWLB ceases to be available to the Council or; a full capital funding partnership is developed with health or; a substantial scheme is proposed

such as a new leisure centre where a Design Build Operate and Maintain solution become the preferable option.

The Transformed In-House model provides the Council with a realistic option for the immediate short-term, based on an assessment of market conditions, the unquantified risk and liabilities associated to the Terms & Conditions Audit, and in consideration of the service and corporate capacity to delivery change currently. Undertaking an Early Market Engagement exercise, without commitment to a procurement event will help inform future delivery arrangement whilst the transformation seeks to optimise the service, as the post pandemic leisure market recovery continues.

Background

Context

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) has commissioned First Point Management & Consultancy Limited (First Point) to undertake an independent review of its in-house leisure function operating under *One Leisure* to consider initial transformation work undertaken in the context of determining the most appropriate future operating model for One Leisure.

The review is broken into four key areas:

- Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years)
- Staff Review
- Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies
- Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)

The client requirements are included as Appendix 1.

Huntingdonshire District Council Headline Statistics

Huntingdonshire is a large (900 square kilometres) and predominantly rural area. However over 40% of the population live in the three largest market towns of St Neots, Huntingdon, and St Ives.

With an estimated 180,800 residents and 76,900 households in 2021, the population has grown significantly over recent decades (up by 47% since 1981). The district has an ageing population with 36,500 residents aged 65 plus, up by 33% since 2011 alone.

The latest estimates indicate that the number of residents in the district born outside the UK was 22,400 at March 2021 (12.4% of all residents). Poland is now ranked as the most common non-UK country of birth for the district's residents, followed by the United States and Romania.

Most people in the district identified their ethnic group within the 'White' category (92%) in 2021. Around 3% identified their ethnic group within the 'Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh' category, 2% within the "Mixed or Multiple" category, 2% within the 'Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African' category and the remaining 1% identified their ethnic group within 'other ethnic groups'.

In 2021, most of the district's residents described their health as at least 'good' (84%), around 12% self-reported their health as 'fair', with the remaining 4% of the population describing themselves as having 'bad' or 'very bad' health. An estimated 16% of the population were disabled in 2021, with 6% stating their day-to-day activities were limited a lot.

The majority of Huntingdonshire residents in 2021 travelling to a workplace or depot travelled more than 10 kilometres (51%) and just over half (52%) of those who travelled to work were drivers or passengers in a car or van. Just over 6,000 residents travelled to work on foot (7%).

There are pockets of higher deprivation within the district, but most areas have relatively low levels, as measured by the 2019 Indices of Deprivation. Economic activity (64% of those aged 16+) and employment rates (61.6% of those aged 16+) are both higher than the national average.

Corporate Plan 2023 - 2028

The Council has recently launched a new Corporate Plan 2023 – 2028, within the Plan it states:

This Corporate Plan to 2028 will inform everything we do as we refocus our vision, review our priorities and work with staff, residents, partners, communities, and businesses to lead Huntingdonshire into the future with confidence.

It will not always be easy. With a decreasing pot of government funding, rising costs and inflation and greater pressure on our services we will need to find ways to save money or generate income in order to continue providing high quality services.

We are also facing the threat of climate change. This requires decisive action and fundamental changes in how countries, cities and communities live and work. Our recently adopted Climate Strategy and action plan sets out how we can be better prepared to adapt to the impacts of climate change at a more local level. We will apply a “green lens” to all our decision making – embedding the climate and green agenda into all we do and considering environmental impacts and opportunities to improve the environment

As we grapple with the real issues facing us, we must be bold and set aspirational targets that challenge us to make a difference, whether that is by doing things directly ourselves or trying to influence change on a wider scale. With that in mind, this Corporate Plan outlines our three key priorities:

Priority 1 - Improving quality of life for local people:

1. Improving the happiness and wellbeing of residents
2. Keeping people out of crisis
3. Helping people in crisis

Priority 2 - Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations:

1. Improving housing
2. Forward thinking economic growth
3. Lower carbon emissions

Priority 3 - Delivering good quality, high value-for money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations:

One Leisure

The Council provides an in-house leisure offer through its ‘One Leisure’ brand that was established in 2010, it is understood that the service has always been managed in-house and there is no history of it being operated by a third-party. The service comprises of:

- St Ives Indoor Leisure Centre
 - The Burgess Hall attached to the centre
- St Ives Outdoor Centre
- St Neots Leisure Centre
- Huntingdon Leisure Centre
- Ramsey Leisure Centre
- Active Health & Sport Development teams
- One Leisure Direct Call Centre (based at Huntingdon Leisure Centre)

The Council decided upon a move away from a traditional leisure services approach and undertook a thorough review of its assets, planning to invest c.£10m into its leisure facilities. The capital investment and change in approach was based upon the premise of the service shifting from operating at a financial deficit to a commercially and financially sustainable position. It has been suggested that some of the financial projections were overly ambitious and whether or not the return on investment was achieved as envisaged is unclear.

Following the completion of the capital investment and rebranding 2015 – 2019 the Council commissioned an independent review of One Leisure with the aim of supporting its long-term goal of becoming a commercially sustainable business whilst supporting and providing the local communities it serves with affordable opportunities to be physically active.

The completion of the actions outlined within the independent review in 2019 were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic as leisure operators across the country faced a sudden and significant loss of income during the government-imposed closures, the subsequent restricted conditions placed upon re-opening facilities with reduced capacities and on-going business recovery.

An interim Head of Leisure Services was appointed in May 2022, now extended to March 2024 with a clear remit to undertake:

- A review of One Leisure's commercial sustainability and operation
- Implement a medium term financial and operational plan
- Propose and implement long term operating models for One Leisure

The review of One Leisure's commercial sustainability and the implementation of a medium term financial and operational plan have been completed, this report therefore focusses on the long-term operating models for One Leisure.

Review Methodology

First Point Management & Consultancy Limited

Established in 2006, First Point Management & Consultancy is a micro consultancy practice with over 30 years of public and private sector experience, providing a flexible interim management and consultancy service, utilising trusted professional and expert associates as necessary.

We have a refreshing and direct approach combining extensive senior management and consultancy experience across the leisure industry bringing together objective and analytical skills with operational expertise. We offer our clients, honest and pragmatic advice, providing professional opinion and solutions that can help influence and transform organisations in a positive and sustainable way.

Regardless of whether it is a discrete project, interim management or transformational support, we apply the most relevant best practice working within the context of existing and emerging policy combining this knowledge with our practical experience of what actually works.

We understand and appreciate that all our clients have different needs and challenges. Our extensive knowledge, expertise and understanding of the leisure sector within local government, not for profit and commercial context across the UK.

As a micro consultancy, we provide a bespoke and dedicated service to our clients, ensuring the named consultants are committed to working on the project, and will not use 'back-office' junior consultants. Collectively we have the skill sets and experience that will deliver the specific requirements of the Council and provide a quality assurance and sense check derived from our collective and extensive experience in the sector both at a strategic and operational level.

The Approach

Following the Inception Meeting in mid-September 2023, in order to develop and understand the existing service, facilities and proposals for the future a site visit was facilitated in early October 2023. The project was designed to be delivered in key stages for each key element of the client requirements as illustrated below.



In response to the detailed client requirements across the four areas for consideration the approach taken is summarised below. At the request of the client the assessment of the proposed Staff Review was advanced in the programme and was also completed in early October 23.

In addition, consultation with senior officers was undertaken to provide some different perspective on the future operational model for leisure, the challenges and opportunities, a list of consultees is contained at Appendix 2.

Short Term Operating Models (2-3 Years)

Through our network and connections with established leisure operators and based on recent experiences in a post pandemic environment, we will provide an assessment of the current market conditions and challenges facing the sector.

Delivery Options were considered as set out in the Client Specification, following dialogue with the client on the current operating model and an assessment of its performance in the current operating environment and as projected by the market over the next 2-3 years. The financial modelling will be based upon the current operation as a benchmark and assessed at a high level across other options based on opportunity/risk and our experience of other models. The collective experience of each of the delivery options described in the Client Specification, will be applied as part of the assessment including the in-house model, establishing a Local Authority Trading Company, the charitable trust model and outsourcing.

Staff Review

As referenced above this element of the project was advanced at the request of the client and undertaken by reviewing the proposals developed by the client and applying our practical and operational experience of implementation in a local authority and leisure management operations. We have also considered the challenges and complexities of transformation within the public sector.

Built Facility & Playing Pitch Strategy

The strategies commissioned by the Council were reviewed and considered in the context of latent demand, broader developments, population growth, observations from the site visits and engagement with key stakeholders. Recent experience suggests the current climate for capital projects is volatile, primarily associated to rising construction and labour costs; therefore, any illustrative provided can only be valid as 'a moment in time' and will need extensive and additional professional support to develop design concepts, financial appraisals and robust business cases to support each proposal.

The volatility of the construction sector is mirrored to some extent by the changing landscape of capital financing options and potential external funding opportunities for leisure schemes, therefore the 'moving feast' of opportunities will need to be kept under constant review as current funding streams close and new opportunities emerge that can support pipeline projects.

Medium (3-5 years) & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)

The approach taken was to apply our experience of capital investment programmes and how this may influence medium- and long-term operating models given the timescales to bring projects to fruition given the complexities of procurement, planning and financing alongside the prevailing market conditions.

Summary of Technical Matters

Qualifications

At this stage, no decisions have been taken by the Council in terms of its future operating model over the short, medium or long. First Point have been commissioned to provide an independent review of the future delivery models available to the Council and make recommendations for the future delivery of its leisure function currently delivered directly by its in-house service (One Leisure).

It should be noted that First Point are not lawyers or VAT specialists, therefore the findings and recommendations of this review are based on our professional experience of the sector and are presented in good faith. We would always recommend that the Council consult with its own legal and VAT officers as part of its own due diligence taking expert external advice as deemed necessary.

Legislation, regulations and guidance from government departments and HMRC are always subject to change therefore it is important that the Council considers any amendments or fundamental change that may be made in the future.

HDC's leisure services have always been delivered in-house, albeit re-branded as One Leisure in 2010 and subject to realignment to capital investment through the subsequent decade. More recently the service has been responsive to a changing landscape within the sector as part of post pandemic recovery.

Like many local authorities, the Council has been experiencing increasing financial pressures on its revenue budgets and needs to reduce costs wherever possible. It has been widely reported that many public leisure facilities are at risk of closure, Gateshead being among one of the first authorities to close a facility due to the pressure on its finances.

The provision of leisure services is not a statutory requirement, and if the Council is to continue to provide the public services it needs to reduce costs to an affordable level.

Legal Considerations

Local authorities have to act within the powers granted to them by Parliament, failure to do so can result in their actions being deemed to be ultra vires and therefore at risk of challenge via Judicial Review. A contract or other arrangement such as issuing a lease or licence to operate that has been granted outside the Council's powers can be declared null and void.

The general power of competence by section 1 Localism Act 2011 is generally accepted as providing a direct power to enter into contracts and grant leases to third party operators of the type relevant to this exercise, including a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC).

Procurement

It is both prudent and good practice for local authorities to periodically assess service delivery options to ensure the duty of Best Value is maintained, reviewing options every 3-5 years is not uncommon giving due consideration of market conditions at the time and service performance. Decisions on delivery options do not need to be permanent, as circumstances may change over time.

Should the Council decide to opt for a market solution at some point, contract awards would need to adhere to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR). However, whilst PCR remains in place currently it is anticipated that primary legislation may be introduced in 2024 or later, therefore it is something to monitor on the horizon. Adopting a market solution through a procurement exercise would require the Council to follow a procedure for seeking market interest, develop a specification, evaluation criteria and award notification, all of which will need to be a transparent and competitive process unless the Teckal exception applies.

Teckal

The Teckal exemption provides for the Council to award a contract and lease to an entity that it owns and controls without any competition, subject to compliance with HDC's own Standing Orders. The Teckal exception could apply to the LATC option, where competition is then not required as the Teckal exemption acknowledges that if a contracting authority contracts with a company that it owns and controls, this is effectively no different from the services being provided in-house. The government's Procurement Green Paper did not propose changes to the Teckal exemption; therefore, it is likely that this remains an option to local authorities regardless of any reforms to the PCR in the immediate future.

Regulation 12(1) of the PCR states that a public contract falls outside the procurement rules where all of the following conditions are met:

- the contracting authority (e.g., the Council) exercises over the legal party concerned (e.g., a wholly owned subsidiary) a control which is similar to that which it exercises over its own departments;
- more than 80% of the activities of the controlled legal person are carried out in the performance of tasks entrusted to it by the controlling contracting authority;
- there is no direct private capital participation in the controlled legal person.

The PCR also confirm that contracts with a wholly owned subsidiary which is owned by more than one public authority are not subject to procurement rules, nor are contracts granted by the wholly owned subsidiary to the parent local authority (e.g., contracts for support services).

In-House Service

There are no specific implications under PCR, if the Council wish for the services to remain in-house, although the need to demonstrate value for money and the Duty of Best Value still apply.

Good practice would be for the Council to develop a detailed specification for the in-house service with key outcomes, this is not intended to be a micro-management tool but something that is transparent in terms of performance and accountability.

Transferring assets to the LATC

Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides the Council with the power to dispose of property including the license or leasehold interest in its leisure assets currently operated in-house. The Council will need to demonstrate that entering into a transaction will meet its obligations as below:

- Councils' duty to obtain value for money,
- Councils' statutory duty to achieve best consideration reasonably obtainable,
- Councils' standard procedures with respect to the disposal of land and
- Councils' statutory duty to deliver Best Value with regards to its functions.

Value Added Tax (VAT)

Historically the supply of sporting services was exempt from VAT if those services are provided by an eligible body (essentially a non-profit distributing body that is not subject to commercial influence). However, the UK made a distinction between a non-profit distributing organisation (NPDO - e.g., a charitable trust) and those governed by public law (e.g., a local authority). The UK's application of VAT regulations disadvantaged in-house provision to some extent.

In July 2017 Ealing Council won a case against HMRC at the European Court of Justice claiming that its supplies of sporting services should also be exempt from VAT, the court found in favour of the Council and that HMRC's differentiation between non-profit making bodies and public bodies was not compliant with EU VAT law.

A recent policy paper issued by HMRC, states that local authorities in the UK are no longer required to pay VAT on leisure services provided to members of the public. This change in VAT treatment was introduced in

March 2023 and is applicable to in-house leisure services for gym memberships, sporting activities, and other facility visits.

Previously, local authorities were required to treat these supplies as business activities for VAT purposes and either charge their customers VAT at the standard rate or apply the exemption. However, following the legal challenge by a number of local authorities (including Ealing), the courts have found that local authorities' leisure services are provided under a statutory framework and can be treated as non-business for VAT purposes.

As a result of this ruling, local authorities can review their position and apply the non-business treatment to their supplies of leisure services. Additionally, there is the potential for consideration of submitting claims to HMRC for overpaid output tax in previous years.

This change in the treatment of VAT between different providers has changed the landscape to some extent. By removing the net income benefit of different VAT treatment between in-house delivery compared to an external organisation has 'levelled the playing field' to some extent. However, this may also impact on the ability of local authorities to recover VAT on their expenditure and potential implications for capital expenditure will need to be carefully considered in the wider context of the local authority's VAT position.

It is recommended that the Council seek specialist VAT advice to determine the net benefit of a claim to HMRC for output VAT paid in previous years and any broader VAT implications.

NNDR (National Non-Domestic Rates)

The Council does not benefit from any relief on NNDR for its leisure facilities managed by One Leisure. Charitable organisations and other Non-Profit Distributing Organisations (NDPO) including carefully constituted LATCs with charitable objectives would be entitled to 80% rate relief, HDC's Discretionary Rate Relief Policy (2023-2026) states it can grant the additional 20% at its discretion, taking into consideration the following:

- The extent their activities meets the Councils' corporate objectives and a demonstrable impact to the local community.
- The extent to which the organisation is local to Huntingdonshire and the benefits of the Authorities residents.
- The financial position of the applicant.

Many of the major leisure operators have charitable status in order to access the 80% relief, a LATC would only be able to access the discretionary relief. However, under the Business Rates Retention Scheme (2013), the granting of discretionary relief effectively results in the Council funding all or some of the 20% relief itself and offers limited financial benefit to the Council.

Following a recent valuation, the NNDR for the leisure estate is currently £1,117,500 in total. Many leisure operators are established with charitable objectives so delivery via this model could potentially reduce the operational cost by a net sum of c.£536,000. The discretionary rates relief policy is capped at £51k; all of the leisure facilities are above this threshold and would therefore not qualify for consideration. The rateable value of each site is contained at Appendix 3.

Consultation Requirement

The need for public consultation is something for potential consideration particularly if it is proposed to change the delivery model or fundamentally change the service, given that leisure is a customer facing service. Although the core function is unlikely to change the customer experience to any significant extent a change in delivery model may warrant further consultation to establish the key priorities of the new operator, such as approach to and its policy on accessibility.

The Council's duty to undertake consultation is derived from:

- statute (section 3(2) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999);
- a contractual commitment to do so;
- any policy or stated promise/representation that it would consult (in a council document, website, press notice or other public document) which will give rise to a potential legitimate expectation of consultation;
- Council policies.

Conclusion - Technical Matters

The delivery options available to the Council, are bound by legislation and directives as set out in this section (above). The recent change in the treatment of VAT by HMRC for in-house leisure operations, eliminates one of the advantages that NPDO operators have historically had over in-house provision. The complexity of legislation varies according to the selected delivery model; however, all are considerations of determining that model.

Post Pandemic Market Assessment

Post Pandemic Leisure Market

This section provides an assessment of the prevailing post pandemic market conditions as the sector continues on its recovery journey following the significant negative affect of the COVID-19 pandemic; seeking to inform recommendations for the short-term operating model.

Limitations

There are some limitations to this market assessment of business recovery:

- data collection on a macro scale takes time and is reliant on Sport England and/or industry bodies undertaking a comprehensive study of the market;
- a soft market testing exercise will consume additional resources to undertake and is unlikely to provide a guaranteed position as operators are likely only to respond in generalities in order to protect their commercial position;
- only by investing in a full procurement exercise will the market response be certain, procurement on this scale is a costly exercise and there is no guarantee that procurement will secure any significant benefits to Council in the current climate;
- the assessment of market conditions is based on the data available, informal dialogue with operators' observation of current trends and market activity.

Market Assessment

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the leisure market. Pre-pandemic the sector was buoyant across private and public organisations and both the private and public fitness market was booming.

This assessment focusses on the public sector, facilities provided by the local authority and operated by various organisational forms (in-house; arm's length Local Authority Trading Company (LATC), independent charitable trusts, social enterprises and the private sector).

Pre-pandemic many public sector contracts were seeing operational subsidies reduce as revenues grew and although not the norm, a number of contracts let to operators as a 'commission contract' whereby the operator paid the local authority a fee to operate its leisure facilities.

As Covid took a grip on the country, the government introduced a series of 'lockdowns'; from March 2020, these enforced closures of leisure facilities had a catastrophic impact on the sector. When facilities were permitted to re-open later in the year, strict operating restrictions were imposed, with significantly reduced capacities, social distancing, customers being required to pre-book sessions, and enhanced cleaning regimes being introduced were all factors that contributed to income being dramatically reduced as operating costs increased. These factors coupled with a change in customer behaviour, including the increase of outdoor activity and digital activity programmes, the loss of customer confidence, (particularly vulnerable users) resulted in a significant disruption to the market.

Government support schemes such as furlough, rate relief and other covid recovery schemes such as the National Leisure Recovery Fund and crucially in most instances the understanding and financial support of local authorities to protect these important local services allowed some hope that post pandemic recovery was realistic and a new priority.

Commentators in the sector at the time were predicting 2-3 years before it would return to 'business as usual'. Evidence from Sport England's *Moving Communities* report (April 2022) suggest that was not far from reality (see Appendix 3) as participation nationally, although recovering is still below pre-pandemic levels with outdoor activities (87%), swimming (83%), swimming lessons (74%), and gym activity (72%) this is broadly

reflective of the One Leisure position at the time, with the exception of swimming lessons that is performing exceptionally well.

Financial Impact

With the inevitable financial pressures that all leisure operators faced as a result of Covid, leisure provision became an increasingly prioritised conversation within many local authorities as the viability of provision under threat. Dialogue with third party operators became a 'live' issue as re-negotiating terms and/or the level of financial recovery support required put pressure on the already stretched public purse. The same pressures applied to directly delivered services or those delivered via an arm's length council-controlled company.

At the same time Covid made local authorities reconsider its leisure provision, operators were becoming increasingly risk adverse. This was then exaggerated further by the rapid spike in utility costs, unprecedented and sustained inflation and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, that was squeezing its revenue streams from the paying customer.

As contracts were being renegotiated or coming to a natural end, the risk appetite of the main operators in the sector was understandably changing to a considerably more cautious and risk adverse approach from that seen in previous years. Risk transfer was once a key attraction of outsourcing; however, operators have adopted a more cautious approach to risk and generally focussing on consolidation of market share rather than growth, this may include bidding for contracts as other are lost.

During the review, the consultants were made aware of a potentially significant operational and financial risk with regard to the Terms & Conditions Audit being undertaken by the Council.

The Audit has identified an unquantified risk (to date) re: departure from NJC 'Green Book' conditions for a significant number of One Leisure employees that may result in pay enhancements such as weekend and anti-social hours working having to be paid to employees stretching back for up to 5 years. As this is to date an unquantified risk, potential operators are likely to approach this matter with caution; even if the Council agreed to underwrite this cost it will undoubtedly be disruptive to the workforce and may hinder any future changes to terms and conditions that an operator may seek to introduce.

More recently there have been a number of authorities starting on the journey of insourcing including several London Boroughs, it is likely that this is due to a mix of political ideology, demands of third-party operators in contract renegotiation and changes to VAT regulations that is levelling up the playing field to some extent in terms of some historic outsourcing advantages.

Competitive Tension

Overall there currently appears to be little competitive tension in the market for leisure operators, except for the larger and potentially more lucrative contracts, although there are some early signs of the market revival. Covid recovery remains a key factor, however other challenges such as utility costs, inflation and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on disposable income of customers all are maintained as material risks to the sector.

Given that operators are currently risk averse and generally seeking terms that are less attractive than in the pre-pandemic period, a number of authorities are not prepared to make the considerable investment in a major procurement exercise, where the outcome is so uncertain and unlikely to offer any improvement on the current position in the short term. External providers are likely to seek a minimum term of 10 years with an option to extend, as reducing employee and other operational costs will take several years to execute.

Some operators may however consider strategic geographic growth, whereby they will seek to secure contracts in neighbouring authorities that would allow them to distribute their management overhead costs across a wider base and operate more efficiently and spreading their operational risk

- Considering strategic geographic growth around the HDC area, it is noted that: GLL are operating facilities for Cambridge City Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council;
- Trilogy Active is a local trust operating facilities in Northampton

- Abbeycroft Leisure are a not-for-profit organisation, operating facilities for West Suffolk Council and Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Council;
- Freedom Leisure is operating facilities in Fenland District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Milton Keynes, North Northamptonshire Council.

Peterborough have moved its leisure facilities into its LATC that was established primarily for waste and recycling services, it remains unclear if this is a temporary move pending market recovery. Each operator will have its own business recovery and growth strategy, it's a case of opportunity, capacity and timing will be factors in determining operators' level of interest in a procurement opportunity alongside the financial viability of the contract and the associated risks.

Early Market Engagement

The market assessment has been undertaken without the benefit of an Early Market Engagement exercise; therefore, assumptions have been made based on experience and observations within the market. The Council may wish to consider undertaking an exercise to test the potential appetite of leisure operators, that will offer further reassurance as part of its own due diligence and may also help to better inform future decisions in the medium and longer term, even if not the short-term delivery model. An Early Market Engagement exercise typically takes 6-8 weeks to conclude.

The Case for Leisure Provision

Local sport & leisure facilities are unquestionably part of the social fabric and physical infrastructure of the communities they serve. However, the leisure provision is a non-statutory function, and there is no legal requirement for local authorities to provide these services.

The question of provision is valid particularly as authorities become under increasing financial pressure and it could be argued that there is an established private sector market. However, private sector provision tends to be biased towards gym/fitness facilities (swimming pool provision is predominantly within the public domain); even where there are multi-functional facilities, accessibility is a factor as memberships are not affordable for everyone, thus exaggerating the health inequalities of low-income individuals and families.

The government has an ambition to improve the health of the nation, reduce health inequalities and improve co-ordination across health and social care through:

- improving physical activity especially among the most deprived, should lead to a reduction in diseases (thus alleviating pressure on the healthcare system and reducing treatment costs);
- improved quality of life and the associated economic returns, and
- a reduction in health inequalities (by reducing the gap in healthy life expectancy between the lower and higher social economic group) also contributing to a reduction in NHS expenditure.

There is evidence of the growing importance for local health collaboration across the country. The Integrated Care Systems (ICS) brings together health and care organisations, local councils, and third sector organisations to make a difference locally, reducing health inequalities and supporting prevention. HDC is a partner authority of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough ICS and has received £249,600 to offer residents evidence-based interventions for those with mild to moderate frailty and those at risk of cardiovascular disease. One Leisure can play a key role in delivering these types of health interventions and other social prescribing initiatives; however it will need to broaden its horizons beyond the existing leisure centres and take activity into the community.

Sport England, the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), Community Leisure UK (CLUK), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chief Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) all champion the need for public leisure facilities as a critical component of the community infrastructure supporting health and wellbeing, community cohesion, tackling inequalities, and creating a positive and active environment for local people.

The continued evolution of a financially sustainable public leisure offer is likely to be reliant and focussed on, active wellbeing, where commissioned public health programmes are integrated with traditional leisure activities and become a core component of the leisure offer.

Conclusion – Market Assessment

In summary, in the short term (2-3 years) it is considered unlikely that there will be sufficient market tension currently to secure a Best Value outcome from a competitive process currently, given the probable contract term sought by operators and the unquantified risk arising from the Terms & Conditions Audit. However, as referenced previously good practice would be to test this through an Early Market Engagement exercise and keep this under review as market conditions and circumstances may change.

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented pressures and hardship across all aspects of society, public and commercial organisations. In terms of the leisure sector, what it did highlight very clearly is that regardless of how councils have decided to provide and manage its public leisure services, risk of failure cannot be divested away from council assets and the local authority is always likely to be the funder of last resort in contract renegotiations.

The opportunity for One Leisure to exploit and maximise the community benefits of its relationship with the ICB, if taken, can only strengthen the case for continuation of the in-house offer, although other providers can argue that they could fulfil community health and wellbeing interventions equally as well and some operators are adept in this area. The creation of LATC's to deliver leisure functions has increased in popularity more recently and if constituted correctly can secure NNDR relief.

Short Term Operating Models (2-3 yrs.)

Service Delivery Options

As commented on above, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed and disrupted the leisure market; this section will explore the potential delivery options available to the Council in the short term.

At this stage, it should be reiterated that no decisions have been taken by the Council in terms of its future operating model over the short, medium and long term. First Point have been commissioned to provide an independent review of the future delivery models available to the Council and its leisure function currently delivered directly by its in-house service (One Leisure).

Whilst the Medium-Term Financial Strategy sets out a fairly positive picture overall compared to a number of other authorities, in common with many across the country, the Council remains under sustained financial pressures on its revenue budgets and needs to deliver its services in the most cost-efficient way possible, this necessity is heightened for non-statutory services such as leisure.

Facilities

One Leisure is the trading name of the Council's in-house leisure service that fulfils the leisure function delivering services from five sites:

- Huntingdon Leisure Centre
- Ramsey Leisure Centre
- St. Ives Leisure (Outdoor)
- St. Ives Leisure Centre (Indoors)
- St. Neots Leisure Centre

From the site visits undertaken, it is clear that from a customer perspective the facilities appear well presented, and clean, although there is a need for refurbishment, modernisation, re-configuration and in most instances the opportunity for expansion.

Core Options

The Council have identified 4 key delivery options to consider that could potentially be deployed for the operation of the council's leisure facilities, these include:

- direct in-house delivery by One Leisure (the current model);
- establishing a wholly owned and controlled council company;
- outsourcing to a third party;
- creation of a trust or not for profit entity.

In discussion with the client, the in-house option is considered as the 'Transformed In-House', the transformation foundations of this have already been laid through the appointment of an Interim Head of Leisure Services, adopting a more commercial approach to the service, the commissioning of the Built Facility and Playing Pitch strategies in 2022 and developing a detailed staff review that has been considered as part of this report. Failure to implement change would result in the 'status quo' being maintained and the operational deficit continuing unabated; encouragingly the initial stages of transformation have been supported by the Council therefore the 'Transformed In-House' is the model considered as the direct delivery option against the other core options listed above.

However, there are other potentially other less prevalent options for service delivery as described below; these options can be more complex, consume more resources and take longer to establish and implement. Although we have summarised the basic purpose and arrangements of these options below, these are not considered in

further detail at this stage given current market conditions and their complexity to establish, although they may be a consideration for the medium/long-term.

Joint Venture Company (JVC)

A joint venture company is a business entity created by two or more organisations (in this case the Council and another organisation) the two parties pool resources, expertise, and capital to undertake a specific business project or objective. The organisations involved in the joint venture remain separate legal entities, but they work together to achieve a common objective.

In a joint venture, the responsibilities, risks, and profits are shared between the parties involved according to the terms of the agreement. Joint ventures can take various forms, such as equity joint ventures where both parties own a percentage of the joint venture company, or contractual joint ventures where the companies work together under a contractual agreement but do not form a new separate legal entity. The Council could consider seeking a partner to establish a JVC; however, the proposition will need to be at a scale and sufficiently commercially attractive to potential partners. The only known JVC in the UK public leisure market is between Sunderland City Council and SLM (trading as Everyone Active), established in 2015 when the market was buoyant.

Joint Delivery Area Model

Similar to the JVC the opportunity exists to create or join a consortium approach when considering the future operating structure of the service. This is more commonplace with the Local Authority sector often more widely seen in the Shared Service Models. As the leisure sector continues to evolve and alternative operating models are considered by neighbouring local authorities, the opportunity to consolidate services with likeminded partner authorities in Cambridgeshire provides a potential vehicle for change in the future; however, the complexity of contract alignment of existing arrangements and developing partnerships should not be underestimated.

Options Appraisal

Consideration of the four core delivery solutions is set out below.

Transformed In-House

This is potentially the easiest option for the short term. However, for this to be successful, transformation must be supported and resourced, with the initial service changes embedded and full transformation pursued with vigour. Tweaking the operations will not be enough, and it is likely that unless a transformation plan is developed and driven by service management, it will only ever result in a sub-optimum outcome.

In-house transformation can be developed on a sliding scale, determining the depth of transformation the Council requires and has both the appetite and capacity to achieve. The aim should be to operate as leanly as possible, adopting best practice from the sector (regardless of the delivery model) and the benefits of the local authority infrastructure, its wider connectivity and local focus. The service will need sufficient scope and leeway to operate with flexibility such as working within agreed parameters to change prices or apply promotional offers without recourse for additional approvals, thus being able to respond to the market in a more dynamic way, similar to its external competitors. It may also need support services to adapt and change the way they interact with the Transformed In-House model, which can be challenging when they are still providing support for the entire organisation.

It is acknowledged that the optimum operational position from a pure finance perspective is unlikely to be palatable or possible e.g., moving away from NJC terms & conditions and even the Local Government Pension Scheme (LPGS); indeed, as a good employer some of this may not be desirable at all and have a negative impact on recruitment and retention. However, changes to operational practice that enable the service to operate in the most efficient way possible in line with the sector 'norms' can be achieved. HDC has recently commenced work on its Workforce Strategy. It will be important for the service to engage with this initiative to ensure that it meets the needs of its transformation plan e.g., a reward and remuneration or commission

scheme for sales above target and flexibility within the workforce that is appropriate for a 7-day-a-week service. It is not possible for the directly delivered in-house model to access any NNDR relief.

Local Authority Trading Company (LATC)

The Localism Act gave local authorities new powers to trade, resulting in the increase in popularity of the LATC model and the creation of new companies, delivering a wide range of services including leisure. Whilst there are variants to this approach, in this instance the LATC is considered to be a wholly owned and controlled Council company. It is possible for the LATC to be part of a JVC or Joint Area Delivery Model at some point in the future. Current procurement regulations continue to provide the powers for public authorities to create LATC's and award contracts directly without competition.

The LATC is an arms-length incorporated company and potentially could benefit from increased flexibility in decision-making to the same extent or potentially beyond that of an optimised Transformed In-House model. This would provide the LATC with the capability to operate more commercially and the potential to generate trading surpluses that can be reinvested back into the service and local community in accordance with its Articles of Association. It is assumed that the LATC model will not be simply a 'lift and shift' of the current One Leisure model, but it will share the current and future transformation objectives of the Transformed In-House model, providing the LATC with the ability to operate freely will be a key determinant of its success.

However, establishing a LATC does require resourcing. It was discovered during the review that HDC already has a LATC, *Huntingdonshire District Council Ventures Limited*; although it is understood that the company does not fulfil any frontline delivery functions. It should be possible to establish a leisure subsidiary of Ventures Ltd, subject to a review of and possible amendment of its Articles of Association, although it may be preferable to create a new LATC. Reviewing the articles of the existing LATC is outside of the scope of this review.

Key to its success will be the relationship between the local authority and the LATC, company, and managing the potential conflicts of interest between the commercial interests of the company and the public interest of the local authority. The benefits of the LATC are generally predicated on taking a long-term view and the Council being supportive of potential changes to terms and conditions of employment such as weekend enhancements and alternative pension provision for new entrants, that could potentially make significant savings to employee costs. Despite being an arms-length organisation the LATC is wholly owned by the Council and that inevitably brings into question that this could be considered by the trade unions as creating a 'two-tier' workforce where changes are proposed and may be resisted by the trade unions. Given the recent spotlight on employment terms through the Terms & Conditions Audit, changes of this nature may be more difficult to achieve in the short term.

If constituted correctly as an NPDO with charitable objectives clearly stated in its Articles of Association it is possible for the LATC to secure the 80% NNDR relief afforded to NPDO's, however it is not and never can be a charity as governed by the Charities Commission.

There are multiple examples of LATC's across the country including: *Brio* (Chester and Chester West), *Lampton Leisure* (Hounslow), *Leisure SK* (South Kesteven), *Life Leisure* (Stockport), *Plymouth Active* (Plymouth), *Volair* (Knowsley).

Outsourcing to a Third-Party

There is a mature leisure market that has been established across the country for several decades. This commenced with the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) in 1998 and continued to develop with the Best Value regime that followed, providing a variety of outsourced models; the three main types are as below:

- Large NPDO's – these will have all been developed from local authorities and have grown considerably to successfully operate multiple contracts beyond their original 'home' authority and across the UK. Some of these operators such as Fusion, GLL (trading as 'Better') and Freedom manage both local and high-profile facilities such as the Olympic Legacy venues.

- Private operators such as Places for Leisure, Parkwood, Serco and SLM (Everyone Active) often deploy a 'hybrid trust' model, whereby they can distribute profit back to their controlling company.
- Smaller local NPDO's (Trusts) have usually emerged from their 'home' authority, generally with little ambition for growth beyond their own geographic area and wholly focussed on a contract with their host authority. Whilst providing a focussed local service, the vulnerability of a single contract is a risk, examples of this type of organisation can be found at Burnley, Harlow, Pendle and Warrington.

If this option was selected a full procurement exercise would be required, this includes the option of the Council establishing its own charitable trust, that by its very nature must be wholly independent from the Council who can have no controlling interest in the trust. The resources to undertake a procurement event should not be underestimated. The market assessment concludes that this is not recommended for the short-term solution, as the Council should be seeking to 'squeeze the value' out of the service before considering going to the market and should also keep the situation under review.

Trust or Not for Profit Entity

Many local authorities established charitable trusts or similar vehicles to deliver their leisure services from their own in-house service (as commented on above) from the inception of CCT in the late 1980's. This option was attractive to many authorities, as it effectively shielded the service from any form of robust or an open procurement process and created access to many charitable benefits; one of the key benefits being 80% NNDR relief and often the additional 20% discretionary relief afforded by some authorities. This option remained available to local authorities until 2016 when direct awards (without following a competitive process) became only permissible in very exceptional and strictly interpreted, circumstances set out in Regulation 32 of the PCR (2015).

An award of a contract under regulation 32(2)(c) allows the use of the negotiated procedure without prior publication for the award of service contracts *"insofar as is strictly necessary where, for reasons of extreme urgency brought about by events unforeseeable by the contracting authority, the time limits for the open or restricted procedures or competitive procedures with negotiation cannot be complied with"*.

The circumstances invoked to justify extreme urgency must also not be attributable to the contracting authority. This means that direct awards have to be strictly necessary, the urgency of doing so must be extreme and the events giving rise to the urgency must have been unforeseeable by and not attributable to the Council and it must not be possible to procure the services using one of the accelerated tender processes under the PCR.

It should be noted that it is still possible to create a charity or not for profit organisation, however it will need to compete in a transparent procurement process. A new charity must be a wholly independent organisation, most will be a limited liability company incorporated under the Companies Act 2006. As such it has all the characteristics of a normal company, including legal personality and limited liability of members and must comply with all requirements set for companies, such as the requirement to file accounts, certain resolutions and regular returns with Companies House.

A new charity will have no financial or operational track record as such, Trustees will need to be recruited and a Board established, management and staff recruited, and back-office support services sourced and secured. The likelihood of a successful procurement outcome against established operators in a competitive environment is low. However, given the market is suppressed currently this may present an opportunity, although the risk of external competition cannot be ruled out. Given the uncertainty of the procurement outcome, staff may be resistant to commit to the move across to it and it may only technically become a TUPE situation when the charity has a contract award.

Additionally, the Council will not be able to control or unduly influence the operation and affairs of the charity as it must be an independent body to become a registered charity governed by the Charities Commission.

Another common form of a not-for-profit organisation is the Community Interest Company (CIC), an enterprise set up to benefit the community.

CICs have been set up to run community facilities such as swimming pools, community centres, and other assets that were being sold off by local authorities. There are thousands of CICs of all sizes across the UK, operating in a wide range of sectors, including health, the arts, media, education and social work. The basic legal structure of a CIC is similar to a charity insofar as it would be a limited liability company incorporated under the Companies Act 2006 and have the characteristics of a normal company as described above in relation to a charitable trust. A CIC is therefore not a separate form of company, but merely a company with certain characteristics.

What makes a CIC distinct is that it has a 'lock' on its assets and is limited to the profits it can distribute to shareholder/members, which in this instance would be the Council if established by HDC. All assets have to be used for the community purpose; if the assets are sold, the proceeds have to be used for the community purpose. If a CIC ceases trading, the assets have to be transferred to a similar asset-secured company.

It should be noted that the Council could establish a LATC that would be a not-for-profit entity, this can be incorporated in the form of a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) or a CIC and like any other company will be bound by company regulations.

The Community Interest Test

When applying to set up a CIC at Companies House, the Council would need to undertake the a 'community interest test'; demonstrating that there is a clear benefit to the wider community and not just to the Council. All the directors have to sign a community interest statement to this effect.

