



We are

Hertfordshire County Council

**Annual Report
2023-2024**



Hertfordshire

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Foreword



In the past year we have celebrated our 50th anniversary as a County Council, marking half a century of dedicated service to our communities. We have also continued to navigate the complexities of an ongoing challenging environment for public services, with the cost of living and high demand for our services continuing to challenge how we deliver and support our communities.

In response, we have taken strategic steps towards organisational resourcing, addressing these funding challenges head-on and taking action to reshape our organisation to be fit for the future. In August 2024, we completed our office move to Stevenage, a decision made with the foresight of fostering a more dynamic and efficient working environment, whilst making savings for the organisation.



Our council's commitment to our residents has been recognised with a Good rating from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment for our Adult Care Services, a testament to our colleagues hard work, passion and commitment. However, the path has not been without its challenges. An inspection of Hertfordshire's Local Area Partnership for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in July 2023 has laid bare the pressing needs within our community. We are taking forward the learning from the inspection process and an action plan has been developed to address the priority actions identified, with significant progress having already been made.

At the end of March 2024, we bid farewell to our Chief Executive, Owen Mapley, and with great pleasure we have welcomed Angie Ridgwell at a critical time for public services in which we are experiencing a period of transition, both nationally and for us as a council, bringing with it new opportunities.

As we look to the horizon, we are poised to meet the challenges we face with innovative solutions, whilst continuing to put Hertfordshire residents at the centre of all we do.

Richard Roberts
Leader

Angie Ridgwell
Chief Executive

Our vision

We pride ourselves on Hertfordshire being the 'county of opportunity' - a place where people can thrive, places can prosper, and the planet is protected.

As the county council, we are responsible for delivering a range of vital services to the residents of Hertfordshire including adult social services; children's social care; schools and education; highways, roads and pavements; recycling, waste and environment; libraries and archives; local health services; business and trading standards; and fire and rescue. **Across all our services, we put our residents at the heart of all we do.**



Our [Corporate Plan](#) sets out our ambition to achieve four key priorities for residents:

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

We work closely with other local authorities, businesses, community groups, and service delivery partners to ensure that our county is a great place to live, work, and visit.

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



Our vision



Delivering our Corporate Plan

Key highlights 2023 - 2024

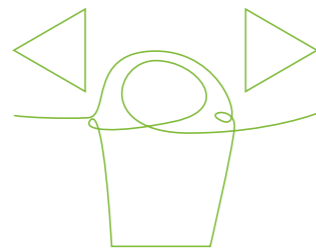
Cleaner and greener Hertfordshire



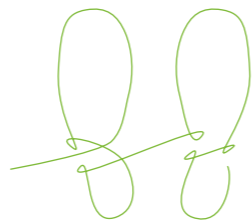
4.2kg of household waste reduced per household (2022/23)



51% recycled household waste (2022/23)



89% of waste diverted from landfill 2022/23



1.6 million estimated footfall at recycling centres

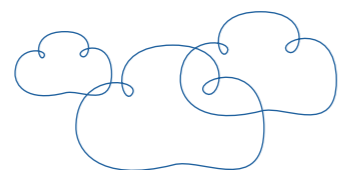


108 Green Spaces which have been improved

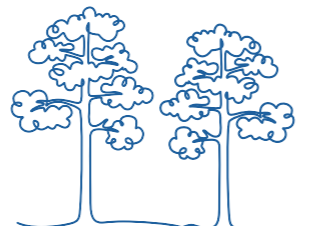
Sustainable, responsible growth in our county



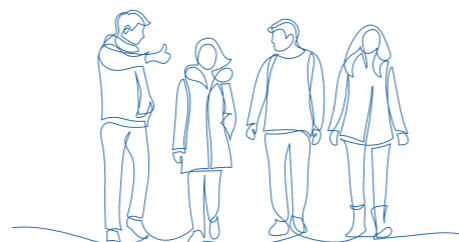
£91 million spent on new school buildings, land and modifications.



27% estimated reduction of Hertfordshire County Council's carbon emissions since 2019



115,983 trees planted or enabled to be planted



22% increase in participation of health walks

Health and fulfilling lives for our residents



38,700 SEND Children supported this year



14% increase in number of children and young people supported with **Education, Health and Care Plans**



15,827 people accessed **Healthy Hubs**



971 children in our care at the end of March 2024

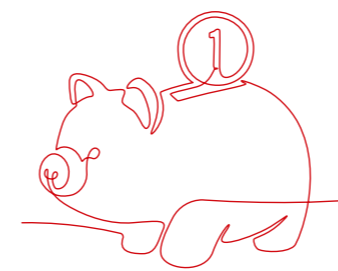


9,903 Safe and well Fire and Rescue visits to households



Over 47,000 adults provided with adult social care services

Providing excellent services for all



5,740 Money Advice Unit referrals (Adult Care Services)



80,501 households supported via the **Household Support Fund**



2.7m million library visits this year



74,000 potholes repaired by our Highways Team

More than 1,000 highways improvement and maintenance schemes delivered

How is my council tax spent?

2024/25 Revenue Budget Figures



£478m

Caring for adults

Your money helps us provide essential care and support to over 30,000 adults every year. We assisted over 18,000 residents to leave hospital in 2023/24 and we've invested £31m to fund an uplift in care provider fees. This investment allows over 10,000 residents to stay safe and independent at home for longer.



£54m

Keeping residents healthy

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. This includes checking the weight and development of every child born in the county and providing services that help residents to quit smoking and to access support for alcohol and substance misuse.

£80m

Keeping Hertfordshire moving

We look after 3,200 miles of roads, carrying out more than 1,000 maintenance and improvement schemes annually. We work on major projects such as recent improvements to the A602 between Stevenage and Ware, and a range of active travel schemes that encourage residents to walk, cycle and scoot.



In 2024/25 we will spend over £1 billion on over 500 services benefiting every resident, business and community in Hertfordshire, including...

£59m

A cleaner and greener county

We fund the treatment and disposal of 500,000 tonnes of waste each year, more than half of which is recycled. We maintain over 2,000 miles of footpaths, bridleways and byways, and improve around 100 green spaces, nature reserves, rivers and woodlands each year. We're also helping to plant and establish 1.8 million trees and working to make our operations carbon neutral by 2030.



