



St Albans City and District Council

Corporate Plan 2021-2026

*Note: This Corporate Plan was agreed by Council at its meeting on 24 February 2021.
It will be released in designed format shortly.*

Foreword by Cllr Chris White, Leader

Coronavirus hit us all hard in 2020 and continues to present great challenges. Not least is the devastating social and economic damage to many local people and businesses, and the huge budget gaps that public service providers like the Council are left with.

These factors, together with the climate emergency, the urgent requirement for more social housing, the need for better community facilities and our desire to enhance local businesses, are the Council's key areas of focus for the coming year.

These are challenging times and difficulties lie ahead. There remains much uncertainty and the extent of the Council's continued role in the Covid-19 response and what this may mean for our plans in 2021/22, and for our finances, is by no means clear.

As ever in local government, tough choices about our spending and how we operate must be made. Much is about cultural change, how we conduct business, and close working with other districts and public agencies, and with our partners.

Combat the Climate Emergency

Our work with Sustainable St Albans, St Albans Friends of the Earth and a range of other environmental groups has been instrumental in developing our [Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy](#) setting out the actions we will take locally to make the Council's and the community's carbon emissions net zero by 2030.

Sustainable growth will be necessary, and our work must dovetail with that of the County Council to ensure highways can be improved to make travel easier for pedestrians and cyclists.

Much can be achieved through encouragement and leadership. Our Local Plan – the blueprint for what can be built how and where for the next two decades – was not accepted by Planning Inspectors in 2020. While this is disappointing on one level, it also presents accelerated opportunities to hardwire sustainability into local development activities sooner than might otherwise have been the case, as we work on a new version.

Deliver more social housing

Our location and beautiful surroundings mean lots of people want to live here. High demand for local housing means many local people find they cannot afford to buy or rent. Homelessness is a pressing issue here as elsewhere.

The Council – not least to help deliver the housing numbers sought by central government – needs to become a large-scale developer in our own right. Social housing rent levels should be our aim. Such housing is delivered in various ways: through the planning system, through the Council's Housing Revenue Account, through the mechanism of a new registered provider housing company, and through partnerships using direct investment and joint ventures.

The principal demand in the District is for three-bedroom homes.

New housing schemes will need, for the foreseeable future, to involve a mix of housing to provide Council income or profits from sale, and social housing. It is obviously

impossible to prescribe a hard and fast rule for every case, but in general, projects controlled by the Council should involve 40% social housing, measured by projected value. An exception to this would be where housing is being provided to fund investment in community facilities, where a greater proportion of homes may be needed for sale.

We are also closely monitoring turnaround times for dealing with empty Council-owned properties to ensure they can be let again swiftly to families in need. This requires fast work from our contractors to undertake the necessary works and repairs.

And we need to prioritise the climate emergency when it comes to ensuring that homes are warm, dry and energy efficient.

Enhance local business

Covid-19 has taken its toll here as elsewhere and there is significant uncertainty as a result of this and the challenges presented by leaving the European Union.

These complexities are on top of the day to day challenges we face like the high cost of housing, skills shortages, the unfair and damaging business rates system, the loss of office accommodation due to permitted development rules, and poor-quality broadband in some areas.

Many of these require Government action at a national level. Locally though we can play our part. For instance, we can recognise the importance of the visitor economy – both tourism and the night-time economy – and work with our partners to develop these markets for the benefit of visitors, residents and businesses locally. Important too is ensuring our contractors deliver high quality services that meet the needs of all sections of our community.

It is evident that there is a need for new plans, for example in the areas of street markets, City Centre Vision, cultural strategy and destination management. The museum service is a unique cornerstone for the active promotion of the City and District providing rich cultural opportunities throughout the year for local people and visitors alike and supporting city centre vibrancy. Above all we need to ensure that we continue to listen to business and work with our partners to address their needs.

Support our communities

We continue to work with town and parish councils and consider further devolution of community assets where that makes mutual sense so can we achieve the best outcomes for local people.

Our Local Plan presents opportunities for the community to lead in neighbourhood planning such as the St Peter's Street area of the City Centre.

