

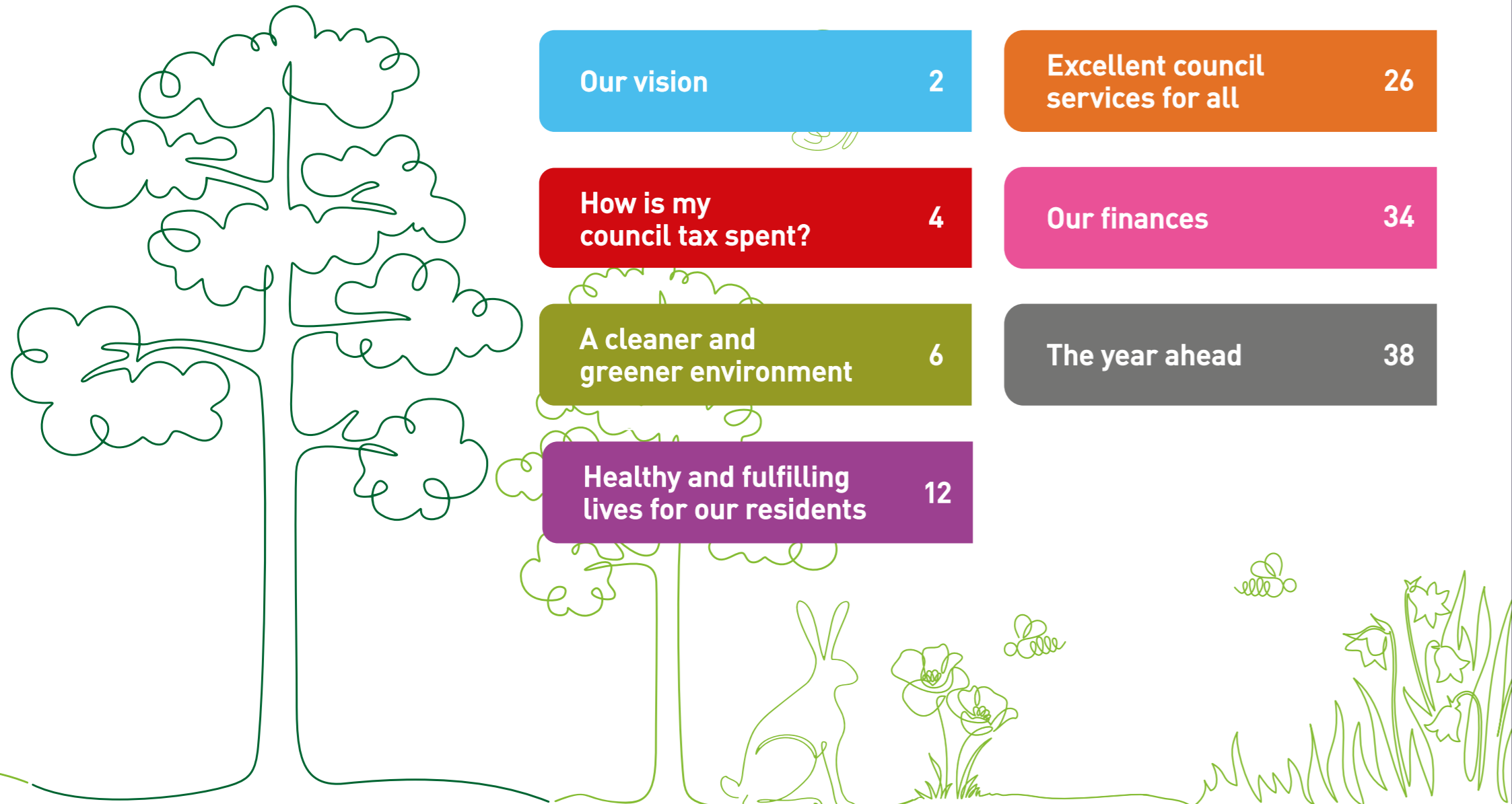
# Annual Report 2022-2023

Hertfordshire County Council



Hertfordshire

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“ This year has been one like never before – we have been striving for innovation and improvement during testing times, all while continuing to commit ourselves to our communities and deliver excellent and more efficient services. We’re confident that we are taking strides towards our ambitious vision. Despite the severe pressures we have faced, we are immensely proud that we have still achieved great things in the past year, including delivering impressive results across our four strategic priorities, and our overall vision for a cleaner, greener, healthier Hertfordshire. ”

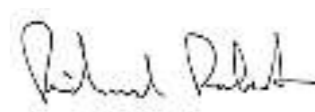
With overlapping global emergencies, persistent inflation, increased cost of living and continued demand on our services, we are reimagining how we continue to deliver the support our communities need, expect and deserve. This has included making significant investments in our roads, pavements and cycleways to make sure people can travel around our county safely; increasing the payments awarded to the valuable foster carers that help to support our children and young people; and thinking carefully about how we choose office space that gives our teams what they need whilst prioritising our financial and environmental commitments. We have seen some incredible highs, such as Children’s Services being rated as ‘Outstanding’, but we have also experienced challenges, much like families across the county - and we know that, unfortunately, things are not going to get any easier. So, we are working hard to ensure we are a robust and resilient authority for years to come - including launching our internal Workplace Strategy earlier this year to improve, modernise and rethink how we work, to ensure we can continue to meet the needs of our services and employees.

# Foreword



Sadly, we lost our Monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, this year. We came together to pay our respects and published tributes from our leadership team, opened a book of condolence, and arranged a proclamation ceremony and local floral tribute.

The dedication of our 8,000 colleagues and excellent partners has been key to our achievements and we are confident that we are in a really good place to prioritise what matters most to our residents and make sure Hertfordshire remains the County of Opportunity.

  
Richard Roberts  
Leader

  
Owen Mapley  
Chief Executive

# Our vision

Hertfordshire has long been the county of opportunity, recognised as a great place to live, work, learn and do business.

Hertfordshire will continue to be the county of opportunity for all; a place where our people thrive, our places prosper, and our planet is protected. To achieve this, our vision is to create a cleaner, greener and healthier county.



Our vision is outlined in our [Corporate Plan](#), which was launched in 2022. This centres around the following four priorities:

- A cleaner and greener environment
- Healthy and fulfilling lives for our residents
- Sustainable, responsible growth in our county
- Providing excellent services for all

Find out more about our key priorities in this [video message from Cllr Richard Roberts](#), Leader of Hertfordshire County Council.

We know we cannot achieve our vision alone – we must all work together to achieve this bright future for our county. By harnessing the resilience and strength of Hertfordshire’s people, places and businesses, and working closely with our local partners, together we can create a more inclusive and productive county, where everyone, regardless of their circumstances, has the opportunity to succeed.

Each year, our Annual Report outlines the progress against our key priorities.



# How is my council tax spent?

## 2023/24 Revenue Budget Figures

We spend one billion pounds every year to deliver over 500 county council services, which benefit every resident, business and community in Hertfordshire.

We understand that times continue to be difficult for everyone due to the rising cost of living, and we're working with more people who need our support than ever before. Every penny of your council tax contributes towards delivering excellent council services for all and looking after those who need us most.

### Did you know?

We spend over a million pounds a day providing care to adults that require our support.