£21m

Community services for every stage of life

Our libraries continue to see an increase in visitors, who borrow over five million items each year. We register 3,500 civil marriages and partnerships and 20,000 births and deaths each year.



£257m

Supporting children and young people

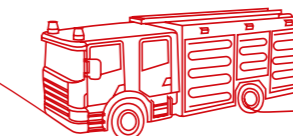
We support almost 300,000 children and young people by providing them with early years education, a place at a good school and supporting those with special educational needs. Over 1,000 children and young people are in our care at any one time, and we've also developed pioneering safeguarding models to return many of them safely to their families.



£46m

Protecting our communities

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



Cleaner and greener Hertfordshire

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

We have now planted, or enabled the planting of 324,647 trees since our Climate Emergency Declaration in 2019. This includes 4.25km of hedgerow.

Our Countryside Management Service have **replaced petrol driven power tools with electrical units to reduce emissions**. These support our volunteers to actively improve green space and Public Rights of Way for Wildlife and people.

In 2023-2024 a total of **41,590 volunteer hours** were given to support **health walks**, practical conservation and maintaining Rights of Way across Hertfordshire.

Hertfordshire County Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and in response, we published our [Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy and Action Plan](#), which was revised in March 2023. We have also published 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%
- Cleaner air for all

We will continue to work to deliver the other internal sustainable 'business as usual' ambitions; and 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.



Education and awareness of climate change – Hertfordshire Youth COP

As part of our ambition for a cleaner, greener Hertfordshire, we encourage education and climate change awareness training through schools, households, local businesses, and community level engagement.

Our Hertfordshire Youth COP event took place in July 2023. 30 students from 14 secondary schools across the county came together to attend the second annual Youth COP. The attendees were made up of students aged 12-17 who have a particular interest in climate change, the environment, and helping to protect our planet for current and future generations.

On the day, attendees took part in a variety of activities including a climate simulator that challenged groups to bring down global temperature rises whilst considering other interests and needs. A series of breakout workshops, themed around our Sustainable Hertfordshire ambitions, gave the young people a chance to learn more about specific climate change topics including carbon neutrality, enhancing nature, air quality and adaptation to the impacts of climate change. From these workshops, the students created action plans to take back to their schools to begin implementing positive climate action.

The next Sustainable Hertfordshire Youth COP 2024/25 will take place on 11 February 2025.

Delivering new cycling and walking facilities

We have delivered new cycling and walking facilities in Stevenage, including a new separated two-way cycle track on North Road which now connects communities to the hospital, schools, Stevenage High Street, surrounding countryside and existing cycle routes, including National Cycle Network Route 12. The scheme was consulted on in 2021 and was funded by the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund, which supports local councils to deliver new cycling and walking facilities.

Since November 2020, Hertfordshire County Council has successfully bid for Active Travel England's active travel fund and has been awarded £13.6m. This funding is being used for schemes in Digswell, Hemel Hempstead, Hertford, Watford, Welwyn Garden City and Wheathampstead. These schemes support the objectives in our Local Transport Plan

and Sustainable Hertfordshire strategy to make it easier and safer to walk, wheel and cycle. This will improve health, air quality, road safety, the local economy and traffic congestion.



Building and Construction Awards

Hertfordshire County Council Property has been the recipient of three prestigious awards in the building and construction sector. These awards are highly competitive and prized by contractors:

1. Building Project of the Year at the Beds and Herts Constructing Excellence Awards for the Valley SEND school, in collaboration with Ashe Construction.

The Building Project of the Year category recognises inspirational projects that deliver outstanding outcomes. The judges were looking for projects that successfully showed better ways of working and that demonstrated a commitment to sustainability, social value, industry culture change, adherence to the Building Safety Act, and high client satisfaction.

2. Climate Action Award at the Beds and Herts Constructing Excellence Awards for our new Net Zero Carbon School in Buntingford, in collaboration with Morgan Sindall.

The award recognises projects or organisations that strive to have a positive impact, or a reduced negative impact, on the natural environment and demonstrate sustainability in their approach to construction. The judges were looking for a project that demonstrated high quality design, effective procurement practices and innovative tools and techniques to provide improved environmental performance and outcomes.

The two projects that have won Constructing Excellence Awards within Beds and Herts will now be entered into the regional awards and, if successful, national awards.



3. Best Project Delivering Sustainable Outcomes at the Pagabo Framework Awards for the Valley SEND school, in collaboration with Ashe Construction who received the award as the main contractor.



Managing the county's waste

Plans to improve Hertfordshire's waste management infrastructure were progressed in 2023-24. This includes a new recycling centre at Welwyn Garden City, opened in May 2023.

The multi-million-pound investment has provided significantly improved facilities for local residents, making it easier to recycle and reuse waste. The new recycling centre has made it easier for visitors to dispose of their items, reduces queuing, provides a business waste drop-off service and a new purpose-built re-use shop which allows for donations and purchase of good quality unwanted items. The reaction of site users has been overwhelmingly positive with many noting the improvements in relation to the previous Cole Green site and highlighting customer care by staff. On Google review pages, since the recycling centre opened in May 2023, 84% of reviews have awarded the site the highest rating of 5 stars.

Waterdale Shredding Facility: The shredding facility is the first part of the planned improvements for the Waterdale Waste Transfer Station (WTS). The construction project, which is predicted to cost £11 million, started in March 2024 and is expected to be completed in early 2025.

The new facility will have several operational benefits which will help reduce fire risk, local queuing, and odours. By shredding bulky waste on-site, the Council can send more waste in each transport load, which will reduce costs and is more environmentally friendly.



Did you know?

Our new waste contracts mean that since April 2024, household refuse waste is sent to energy recovery sites rather than landfill. Landfill is now only used as a last resort. This supports our ambition to send zero waste to landfill by 2030.

Eastern Waste Transfer Station: Work to prepare for the delivery of the Eastern Waste Transfer Station (WTS) began in January 2024. The facility will be located behind the Ware Recycling Centre and will take around two years to build. It is expected to be operational by early 2026.

The new facility will have several operational benefits which will help reduce fire risk, local queuing, and odours. By shredding bulky waste on-site, the Council can send more waste in each transport load. This will reduce costs and reduce our carbon footprint as a result of less journeys being made. The facility will also reduce noise and pollution for residents.