Differences Between CICs and Charities

One major difference is that directors of CICs can be paid a salary and retain control of the company whereas charities tend to be run by volunteer boards. The asset lock is also unique to CICs and thanks to the social-purpose of the enterprise, they can legitimately apply for grant-funding usually restricted to charities. Charities that operate trading arms could convert to the CIC model, although the CIC may not benefit from all the tax advantages as charitable organisations.

Analysis of Options

As commented on above, we have assumed the in-house option will be a Transformed In-House service, building on the initial work that has commenced over the past c.18 months.

The options appraisal is based on the principles set out by Council in the project brief, these have been considered as the underlying principles of each aspect commented on below. The principles are:

- financial modelling
- balancing the level of risk, the Council is willing to take
- the commercial return the Council wishes to secure or guarantee
- the social and wellbeing benefits the Council is seeking to achieve
- the environmental factors that the Council expect to achieve through its Climate Strategy
- the level of control the Council would retain over both strategic and operational matters

The assessment is based on the market assessment and our practical experience of each of the models. It is not possible to determine with total accuracy which model may actually be most advantageous to the Council without undertaking a soft market testing exercise and/or a full procurement exercise, where through dialogue with potential operators the proposal can be comprehensively considered. This may be something for consideration in the medium/long term options at the appropriate time.

Each element below is RAG rated as illustrated below:

	Most beneficial / advantageous to the Council
	Moderately beneficial / advantageous to the Council
	Least beneficial / advantageous to the Council

Set Up and Transitional Costs

The Transformed In-House model is likely to have the lowest cost to implement. However, there will be a need to invest in management and staff to ensure it has the capacity and capability to optimise performance.

The current Head of Service has been integral to initiating and driving service improvement over the past 18 months or so, it is understood that the postholder is only contracted to March 2024, this not only generates a delivery risk but potential recruitment cost. The Transformed In-House option could be implemented immediately; although external transformation support may be required if there is not sufficient internal capacity within the Council to affect the cultural shift required. The estimated cost of external support is c.£20k-35k depending on the depth of support required.

Establishing a leisure subsidiary of the Council's existing LATC or creating a new LATC, is likely to require external support, unless there is spare capacity within the Council to project manage its inception and mobilisation. Carefully establishing the LATC to be Teckal compliant and to secure NNDR relief may require additional external support. Although the transfer from in-house to LATC should be relatively seamless, it would be prudent not to underestimate the volume of work involved including some highlighted below:

- Articles of Association with charitable objectives.
- Producing a client service specification; Memorandum of Agreement/Funding Agreement, performance framework, operating leases/licences etc.
- Establishing new governance and oversight mechanisms (may be more involved for a customer facing service).
- Subsidiary or NewCo established and incorporated including; Articles of Association (or review and amendment to existing), VAT registration, producing a Business Plan for consideration by the Council and;
 - establishing its own banking and financial arrangements; regulatory procedures, appointment of an auditor;
 - support service requirements (buying back from the Council or sourcing externally);
 - comprehensive suite of policies and procedures (although these could potentially just be adopted from One Leisure initially);
 - payroll arrangements and compliance with HMRC requirements for an arms-length company;
 - internal and customer comms and re-branding;
 - ICT systems interface with the Council;
 - Board recruitment (although this could initially be existing Councillors and/or Senior Managers) of Company Directors with the requisite sector experience and skill sets required to control a leisure company;
 - Company Director training for the Board etc. (if new Directors are appointed);
 - HR support to manage the TUPE transfer, in accordance with legislation.

There is a potential reduction in demand for Council support services if the LATC source alternative providers that are more cost effective, however in most instances of LATC's being established there is a minimal impact on central support costs that are generally redistributed across the council.

Based on previous experience elsewhere, whilst creating the LATC as a 'shell' company or subsidiary is relatively straightforward and can be done in days, getting to 'go-live' for a customer facing service in readiness to trade could take anything from 6-12 months dependent on the speed of decision

making/delegations for each aspect of establishment with an estimated cost of c.£75k - £125k (excluding re-branding costs, uniforms, signage etc.), depending on what internal capacity exists to support the implementation of this option.

Outsourcing to a third party would require a comprehensive procurement exercise in accordance with the Procurement Act (2023) that received Royal Assent on 26th October 2023. It is anticipated this new procurement legislation will 'go-live' in October 2024 following a minimum of 6-months advance notification. Local authorities have been asked to consider their procurement pipeline for the next 12 months in light of the Act being introduced, this would not restrict the Council undertaking an Early Market Engagement exercise. Procurement of leisure services can be a complex and lengthy process that is likely to need external support depending on internal capacity across most disciplines. Typically for the leisure contracts a minimum of 9-12 months should be allowed from the point the decision to outsource to award. Established operators will have their own back-office support functions therefore there would be in theory be a reduction in demand for corporate support services, however as the leisure function is often a small proportion of a particular activity, realisation of cost reduction in this regard is limited. The cost of procurement alone is estimated to be c. £100k- £150k.

The creation of a charitable trust or not for profit entity will still require a procurement exercise as described above and have a similar impact of Council support services. In addition, the trust will need to recruit a Board of Trustees, typically these consist of up to 12 independent Directors with the requisite skills to govern a charity (with a maximum of two local authority representatives under this format). The trust would need all the management and operational arrangements put in place as per the LATC option, which could be developed in tandem with the procurement exercise but as a NewCo it will need to establish and initiate all the business infrastructure unlike an existing operator. It should be noted that this option would all be undertaken 'at risk', as the outcome of a successful procurement exercise cannot be guaranteed.

The attraction of outsourcing to an organisation with charitable objectives including a correctly formed LATC with charitable objectives, is securing the 80% NNDR mandatory relief (net benefit 60% of this sum after accounting for loss on rates income to HDC). However in the short-term the cost of procurement, uncertainty of a beneficial outcome and other 'live' issues all detract from the potential NNDR advantage if seeking an external delivery solution; there would be no requirement for procurement with a LATC option.

Transformed In House	
LATC	
Outsourced	
Trust or NPDO	

Level of Operational Risk Transfer

The Transformed In-House model offers no change to the current position with One Leisure as the Council remain liable for all operational risk transfer. For the LATC model it could be argued that there is some risk transfer, but it is minimal as despite being a separate entity in theory, the Council are its sole Member, therefore it retains some liability albeit at arms-length

For both the outsourced and trust/NPDO option day to day operational risk would sit with the operator, however if either option went into financial crisis and/or liquidation the Council remains would be the funder of last resort, so are the risk transfer is not absolute.

The unquantified risk associated to the Terms and Condition Audit, can only really be mitigated for an alternative delivery model if the Council state at the outset that they will underwrite the liability. However, as the quantum is currently unknown and resolution is likely to take some considerable time, the financial impact to the current and future service offer is likely to create a significant non-transferrable risk. The uncertainty this creates amongst potential operators may result in them seeking full indemnity for this and other unforeseen historic liabilities regardless of their own due diligence.

Transformed In House	
LATC	
Outsourced	
Trust or NPDO	

Asset Management Responsibility Transfer

The notion of 'full repairing leases' is a long way from reality in most leisure contracts. In all instances the Council is likely retain ownership and responsibility for the main structural elements of the facilities such as the roof, walls, drainage, major capital works etc. Even where a degree of asset management transfer was possible as determined by contract and/or negotiation, the Council would assume the 'landlord' responsibility under a typical 'landlord and tenant' lease arrangement.

As the Council will retain ownership of the facilities and be responsible for major capital works in each of the models considered, there will be no material difference in terms of carbon reduction schemes and access to grants as the Council is still likely to take the lead on these projects supported by the operator. Outsourcing to one of the larger operators is likely to bring some additional experience to carbon reduction schemes in leisure facilities; however, the Council has already successfully completed a project at Ramsey Leisure Centre, therefore this is not considered to offer any significant advantage.

Utility consumption for leisure facilities is a significant operational cost, particularly those with swimming pools; the recent spike in energy costs has highlighted this more widely. Pre-pandemic the operator was generally liable for utility costs, and generally accepted this level of risk, even if this was based on a 'cap and collar' arrangement. The recent spike in energy costs effectively triggered a renegotiation of contract terms between many operators and the local authorities, as this along with the loss of revenues due to the pandemic this threatened the viability of many contracts. Local authorities can often secure preferable unit costs and achieve economies of scale particularly if they are part of an energy consortium; some of the larger leisure operators can achieve similar rates where they operate multiple contracts. The newly established trust/NPDO would however be reliant on the Council continuing to provide utilities as it is unlikely to be able to secure the best unit costs as a new entity with a single contract.

Risk transfer on utilities alone is unlikely to be significantly different for any of the options currently. External operators will be reluctant to take on the utility risk, without 'risk pricing' in their commercial offer or negotiating shared risk.

One of the key determinants of whether this is advantageous to the Council or not will be the condition of facilities and the split of liabilities. In each of the models, it would be common for day-to-day repairs, and small capital work to fall to the operator who would factor this in the commercial offer based on recent condition surveys undertaken by the Council. Prospective operators will inevitably assess the risk and factor that into contract negotiations. Achieving any additional liability transfer maybe possible, however the cost of risk transfer in the commercial considerations may equate to or be higher than the risk of the Council retaining responsibility.

On the assumption that outsourcing the service to an established operator who has established relationships with contractors some aspects of asset management could be satisfactorily undertaken, however the Council may have established contractual relationships with local suppliers that supports the local economy. For a newly established trust or NPDO with no account history with contractors the advantages are likely to be marginally better than the Transformed In-House or LATC option but not as good as an established operator.

The Transformed In-House model offers no change to the current position with One Leisure as the Council remain liable for all operational risk transfer. For the LATC model it could be argued that there is some risk transfer to an arms-length company but in reality, the liability would not stray from its single member, the Council. In current market conditions where operators are risk adverse, transfer of liabilities may be possible but will come at a cost to the Council and may only offer a marginal advantage.

Transformed In House	Red
LATC	Red
Outsourced	Yellow
Trust or NPDO	Yellow

Level of Council Control

With the Transformed In-House model, the Council would maintain full control, albeit to maximise the advantages of this approach, freedom to operate and flexibilities need to be applied. The LATC will have its own company Board of Directors and must have the latitude to operate commercially, however ultimately the Council is its sole member and can decide to terminate the arrangement with the LATC as and when it chooses to do so, therefore the degree of control is considerable.

The Council's level on influence and control of both the outsourced and LATC/NPDO option is effectively governed by the contract and service specification it has in place with the service provide. Typically, the Council may have two representatives on a Board of twelve Directors for a locally established independent charitable trust. However, the Council nominees are Directors of the trust/NPDO and bound by the responsibilities and duties of a Director to entity and not the Council; as such the level of control is the same as the outsourced option.

Transformed In House	Green
LATC	Green
Outsourced	Red
Trust or NPDO	Red

Scope for Community Involvement

In theory there should be no discernible difference between the options if the requirement for community involvement is clearly specified in the client requirements, as each of the options could in theory work with the Council and community partners to engage with the community. However, in practice a Transformed In-House and LATC option is likely to have existing relationships across the Council and with community groups therefore would have a 'head start' on the outsourced and trust/NPDO option even if staff transfer across under TUPE. Local authorities are established organisations, embedded in the local community and generally 'trusted' organisations, this does give the Transformed In-House and the LATC model a slight advantage in this area.

Transformed In House	Green
LATC	Green
Outsourced	Yellow
Trust or NPDO	Yellow

Potential to Increase Participation

The service specification and/or client requirements should include the need to increase participation. All of the delivery models will be focussed on increasing participation where it increases generated income and drives up community participation that delivers health and wellbeing outcomes, attracts third-party funding and delivers against the contractual performance targets. Retention of existing and new customer is equally important to maximising participation rates, investment in digital tools and targeted marketing will support this objective, alongside a membership architecture that provides options and choice for customers. Whilst the Transformed In House and LATC may appear best placed with existing connections and local intelligence, given TUPE applies it is not considered that this provides any distinctive difference between the delivery models.

Transformed In House	Green
LATC	Green
Outsourced	Green
Trust or NPDO	Green

Access to Capital and Investment Funds

Currently Prudential Borrowing through the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) despite recent interest rate increases offers the most preferential lending rates compared to borrowing from the market. Even where leisure facilities are operated by a third-party organisation, the local authority often finance capital schemes through PWLB; project management responsibility can be led by the council or the operator depending on capacity and capability that would need to be agreed between the parties.

If HDC reached its borrowing capacity limits, an established operator could potentially borrow from the market to deliver a scheme on behalf of the council. However, this would need to be negotiated with the operator on the understanding that a management fee may be applied by the operator in addition to a higher rate of borrowing than the PWLB and the arrangement would be dependent on the length of the contract. A newly established trust/NPDO will have limited financial or credit history and may find it more difficult to secure capital funding than any of the other options.

Access to major sources of third-party funding e.g., Sport England, Football Foundation, National Governing Bodies is likely to be accessible regardless of the delivery model, although as asset owners, the Council is likely to be required to guarantee longevity of use. Access to some funding schemes is restricted to charitable organisations, providing some possible advantage for the trust/NPDO's although it should be noted that many of the major operators fulfil this criterion.

Given that the PWLB is likely to be the preferred source of financing capital schemes regardless of the service delivery option, then there is no difference in this regard. An established operator will potentially have the ability to secure funding from the market, if necessary, where this is less likely for a newly established trust/NPDO. Some funding streams will be restricted to organisations with charitable status, therefore overall, this provides a marginal favourable position to that of the Transformed In-House and LATC option.

It will be important that capital investment in leisure is fully immersed in the thinking and opportunities to finance or contribute to schemes from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and/or Section 106, creating a pipeline of potential investment aligned to development and regeneration schemes.

Transformed In House	
LATC	
Outsourced	
Trust or NPDO	

Options Summary

The tables below provide a summary of the criteria set by the Council, a weighting applied to the assessment and the outcome.

Table 1 - Criteria Assessment

	Set Up & Transitional Costs	Level of Operational Risk Transfer	Asset Mngt. Transfer	Level of Council Control	Scope for community Involvement	Potential to increase participation	Access to capital and investment funds
Transformed In House							
LATC							
Market Solution (Outsourced)							
Creation of a Trust or not-for-profit entity							

Conclusions – Short Term Operating Model

In consideration of both the current Market Assessment, the Options Appraisal, and the recently identified risk associated to the Terms & Conditions Audit, the Transformed In-House model is considered to provide the best solution for the Council in the immediate short-term. Both service and corporate capacity to implement an alternative delivery currently would be challenging and may severely stretch the organisation. However, reviewing market conditions through an Early Market Engagement exercise and reconsidering the LATC option within the next year is worthy of consideration.

The set-up costs and timescales associated to implementing any of the other options is likely to take until early 2025 to result in a change of operating model even for a LATC, assuming a decision to select an alternative model is taken in early 2024. If the Transformed In-House model is approved and resourced, the transformation journey will effectively have had a 12-month head start on any of the other options to implement the changes required. Resolving the currently unquantified liability of the Terms & Conditions Audit is key as employee costs are the largest expenditure item for leisure and until this issue is resolved it would not be possible for the LATC to develop a Business Plan with any degree accuracy.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and market recovery, the acute rise in utility costs and cost of living crisis have resulted in a more cautious market and operators becoming risk adverse, significantly changing and suppressing the appetite of operators to take commercial risks.

Council control is maintained with the Transformed In-House model. In each of the other models the operator is an independent entity, although less so with the LATC as the Council would be its sole member and can determine the continuation of the company. The LATC is only an attractive option if there is a commitment to a term similar to that an external operator may seek, in order to implement change e.g., 10 years with an extension option. If an authority was only considering the LATC model as an interim position to secure NNDR benefits, then due regard should be given to the negative impacts of this approach. The disruption of a service transfer for the short term is unlikely to be beneficial to the financial or operational position. In theory, it could be argued that the required service specification, and performance framework for the LATC model provides the Council with control in all options, however each of these would require an enhanced 'client side' to monitor the contract whilst the Transformed In-House provides direct control and influence.

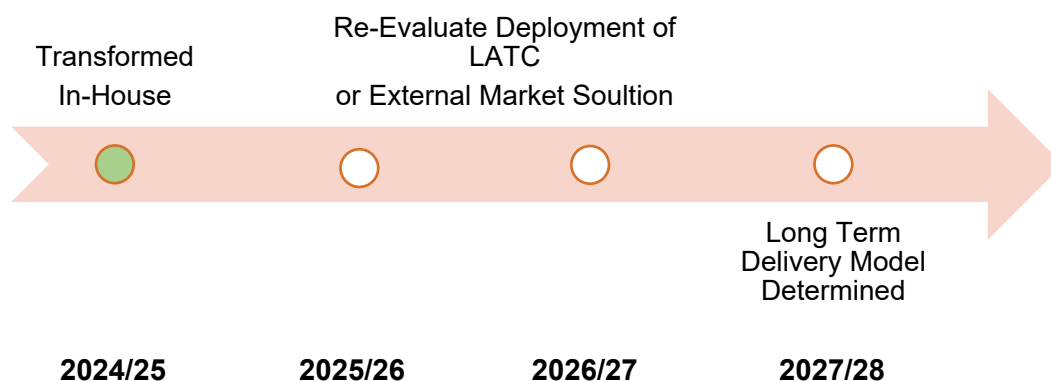
The Transformed In-House and LATC are most likely to provide opportunities for community involvement as they will have existing relationships and connections with the communities they serve, although it is possible over time that the other delivery models could achieve similar levels as they develop their understanding of the locality.

It is not considered that there is any material difference between the models in terms of increasing participation as all models will have a clear focus on delivering this.

Access to capital and investment funds for large capital schemes is likely to come from Prudential Borrowing as the Council are owners of the assets; interest rates are competitive and offer good value for money compared to market financing solutions. If the Council reach capacity on its borrowing or have other priorities it would be possible for an established operator to secure capital financing from the market although this is not 'free money' and would and ultimately cost the Council more to repay.

However, if at some point in the future the Council considered a significant capital project to build a new leisure centre(s) that was upwards of c.£20m then a market solution to Design Build Operate and Maintain (DBOM) may be an attractive option if the Council had exhausted its capital borrowing limits. This however is not a scenario for the immediate future or the short-term, if this became a live option, the operating model should be reconsidered at this time.

Operators with charitable status may be eligible for some external funding streams which the local authority are excluded from although these are generally associated to programme delivery rather than infrastructure projects. A timeline summarising the proposed short-term delivery arrangement is illustrated below.



Proposed Staff Review

Introduction

This section provides a high-level diagnostic review of and provides comment on the preliminary work undertaken to date on the proposed staffing structure for HDC's Leisure Services.

The review critiques the recent paper presented to the Council's SLT and HR (September 2023) on the proposed staff review of One Leisure in conjunction with associated supporting documents provided by the client

The purpose of the review was to fulfil the following key objectives which are identified as:

- A structure that allows for a clear pathway to career progression and better training and development opportunities for staff
- Provide a staffing structure that supports financial efficiency and growth
- Improve financial performance of One Leisure

Limitations

The limitations of a high-level review mean that Job Descriptions and Person Specifications are not considered. Additionally, and possibly more crucially, the competence and capability of existing staff and any new appointments that are required to deliver any change in service delivery is unknown to the consultants and will only become evident after implementation. Comments on the proposed structure are therefore provided in the context of these limitations.

Huntingdonshire Built Sports Facility Strategy

In 2022 the council commissioned external support to produce an Indoor and Built Sports Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy for Huntingdonshire. Endorsed by Sport England, the strategies provide a comprehensive review and assessment of facilities and pitches and provide strategic recommendations in line with population growth forecasts contained in the Local Plan.

The strategies are key features of the wider One Leisure review and play a central part of the proposals emerging across this wide and expansive staff review.

Plans are in place that these strategies are to be utilised by partners and providers to benefit and enable the leisure and sporting landscape across Huntingdonshire as a whole.

The service vision expressed on HDC's website is:

To create and maintain high quality, sustainable leisure and sports facilities which meet community need, increase participation, help tackle health and age issues and provide accessible, inclusive activities for Huntingdonshire residents as part of an active lifestyle.

It is important that the proposed staff review is aligned to the development of these important strategies, supports financial imperatives and sustainability.

The key purpose of the overarching One Leisure staff review is to support the delivery of the new corporate plan priorities and aid full post pandemic business recovery whereby the service can eliminate the operating deficit, move to breakeven and ultimately to a position where it generates an operating surplus. The clear intent remains as reported on in the paper to SLT/HR, that the proposed staff changes will result in a more efficient and effective structure that is outcome focussed with improved staff retention, recruitment, and career pathways.

However, it is recommended that for the proposed structural changes to be effective a Learning & Development Plan is developed and adequately resourced to support individuals and the service to achieve its objectives. In addition, an objective post implementation review should be undertaken to determine if the changes have delivered the anticipated outcomes.

It is recognised that the work undertaken to date and phased approach to a new model of delivery has allowed a detailed review to take place on the joint outcomes that can be better delivered by a more purposeful and collaborative approach across all leisure sites within One Leisure.

National Context

HDC acknowledged that change was required across broad Leisure functions and the One Leisure Business model to reposition the traditional offer of public leisure into a more commercially viable offer in parallel to an active wellbeing service, doing more to create healthier and more active communities across HDC. The appointment of a more commercially focussed Interim Head of Leisure is testimony to the commitment to change.

Nationally Sport England have recently published *The Future of Public Leisure report*. The impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, rising energy costs and cost of living crisis has accelerated the appetite for local authorities and their partners to review leisure services and more broadly re-examine the purpose of provision. This includes their alignment with broader strategic outcomes, particularly health. The report recommends expanding the traditional offer of public leisure into an Active Well-being service, doing more to create healthier and more active communities. It will be important that the proposed new structure has the roles and personnel with the capacity and capability to effectively engage with partners, particularly in health, where there are opportunities to secure funding to deliver community focussed services.

Leisure Operational Focus

Previous data analysed cited covering the last 5 years of actual staff and income information and the 2023-2024 budgeted position. One Leisure has typically operated at a financial deficit position with a staff to income ratio of between 60 – 65%.

Prior to Covid and the significant business disruption encountered across the leisure industry per se, it has widely been accepted that generally most commercial operators will aim to deliver a service at around 50-55% staff to income ratio. Although it should be noted this figure does vary considerably based on accuracy of data and local circumstances aligned to the delivery model (private/Trust/in house etc.), and the specific priorities and ambition of the service. The proposal is geared towards a leaner more efficient structure, with opportunity for growth.

Staffing is the single largest cost to operating leisure centres and the current structure within One Leisure (prior to any changes proposed) is delivering a high cost to income ratio. It is noted that feedback from staff engagement sessions facilitated by senior managers across One Leisure in May and June 2023 suggested there was no evidence of a progressive career pathway for staff. This positive engagement should continue to be an integral part of any change process and service restructuring.

One Leisure management have undertaken a review of current and proposed structures that has considered:

- Core operational hours of leisure centres
- Core customer opening hours
- Lifeguard operational review
- Fitness consultant appointment review
- One Leisure Direct telephone call review

The review of these operational elements is comprehensive and geared to delivering an efficient service that meets current service demands with flexibility to scale up for growth also. This work has made a valuable contribution in the design of the new delivery model for the service and its individual sites.

It is clear the proposed changes represent a change of direction with a clear focus on a more commercial approach that is in keeping with industry 'norms' of the major service providers in the sector and overall, greater strategic alignment with council priorities. The introduction of 3 new posts:

- Activities Manager
- Events & Hospitality Manager
- Business Support & Compliance Manager

These roles are designed to support both the financial objectives of the service and deliver community outcomes; these new posts coupled with greater emphasis on revenue generation, service standards, and compliance are key features of a more dynamic leisure operator. Converting outcomes to deliverables will also be a key feature; it is recommended that the service should develop a Key Outcomes Framework that is integrated with individual and team target setting that supports this new focus

Data and insight will be key to supporting the services as it seeks to deliver its objectives and demonstrate how sport and leisure can play an integral role in delivering community outcomes. It is anticipated the new Business Support and Compliance Manager will provide the tools and analysis to all informed decisions to be taken.

It is noted that the proposed structure includes the deletion of the current Marketing and Communications Coordinator. The impact of this proposal is unclear from this desk-top review, it is however essential that the duties and capabilities are accommodated within the proposed structure. Effective marketing, communications and use of social media platforms are key to commercial success; therefore, assurance should be sought that these functions are adequately covered in the proposed structure.

The proposed staff re-structure compared against the current 2023-2024 budget indicates that overall, the staff weekly hours are maintained, however, the proposal can potentially reduce expenditure by £257k per annum. The cost efficiencies are considerable and support the move towards breakeven and ultimately an operational surplus and can be considered a commercially sound approach to pursue.

The restructure proposal presented to SLT/HR in September is focussed on providing added value to the service and supporting the delivery of local priorities as a strategic priority. However, the proposed changes will have varying degrees of impact on individuals across the service, therefore it will be important to assess potential impacts such as net loss/gain of posts and undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment.

The proposed changes to the Personnel Training (PT) model seek to address some purported weaknesses in process and historic poor management practice. The proposal may have an adverse effect on some existing staff, although this is considered necessary to re-set service delivery practice. Whilst the proposal of contracting PT provision to a third party is not unique and a perfectly valid approach, it will be important to ensure an effective communication plan is in place for both staff and customers to avoid any risk of confusion and loss of business. It is recommended that management should ensure measures are in place that do not jeopardise the commercial objectives of the service including the projected staff cost savings.

Based on experience from similar structural changes in local authorities, the timeline for implementation of the proposed changes is ambitious but not impossible. If approvals, consultation, and implementation do not encounter any significant delays then the full efficiencies savings can be secured in 2024/25, however it would be prudent to consider a contingency in budget planning in the event of any implementation delay.

Implementation will require a mobilisation plan to ensure smooth transition into the new ways of working and will need to be carefully managed to ensure the service quality and customer confidence is not adversely impacted, in what remains a highly competitive market and challenging trading conditions prevailing in the sector per se.

Establishing a set of design principles for the service is worthy of consideration, this will not only provide the foundation for structural review but the on-going service transformation. Some common themes and ambitions for the remodelling of One Leisure could include:

- Commerciality and Sustainability – to ensure the sustainability of services through growth of revenue/reduction of costs; waste minimisation and carbon reduction.
- Careers - career development and career pathways that any new model of delivery will help achieve.
- Adaptability - flexible and adaptable roles within any new alternate delivery model designed to meet the needs of the public. The intent to move to a more expansive and wide range of opening times across all areas of the service.
- Customer Centric – clear customer focus – maximising the opportunities to cross sell and grow revenue/income.
- Community - opportunities for the community to be involved and to co-deliver services in particular community health programmes.
- Synergy - service synergy where this makes sense – between sites and community outreach especially Public Health delivery.
- Resilience - ensuring long-term service resilience and post Covid recovery to deliver wider service outcomes.

The service has been progressing through a whole service transformation programme for c.18 months since the appointment of the Interim Head of Leisure, the direction of travel is clear and the foundations for success are in place.

Links to wider Public Health Initiatives

The One Leisure Active Lifestyles team offers a wide range of sport and health related activities to promote a healthy population within the district.

The team works closely with a number of partners to help provide these activities, such as young people's holiday programmes, disability sports clubs and health walks. Support is also offered to local sports clubs to help provide access to leisure. This team and the wider contribution it can make across wider Health partners remains a key delivery component of the local service delivery model proposed.

The service should seek to develop this function across a wider partnership landscape and exploit the opportunity that currently exist in particular within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System.

The leverage of additional funds to support longer term health conditions across communities covering the borough will require close collaboration and work at a senior executive level. That systems leadership function will help pivot One Leisure into a more coherent community focused service: moving away from leisure centre facility management into a greater integrated Leisure service delivering tangible outcomes across communities. Ensuring the service has the capacity and capability to develop these partnerships and access the funding that is available for preventative and recovery interventions will not only improve the health and wellbeing of residents, but it will also position One Leisure as the provider of choice for multiple partners.

Some broader community orientated interventions designed to tackle health inequalities are already in place across the council area; this should provide the foundation for increased partnership activity in this area (see link below).

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/news/grant-from-huntingdonshire-district-council-enables-community-groups-to-offer-health-activities-to-residents/>

Risks & Benefits

As with any change process there are a number of risks and benefits associated to both implementation and/or failure to implement the proposed changes.

The identified risks/benefits of the proposed staff review are highlighted below.

- **Failure to implement the proposed review in part or full;**
 - this would negatively impact on the projected efficiencies and is likely to result in One Leisure continuing to operate at a sub-optimum level with a financial deficit;
 - career progression opportunities may be stifled and consequently an increased risk of losing talent from the organisation;
 - the future of One Leisure to operate as a commercial entity and achieve financial sustainability would be jeopardised.
- **Implementation of the proposed staff review would:**
 - create the conditions for success and short-term sustainability of One Leisure;
 - support the efficient operation of leisure facilities;
 - provide operational flexibility and resilience;
 - provide career pathways and opportunities for existing staff to progress with appropriate reward/remuneration;
 - afford the opportunity to implement a learning & development plan for staff that supports career progression;
 - retain talent within the organisation;
 - potentially place some staff 'at risk' of redundancy if they were unable to secure alternative positions within One Leisure and/or the Council.

Conclusions - Staff Review

It is acknowledged that the current service configuration across One Leisure is fragmented and not coherent. Identifying some practical steps to reduce costs, improve efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of local services and support for local systems through greater collaboration is a key ingredient of the proposals emerging on the staff realignment.

The proposed restructure has been carefully considered by the senior management of One Leisure, with detailed reviews of site-specific role and resource allocations. It is evident from the work conducted to date that the proposal is designed to provide a more commercially orientated cost-effective service that is customer led and responsive to demand, with closer alignment to the new Corporate Plan.

A genuine opportunity now exists under the leadership of the Interim Head of Leisure Services to change the service configuration alongside the staffing model; with a sustained focus on the end user and wider communities across HDC.

It remains important this service review is aligned to a wider place-based community interventions and ambitions in order to maximise opportunity and impact.

A new target operating model aligned to this review will need a detailed financial analysis in parallel to the stated outcomes that the change could help deliver. The cost benefits associated with the proposed staff review are clear, however the outcomes have scope for further development and greater clarity.

Consideration should be given to producing a set of overarching design principles to underpin the new structure and applied to subsequent phases of service transformation.

The proposals set out for the service provides the opportunity to significantly reduce staff costs and become a leaner operation that is more commercially focused applying the simple principle of reducing costs and increasing revenue generation.

The proposals are generally consistent with the approach taken by commercial operators in the sector and seek to achieve current industry standards and 'norms' i.e., the staff to income ratio.

The proposal also affords the opportunity to reach out to the hard-to-reach communities to ensure equity of access and inclusion, remaining agile, flexible, and responsive to demand and ultimately more sustainable.

Recommendations

- The proposed staff review should be progressed commencing with an Equality Impact Assessment in respect of staff potentially impacted by the review.
- Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan to support the review.
- Establish a cohesive and resourced plan to deliver the staff review in conjunction with internal business partners.
- Develop a key outcomes framework that provides clarity of task and targets for the service and staff.
- Develop a Learning & Development Plan that supports career progression and delivery of service objectives.
- Develop a robust stakeholder communications plan that addresses both staff and customer communications on all relevant aspects on the change process to ensure business continuity.
- Consider developing a set of design principles underpinning the staff review and any subsequent transformation phases.
- Develop a contingency plan within the 2024/25 budget planning process to reflect any potential implementation delays and subsequent impact on delivering the projected efficiency target.
- Undertake a post project implementation review to assess if the proposed change has met its objectives and produce a learned document to support on-going improvement.

Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies

Strategy Overview

The Indoor and Built Sports Facilities Strategy (IBF) and Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) 2022 - 2043 were commissioned in early 2022 with completion in November of that year and subsequently adopted by the Council in June 2023.

The strategies are endorsed by Sport England insofar as they follow the accepted methodology in terms of an assessment of provision and projected need in line with population growth forecasts contained in the Local Plan over the next two decades. A Sport England endorsed strategy is the 'gold standard' for the assessment of sports facilities; commissioning this work demonstrates a commitment to a robust evidence base to support and enable improved sporting facilities for Huntingdonshire residents.

It is clear these strategies will help provide the evidence base to develop the right facility mix across Huntingdonshire; however, it does not resolve the issue of prioritisation or funding for One Leisure facility provision.

These strategies will also support the updates to the Local Plan review and be considered as part of the Councils' Place Strategy and Climate Strategy.

However, there is no financial plan that supports any proposed development, the omission of any form of financial assessment, makes it difficult to assess future need, therefore the suggestions put forward are based on observation, dialogue with the client and a degree of speculation. It is understood that the financial plan that would normally accompany the IBF and PPOSS to help inform options for future development was to be a phase 2 consideration. To date this work has not been commissioned.

The PPOSS should be a supporting document to the Local Plan Update. Any action plan arising from the strategy should be flexible; and be regularly reviewed in order to ensure it will continue to be a deliverable plan and one that fits the emerging/expanding communities across the HDC area.

Recent challenges across the leisure sector in terms of affordability of leisure provision and closures, should be taken into consideration when considering the district leisure requirements.

Both strategies for both indoor and outdoor sports facilities will support delivery at a local level and provide the needs assessments and strategic recommendations to act upon.

However, it should be reiterated that these are strategies spanning some 20 years and relate to sport and leisure provision across the entire council area. The scope of this review is focussed upon and limited to the One Leisure estate.

Investment Priorities

The immediate capital investment priority should be to adequately resource and commission the feasibility studies and the Outline Business Case (OBC) of each proposal.

The feasibility study should consider:

- if the scheme objective is technically possible to deliver
- design issues and options
- land and property related matters
- high level cost projections

The OBC should only be commissioned if a scheme is technically possible to deliver and is geared towards supporting a bid to secure capital funding (internally or externally). The OBC should address the following:

- the strategic context and rationale
- option variants
- economic appraisal and value for money
- non-monetary benefits
- risk appraisal
- procurement options
- project outcomes
- affordability
 - capital cost
 - financial modelling & appraisal
 - potential funding partners
- project management
- timeline
- risk management plan

The potential to capitalise this essential preliminary work and potentially the project management element of these actions should be explored.

The Council has already completed the de-carbonisation of Ramsey Leisure Centre and should progress feasibility studies of carbon reduction solutions across the One Leisure estate, in line with the suggested facility investment priorities.

Facility development costs are difficult to predict, as local complications such as land ownership, ground conditions and development constraints are variable. Where consideration is given within the feasibility study to relocating facilities, land valuations and future use of a 'disposed' site are all factors to assess.

Within Sport England's Design and Cost Guidance, they produce quarterly facility cost updates which provide a good indicative cost of new facilities (see Appendix 5). These costs should be applied to as an initial guide to capital costs, although some facility refurbishments, expansions and 'retrofits' can often generate design complications and cost implications, all of which should be identified in the initial feasibility study work.

The complexity of meaningfully projecting revenue benefits at this 'blue sky' stage is not really possible, with return-on-investment considerations being determined by the nature of the scheme e.g., there is unlikely ever to be a financial return on installing an athletics track, whilst a 3G pitch or upgrading a fitness suite is likely to be more financially successful. This will be better determined once the feasibility studies have been completed. Net benefit will need to consider not only generated revenue from service users, but the level of capital investment, the nature of the development, and the potential cost saving on utility costs by putting carbon reduction at the forefront of design principles such as adopting Passivhaus standards across the estate where possible.

Post pandemic, swimming has become an increasingly popular activity across the country and the demand for swimming lessons is stretching pool time capacity. HDC does not have a competition swimming pool, all the Council pools are only 4 lanes x 25m, a competition pool needs to be at least 6 lanes, with an appropriately sized spectator gallery to facilitate competition galas. Although there are some other school pools in the area, community and club access is limited. Local authorities are always likely to be the main provider of swimming pools for public access; they are also the costliest element of provision.

There are some discrepancies between Sport England's estimate of a shortfall of pools and that of Swim England due to different methods of calculating deficiency of supply. Unmet demand is focused in the south and southeast of the district (Huntingdon, St Ives, and St Neots).

The IBF highlights that pools on One Leisure sites are approaching the end of their life cycle and will need refurbishment or replacement in the short term. Whilst suggestions are made re: future pool space, these are made in the absence of a specific Aquatic Strategy and based on the IBF strategy report, demand, and observation. Therefore, it is suggested that future provision should be based on a 6-lane x 25m pool, with a separate teaching pool; the viability of a moveable floor should be explored at feasibility and OBC stage as this would provide optimum pool flexibility and increase swim school capacity. If the 6-lane pool was the standard specification for refurbishment or replacement of existing pools at the three sites where there is unmet demand (as above) this would exceed the provision shortfall based on the Sport England Facility Calculator 0.7 of a pool (3 lanes) but meet the higher Swim England needs estimate.

Huntingdon Leisure Centre is split over two separate site, dry side provision is within HDC ownership and is new, compared to the aging wet side provision that c. 200m away and accessed via an external pathway. The sports and leisure footprint at Huntingdon has Town, District and County Council land ownership including Tennis and Bowls facilities leases to clubs by the Town Council and a cricket field that is infrequently used (possibly due to dilapidated condition of the pavilion) that is also in the ownership of the Town Council. If a shared vision for the entire site could be developed and agreed with stakeholders, there is genuine potential to create a sports hub at this site.

One Leisure have previously operated the pool and leisure facilities at Sawtry on behalf of the Cambridge Meridian Academy Trust (CMAT). The pool, like HDC's pool stock will be in the need of investment in the short to medium term and has been under the threat of closure for some time and was closed by CMAT in December 2022. If HDC were to progress the redevelopment of its own pools, gaining access to operate the Sawtry site on a fixed term arrangement could mitigate the displacement of swimming lessons and keep the pool open for community use in the short term.

The IBF and PPOSS highlight deficiencies in supply in a number of other activities, there is a shortfall of three 3G pitches across the district, c. 500 fitness stations, dance studios and a 4-court sports hall, for One Leisure these are core activities and should be considered as investment priorities too.

The Football Foundation could potentially provide a high % of the capex required to install a new 3G fenced and floodlit pitch, which are normally positive revenue generators. Locating a new 3G pitch at the St Ives Outdoor site could help expand the sports hub concept; whilst the poor condition of a small sand filled Artificial Turf Pitch at Ramsey could potentially be converted into a small 3G pitch or small sided junior games or training.

In consideration of generating revenues at this site, and the sustainability of One Leisure per se, the 'blue sky' thinking should not be bounded by the IBF and PPOSS; the café/bar is looking tired and unappealing, the scope of feasibility work should therefore consider secondary income opportunities such as refurbishing the bar area that could become the focal point of the sport hub, scoping the viability of installing a golf driving range, adventure golf or high ropes course to generate revenue and support the café/bar are all potential options that will also create a different offer and broaden the appeal and customer base.

The Council is likely to be the principal funder of One Leisure facilities, with the Council's own capital programme and the PWLB being the most likely primary source of funding for most schemes. Sport England are no longer a major funder of capital schemes but may be a potential contributor along with some sport specific National Governing Bodies (NGB). The Football Foundation have been known to contribute 90%+ of funding for new 3G pitches and pitch development. The government's Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme continues to offer a potential funding stream to support the decarbonisation programme across the leisure estate, as it has already done so at Ramsey Leisure Centre. Although the Levelling Up Fund administered by the Department of Levelling Up Housing & Communities has not directly allocated funds to leisure, as Huntingdonshire continues to grow, developer contributions through s106, or CIL funding and future government regeneration programmes could become a possibility for sport and leisure schemes. If the Council were to implement a NDPO solution either with a third-party or a LATC, then consideration could be given to

the reinvestment of some of the NNDR efficiencies back into the service, this would clearly require negotiation with the operator and subject to the financial position of the Council.