**£84m** Keeping Hertfordshire moving

Your money goes towards maintaining 3,200 miles of road, including fixing 21,000 potholes every year. We also manage over 1,000 different kinds of maintenance and improvement works, to support the county and keep Hertfordshire moving.



**£89m** Community services for every stage of life

Our libraries continue to see an increase in visitors, who borrow around five million items each year. We register 18,000 births and deaths annually and run important statutory and legal services for our 1.2 million residents. We also support the building and maintenance of care homes, schools, bridges and roads.



**£225m** Supporting children and young people

We support almost 300,000 children and young people by providing them with early years education, a place at a good school and we're currently supporting over 11,000 children and young people to help meet their special educational needs. Over 900 children and young people are in our care at any one time, and we've also developed pioneering safeguarding models to return many of them safely to their families.



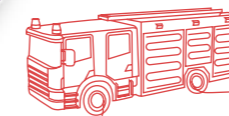
**£58m** A cleaner and greener county

We fund the treatment of 534,000 tonnes of waste each year, and more than half is recycled. We maintain over 2,000 miles of footpaths, bridleways and byways, and improve over 50 green spaces, rivers and woodlands. We're also helping to establish 1.8 million trees and working to make our operations carbon neutral by 2030.



**£443m** Caring for adults

Your money helps us provide essential care services to over 30,000 adults every year. We've assisted over 14,000 residents to leave hospital this year and we've invested over £38 million to improve care workers' pay. This investment allows 9,500 residents to stay safe and independent at home for longer.



**£43m** Protecting our communities

We provide a fire and rescue service that responds to 10,000 emergency calls each year, a resilience team that prepare us for major incidents, and a Trading Standards team who deals with around 7,000 complaints about dodgy dealers, counterfeit products and scams annually.



**£52m** A healthy Hertfordshire

Our services help people to make healthy choices and lifestyle changes, reducing their risk of long-term illness and helping them to live a long life well. From checking the weight and development of every child born in the county, to working with over 600 schools to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases such as Strep A.

### Did you know?

We are spending £102 million this year from the county council's capital budget on the county's highways, including on more than 1,000 maintenance and improvement schemes across Hertfordshire's 3,200 miles of roads and 3,500 miles of pavements and cycleways.

# A cleaner and greener environment

Protecting and improving our environment is integral to Hertfordshire's long-term prosperity. We are taking care of our environment through the following objectives:

- Environmental leadership
- Accessible and biodiverse green spaces
- Inspire a sustainable county
- Minimise waste

Hertfordshire County Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, and the [Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy and Action Plan](#) were prepared following this declaration.

The Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy was reviewed this year, alongside the preparation of an updated Programme Plan for the delivery of the three, cross-cutting county council ambitions for 2030: carbon neutral in our own operations, enhancing nature on our own land by 20% and cleaner air for all. We will continue to work to deliver the other internal sustainable 'business as usual' ambitions. The delivery of our external ambitions, such as a county-wide reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and resource efficiency, are being delivered via the [Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership](#) and [East of England LGA Climate Change Forum](#).



## Strengthening our recycling centres network

As part of our commitment to minimising waste, we support our residents to reduce what they throw away and increase recycling and reuse. The 16 recycling centres in the county manage approximately 80,000 tonnes of waste from around 1.5 million visitors per annum. We segregate up to 33 different materials for recycling, reuse, or recovery. The introduction of nine new compaction machines has reduced the number of miles travelled by heavy goods vehicles carrying waste by around 28,000 miles, and the fleet runs on hydrogenated vegetable oil. This reduces carbon emissions by over 700 tonnes each year. Due to the success of this work, a further three machines were ordered and are now on site.

In May 2023, a new modern Welwyn Garden City recycling centre opened, offering access seven days a week all year round. The new 'supersite' provides a split-level design system, making it easier for visitors to dispose of their items. New features and site enhancements include reduced queueing, a new reuse shop for donations and purchases of good quality items, and a business waste drop-off service following the successful pilot in Ware, which provides an opportunity for businesses in the county to compliantly dispose and recycle their waste at competitive rates. Further recycling centre improvements are planned later in 2023/24, with planning applications due to be submitted for the Bishops Stortford and Berkhamsted recycling centres.



## Delivering our Tree and Woodland Strategy

In 2023 the number of trees planted across Hertfordshire, supported by the county council, passed 211,000. This takes us towards our ambition to help plant 1.8 million trees by 2030, as outlined in our [Tree and Woodland Strategy](#). In March 2023, we concluded our coordination of Hertfordshire’s contribution to the Queen’s Green Canopy national initiative. This resulted in more than 100,000 trees planted across the county by schools, councils, community groups and private landowners.

The success of the 2022 [Your Tree Our Future](#) campaign – which saw almost 47,000 free trees given to Hertfordshire’s residents – has been surpassed by the campaign’s second year. We have already received requests for another 67,000 trees which will be available for residents to collect and plant this winter.

We collaborated with district and borough councils to secure nearly £80,000 from the Local Authority Treescape Fund which has resulted in around 6,500 trees planted on council land across the county. Finally, in 2023 we launched a new [Environmental Improvement Grant](#) which is designed to support small projects, including tree planting, that will help deliver on the ambitions within our [Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy](#).



## Delivering resilient services in extreme weather

As part of our commitment to demonstrate environmental leadership in the county, it is important that our services are ready and resilient in the face of extreme weather.

Tuesday 19 July 2022 was one of the busiest days in the history of Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS). The record-breaking high temperatures resulted in an unprecedented number of 999 calls and crews having to respond to a large number of incidents. In the course of that day, Fire Control took over 450 calls and, at its peak between 5pm and 6pm, control staff were taking a call every 13 seconds. The strength of the East Coast and Hertfordshire Collaboration partnership was evident, with 32 of the calls answered by HFRS Control linked to incidents not in Hertfordshire.

In testing circumstances, crews from across the county responded to an unrelenting stream of large-scale incidents including road traffic collisions, fires close to major motorways, as well as crop fires and field fires. In the six-week period from 4 July to 15 August 2022, our services responded to a total of 871 fires. To put this into context, during the same period in 2021 which was also busy, the service dealt with 248 fires in total. The service also continued to be severely tested throughout the July and August heatwaves.



# Hertfordshire's first net zero carbon school

Recently opened in September 2023, Buntingford First School is the first net zero carbon school for Hertfordshire County Council, providing school places for 300 pupils, plus a 30-place nursery.

This is being achieved by balancing the emissions produced by the project, with its removal through careful design and consideration.

Key performance and sustainability targets were set at the start of the project, which have been achieved through measures such as: installing over 611m<sup>2</sup> of solar panels alongside triple-glazed windows; choosing low carbon construction materials, enabling a

*Did you know?*  
Over 91% of Hertfordshire schools were rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted as of 31 March 2023.

reduction in approximately 200 tonnes of carbon, which is equivalent to heating 75 homes in the UK for an entire year. Since the declaration of a climate change emergency in Hertfordshire, all new school developments have adopted design specifications to deliver new buildings to net zero carbon in operation standards, with Avanti Brook Primary School in Bishops Stortford and the Valley Special School in Stevenage also due to open in 2023.



# Healthy and fulfilling lives for our residents

By ensuring healthy and fulfilling lives for our residents, Hertfordshire will continue to prosper. To do this, we have five aims:

- Support to live independently
- Every child to have the best start in life
- Everyone kept safe from harm
- Inclusive and safe communities
- Opportunity to live life well

The Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System (ICS) has been in place for a year. The ICS is made up of two key elements – the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Partnership (ICP), the latter of which is chaired by the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council and brings together a broad range of organisations involved with improving the health and care services of the population.

The Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Partnership has developed an ambitious 10-year [Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Strategy \(2023 - 2033\)](#) with a focus on improving health and care through early help and prevention. The delivery plan sets out key actions that partners across the system will take to deliver the ambitions set out in the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Strategy, with a particular focus on prevention and health inequalities.

Hertfordshire's Health and Wellbeing Board, which is chaired by the Deputy Leader of Hertfordshire County Council and brings together partners such as NHS organisations, district councils, the voluntary sector, and others, has also refreshed its [Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 - 2026](#). The Board supports joined-up working at a local level across health and care organisations and sets strategic direction for integration, to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in Hertfordshire.

We also recognise the challenges our residents and businesses are facing with the increased cost of living, and we are continuously working with partners to support residents through this. For instance, our Money Advice Unit has provided advice, assistance and advocacy on benefits for over 5,000 local residents, resulting in benefit gains of over £22 million.

## Supporting adult community learning through Step2Skills



Our Step2Skills service provides opportunities for adults in Hertfordshire to get involved in learning and employment. This includes work such as the Neurodiversity at Work Project, the Building Better Opportunities Project, and the Inclusive Employment Project to support people with learning difficulties, disabilities and other barriers to accessing work and education. Step2Skills also organise inclusive employment job fairs to help match employers with people with learning disabilities. The latest Inclusive Employment Job Fair in Watford was a tremendous success, with 32 employers exhibiting, over 600 visitors, 46 job offers to people with disabilities, one supported internship agreed and four local employers signing up to the Disability Confident Scheme.

“When Zac met Andrew from Step2Skills he'd had a couple of unsuccessful work tasters, which had knocked his confidence. We set up a couple of voluntary placements ourselves, which he enjoyed, but he wanted the same as everyone else, to be paid for doing a job. At the start of the pandemic Andrew kept Zac engaged with the world of work with regular virtual meetings and phone calls. He helped Zac re-do his CV and facilitated some virtual interview training. Following a work taster, Zac is now on a permanent contract and is loving his job. We have seen Zac grow in confidence and he now feels he has value and status in the community. We are so proud of him.”

Zac's parents



## Trading Standards' work to seize illegal vapes and underage selling

Our Trading Standards team work to protect children and young people from the harm associated with illegal tobacco products and nicotine inhaling devices, also known as 'vapes'.

Alongside the country-wide issue of underage sales, there is also the widely identified issue of non-compliant and illegal vapes. These non-compliances range from containing excessive levels of nicotine to being counterfeit versions of well-known vaping brands. Some illegal products have been found to contain very high levels of metals such as lead, chromium, and nickel which are dangerous to human health.

Last year, our Trading Standards team seized approximately 14,000 illegal vapes. Working with partners, Trading Standards have also been working to stop the sale of illicit cigarettes and tobacco products. Like vapes, these are sold at lower prices, making them more readily available to young people. Where illicit cigarettes and tobacco are discovered, these products are now frequently found hidden in elaborate mechanical concealments within walls, ceilings, and even concrete floors, as well as vehicles. Last year, Trading Standards seized over 55,000 cigarettes, over 21kg of hand rolling tobacco and over 150 packets of other tobacco products.



## Supporting the health and wellbeing of our Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities

A Health Improvement Coordinator from our Mental Health and Suicide Prevention team has been working specifically with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people living in Hertfordshire since January 2022. As part of this, our services have been working with GATE Herts; a community organisation for Gypsy, Roma and Travellers. Research shows that people from these communities are at least six times more at risk of suicide than the general population; this becomes seven times higher for males.

The aim of this work has been to promote mental health and wellbeing by raising awareness of support available, and has also allowed us to address some of the discrimination people from these communities face, challenge stereotypes and work together. Some of the projects and events we have recently arranged and supported include: a World Suicide Prevention Day event, floristry sessions to help bring people together and create a space to share stories and experiences, museum trips to celebrate culture and heritage, dance and wellbeing sessions, and a series of interviews carried out with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people to understand their thoughts and needs around mental health and wellbeing.



## Improving the experiences of Hertfordshire's care leavers

Over the past year we have worked closely with the Children in Care Council as part of our co-production work, to improve the lives of children looked after (CLA) and care leavers, who have been involved in the co-production of strategies such as the [Exciting Life Changing Corporate Parenting Strategy](#), and the internal 2022-2023 Service Development Plan.

Some of the recent work we have implemented includes increasing the number of care leavers accessing education, employment, and training through services such as the Care Leaver Hub. We are also continuing the work of Project Positive for a second year, which aims to raise the aspirations of children in care and reduce the stigma associated with care leavers applying for jobs. To date, 51 children looked after and care leavers have been supported by this pilot. Strategic and Operational working groups have been set-up to target young people not in education, employment, or training.

Our Ohana service provides a free support group for young parents who are in care or who are a care leaver and 41 young parents are now involved. National Lottery funding has also been secured to create a volunteer programme, which will offer one to one support to the most vulnerable care leavers. We have improved care leavers' emotional health by offering support at different levels, via self-help routes, access to Adult Mental Health Services and working with charitable organisations.

We have also worked to support care leavers to manage the cost of living through measures such as:

- Access to the Family Support Fund
- Access to a resource booklet, including budgeting support
- Opportunities to attend Christmas events – 150 care leavers received a Christmas bag and a further 50 care leavers received a Christmas Day bag all of which had a cost of living theme.



## Preventing falls in the home through slipper swaps in libraries

Our Library and Adult Care Services have been working to deliver 'slipper swaps' across libraries in Hertfordshire for residents at risk of falls. Old slippers can cause trips and falls, often leading to a costly stay in hospital, and a loss of confidence. As well as giving out 395 pairs of slippers during the 2022 campaign, these annual slipper swap events have provided warm spaces over the winter to help residents manage the cost of living, and we are planning to hold more events this coming winter. At each event, occupational therapists were on hand to offer advice on fall prevention, and other health and wellbeing charities and organisations have also attended to offer help and advice to residents. We also handed out bags consisting of blankets, woolly hats and socks, cuppa soups and other items from Small Acts of Kindness, a local charity.

"A lady stopped me in the library yesterday to thank me for the slippers we gave to her mum, and to thank us for the Falls Prevention leaflet as well. Apparently, she visited her mum the other day and

found that she'd had a fall but was able to use the information from reading the leaflet to deal with the situation and get her up on her feet. She was really grateful to us and extremely positive about the library."

Harpenden Library Manager

### Did you know?

Last year, our libraries welcomed over 5.2 million visitors and issued over 5.6 million items.



## Supporting residents' mental wellbeing through physical activity

Over the last year, our Public Health Services have funded 15 local voluntary and community groups to deliver physical activity sessions to improve the mental wellbeing of Hertfordshire residents, with activities ranging from football and yoga to gardening and Nordic walking.