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

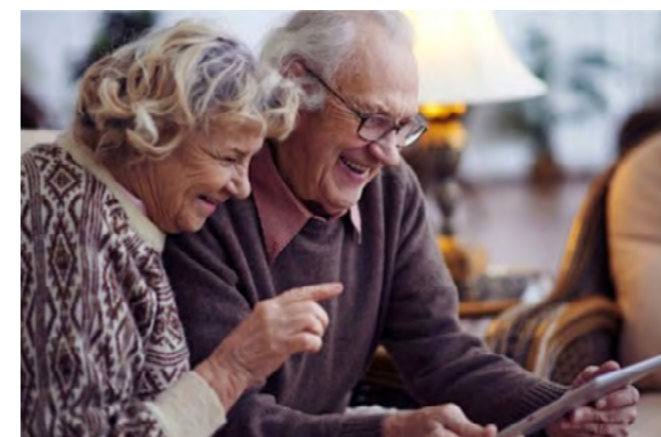
The [Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System](#) (ICS) is a partnership of organisations, including Hertfordshire County Council, that work to improve outcomes in population health and healthcare. The ICS plan and deliver health and social care services to people living in Hertfordshire and Essex, in 13 district and borough council areas. The meetings of the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Partnership are managed by Hertfordshire County Council.

The [Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care 10-year Strategy](#) sets out how we are working together to create healthy and safe communities.



Data Inspired Living

Following a successful pilot, we launched Data Inspired Living, Hertfordshire's assistive technology solution in November 2023 to support residents to live more independently at home whilst being able to better target our care resources. It consists of an online dashboard, which provides a view of residents' routines using various small, discreet sensors that are placed around the home. These sensors help to build a day-to-day picture of someone's normal routine, so if the sensors detect anything abnormal an alert can be raised and investigated by our Assistive Technology practitioners. These alerts can prompt an intervention by a practitioner, a family member or carer or the 24/7 responder service.



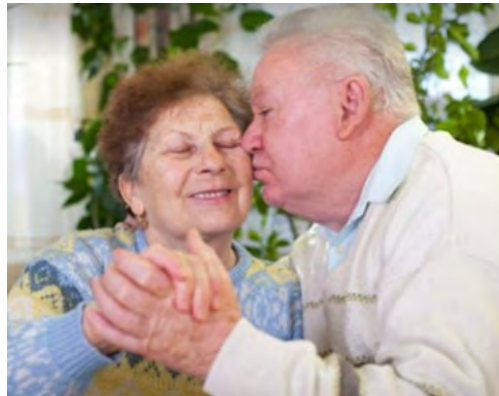
Using Data Inspired Living as an integral part of a resident's care has enabled us to identify emerging issues and set up relevant support at an early stage. The scheme has provided benefits including improved resident health and wellbeing, support for families and carers, financial savings for the Hertfordshire County Council, fewer transitions to residential care homes, less unplanned hospital admissions, and reduced homecare hours.

Data Inspired Living was recognised at the prestigious Local Government Chronicle Awards 2024 in June, winning the Innovation category. The judges were thoroughly impressed with Hertfordshire's approach of co-producing technology that is adaptable and scalable, showcasing a true learning culture aimed at continual improvement.

Carers in Case of Emergency Plan

Hertfordshire residents who provide care for a family member or loved one can get help preparing for emergency situations with Hertfordshire County Council's 'in case of emergency' plans. 'In case of emergency' plans allow carers to record useful information on what they would like to happen if an emergency occurred.

Once we have received 'In case of emergency' plan information, carers receive an 'I am a Carer' card and key fob, with contact information for a 24-hour hotline. In the event of an emergency, anyone who has access to the card/fob can contact us and we will put the plan in place to make sure the person who needs care gets the support they need.



Mr P, from Stevenage, has been his wife's carer for fifteen years. He has put his 'in case of emergency' plan in place on two separate occasions. Following a car accident, medical professionals found Mr P's 'I am a carer' card and got in touch with us. We put the emergency plan into action and

contacted the emergency contact, who was able to go and check on Mr P's wife. Mr P said: "For me, it's taken a worry away in terms of the 'what ifs'. Had my emergency plan not been in place [when I had] the accidents, the doctors would be trying to treat me, and I'd have just been worried about [my wife]. The plan includes lists of medication, her likes/dislikes, how to approach her and it really does give me peace of mind."



Supporting our Care Leavers

On 15 May 2024, we signed the Care Leaver Covenant, pledging our continued commitment to support care leavers as they journey to live independently. The National Care Leaver Covenant is a promise made by the private, public and voluntary sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them live successful lives. The covenant relates to all areas which impact on care leavers' opportunities to thrive including housing support, training and employment, work experience, or partnerships with local businesses.

Signing the Care Leaver Covenant is one element of our commitment to improve outcomes for care leavers. We recently agreed to treat care experience as a protected characteristic. This means that when we develop policies and services, it will assess the impact on people with care experience making sure that they are not negatively impacted by the decisions we take.

As well as the local offer for Care Leavers, we have recently extended the lifelong links programme; strengthening care leavers' contact with people important to them to create support networks and provide stability. We have also expanded the Care Leaver Service to provide personal advisors with more capacity and time to dedicate to the young people, and the popular Ohana support group for care experience young parents.

Evidence indicates that Hertfordshire Care Leavers encounter daily living expenses that many of their peers who live with their families do not face. Many face disadvantage as a result, which has been further exacerbated by the recent cost of living crisis and can lead to an increased need for support. In response to this, in April 2024 we introduced Council Tax support to Care Leavers aged 18-21 years, whereby the County Council pay for their Council Tax once all relevant discounts and support has been applied.



Our Priority Action Plan for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

In July 2023, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) undertook a joint inspection of Hertfordshire's Local Area Partnership for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The inspection outcome found widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently. SEND is a key priority for Hertfordshire and improvement work in this area is owned across the system by senior leaders.

[The SEND Priority Action and Improvement Plan](#) has been produced and agreed by Ofsted and the CQC, aiming to take forward the learning from the inspection process and setting out how the Partnership will address the priority actions and improvement areas identified through the inspection.