The health sector through the ICS and regional ICB could also be potential funding partners for integrated facilities and the co-location of services where there are opportunities to bring public leisure and public health closer together under the principles of the One Public Estate approach.

It should be remembered that the IBF and PPOSS are district wide strategies, aside from the Council's own facilities, it should be an advocate and facilitator for specialist or one sport clubs and other organisations to develop and provide new or better facilities. However, this does not automatically translate to the Council becoming the principal funder, as the Council cannot provide facilities for every sport; clubs and organisations should be encouraged to fund raise and seek grant funding as widely as possible.

Realisation of significant investment will take several years to bring to fruition, feasibility studies, OBC's and securing funding to deliver schemes is likely to result in delivery as medium to long term objectives. The immediate investment priorities are indicated in the table below.

Table 1 Investment Priorities

Theme	Action	Outcome
Decarbonisation	Feasibility Study of Huntingdon Dry Side site. Feasibility of all other sites in line with investment strategy.	Implementation of decarbonisation plan at Huntingdon Dry Side site Implementation of decarbonisation works aligned to agreed investment strategy. Supports HDC Climate Strategy; and financial sustainability of One Leisure.
Swimming Pools	Commission the development of an Aquatics Strategy to set-out the long-term options for aquatics to inform the strategic investment and decisions re: new/replacement swimming pools Explore the viability of an interim solution for retaining/increasing capacity and community access at Sawtry Swimming Pool. Commission a feasibility study to develop an agreed vision for a sports & health hub at Huntingdon with the Town and County Councils, health partners and other stakeholders. Commission feasibility studies to upgrade swimming pools at St Neots and St. Ives to meet increased future demand. The study for St Neots to include feasibility of relocation of the leisure centre in consideration of the Local and Neighbourhood Plans. On completion of feasibility studies, commission OBC's as determined by	Aquatic Strategy produced setting out a vision and long-term options for developing and sustaining aquatic activity in the HDC area. Interim arrangement agreed with CMAT to access & operate Sawtry Swimming Pool and meet demand and access targets. Vision agreed with stakeholders with potential disposal of old wet side facility and re-provision of new pools integrated with the dry side site that includes a community health offer. Replacement of ageing pools will ensure current and future demand is met by increasing capacity, improving the customer experience, protecting existing and growing revenues. Reprovision of the entire leisure centre at St Neots to a new site would provide a

	<p>feasibility findings; the indicative priority order would be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Huntingdon 2.St Neots 3.St Ives 	<p>modern 'fit for future' centre with minimal disruption to service. HDC's capital capability would need to be assessed if this option was brought forward which then opens the potential for a DBOM solution and a review of the service delivery model at that point.</p>
Sports Halls	<p>Explore the optimum location of an additional 4 court sports hall to address identified shortfall, potentially as part of the sports & health hub concept at Huntingdon.</p>	<p>Addresses identified shortfall and the creation of a multi-sport facility.</p>
Fitness Centre	<p>Develop a strategic plan to support growth and meet demand of 500 additional fitness stations across the district.</p> <p>One Leisure to explore opportunities to distribute old fitness equipment to community facilities/hubs in more isolated communities.</p> <p>Review and audit current fitness equipment provision and highlight potential areas for growth to offset shortfall identified in the IBS.</p> <p>Benchmark current One Leisure fitness centres versus industry standards to ascertain utilisation and inform future provision.</p>	<p>Addresses identified shortfall in provision.</p> <p>Potential to create local access to fitness equipment in more isolated communities.</p> <p>Provides an evidence base for 'right sizing' provision.</p> <p>Provides an evidence base provision.</p>
Dance Studios	<p>Develop a short-term refurbishment/improvement programme for existing dance studios to address demand.</p> <p>Assess the viability of creating extra studio space at Huntingdon in current soft play area and transfer kit to St Ives Indoor.</p> <p>Explore options for creating new studio space to support increased levels of physical activity and to provide greater retention opportunities over medium to long term in line with emerging capital investment plans.</p>	<p>Refurbishment plan developed and implemented.</p> <p>Additional studio space created within existing facilities.</p> <p>Medium – long term plan developed for new studio space across the One Leisure estate with increased participation and customer retention levels.</p>
Football Pitches (3G -ATPs)	<p>Liaise with Football Foundation and other stakeholders to commission a feasibility study to develop a new 3G pitch at St Ives Outdoor as the preferred option.</p> <p>Liaise with Abbey College/Football Foundation re: operating agreement and refurbishment of small ATP at rear of the</p>	<p>Feasibility study completed for new 3G pitch at St Ives.</p> <p>New operating agreement in place for the small 3G pitch at Ramsey.</p>

	<p>Ramsey Leisure Centre to create a small 3G pitch with community access.</p> <p>Submit a grant funding application to the Football Foundation for the construction of a new full size 3G pitch at St Ives and a small 3G at Ramsey.</p>	<p>Grant funding applications submitted and approved.</p> <p>Delivery of a new 3G pitches.</p>
Commercial Opportunities	<p>Commission design work for the refurbishment and re-modelling of the café/bar at St Ives Outdoor.</p> <p>Commission a feasibility study to explore other revenue generating activity related opportunities across the One Leisure estate and or HDC land e.g., Golf Driving Range or Adventure Golf at St Ives Outdoor; Laser Tag; High Ropes etc.</p> <p>Where financial viability is evident progress schemes to OBC stage.</p>	<p>Completion of re-modelling and design proposals of the café/bar at St Ives Outdoor.</p> <p>Feasibility study completed with options to move on to OBC phase.</p> <p>Complete OBC's as determined from feasibility work and secure funding for full business case and delivery.</p>

The indicative costs of scheme delivery are illustrated in Appendix 5 (Sport England – Design and Cost Guidance); however, before delivery can be contemplated there is the feasibility and business case stages to undertake. Table 2 (below) provides an estimate of resources required to deliver the immediate facility and service investment priorities included proposals as highlighted in Table 1 (above).

Table 2 Preliminary Investment Priority Costs

Action	Indicative Cost
Decarbonisation Feasibility	£8k - £10k per site*
Deliver Decarbonisation Scheme	Variable - determined by Feasibility Study*
Produce an Aquatic Strategy	£10k - £12k
Digital Innovation	£20k
Sawtry Swimming Pool Interim Access Arrangement **	HDC Officer Time (c.£5k-£8k) Leisure/Legal/Finance etc.
Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub Feasibility & Master Plan	£15k + Officer Time (c. £5k)
St Neots Leisure Centre Feasibility (including re-provision options)	£15k + Officer Time (c. £5k)
St Ives Leisure Centre (Indoor) Pool Expansion Feasibility	£12k -15k + Officer Time (c. £5k)
Ramsey Leisure Centre Gym Expansion	£50k – 70k
Sports Halls Feasibility	Included within Huntingdon Feasibility (c.£3k - £5k if not viable at Huntingdon)
Fitness – Additional Stations	HDC Officer Time (c. £5k)
Dance Studios – Refurbishment Programme and Relocation	HDC Officer Time for options(c.£3k); c. £20k - £25k for delivery.
3G Pitches Feasibility & Delivery at St Ives (Outdoor) and small 3G at Ramsey	£1.4m***
Commercial Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Café Bar Refurbishment Design & Delivery • Feasibility of Commercial Opportunities • Delivery of Commercial Project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £5k (Design) £30k - £35k (Delivery) • £10k - £15k • Delivery costs determined by feasibility £300k - £1m

*Costs at Ramsey should be used as a guide (potential funding from Government Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund)

**Action linked to pool refurbishment/replacement

***Football Foundation could potentially grant fund a high % of capex

The timescales for delivery of capital schemes will be dependent on the following:

- Findings from the Feasibility Studies
- Approval of the OBC
- Securing capital funding
- Corporate capacity to deliver

Notwithstanding the above, an indicative facility and service capital investment programme is illustrated below in Table 3 and reflected in the 3-Year Action Plan at Appendix 6. The indicative capital costs are derived from the Sport England Design and Cost Guidance (2023 Quarter 2) as appropriate. It should be noted that the indicative costs are for new provision, the guidance is included at Appendix 5, it will also be important to acknowledge the caveats applied by Sport England to these costs.

At this stage it is not possible to provide a cost vs benefit analysis for the proposed schemes, only once the Feasibility Studies have determined what is possible and what the variant options may be can the detailed analysis and various options be developed as part of the Outline Business Case(s) work to provide a firmer indication of the expenditure (capital and revenue) and the projected financial returns and other non-financial benefits of the scheme. At this stage, it is suggested that a capital requirement is 'earmarked' within the capital programme pending the above activities.

There are some benefits to commissioning the various elements of the feasibility studies of a similar nature at the same time e.g. the Decarbonisation Feasibility Studies across the 3 remaining sites (Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots); likewise grouping the Facility Development Feasibility Studies for these sites may not only secure some economies of scale but will also help determine 'right sizing' the Council's leisure estate and any land assembly, ownership and construction, challenges that may change the suggested programming of the procurement and physical works.

Table 3 Indicative Capital Investment Programme

Action	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Indicative Capital Cost
Decarbonisation Feasibility (x3 sites)	X			£400k
Deliver Decarbonisation Scheme (x3 sites)	X	X		£10m
Produce an Aquatic Strategy	X			£10 - £12k
Digital Innovation	X			£20k
Sawtry Swimming Pool Interim Arrangement	X	X		CMAT Investment
Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub Feasibility	X			£25k
Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub Delivery		X	X	£6.7m ¹ - £11.56m ²
St Neots Leisure Centre Feasibility	X			£25k
St Neots Leisure Centre Delivery		X	X	£12.36m ³
St Ives Leisure Centre Pool Expansion Feasibility	X			£20-25k
St Ives Leisure Centre Pool Expansion Delivery		X	X	£5.85m ⁴ - £7.5m ⁵
Ramsey Leisure Centre Gym Expansion	X			£50k - £70k
Sports Halls Feasibility	X			£3k - £5k ⁶
Sports Halls Delivery		X	X	£2.86m ⁷
Fitness – Additional Stations	X	X	X	£200k - £600k ⁸
Dance Studios – Refurbishment Programme	X	X		£23k - £28k
3G Pitches Feasibility	X			£20k - £25k ⁹
3G Pitches Delivery	X	X		£1.4m ¹⁰
Commercial Opportunities				
• Café Bar Refurbishment Design & Delivery	X			£35k - £40k
• Feasibility of Commercial Opportunities	X	X		£10k - £15k
• Delivery of Commercial Project			X	£300k - £1m ¹¹

¹ 6-lane x25m pool plus secondary pool

² 4 court sports hall

³ New facility - 6-lane x25m pool plus leaner pool, 4 court sports hall, 100 station health & fitness gym, 2 studios

⁴ Assumes a new 6-lane x25m pool and an allowance for retro-fit

⁵ Allowance for retrofit construction & additional spectator seating

⁶ If not feasible to provide at Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub

⁷ If not delivered at Huntingdon Sports & Health Hub

⁸ Cost variation determined by recipient of equipment i.e. private clubs etc

⁹ Potential Football Foundation grant funded

¹⁰ Potential Football Foundation grant funded

¹¹ Cost determined by feasibility work, and Return on Investment potential

Conclusions – Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies

The production of a financial appraisal as phase 2 of the IBF and PPOSS work should be commissioned, as an understanding of the scale of the investment need may help to both influence and clarify potential funding sources, developer contributions and deliverability of schemes.

Addressing the identified shortfall in provision across the district, will require a focussed approach over a long period of time, it should be remembered that the IBF and PPOSS span a period of two decades, delivery is a 'marathon not a sprint'. The Council has a lead role in supporting the delivery of these strategies but should not be the sole owner or funder.

Where there are existing and future opportunities for both indoor and outdoor shared or dual use facilities, it will be important that community access agreements provide good public and/or club access.

A key element of this review has been to consider the delivery model and sustainability on the current operating model, investment in the existing estate to refurbish or develop new facilities that enhance the offer will be essential to protect existing and increase revenues.

Medium (3-5 yrs.) & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ yrs.)

Future Operating Models

As commented on previously it is clear that the leisure sector and its long-established delivery models has changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges associated with the challenging market conditions now prevailing across the UK. Some external private operators have reduced in size and complexity to ensure business continuity.

For One Leisure to provide a financially sustainable service offer it must operate as the Transformed In-House model, operating to optimum efficiency wherever possible, however that objective is reliant on adequate and continued investment in the facilities.

Both the medium- and longer-term operating models should be determined by assessing the performance of One Leisure and how the transformation objectives have been delivered coupled with horizon scanning and testing the market through an Early Market Engagement exercise, and potentially leading to a full procurement event. Assessing market conditions in 2-3 years should also be sufficient time for the liability of the Terms & Conditions Audit to have been determined and resolved.

The potential for a Cambridgeshire Joint Area Delivery Model exists as a medium- and long-term option, however it is a complex arrangement and would require coordinating, possibly initiated by the Combined Authority, subsequently led by the local authorities involved in it and the close alignment of contract terms.

The delivery model is only likely to be influenced by the capital investment plan if HDC has reached its borrowing capacity from the PWLB for a major capital scheme e.g. a new leisure centre, or in the unlikely event that market loan rates become lower than the PWLB. Operators that can potentially bring capital investment to facilities will seek to recover that investment over the contract term, which in is highly likely to result in a higher cost of borrowing for the Council but spread over a long period. Capital investment and service delivery through a DBOM solution is generally a long-term commitment of c.20 years or longer.

The real opportunity for One Leisure and the future leisure provision remains with developing partnerships with the health sector and in particular the relationship with a maturing ICB. That pivot to health requires and will allow the in-house team to develop a broader systems leadership role with partners and safeguard some of the financial risks of the leisure market. Securing long term investment in community outreach will also help deliver those outcomes linked to broader community targets contained in the new strategic plans recently endorsed.

An investment in feasibility studies and the OBC's that follow will determine what the capital investment priorities will and should be. The IBF and PPOSS are long term strategies for the district not just One Leisure and identify projected needs over the next 20 years. The priorities and demand may change over time as activity trends can change too (the demise of squash and the rise in popularity of spin classes are examples of change over time); the anticipated pace of development may change too.

Where some facilities may have reached the end of their natural life, consideration may be around full re-provision rather than refurbishment.

As commented on above it is too early to project the revenue benefits of potential schemes this would be developed through from the OBC work once the technical feasibility study of a proposed scheme has been completed.

Conclusions – Medium & Long-Term Operating Models

It would be prudent to review the operating model periodically, doing this on a 3–5-year cycle is considered to be reasonable approach. If it is agreed to continue with in-house provision in the form of One Leisure as the Transformed In-House model then a review in line with the suggested review cycle should be adhered to, this ensuring best value is being delivered.

It is not considered that capital investment is a determining factor of the operating model of HDC's leisure offer unless access to the relatively low cost of borrowing through the PWLB ceases to be available to the Council or a full funding partnership is developed with health.

Recommendations

It should be noted that there are a number of variables that need to be progressed as highlighted within this review in order to determine the long-term operating model and take the service forward; a 3-year Action Plan of recommended actions is included as a timeline at Appendix 6.

Recommendations from this Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure are presented for consideration below; It is recommended that:

- The immediate short term delivery model for the Council's leisure function should be an adequately resourced and empowered Transformed In-House service.
- Review the membership architecture to provide enhanced customer choice and invest in digital innovation to improve the customer journey.
- Determine the senior management arrangements within One Leisure, necessary to lead and drive service transformation.
- Establish a set of Transformation Design Principles and an Outcomes Framework for the service.
- Produce or commission a financial plan to accompany the Indoor Built Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy to conclude that stage of work.
- An Early Market Engagement exercise should be undertaken in parallel to the commencement of the Transformed In-House service, to provide assurance to the Council as part of due diligence and help inform future arrangements.
- Conclude the Terms & Conditions Audit as soon as practically possible and assess the on-going implications for One Leisure.
- Upon the conclusion of the Early Market Engagement exercise and the Terms & Conditions Audit, re-evaluate the Local Authority Trading Company option and market solution.
- Implement the proposed staffing structure and the associated specific actions:
 - The proposed staff review should be progressed commencing with an Equality Impact Assessment in respect of staff potentially impacted by the review.
 - Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan to support the review.
 - Establish a cohesive and resourced plan to deliver the staff review in conjunction with internal business partners.
 - Develop a key outcomes framework that provides clarity of task and targets for the service and staff.
 - Develop a Learning & Development Plan that supports career progression and delivery of service objectives.
 - Develop a robust stakeholder communications plan that addresses both staff and customer communications on all relevant aspects on the change process to ensure business continuity.

- Consider developing a set of design principles underpinning the staff review and any subsequent transformation phases.
- Develop a contingency plan within the 2024/25 budget planning process to reflect any potential implementation delays and subsequent impact on delivering the projected efficiency target.
- Undertake a post project implementation review to assess if the proposed change has met its objectives and produce a learned document to support on-going improvement.
- Develop a structured approach to effectively engaging with the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care System that creates opportunities for One Leisure to broaden its delivery of health improvement interventions.
- Develop an Aquatic Strategy that sets the future direction of swimming and water-based activity.
- Commission decarbonisation feasibility studies across the One Leisure estate.
- Develop a programme of feasibility studies for potential capital investment schemes across the leisure estate aligned to the Indoor Built Facility Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy and commercial opportunity.
- Review and manage the delivery of the proposed 3-year Action Plan.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Client Specification

1. Short Term Operating Models (2-3 years):

- a) An independent assessment of the UK leisure market post COVID-19
- b) Outline of the subsequent challenges facing the leisure operating environment as a consequence of COVID-19, and based on this insight
- c) Provide an options appraisal on the different long term operating models best suited to One Leisure based upon the existing leisure market challenges. Risks and benefits should be clearly defined.
The options appraisal should include, but not be limited to a review of:
 - i. Option 1 - In-house management (Current Model – One Leisure)
 - ii. Option 2 - In-house management via a Council owned company (wholly owned company (LATCo) / Teckal company)
 - iii. Option 3 - Tendering the leisure service as a service or concession contract
 - iv. Option 4 - Creation of a Trust or not-for-profit entity
- d) The options appraisal should be based upon the following principles:
 - i. financial modelling
 - ii. balancing the level of risk, the Council is willing to take
 - iii. the commercial return the Council wishes to secure or guarantee
 - iv. the social and wellbeing benefits the Council is seeking to achieve
 - v. the environmental factors that the Council expect to achieve through its Climate Strategy
 - vi. the level of control the Council would retain over both strategic and operational matters
- e) In order to review the different options, the four options should be assessed across the following criteria (with the inclusion of any other factors you would recommend on agreement):
 - i. Set-up and transitional costs
 - ii. Level of operational risk transfer
 - iii. Asset management responsibility transfer
 - iv. Level of Council control
 - v. Scope for community involvement
 - vi. Potential to increase participation
 - vii. Access to capital and investment funds
- f) The options should be quantified and evaluated against each other as follows:
 - i. Green: Most beneficial / advantageous to the Council
 - ii. Amber: Moderately beneficial / advantageous to the Council
 - iii. Red: Least beneficial / advantageous to the Council
- g) Provide a presentation with supporting evidence and analysis around decision making to the Council outlining key recommendations for short to medium term operating models for One Leisure based upon 1a – 1f
 - i. The consultant will be required to present the recommendations to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet meetings with support from the Interim Head of Leisure

2. Staff Review:

- a) Complete an independent review of work undertaken to date on existing leisure centre workforce structures and payroll and provide assurance to the Council that the work undertaken supports a long-term operating model

3. Built Facility & Playing Pitch Strategies:

- a) To review and utilise the actions within the Built Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy to clearly identify a priority list for capital investment.
- b) Complete and submit the capital investment priority list to the Council with outline recommendations, illustrative costs and revenue benefits and proposed timelines.

- c) Identify and evidence potential opportunities for utilising external funding opportunities to deliver the capital investment programme
- 4. Medium (3-5 years)- & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years):
 - a) Carry out a high-level review of the Built Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy and provide the Council with outline recommendations on the medium- and long-term operating models for One Leisure. This should be centred around the required capital investment into the Councils leisure facilities as outlined by the consultant and within section 3. This should also include illustrative costs and subsequent revenue projections.

Appendix 2 – Consultees

Elected Members	
Stephan Cawley	Councillor and Overview & Scrutiny Member
Lara Davenport-Ray	Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment
Brett Mickelburgh	Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources
Simone Taylor	Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene
Officers	
Leigh Allayer	Business & Operations Manager
Nicki Bane	Strategic Human Resources Manager
Paul Fox	Interim Corporate Director – People
Gregg Holland	Interim Head of Leisure Services
Clara Kerr	Chief Planning Officer
Oliver Morley	Corporate Director – People
Pam Scott	Regeneration and Housing Manager
Neil Sloper	Assistant Director – Strategic Insights and Delivery
Karen Sutton	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
John Taylor	Chief Operating Officer
Zoe Warren	Council Tax and Business Rates Manager

Appendix 3 –NNDR Site Cost

Huntingdon Leisure Centre	£181,000
St Ives Leisure Centre (inc. Burgess Hall)	£290,000
St Ives Outdoor Centre	£164,000
St. Neots Leisure Centre	£155,000
Ramsey Leisure Centre	£327,500

NB: The discretionary rates relief policy is capped at £51,000.

The 80% NNDR relief afforded to charities and other NPDO forms would result in the Council not receiving 40% of this sum and be illegible to receive any reimbursement (via Section 31) grant on this 80% relief.

The charity or NPDO would still be liable for the remaining 20% of which the Council would receive 40% of this sum.

Appendix 4 – Leisure Covid Recovery

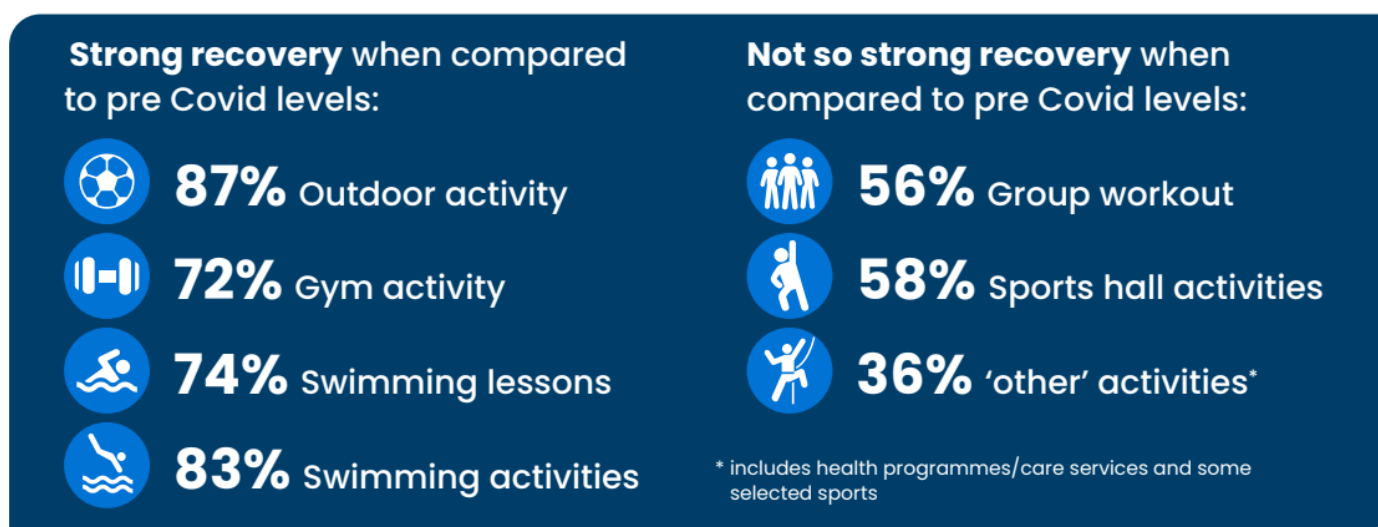
Extracts from Sport England's *Moving Communities* report April 2022

Whilst participation levels across all activities have recovered to 65% of pre Covid levels, this recovery has not been consistent between different types of activities (see Graphic 1).

Outdoor activity not unsurprisingly became more popular during the pandemic and has led the way with post Covid recovery closed followed by swimming and the appetite for swimming lessons remains positive (see Graphic 2).

Graphic 3 illustrates the different rates of recovery across the country

Graphic 1



Graphic 2



Empowering decision makers... meeting needs...
improving standards... moving communities

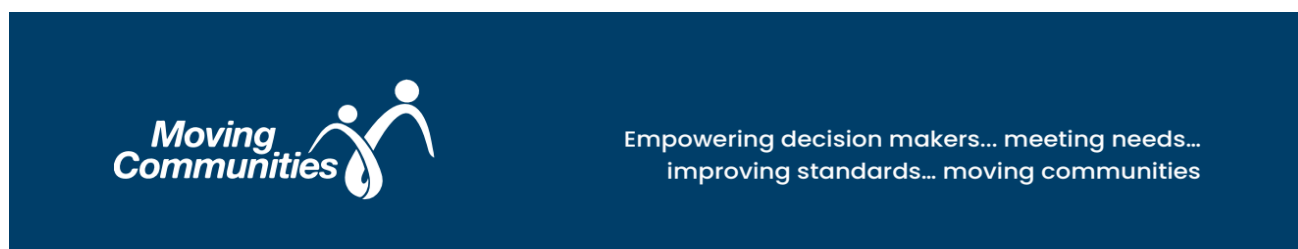
Group workout classes continue to be 80% female in terms of participant breakdown and outdoor activities have been attended by just over 10% more women in 2021/22 than pre pandemic.

The strong recovery in swimming lessons is being driven significantly by children and young people, with 93% of attendees aged 15 or under. There's been a gradual monthly increase in pool use over the April 2021 – Jan 2022 period to where in January as a stand alone month, both swimming activities and swimming lessons were over 100% of their pre Covid levels. The impact of rising energy prices will be significant on whether pools continue to open and provide participation opportunities.



2021/22	Swimming Activities	Swimming Lessons
April	60.7%	67.2%
May	86.3%	77.9%
June	94.1%	84.2%
July	98.2%	84.2%
August	117.3%	90.9%
September	112.6%	94.1%
October	116.1%	94.5%
November	113.3%	95.7%
December	110.9%	96.3%
January	114.5%	101.8%

Graphic 3

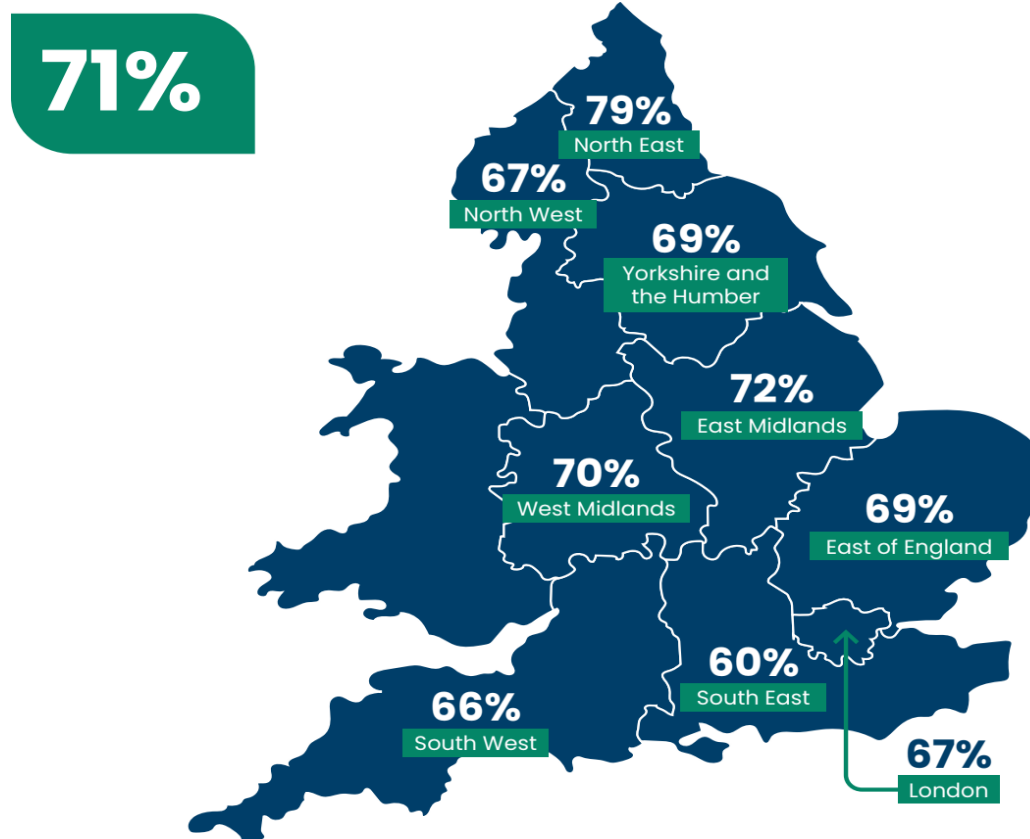


Regional Analysis

This map shows the recovery rates of visits across different regions in England across 793 sites between April 2021 – Jan 2022, compared to the same period in 2019/20.

Visits to leisure centres located in minor urban areas recovered at a higher rate (71%) compared to visits to centres located in urban cities or towns (66%), or rural areas and major urban areas (67%).

National Average



Appendix 5 – Sport England Design & Cost Guidance

2nd quarter 2023 facility cost updates

The following costs are for the development of good quality community sports facilities at 2Q2023. These rounded costs are based on typical schemes funded through the Lottery and where applicable, based on pdf layouts developed in accordance with Sport England design guidance.

Tender prices are forecast to have increased by 5% in the 12 months to 2Q2023.

Labour site rates continue to rise faster than wage awards and are expected to be the main driver of growth in overall costs in the second half of 2023. There is a shortage of construction labour which is expected to push up wages over the next two years.

The rate of materials cost inflation has been easing and many supply chain issues have been resolved. Prices for concrete, cement, bricks and tiles continue to rise, whereas the prices of, for example steelwork and reinforcement has reduced. Overall availability seems to be close to pre-covid levels.

New work output is forecast to contract in 2023 and 2024, returning to slow growth thereafter.

Climate goals may help support the infrastructure sector, but other sectors should benefit as retrofitting becomes more attractive.

Tender prices are forecast to rise by approximately 3% per annum in 2023, 2024 and 2025 with variation due to procurement and project type, and regional factors.

Facility Costs 2Q2023 (Revision 1)

Facility type/ details	Area (m ²)	Capital cost (£)
Indoor facilities		
Affordable Sports Halls		
• 1-court hall (18 x 10 m)	382	860,000
• 2-court hall (18 x 17 m)	515	980,000
• 4-court hall (34.5 x 20 m)	1,532	2,860,000
• 5-court hall (40.6 x 21.35 m)	1,722	3,095,000
• 6-court hall (34.5 x 27 m)	1,773	3,135,000
• 8-court hall (40 x 34.5 m)	2,240	3,920,000
• 10-court hall (40.6 x 42.7 m)	2,725	4,715,000
• 12-court hall (60 x 34.5 m)	3,064	5,195,000
Affordable Community Swimming Pools		
• 4-lane 25 m pool (25 x 8.5 m)	1,084	4,450,000
• 5-lane 25 m pool (25 x 10.5 m)	1,344	5,390,000
• 6-lane 25 m pool (25 x 12.5 m)	1,543	5,850,000
• 6-lane 25 m pool (25 x 12.5 m) plus secondary pool (13 x 7 m)	1,850	6,970,000
• 8-lane 25 m pool (25 x 17 m)	1,878	7,050,000
• 8-lane 25 m pool (25 x 17 m) plus secondary pool (17 x 7 m)	2,226	8,090,000
Affordable Sports Centres with Community 25 m Pool Options		
• 4-lane 25 m pool, 4-court hall, 50-station health and fitness gym plus studio	2,879	9,560,000
• 6-lane 25 m pool, 4-court hall, 100-station health and fitness gym plus 2 studios	3,553	11,220,000
• 6-lane 25 m pool plus learner pool, 4-court hall, 100-station health and fitness gym plus 2 studios	3,906	12,360,000
• 8-lane 25 m pool plus learner pool, 5-court hall, 100-station health and fitness gym plus 2 studios	4,509	13,685,000
Affordable Sports Centres with Community 50 m Pool Options		
• 8-lane 50 m pool with boom and 23.5 m-long movable floor, 5-court hall, 100-station health and fitness gym plus 2 studios	5,592	19,970,000
• 8-lane 50 m pool plus learner pool, 5-court hall, 100-station health and fitness gym plus 2 studios	6,115	20,230,000
• 8-lane 50 m pool plus learner pool, 5-court hall, 150-station health and fitness gym plus 3 studios	6,499	20,915,000

Facility type/ details	Area (m ²)	Capital cost (£)
Indoor facilities continued		
Bowls centres (indoor)		
• 6 rinks (excludes club/ function room)	1,914	2,595,000
• 8 rinks (includes club/ function room)	2,500	3,390,000
Changing rooms/ clubhouses (traditional construction)		
• 2 team changing rooms plus officials	75	300,000
• 4 team changing rooms plus club room	245	785,000
Tennis centre (indoor)		
• 3-court centre	2,138	2,930,000
• Extra court		955,000
Outdoor facilities		
Cricket pitch		
• 1-bay practice cage on macadam base (32 x 3 m)	96	40,000
• Match pitch on macadam base (32 x 3 m)	96	25,000
Grandstand		
• 500 seats, no undercroft		805,000
Skate park		
• 40 x 18 m, fenced, sports lighting	720	185,000
Artificial grass pitches (AGPs)		
Football AGP		
• U9/ U10/ training 23 mm sand-filled pitch, fenced, sports lighting (61 x 43 m)	2,623	440,000
• U9/ U10/ training 40–50 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (61 x 43 m)	2,623	485,000
• U9/ U10/ training 60–65 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (61 x 43 m)	2,623	510,000
• Senior 23 mm sand-filled pitch, fenced, sports lighting (106 x 70 m)	7,420	1,030,000
• Senior 40 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (106 x 70 m)	7,420	1,115,000
• Senior 50 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (106 x 70 m)	7,420	1,120,000
• Senior 60 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (106 x 70 m)	7,420	1,140,000
• Senior 65 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (106 x 70 m)	7,420	1,170,000

Facility type/ details	Area (m ²)	Capital cost (£)
Artificial grass pitches (AGPs) continued		
Hockey AGP		
• 18 mm sand-dressed pitch, fenced, sports lighting (101.4 x 63.0 m)	6,388	950,000
• 23 mm sand-filled pitch, fenced, sports lighting (101.4 x 63.0 m)	6,388	890,000
• Water-based pitch, fenced, sports lighting (101.4 x 63.0 m)	6,388	1,060,000
Rugby League AGP		
• Senior 65 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (122 x 74 m)	9,028	1,440,000
Rugby Union AGP		
• Senior 65 mm 3G pitch, fenced, sports lighting (130 x 80 m)	10,400	1,550,000
Macadam surfaces		
Athletics track		
• 6-lane track with 110 m straight both sides, grass infield, artificial-surfaced throws, jumps and end fans, sports lighting		1,705,000
• 8-lane track with 110 m straight both sides, grass infield, artificial-surfaced throws, jumps and end fans, sports lighting		1,855,000
Multi use games area		
• Macadam, fenced, sports lighting (36.60 x 21.35 m)	782	180,000
Tennis courts (outdoor)		
• 2 courts, macadam, fenced, sports lighting (36.58 x 33.53 m)	1,227	245,000
• 4 courts, macadam, fenced, sports lighting (36.58 x 64.01 m)	2,342	435,000
• 6 courts, macadam, fenced, sports lighting (36.58 x 94.49 m)	3,456	570,000

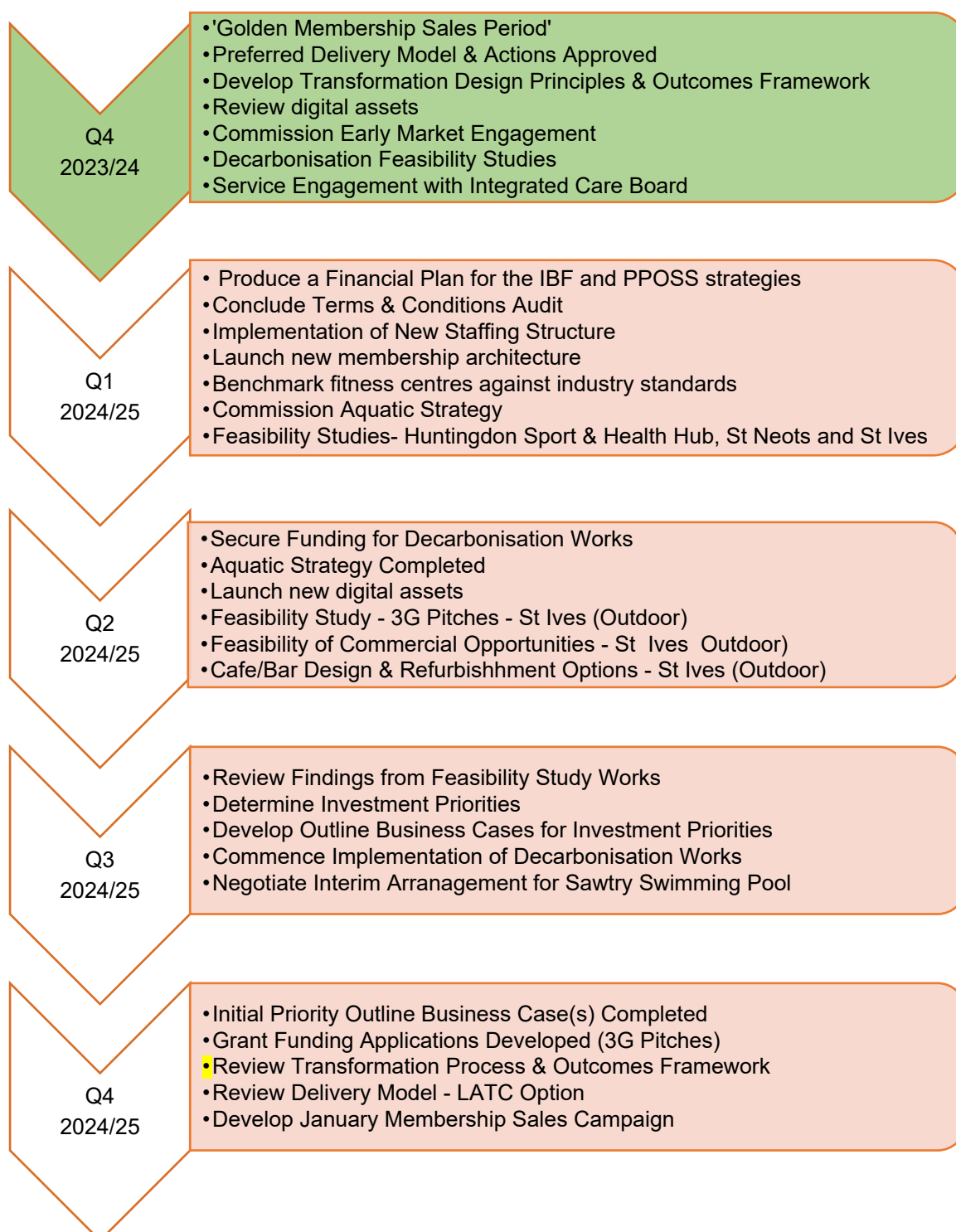
Facility type/ details	Area (m ²)	Capital cost (£)
Natural turf surfaces		
Bowling natural turf green		
• Flat or crown green (40 x 40 m)	1,600	170,000
Cricket natural turf pitch		
• Cricket pitch with 8-pitch square and 2 winter sport pitches(125.6 x 164.4 m)	20,649	345,000
Football natural turf pitches		
• U8/ U7 mini pitch (43 x 33 m)	1,419	30,000
• U16/ U15 youth pitch (97 x 61 m)	5,917	90,000
• Senior pitch (106 x 70 m)	7,420	110,000
Rugby League natural turf pitch		
• Senior pitch (122 x 74 m)	9,028	145,000
Rugby Union natural turf pitch		
• Senior pitch (130 x 80 m)	10,400	165,000
Carpet-hybrid surfaces for community use		
Football carpet-hybrid pitches		
• U8/ U7 mini pitch (43 x 33 m)	1,419	95,000
• U16/ U15 youth pitch (97 x 61 m)	5,917	370,000
• Senior pitch (106 x 70 m)	7,420	460,000
Rugby League carpet-hybrid pitch		
• Senior pitch (122 x 74 m)	9,028	555,000
Rugby Union carpet-hybrid pitch		
• Senior pitch (130 x 80 m)	10,400	650,000