Communities also depend on facilities. Significant improvements to local leisure and museum facilities have been made over the last few years, including most recently in Harpenden. But community halls and similar facilities elsewhere need improving too. Our work to develop the Marlborough Pavillion in the Sopwell area continues apace and Fleetville Community Centre is in the pipeline.

The Council's own commercial and development operations will be our primary means of delivering many of our desired social housing, construction and community facility improvements. Such projects will also generate new developments and investment income that can fund more housing locally, especially much needed social rented homes. This income will be used additionally to regenerate, redevelop and refurbish

Council assets to support future retail, commercial, cultural and community needs in our towns and villages post Covid including St Albans City Centre and the Alban Arena.

A large part of the Council's work this year will be about filling our huge budget gap and reshaping our services for the digital age. And underscoring everything is the Covid response and the Climate Emergency which must be at the forefront of all our minds.

Foreword by Amanda Foley, Chief Executive

None of us could have imagined the effect that a virus like Covid-19 would have on the day to day lives of people.

The pandemic has challenged us severely and we have all been forced to rethink the way we go about our business.

Local people have come together to help each other. Businesses and charities have made innovative changes to keep afloat.

Overnight, like most organisations across the world, councils have had to change the way we work. In St Albans, most of our staff have been working from home since March 2020, and many have also doubled up to deliver both the day job and support the considerable coronavirus response. The way our staff have adapted has been remarkable.

It has been a mighty challenge, and it continues as I prepare this foreword for the coming year. On page x you can see some of the response and recovery work we have been involved in.

Our budgets, always under pressure, were severely hit by the pandemic, as many of our income streams - from services like car parks, leisure centres, and museums - shrank to almost nothing for months on end.

My role, as Chief Executive, is to ensure the Council is ready for whatever lies ahead. We will continue to do all we can to support our local communities and keep local services going whatever happens.

The crisis showed us all what we are capable of when the chips are down and change is thrust upon us. Working from home has meant we have had to become experts at remote working and embrace the new technologies that we put in place as part of our digital transformation programme in recent years.

Lots of other changes are accelerating our digital transformation. There is much work to do to ensure we take from our experiences during the pandemic all that is positive and worth keeping. Beyond the bad news, the good news is that there is potential for creating an increasingly modern and efficient council. Our work to put this in place has already begun.

Despite the changes ahead, customer focus, developing our workforce and digital transformation remain the key building blocks for our future development, and for tackling the areas of focus outlined by Cllr Chris White in his Leader's foreword.

Caring for our community, working together, and developing confident people are at the heart of our values and behaviours. These themes are helping us to develop our

services to become the trusted and customer driven Council we aspire to be. The overarching priorities we are working to support are: a vibrant economy; a thriving community; a great place to live and work; and a cost-effective Council.

Covid has taught us that we are stronger when we work as one with our partners. It is partnership working that has helped us to support our most vulnerable residents during the pandemic, and it is our partnerships that will help us build the capacity needed to transform our services for the future. Most importantly perhaps, it is our partnerships that are helping us get to grips with what we need to do to combat the climate emergency and build on the action plan put in place over the last year. We hope that local people, businesses and organisations will continue to work with us to play their part too.

Amanda Foley, Chief Executive

Infographics

[Insert infographics showing key facts about the District in numbers, and Covid-19 response information]