On 10 July 2023, Hertfordshire County Council's Cabinet approved an additional £5 million investment to improve the delivery of statutory SEND duties through our ['Making SEND Everyone's Business' Programme](#). A further £2 million investment was agreed in December 2023 to improve the experiences of Hertfordshire's children, young people, and families in relation to Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) processes.

Following increased investment and an ongoing recruitment programme to deliver our statutory SEND requirements, we launched

the Hertfordshire SEND Academy in January 2024. This provides an innovative training programme and induction, with a focus on recruiting those with transferable skills and lived experience. As of August 2024, we have appointed 136 new staff. This includes 95 recruits through our SEND Academy, now working in services that manage EHCPs.

We are also investing £131m across the county to create more than 1,000 special school places. Between 2018 and September 2024, 764 additional special school places have been created in Hertfordshire Schools. Increased capacity and a dedicated focus on finding suitable provision has led to a 65% reduction in the number of children and young people waiting over one year for specialist provision (Sep 2023 to Jul 2024).

Significant progress has been made delivering the commitments of the Priority Action and Improvement Plan through close partnership working.

Early indicators of improvement include:

- Improved timeliness of EHC needs assessments, from 40% within the 20-week timescale in 2023 to 58% in 2024 (year to date Jul 2024).
- The number of children waiting more than 6 weeks for speech and language assessments has decreased by 68% (Sep 2023 to Jul 2024).

- The quality of audited EHCPs has started to improve (from 5% to 28% rated good or outstanding between Q2 23/24 and Q1 24/25).
- A reduction in the number of children waiting for specialist provision.

New initiatives are being implemented to give children and young people a greater role in influencing Hertfordshire's SEND services. In June 2024, we created 'Experts by Experience' roles and have appointed four individuals who are under 25 with lived experience of SEND. Our Experts by Experience will lead on co-production and engagement with service-users to support the improvement of our SEND services.

Whilst we are moving in the right direction, we recognise that improved experiences for children, young people and families across Hertfordshire are not yet consistent. We continue to work hard to improve experiences for all families and continue to seek feedback to assess the impact of our actions.



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

Developing a strong economy

The integration of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) into Hertfordshire County Council on 1 April marked a significant change in how the county will deliver economic growth. This brings the business voice into local decision making and ensures the county can speak with one voice on socio-economic matters.

[Hertfordshire Futures](#), the new name for the LEP, recognises this strengthened status and its role in developing a more inclusive economy in greater alignment with other countywide initiatives.

In the next year, we will continue to position Hertfordshire as a UK economic hub and a prime location for growth and excellence where businesses, talent, and communities thrive. We will achieve this by fostering a world-class innovative environment and investing in programmes that support local businesses, deliver skills leadership, drive sustainable and inclusive growth, and attract inward investment.

We expect our core focus will be the development of a new strategy to promote the economic growth of the county. This will be evidence-led, building on data collected over the past decade and previous good practice. We will ensure wide-ranging engagement through surveys and discussions to capture the views of our residents and community groups.

Did you know?

In 2023-24, 15,869 childcare places were accessed by working parents in Hertfordshire providers.

Partnerships

Hertfordshire County Council is committed to working closely with valued strategic partners, engaging in over 110 strategic partnerships across the county and beyond. We recognise that more can be achieved by working together to achieve the best possible outcomes for our communities.

In 2024 a new formal partnership was established between the County Council and the University of Hertfordshire. There is a history of collaboration between the two organisations, but a Memorandum of Understanding is now in place to promote co-operation, discussions, collaboration, and positive relations between the University and the Council, to their mutual benefit. The newly established Hertfordshire Civic University Partnership Board will work to leverage academic expertise, funding, research, and community resources to address local opportunities and challenges for the benefit of Hertfordshire and all communities.



Working together to create a vision for sustainable growth

Hertfordshire County Council has worked alongside key partners, as part of the Hertfordshire Growth Board (HGB), to launch an ambitious vision for sustainable growth that will benefit residents, businesses, and communities for future generations.

Hertfordshire Growth Board is made up of representatives from Hertfordshire County Council, the 10 district and borough councils, the police, health, and Hertfordshire Futures (the new name for the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership). The HGB works together to deliver a thriving and sustainable economy, environment and society across the county.

Over the past year, HGB leaders have established a set of countywide goals and missions, which were further developed following public engagement which received 4,379 responses.

The shared [HGB vision and missions](#) set out a collective ambition to create:

<p>A vibrant and resilient economy that seizes the right opportunities, enabling Hertfordshire's residents and businesses to succeed.</p>	<p>Healthy, inclusive, safe and better-connected communities who thrive, and enjoy Hertfordshire's quality of life.</p>	<p>A place that grows responsibly, and celebrates its heritage, diversity, rural and green landscapes that makes Hertfordshire special.</p>
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Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter

[The Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter](#) was launched September 2023, with the ambition to set and achieve a new benchmark for high quality and sustainable development in Hertfordshire.

Most councils and many developers in the county have declared a climate emergency and are committed to becoming climate neutral within the next generation. The built environment is responsible for about 25% of greenhouse gas emissions, so one of the best things we can do is improve the construction, heating, cooling and powering of our homes and other buildings.

This Charter aims to achieve exemplary design quality and sustainability performance in new homes and buildings. It is about making sure that building control compliance, planning policy, design quality and sustainability performance can achieve more together. It is a commitment to follow set processes in order to comply with planning and design policies and will seek to achieve high sustainability performance above the current minimums set by building regulations.

The Charter has now been signed by nine councils in Hertfordshire, plus a handful of landowners and developers. This means that the Charter's pledges will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.



Hertfordshire Development Quality Charter

Hemel Garden Communities

Hemel Garden Communities is an ambitious development programme that will transform Hemel Hempstead and create attractive and sustainable new neighbourhoods and communities to the north and east of Hemel Hempstead, through the delivery of around 11,000 new homes and 10,000 new jobs by 2050.

The Hemel Garden Communities (HGC) partners are working with key landowners to deliver the programme, which will provide a variety of benefits to Hemel Hempstead. These include:

- New high-quality homes, of which 40 per cent will be affordable.
- New neighbourhoods will be set around vibrant local centres, green spaces and play areas, all easily accessed on foot.
- Sustainable travel such as walking, cycling and public transport will be given priority as we target a greener, healthier environment, which includes open spaces as well as new country and district parks.