Notes

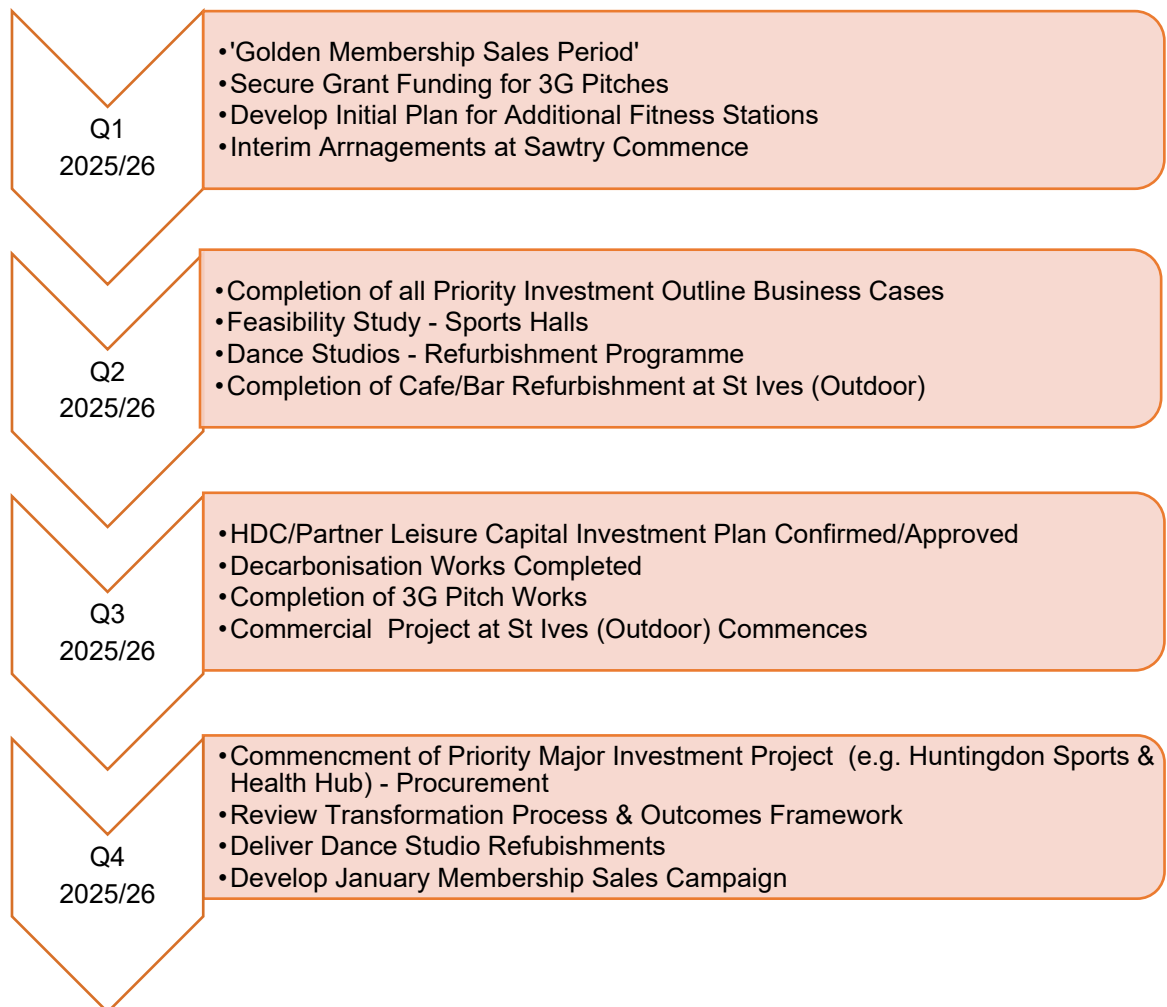
1. The area for buildings is the gross internal floor area (GIFA).
2. The area for pitches typically includes safety run-offs.
3. The sizes for artificial, natural turf and carpet-hybrid pitches reflect current or developing best practice or NGB recommendations.
4. The costs for:
 - Affordable Sports Halls;
 - Affordable Community Swimming Pools;
 - Affordable Sports Centres with Community 25 m Pool Options;
 - Affordable Sports Centres with Community 50 m Pool Options;align with the costs included in the Sport England publications of the same name updated to 2Q2023. The reader is referred to these documents and their appendices for further information on sizes and general arrangement layouts.
5. The costs include the following:
 - External works allowance (car parks, roads, paths, services connections etc) averaged at 12% of the sports facility costs;
 - 12 months maintenance/grow-in costs for natural turf and carpet-hybrid pitches;
 - Allowance for fees inclusive of project management (PM), site investigation (SI), planning and associated fees.
6. The fees for:
 - Artificial grass pitches;
 - Macadam outdoor surfaces;
 - Natural turf pitches;
 - Carpet-hybrid pitches;are included at 6% (inclusive of PM, SI, planning and associated fees).
7. The costs exclude the following:
 - Project specific details/ information, poor ground conditions, difficult access, long service connections;
 - Site remodelling, pump and sump systems and SuDS attenuation for natural turf and carpet-hybrid pitches;
 - Inflation beyond 2Q2023;
 - VAT;
 - Land acquisition costs;
 - Regional cost variations in materials and labour.

Appendix 6 – 3-year Action Plan

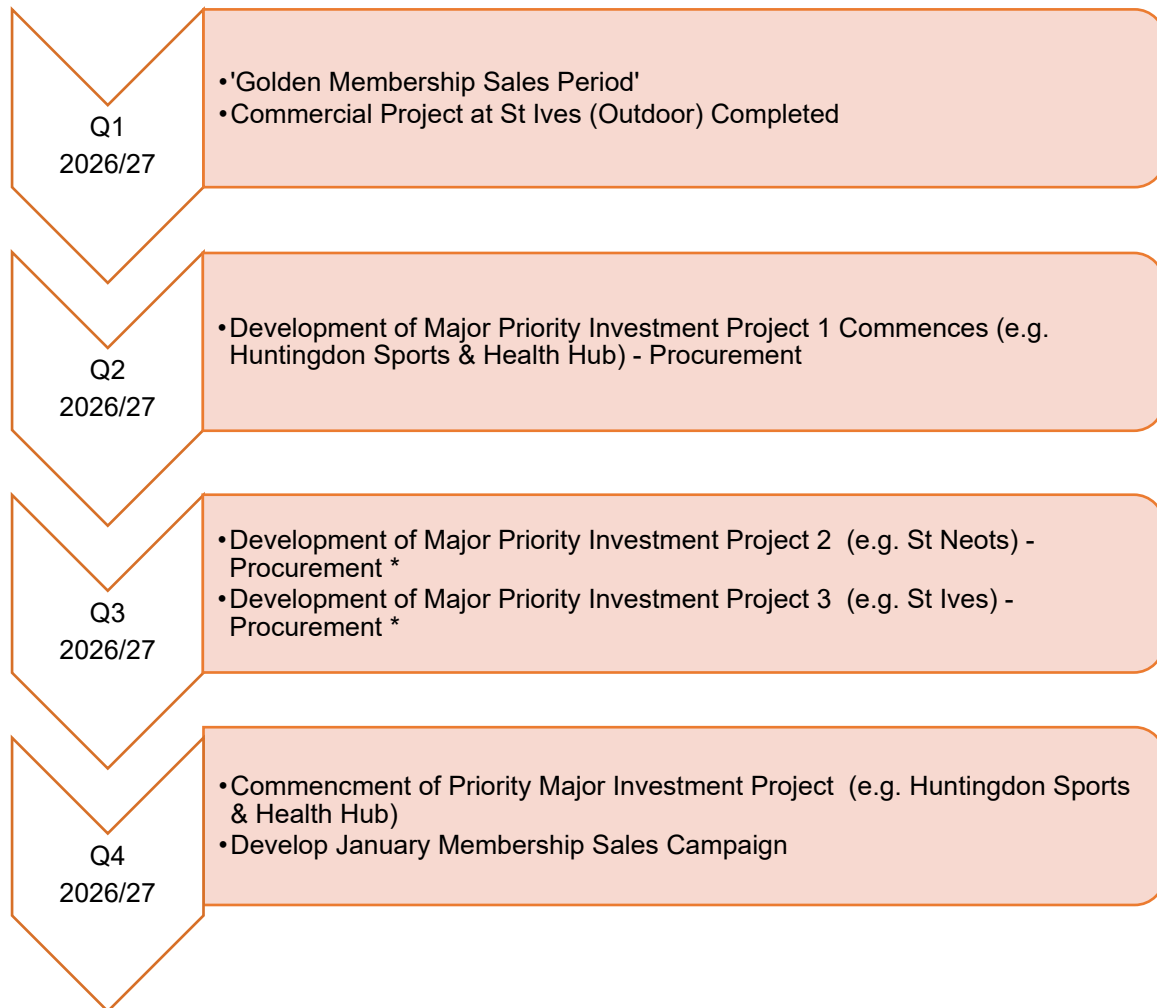
Year 1



Year 2



Year 3



*Review progress of capital schemes to determine capacity and service delivery issues and update Action Plan accordingly.

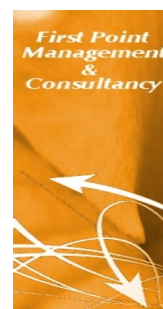
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Year 1 – Transformation Progress Report of Actions & Recommendations from the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure



First Point Management & Consultancy Limited

May 2025



Introduction

One Leisure embarked on a transformation journey in early 2023 with the appointment of an experienced leisure professional as Interim Head of Service. The transformation began with a systematic review of service delivery in order to increase participation, reduce operational subsidy and move the service towards financial sustainability including a review of the delivery model.

Background

The Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure was commissioned and undertaken by First Point Management & Consultancy in autumn 2023. A series of recommendations were proposed as part of the Independent Review and subsequently endorsed by the Council in March 2024.

The table below illustrates the key milestones within One Leisure since May 2023 to date.

2023			2024			2025	
May Interim Head of Leisure Appointed	June Built Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies Endorsed	September Independent Review of One Leisure commences	March Independent Review of One Leisure Endorsed	November Huntingdon LC – RIBA Capital Investment Priorities (Options) Complete	December Huntingdon LC – RIBA Stage 1 Feasibility Study Commence s	April Huntingdon LC – RIBA Stage 1 Feasibility Study Approved	May Year 1 Progress Review Completed

Transformation Performance Summary

The Dashboard below provides a performance summary of 22 actions and recommendations from the Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model as indicated below. In total 15 actions/recommendations have been completed (c. 68%);

5 remain in progress and span more than a single year (c. 23%), whilst 2 (c. 9%) have not been progressed, primarily due the pending implementation of Local Government Reform (LGR).

68%	Complete
23%	In Progress
9%	Incomplete

In addition, it should be noted that One Leisure has negotiated and reached an agreement with the Sawtry Academy Trust (part of the wider Cambridge Meridian Academy Trust) to manage and operate leisure facilities at Sawtry. This included the re-opening of the swimming pool with capital funding to replace essential plant and equipment having been secured through the Community Infrastructure Levy (£360k) and contributions from both Huntingdonshire District Council (£180k) and Sawtry Academy Trust (£60k).

The swimming pool is scheduled to re-open in Spring 2026 once the installation of new plant and equipment has been procured and installed.

Performance Dashboard

Action	Status	Comment
The immediate short term delivery model for the Council's leisure function should be an adequately resourced and empowered Transformed In-House service.		In April 2024, the Council approved the recommendation from the Independent Review of the Long-Term Operating Model for One Leisure to continue with the in-house delivery model. One Leisure is adequately resourced and supported by the Council as it continues with its service transformation.
Review the membership architecture to provide enhanced customer choice and invest in digital innovation to improve the customer journey.		Completed and approved by Cabinet in March 2024.

Determine the senior management arrangements within One Leisure, necessary to lead and drive service transformation.		A permanent appointment was made to the Head of Leisure role in September 2024.
Establish a set of Transformation Design Principles and an Outcomes Framework for the service.		Staff workshops and stakeholder engagement took place in March/April 2025. Senior Officer and Councillor consultation to be scheduled for July/August 2025 and report completed by September 2025.
Produce or commission a financial plan to accompany the Indoor Built Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy to conclude that stage of work.		High Level indicative Financial Plan completed for key priorities. Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub currently at RIBA Stage 1 (April 2025); all other leisure centres to have RIBA Stage 1 completed in 2025/26 – 2026/27.
An Early Market Engagement exercise should be undertaken in parallel to the commencement of the Transformed In-House service, to provide assurance to the Council as part of due diligence and help inform future arrangements.		This is currently on hold and should be considered as part of the broader LGR discussions re: leisure provision within the new authority.
Upon the conclusion of the Early Market Engagement exercise and the Terms & Conditions Audit, re-evaluate the Local Authority Trading Company option and market solution.		Currently on hold. It is recommended that this is considered as part of LGR implementation.
Implement the proposed staffing structure and the associated specific actions:		Completed May 2024.
The proposed staff review should be progressed commencing with an Equality Impact Assessment in respect of staff potentially impacted by the review		Completed in December 2023.
➤ Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan to support the review.		Completed. The stakeholder engagement programme has been

		identified as an exemplar by the TU and Employee Representative Group (ERG) for the Council and to be adopted corporately.
➤ Establish a cohesive and resourced plan to deliver the staff review in conjunction with internal business partners.		Plan developed and successfully implemented (December 2023 – May 2024).
➤ Develop a key outcomes framework that provides clarity of task and targets for the service and staff.		Incorporated within job roles and as part of the corporate Workforce Strategy within Personal Development Reviews (launched in April 2025).
➤ Develop a Learning & Development Plan that supports career progression and delivery of service objectives.		Staff have access to CIMPSA training and accreditation as presented to Employment Committee in February 2025.
➤ Develop a robust stakeholder communications plan that addresses both staff and customer communications on all relevant aspects of the change process to ensure business continuity.		Communication Plan developed and implemented. All staff regularly updated with FAQs on a weekly basis and through staff engagement sessions.
➤ Consider developing a set of design principles underpinning the staff review and any subsequent transformation phases.		Staff workshops and stakeholder engagement took place in March/April 2025.
➤ Develop a contingency plan within the 2024/25 budget planning process to reflect any potential implementation delays and subsequent impact on delivering the projected efficiency target.		A contingency plan was developed, however not required due to progress with the restructure and a positive trading position.
➤ Undertake a post project implementation review to assess if the proposed change has met its objectives and produce lessons learned document to support on-going improvement.		Review undertaken and reported to Employment Committee (February 2025).

Develop a structured approach to effectively engaging with the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care System that creates opportunities for One Leisure to broaden its delivery of health improvement interventions.		Head of Leisure, Health & Environment is engaged with and regularly meets with NHS/ICS and is exploring a co-located service at Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub.
Develop an Aquatic Strategy that sets the future direction of swimming and water-based activity.		Completed February 2025. Final element to be concluded with Head of Leisure, Health & Environment and Swim England re: wider club engagement.
Commission decarbonisation feasibility studies across the One Leisure estate.		Work is on-going with HoS/ wider Council colleagues aligned to capital development options and feasibility work for all facilities.
Develop a programme of feasibility studies for potential capital investment schemes across the leisure estate aligned to the Indoor Built Facility Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy and commercial opportunity.		Prioritised programme developed. Minor schemes completed at St Ives and St Neots with other schemes to follow in 2025/26 (Huntingdon and Ramsey). Major investment scheme for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub is being progressed and is at Feasibility Study and Initial Concept Design stage (RIBA stage1), this was presented to Cabinet in April 2025. Work in progress to develop options/feasibility studies across all other leisure facilities in 2025/26 – 2026/27.
Review and manage the delivery of the proposed 3-year Action Plan.		On-going (see overall summary of progress of Year 1).



Conclusion

Overall, the performance and ongoing transformation of One Leisure continues to be good and the trajectory towards increased participation and financial sustainability remains positive and is very encouraging.

Good progress has been made on potential major capital investments into the leisure estate, these are major projects for One Leisure with the proposed Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub at RIBA Stage 1 and all other sites due to follow during 2025-26. Developing a robust leisure capital programme will be important in light of the pending implementation of LGR.

In addition, securing capital funding and operational agreements to re-open and manage the swimming pool and leisure facilities at Sawtry is a significant achievement, with refurbishment and mobilisation taking place in 2025-26 with a view to reopening in Spring 2026.

However, it remains important to continually monitor progress and strive for continuous improvement across all aspects of service delivery wherever possible. It is recommended that for consistency, independent annual reviews are commissioned to assess and report progress and performance.

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One Leisure Annual Performance Review

2024 - 2025

Agenda



- 1 Field Lodge Care Home - Video
- 2 Year in Numbers (2024-2025) - One Leisure Facilities & Active Lifestyles (Health)
- 3 Year in Numbers (2022-23 v. 2023-24 v. 2024-25) - One Leisure Facilities & Active Lifestyles (Health)
- 4 Key Successes (2024-2025) - One Leisure Facilities, Active Lifestyles (Health) & Sports Development
- 5 Changing Lives
- 6 Service Plan (2025 - 2026)
- 7 Questions

Field Lodge Care Home



————— ” —————

We have enrolled in a 12 -week programme with Active Lifestyles, which is part of Huntingdonshire District Council. This is our third week, and it’s been a huge hit with residents, with one saying it’s “very effective.” Our One Leisure Instructor Claire is building a great rapport with residents and we look forward to seeing her each week!

————— ” —————

Year in Numbers 2024-2025



£6.84m

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

↑ 9%



£6.82m

TOTAL INCOME

↑ 18%



1.47m

ADMISSIONS

↑ 3%



£368k

BURGESS HALL INCOME

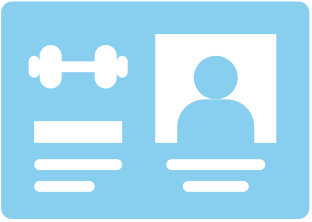
↓ 5%



8,186

HEALTH & FITNESS

↑ 5.6%



£3m

MEMBERSHIP INCOME

↑ 45%



3,303

SWIM SCHOOL

↑ 1.2%



£1.4m

SWIM SCHOOL INCOME

↑ 13%

Year in Numbers 2024-2025



4,000

ORGANISED SESSIONS

↑ 41%



45,550

ATTENDANCES

↑ 62%



4,314

INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

↑ 35%



£389k

TOTAL INCOME

↑ 46%



327

EXERCISE REFERRAL

↓ -1%



379 Walks
4,014 Attendances
176 Participants

VOLUNTEER LED
SESSIONS

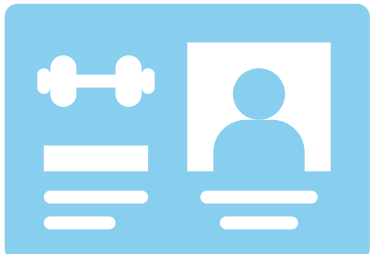
↑ 11%



2,112

CONCESSIONARY
PAY & PLAY

↑ 35%



435

ACTIVE LIFESTYLES
(HEALTH) MEMBERSHIPS

↑ 36%

Years in Numbers 2022/23, 2023/24 & 2024/25



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INDICATOR	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	% CHANGE	UPDATE
Swim School Students	3,187	3,267	3,303	↑ 1.2%	36 pupil growth year on year. Static performance in 2024/25, however following Swim England's Aquatic Review and Centre's actions we should see 3,400 achieved for the end of the first quarter of 2025/26.
Health & Fitness	7,560	7,486	8,186	↑ 5.6%	700 year on year member growth. OL St Ives and OL St Neots gym project complete and OLH gym project to start in May 2025 will put the live member count on target for 8500 by quarter two 2025/26.
Admissions	1.3m	1.4m	1.44m	↑ 3%	40,000 more attendances across all One Leisure Centre's year on year reflective of membership growth impacting gym and group exercise classes attendances over the year.
Total Income	£5.5m	£6.1m	£6.82m	↑ 18%	Overall income growth is attributed to increase in live members in both Swim school and gym income compounded over the year.
Total Expenditure	£5.9m	£6.5m	£6.83m	↑ 9%	Expenditure increase in line with inflation and increase in operating costs.
Membership Income	£2m	£2.15m	£3m	↑ 45%	Year on year member growth, the introduction of higher yield memberships and over performance on up front income account for the growth.
Swim School Income	£1.1m	£1.2m	£1.4m	↑ 13%	36 new pupils on the programme year on year account for the growth in income inclusive of annual price increase.
Burgess Hall Income	£310k	£395k	£368k	↓ 5%	Cancelled event in March impacted booking and bar sales and final outturn position for the year.

Years in Numbers 2022/23, 2023/24 & 2024/25

INDICATOR	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	% CHANGE	UPDATE
Organised sessions	2,051	2,830	4,000	↑ 41%	'Pay as You Go' sessions increased by 17% versus the previous year (2,065 v 1,766), and 'Commissioned' sessions are 133% above (932 v 400). Both strands are key to the long-term sustainability of the service.
Attendances	22,395	28,180	45,550	↑ 62%	Specialist Exercise Classes have increased by 43% on previous year achieving 5,329 attendances. Sessions in Care Settings have attracted 6,322 attendances - 271% on the previous year (2,334).
Individual Participants	2,470	3,184	4,314	↑ 35%	With a growth in variety and scope of offer and an increase in specialist sessions the service is attractive to a wider number of residents. 628 participants are from Care Settings.
Memberships	160	321	435	↑ 36%	Memberships continue to grow particularly through graduates of Active for Health, Active for Health Xtra and Staying Active.
Concession Pay & Play	831	1,567	2,112	↑ 35%	The Concessionary Scheme continues to thrive with renewals and new applications continuing to arrive.
Volunteer Led Sessions	364	368	379	↑ 3%	Wellbeing Walks have had their best year since COVID and achieved over 4,000 attendances averaging 11 participants per walk.
Exercise Referral Clients	322	329	327	↓ -1%	Exercise Referral recovered at the end of the year to almost reach previous year's new starters. The target is to achieve 360 in 2025/26.
Total Income	£186k	£267k	£389k	↑ 46%	Increase is 46% above the previous year and £200k ahead of 2022/23.

Key Successes 2024-2025



Staff Review Completed

One Leisure Facilities

Outsourced Vending Services from In House to External Provider

Introduced **Mystery Shop** with Pro-insight – Customer Service Excellence – One Leisure Average **84%**

Gym Investment Project (£500k)

One Leisure St Neots
One Leisure St Ives

Boiler Replacement Project OLSN - £160k



700 live member increase from **7,486** (£750k Sport England) to **8,186**

Car Park Canopy Solar PV Project complete

New Membership Architecture Introduced to Address VAT Changes and Increase Yield



Launch of Your Personal Training PT Operation

Group Cycle Investment Project at **One Leisure St Neots & One Leisure St Ives**

Recruitment to Management Appointments completed

Procurement of the CRM contract - Gladstone

OLSN 3G Turnstiles and Security Project



TRAINING & ACCREDITATION FOR STAFF

First Local Authority in the UK to align against the CIMSPA Framework

Key Successes 2024 - 2025



**25 NEW STAFF
QUALIFICATIONS**

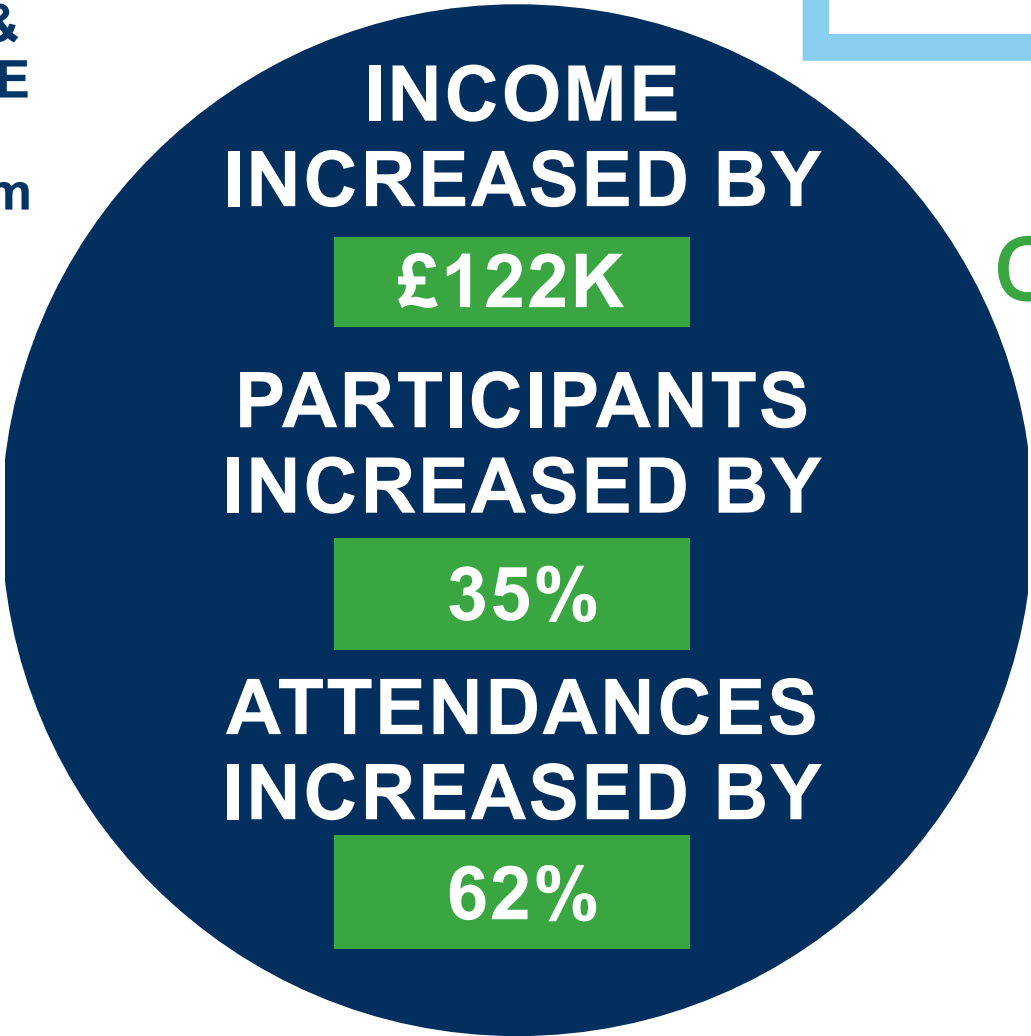
Cancer & Exercise, Cardiac Rehab &
Postural Stability instructor, ESCAPE
Pain, Chair Based Exercise
increasing resilience across the team

71% Completion rate for
Frailty programme:
Staying Active

**Tier 2 Weight Management
Courses: Weight Loss of 834.5 kg**

834

Individuals have taken part in one
of our courses for beginners, for
healthy weight, pain management
or to stay active
(6, 9 or 12 weeks)



**2,112
CONCESSIONARY
'PAY & PLAY' MEMBERS**

**CARE SETTINGS
PROJECT**

**22
Ongoing Sessions**

**27
Total settings visited**

Page 183

65% & 79% Completion rate for
Weight Management Courses:
Active for Health and Active for
Health Xtra respectively



4,000
Sessions Delivered

Key Successes (Sports Development) 2024 - 2025



1,448

After School Club Attendances

3,802

Curriculum PE Attendances

318

Total Schools sessions

ORGANISED CHILDREN'S
HOLIDAYS SPORT SESSIONS:

80

TOTAL ATTENDANCES:

1,211

PARISH COUNCIL
PARTNERS:

15

80 Sessions

1,071 Attendances

78 Hours of
Physical Activity

14 Partners

Page 184



4,318
Attendances at
Walking Sports
sessions



1,700
ATTENDANCES AT
DISABILITY SESSIONS
INCLUDING PEDALS
ADAPTIVE BIKE SCHEME,
ACTIVE & ABLE AND
SPECIAL CHOICES



15 NEW STAFF
QUALIFICATIONS

Level 2 Gym, Chair Based Exercise,
Circuits, Aqua, Multi Skills, Walking
Netball Host, Dodgeball
increasing resilience across the team

“I am so grateful for the opportunity. My son is Autistic and there are no sports for him to join locally. Having attended these sessions, we discovered that he enjoys tag rugby which we wouldn't have known if it weren't for this.”

— ” —

It has allowed me to ‘reset’ myself and get back onto a path of healthy eating and physical activity. My blood pressure reading has gone from hypertensive to normal range without the need for medication!

— ” —

— ” —

I started the activity as I was very unsteady on my feet and frightened of falling. I wanted to improve my strength and balance whilst also socialising.

My balance and mobility have greatly improved. Lauren, our instructor, is very enthusiastic, energetic, friendly and full of energy. She has advised and encouraged and now I feel so much more confident. The class is friendly and fun - you can exercise AND have fun.

— ” —

— ” —

The course has given us the confidence to attend the gym regularly which apart from the physical aspect has also had a positive mental effect. It really kickstarts our day. Meeting lovely people in the same situation as ourselves has been really good for us.

Charlie has been a brilliant course leader keeping us all on track but making it fun. Big thanks to the ICS for the funding and all the One Leisure staff - they really are a nice bunch

— ” —



**JUST WHAT I NEEDED,
TO MEET PEOPLE,
BECOME MORE ACTIVE,
FITTER AND CONFIDENT.
AQUAROBICS IS GREAT
FUN, EVERYONE IS SO
FRIENDLY. WILL
CERTAINLY CONTINUE!**

Thank you

STAYING ACTIVE
PARTICIAPANT



Sports Development School Sessions 2024 - 2025



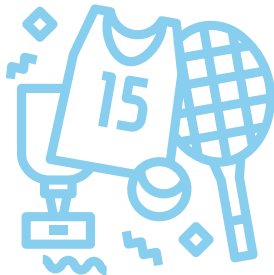
5

SCHOOLS



232

TOTAL SESSIONS
DELIVERED



6

WEEKLY AFTER
SCHOOL CLUBS



5

WEEKLY CURRICULUM
SESSIONS



3,824

ATTENDANCES



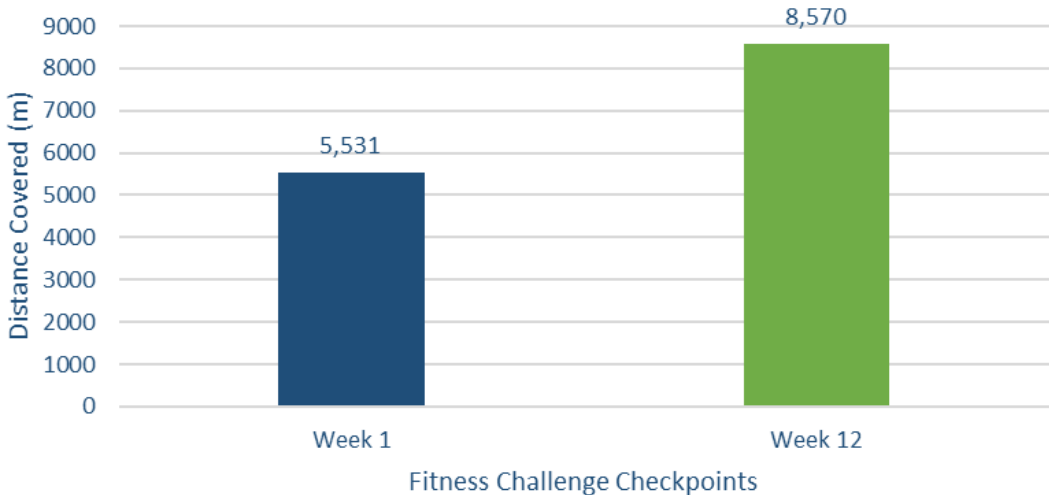
1,373

PARTICIPANTS

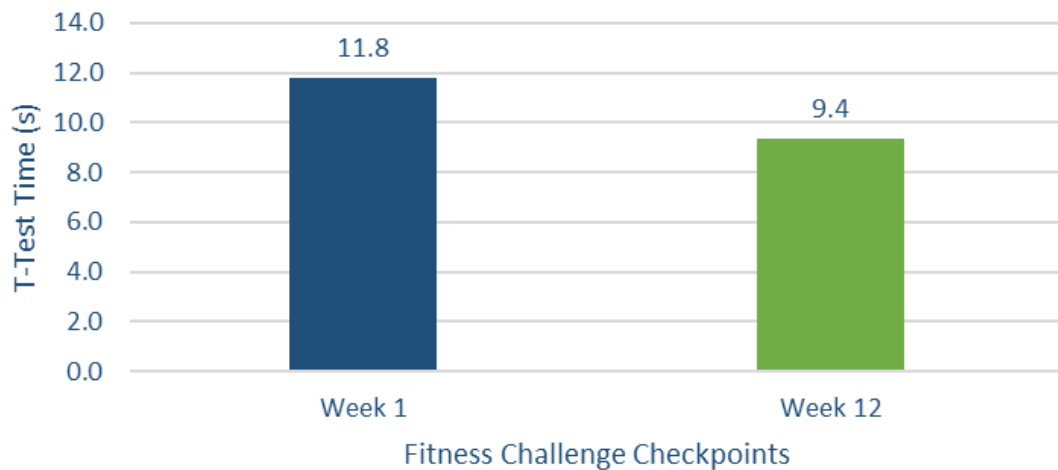
St Johns Primary School

Thongsley Primary School

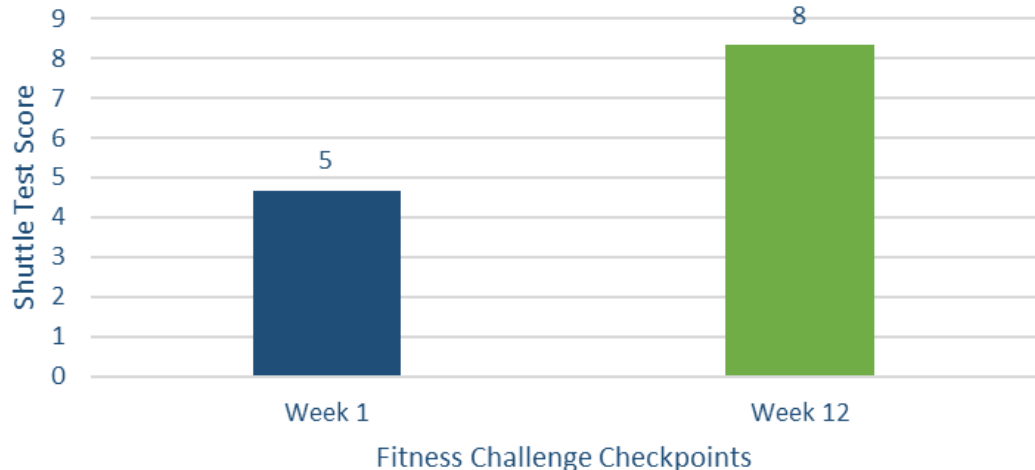
Cumulative Pupil Total Distance Covered (m) from
Week 1 - Week 12



Average T-Test Time per pupil from Week 1 - 12
(s)



Average Shuttle Test Score per pupil from Week
1 - 12



2-min Cooper Challenge is a measurement of aerobic fitness.
On average, an improvement of 111m was made per pupil from
week 1 - 12.

The T-Test is a timed measure of agility.
On average per pupil, an improvement of 2.4s was
made from week 1 - 12.

The Shuttle Test is a timed measurement of speed.
On average per pupil, an improvement of three
shuttles was made from week 1 - 12.