The programme delivered over 500 sessions and engaged more than 600 individuals, having a strong impact on residents in Hertfordshire such as the case study below:

WC, who was unemployed and experiencing depression, was encouraged by his wife to get involved with activities outside of the home. He visited the South Hill Centre in Hemel Hempstead and became engaged in the South Hill Centre Gets Active programme and other offerings. Participating in these activities had a significant positive impact on his physical and mental wellbeing, to the point where he continued exercising outside of the organised sessions. Witnessing his children's boredom, WC was inspired to take them to the park and engage in exercise together. He remains an active participant at the South Hill Centre, maintaining his own active lifestyle and involving his family. WC expressed feeling more active, a better father, and a more attentive partner. He has regained his confidence, secured paid employment, and expanded his social connections.

## An update on Homes for Ukraine

Since March 2022, Hertfordshire has welcomed 2,100 Ukrainian refugees into the county, sponsored by over 1,000 hosts.

Over half of the guests have already left the scheme, either moving on to private rented accommodation, returning to Ukraine, or travelling to other countries; we now have under 880 guests supported by just under 400 hosts.

The majority of guests have integrated into the community extremely well, with many already in work and the children established in schools. A recent survey of guests and sponsors\* established that:



- 85% of guests feel their current hosting arrangement is going well
- 65% of guests are in employment
- 82% of guests said they are connected with the local Ukrainian (and Ukrainian supporting) community in their local area

This year the Homes for Ukraine team have focussed on supporting guests to find their own accommodation with support from the Citizen's Advice Bureau and our district and borough council colleagues.

We are also supporting existing sponsors, and recruiting new sponsors for guests who are moving on from their original hosts for various reasons.

We are utilising central government grants to supplement the government's monthly payments to sponsors to help with the increased cost of living. We are also offering additional winter payments to offset the increase in energy charges.

We will continue to work hard with partners to support arrivals from countries such as Afghanistan and Ukraine to resettle in the UK.

[Further information on Ukraine support in Hertfordshire, including guidance for sponsors, can be found on our website.](#)

\*Based on 282 responses

# Sustainable, responsible growth in our county

Our ambition is to ensure that growth in Hertfordshire benefits all of our residents. To achieve this, we will be both community and economy focused, working with partners across Hertfordshire to implement solutions that will benefit our county for years to come. We are driven by the following ambitions:

- Infrastructure that meets the needs of our communities
- Well-designed communities
- Strong economy
- Employment opportunities for all

Established since 2018, the [Hertfordshire Growth Board](#) is chaired by the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council, and is made up of the 10 district and borough councils, the Independent Chair of the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Systems, Homes England, the Chair of the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

In the past 12 months, the Growth Board, working with the Local Enterprise Partnership, has launched a dedicated film and TV office to capitalise on the growth of this sector within Hertfordshire, developed and published a guide to off-site manufacturing, secured seed funding for high street support helping to revive town centres after the pandemic, implemented a temporary accommodation predictive model to help residents in need of accommodation, and are in the process of developing two joint strategic plans to support infrastructure developments across the county.

Now in its sixth year, the Growth Board is reviewing and refreshing its priorities. The board will prioritise inclusive and sustainable growth that benefits all of Hertfordshire's residents, businesses and communities responding to the key challenges facing the county in relation to:

- Housing (affordable and good quality)
- Transport connectivity
- Economy (access to skills, good jobs and growing key sectors)
- Healthy and active environments
- Digital connectivity
- Climate Change

The Growth Board will develop a Hertfordshire vision that will help in shaping our county for the next 10-15 years, working collaboratively to deliver a sustainable, successful Hertfordshire.

## Sustainable, walking and cycling schemes in Welwyn Garden City

We have delivered several significant cycling, walking and wheeling schemes as part of the Active Travel Fund in the past 12 months. The recent works that are taking place in Welwyn Garden City aim to create a sustainable and healthy environment for all. Data from our surveys show that the biggest barrier to cycling is the fear of road danger, and segregated cycle lanes are the key to providing safe cycling.

Schemes such as the cycle lane across Hunter's Bridge and works on Digswell Park Road help to provide safe and efficient routes for cyclists and pedestrians to commute, exercise, or simply enjoy leisurely rides. The latter route also provides a significant connection point for several schools, helping their students to travel sustainably. Public spaces such as the Stonehills Public Realm Improvements have revitalized one of Welwyn Garden City's central areas, creating an inviting space for residents to gather and participate in community events.

This enhancement of the safe cycling infrastructure and city centre areas will contribute to healthier residents and reduced traffic pollution, creating a more enjoyable place to be, which in the long term will add to the vibrancy and economy of Welwyn Garden City. In order to promote these benefits, we will be organising a series of events in the town, starting in September 2023.