Many of the new jobs created will be in Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter, a new business park with a range of facilities including flexible office and industrial spaces, and a variety of amenities to serve the local community.

Introducing sustainable transport choices and links between Maylands, the town centre and Hemel Hempstead train station, plus wider connections to both St Albans City and St Albans Abbey train stations, will achieve better connected and stronger communities.



Little Furze – 75 bed nursing care home

The construction of the 75-bed nursing care home on the former Little Furze school site started in 2023 and is due for completion in March 2025. The £17.5m contract provides infrastructure needed for the nearby housing area including roads, managing surface water, beautifying the area and utilities.

The state-of-the-art nursing home will provide specialist nursing, dementia, and short-stay care for the residents of South Oxhey, preventing them from having to move to other districts for this service.

This new development is expected to create more than 50 jobs for local people when it opens.



Sustainable, responsible growth in our county

Providing excellent 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

Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Services rated Good by Care Quality Commission

Hertfordshire County Council's Adult Care Services was rated Good by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), following an assessment at the beginning of 2024 that looked at how well we are performing against Care Act duties.

The CQC's report found the Hertfordshire County Council had 'clear plans focusing on supporting people to lead healthy, purposeful lives'. People who use the council's services, and their families, gave positive feedback about their experiences and the support they received confirming 'their care and support was specific to their needs'.



'Excellent partnership working' across all teams was found to be a real strength, with assessors concluding that long-term, strong, effective relationships with the NHS and the Voluntary, Community, Faith, Social Enterprise (VCFSE) had

led to 'really positive outcomes for people'.

Whilst we don't get it right for everyone, the commitment of our workforce to continue to learn and improve was also recognised.

Did you know?

In addition to the £30.7m of our revenue budget, we are investing £5.2m into winter road maintenance and a total of £102 million from our capital budget into road repairs and maintenance in 2024/25.

World's first pothole preventing robot

An autonomous robot, developed by tech company Robotiz3d and academics at the University of Liverpool, in partnership with our Highways Engineers, passed its first test outside of a lab environment on the roads of Potters Bar, Hertfordshire on 6 March 2024. Using state of the art imaging technology, the team working on the project have now developed the first Autonomous Road Repair System (ARRES). The project was funded by Innovate UK and other investors.

The ARRES PREVENT robot identifies cracks and potholes and other defects in the road using Artificial Intelligence (AI). It then automatically fills the cracks to keep out surface water, which in turn helps to prevent potholes forming. It has the potential to save time and money as well as reducing the disruption potholes cause to road users.

This piece of kit is the first of its kind in the world and has been in development since 2020. The brand-new technology could revolutionise the way Hertfordshire and the rest of the world deal with potholes and issues with road surfaces in the future.



Repairing potholes with recycled tyres

We are using a new type of asphalt product made from recycled tyres to repair potholes in a quicker and cleaner way. The roadmender asphalt contains material from tyres that would otherwise have been incinerated and allows road repair crews to repair potholes four times faster, with less dust and noise. The highways teams will be able to repair potholes using 80% less material as well as consuming 80% less energy, with fewer vehicles travelling to and from site.

As the council moves towards making its operations carbon neutral by 2030, the highways team are also working on how they can use all electric vehicles, plant and tools across their works projects.



Our Library Services in the heart of our communities

We run a thriving library service in the heart of our communities which provides a diverse offer for all age groups across the county. Our Library Service has developed a variety of organised groups for adults of all ages which provide an opportunity for connection and support for those experiencing loneliness. These social groups provide residents across the county with an opportunity to discover a shared interest, make friends, or learn something new.

The My Story: Artist in Residence programme has featured at five libraries, with over 100 people participating in an artistic event or workshop. Activities have included watercolour, weaving, sketching, composite photography, and more. Each programme has focussed on using art and culture to foster community connection.

Did you know?

In total there were 8,485 attendances at all library events and activities this year.

Another Arts Council England funded project, "My Voice", has enabled libraries to work with a variety of Hertfordshire charities and organisations to engage young people aged 14-24 and provide them with meaningful volunteering opportunities. My Voice has empowered young people to develop activities and clubs for their peers, including Manga-Anime workshops, revision sessions, book groups, and Dungeons & Dragons clubs.

Libraries also have a full programme of regular Baby Rhyme Times and special events for children of all ages throughout the year.



Refurbishing our fire stations

A major refurbishment programme is underway to improve our fire station facilities, starting with Hemel Hempstead where the refurbishment is now complete. This has included a major effort to improve resting and sleeping accommodation. Individual rest areas and much improved toilet and showering facilities deliver a more dignified and inclusive working environment to better meet the needs of all of our firefighters.

The refurbishment has also improved wheelchair access and mobility within the building and introduced several measures, such as clearly marking out 'dirty' and 'clean' zones, to reduce the risk of exposure to contaminants and carcinogens for firefighters and their colleagues.

An additional £3 million of funding was approved in the last Integrated Plan to extend this programme and work will commence shortly on similar improvements at a number of other fire stations, in the course of the next year.

Fire at Baldock Industrial Estate

In July 2023, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service was called to a fire at Baldock Industrial Estate. The blaze was significant and spread quickly across 43 business units containing a range of hazardous materials and compressed gas.

The size and impact of the fire led to buildings collapsing, nearby homes catching fire from falling debris, and large smoke plumes spreading into the local area.

Firefighters from Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services and police and ambulance teams assisted during the incident, to support the safe evacuation of people at risk from the fire.

Teams remained at the site for two days and were grateful for the support that they received from the National Farmers Union, who used their farming equipment to bring large volumes of water to firefighters at the scene.

GPs provided medical care to the community, whilst local authority teams co-ordinated public health safety messaging, road closures, school closures, and support to the business owners impacted by the fire. By co-ordinating our efforts with partner organisations and the local community we were able to ensure that there were no fatalities or serious injuries.

Did you know?

Our fire crews responded to 11,183 incidents last year and dealt with over 150,000 separate communications.

Did you know?

Between 2023/24, we completed 9,865 'safe and well' visits to those identified as being at a higher risk of fire.