Impacting our Residents



Swim England
Aquatics Review

1,777 Concessionary statuses approved
(including renewals)

Sport England Funding
£750k – One Leisure St Ives Indoor

Weight Loss 834.5 kg
(Healthy Weight Programmes)

New St Ives Indoor &
St Neots Gyms opened

Four free ESCAPE pain courses
delivered with GP Surgeries in local
communities

40,000 more visits
Year on Year (One Leisure Facilities)

Functional Fitness Improvements
through Staying Active

Customer Service Impact



Net Promoter Score (NPS)

Customer Satisfaction (paid activities)

Business & Service Reviews

More options and sessions including
new activities - MORE CHOICE

New Membership Architecture

External - Health & Safety Audits

Pro-Insight Mystery Shops

New Customer Forums
- Meet the Manager

Service Plan 2025 - 2026



Action	Implementation Date
Huntingdon Leisure Centre Gym Refresh Project	August 2025
Huntingdon Leisure Centre Changing Room Refresh Project	August 2025
Ramsey Leisure Centre Gym Expansion Project	October 2025
Digital Innovation – Introduce Health & Safety Monitoring Software for Leisure Centre Operations	July 2025
One Leisure Website Refresh Project	September 2025
Swimming Pool Water Wellness Accreditation (Swim England)	November 2025
Sawtry Swimming Pool Mobilisation	January - March 2026
St Ives LC Swimming Pool Expansion Feasibility	December 2025
St Neots LC Swimming Pool Expansion Feasibility	December 2025

Service Plan 2025 - 2026



Action	Implementation Date
Deliver the Older People’s Physical Activity Project in St Ives in conjunction with COPE and St Ives Cares.	Completed
Launch a Men’s Health Hub a St Ives Outdoor Centre	Completed
Submit a bid to Cambridgeshire County Council to secure the Tier 1 and Tier 2 Healthy Weight Behaviour Change contract for Huntingdonshire.	September 2025
Procure a specialist IT solution to manage the health-based activity programme and enable e-referrals through the NHS for local health professionals.	January 2026
Primary Schools Sports & Physical Activity Initiative	January 2026
Submit a funding application for a new 3G Synthetic Turf Pitch to the Football Foundation.	December 2025
Implement a pilot Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Summer Activation Project	July 2026

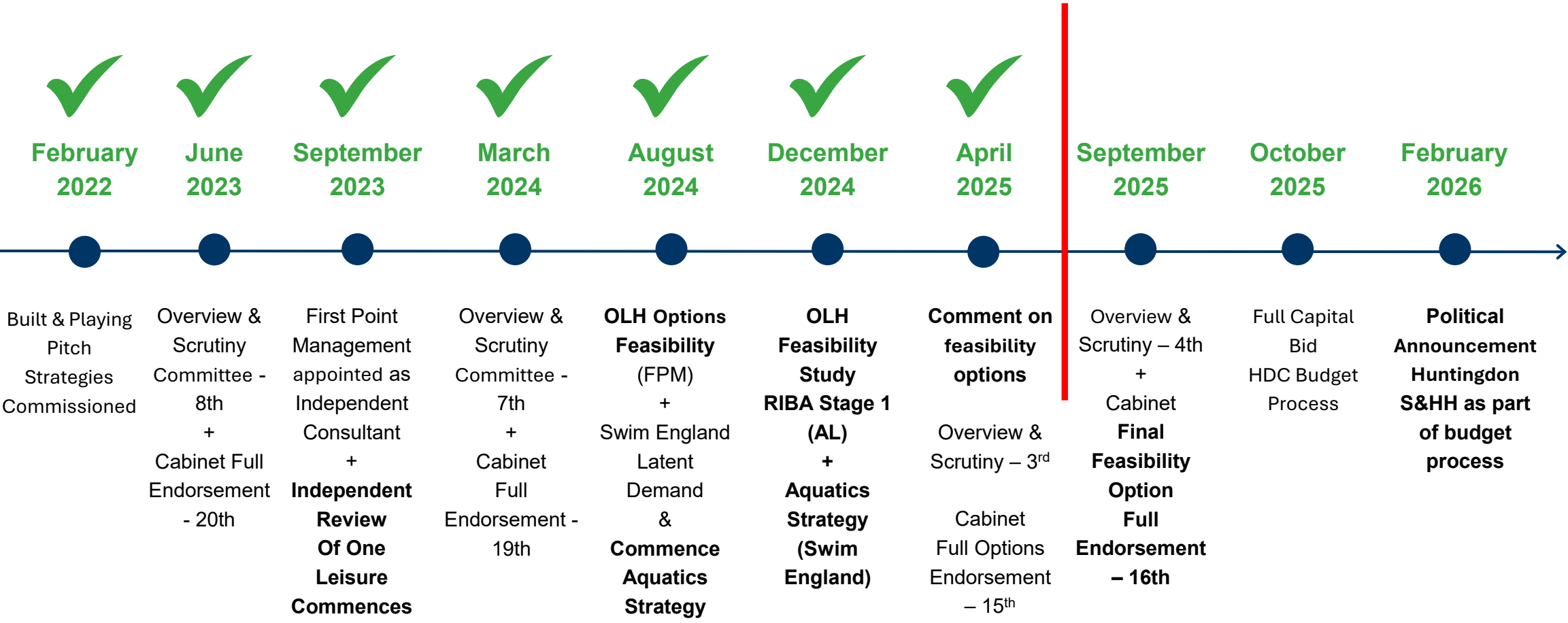
QUESTIONS?

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One Leisure
12 Month
Independent Review Update
July 2025

The One Leisure Journey To Date.....

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Independent Review – What did we ask for?

- Short Term Operating Models – What is the correct model for HDC (2-3 years)
 - a) Transformed In-House (**Approved Option**)
 - b) LATC
 - c) Market Solution Outsourced
 - d) Trust or Not for Profit
- Staff & Structural Review
- Built Facility & Playing Pitch Strategies
 - a) Capital Investment Priority list & Programme – links back to June 2023 reports (**Approved by Cabinet**)
- Medium (3-5 years) & Long-Term Operating Models (5+ years)
- Recommendations

Independent Review - Recommendations

The Independent Review identified 22 actions and recommendations and of this;

- a. 15 actions/recommendations have been completed (c. 68%);
- b. 5 remain in progress and span more than a single year (c. 23%), whilst ;
- c. 2 (c. 9%) have not been progressed, primarily due the pending implementation of Local Government Reform (LGR).

Percentage (%)	Status
68%	Complete
23%	In Progress
9%	Incomplete

Independent Review – Complete (1)

Actions

The immediate short term delivery model for the Council's leisure function should be an adequately resourced and empowered Transformed In-House service.

Review the membership architecture to provide enhanced customer choice and invest in digital innovation to improve the customer journey.

Determine the senior management arrangements within One Leisure, necessary to lead and drive service transformation.

Implement the proposed staffing structure and the associated specific actions:

The proposed staff review should be progressed commencing with an Equality Impact Assessment in respect of staff potentially impacted by the review.

Develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan to support the review.

Establish a cohesive and resourced plan to deliver the staff review in conjunction with internal business partners.

Develop a key outcomes framework that provides clarity of task and targets for the service and staff.

Develop a Learning & Development Plan that supports career progression and delivery of service objectives.

Independent Review – Complete (2)

Actions

Develop a robust stakeholder communications plan that addresses both staff and customer communications on all relevant aspects of the change process to ensure business continuity.

Consider developing a set of design principles underpinning the staff review and any subsequent transformation phases.

Develop a contingency plan within the 2024/25 budget planning process to reflect any potential implementation delays and subsequent impact on delivering the projected efficiency

Undertake a post project implementation review to assess if the proposed change has met its objectives and produce lessons learned document to support on-going improvement.

Develop an Aquatic Strategy that sets the future direction of swimming and water-based activity.

Develop a programme of feasibility studies for potential capital investment schemes across the leisure estate aligned to the Indoor Built Facility Strategy, Playing Pitch Strategy and commercial opportunity.

Independent Review – In Progress

Actions

Establish a set of Transformation Design Principles and an Outcomes Framework for the service.

Produce or commission a financial plan to accompany the Indoor Built Facility Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy to conclude that stage of work.

Page 19

Develop a structured approach to effectively engaging with the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care System that creates opportunities for One Leisure to broaden its delivery of health improvement interventions.

Commission decarbonisation feasibility studies across the One Leisure estate.

Review and manage the delivery of the proposed 3-year Action Plan.

Independent Review – Incomplete

Action

An Early Market Engagement exercise should be undertaken in parallel to the commencement of the Transformed In-House service, to provide assurance to the Council as part of due diligence and help inform future arrangements.

Upon the conclusion of the Early Market Engagement exercise and the Terms & Conditions Audit, re-evaluate the Local Authority Trading Company option and market solution.

Key Recommendations: 2025 - 2026

1. Commission an independent review of:
 - a) One Leisure's readiness for LGR
 - b) High level state of the market review of leisure providers across Cambridgeshire
 - c) Options, Risks & Recommendations for One Leisure
2. To complete all outstanding feasibility studies for One Leisure sites to RIBA Stage 1
3. Gain full approval for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub (RIBA Stage 2)
4. Secure partnership arrangement with NHS/ICB for Huntingdon Sport & Health Hub
5. Finalise and gain approval for One Leisure Design Principles
 - a) Vision & Customer Charter
6. Mobilisation & Re-Opening of Sawtry Leisure Centre
7. Continue working with colleagues to develop de-carbonisation plans

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Public - Yes
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Annual Climate Report and Action Plan Update
Meeting/Date:	Overview and Scrutiny (Environment, Community and Partnerships) – 10/07/2025 Cabinet – 15/07/2025
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Councillor Climate, Transformation and Workforce - Councillor Lara Davenport-Ray
Report by:	Harriet Robinson – Climate Co-ordinator Helen Lack – Development & Delivery Manager – Parks & Countryside
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

The Climate Action Plan, Strategies, and carbon-reducing emission actions in the Corporate Plan all interconnect with the **Place Strategy's** journeys: Pride in Place, Inclusive Economy, Health Embedded, Travel Transformed and Environmental Innovation. **Appendix 1** illustrates how some of our key achievements throughout 2024-25 have benefitted each of these journeys.

This report presents the second Annual Report of Huntingdonshire District Council's **Climate Action Plan**, covering all climate-related activities undertaken between April 2024 and March 2025. This follows the declaration of a **Climate Emergency and Ecological Crisis** made in February 2023. The updated Climate Action Plan is displayed in **Appendix 6**.

This report outlines the ongoing progress made towards achieving **a carbon net zero Council by 2040**, as set out in the Council's Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

The delivery of the Council's Climate Strategy, through the action plan, addresses the Council's Corporate Plan priority of **Creating a Better Huntingdonshire for Future Generations**, particularly the objective of **Lowering Carbon Emissions**.

Strategic Objectives:

- Achieving carbon net zero for HDC's operations by 2040
- Ensuring Council policies support emission reductions and serve as positive examples.

- Continuously considering environmental impacts in all policymaking and asset management
- Collaborating with partners to address environmental issues

Monitoring and Evaluation:

The Council has been using various methods to track progress. This includes quarterly tracking of actions, benchmarking against neighbouring local authorities, annual Climate Conversation events and annual greenhouse gas emissions reporting. The Online Climate Hub, a development from the feedback following 2023's Annual Climate Conversation, is now embedded as part of the Council's community engagement piece and for the promotion of Climate events in and around the District.

This report emphasises the importance of continued efforts and adaptation to modern technologies and approaches to maintain momentum towards HDC achieving carbon net zero by 2040.

Key Achievements:

1. **Emission Reductions:** From March 2019 to March 2025, the Council achieved a reduction of 1,032 tCO₂e. This represents a 34% decrease in overall emissions.
2. **Fleet Transition:** The Council initiated a pilot project to use hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) as an alternative fuel, which is estimated to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 82% or 1,100 tCO₂. In February 2025, the Cabinet approved the use of HVO for all standard diesel vehicles and the process has begun to acquire this fuel after successful tender of contract.
3. **Facilities Upgrades:** Projects such as retrofitting Council buildings continue including the installation of triple glazing and a solar panel canopy at One Leisure Indoor St Ives. The installation began in January 2025 and was commissioned in April 2025.
4. **Green Tariffs:** HDC moved on to green tariffs from September 2024, reducing our Scope 2 carbon emissions for electricity on its main sites to zero.
5. **Carbon E-learning for Staff:** All staff members as of 1st June 2025 now have access to a 30-minute e-learning course concerning Climate and Environment as part of HDC 's staff learning and development offering.
6. **Community Engagement:** This continues with our 2nd Annual Climate Conversation held in November 2024. This brought together stakeholders and residents to discuss and inspire climate action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To comment on the delivery of the Climate Action Plan for 2024-25.
2. To note the progress made by the Council and its partners towards achieving Carbon Net Zero by 2040.
3. To comment on and approve the updated Climate Action plan as shown in **Appendix 6** and note the amendment of actions in **Appendix 7**.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Councillors with an update on progress of the delivery of the Council's Climate Strategy and Action Plan since its adoption in February 2023. Key areas of success in this report will cover the 2024-2025 budget year.
- 1.2 This report will also present a summary of progress, highlighting the current position of Huntingdonshire District Council, demonstrating actions undertaken to reduce emissions through the approach set out in the Climate Strategy for the Council to be:
- **a positive example** through its actions to be a net carbon zero Council by 2040.
 - **an enabler** supporting action within our communities and across our partners.
 - **an encourager** to ensure the efforts of those that live, work, and visit our district help to achieve the aspiration of a net carbon zero Huntingdonshire by 2040.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In October 2022, the Council passed a **Cost of Living and Climate Change Motion**. This recognised the importance and positive impact of action benefiting the climate and environment in tackling the rising costs of living by reducing consumption of natural resources, shifting to renewables, and producing less carbon emissions.
- 2.2 This Council adopted the **Climate Strategy and Climate Action Plan** in February 2023.
- 2.3 The Council hosted its first **Climate Conversation** with our communities in November 2023.
- 2.4 The Council hosted its 2nd Annual **Climate Conversation** in November 2024.

3 CLIMATE STRATEGY

3.1 Climate Vision:

We will be a Council that proactively tackles the Climate Crisis and ecological emergency, collaborating closely with partners, and leading by example to be a net carbon zero Council by 2040, and support Huntingdonshire to achieve the same goal.

3.2 Climate Objectives:

We are working to achieve our vision, responding to the Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency, and are continuing to place focus on the following:

- Achieving carbon net zero for the Council's own operations by 2040
- Ensuring Council policies and projects enable reduction of carbon emissions and provide positive examples for businesses and residents.
- Continually demonstrating that we consider environmental impact in all policymaking and our stewardship of council assets and resources.
- Influencing our updated Local Plan and working closely with the Planning Service to reflect the priorities outlined in our Climate Action Plan
- Maximising the opportunities to work with others collaboratively to address environmental issues.

4 PROGRESS TO DATE

4.1 Strategic Priorities

The Council has been tasked to demonstrate its commitment to reducing carbon emissions in the District. We have continued to engage in several key activities and projects in response to the strategic priorities agreed with the Climate Strategy adoption.

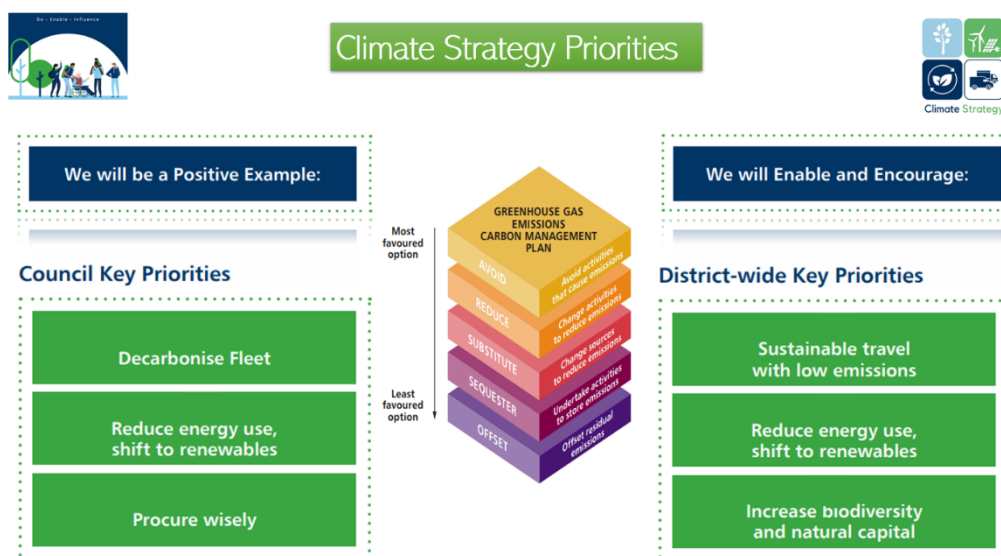
We will be a 'Positive Example' for our direct Council emissions.

- Decarbonise Fleet.
- Reduce Energy use, shift to renewables.
- Procure wisely.

We will 'Enable & Encourage' our District.

- Sustainable Travel with Low Emissions.
- Reduce energy use, shift to renewables.
- Increase Biodiversity and Natural Capital.

Table to highlight HDC's Key Climate Strategic Priorities



4.2 The Climate Strategy includes a detailed Action Plan which sets out our actions to deliver net zero carbon emissions both in terms of our own services and to support our local communities to do the same.

Appendix 2 summarises the detailed progress against the Climate Actions set for 2024/2025. **Appendix 3** goes into these categories in more detail. The Actions are categorised by theme area:

- Buildings;
- Energy & Renewables;
- Nature;
- Travel & Transport;
- Waste, Recycling & Resource Management; and
- Community.

5 CORPORATE PLAN

5.1 The Corporate plan 2023-2028 places strong emphasis on the Council's commitment to delivering their reduced carbon emissions target.

- Priority 1: Improving quality of life for local people
- Priority 2: Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations
- Priority 3: Delivering good quality, high value-for-money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations. Items 37-50 in the Plan highlight the 'lowering carbon emissions' actions and their progress. This table can be found in **Appendix 5**.

6 HUNTINGDONSHIRE PLACE STRATEGY

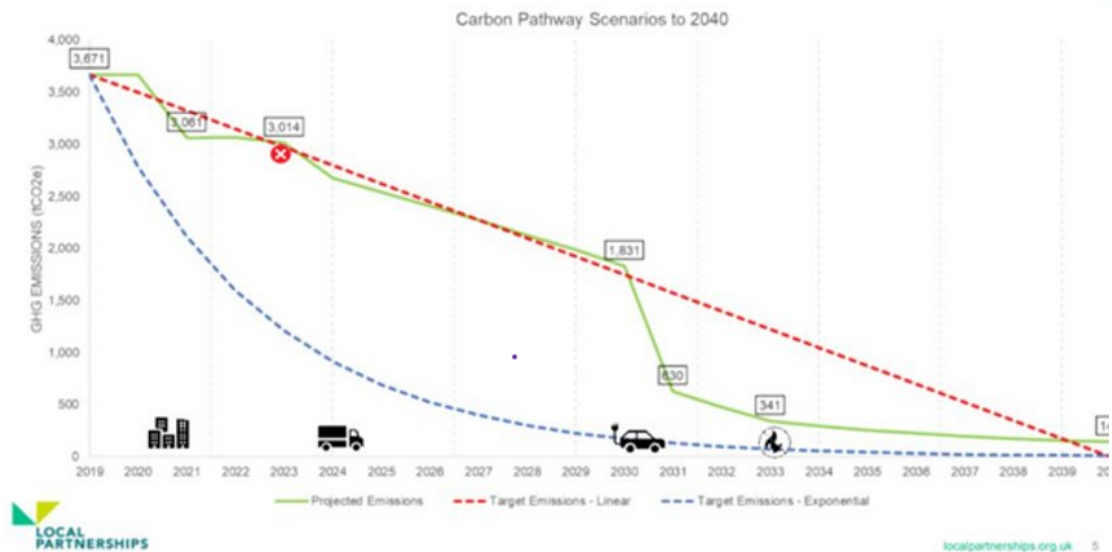
- 6.1 Huntingdonshire Futures sets out a vision to make Huntingdonshire a better place to live, work, and visit over the next 30 years. Over the last 2 years, the Council has started to collaborate with local communities to bring the strategy to life. Environmental Innovation is one of the five journeys agreed within the strategy's adoption.
- 6.2 The Climate and Huntingdonshire Futures teams held an Environmental Innovation launch workshop on 4th June 2024. Through initial consultations with local community groups, aspirations included: "all houses should have no carbon footprint, we should be protecting what we already have and there needs to be more done to make people change." Key themes that emerged from the workshop included: supporting Parish Councils, increasing our natural assets and their value, and giving access to more funding opportunities. Following this workshop, it was decided to progress with additional retrofit studies, which have included a partnership with Cambridge Carbon Footprint as well as further community events, which will be held in 2025-26.
- 6.3 The workshop discussed the importance of Climate work taking place across the District. The keynote speakers were Allia (speaking about their Green Business Programme), Groundwork East (speaking about their Green Recovery Programme) and HDC highlighting its Biodiversity programme. Following this, focus groups gathered to identify priorities and areas for action within the next 5, 10 and 30 years.

7 MONITORING

- 7.1 Carbon Accounting
 - 7.1.1 The Climate Strategy set a carbon trajectory for the Council with Local Partnerships, an in-house public sector consultancy jointly owned by the Local Government Association, HM Treasury, and the Welsh Government. Local Partnerships developed the greenhouse gas emissions calculator for local government and built the carbon trajectory based on our plans to achieve a net zero Council by 2040, training the Council to maintain it.
 - 7.1.2 The latest Greenhouse Gas Accounting Report starts from 1st April 2024 and ends on 31st March 2025. This has enabled HDC to plot our progress in reducing our emissions. The graph below shows the ideal scenario in how the reduction in emissions is to be achieved:

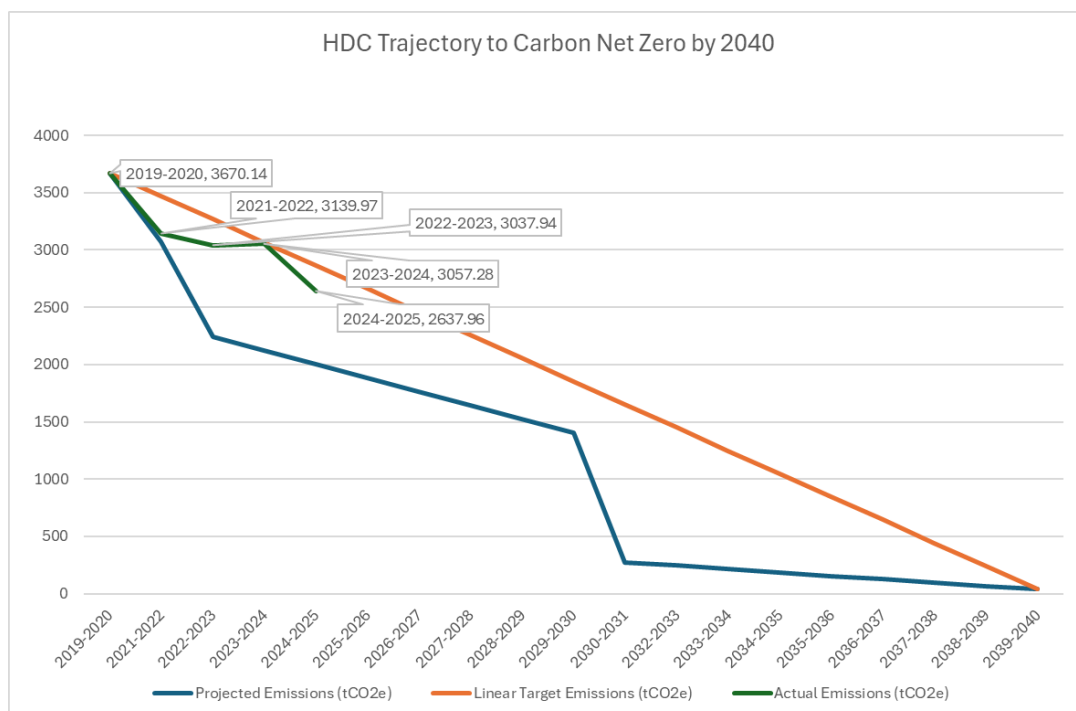
Carbon Emissions Trajectory

All implementations (excluding purchasing green electricity)



The green line (solid) shows the anticipated timing and impact of planned changes to reduce emissions. If opportunities arise to accelerate progress remaining within the financial considerations of the Council, HDC will take these.

7.1.4 The graph below shows where the Council is in terms of its current carbon trajectory:



7.1.3 Carbon savings from Council emissions (Scopes 1,2 and 3) between 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2025 are 1,032.18 tCO₂e. This is the equivalent powering 215 homes' electricity use for a year.

7.1.4 Here are some key points to explain the figures Year on Year between 2023/4 and 2024/5:

- Our Scope 1 emissions consist of fuel and heating.
- Our fuel consumption increased by 3.4% due to an increase in the number of properties being serviced and the number of trade collections taking place, more sweepers being used and increased mileage due to a change in the location of the waste transfer station from Alconbury to Somersham.
- An increased occupancy to Pathfinder House of 15% occurred between 2023-24 and 2024-25. This increase demand on both heating and electricity.
- Our recorded Scope 2 emissions are made up of electricity, which has been purchased from a Green Tariff. Green tariffs for electricity reduce our emissions to zero due to the electricity being obtained from renewable sources. The Council has the relevant renewable energy guarantees of origin (REGO) confirming our electricity are from renewable sources.

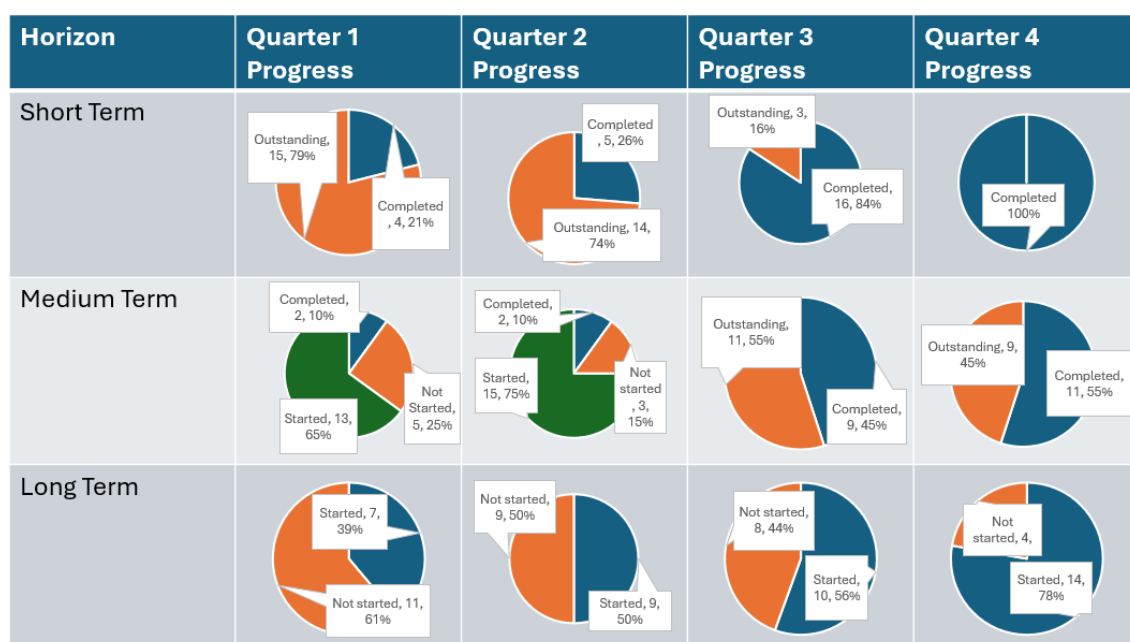
7.2 Climate Action Plan

7.2.1 To ensure continued delivery of the Climate Action Plan. This has and will continue to follow our 'do, enable, influence' principles as set out in the Corporate Plan. The Action Plan has been reviewed quarterly with oversight from both the Corporate Leadership Team and Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation and Workforce.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • 19 th June 2024 | Quarter 1 (Apr – June 2023) |
| • 2 nd October 2024 | Quarter 2 (July – Sept 2024) |
| • 17 th December 2024 | Quarter 3 (Oct – Dec 2025) |
| • 22 nd April 2025 | Quarter 4 (Jan – Mar 2025) |

7.2.2 A summary of the quarterly progress in 2024/25 is shown below, illustrating positive progress through short, medium, and long-term target delivery. An updated Climate Action plan for approval is shown in **Appendix 6**. The highlighted differences are shown in **Appendix 7**.

Table to show Short-, Medium- and Long-Term Progress of Climate Action Plan Actions



7.3 CLIMATE UK SCORECARD REPORT

In 2023-24, HDC received the improved score of 27% (from zero in 2021) from an independent review of our Climate Action by Climate Emergency UK. This demonstrated the immediate impact of developing the Council's Climate Strategy and Action Plan. The scorecard used by Climate Emergency UK enables benchmarking against our neighbouring authorities such as those with similar socio-economic characteristics as determined by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The Council has taken learnings from the work of others to identify areas for where we can improve future scores. The Council undertook a review of the scoring mechanism used to ensure our Climate Action Plan addresses opportunities for learning and improvement. The next scorecard results will be announced in June 2025.

8 ANNUAL CLIMATE CONVERSATION

- 8.1 On 6th November 2024 our 2nd Annual Climate Conversation was held by HDC at the Burgess Hall in St Ives. Attended by ninety community groups, businesses, energy charities and local Councils, everyone came together for a busy day of keynote speakers, panels, and surgery sessions. The keynote speakers came from a wide range of backgrounds including sustainability, procurement, energy saving through thermal cameras and retrofitting at scale to reduce energy consumption.
- 8.2 Many positive connections were made during the event, strengthening relationships and enabling stakeholders to connect with one another. HDC partnered with Cambridgeshire Carbon Footprint and Parish Councils to trial training and loaning thermal imaging cameras to residents. The cameras show where heat escapes allowing residents to see where they

can make changes to reduce their energy consumption, whilst reducing their carbon footprint. Afternoon surgery sessions covering measuring Biodiversity Net Gain, engaging children in climate and how to make net zero work for us all in terms of ownership and engagement.



As a direct result of this Climate conversation, further development has been made on:

- Engaging community groups in biodiversity tracking through the iNaturalist app.
- The continued contribution of toolkit development for a locally determined contribution. This will stipulate work Councils will need to do to reach their carbon net zero targets.
- Passing on meet ups for those who are interested in retrofitting their own homes.
- Further promotion of retrofitting government funding schemes such as HUG2 (now finished) and ECO4 FLEX (ongoing until March 2026).
- Incorporating a further shift into sustainable purchasing practices
- Promotion of our Local Plan development and how this affects all residents through several different channels.

9. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 9.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

10 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The delivery of the Climate Action Plan, Climate Strategy and carbon-reducing actions in the Corporate Plan is supported by a Climate Coordinator and a Project Support Officer. The Climate Coordinator leads on the Climate Conversation, collaborates with Council services to support their climate actions and develop new ones, reports progress across the Council against the Climate Action Plan, reviews benchmarking and

opportunities and supports officers directly engaged in climate work such as the Biodiversity for All project and Home Energy.

- 10.2 The climate budget for 2023-2024 was £150,000 to support Council services to accelerate the development and delivery of priority climate actions. Services have and will continue to use this funding to develop businesses cases, provide energy strategies, offer in-house e-learning training on climate and contributing to facility upgrades on HDC sites such as roof surveys. Services are then able to apply for evidence-based investment in transformational projects such as accelerating solar or transitioning from fossil fuels through the transformation budgets or medium-term financial planning process. An example of where the funding has been used to unlock further investment in the Council is looking to hire a Waste Reduction Engagement Officer, which will be essential in ensuring successful participation among domestic properties receiving communal waste collections in the district.

11 HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Climate change is directly contributing to humanitarian emergencies from heatwaves, wildfires, and floods which are increasing in scale, frequency, and intensity. Locally our communities experience challenges from heat, drought, and flooding.
- 11.2 The ability to cool our living environments are increasingly important as is water security in the driest region of England. Higher temperatures can impact the most vulnerable in our community.
- 11.3 Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases through better transport, food and energy use choices can result in exceptionally large gains for health, particularly through reduced air pollution.
- 11.3 The positive impacts of cleaner and greener places and improved biodiversity are well known in addressing the impacts of climate change as well as our health and well-being.
- 11.4 The Climate Strategy for Huntingdonshire continues to support the Council's commitment to encourage a healthy and active community, particularly as more work is progressed to support climate adaptation.

12.0 APPENDICES

1. Climate Action Undertaken – categorised by Place Strategy Journey
2. Climate Action Undertaken – categorised by Climate Strategy Theme
3. Climate Action Plan – Progress
4. List of HDC Sites that are on a Green Electricity Tariff
5. Corporate Plan Actions and Progress – Lowering Carbon Emissions
6. Updated Climate Action Plan
7. Amended Climate Action Plan

13.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Climate strategy link:

[Climate Strategy Appendix 1](#)

Link to the 1st Climate Action Plan:

[Climate Strategy - Action Plan](#)

ECO4 Scheme:

[Energy Company Obligation \(ECO\) | Ofgem](#)

[Huntingdonshire Futures | Let's Talk Huntingdonshire](#)

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Appendix 1

CLIMATE ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN CATEGORISED BY PLACE STRATEGY JOURNEY

PRIDE IN PLACE



- Completion of 4 roof surveys on 4 key sites: St Ives, St Neots, Ramsey and Huntingdon
- As part of Action on Energy Cambridgeshire Partnership, in the process of producing a local action energy plan
- Collaboration with the LDC project, funded by Innovate UK
- 15 tonnes of WEEE collected
- 39 tonnes of textiles gathered through drop-off points
- HDC provided equipment and collection services enabling 50 community groups delivered 180 litter pick ups

TRAVEL TRANSFORMED



- Upgraded charge points at 13 locations from funding through the Rural England Prosperity Fund
- Completion of pilot project for HVO trial from Nov 2023 through to June 2024

ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION



- HDC's electricity is on a green tariff on its main sites from Sept 2024
- Energy Strategy commissioned and due for completion in July 2025
- Invested in 2 flagship sites: Hill Rise (St Ives) and Priory Park (St Neots)
- Community chest grant awarded to fund rainwater harvesting project
- 4 Huntingdonshire Futures grants awarded funding environmental innovation
- Green Flag Awards - HDC received 4 awards for 4 of their parks

HEALTH EMBEDDED



- Total of 29 ECO 4 FLEX applications submitted
- Warm Homes Upgrade Grant (WHUG), replacing HUG 2 announced
- AS part of CERP, nominated as finalists for 3 awards
- 250 menstrual cups given away for free followed by 250 more sold at heavily discounted rate
- Collaboration with partners for "Chef in the School" initiative to reduce school food waste

INCLUSIVE ECONOMY









- Following the award of £700,000 Swim England funding, the installation of triple glazed windows around the swimming pool and a solar canopy in the car park were completed
- Continuation of the Green Skills programme - 67% of participants secured employment following involvement
- HVO trial partnered with Fire Service and Police
- Partnership with Cambridgeshire Carbon Footprint providing training and use of thermal imaging cameras
- Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme - CPCA funding aiming to help rural communities to reduce their carbon footprint. Awarded to 11 successful applicants
- Climate education - partnership with PECT to provide education programme to 5 schools

2024-2025

Appendix 2

CLIMATE ACTION UNDERTAKEN CATEGORISED BY STRATEGY THEME

 BUILDINGS	 ENERGY & RENEWABLES	 NATURE	 TRAVEL & TRANSPORT	 WASTE, RECYCLING & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	 COMMUNITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDC's electricity is on a green tariff on its main sites from Sept 2024 Completion of 4 roof surveys on 4 key sites: St Ives, St Neots, Ramsey and Huntingdon Following the award of £700,000 Swim England funding, the installation of triple glazed windows around the swimming pool and a solar canopy in the car park were completed Energy Strategy commissioned and due for completion in July 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total of 29 ECO 4 FLEX applications submitted Warm Homes Upgrade Grant (WHUG), replacing HUG 2 announced AS part of CERP, nominated as finalists for 3 awards As part of Action on Energy Cambridgeshire Partnership, in the process of producing a local action energy plan Collaboration with the LDC project, funded by Innovate UK Upgraded charge points at 13 locations from funding through the Rural England Prosperity Fund 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invested in 2 flagship sites: Hill Rise (St Ives) and Priory Park (St Neots) Continuation of the Green Skills programme - 67% of participants secured employment following involvement Community chest grant awarded to fund rainwater harvesting project 4 Huntingdonshire Futures grants awarded funding environmental innovation Green Flag Awards - HDC received 4 awards for 4 of their parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of pilot project for HVO trial from Nov 2023 through to June 2024 Trial partnered with Fire Service and Police EV charging points installed at key sites around the District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 250 menstrual cups given away for free followed by 250 more sold at heavily discounted rate 15 tonnes of WEEE collected 39 tonnes of textiles gathered through drop-off points HDC provided equipment and collection services enabling 50 community groups delivered 180 litter pick ups Collaboration with partners for "Chef in the School" initiative to reduce school food waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership with Cambridgeshire Carbon Footprint providing training and use of thermal imaging cameras Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme - CPCA funding aiming to help rural communities to reduce their carbon footprint. Awarded to 11 successful applicants Climate education - partnership with PECT to provide education programme to 5 schools
2024/2025					

Appendix 3

Buildings

Facilities

The Facilities team have initiated several projects throughout 2024-25 as set out in the Climate Strategy, especially in continuation of retrofitting Council buildings to make them more sustainable. As of October 2024, all HDC's electricity is now on a green tariff. This includes all our corporate sites, bus stations and One Leisure sites. A list of these sites can be found in Appendix 3. Item 39 in the Corporate Plan to 'deliver an energy strategy' which will be completed by the end of July 2025. 4 roof surveys were completed in April 2024 on the following sites: St Ives, St Neots Ramsey and Huntingdon to establish the suitability of installing solar panels. Projects to install solar panels on St Neots, Huntingdon and Ramsey will be completed in the 2025-2026 financial year.

In April 2024, £700,000 of Swim England funding was awarded for the installation of triple-glazed windows around the swimming pool and the installation of a solar canopy in the car park at One Leisure St Ives. The canopy installation was commissioned as of 22/04/2025 and the triple glazing completed at the end of January 2025. The energy production will be monitored through software apps, meter readings and utility bill management. It is estimated that the solar canopy will save 31,941kg of CO₂ per year. 215,000 kwh per year in terms of electricity production.

Reduce energy use, shift to Renewables

EV Strategy

Through funding from the Rural England Prosperity Fund, HDC has completed works to upgrade its charge points and the ancillary equipment (which includes meters etc.) that powers them. These EV charge points are located at:

- Multi-storey Car Park – Huntingdon
- Princes Street – Huntingdon
- Mill Common – Huntingdon
- Great Northern Street – Huntingdon
- Ingram Street – Huntingdon
- Tebbutts Road – St Neots
- Tan Yard – St Neots
- Riverside Car Park – St Neots
- Priory Lane West – St Neots
- Brook Street – St Neots
- Cattle Market – St Ives
- Darwoods Pond – St Ives
- Globe Place – St Ives

Whilst the sites do offer EV charging, they still have some power limitations. However, the hardware does support a higher charge rate, which would remove a barrier should additional funding be sourced to supply this in the future.

Home Energy

Home Energy work continues through the 'Action on Energy (AOE) Cambridgeshire' network. A total of 29 Energy Company Obligation (ECO) 4 FLEX applications have been submitted over the last financial year. ECO4 Flex is a household referral mechanism within the wider ECO4 scheme enabling Local Authorities to widen the eligibility criteria for ECO, allowing them to tailor energy efficiency schemes to their respective area. A total of 24 properties were approved to be upgraded for the HUG2 (Home Upgrade Grant) scheme in 2024-25. This scheme provided energy efficient upgrades and low-carbon heating to low-income households living in off-gas grid homes in England.

The HUG2 scheme has now closed and has been replaced with the Warm Homes Upgrade Grant (WHUG) scheme. Depending on eligibility, free energy saving improvements can be made to homes and is only available in England. The details of this scheme are currently being finalised, and the 3-year programme is being launched in 2025-2026. This 3-year programme will receive £8.5 million's worth of funding to retrofit properties across Cambridgeshire as a whole, which was a lower figure than initially bid for.

The Home Energy team along with the Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership (CERP) attended a wide variety of in-person events and award ceremonies across the District. These included:

- Attending the Pidley Eco Fayre in June 2024, showcasing Home Energy schemes on offer to residents in the area
- APSE Energy Awards – CERP were finalists for the 'working in collaboration' category
- Retrofit Academy Awards – CERP nominated for 'Best Local Authority Led Retrofit Program' finalist
- iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards – CERP nominated for the 'Green Public Service' Bronze Award

Economy

HDC took part in the green business programme where businesses could apply for small grants to make sustainable change. The grants ranged from £1,500 to £15,000 and 20 grants in total were approved by the end of the programme. Sustainable changes made included: installation of LED lighting, solar panels, roof insulation, smart plugs and replacing old windows.