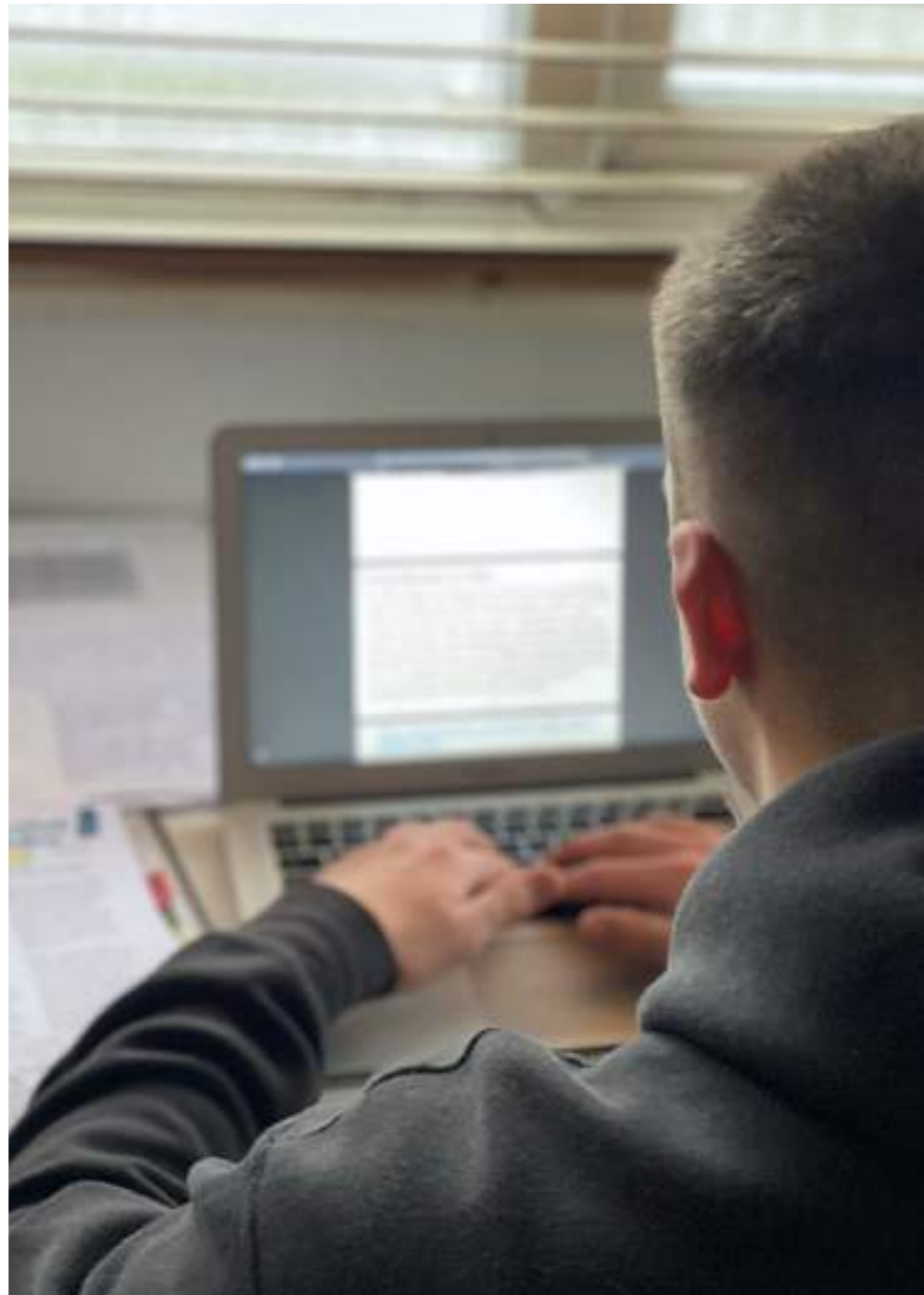
## Towards Digital Growth

The Towards Digital Growth programme is jointly funded by Hertfordshire County Council, the county's Growth Board and Local Enterprise Partnership. The programme is targeting commercial and public investment to improve broadband and mobile telecoms provision across the county.

The programme was created to build upon our success with the Connected Counties broadband programme, which upgraded more than 54,000 superfast broadband connections across Hertfordshire, with around 80% of these connections already taken up.

We are working closely with Building Digital UK on Project Gigabit and developing plans to roll out a substantial number of gigabit capable connections up to 1,000mbps, with a particular focus on delivering in the harder-to-reach areas.

Alongside this, the programme has been awarded a £400,000 grant for topping up the Gigabit Voucher scheme in the county which will benefit rural connectivity, as well as investigating and developing a number of workstreams to improve connectivity and reduce digital exclusion in Hertfordshire.



## Harlow-Gilston Garden Town regeneration

In the last year, we have been working closely with partners to progress ambitions for sustainable developments such as the regeneration of Harlow-Gilston Garden Town.

Plans allocated as part of this adds up to a total of about 24,000 new homes over the next twenty years. Central government have given Harlow 'garden town' status to reflect the scale of this ambitious growth agenda and the aim to shift towards walking, cycling and public transport for a more sustainable Hertfordshire.



The Gilston planning applications for 10,000 homes were approved by East Herts Council in Spring 2023, subject to legal agreement, and include significant provision of new schools, libraries, public transport and community facilities to provide infrastructure that meets the needs of our growing county. To help deliver these plans, we have entered into a £171 million contract with Homes England, to build new bridges and link roads and keep the county moving.

We are also in the process of creating a joint committee with Essex County Council, East Herts, Epping Forest and Harlow councils to oversee the entire programme of Harlow-Gilston Garden Town activity and to ensure that there is regular communication and public transparency at each stage of the process.

Sustainable, responsible growth in our county



# £29.7 million secured for the county's Bus Service Improvement Plan

In 2021, the government released a new strategy aiming to improve bus services in England. Our existing Enhanced Partnership (the first in the country) in Hertfordshire means that we have been able to build on our existing ambitions through the development of our Bus Service Improvement Plan. In April 2022, the Bus Service Improvement Plan was able to secure funding of £29.7 million in total for the delivery of the plan, which will be delivered over three years.

As well as aiming to grow the number of people using the county's buses and helping to aid post-pandemic recovery, the plan will focus on how more can be achieved if more resources are dedicated to bus services. The first deliverables of the Bus Service Improvement Plan commenced over recent months, which was focused on the launch of a new route connecting Stevenage and Hertford, the extension of the existing HertsLynx service into a late-night service on Fridays and Saturdays, as well as a 15% reduction in the price of the Explorer and Busnet tickets.

The second year of the plan's funding will be focused on fares and ticketing schemes, with the launch of a refreshed ticketing app which will provide a journey planner with real-time information and new SaverCard products, enabling wider choice and better fares for residents.

To monitor the progress of schemes and to keep on track with the Bus Service Improvement Plan's objectives and progress please visit the [Intalink website](#) for updates.



# Excellent council services for all

The previous sections have set out how we are looking to deliver our vision of a cleaner, greener and healthier Hertfordshire. In delivering on our commitments, we will adopt and demonstrate the following principles:

- Collaborative leadership
- Citizen focus
- Embrace diversity
- Modern and innovative
- Investing in our staff

## Did you know?

Our Children's Services are rated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.



## Investing in our Gateway to Children's Services

Our Children's Services gateway provides a single point of contact for all families, residents and professionals to request help for families or report safeguarding concerns for a child.

Our services which provide the first point of contact to residents ('front door' services) have seen a growth in demand, against a backdrop of increasingly insufficient resources and recruitment challenges. This led to approval in June 2022 for the Gateway to be transformed. We committed an additional £577,450 per annum that was used for staffing.

The first phase of this transformation project involved a review of immediate service needs and pressures, while phase two was focused on stabilising front door services whilst the re-design work was underway. The third and final phase concluded in summer 2023, which involved Children's Services staff moving into the new design model and a recruitment campaign was launched to fill new positions.

As a result, the transformation of our front door services, the Gateway, has supported timely and high-quality service delivery for Hertfordshire's children, young people and families.

Excellent council services for all



## A challenging winter for our Highways Services

Over recent years the general condition of the county's roads has improved significantly as a result of extra investment in a resurfacing programme targeting local residential roads. However, the most recent winter was particularly challenging for our road repairs services, who worked hard to repair the increased potholes across the county due to the prolonged cold and wet weather. December 2022 saw the first significant snowfall across Hertfordshire since 2018, with road surface temperatures below zero for 12 consecutive days. This 12-day period accounted for just over 25% of the entire winter season's gritting activity. January 2023 also saw a second severe cold snap, with road surface temperatures well below zero for multiple days once again.

Our winter self-help scheme launched in September 2022 resulted in 4,778 bags of salt being delivered to schools, residents' groups and local town, parish, district and borough councils. Following last year's winter conditions, it is anticipated that there could be an increase in free salt requests for the coming season, and similar support is planned for the coming winter.



## Further funding to protect and repair our roads

We have pledged to double the number of potholes fixed and protect roads from damage before the next winter, using new multi-million-pound funding. Road surfaces across the country have suffered exceptional damage this year due to snow and ice during the winter followed by heavy rainfall in the spring, resulting in an increase in potholes.

The allocation of nearly £4 million from the government's Pothole Fund will fund up to 20,000 additional pothole repairs across the county, taking the total number of repairs to an expected 40,000 this year. We will also replace or protect existing surfaces on hundreds of roads across Hertfordshire to extend their lifespan and head off thousands of further potholes from developing. This will see more than one million square metres of road treated – the equivalent of 140 football pitches. We have also begun using Roadmender asphalt to repair our roads, which is made from recycled tyres that would otherwise have been incinerated. Roadmender allows us to save 80% on materials, 80% on energy, and we can make the repairs four times quicker. Planned works for the current year include repairs and maintenance to pavements, roads, bridges and traffic signals, as well as improvements such as tackling safety problems, reducing traffic congestion, and making walking and cycling more practical and attractive.





## Diversity and inclusion

At Hertfordshire County Council, we are committed to ensuring diversity and inclusion is part of our DNA, and the 2021 census results evidenced that Hertfordshire has become more diverse in recent years.