Did you know?

Our fire crews and specialist Inspecting Officers completed 1,255 fire safety inspections of high-risk premises in Hertfordshire between 2023-24



Education in Hertfordshire

The [Hertfordshire School Improvement Strategy 2021-2026](#) has two key priorities which are to:

- Increase the number of good and outstanding schools and settings; and
- Increase the pace of closing the gap for vulnerable groups, whilst maintaining current high levels of attainment.

Ofsted

Did you know?

As of May 2024, 91.9% of all Hertfordshire maintained schools and academies are good or outstanding

This is higher than the national proportion and means that 92.4% of Hertfordshire pupils are educated in Good or Outstanding schools. This percentage has increased since September 2022 (89.8%) and is a significant improvement since September 2014 when only 82.6% pupils were in good or outstanding schools.

Educational Performance

We are delighted that Hertfordshire continues to have sustained high attainment across all key stages in comparison with national performance outcomes. For those at Key Stage 4, Hertfordshire is in the top quintile (approximately top 30) of 150 local authorities for five key secondary measures including standard pass in English and mathematics measure (grade 4) and good pass in English and mathematics measure (grade 5).

The pandemic has affected the progress and attainment of disadvantaged learners disproportionately across the country and in Hertfordshire. Addressing the gap between the outcomes for those pupils eligible for Pupil Premium funding and their more advantaged peers remains an on-going priority.

Did you know?

In 2023/24 18,085 young people received individual support with education, employment and training through Services for Young People. Hertfordshire's rate for 16-18-year-olds that are not in education, employment or training (NEET) was 2.7%, which is lower than the national average of 2.9%.

Education, Employment and Training support for our young people

Our Services for Young People (SfYP) provide nationally qualified career education advisers, employment training advisers, and youth workers to support young people in accessing education, employment and training (EET) opportunities. SfYP maintains a robust system to identify and support 16–17-year-olds that are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). This extends to young adults up to age 25 with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities or who are Care Leavers.

SfYP offers programmes to develop employability skills including work experience placements, employer visits and workshops.



Diversity and Inclusion:

At Hertfordshire County Council, our dedication to diversity and inclusion is engrained in our values and working practices. Whilst there are many examples across our services, we have selected a few significant examples that demonstrate how we have been progressing our [Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2024](#). The delivery of our inclusive services is made possible by through our ongoing collaboration with partners and the support of our communities.

Hertfordshire Faith Covenant

On 16 January 2024, Hertfordshire's faith leaders came together at County Hall, Hertford, to sign the first ever Hertfordshire Faith Covenant. The event was hosted by the Chairman of Hertfordshire County Council, who signed the Faith Covenant on behalf of the council.

22 Faith Leaders from Bahai, Christian, Hindu, Islam, Jain, Jewish, Quaker, and Sikh faiths and Inter Faith leaders signed the Covenant.

The Faith Covenant is a joint commitment to a shared set of principles that guide engagement between faith communities and public services. It aims to promote open, practical modes of working together and to strengthen community cohesion.

Inclusive job fair

We hosted our seventh inclusive job fair in St Albans, Hertfordshire on 21 May 2024. The event was organised in collaboration between Step2Skills, St Albans Council, XMA, Job Centre Plus, and St Albans Bid. 20 employers exhibited on the day and the event had 350 visitors.

The event led to five new referrals to our supported employment projects, 15 referrals to Multiply, and direct leads to opportunities for Step2Skills participants including interviews and work tasters.

“Our students thoroughly enjoyed themselves and I felt it was a truly inclusive event with the employers really engaging with our students and thinking of ways to make their offer deaf friendly.”

Heathlands School



Recruitment Inclusion Ambassadors to support recruitment processes

Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for the workforce highlights our aim to have an inclusive workforce that represents and reflects the communities that we serve. In a highly competitive job marketplace, it is vital that the Council is an employer of choice and builds a diverse and engaged workforce. We are taking action to ensure that people applying for jobs, work placements or volunteering at Hertfordshire County Council are provided equality of opportunity in all aspects of recruitment and selection, and to remove any barriers to inclusion.

25 colleagues across Children's Services have put themselves forward as recruitment ambassadors to be available to support in ensuring that inclusive processes are embedded in recruitment procedures and practice. The role of the recruitment ambassador is to provide support and challenge to both the hiring manager and the recruitment panel throughout the process. This could include reframing questions, posing challenges in relation to responses, and ensuring that all colleagues are given a fair chance through the promotion of inclusive practices.

For leadership appointments in Children's Services, engagement in this is now a mandatory process. This aims to ensure that we have the best possible chances of enabling all colleagues, including those from diverse backgrounds, to be better represented in leadership roles in Children's Services.

We have also appointed seven Recruitment Inclusion Ambassadors (RIAs) within Adult Care Services to support recruitment processes. The ambition is to increase representation in management roles of people from global majority backgrounds and disabled people who are understood to experience more barriers to progression than their peers across the Herts and West Essex Integrated Care System.

Fair Chance Alliance

As a major employer in Hertfordshire, and recognising the recruitment pressures for the public sector, we have explored how we can support employment opportunities for those with experience of the criminal justice system.

In November 2023, Hertfordshire County Council became a Fair Chance accredited employer. Being a part of the Fair Chance Alliance means that we are committed to providing those with a criminal record a fair opportunity to participate in the workforce. This involves ensuring inclusive hiring practices and supporting progression. Employers in the Alliance follow a set of quality standards to ensure this process is successful, sustainable, and safe.

Additionally, we have achieved a Silver Magistrates Award, recognising our ongoing commitment to support staff members who around their day job, are actively contributing to our community by being a magistrate.

Our finances

In the last year we have continued to face significant financial pressures from the impact of inflation on services. Despite this, we have responded to these issues, managing our budget within the funding available while supporting Hertfordshire residents through the cost of living.



Revenue

Each year we refresh the Integrated Plan (IP) and set the budget for the following year. This year, we needed to review and address:

- External factors, such as high inflation and a challenging employment market
- Increasing demand for services from our growing and ageing population, exacerbated by the on-going impact of the pandemic
- Increasing complexity of needs of existing service users, for example within social care related services; and
- Significant savings already delivered by the Council since 2010.