Local Action Energy Plan

The Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) aims to provide us with the information on current energy infrastructure and what we need in the future to support the transition to low carbon energy for Cambridgeshire. It aims to define the extent of the transformation required to transition an area's energy system to net zero in each timeframe. The partners in the production of the LAEP are: Cambridgeshire County Council (Lead Partner), the CPCA, Cambridgeshire City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and HDC. HDC's participation has ensured Huntingdonshire remains part of the solution leading the way in planning for the future and tackling Climate Change. The CERP went out to tender and CAG Consulting were chosen to conduct the engagement piece and Mott Macdonald as the preferred supplier to create the plan post engagement.



Locally Determined Contributions (previously known as CANFFUND)

A Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) is a national action plan required under the Paris Agreement to reduce emissions and adapt to climate impacts. There are growing calls for these to incorporate Regionally and Locally Determined Contributions (LDCs), enabling local authorities to define and report their own climate commitments. Including LDCs in national inventory reports would enhance transparency and track progress more accurately. Similar to NDCs, LDCs outline local targets, actions, and implementation plans. Developing an LDC offers a cost-effective, place-based approach to achieving Net Zero, aligning with wider goals such as health, wellbeing, and reducing inequalities. It also addresses the current lack of a clear national-local governance framework, helping to unlock funding opportunities and attract private sector investment. Early adoption, as seen in Cambridgeshire, positions local authorities ahead of potential regulatory changes and supports broader, scalable climate action.

The Locally Determined contributions (LDC) project was funded by Innovate UK and is a collaboration between the following Councils and organisations: Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council and HDC, Centre for Climate Engagement, Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge and collaborate. The project began in February 2024 and is due to complete in July 2025.

Nature - Increase Biodiversity and Natural Capital

Biodiversity and Green Skills Programmes

HDC's Biodiversity for All programme is helping to double nature across the District, thanks to £1.3 million of funding from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).



Over the past year, the project has invested in two flagship sites: Hill Rise (St Ives) and Priory Park (St Neots). Across these sites, over 120 native trees have been planted, alongside large expanses of native wildflower meadows and the restoration of key habitats, including the historic pond at Priory Park. These improvements are already helping to strengthen local ecosystems, supporting pollinators, birds, and amphibians, and enhancing natural flood resilience.

Through the Greenskills strand of the project, further ecological enhancements have been made across eight HDC sites. So far:

- 37 volunteers have contributed
- 1,387 trees and shrubs have been planted,
- 856.66m² of new wildflower habitat has been created
- 11 new habitats have been established, and
- 11 existing habitats have been significantly improved

These efforts have delivered an estimated 6.09 additional biodiversity units, meaning more connected, thriving spaces for native wildlife to nest, feed, and shelter. As these habitats mature, they will also play an important role in improving soil health, carbon capture, and resilience to climate change.

Beyond the ecological benefits, the project is delivering real social value. 67% of Greenskills participants have secured employment following their involvement, and 100% reported an improvement in their mental health. By offering opportunities to learn new skills, connect with nature, and build confidence, Biodiversity for All is creating lasting positive change for individuals and communities alike.

The project is also driving a community-powered approach. Through two rounds of small grant funding – offering up to £8,000 per project – Biodiversity for All has already supported 18 local groups and landowners to enhance biodiversity. This is on land with public access, empowering communities to take action for nature and **helping create a better Huntingdonshire for future generations.**

Grant Schemes: Huntingdonshire Futures and Community Chest

Community Chest

The community chest scheme welcomes applications from community groups and organisations who would like to assist HDC achieve the following priorities set out in our Corporate Plan:

- Improving the quality of life and well-being for everyone
- Keeping people out of crisis
- Helping people in crisis
- Lowering carbon emissions

There was 1 grant awarded of £2,500 that went towards rainwater harvesting at the Upwood and the Raveleys Allotment Association allowing further rain collection and saving water.

Huntingdonshire Futures

The Huntingdonshire Futures grant scheme runs in a similar vein to community chest but aligns with the key journeys set out in the Pride of Place strategy. Applicants can request grant funding providing it helps to improve one of the 5 journeys:

1. Pride in Place
2. Inclusive Economy
3. Health Embedded
4. Environmental Innovation
5. Travel Transformed

There were 4 grants issued and a total of £5,901 awarded to groups that met the 'Environmental Innovation' journey. These included: a green weekend for crafts and workshops at Godmanchester Plant Nursery, a 1-day event to inspire connection with nature in Huntingdon and funding for planting of hedging and a wildflower meadow in Alconbury.

Green Flag Awards

The Green Flag Award scheme was launched in 1996 and is managed by the charity Keep Britain Tidy under licence from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. It recognises and rewards well-managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of green spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world. HDC has received awards for 4 of their parks including: Hinchingsbrooke Country Park (Huntingdon), Paxton Pits, Priory Park and Riverside Park & Regatta Meadow (all in St Neots). To have these awards is a huge testament to the hard work and dedication of the staff and volunteers who manage and maintain these parks and nature reserves. This continues to **enable** the benefit of community and nurturing of wildlife.



Travel and Transport - Decarbonising our Fleet

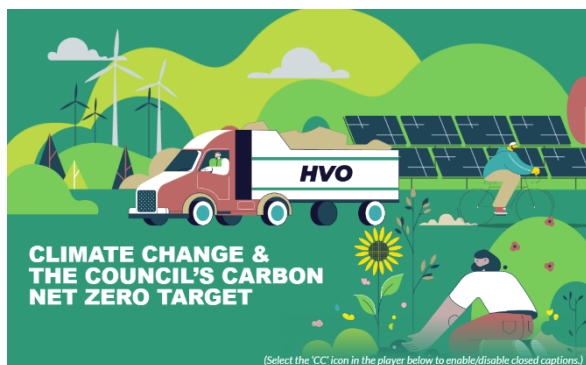
HVO Fleet Trial and subsequent adoption

HDC declared a climate emergency in 2023. As part of the strategy, research from the Local Partnerships Consultancy showed that Co2e from HDC's fleet contributed to 36.7% of HDC's total greenhouse gas emissions. A pilot project was agreed on in November 2023 through to June 2024 to use hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) as an alternative to standard road diesel in a controlled group of vehicles, plants and machinery. Calculations for the reduced emissions of using this fuel have been calculated at an 82% reduction. Transferring from standard road diesel to HVO would reduce the vehicle's fleet emissions by 1,100 tonnes of CO₂ annually taking emissions from 1,300 tonnes to 200 tonnes. This is a total carbon footprint reduction of 36%. 54,000 litres of fuel were used during the trial and a collaboration was formed with external partners, broken down as:

- HDC – 49,816 litres
- Fire Service – 3,613 litres
- Police – 571 litres

No issues were found concerning engine and cold weather performance and overall vehicle operations during the trial. Cabinet approved the use of HVO in February 2025, agreeing to the purchase of 550,000 litres of fuel. The price ranges were between £100,000 (£0.18 ppl) to £340,000 (£62ppl), which would mean a maximum cost of £309 per tonne of CO₂ saved.

Climate Change Training



HDC partnered with Groundwork East to run a pilot round of carbon literacy training.) In addition, all staff members have access to a 30-minute 'Climate Change and the Council's Net Zero Target' as part of HDC's internal learning and development modules.

Operations

Climate Impact Assessment – final submissions of impact assessments were sent to the Business and Transformation team. Now passed, these are being used to **influence** HDC's ideas process and also assist in embedding climate consideration into any pre-project and strategic work through the following compliance requirements:

Tree Planting

Over the last financial year, the arboriculture team have planted a total of 4,840 trees. These continue to enhance Biodiversity, restore woodland and create wildlife-friendly hedgerows using native species including hawthorn, holly and hazel. Each location supports a different function from rejuvenating degraded woodlands to forming pollinator-rich, climate-resilient hedges along roadsides and rivers. The mix of evergreen and deciduous species offers year-round habitat and food for birds, insects, and mammals, while improving air quality, soil health, and carbon storage. The trees were planted in the following locations:

Location	Tree Species	Quantity
Coneygear, St Ives – fence to hedges project	Fagus Sylvatica	825
Holly Olly Hedge extension at Riverside Huntingdon	Holly	680
Riverside, Huntingdon – wild mix hedge along the road	Hawthorn	200
	Hornbeam	200
	Field Maple	200
	Blackthorn	200
	Hazel	200
Woodland rejuvenation – Hill Rise, The Long Plantation	Field Maple	300
	Hazel	200
	Hawthorn	400
	Hornbeam	200
Woodland rejuvenation – Priory Bottom Woods	Hawthorn	235
	Field Maple	200
	Hazel	300
New plantation – Sapley Pavilion backfill	Holly	100
	Field Maple	100
	Hawthorn	100
	Hazel	100
	Hornbeam	100

Waste, Recycling and Resource Management

During 2024-25, a wide range of waste reduction and sustainability initiatives were delivered or supported. Through the Hey Girls initiative, around 250 menstrual cups were given away for free, while a further 250 were distributed at a heavily discounted rate via Mooncup, making reusable products more accessible. Waste collection efforts remained strong, with over 15 tonnes of Waste, Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) collected, and 39 tonnes of textiles gathered through drop-off points, supported by a renewed contract. HDC partnered with Protonera to supply textile waste for innovative trials converting materials into hydrogen. Additionally, further engagement took place with 64 participants through four “Waste Busters” meetings. 50 community groups were supported to deliver around 180 litter picks, providing equipment and collection services.

Preparations for a food waste minimisation campaign continued in collaboration with consultants and the communications team, alongside initiatives like “Chef in the School” to reduce school food waste. Other efforts included supporting challenging flat-based waste areas, promoting the Community Green Bin Scheme, and encouraging home composting—almost 400 compost bins have been purchased.

HDC delivered around 40 free soil improvers. In support of Simpler Recycling, HDC has provided general assistance and exploring new ideas such as vape drop-off points (ultimately not viable), repair stations in schools, and a nappy collection service. HDC is participating in Cambridgeshire’s volunteer recruitment initiative and supporting Boots’ blister pack recycling scheme.

Community

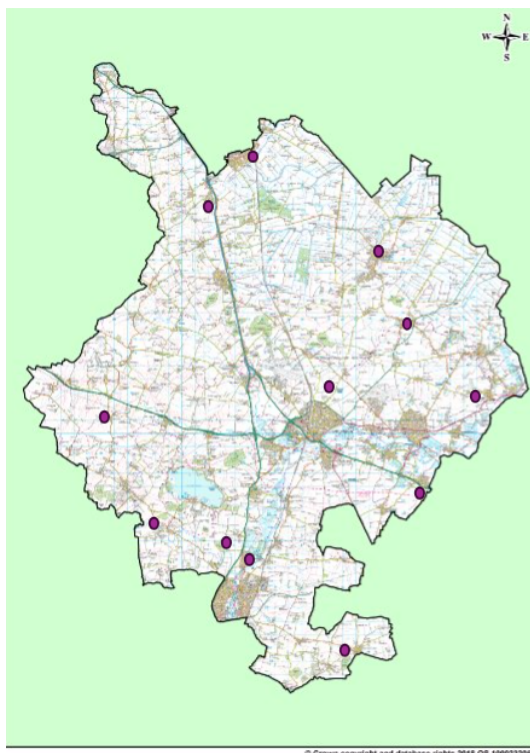
Community Engagement – Cambridge Carbon Footprint partnership



HDC partnered with Cambridge Carbon Footprint loaning 2 thermal cameras to residents, which also included training. Out of the 56 Huntingdonshire residents who attended the training, 43 of those borrowed a camera. The highest areas of interest were St Ives and Buckden. 22 types of property were surveyed from older style single brick through to new

builds. Residents wanted to check the effect of additional insulation and address concerns around specific cold spots.

Net Zero Villages



The Net Zero Villages grant scheme is a fund provided by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) aimed at helping rural communities reduce their carbon footprint. A total of £257,376.60 was available for distribution of grants, which ranged in amounts between £5,000 and £50,000.

The categories of project to apply for were:

1. Tackling energy use and/or supporting energy efficiency or generation retrofit to community buildings
2. Enabling access to public transport or access to local services through low carbon transport
3. Nature-based solutions to tackle overheating of community buildings

Applicants had to be geographically located in Huntingdonshire and the market towns of St Neots, Huntingdon and St Ives were excluded, owing to them being non-rural locations. All projects must be completed by 28th February 2026 and more details of this work will be included in the next annual Climate report. A summary of the successful applicants and where they are located in Huntingdonshire are below:

Table to show Net Zero Villages Successful Grant Applicants

Applicant	Project Summary	Grant awarded
Yaxley – Amenity Hall	Installation of batteries at the Amenity Centre	£16,995.00
Great Staughton	Replacing heating from oil to electric	£12,300.00
Bluntisham	Solar panels on David Morris building	£7,500.00
Little Paxton Parish Council	Solar streetlights	£35,400.00
Southoe	Solar panels and replacing old heating system	£20,027.08
Fenstanton	Active travel	£35,450.00
Catworth	Solar panels on pavilion	£12,142.42
Great Gransden	Solar panels and battery for community buildings	£17,999.00
Ramsey Pavilion Hub	Solar panels on building roof and car parking lighting changing to solar	£38,965.00
Warboys	Lighting, battery and heat pump	£35,000.00
Stilton	Solar panels and battery	£25,598.10
	Total	£257,376.60

Climate Education

In partnership with the ‘Peterborough Environment City Trust’ (PECT), HDC piloted a climate education programme with 5 schools: Thongsley Fields Primary School, Crosshall Junior School, Ernulf Academy Secondary School and Stukeley Meadows Primary School. The programme was designed to **engage** and educate young people on key climate issues including sustainability, increasing biodiversity for all, minimising waste and engaging their own communities. The trial lasted from January 2024 through to January 2025.

Schools undertook a number of actions including:

- Creating a composting system
- Providing homes for nature
- Reducing paper usage
- Setting up uniform swap shops
- Taking part in national/international zero waste events

Notable successes include Stukeley Meadows’ impactful Climate Detectives and Ocean Friendly School projects, which involved community engagement and partnerships with organisations like Anglian Water. Schools accessed funding, such as Huntingdon Primary through the Learn to Live Well Fund, to support site-specific actions like greenhouse placement and orchard planting. Engagement challenges included staggered school onboarding and key staff turnover, which

sometimes stalled progress. Testimonies and creative student-led projects demonstrate the potential and real-world impact of these initiatives, with further follow-ups underway to obtain visual evidence of outcomes.

Procuring Wisely



HDC partnered with Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) to finalise the development of a bespoke sustainable procurement training programme covering:

- Understanding UK policies, regulations and global best practices in sustainable and circular procurement
 - Apply tools such as the life cycle costing (LCC), total cost of ownership (TCO) and carbon foot printing
 - Engaging suppliers in sustainable procurement and innovation techniques
- Make data-driven procurement decisions using circular economy principles

Using the information provided in these lectures has **enabled** the development of actionable strategies to embed sustainability into HDC's procurement policies and contracts. The procurement team now work to ensure that 10% of the technical evaluation criteria for all tender activities is allocated to social value. Suppliers are required to select a social value commitment that is proportionate to the value of the tender and clearly outline how they intend to deliver it. This commitment will be formally included as a contractual clause and monitored as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) to embed social value as a standard part of our business-as-usual practices and in accordance with the new Procurement Act 2023.

Food for Nought

During April 2024 to March 2025, Food for Nought (F4N) made a significant impact across Huntingdonshire by redistributing 37,795.14 kg of surplus food through its two community fridges in Oxmoor and Yaxley. This initiative supported HDC's strategic goals by improving food access for vulnerable residents, reducing environmental impact and alleviating financial pressures on households. The redistribution helped avoid approximately 30,236 kg of CO₂ emissions and provided an estimated £94,487.85 worth of food, contributing to local economic resilience. Operating entirely through volunteers and local partnerships, F4N successfully diverted food waste from landfills while offering nutritious food to the community.

Beyond immediate food relief, F4N fostered community engagement, promoted healthier eating habits, and provided residents with valuable life skills through training programs in cooking and budgeting. The community fridges also served as safe, welcoming spaces where individuals could receive support, advice, and referrals to other services. These efforts align with Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Plan and Health and Wealth Building Strategy, enhancing

quality of life, building social connections, and supporting environmental sustainability across the district.

Appendix 4

Site Name	Site Name	Site Name
One Leisure Huntingdon	Tebbutts Road Car Park	St Neots Mobile Home Park
One Leisure St Ives	Trinity Place Car Park	St Benedict's Court Water Feature
One Leisure St Neots	Cross Hall Road Car Park	
One Leisure Ramsey	Feeder Pillar – Market Square	
Pathfinder House	Hill Rise Park	
Eastfield House	Hinchingbrooke Countryside Centre	
Brook Street Car Park	Hinchingbrooke Visitors Centre	
Butts Grove Way Car Park	Huntingdon Bus Station	
Cattle Market Car Park	St Ives Enterprise Centre	
Great Northern Street Car Park	Haweswater Cycleway Lighting	
Ingram Street Car Park	Mayfield Road Lighting	
Mayfield Road Car Park	Wertheim Way Cycleway	
Mill Common Car Park	Little Paxton Education Centre	
Multi Storey Car Park	Little Paxton Visitors Centre	
Swallow Bush Car Park	St Ives Market Hill	
Princes Street Car Park	St Neots Market Square	
Priory Lane Car Park	Priory Park Pavilion	
Riverside (Huntingdon) Car Park	Sapley Park Pavilion	
Riverside (St Neots) Car Park	Hartford Road Pavilion	
Tan Yard Car Park	St Ives Sheep Market	

Appendix 5

DO	Action	Progress
37	Complete Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) Fuel Trial and present a business case for decision	Completed. Cabinet approved the use of HVO for all diesel vehicles on 25/02/2025. Purchase of fuel in progress.
38	Deliver a Fleet Decarbonisation Plan	Completed
39	Deliver our Energy Strategy	Due for completion by the end of July 2025.
40	Deliver the Climate Conversation in 2024, showcasing community action and listening to local people in their communities	Completed. The next annual climate conversation is on 05/11/2025
41	Identify emissions from HDC IT data centres to include in reporting and establish disposal methods for IT equipment to reduce environment impact	Completed with continuing ongoing improvements
42	Establish climate and carbon emissions learning and development plan for Council employees	Completed
43	Accelerate Solar Power Adoption on Council Buildings	Completed and continually ongoing

Enable	Action	Progress
44	Support community projects and plans that reduce carbon emissions.	Completed with ongoing support through partnerships and grants
45	Deliver Biodiversity for All (2023-2025) to enable community action and support green skills development.	In progress, due for completion in October 2025
46	Commission Active Travel Studies (UKSPF) to influence/inform future investment priorities.	Completed
47	Deliver the Phase 1 Rural Pilot HDC Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy Actions.	Completed

Influence	Action	Progress
48	Develop the Council's procurement rules to further embed social and environmental value.	Completed
49	Expand positive climate action support for local businesses, celebrating best practice and sharing knowledge.	Completed and continually ongoing
50	Adopt the Huntingdonshire Plan for Nature and influence the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough	Completed and adopted

	Local Nature Recovery Strategy with our priorities.	
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Climate Action Plan

Issued June 2025

Actions	Priority	Action	Theme	Portfolio	Target Completion Date
	Medium	Explore options for offsetting emissions (natural carbon capture)	Biodiversity	Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene	31/03/2026
	Low	Deliver programme of biodiversity gain with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to include Community and Council Open Spaces	Biodiversity	Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene	31/03/2026
	Low	Support delivery of the Great Fen	Biodiversity and Planning	Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene	2027 onwards
	Medium	Include climate considerations within all key strategies and governance documents	Business Transformation and PMO	Policy, Performance and Emergency Planning	31/03/2026
	Medium	Undertake annual review of the completion and progress of service plan actions that deliver net zero carbon by 2040	Business Transformation and PMO	Policy, Performance and Emergency Planning	31/03/2026
	Medium	Research into alternative power sources (solar) for CCTV cameras	CCTV	Leisure, Waste and Street Scene	31/03/2026
	Low	Understand sources and availability of data for scope 3 reporting	Climate	Climate, Transformation and Workforce	31/03/2026
	Low	Agree scope 3 emissions approach and included emissions sources for reporting	Climate	Climate, Transformation and Workforce	31/03/2026
	Low	Enabling Communities to deliver climate change activities through Community Action Plans	Communities	Climate, Transformation and Workforce	31/03/2026
	Low	Support and participate in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Climate Change Commission and Action Plan delivery	CPCA	Climate, Transformation and Workforce	31/03/2027
	Low	Work with partners and responsible transport authorities to promote active, net zero carbon travel	Economic Development	Economy, Regeneration and Housing	2027 onwards

Actions

Low	Continue to engage with local businesses to explore ways the council could support them to reduce waste, recycle more	Economic Development	Economy, Regeneration and Housing	31/03/2026
Low	Engage with local businesses to explore ways the council could support them to have less climate impact	Economic Development	Economy, Regeneration and Housing	31/03/2026
Low	Support capital grant development (where government grant funding becomes available) to encourage businesses to lead in green credentials	Economic Development	Economy, Regeneration and Housing	2027 onwards
Low	Identify actions to increase resilience to disruption to Council services from extreme weather	Emergency Planning	Economy, Regeneration and Housing	2027 onwards
Low	Reduce the carbon emissions of the Council's commercial estate	Estates	Economy, Regeneration and Housing	2027 onwards
Low	Promote high quality design in the Council's commercial estate that incorporates net gain to biodiversity	Estates	Economy, Regeneration and Housing	2027 onwards
Low	Use EPC ratings to monitor our own Commercial estates	Estates	Economy, Regeneration and Housing	2027 onwards
High	Develop plan for the Council to use 100% renewable energy	Facilities	Property and Facilities	31/03/2026
Medium	Develop an Energy Strategy	Facilities	Property and Facilities	31/03/2026
Medium	Identify emissions from HDC IT data centres to include them in reporting	ICT	ICT Management	31/03/2026
Low	Enhance environmental aspects of the Local Plan where possible to do so	Planning	Planning	2027 onwards
Medium	Provide housing association landlords with information/advice on energy saving to support their tenants	Regeneration and Housing	Economy, Regeneration and Housing	31/03/2027

Actions	Medium	Engage with key registered providers of housing, to give tenants information that encourages them to reduce their carbon emissions	Regeneration and Housing	Economy, Regeneration and Housing	31/03/2027
	Medium	Quantify carbon savings from the Council's shift to E-billing	Revenues and Benefits	Customer Change	31/03/2027
	Medium	Review technology and alternative ways of working to plan emissions reduction in Street Cleansing	Street Cleansing	Leisure, Waste and Street Scene	31/03/2027
	Medium	Reduce waste collected from households through kerbside collections	Waste Minimisation	Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene	31/03/2027
	Medium	Improve information, knowledge and advice to increase the recycling rate of municipal waste and reduce the amount of our waste that goes to landfill	Waste Minimisation	Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene	31/03/2027
	Medium	Increase understanding and engagement in waste and recycling for local community and key stakeholders	Waste Minimisation	Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene	31/03/2027
	Medium	Increase our measured household recycling rate	Waste Minimisation	Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene	31/03/2027
	Medium	Increase our recycling service for communal areas	Waste Minimisation	Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene	31/03/2027

Appendix 7

	Total Actions	2024-2025 Actions	2025-2026 Actions	2027 Actions	Onwards
Climate Action Plan (adopted January 2023)	57	19	20	16	
Proposed Climate Action Plan	31	0 – due to all actions completed	13	18	

The updated Climate Action Plan's actions have reduced from 57 to 31. Of the original 19 short-term actions, listed in the original [Climate Action Plan](#) all have been completed aside from "Include climate considerations within all key strategies and governance documents." Despite being completed, this has been kept in as a continuation as this will continue to evolve with the new service plans and Procurement frameworks being developed.

The 2025-2026 actions have reduced by 7 to 13 actions. These goals are:

- Explore options for offsetting emissions (natural carbon capture)
- Deliver programme of biodiversity gain with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to include Community and Council Open Spaces
- Undertake annual review of the completion and progress of service plan actions that deliver net zero carbon by 2040
- Understand sources and availability of data for scope 3 reporting
- Agree scope 3 emissions approach and included emissions sources for reporting
- Enabling Communities to deliver climate change activities through Community Action Plans
- Continue to engage with local businesses to explore ways the council could support them to reduce waste, recycle more
- Engage with local businesses to explore ways the council could support them to have less climate impact
- Develop plan for the Council to use 100% renewable energy
- Develop an Energy Strategy

- Identify emissions from HDC IT data centres to include them in reporting

The 2027 actions have increased from 16 to 17. These goals are:

- Support and participate in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Climate Change Commission and Action Plan delivery
- Provide housing association landlords with information/advice on energy saving to support their tenants
- Engage with key registered providers of housing, to give tenants information that encourages them to reduce their carbon emissions
- Quantify carbon savings from the Council's shift to E-billing
- Review technology and alternative ways of working to plan emissions reduction in Street Cleansing
- Reduce waste collected from households through kerbside collections
- Improve information, knowledge and advice to increase the recycling rate of municipal waste and reduce the amount of our waste that goes to landfill
- Increase understanding and engagement in waste and recycling for local community and key stakeholders
- Increase our measured household recycling rate
- Increase our recycling service for communal areas
- Identify actions to increase resilience to disruption to Council services from extreme weather
- Promote high quality design in the Council's commercial estate that incorporates net gain to biodiversity
- **Use EPC ratings to monitor our own Commercial estates**
- Support delivery of the Great Fen
- Work with partners and responsible transport authorities to promote active, net zero carbon travel
- Support capital grant development (where government grant funding becomes available) to encourage businesses to lead in green credentials
- Reduce the carbon emissions of the Council's commercial estate
- Enhance environmental aspects of the Local Plan where possible to do so

The **emboldened goal** above originally had a target of 2026 but a proposal to move this to 2027 has been suggested. The reason for this is to allow sufficient time to help and engage with businesses to help them align with their Climate targets. The target would encompass not just monitoring but partnering with businesses to assist in ways to actively improve their energy performance, saving them money and integrating EPC ratings to demonstrate carbon reduction.



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Huntingdonshire District Council's Journey to
Carbon Net Zero



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Huntingdonshire Place Strategy and Climate

Key Achievements

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Climate Action Plan Progress

Net Zero Villages

Annual Climate Conversation 2024

Home Energy



HDC Place Strategy and Climate

CLIMATE ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN CATEGORISED BY PLACE STRATEGY JOURNEY

PRIDE IN PLACE



- Completion of 4 roof surveys on 4 key sites: St Ives, St Neots, Ramsey and Huntingdon
- As part of Action on Energy Cambridgeshire Partnership, in the process of producing a local action energy plan
- Collaboration with the LDC project, funded by Innovate UK
- 15 tonnes of WEEE collected
- 39 tonnes of textiles gathered through drop-off points
- HDC provided equipment and collection services enabling 50 community groups delivered 180 litter pick ups

TRAVEL TRANSFORMED



- Upgraded charge points at 13 locations from funding through the Rural England Prosperity Fund
- Completion of pilot project for HVO trial from Nov 2023 through to June 2024

ENVIRONMENTAL INNOVATION



- HDC's electricity is on a green tariff on its main sites from Sept 2024
- Energy Strategy commissioned and due for completion in July 2025
- Invested in 2 flagship sites: Hill Rise (St Ives) and Priory Park (St Neots)
- Community chest grant awarded to fund rainwater harvesting project
- 4 Huntingdonshire Futures grants awarded funding environmental innovation
- Green Flag Awards - HDC received 4 awards for 4 of their parks

HEALTH EMBEDDED

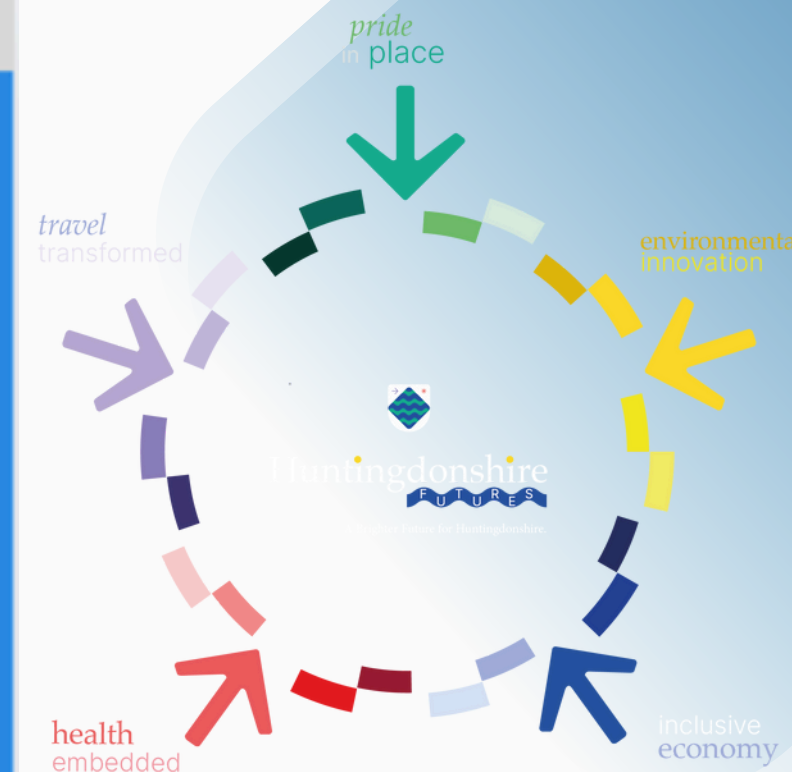


- Total of 29 ECO 4 FLEX applications submitted
- Warm Homes Upgrade Grant (WHUG), replacing HUG 2 announced
- AS part of CERP, nominated as finalists for 3 awards
- 250 menstrual cups given away for free followed by 250 more sold at heavily discounted rate
- Collaboration with partners for "Chef in the School" initiative to reduce school food waste

INCLUSIVE ECONOMY



- Following the award of £700,000 Swim England funding, the installation of triple glazed windows around the swimming pool and a solar canopy in the car park were completed
- Continuation of the Green Skills programme - 67% of participants secured employment following involvement
- HVO trial partnered with Fire Service and Police
- Partnership with Cambridgeshire Carbon Footprint providing training and use of thermal imaging cameras
- Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme - CPCA funding aiming to help rural communities to reduce their carbon footprint. Awarded to 11 successful applicants
- Climate education - partnership with PECT to provide education programme to 5 schools



Key Achievements

Emission Reductions: from March 2019 to March 2025, HDC has reduced its emissions by 1,032 tCO₂e.

Fleet Transition: HDC completed a successful HVO trial, resulting in Cabinet approving its use across all standard diesel vehicles. This is estimated to reduce CO₂ emissions by 1,100 tonnes annually.

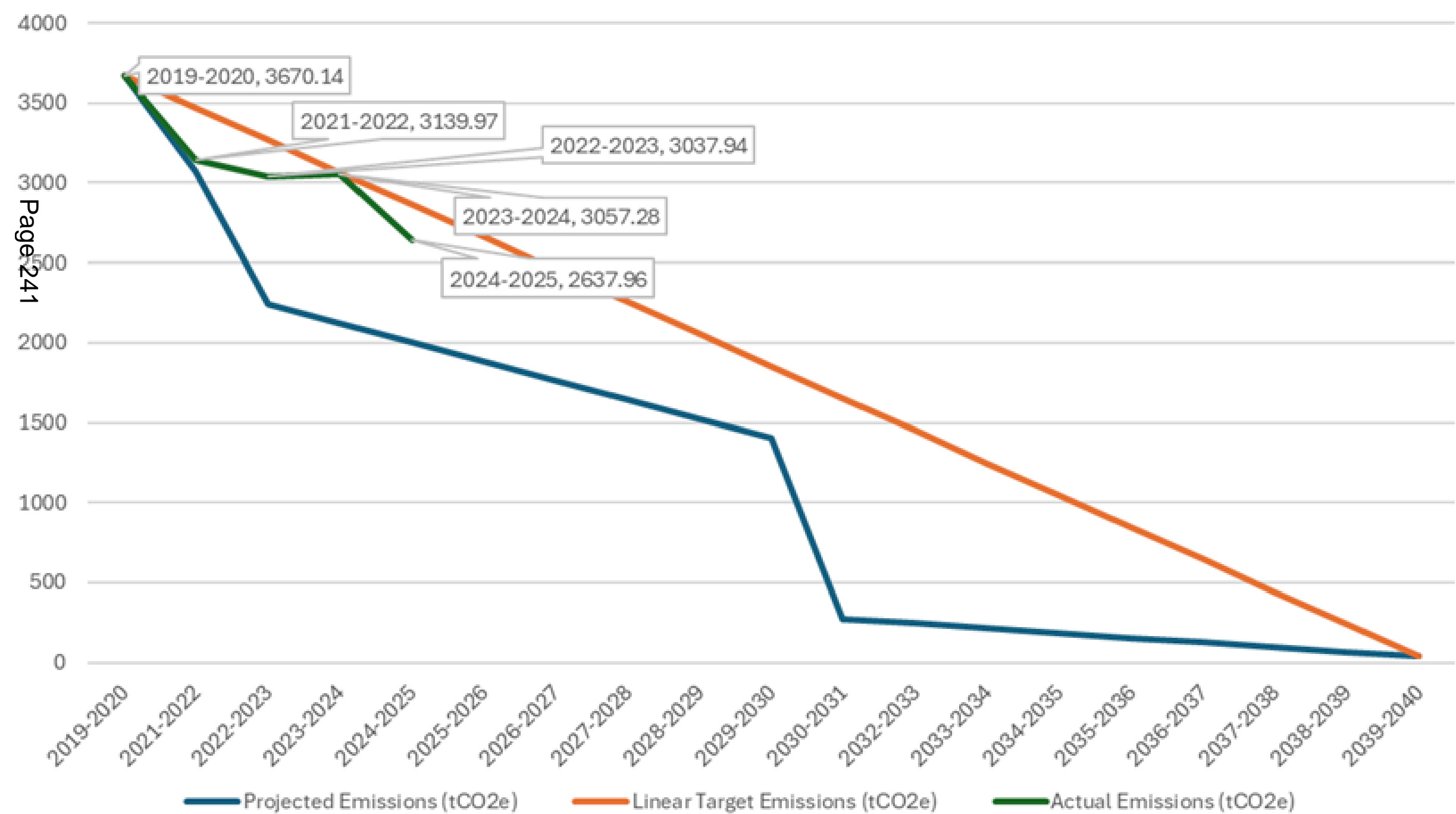
Facilities upgrades: retrofitting Council buildings, including the installation of a solar panel canopy at One Leisure St Ives in January 2025, which was commissioned in April 2025.

Green tariffs: HDC moved on to green tariffs on its main sites from September 2024, reducing our Scope 2 carbon emissions to zero

Education and events: HDC held its 2nd Annual Climate Conversation in November 2024 bringing together stakeholders and residents to discuss and inspire Climate action

GHG Emissions

HDC Trajectory to Carbon Net Zero by 2040



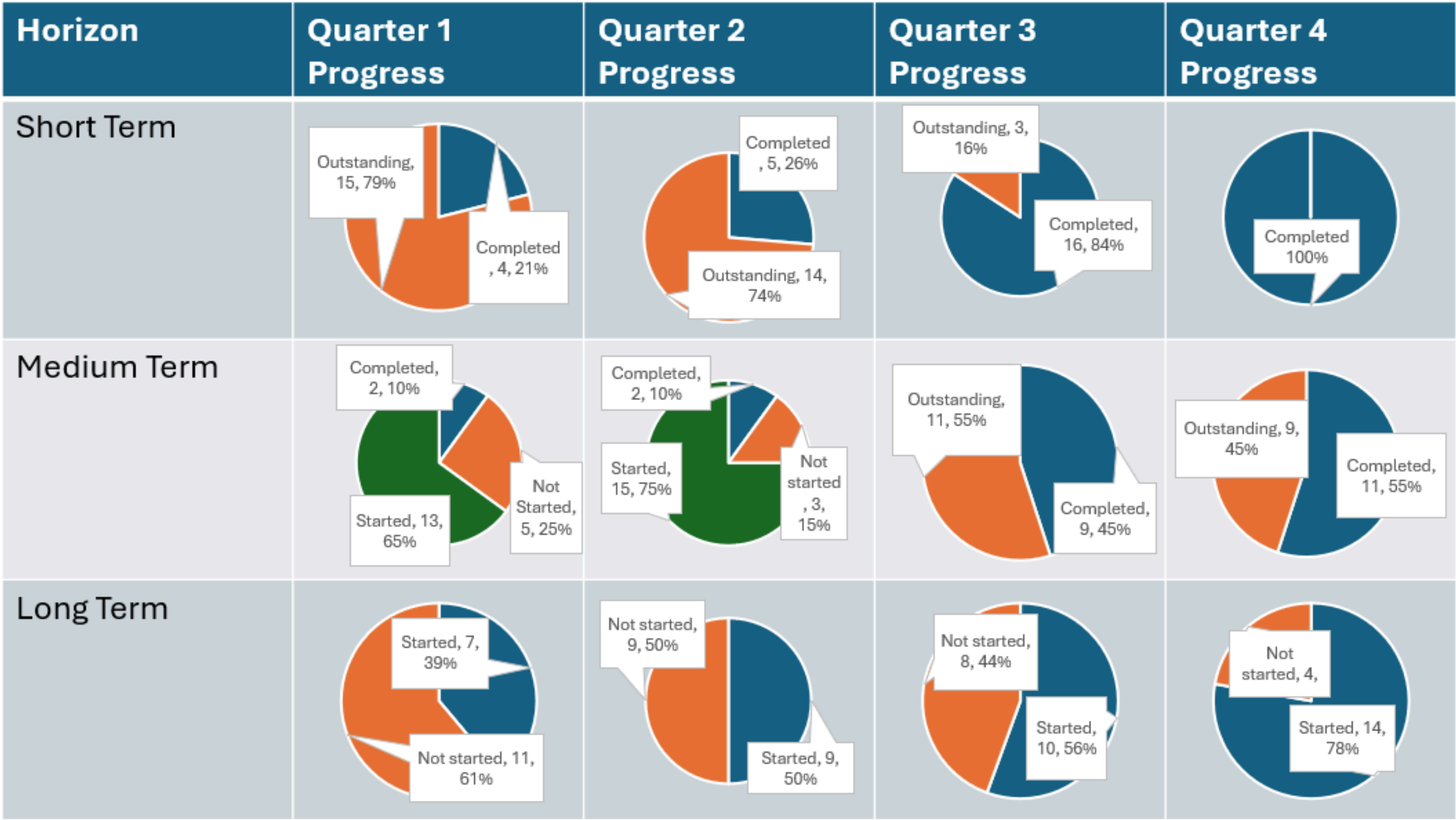
Carbon savings from HDC's emissions is 1,032.18 tCO₂e - this is the equivalent of powering electricity for 215 homes.

Combination of Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions

- Scope 1 - direct emissions from our owned or controlled sources
- Scope 2 - indirect emissions e.g. from the generation of purchased energy
- Scope 3 - all other indirect emissions in a company's value chain

Our recorded Scope 2 electricity emissions have been purchased from a Green Tariff, which have reduced those emissions to 0. HDC has the relevant energy guarantees of origin (REGO) confirming the electricity is from renewable sources

Climate Action Plan 2024-2025 Progress.