We've chosen some notable examples of how we are progressing our [Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-24](#) – there are many others. Our work to provide inclusive services is only possible through our ongoing work with partners and the support of our communities.

## Easter and Summer Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAPpy)

Our Easter and summer holiday activity programmes made a big difference to the lives of young people, whose families may be struggling financially with the current cost of living. The programme is designed to counteract the triple inequalities faced by Hertfordshire's most disadvantaged young people – holiday hunger, physical inactivity, and social isolation. Sessions took place in all 10 districts across the holiday period, with a total of 202 sessions across all HAPpy 2022 projects. All sessions provided a range of free physical activities, learning opportunities and healthy meals for young people eligible for benefits-related free school meals.

Through a wide range of fun team building challenges, sports and problem-solving games, young people developed their interpersonal skills and adaptability. They also developed their cooking skills in the training kitchens at young people's centres, learning about the benefits of making meals

from scratch and increasing their knowledge of nutrition and healthy eating. They explored how having a healthy lifestyle is about more than eating well and exercising, but also encompasses maintaining good mental health, positive relationships and keeping themselves safe.

Many of the sessions were supported by local partners, for example, the charity Change Grow Live delivered interactive sessions on the physical and personal consequences of substance misuse. Police officers from Safer Neighbourhood teams came to discuss their roles and how they work with young people in the community. Herts Young Homeless led sessions which gave young people a better understanding of what it is like to live away from parents/carers and where to get support should they be faced with homelessness themselves.



## Fire and Rescue Services attend Muslim Scout Fellowship event

The annual Muslim Scout Fellowship event was held in Cuffley in July 2022 to cover all Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, Brownies, and Guides for the whole of the South of England. Our Fire and Rescue Services attended, and operational crews delivered fire safety messaging and explained what it is like to be a firefighter. This helped the fire service to engage with communities who may be less likely to access our services or consider it as a career option.



## Quiet hours at fire station open days

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue have been providing 'quiet hours' at some of their station open days to cater for people with neurodiverse conditions. Public events like a fire station open day can be an overwhelming experience for those who are neurodivergent, due to stimuli like loud noises, flashing lights and temperatures. In June 2022, Borehamwood Fire Station held a 'quiet hour' during one of their station open days, which included things like; a sensory area within the bays including yoga balls, a mat with different textures to walk on, beanbags; and a breakout area.

Approximately 100 people attended the hour-long session with their carers/parents. Making the event more inclusive for residents helped ensure vital safety messaging could be delivered and that awareness could be raised of the variety of career options within the service.



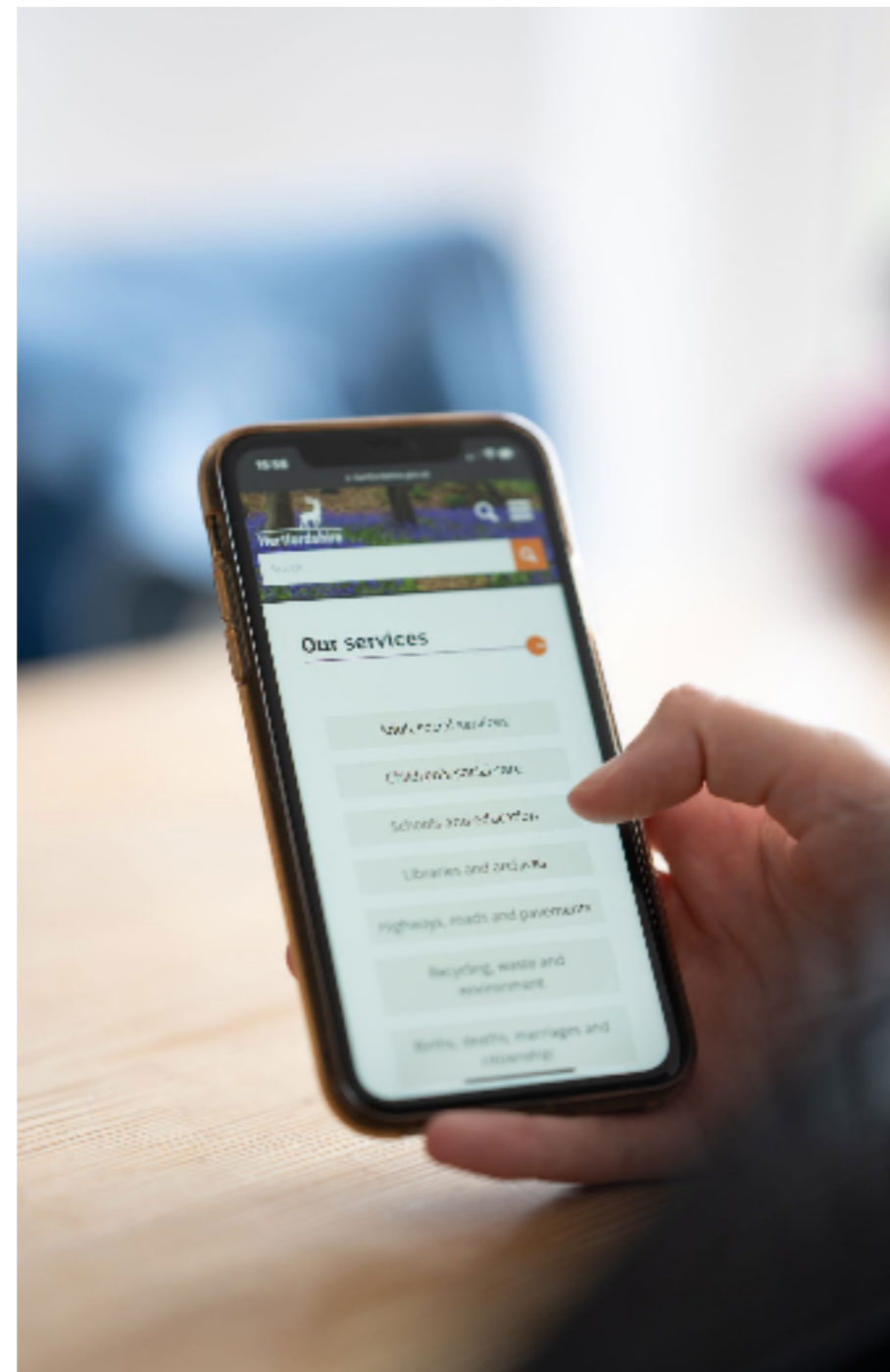
## Supporting our residents through modern assistive technology

We understand the vital role that modern technology will have in meeting future challenges in areas such as Adult Social Care.

Over the last couple of years, we have been conducting a pilot on the use of assistive technology.

The results of the pilot study have provided sufficient evidence to support the incorporation of assistive technology into business as usual over the next year. Assistive technology has been shown to help maintain or improve some people's independence and can support people to remain at home for as long as they are safe to do so. An additional £1.8 million has been allocated to further develop this approach across Hertfordshire.

A key part of supporting residents to live healthy, fulfilling lives is in offering choice in the way they are supported. David had been diagnosed with dementia and had experienced several falls during periods of ill health, some of which required hospital admission. Whilst David's family supported his wish to remain at home and be as independent as possible, they had some concerns. After hearing about assistive technology and other options for support during a care assessment, David chose to have assistive technology installed at home and a carer to visit daily. The data from sensors provided information on David's normal routine and highlighted when there was a change. These changes generate alerts which prompt staff to check in with David and his family in a timely way and allow appropriate action to be taken, providing reassurance for David's family and early contact by Adult Social Care Services when required.