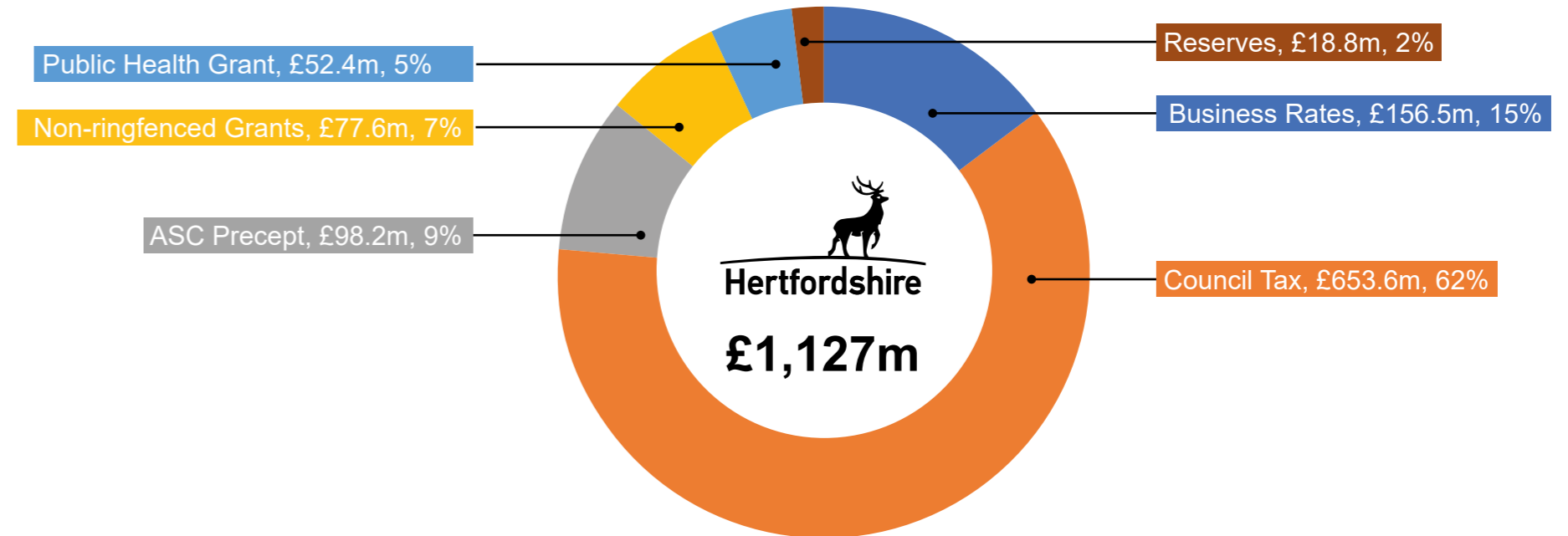
The IP for 2023/24 was significantly impacted by these factors, and especially the economic environment and high levels of inflation. In order to maintain services and meet costs of inflation and increased demand, we needed to increase spending by 13.6%.



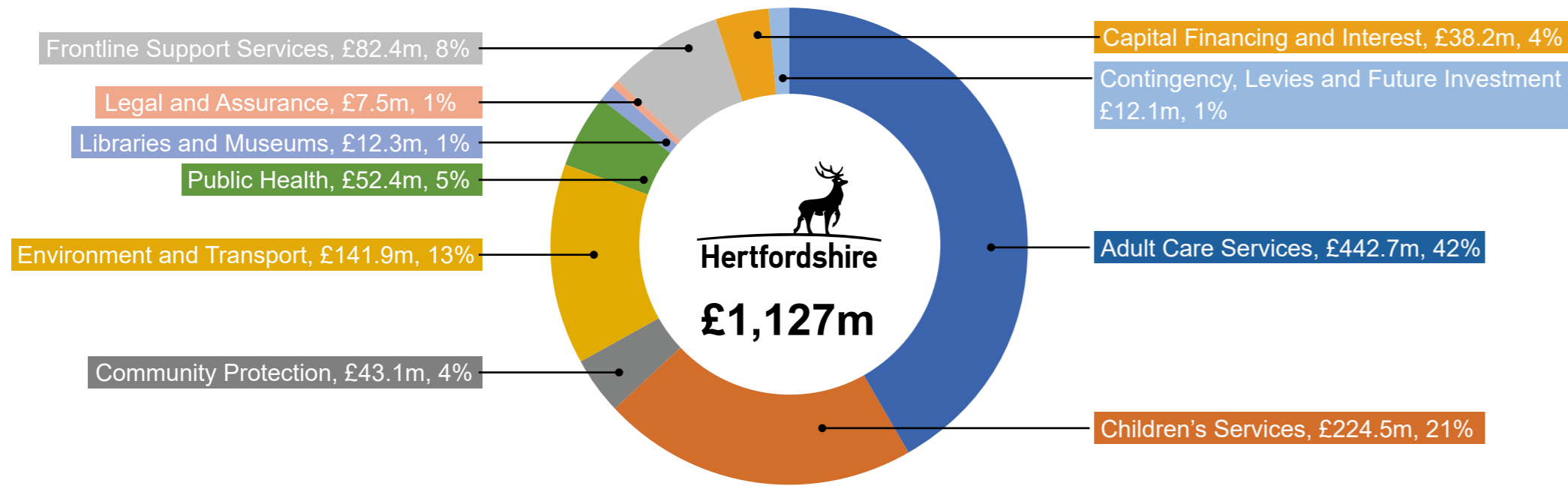
As well as protecting services, we were able to invest in services and priorities, including the following:

- **£38m to ensure adult care providers can continue to support residents** – including a 9.68% wage increase for care staff to help recruitment and retention, matching the increase in the national living wage, and continuing to ensure that Hertfordshire care wages are well above both the national and real living wages (supported by the social care precept)
- **£13m from the extension of the Household Support Fund** to support our most vulnerable residents with the cost of living
- **An extra £19m for Childrens’ Services**, including an extra £5.2m to support the children in our care and £10m for home-to-school transport for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities to ensure they can get to school easily
- **£6.4m to support waste disposal services**, alongside new contracts that will mean that no waste in the county will go to landfill from 2024.
- **£4.6m of extra funding into highways revenue budgets** to cover inflation and ensure we can continue repairs and maintenance work on our roads.
- **£3.0m additional funding into the highways service to repair the increased number of potholes** created by the severe cold weather, and additional resource for highways to refresh line markings, vegetation cutbacks, and targeted maintenance programmes, including faster gully clearance.