Net Zero Villages

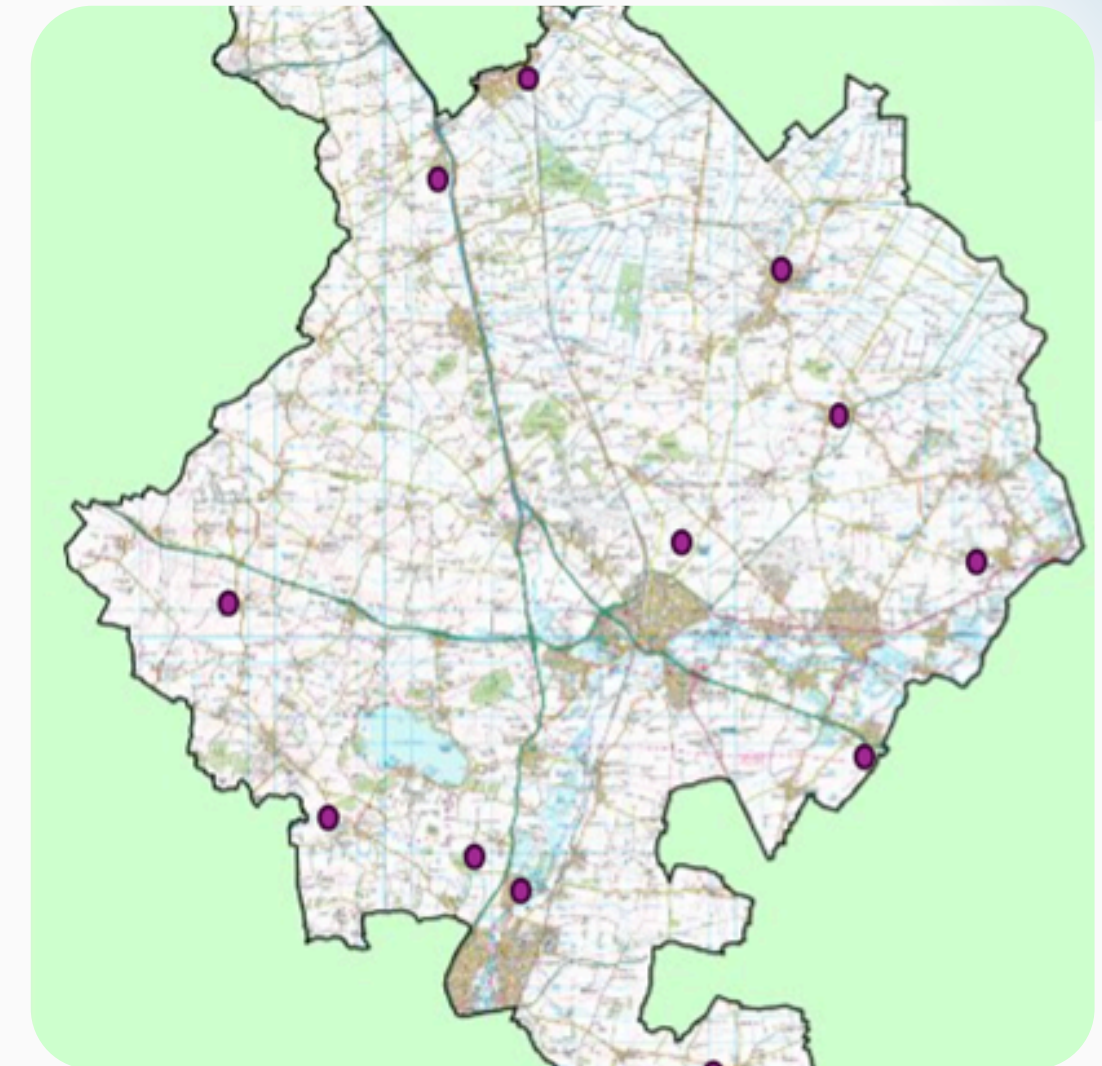
The Net Zero Villages Grant Scheme is a CPCA-provided fund aiming to help rural communities reduce their carbon footprint. A total of £257,376.60 was available for grant distribution, which ranged in amounts between £5,000 and £50,000.

The categories of project to apply for were:

- Tackling energy use and/or supporting energy efficiency or generation retrofit to community buildings
- Enabling access to public transport or access to local services through low carbon transport
- Nature-based solutions to tackle overheating of community buildings

The 11 successful applicants were located in: Yaxley, Great Staughton, Bluntisham, Little Paxton, Southoe, Fenstanton, Catworth, Great Gransden, Ramsey, Warboys and Stilton

Projects included: solar panel and battery installations, replacement of heating from oil to electric, solar streetlights and heat pump installations



Annual Climate Conversation 2024.



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On 6th November 2024 our 2nd Annual Climate Conversation was held by HDC at the Burgess Hall. It was attended by 90 people from community groups, businesses, energy charities and local Councils. The keynote speakers came from a wide range of backgrounds including sustainability, procurement, energy saving through using thermal cameras and retrofitting at scale to reduce energy consumption.

As a direct result of this Climate Conversation, further development has been made on:

- Engaging community groups in Biodiversity tracking through the iNaturalist app
- The continued contribution of toolkit development for a locally determined contribution. This will stipulate work Councils will need to do to reach their own carbon net zero targets
- Networking opportunities for those who are interested in retrofitting their own homes
- Further promotion of retrofitting government funding schemes such as HUG2 (now finished) and ECO4 FLEX (ongoing until March 2026)/
- Incorporating a further shift into sustainable purchasing practices

Home Energy

The Home Energy work continues through the 'Action on Energy (AOE) Cambridgeshire' network. A total of 29 Energy Company Obligation (ECO) 4 FLEX applications have been submitted over the last financial year. A total of 24 properties were approved to be upgraded for the HUG2 (Home Upgrade Grant) scheme in 2024-25. This scheme provided energy efficient upgrades and low-carbon heating to low-income households living in off-gas grid homes in England.

The HUG2 scheme has now closed and will be replaced with the Warm Homes Upgrade Grant (WHUG) scheme. Depending on eligibility, free energy saving improvements can be made to homes and is only available in England. The details of this scheme are currently being finalised and the 3-year programme is being launched in 2025-26. This will receive £8.5 million worth of funding to retrofit properties across Cambridgeshire as a whole, a lower figure than initially bid for.

The Home Energy team along with the Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership (CERP) were nominated for the following awards, in which CERP were shortlisted as finalists:

- APSE Energy Awards - 'working in collaboration'
- Retrofit Academy Awards - 'best Local Authority Led Retrofit Program'
- iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards - 'Green Public Service' Bronze Award





Questions?

Public
Key Decision – Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Subject Matter: Huntingdonshire' Economic Growth Strategy
(refresh)

Meeting/Date: SLT
– 22/04/2025
Overview and Scrutiny (Performance & Growth)
– 04/06/2025
Cabinet
– 16/07/2025

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration
and Housing.

Report by: Economic Development Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

The refreshed Economic Growth Strategy for Huntingdonshire sets out a vision to drive sustainable economic development, aligning with the existing Corporate Plan and Place Strategy. It prioritises business growth, innovation, skills development, tourism opportunities and the transition to a green economy.

The strategy promotes inclusive growth, encouraging collaboration and addressing net-zero goals to enhance productivity, resilience, and community well-being, with clear milestones ensuring progress toward sustainable economic development.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED

- a) To endorse the refreshed Economic Growth Strategy, enabling the Economic Development Team and partners to deliver its objectives over the next 2–5 years.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report is to present the refreshed Economic Growth Strategy for Huntingdonshire to Cabinet for endorsement. The strategy outlines a clear framework for promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth over the next 2–5 years. Which will enable the Economic Development Team to deliver the strategy effectively, ensuring the district remains attractive and competitive in a rapidly evolving economic landscape.

2. CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 These include ensuring adequate resourcing for the Economic Development Team to deliver the strategy's objectives effectively. The strategy must address external factors such as evolving economic conditions, potential policy changes, and the ongoing impacts of global challenges like climate change and economic recovery. Robust monitoring will be applied to ensure the strategy achieves its intended outcomes.

3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 3.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel were considered and included in the Final Economic Growth Strategy.

4. KEY RISKS

- 4.1 The key risks associated with the refreshed Economic Growth Strategy include insufficient funding or resources to implement key initiatives, delays in infrastructure development, and potential challenges in aligning with evolving national and regional policies.
- 4.2 Other risks involve the potential effects of unexpected events, such as another economic downturn or environmental crises. To address these risks, the team will closely monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) and maintain ongoing business engagement to stay informed about developments on the ground.

5. TIMETABLE

- 5.1 The implementation of the refreshed Economic Growth Strategy is set over a 2–5-year period, with reviews at regular stages using KPI data and qualitative feedback.

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 6.1 The strategy aligns with the Corporate Plan 2023–2028 by supporting the 'Forward-thinking Economic Growth' action and from the Place Strategy focusing on the 'Inclusive Economy' and 'Pride in Place' workstreams. It directly contributes to the overarching goals of enhancing local resilience, fostering sustainable growth, and improving the district's economic attractiveness.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no immediate legal implications associated with endorsing the strategy; however, certain elements may require compliance with relevant legislation as specific projects are developed. Legal advice will be sought on a project-by-project basis to ensure compliance with all applicable regulations.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The successful implementation of the strategy will depend on appropriate allocation of resources, including both staffing and financial investment. The Economic Development team is now fully staffed and capable of effectively fulfilling their roles to deliver, enable, and influence key actions.
- 8.2 Additionally, the team will utilise transition-year funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) to financially support initiatives in the first year.

9. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 While the strategy is primarily focused on economic growth, there are potential health benefits, particularly through the promotion of a healthier, more inclusive economy. Improved employment opportunities, access to education, and workplace wellbeing initiatives will contribute to the overall welfare of the district's residents.

10. ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The strategy is committed to promoting a green economy, which aligns with the district's environmental sustainability goals. Key initiatives will focus on low-carbon technologies, sustainable infrastructure, and green business practices to reduce the district's carbon footprint. The strategy will contribute to local climate change targets and is designed to be adaptable to emerging environmental policies.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 11.1 Endorsing the strategy will enable the Economic Development Team and its partners to focus on the delivery of key projects that will foster sustainable growth, create jobs, and improve the district's economic resilience.
- 11.2 It will also help to secure Huntingdonshire's long-term economic future, as the implementation is crucial to driving forward the district's ambitions and ensuring its effectiveness in an evolving economic geography.

12. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix A – Huntingdonshire's Economic Growth Strategy

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

CONTACT OFFICER

Name/Job Title: Rebecca Tomlin / Economic Development Manager
Email: Rebecca.tomlin@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Huntingdonshire Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030

June 2025

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prdweb.co.uk

Volterra

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Summary

Huntingdonshire's Economic Growth Strategy sets out our vision and ambitions for Huntingdonshire's economy from 2025-2030. It is built upon the latest evidence of what makes Huntingdonshire best in class, where our opportunities are, and the challenges we face.

This data, combined with our conversations with public sector, businesses and community partners, emphasised the strengths of our district. We are a great place to live and visit and have a diverse business economy. Our research has also reinforced the challenges faced by our communities. Some of our residents face significant barriers to accessing employment, and many jobs are poorly paid. At the same time, some of our businesses are struggling to recruit the talent they need to grow.

There are exciting new opportunities in the pipeline, and we must make sure that these drive prosperity in our communities. Our strategy recognises the need for economic growth whilst preserving the strength of our natural assets and reducing our environmental impact.

Huntingdonshire is in an important strategic location, but the evidence has shown we are currently not maximising our potential in terms of economic output. Our Strategy positions us to increase our contribution to national growth and prosperity.

The Economic Growth Strategy provides a framework to guide the action of Huntingdonshire District Council and public, private and community partners across our District.

Our vision is:

A prosperous, resilient and dynamic economy which provides the foundation for Huntingdonshire to be a good place to live, work and visit.

We will be open for business, work collaboratively with partners, capitalise on our opportunities and invest in our people and places.

Our ambitions are:

Our economy is flexible. We have planned for change in our key sectors and contribute to national growth priorities

Enterprise is celebrated and Huntingdonshire is a great place for business

Our residents have the skills they need to participate in the economy

New investment and development is positively supporting our economy

The vibrancy in our rural areas and market towns make our district a desirable place to spend time and explore

Foreword



A prosperous, resilient, and dynamic economy is the core vision for the Huntingdonshire Economic Growth Strategy 2025-30.

This vision is the result of long-term collaboration with local partners, businesses, and stakeholders, and is firmly rooted in evidence, research, and engagement. The strategy sets out clear priorities for enterprise, infrastructure, and place-based growth, ensuring that people are equipped with the right skills to prosper in key sectors such as digital, life sciences, and green growth.

Huntingdonshire's market towns and villages are thriving centres of enterprise, each building on their unique heritage and strengths to create vibrant, lasting communities. The district's leadership and commitment to sustainable innovation are echoed in this strategy, which recognises that 89% of local businesses are micro enterprises and that harnessing their growth potential is crucial for our future success. The ongoing reinvigoration of our town centres, designed to embrace history and community, mirrors the approach of this strategy - locally led, ambitious, and designed to leave a long-lasting legacy.

FSB welcomes the commitment to partnership working and the recognition of small businesses as the backbone of our local economy. We look forward to supporting the aims and objectives of the Huntingdonshire Economic Growth Strategy 2025-30, ensuring that our district's businesses and residents can meet their full potential and set the pace for regional growth well beyond devolution and into 2030.

Jade Uko, Chair, East of England, Federation of Small Businesses



Introduction

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What is the Economic Growth Strategy 2025-2030?

The Economic Growth Strategy establishes the direction of travel for our economy over the next five years.

A lot has changed politically and economically since our previous Economic Growth Strategy, “Ready to Recover” was developed in 2020.

With a new Government focused on growth and unlocking the economic potential of regions, now is the time to for an evolution and refresh of Huntingdonshire’s ambition for our economy.

The Corporate Plan 2023-2028 sets out ambitions for the district, and the Economic Growth Strategy provides the detailed economic framework to achieve these aims. To be impactful, this must establish the key shared ambitions for our economy to direct resources over the next five years.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority will play an important role in identifying growth opportunities through the forthcoming Local Growth Plan. However, there is a vital role for District Councils to translate regional growth ambitions into action on the ground.

The Economic Growth Strategy is designed to spark action beyond the council. It has been shaped by the Huntingdonshire Economic Development Team, District and County Council Officers and stakeholders across the district. For maximum impact it should be adopted by, and guide the work of, both the District Council and its partners.

Alongside the Economic Growth Strategy, we are developing an Economic and Employment Needs Assessment (2025). This is a policy compliant

document which provides a robust evidence base on the Huntingdonshire economy to underpin the Local Plan to 2036 review.

How was it developed?

The Economic Growth Strategy is underpinned by the latest evidence on Huntingdonshire’s economy, population and labour market. This has helped us to compare how we are performing to our neighbours, and similar local authorities across the UK.

We have supplemented our data with the experience and insights of stakeholders across our district through 1:1 conversations and group discussions with businesses, business representative groups, community partners and officers who are integral to our current and future prosperity.

We have used this evidence to inform our vision, ambitions and actions.

Over the 5-year time period of our strategy, there is likely to be significant political, economic and social changes. In developing our action plan, we have identified the key uncertainties in our economy, and developed scenarios of what the future might look like. This is designed to future-proof our action plan and ensure adaptability. Our scenario planning work can be found in the evidence appendix.

How will the strategy be delivered?

Huntingdonshire District Council will take the lead role in delivering the Economic Growth Strategy and measuring progress.

The action plan follows the Do, Enable, Influence approach set out in the Corporate Plan:

Do: actions we can directly deliver as a District Council

Enable: actions focused on bringing people together and creating spaces and forums for collaboration

Influence: actions focused on influencing our partners, public and private

We recognise the need to work together with local stakeholders to achieve our goals. Our Strategy seeks to activate the expertise, talents and resources of our key public, private and community partners.

Our role as part of a Combined Authority provides unique opportunities for our district in achieving our ambitions. Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority are developing a Local Growth Plan which sets out economic ambitions to 2035 and provides a direct link between Government growth ambitions and the CPCA region. Huntingdonshire’s Economic Growth Strategy is designed to align with this and identify local priorities and ambitions which compliment and reinforce the longer-term regional aims.

Local Government Reform will impact upon our District within the timeframe of the strategy. We think it is vital to have a medium-long term vision for our district which can be adopted by our partners now and in the future, but to reflect upcoming changes, we have focused our actions on what we can do in the next two years.

The Economic Growth Strategy will be an important part of ensuring that the opportunities in Huntingdonshire are realised despite changing political landscape.

This is Huntingdonshire

A Rich Economic Heritage

Huntingdonshire's history illustrates the district's ability to evolve its economy to meet the needs of residents and businesses.

Huntingdonshire's economy grew from agricultural roots, with market towns like Huntingdon, St Ives and Godmanchester enabling trade in agricultural produce. St Ives gained its first charter establishing a market in 1110, followed by St Neots in 1130, Ramsey at the end of the 12thc and Huntingdon in 1205. The rural economies and market towns still form a vibrant part of our district today.

While agriculture, and rural industries, remain a central part of our economy the Industrial Revolution brought new and emerging industries to Huntingdonshire. Our strategic location enabled the district to flourish as a significant coaching centre, attracting people and trade from across the country.

An Economy of Transition

As times change, our district evolved, and manufacturing became an important piece in the jigsaw of our economy. From brick making in Yaxley, to textiles and aviation in Godmanchester and light engineering in towns including Huntingdon, St Ives and St Neots.

Today, Huntingdonshire's modern manufacturing base focuses on advanced technologies, research and development in sectors like automotive, aerospace, medical, and technology. We are home to innovative advanced manufacturing companies who have

located, stayed and developed their products within our district such as Paragraf, who produce industry-ready graphene electronic devices.

We are also a key centre for defence, with RAF Wyton, RAF Molesworth and RAF Alconbury within our District and active bases, intelligence and logistics hubs, academic and R&D institutions located within a 2hr radius.

We have diversified our economy to include professional, scientific, and technical activities, construction, and other business services including professional and consultancy services, legal services, accounting and marketing.

Once again, our economy is at a point of transition and evolution, as we move towards decarbonisation and the next industrial revolution. The Government's focus on growth and the emerging Industrial Strategy presents us with the opportunity to define our economic future for the benefit of our residents, businesses and national economic growth. This is why now is the time to look to the future, updating and refreshing our Economic Growth Strategy to ensure we are well placed to meet the challenges and embrace the opportunities available to us.



Modern harvest at Glebe Farm



Early 20th century Huntingdon Market Day, Huntingdon Heritage



New facilities open at Alconbury Weald

This is Huntingdonshire

A Great Place to Do Business

Huntingdonshire's location has always supported its economic growth and prosperity. From a bridging point in Roman, Viking and Anglo-Saxon times, to a major stop for stagecoaches in the 18th and early to mid 19th Century, and now a key area within the East of England with connections to the rest of the country.

Our location between Cambridge's world-renowned innovation ecosystem and life sciences cluster and Peterborough's manufacturing and logistics specialisms, mean we are strategically positioned to drive both regional and national growth. We have a growing amount of high quality industrial and commercial space to support innovation in our region.

We are proactively responding to exciting developments on our doorstep including Universal Studios in Bedford, which is a 30-minute drive from St Neots. The development is expected to create 8,000 permanent and 20,000 construction jobs and our businesses and residents are well placed to support in both the supply chain and operations.

Our district benefits from road and rail links to London, the Midlands, the North and major ports including Felixstowe and have good airport connections. Future infrastructure developments including the A428 upgrade and the East West Rail project will enhance our connectivity even further.

Huntingdonshire's prime location, transport links and affordable locations make us a great place to do business.

A Great Place to Live

Our picturesque towns, villages, and countryside contribute to a strong quality of life for our residents. This is a key part of a successful economy, important for retaining talent, attracting visitors and encouraging businesses to locate here.

As a council, we have invested time in understanding what resident priorities are for the district, what is working and how it can be improved.

Huntingdonshire's Place Strategy (Huntingdonshire Futures) built on hundreds of conversations with residents who told us why they live in Huntingdonshire. Our residents' value the districts network of green spaces, our market towns, the sense of community, our rich history and links to Cambridge and London.

Huntingdonshire Futures sets out an aspiration for an 'inclusive economy' which ***"champions upskilling and provide inspiring job opportunities for residents in a variety of industries. We will nurture start-ups, enable businesses to grow, and build a strong local economy."***

Our approach to this Economic Growth strategy builds on this ambition – delivering economic growth in a way that improves our resident's quality of life and ensures that Huntingdonshire continues to be a great place to live, work, learn and visit.



St Ives Bridge



Glass Moor Wind Turbine



St Neots Pocket Park



Huntingdonshire's Economy Today





A growing population

5% population growth

9,150 more in 2023 than 2018¹

61% working age population

Higher than many rural comparator districts and authorities²



Strategic location

Well located nationally and regionally

Neighbour nationally and internationally significant cities Cambridge and Peterborough, with transport links to the rest of the UK through road and rail

Developments inside and outside the district

Offer exciting opportunities at present and in the future for growth and job creation



Employment growth

5,000 more jobs

7% increase in job counts across the district in 2023 compared to 2018³

81,000 jobs

In total across the district in 2023³



Distinct character

Historic market towns and rural areas

Providing unique opportunities for development and tourism, combined with high standard of living for many residents

1: ONS, UK Population Estimates
2: ONS, Annual Population Survey
3: ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey



Active small business economy

89%
of businesses in
the district are
micro⁴

With numbers
of small,
medium and
large
businesses
growing since
2019⁴

Huntingdonshire's largest sectors⁶

Across the district, the highest employing sectors are:



11,000

Manufacturing jobs



9,000

Healthcare jobs



6,000

Professional, scientific
and technical jobs



6,000

Education jobs

Commercial space breakdown⁵



Office	Research and development	Light industrial	General industrial
271,000m ²	333,000m ²	126,000m ²	353,000m ²
Of floorspace spread across 336 premises	Of floorspace spread across 4 premises	Of floorspace spread across 51 premises	Of floorspace spread across 255 premises

Visitor Economy

£371.55M
Economic impact

4.92M
Visitors

4: ONS, UK Business Counts
5: CoStar (2025)
6: ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey; STEAM, 2025

What Partners Told Us:

“

Collaboration is vital for success:

“There is a great sense of community and collaboration...we are in it together.”

“It's great that communities are doing things to help themselves, but we need to harness that now into a more strategic approach to ensure consistency of support and avoid duplication.”

“

Get skills right:

“We have to take every opportunity to get the skills landscape right; better collaboration on skills plans, avoiding duplication and pooling funds to unlock match.”

“We have to find pathways that work for people, getting knocked back because we've asked them to apply for a job that is inappropriate for their skill set doesn't help people.”

“

Location, Location, Location:

“Our location is one of our biggest assets, we should be aiming to be the place where innovators come to test and develop their ideas.”

“There are opportunities, like Universal Studios, happening on our doorstep which we cannot afford to miss.”

“

Transition provides opportunity

“We cannot ignore Local Government Reform, but we can use it as an opportunity to think differently and be bolder.”

“We need to be ready for what's coming, that means getting our businesses ready for AI and being ahead of that change.”

Strengths: A growing working age population attracted by our strong quality of life offer

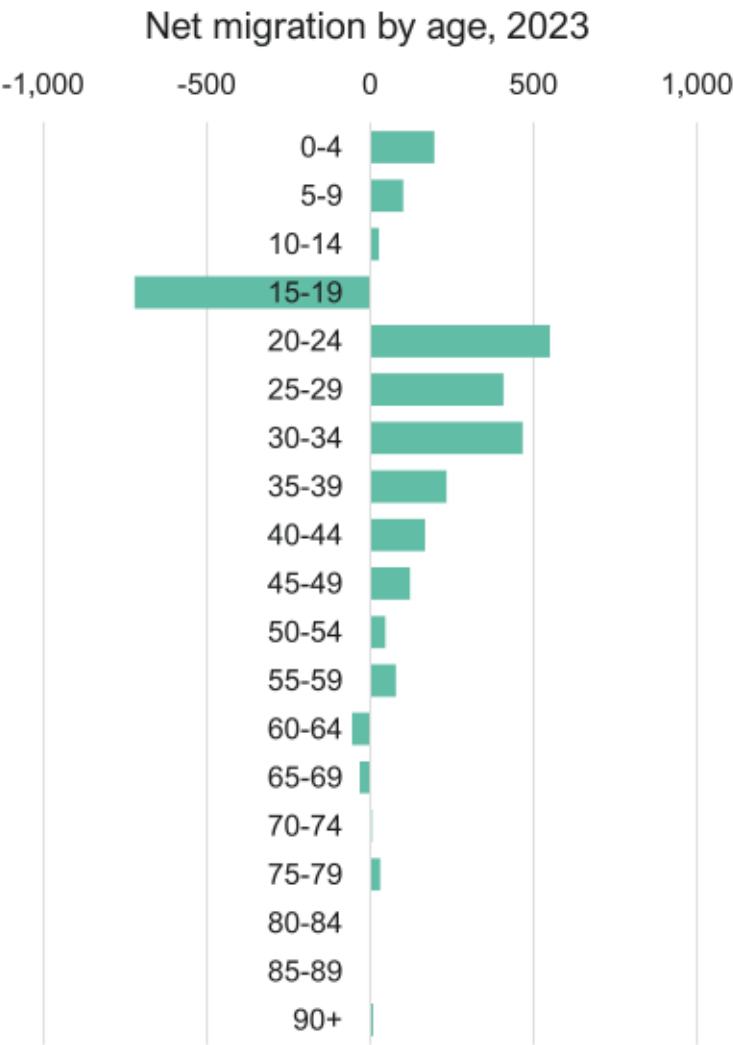
Huntingdonshire is recognised as a great place to live, with high resident health, wellbeing and life satisfaction. Our engagement emphasised the appeal of our market town heritage and natural environment, as well as the district being a relatively affordable place for families. We have growing arts, entertainment and hospitality industries which are supporting our cultural and leisure offer.

Our population is growing, and we are home to over 100,000 more people than five years ago. Many of our new residents have come from neighbouring, often more expensive, local authorities such as South Cambridgeshire, Central Bedfordshire and Cambridge. The 2023 migration patterns show our appeal to working aged people and young families, with high growth in people aged 20-40 and under 10.

In 2023, we had a net outflow of young people, moving to key cities such as Nottingham, Leeds, Norwich and Manchester. It is an important element of our Economic Growth Strategy to create strong opportunities for those who want to remain.

7: ONS Wellbeing Metrics
8: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey
9: ONS, Internal Migration Estimates
10: ONS, House Prices to Earnings Ratios

7.5 average life satisfaction score 2022-2023, compared to 7.4 nationally⁷



14% growth in arts, entertainment and recreation businesses
7% growth in food and accommodation 2017-2023⁸

Local Authority	5 Year average 2019-2024 house price to resident earnings ratio
Cambridge	11.86
South Cambridgeshire	10.09
East Cambridgeshire	9.65
Huntingdonshire	9.28
Peterborough	7.40
Fenland	7.18

Opportunities: new development, specialisms and knowledge to support national growth priorities

Our economy is well-placed to support and drive national growth priorities.

The Government's Invest 2025 Industrial Strategy emphasises the key sectors which will drive national growth. Defence and Life Sciences are national priorities and over the past 5 years, Huntingdonshire has become a growing hub for both sectors.

Huntingdon is home to RAF Wyton, the US Air Force's Joint Intelligence Operations Centre Europe and the NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre and the Headquarters of the USAF 501st Combat Support Wing. There are 15 established defence companies which have an employee growth rate of 30% year on year and GVA per job of £111k.

Huntingdonshire has seen the development of new landmark housing, commercial and mixed-use sites such as Alconbury Weald Enterprise Zone which have become important economic assets and contributed to the growing amount of commercial space.

In the coming years, a number of strategic-scale pipeline developments make Huntingdonshire well-positioned to accommodate new economic activity in existing and emerging sectors and support government growth priorities. Through this Economic Growth Strategy, we will work with our regional partners and CPCA to ensure that the commercial opportunities within our district are capitalised upon.

10: CoStar (2025)



4% increase
in office floorspace (2019-2024) in line with regional and national averages



12% increase
in industrial floorspace (2019-2024) compared to 7.4% increase across England and 11% in the East of England¹⁰

	Number of jobs 2023	Change 2018-2023		
Sector	Huntingdonshire	Huntingdonshire	East of England	England
Advanced manufacturing	4,000	-20%	-4%	8%
Clean energy industries*	1,500	-14%	-19%	2%
Creative industries	3,000	0%	-3%	12%
Defence	4,000	14%	-1%	9%
Digital and tech	2,500	0%	5%	13%
Financial services	2,500	0%	-3%	10%
Life sciences	7,000	17%	15%	18%
Professional and business	3,000	-14%	-10%	8%

*Wind, nuclear fission and fusion, hydrogen, carbon capture, heat pumps, networks and other critical technologies

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, DataCity definitions of National Industrial Strategy Sectors

Weaknesses: high number of jobs in traditional sectors at risk of decline

Many of our key specialisms, and high numbers of jobs and businesses, are in traditional sectors such as manufacturing, with a lower proportion of employment in knowledge intensive industries.

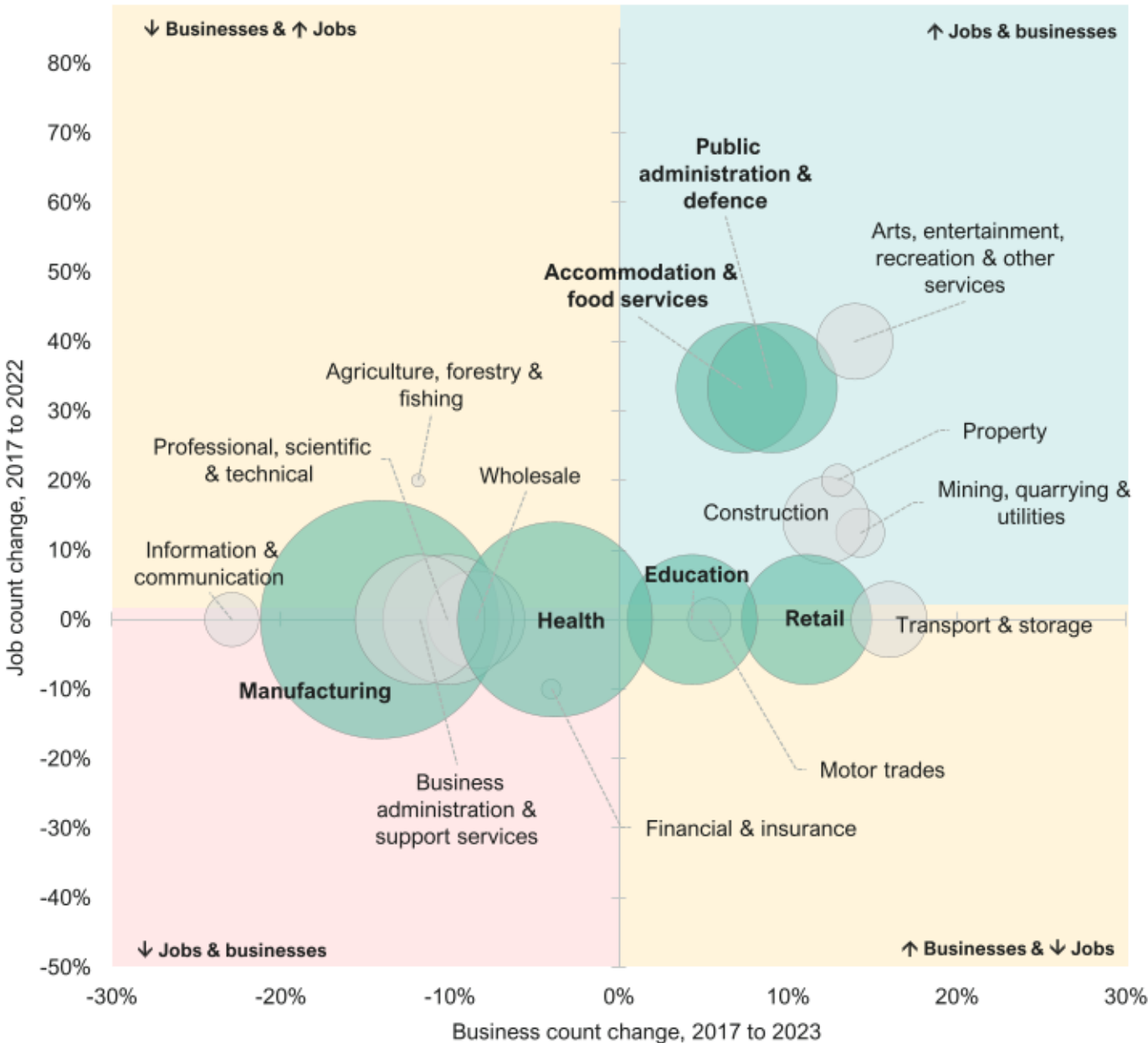
Overall, business numbers in the district have declined by 1.3% in the last 5 years and there have been significant declines in knowledge intensive industries such as professional, scientific and technical, finance and insurance and information and communication.

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Sector	Business change 2017-2023
IT & Communication	-23%
Manufacturing	-14%
Agriculture	-12%
Business support	-12%
Professional, scientific and technical	-10%

Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, UK Business Counts

Change in business & job counts by broad sector



Circle size represents the overall number of jobs in the sector as of 2022. The bigger the circle, the more jobs

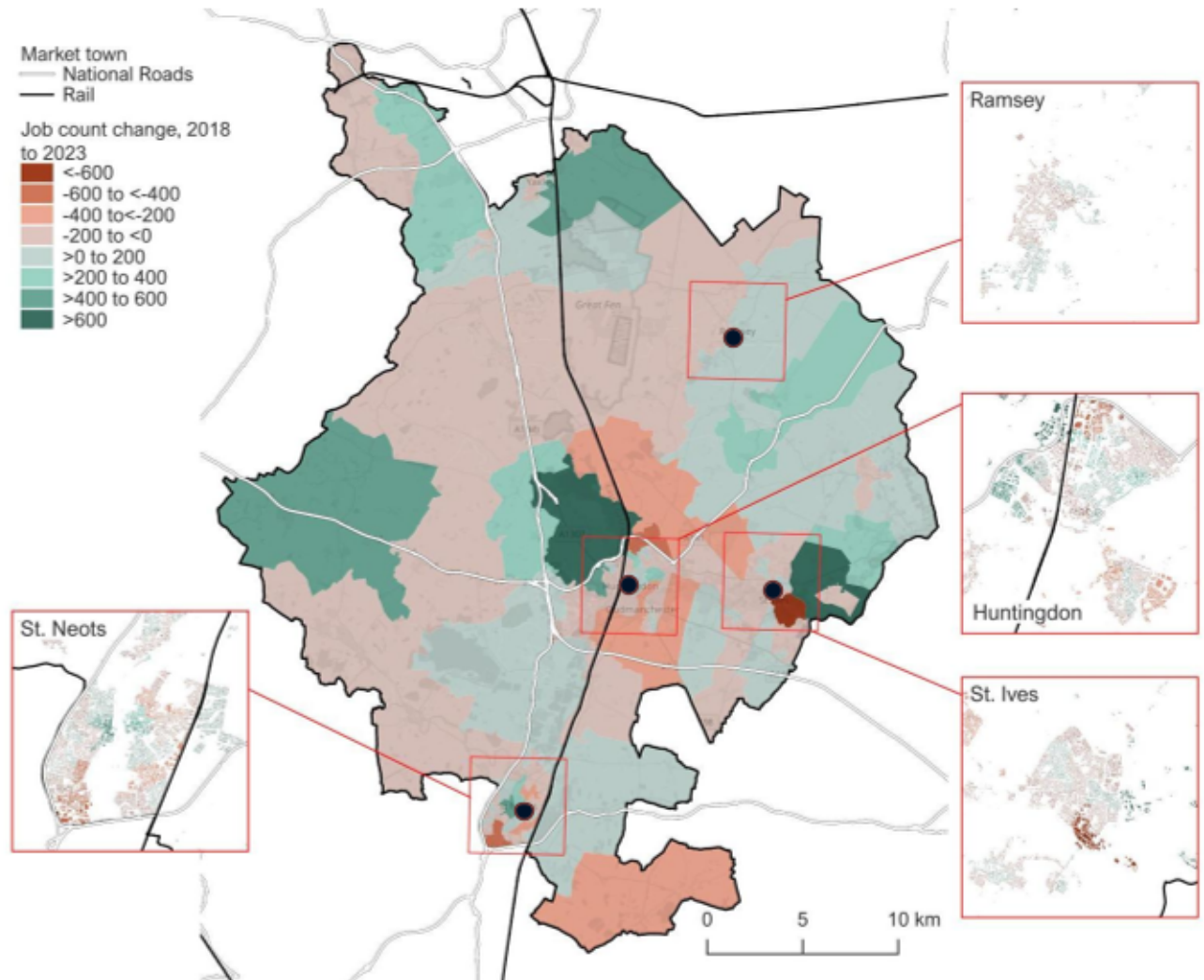
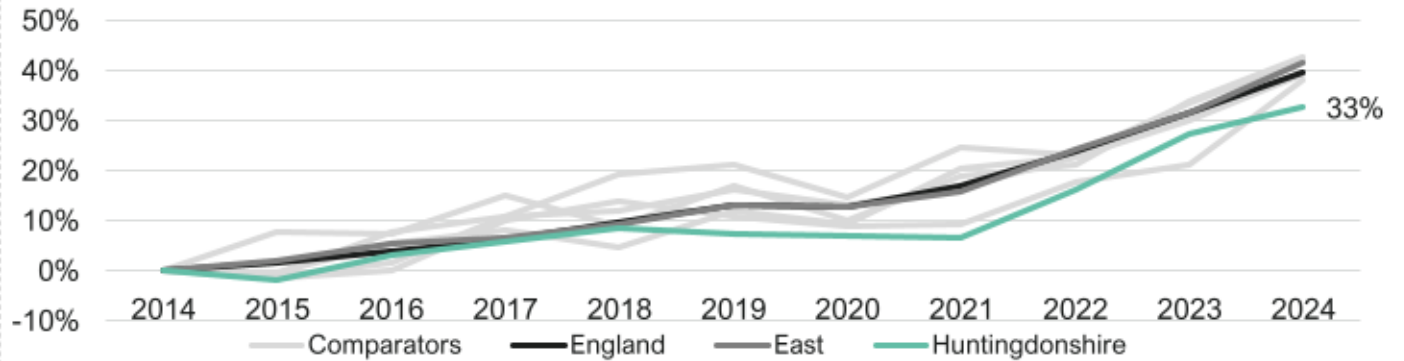
Weaknesses: earnings and opportunities for our residents lag behind other areas

Across Huntingdonshire the number of jobs has grown by 6.6% since 2018, above both the national and regional averages. This has not always translated into a more well-paying new opportunities for residents.

Resident and worker earnings in Huntingdonshire have consistently lagged behind national and regional averages and failed to keep pace with our neighbours. Our residents get paid over £100 less per week on average than those in Cambridge, and £30 less than the East of England.

New employment opportunities have been concentrated outside of our market towns, within our business parks and industrial areas both in new and existing spaces. Across our district we have challenges with public transport and accessibility, and many of our businesses spoke about the need for residents to have a car to access jobs and employment. It is important that new opportunities come alongside active travel and public transport improvements.