# Our finances

As a county council, in the last year we faced significant financial pressures from the impact of inflation on services. Despite this, we responded to these issues, managing our budget within the funding available while supporting Hertfordshire residents through the cost of living.

This strong financial management has meant the county council has been able to continue to support the most vulnerable in our communities through a financial year that has been one of the most turbulent in recent history. Within weeks of the budget being approved in February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, creating turmoil in all economies across the globe. Inflation ran in excess of 10% for most of the year, with massive increases in the price of energy and other materials and services. In the UK, this impacted households, businesses and public sector organisations, across the country.

We also made financial commitments to tackle:

- A significantly higher number of requests for financial support than in previous years increasing from 9,603 in 21/22 to 15,475 in 22/23
- A 14% increase in new requests for support (30,099) in Adult Care Services, compared to pre-Covid (and the highest number experienced by the authority)
- A continued high number of referrals into Children’s Social Care compared with pre-pandemic numbers (throughout the year the county council received between 240-250 referrals per 10,000 compared with the 2019/20 rate of 197.3)
- Increasing Adult Mental Health referrals from the previous year
- Increase in demand for Education Health and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) which was 2,712 at the end of March 2023, an increase of 20.8% from the same point the previous year.

In total, our service operational budgets overspent by £11.7m in 2022/23. However, this overspend was more than offset by savings of £13.3m that were identified during the financial year.

### Did you know?

Over the last year, our customer call centre managed 450,000 calls and 320,000 emails and applications. We had over 7.5 million visits to our website.

Despite challenges, we have continued to target support to those most vulnerable and at risk. For 2022/23, a total package of £17m was delivered. This included:

- **Household Support Fund (£12m funded by government grant)**, supporting families with children eligible for Free School Meals (supermarket vouchers in holidays) and pensioners on pension credit whilst also providing funding for

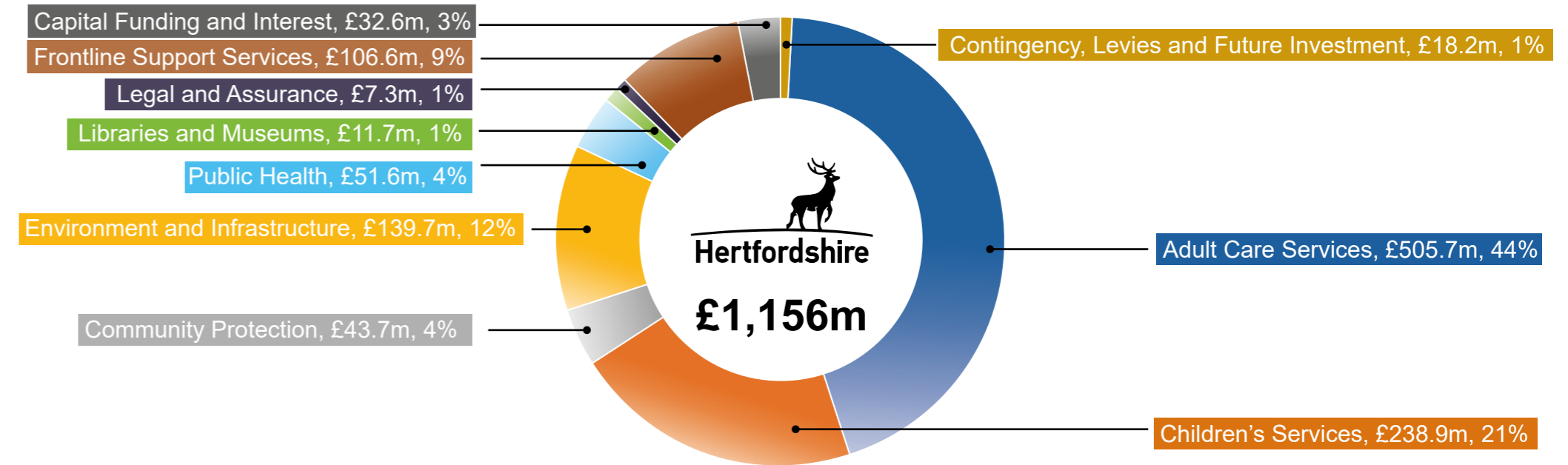
emergency response support schemes, food banks and other forms of direct support.

- **HAPpy Programme (£2.9m):** The Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAPpy) which provides holiday camps that are free to children and young people eligible for benefit-related Free School Meals.
- **Building Life Chances (£2.3m):** Part of

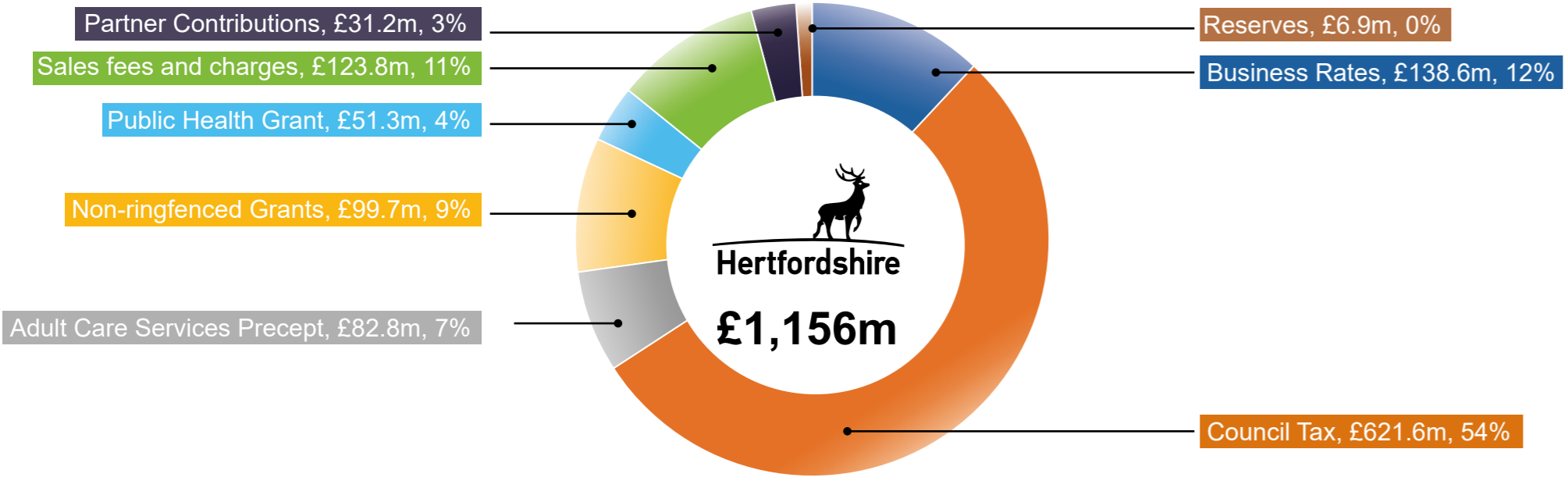
the COVID-19 recovery strategy response to the economic impact of pandemic. Projects are also relevant to the cost of living response.

- **Coming Back Stronger (£0.7m):** The Coming Back Stronger programme of activities works with schools to support children’s social, emotional and mental health needs and to support vulnerable learners.