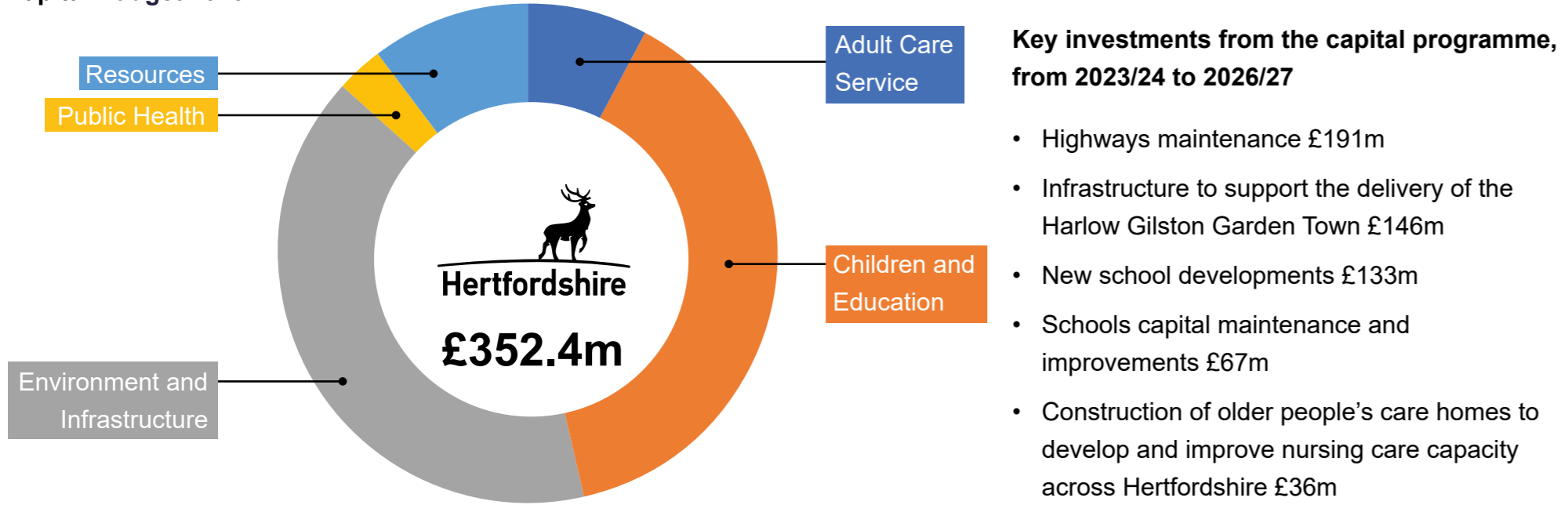
Revenue Funding Breakdown 2023/24



Net Budget 2023/24



Capital Budget 2023/24



Key investments from the capital programme, from 2023/24 to 2026/27

- Highways maintenance £191m
- Infrastructure to support the delivery of the Harlow Gilston Garden Town £146m
- New school developments £133m
- Schools capital maintenance and improvements £67m
- Construction of older people's care homes to develop and improve nursing care capacity across Hertfordshire £36m



The year ahead

We continue to operate in an environment marked by uncertainty and transition. This includes high rates of inflation, a finely balanced employment market and a change in national government. Our residents continue to face cost of living challenges and the demand for county council services remains high.

In the coming year, we will continue to ensure we are prepared to respond to the agenda of the new government, whilst actively representing the contributions and needs of Hertfordshire. We will strive to foster a collaborative and constructive relationship with our new cohort of Hertfordshire MPs and the new national administration.

We believe that a devolution deal for the county could bring significant benefits. As such, in conjunction with our District and Borough council partners, we will be pushing for this in the coming year. A devolution deal would give us greater control over local issues and allow us to better serve our residents.

Looking ahead, we are preparing for Hertfordshire County Council's local election, which will be held on Thursday 1 May 2025. These elections are an important opportunity for residents to have their say on the future of the county council. We will be working hard to ensure that the election process is smooth, and we will continue to pursue excellence in our council services before, during, and after the election period.

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

Growth and Environment: 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.

Through key strategic groups such as the Hertfordshire Growth Board, Hertfordshire Economic Board and Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, the county will work together to implement and promote key growth and economic opportunities and tackle environmental challenges facing the county. These groups will play a key role in advocacy to the new government, seeking to secure investment and to support a devolution deal to Hertfordshire that will meet the skills, jobs, housing, transport and environmental needs of the county.

Community protection: Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service will focus on delivering our key priorities: community safety, emergency response, community engagement, workforce excellence and service transformation as part of our new Community Risk Management Plan. Trading Standards teams continue to support businesses and protect consumers across the county. We are committed to working closely with Public Health colleagues to reduce the risk of harm from illegal tobacco and vapes.

Public Health will be implementing a refresh of our Public Health work programme, with a renewed focus on building healthier communities, tackling health inequalities, supporting our professional partners and helping our residents to adopt positive, healthy habits.

Adult Care Services will work as equal partners, with the NHS, Integrated Care System, the wider care market and the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector. We will work towards people having clear information and advice on staying well and accessing services and support, allowing people to live as independently as possible.

We will continue to work alongside the whole council and partners across the county to ensure Hertfordshire is a place where people lead healthy, purposeful, self-supporting lives. Striving to ensure care and support will be personalised to the individual and directed by them over their life.

Children's Services will continue to ensure we meet the needs of all children and young people in their local communities, for example through growing Hertfordshire's local residential homes and in-house foster care, increasing the number of Care Leavers in employment, education and training, and more effectively supporting children who are not currently attending school. We will also continue to work hard to improve outcomes and experiences specifically for children, young people and their families with SEND through the work of the SEND Improvement programme, which will take forward the areas for improvement identified by our July 2023 SEND Local Area Partnership inspection.

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.





Creating a cleaner, greener,
healthier Hertfordshire

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

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