Change in gross weekly earnings over time, residents



Threats: changes in our economy will impact the skills our residents need

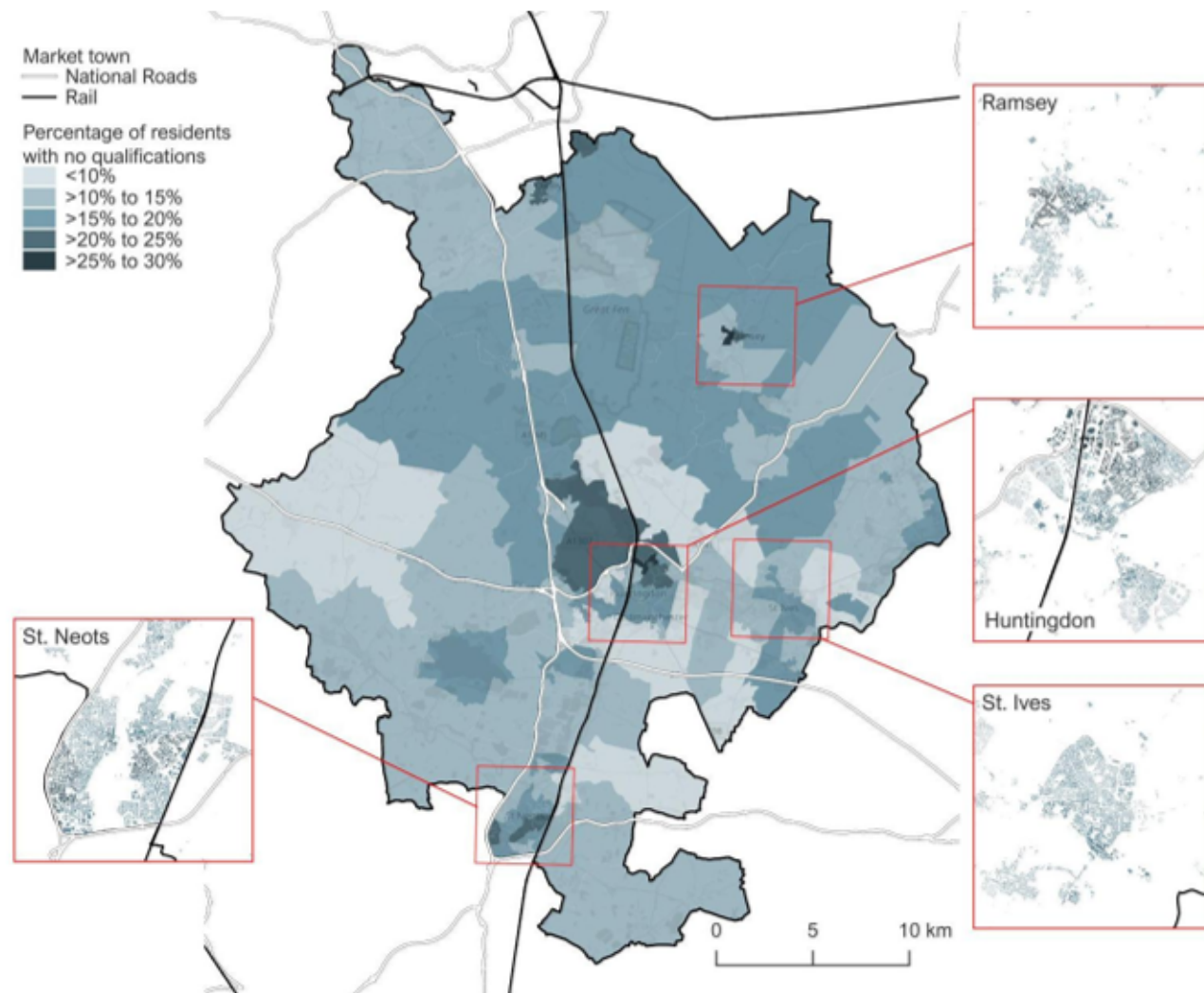
Our Economic Growth Strategy needs to identify and respond to emerging economic changes and threats, and ensure resilience across the whole of our district.

Future trends such as automation and AI have the potential to significantly change the labour and talent requirements for some of our key employers. We also recognise the potential impact macro-economic trends, such as changing global supply chains, could have on our core industries and employment opportunities within our district.

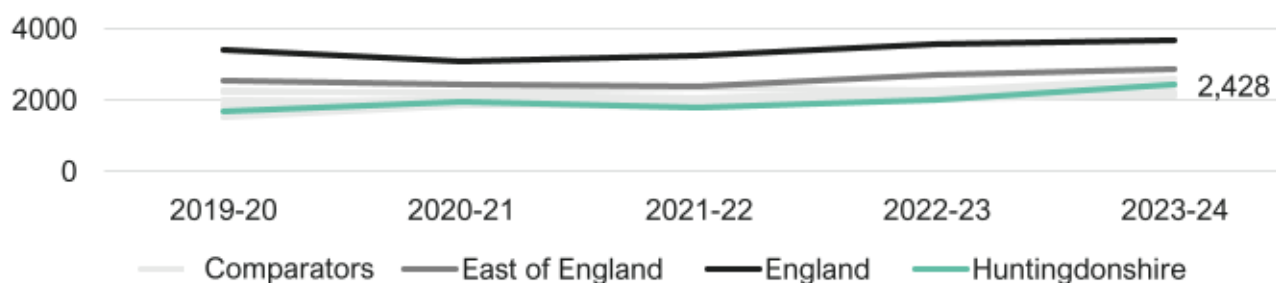
2% of our workforce, almost 9,000 jobs, have been identified as requiring re-training.

Skills attainment is a recognised challenge across our district at all levels from foundational skills to further education attainment and degree level qualifications. Whilst our overall averages are positive, with a smaller proportion of the population with no qualifications and similar educated to degree level than nationally, this masks significant variation within our neighbourhoods.

There are communities within our market towns where over a quarter of residents have no qualifications and our further education achievement levels are significantly lower than regional and national averages.



Further Education and skills achievements per 100,000 people



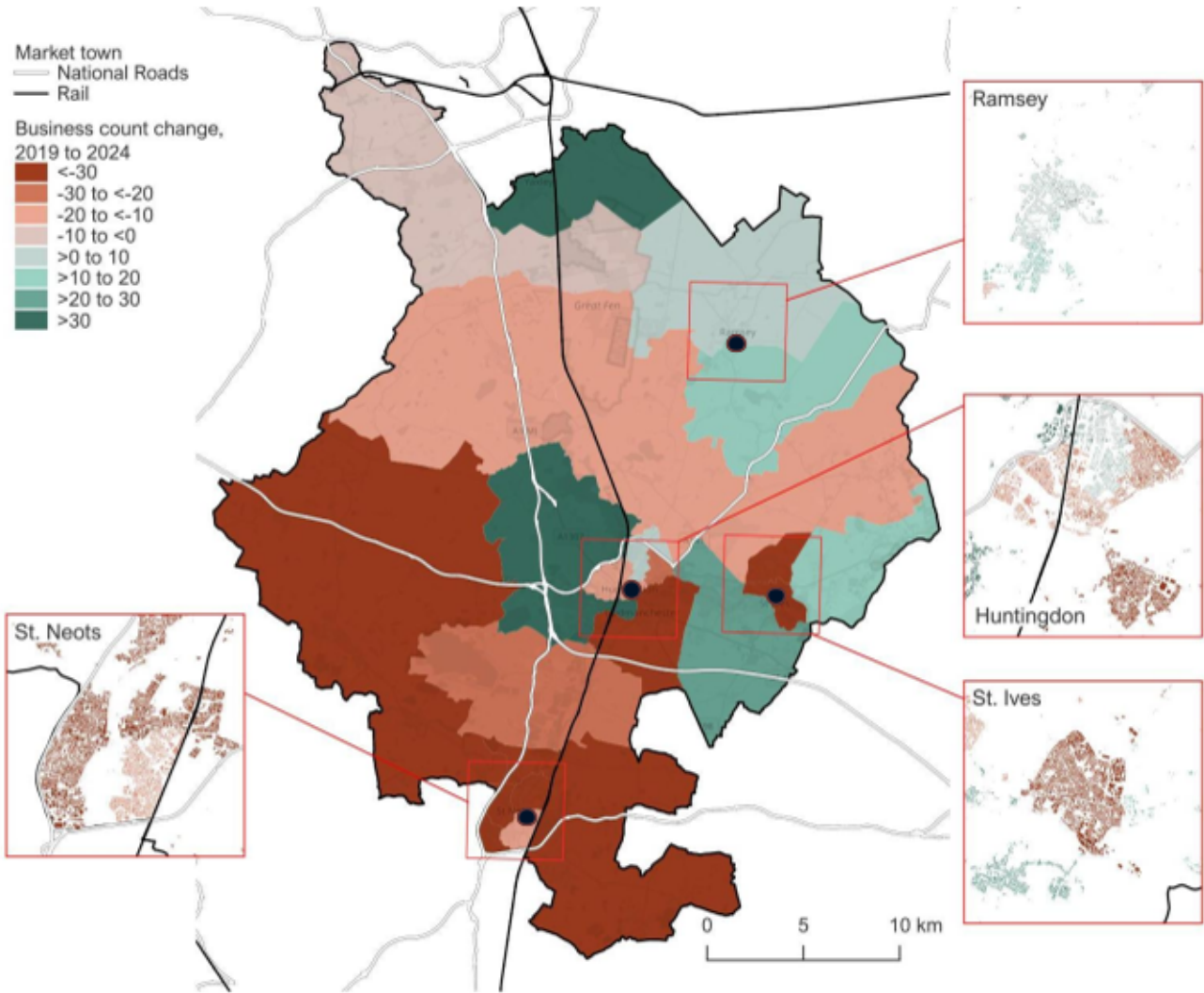
Threats: our market towns are impacted by our changing economy

The experience of our market towns and the rest of the district, including rural and industrial areas is very different. In non-market towns, there has been growth in business numbers, mostly fuelled by areas in the North and East of the district and around successful new developments.

In contrast, in three of our four market towns, Huntingdon, St. Neots and St. Ives, there have been high declines in businesses. In these areas the high street and visitor economy offer, like retail, entertainment and hospitality businesses has stayed relatively stable, with declines driven by professional and office-based sectors.

For example, Huntingdon has experienced a 60% decline (-15 businesses) in finance and insurance, compared to -6% across the rest of the district and a 23% decline in professional, scientific and technical (-30 businesses), compared to -9% across the rest of the district. In St Neots, there has been a 40% decline (-40 businesses) in information and communication, compared to -24% across the district. These declines will be attributed to businesses closing or moving out of the district.

	Huntingdon	St. Ives	St. Neots	Ramsey	Rest of District
Total employment	19080	7645	10940	2155	40480
Employment 5-year change	4.34%	-12.29%	-1.64%	4.88%	11.91%
Total businesses	840	770	1060	380	4710
Business 5-year change	-2.82%	-8.77%	-9.70%	1.33%	1.29%



Source: ONS, UK Business Counts, Business Register and Employment Survey



Huntingdonshire's Economic Growth Strategy

Our vision is:

**A prosperous, resilient and dynamic economy
which provides the foundation for
Huntingdonshire to be a good place to live,
work and visit.**

**We will be open for business, work
collaboratively with partners, capitalise on our
opportunities and invest in our people and
places.**

Vision principles

Our vision for Huntingdonshire's economy....

Places importance on both economic growth and environmental sustainability

Huntingdonshire has made significant progress in decarbonising our economy and maintaining a strong natural environment. We will apply a "green lens" to all our decision making, to ensure that we do not drive economic growth at the expense of Huntingdonshire District Council's net-zero commitments.

Focuses on diversity and good opportunities to create an inclusive economy

Huntingdonshire is home to many different sectors and industries, with businesses ranging from 1 to over 2,000 employees. Our Economic Growth Strategy recognises the importance of having a diverse economy and seeks to maintain the variety of activity within our existing business base. We will focus on attracting businesses which will bring well-paid high-quality opportunities for our residents rather than narrowing our focus on select sectors.

Emphasises Huntingdonshire's strengths in quality of life, place and people

With a large proportion of countryside and the Great Ouse, our district is characterised by the strength of our natural environment. Together with our four market towns, these assets contribute to our high quality of life and strong visitor offer. We recognise the

importance of thriving and unique places across our district, to attract visitors, talent and businesses.

Positions Huntingdonshire as open to investment and growth

Huntingdonshire is a key strategic location in between Cambridge and Peterborough with strong connections across the country through the A1, A14 and wider road network. We are proactively seeking the right kinds of growth and investment which can support national and regional growth priorities.

There are major developments planned and in progress, and we will work to ensure these provide opportunities for our residents and businesses.

Recognises the need for collaboration to drive growth

As a District Council our levers for change and resources are limited, and we must work with partners to achieve our ambitions. The Economic Growth Strategy recognises that active involvement of and collaboration with partners and stakeholders is key to success.

We are also in a time of political change with Local Government Reform and Devolution, making it more important than ever that we align with regional and national priorities. This will future-proof the strategy and ensure the ambitions can be achieved within a changing political landscape.

Vision and Ambitions

Policy Context

National:



Invest 2035: The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy



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Get Britain Working

Get Britain Working White Paper

Regional:

Oxford to Cambridge pan-Regional Partnership

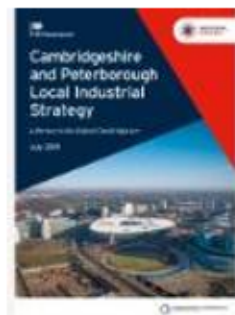
Oxford to Cambridge Partnership



The UK Innovation Corridor



Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Economic Growth Strategy



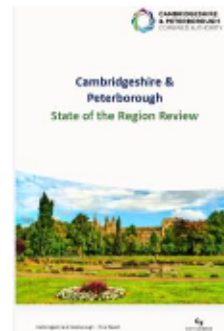
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Local Industrial Strategy

CPCA Local Growth Plan

This will plan for economic growth across the CPCA area



Looking Forward A Shared Ambition for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough



Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority State of the Region Review

CPCA Further Education Cold Spots

Local:



Huntingdonshire Futures Place Strategy



Huntingdonshire District Council Corporate Plan



Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036



Huntingdonshire Climate Strategy

Economic and Employment Needs Assessment

EENA: A study of the current and future economic and employment landscape in Huntingdonshire (insert link when available).

Our outcomes framework:

To achieve our Vision, our data analysis and engagement showed we need to:

Make sure we are ready to respond to changing macro economic trends

Attract and support businesses which are providing good, well-paid opportunities for our residents

Respond to the skills gaps

Make the most of our development and investment

Maintain our high quality of life and strength of place

In response to this evidence, we have identified five ambitions:

Our economy is **flexible**. We have planned for change in our key sectors and contribute to national growth priorities

Enterprise is celebrated and Huntingdonshire is a great place for business

Our residents have the **skills** they need to participate in the economy

New **investment** and development is positively supporting our economy

The vibrancy in our rural areas and market towns make our district a desirable **place to spend time and explore**



Delivering our vision and ambitions

Delivering our vision and ambitions

Our vision and ambitions will be used to shape our activity over the next 5 years and track progress

Against our five long-term outcomes, we have used our evidence base to identify the rationale for change and what progress will look like. We have linked each outcome to principles in the Corporate Plan, to show how they will support priorities across the District Council, and what the outcomes will be if we achieve each ambition.

Our actions are categorised into:

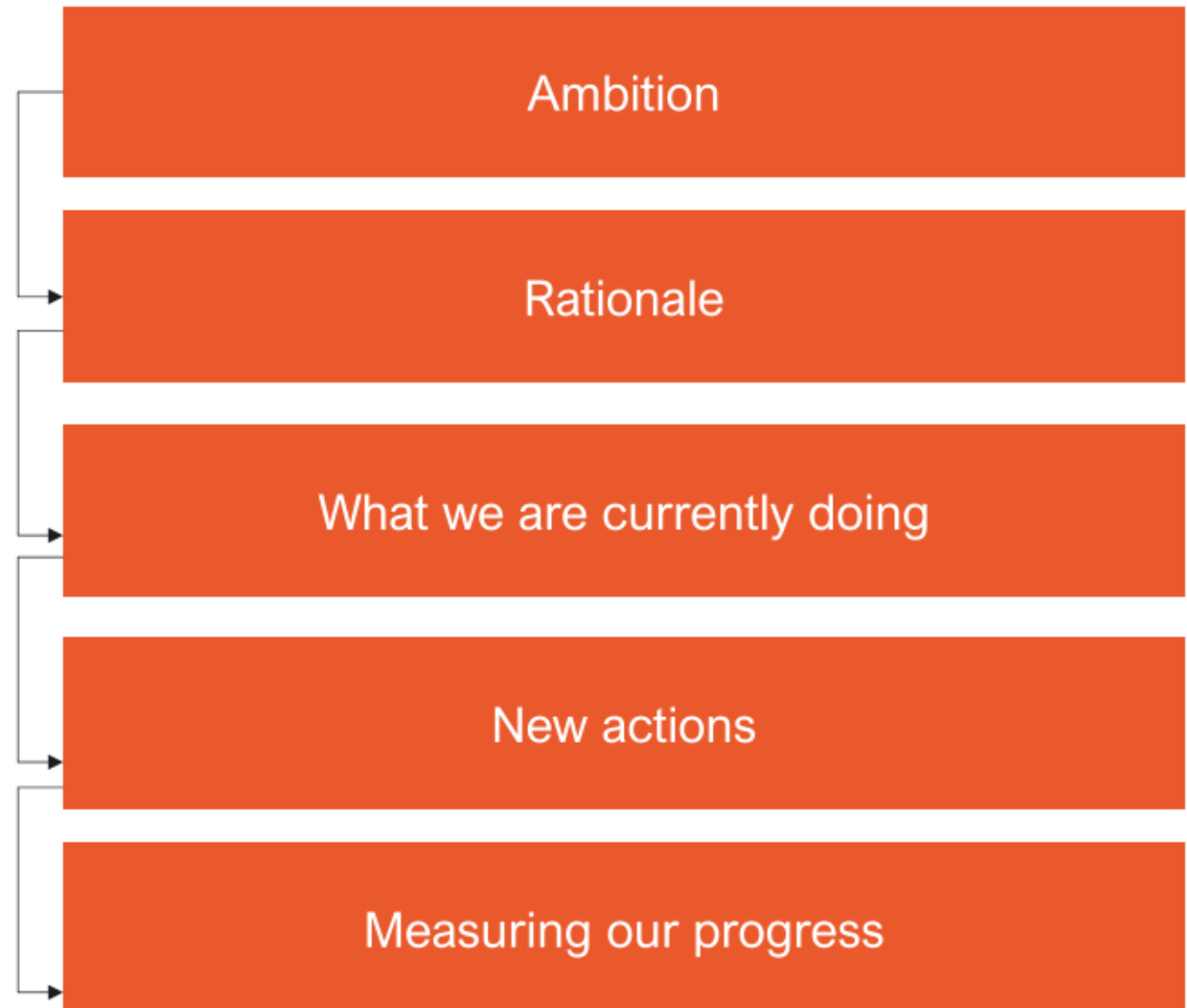
Do: actions we can directly deliver as a District Council. The Economic Development Team will lead the action, with partners specified.

Enable: actions focused on bringing people together and creating spaces and forums for collaboration. Huntingdonshire's Economic Development team acting as a convenor

Influence: actions focused on Huntingdonshire District Council influencing our partners, public and private

We are confident that this approach will enable us to focus our resources on the tasks which will have the biggest impact on our long-term vision.

Structure of this chapter:



Ambition 1: Rationale

Our economy is flexible. We have planned for change in our key sectors and contribute to national growth priorities

Why this is important:

Our economy is changing rapidly in response to macro economic and political shifts, adoption of new technology, impact of climate change and carbon reduction.

This will affect businesses within many of our key sectors such as manufacturing, retail, construction, business services and agriculture and healthcare.

We are home to industries and businesses which are driving growth in national priority sectors and are well placed to respond to new opportunities at this scale.

Link to the Corporate Plan:

The Corporate Plan is focused on improving the quality of life for Huntingdonshire residents. The aspiration of “forward thinking economic growth” sets out that Huntingdonshire should have a local economy that is “a place where businesses chose to start-up grow, and there is investment in high-value jobs”. This can be delivered by ensuring change is proactively planned and prepared for, our ambitions align with national growth priorities and we can adapt as the economic landscape changes.

What does success look like?

- We will have an adaptable and responsive approach to how we support our economy.
- A diverse and growing economy with a mix of established and emerging sectors.
- The environmental impact of the economy is reduced, and we are meeting our decarbonisation targets.
- Changes in our economy are monitored and tracked, to ensure that we can respond to them.
- Huntingdonshire is contributing to regional and national economic growth, with increased GVA per worker.

Ambition 1: Our delivery priorities

What are we currently doing?

Huntingdonshire District Council prioritises the changing needs of businesses, and the Economic Development Team are the first call for business support, advice and guidance across the district.

We are working with professional service networks, investors and developers to understand the health of the economy, develop responses and attract

investment in our economy, as set out in our Corporate Plan.

We are also working closely with our regional partners and neighbours, to ensure our activity aligns with and complements relevant regional and national priorities and to identify and unlock opportunities for funding and investment.

2025-2030 Actions

Action	Outcome(s)	Do/ Enable/ Influence
Establish an incentive funding pot and application criteria to support businesses looking to grow or expand in our district	Our businesses are growing	Do
Support businesses to improve their net zero ambitions through green tools and resources	Our businesses have reduced their emissions and we have tracked progress towards net zero	Do
Work with Data and Insights team at Huntingdonshire District Council to establish yearly monitoring of key economic indicators	We are tracking the changes in our economy	Do
Establish a Huntingdonshire Business Leaders Group focused on identifying and understanding regional challenges and opportunities	In depth understanding of trends in key sectors, our role within Cambridgeshire, business performance and survival	Enable
Initiate collaborative working groups to drive action in potential growth sectors for example defence and green / clean tech	Partners are empowered and resourced to develop a collaborative approach to responding to identified growth sectors.	Enable
Work with regional partners and businesses to understand the changes, challenges and opportunities within the agricultural sector	Increased resilience of the agricultural sector	Enable

Ambition 2: Rationale

Enterprise is celebrated and Huntingdonshire is a great place for business

Why this is important:

We have a strong small business base and a diversity of activity. We are well positioned as a business location through physical proximity to Cambridge & Peterborough and key road infrastructure.

Workplace earnings are lower than in other areas and there are few well paying jobs.

Providing and improving accessibility and visibility of opportunities is important to keep talent and enterprise within Huntingdonshire.

Link to the Corporate Plan:

The Corporate Plan has a priority to create “a better Huntingdonshire for future generations” which includes an outcome to deliver a “forward thinking economic growth.” Being open for business and celebrating entrepreneurship will be fundamental to delivering this outcome. This will include building on the successful work set out in the Corporate Plan including evolving the Invest in Huntingdonshire website as a comprehensive portal for businesses and investors, and the role of the Local Plan in ensuring the district continues to be a great place to do business.

What does success look like?

- Huntingdonshire’s economy is a hub for new and growing business across a variety of sectors.
- Our commercial property vacancy rates are low.
- Huntingdonshire’s local businesses are expanding, creating more jobs and opportunities for residents.
- Huntingdonshire has a well-connected eco-system, and an increasing number of businesses are engaging with networks, funding opportunities and advice services.
- The number of businesses in high-value and knowledge economy industries has increased.
- Workplace and resident earnings have increased.

Ambition 2: Our delivery priorities

What are we currently doing?

Huntingdonshire District Council are actively engaging the business community. We host well attended events, such as CEO breakfasts, bringing together businesses and leadership across the Council.

We are working to strengthen our relationship with our business community and have appointed a Business Development Officer. This enables us to

understand the challenges businesses are facing on the ground and identify new opportunities. We are working with our partners the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses, and Huntingdon First BID. The Chamber of Commerce hosts engagement events within the District, including round tables and summits, to understand challenges and opportunities. Raising the profile of Huntingdonshire is important, and we have an active social media presence and Invest in Huntingdonshire website.

2025-2030 Actions

Action	Outcome(s)	Do/ Enable/ Influence
Establish formal collaborations with the business community and partners such as the Chamber of Commerce to address shared challenges and pursue opportunities for growth	Formal collaborations foster the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and resources. Strong partnerships build trust and confidence. Businesses and the organisations can identify and tackle challenges collaborative. Establish clear roles and responsibilities for addressing challenges, leading to more effective and sustainable solutions. Valuable insights inform the regional and local decision making.	Enable
Establish the Invest In Huntingdonshire website as the primary online directory for business investment opportunities, resources, and resident support within the district	Businesses, investors and residence have an increased understanding of the opportunities available to them. Improved efficiency of information sharing.	Do
Initiate a District Business Awards program to champion the achievements of our local business community and recognise their work which directly supports our Corporate Plan ambitions	Local business are celebrated and showcased. Best practice is shared across the district. A strengthened relationships between the District Council, partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and FSB and businesses.	Do
Carry out a yearly survey of business satisfaction within Huntingdonshire	We are tracking and can respond to changing business sentiment	Do
Work with CPCA to ensure revised bus transport network responds to needs of Huntingdonshire's economy	Better links between residents and opportunities.	Influence

Ambition 3: Rationale

Our residents have the skills they need to participate in the economy

Why this is important:

Businesses have highlighted difficulties in accessing talent with the appropriate skills locally.

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There is low participation in further education and training compared to regional and national averages.

Reskilling will be an important consideration for residents currently in the workforce, both to access new opportunities and adapt to changing requirements of their current roles.

Link to the Corporate Plan:

The Corporate Plan explicitly sets out that “local people should be able to develop their skills to take advantage of these opportunities, with businesses and education providers working more closely together to deliver an inclusive economy.”

What does success look like?

- The number of businesses reporting skills shortages has declined.
- There is growing participation in further education and vocational learning.
- The number of residents who are NEET is reduced.
- The economic activity and employment rate remains high.
- The offer of local providers such as Cambridge Regional College's Huntingdonshire Campus and ARU Peterborough meets the needs of Huntingdonshire's residents and businesses.

Ambition 3: Our delivery priorities

What are we currently doing?

Working with partners is essential for this priority and we have built relationships with our local stakeholders including DWP and CPCA. We use our platform to promote skills development and training opportunities available within our area.

We are actively developing initiatives where we can lead by example as an anchor employer. Recognising a gap in opportunities for young people and

the need to lead by example as an anchor institution, we arranged a work experience programme in partnership with local schools for 100 school children from the local area who were without a placement.

We worked with the CPCA and partners to review of the future demand for Further Education (FE) provision in the St Neots area and developed the Local Skills Improvement Plan, prioritising connections between FE provision and local employers aligned to core growth sectors.

2025-2030 Actions

Action	Outcome(s)	Do/ Enable/ Influence
Develop a strategic alliance with ARU Peterborough and Cambridge Regional College to establish a responsive program delivery that directly addresses the evolving needs of our key sectors	Reduction in the skills gap. Increased innovation in the local curriculum. Access to industry expertise and resources. Improved pathways into work for students. Prepare strategically for the post SPF employability and skills landscape.	Do
Embed skills and training requirements for local people within public sector planning policies, procurement processes (including the application of social value frameworks), and other relevant mechanisms. Initially explore the use of CIL to secure improvements to training opportunities.	All major development includes an employment and skills strategy. S106 and CIL payments are targeted and directly address local need.	Enable
Work with CPCA to establish a Huntingdonshire equivalent of the Fenland Education, Skills and Training Provider Partnership	Clearer pathways from education into employment across the district Increased uptake in T-Levels, apprenticeships and work experience placements Alignment of resources and reduction in duplication	Enable
Work with anchor employers to encourage coordinated ESG funding into local skills provision	Increased capacity and funding for local skills provision Directed and targeted resource which avoids duplication	Influence

Ambition 4: Rationale

New investment and development is positively supporting our economy

Why this is important:

There are proposed large scale new developments in Huntingdonshire and close by. These will provide significant opportunities for our residents and businesses both throughout construction and operation phases. Our new developments will also provide the commercial spaces needed to drive growth in our area.

We need to work with partners to unlock investment in our strategic infrastructure – road, rail, water, energy. This is vital to facilitate our major schemes, but also to support the greening of our economy.

Currently, limits to public transport and active travel infrastructure means there is heavy reliance on cars to access opportunities.

What does success look like?

- We become a natural choice for new investment and development and inward investment within the district is increased.
- Huntingdonshire is recognised as a “can do” area, where opportunities for economic growth are considered proactively.
- Huntingdonshire’s businesses are connected to local supply chains supporting new development.
- Increased office, industrial, R&D and light industrial commercial spaces.

Link to the Corporate Plan:

The Corporate Plan puts economic growth in the context of “creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations.” This ambition links to the priority on how large-scale development in Huntingdonshire and across the region can be a catalyst for economic growth. It builds on the Corporate Plan’s actions to influence, and contribute to, the devolution deal for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and to influence the delivery of including East West Rail, A428, A141 Strategic Outline Business Case and future Transport Strategies.

Ambition 4: Our delivery priorities

What are we currently doing?

It is important to be at the table early in conversations around new development. We are working closely with partners to identify opportunities associated with major schemes such as Universal Studios. We are actively marketing Huntingdonshire as a place for investment, attending major conferences and promoting the opportunities available through [Invest in Huntingdonshire](#). We are working with central Government to showcase our defence specialisms and opportunities.

In addition, we are continuing to influence delivery of infrastructure including East West Rail, A428, A141 Strategic Outline Business Case and Alconbury Railway Station.

2025-2030 Actions

Action	Outcome(s)	Do/ Enable/ Influence
Continue to work with commercial developers and agents to build relationships, understand demand and identify gaps with an initial focus on light industrial premises	Evidence based decision making enables targeted development. Investment is attracted to and benefits Huntingdonshire. Existing assets are optimised to enable economic growth.	Do
Collaborate with developers and local businesses to understand supply chain needs for new projects and proactively match these with the capabilities of district-based suppliers	Stronger local supply chains Increased business opportunities for district-based suppliers Local and regional development benefits local business and supports their growth and expansion. Increased sustainability through local sourcing.	Enable
Create working group/s to identify and strategically plan for significant regional opportunities for example Universal Studios	A comprehensive understanding of direct and indirect opportunities. A coordinated and unified approach to engaging with potential opportunities.	Enable
Actively lobby government bodies, regional authorities, and other relevant stakeholders to prioritise and fund essential infrastructure projects identified as crucial for Huntingdonshire's economic development	Travel and transport infrastructure is developed for the benefit of our residents and businesses. Huntingdonshire is involved with discussions about EWR and other developments.	Influence

Ambition 5: Rationale

The vibrancy in our rural areas and market towns make our district a desirable place to spend time and explore

Why this is important:

Our market towns, rural areas and natural assets are all important aspects of our uniqueness and identity and pride in place.

Strong quality of life is important for our residents and businesses, and our assets form the basis of the visitor offer. We have a growing culture, leisure and hospitality offer.

Supporting diversification of rural areas and changes in our town centres will provide new economic opportunities.

What does success look like?

- Footfall and spending within our market towns increases.
- We have a diverse offer on our highstreets for the whole community and vacancy is low.
- The role of leisure, art and culture plays in contributing to our economy is understood and celebrated.
- There is an increase in visitors in our rural areas and market towns for leisure, tourism, and day trips.
- Decline in businesses and jobs within our town centres is reversed.

Link to the Corporate Plan:

Thriving high streets and vibrant market towns are pillars of the Corporate Plan's priorities. The plan highlights the Market Towns Programme, which has delivered investment in St Neots and Ramsey, and set out that Huntingdonshire "will be a place which attracts employers and visitors and somewhere residents are proud to call home".

Ambition 5: Our delivery priorities

What are we currently doing?

As a District Council we have recognised the importance of visitors and tourism as part of our economy. We have appointed a Visitor Economy Officer, are developing our Destination Management Plan and are tracking performance of our tourism economy. We are promoting the district through our [Discover Huntingdonshire](#) website.

We value our natural assets, and are developing a Business Case for the River Ouse to be a dedicated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and are investing

in Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

We are exploring how we can continue the Market Towns Programme having delivered a range of interventions including the Future High Street projects in St Neots, development of new Retail Hub in Ramsey, and various other funded projects within the four market towns. The District Council has commenced feasibility work on new projects to enable them to be brought forward when funding is available.

2025-2030 Actions

Action	Outcome(s)	Do/ Enable/ Influence
Create retail forums or high street business community groups within our market towns without a BID	Stronger partnership with business and third sector community.	Do
Establish a District Tourism Partnership bringing together our tourism, hospitality and retail businesses and wider stakeholders	Coordinated working with partners to improve tourism and visitor offer	Enable
Explore use of High street Rental Auctions to tackle vacant properties	Reduction in vacant properties in our Market Towns. Increase spaces for entrepreneurs	Do
Work with partners to respond to recommendations within the Tourism Growth Plan	Huntingdonshire's visitor offer is improved	Do
Play an active role in the Local Visitor Economy Partnership alongside regional partners	Strong local leadership on tourism and strategic relationship with national agencies such as VisitEngland and DCMS	Do

Inspiration

Our strategy and action plan takes inspiration from successful projects in places across the UK....

Hackney Central Impact and Ideas Fund

Business grant fund for Hackney Central using Additional Restrictions Grant funding the council had received from central government. The scope of the fund was shaped by the Hackney Central town strategy and aimed to support local businesses to deliver new projects in the town centre. There were 200 applications and the council awarded £600,000 in grants. Projects included free retail space for emerging fashion designers, a festival, a 3D printing process and a walking map showcasing Hackney's history.

Learnings for Huntingdonshire: grants to support enterprises and businesses to adapt their processes and contribute to a thriving borough. Criteria shaped by locally relevant priorities.

Devon County Council Green Innovation Fund

Competitive grant scheme which has invested £800,000 into innovative projects and technologies, driving green growth and supporting local enterprises. Funded through £6 million in Recovery Programme, the fund forecasts to save around 100,000 tonnes of carbon over the next ten years.

Learnings for Huntingdonshire: specific focus on greening and net zero transition with emphasis on wider benefits such as green skills development.

UCL and Islington Council Strategic Partnership

In 2023 UCL and Islington Council formed a strategic partnership via a Memorandum of Understanding with the aim of working together to make Islington a fairer and more equitable place to live. This has enabled knowledge exchange and allows Islington Council to convene with experts. So far, the focus has been on climate change.

Learnings for Huntingdonshire: formal partnership between a University and Council for knowledge exchange and innovation.

Liverpool City Region Supply Chain Support

Single platform with supply chain and procurement guidance for businesses across Liverpool City Region.

Learnings for Huntingdonshire: easily accessible resource for businesses to understand more about the supply chain process.

Bathscape Landscape Partnership

A Bath & North East Somerset Council led partnership delivering a 7-year programme

supported by National Lottery Heritage funding. The aim is to ensure Bath and its setting is better recognised, managed and experienced with the rural landscape and heritage sites enjoyed by all.

Learnings for Huntingdonshire: focuses on supporting and maintaining the rural and heritage elements of the local offer, improving access and telling a joined-up story for visitors and residents.

Bristol Vacant Commercial Property Grant Scheme

Businesses and organisations can apply for funding from £2,500 to £10,000 to bring a vacant commercial property back into permanent or temporary use. This is part of the Bristol City Council City Centre and High Streets Renewal Programme and funded through Bristol City Council, West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and UKSPF. They aim to support small businesses and sole traders, charities, community organisations and creative and cultural groups. The grant is designed to help organisations get up and running in a new property.

Learnings for Huntingdonshire: tackles challenges of vacant and poor-quality properties on high streets and supports businesses to locate in town centres.



Measuring our progress

Our Economic Growth Strategy will support progress towards wider Council Ambitions

The role of the Economic Growth Strategy is to provide a framework for action. The aims and ambitions within the Corporate Plan and Huntingdonshire Futures provide the overarching goals and priorities for the district. The Economic Growth Strategy has been developed as a more detailed plan to drive the economic progress needed to support our wider ambitions.

Our evidence led priorities and actions ensure that the resources of the Economic Development Team and partners are focused towards tackling the most important challenges and targeting the key opportunities which will drive our economic growth.

Success against the Economic Growth Strategy's five ambitions will lead to improved performance against economic metrics, such as GVA and business and jobs growth, but it will also drive success across the District Council's strategic priorities.

Page 289 **How the Economic Growth Strategy will drive change:**

Quality of life and strength of place are key areas of focus of the Economic Growth Strategy. We will enhance our visitor and tourism offer within our town centres and rural areas.

We have adopted inclusive economy principles and will prioritise growth and investment that will benefit our residents and businesses. We have identified the current barriers residents face to accessing opportunities and developed actions to respond directly to these. We will also prioritise supporting our businesses to access the supply chain of new developments.

We will focus on attracting good employers and celebrate businesses adopting good employment practices and paying fairly. We will also work to improve the pathway from school into work.

A key principle is ensuring that we continue to decarbonise our economy and prioritise environmental considerations in decision making. We will support our businesses to green their operations.

We have included a focused action on improvements to the bus network to reflect resident, business and visitor needs and recognise the need to lobby for improvements to travel infrastructure across our district.

Strategic priorities it will support:

Huntingdonshire District Council, Corporate Plan 2023-2028

Priority 1: Improving Quality of Life for local people

- *Happiness and wellbeing of residents*
- *Keeping people out of crisis*

Priority 2: Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations

- *Forward thinking economic growth*
- *Lowering carbon emissions*

Huntingdonshire 2050 Place Strategy:

Journey 1: Pride in Place

Journey 2: Inclusive Economy

Journey 3: Health Embedded

Journey 4: Environmental Innovation

Journey 5: Travel Transformed

Our vision and ambitions are designed to be measurable. It is important that we can track progress against our aims, identify what we are doing well and where we need to focus our efforts.

Included on the following page are indicators we will use to do this. Where possible, these are publicly available data sets.

Indicators

Ambition	Indicator	Source	Update Frequency
All	Healthy Life Expectancy	PHE Fingertips	Yearly
All	Resident Life Satisfaction	ONS 4	Yearly
All	Carbon Emissions	Huntingdonshire District Council	Yearly
1	Business Counts overall and across our sectors	ONS, UK Business Counts	Yearly
1	Jobs Counts overall and across our sectors	ONS, UK Business Register and Employment Survey	Yearly
1	GVA per worker	ONS	Yearly
1,2	Resident and workplace earnings	ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings	Yearly
1	MtCO2 associated with economic activity	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, BEIS	Yearly
1,2	Business rates income	Huntingdonshire District Council	Yearly
2	Business demography changes	ONS, UK Business Counts	Yearly
2	Business start up and survival rates	ONS	Yearly
3	Further Education Achievements	DFE	Yearly
3	% of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)	DFE	Yearly
3	% of residents with no qualifications	ONS Annual Population Survey	Yearly
3	% of residents economically inactive	ONS Annual Population Survey	Yearly
4	Quantity of commercial space delivered	Huntingdonshire District Council	Ongoing
4	CIL funding secured through investment	Huntingdonshire District Council	Ongoing
5	Number of visitors	STEAM	Yearly
5	Economic impact of visitors	STEAM	Yearly



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