2022/23 Gross Budget by Spending Area



**2022/23 Revenue Funding Breakdown**



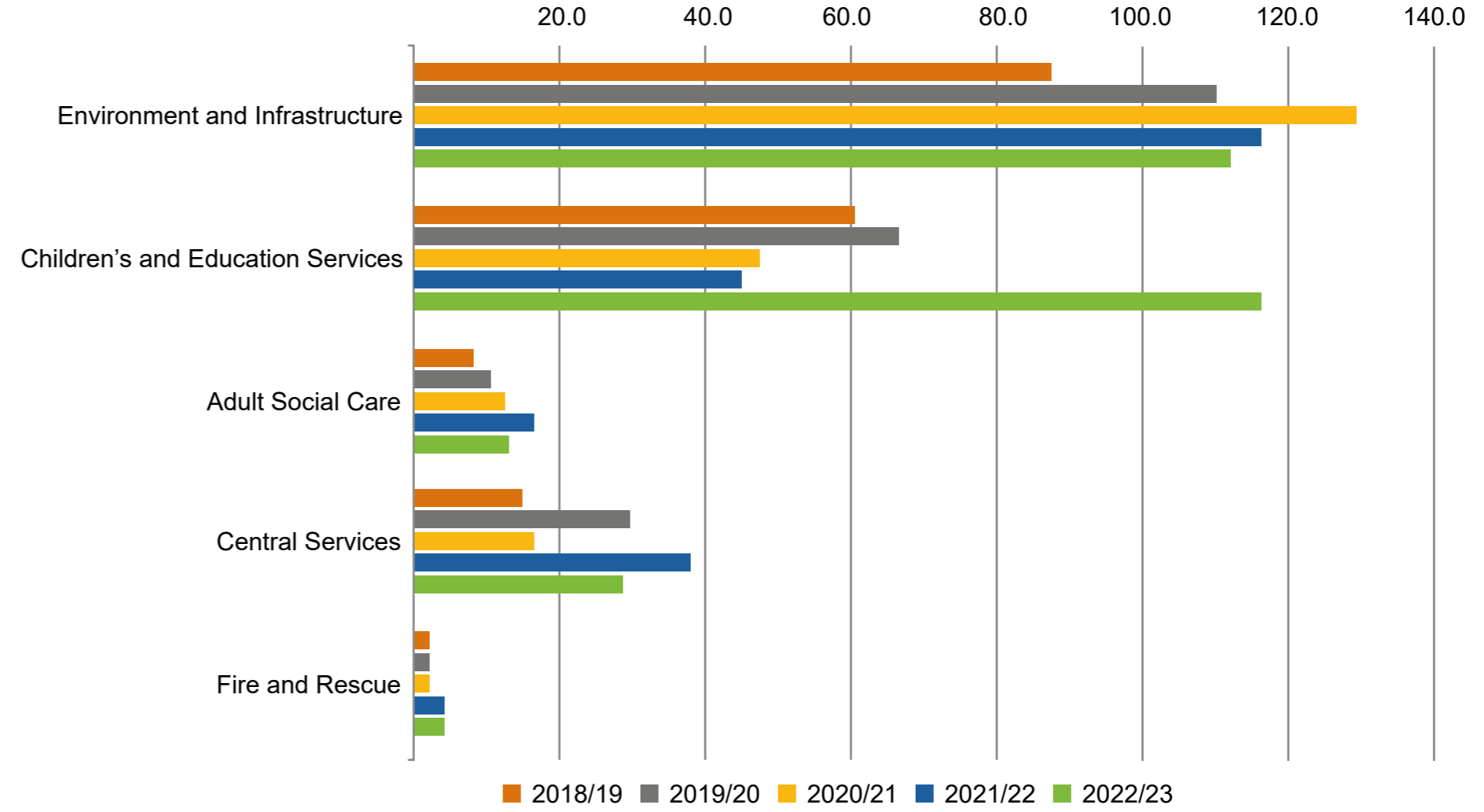
The capital programme for the year 2022/23 saw investment of £274m in the infrastructure of the county, the highest on record and delivered with specific emphasis on highways and schools expansion. Notable schemes include:

- £86m investment in the highways network, including maintenance of carriageways, footways and bridges and investment in active travel schemes.
- £66m on the construction of new schools in Bishop's Stortford and Buntingford and the expansion of existing schools across the county to meet the demand for additional school places.

- £19m on improving the condition of school buildings across the county.
- £13m on projects that support the delivery of the council's strategy for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including the provision of additional school places within the county.
- £10m on new highways infrastructure, including the A120 Little Hadham Bypass and A602 Improvements between Stevenage and Ware.

This is shown in the chart below, which provides comparator figures for previous years. Since April 2018 there has been £1.3 billion invested in Hertfordshire through the county council's capital investment programme.

**Capital Investment (£m)**



# The year ahead

We continue to operate in an uncertain environment. This includes high rates of inflation, fluctuations in interest rates and a finely balanced employment market, as well as high demand for county council services as our residents continue to face cost of living challenges.

At the same time, we will continue to work with our partners through the Hertfordshire Growth Board to prepare to sustainably accommodate over 100,000 new homes and jobs in the county over the next 15 years. We will continue to work with our partners through the Hertfordshire Growth Board to effectively plan and respond to the opportunities and challenges this will bring.

Likewise, through the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Partnership, we are committed to working with our health partners to make the county a healthier place to live and work.

As we look forward, our services continue to face various challenges and opportunities:

**Adult Care Services** will work towards ensuring the highest quality of care and support continues to be delivered to Hertfordshire residents. We shall work to ensure there is quality care practice in the wider care market, through effective work with the sector and implementation of new workforce strategies. We shall work with our key partners, including the NHS and Integrated Care System, to ensure we provide effective preventative support so that people can continue to live as independently as possible.

**Children's Services** will build on the positive outcome of the Outstanding rating from our January 2023 Ofsted inspection. We will continue to build capacity to enable our children looked after to remain closer to their homes, by increasing recruitment and retention of our foster carers and delivering additional residential places, and we are consulting on proposals for the re-design of our early help offer.

We will be investing £5 million ongoing funding to improve our support for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This will enable us to recruit up to 80 new frontline staff to allow us to meet our statutory SEND duties more effectively and over time, improve the quality and timeliness of our Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) so that children get the right support at the right time more consistently across Hertfordshire.

**Growth and Environment** will be focused on delivering bus improvements across the county, active travel improvements and opportunities, the [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#), sustainable and responsible growth, highway improvement programmes and green space improvements.

**Community Protection** will be preparing and consulting upon its next Community Risk Management Plan which will set out our Fire and Rescue Service's understanding of risk in the county and how we will manage it in the four years ahead. **Public Health** will continue to focus on improving the mental and physical health and wellbeing of residents and reducing health inequalities by offering localised and targeted support for those most in need.

**Resources** will continue to support the organisation to deliver its wider objectives alongside recruiting, retaining and supporting its valuable workforce and helping to manage the financial challenges the county council faces. We will be continuing to develop our [Digital Strategy](#), including looking at the automation of processes through the use of robotics and possible artificial intelligence and introducing new digital tools for our staff. A new library for Ware is also due to open in early 2024.





Creating a cleaner, greener,  
healthier Hertfordshire

Thanks to all colleagues, residents and organisations  
who feature in this publication.

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