

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CABINET – 3 SEPTEMBER 2024  
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**TOWN CENTRES AND NICER NEIGHBOURHOODS TASK FORCES**

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 In November 2023, Full Council unanimously agreed five key priorities for the Council for the next three years.
- 1.2 It should be noted that good progress has been made to deliver the commitments set out in these priorities and that regular progress updates are provided via monthly meetings with Cabinet portfolio holders and quarterly Performance Clinics.
- 1.3 The formation of the new Cabinet since May 2024 has given rise to an opportunity to build on the success of the business plan and identify any gaps to deliver the commitments set out in the Council priorities.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to set up two task forces on:
  - Town Centres
  - Nicer Neighbourhoods
- 1.5 It should be noted that the setting up of the task force does not change the Council's priorities and commitments already agreed, they seek to provide more support to the following priorities:
  - Enable an economy that delivers for everyone
  - Together, create opportunities for our communities

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the establishment of Town Centres and Nicer Neighbourhoods task forces as set out in sections 3.4 and 3.5 respectively.

**3 Explanation**

- 3.1 The Council's five priorities as agreed by Full Council in November 2023 are set out as follows:
  - Homes to be proud of
  - Enable an economy that delivers for everyone
  - Action on climate change
  - Run an effective council

- Together, create opportunities for our communities
- 3.2 The new Cabinet formed since May 2024 acknowledged that good progress has been made on the delivery of the business plan, however it also recognised two of the priorities will need more support, namely “Enable an economy that delivers for everyone” and “Together, create opportunities for our communities”.
- 3.3 The establishment of two Cabinet led task forces focusing on Town Centres and Nicer Neighbourhoods would provide the support required on the delivery of these two priorities.
- 3.4 **Town Centres Task Force**
- 3.4.1 This task force is to set to achieve the following objectives:
- To create vibrant, thriving and welcoming town centres
  - To improve the cleanliness, safety and attractiveness of our town centres
  - To support existing businesses of all sizes, and identify ways that we can attract new businesses to support the local economy
- 3.4.2 The task force will undertake to:
- Explore opportunities to create staffing resource with town centre remit as part of their job
  - Seek targeted actions to enhance the vitality of our town centres
  - Work to create a town centre strategy to ensure our town centres can meet future challenges
- 3.4.3 It is important to note that the following projects will continue to support the Council’s priority “Enable an economy that delivers for everyone”.
- Build on the success of the current regeneration plans and to deliver projects that enhance Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City town centres
  - Evaluate the impact of introduction of free parking on Sundays from April 2024 to inform future parking measures to support town centres.
  - Continue to engage with key partners such as Welwyn Garden City BID and police to ensure that we support each other’s activities
  - Evaluate existing town centres events, specialist markets, to ensure they are fit for purpose
  - Review the Council’s existing communication and promotion of all town centres events (including those that are not organised by the council) and implement any changes as necessary to ensure maximum reach, as appropriate
  - Evaluate existing engagement and communication with town centre businesses to ensure they are fit for purpose and to seek opportunities to encourage potential new businesses

- Review council's procurement strategy to support local businesses, as appropriate
- Continue to make positive changes to the town centres through horticultural and environmental projects, in particular, taking part in the Anglia in Bloom competition, which helps to promote a sense of pride of place.
- Working with the Police to tackle anti-social behaviour in our town centres
- Continue to maintain high occupancy rates of town centre units owned by the Council

### 3.5 **Nicer Neighbourhoods Task Force**

3.5.1 This task force is to set to achieve the following objectives:

- Neighbourhoods are clean, well kept, greener and safer
- Residents feel happier and proud of their neighbourhoods
- Residents are listened to and have opportunities to input in how their neighbourhoods can be improved

3.5.2 The task force will focus on the following emerging projects:

- Deliver two pilot areas within our housing estates that involves:
  - a) Working with tenants/leaseholders and our contractors to establish a nicer neighbourhood plan using existing resources
  - b) Deliver projects within the nicer neighbourhood plan
  - c) Evaluate the success of the plan to inform a wider improvement plan for our estates
- Under the Nicer Neighbourhood banner:
  - a) Develop a long term improvement plan on how we manage our housing estates

3.5.3 It is important to note that the following projects will continue to support the Council's priority "Together, create opportunities for our communities".

- Evaluate the impact of the new approach on environmental enforcement from September 2024, in particular in relation to fly-tipping, and make recommendations to improve the scheme as necessary
- Evaluate the impact of community events such as Hatfield Community Fair and Community catch up days
- Implement a resident satisfaction survey and create a follow-up action plan
- Review the existing work of Healthy Hub to ensure it is fit for purpose

- Review the Community and Stakeholder engagement strategy
- Create a cultural strategy and to seek funding opportunities to support activities to our museum services
- Continue to deliver the One Welwyn Hatfield Community Awards to ensure that we celebrate the good work of the community and to foster civic pride
- Continue to work with the police to ensure that their Safer Neighbourhood Plan reflects the priorities of the community
- Evaluate the impact on the recycling rate and the incidences of fly-tipping following the introduction of new recycling bring bank facilities across the borough

### **3.6 Governance of the Task Forces**

- 3.6.1 It is proposed that both of these task forces would be chaired by the Leader and that the Deputy Leader would be the Vice Chair.
- 3.6.2 Due to the level of funding cuts faced by the council since 2010, the projects set out in the task forces will be delivered using existing resources as much as possible. It is proposed that the Leader and Deputy Leader will receive regular briefing on the progress of these projects from the Chief Executive and that Cabinet will receive formal updates from officers at the quarterly Performance Clinics.
- 3.6.3 It is inevitable that new projects may be added in each of the task forces over time, if additional budget is required to deliver the projects, formal approval process will be sought in accordance with our Constitution and/or at the budget setting process, as appropriate.

### **Implications**

#### **4 Legal Implication(s)**

- 4.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation.

#### **5 Financial Implication(s)**

- 5.1 It is envisaged that the projects set out in sections 3.4 and 3.5 will be delivered using existing resources. If new projects are added at a later stage, and they require additional budget, appropriate approval will be sought in accordance with our Constitution.

#### **6 Risk Management Implications**

- 6.1 As with all projects, there are risks associated with the delivery of/not meeting the objectives set out in the task forces. But regular progress update will be provided to minimise this risk.

#### **7 Security and Terrorism Implication(s)**

7.1 There are no implications.

**8 Procurement Implication(s)**

8.1 There are no implications.

**9 Climate Change Implication(s)**

9.1 There are no implications.

**10 Human Resources Implication(s)**

10.1 There are no implications.

**11 Health and Wellbeing Implication(s)**

11.1 There are no implications.

**12 Communication and Engagement Implication(s)**

12.1 The establishment of the task forces, once approved by Cabinet, will be promoted via a press release.

**13 Link to Corporate Priorities**

13.1 The setting up of task forces will contribute to the following corporate priorities; “Enable an economy that delivers for everyone” and; “Together, create opportunities for our communities”.

**14 Equality and Diversity**

14.1 An EqIA was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

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