| Category | Item | Number |
|----------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| District | Population | 148, 500 |
| | Size | 62.2 m² |
| | Houses (and other dwellings) | 61,723 |
| | Band – D Council Tax Properties | 16,329 |
| | Businesses | 9,300 |
| | Employment Rate | 78.6% |
| | Average Income | £631/week |
| | Resident with HND, degree (NVQ 4) | 58.5% |
| | MPs | 2 |
| Council | Council Tax | £11.4m |
| | Revenue Support Grant | £0m |
| | Expenditure General Fund | £14.6m |
| | Housing Revenue Account | £26.9m |
| | Business Rates Collected | £23.7m |
| | Business Rates Retained | £2.4m |
| | Council Staff | 368 (Full time Equivalent) |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Public Health | Male Life Expectancy at Birth | 82 |
| | Female Life Expectancy at Birth | 85 |
| | Clinical Commissioning Group | 1 |
| | GP Practices | 13 |
| | Hospitals | 1 |
| Planning and Housing | Average House Price | £574,035 |
| | Greenbelt | 82% |
| | Annual Planning and Building Control Applications | 4245 |
| | Additional dwellings per year estimated required | 893 |
| | Houses built per year | 395 |
| | Council Owned and Managed Dwellings | 4,909 |
| Democracy and customer services | Wards | 20 |
| | Elected Members | 58 |
| | Parish Councils | 8 |
| | Town Councils | 1 (Harpenden) |
| | Member Meetings per Year | 252 |
| | Calls Received by Customer Service Centre each year. | 49,146 |
| Communities, Leisure and Sport | Community Centres | 24 |
| | Libraries | 6 |
| | Primary Schools | 53 |
| | Secondary Schools | 12 |
| | Further Education Colleges | 1 |
| | Managed Parks and Open Spaces | 439.1 hectares |
| | Leisure Centres and Sports Facilities | 24 |
| | Cemeteries | 3 |
| | Museums | 2 |
| | Heritage Sites | 3 |
| | Charter Market | 1 |
| | Visitors to St. Albans per Year | 228,2000 |

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| | (2018) | |
| Parking and Environment | Visitors to District Car Parks | 873,165 |
| | Spaces in Car Parks | 2,701 |
| | On-Street car parking spaces | 4,504 |
| | CCTV monitoring and control centres | 1 |
| | Recycling rate - measured by weight (2020/21) | 63% (in the top 10 best recycling areas in the country) |

The Council's vision and priorities

Our overarching vision is: a vibrant economy; a thriving community; a great place to live and work; and a cost-effective Council.

Outside the Covid-19 response, our four key priorities, designed to deliver a viable, happy, inclusive and sustainable community, are to:

- Combat the climate emergency
- Deliver more social housing
- Enhance local business
- Develop community facilities

Combating the climate emergency

What we are doing to achieve this priority

Priority projects for 2021/22

| Priority Projects and Targets | Lead Portfolio | Lead Department |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Climate Emergency | | |
| Take forward the Sustainability and Climate Crisis Strategy and Action Plan published in 2020/21 and implement Year 2 Measures and Actions. | Climate, Environment and Transport | Community Services |
| Increase the quantity of tree cover in the District, planting 3,000 trees in 2021/22. | Climate, Environment and Transport | Planning and Building Control |
| Lead initiatives to reduce the impact of aircraft pollution and noise arising from proposals to expand Luton Airport capacity. | Climate, Environment and Transport | Planning and Building Control |
| Progress the installation of additional solar PV panels at the Council's Leisure Centres – for delivery by June 2021 | Commercial, Development and Wellbeing | Commercial and Development |
| Progress the installation of electric car charging points at Cotlandswick Leisure Centre Car Park – for | Climate, Environment and | Commercial and |

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|---|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| delivery by Nov 2021. | Transport | Development |
| <p>Continue to improve Council houses and flats to reduce energy use and CO₂ emissions, providing better homes and lower energy bills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Grade A boilers in 300 properties; • New windows and doors in 100 properties; • New bathrooms and kitchens in 40 properties; • Loft insulation and cavity wall insulation in 300 properties identified from the Council's stock condition survey and energy pilot studies. • Adopt an energy strategy for Council housing stock using Government grant funding and funding from the Housing Revenue Account. | Housing, Inclusion and Protection | Housing |
| <p>Progress the River Ver and Verulamium Lakes development Project. In 2021/22:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline scheme design completed: estimated April 2021 • 2 Cross-Party Working Group meetings held during 2021/22, timing dictated by overall project timetable. • Full Business Case (to progress from agreed design to implementation phase) completed: estimated March 2022. | Leisure, Heritage and Public Realm | Community Services |
| Sustainability | | |
| Implement a new operating model for the Council which supports the delivery of a more sustainable organisation, using digital technologies to support a more flexible and mobile workforce; reduced and better use of Council office space; and the continuing development of online services for residents. | Resources | Corporate Services |
| <p>Implement measures and actions in the Council's Litter Management Strategy 2020/21 – 2024/25. In 2021/22:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch campaign to encourage local businesses to help reduce the amount of litter dropped in and around retail premises (linked to 2021 Keep Britain Tidy Spring Clean Programme): May 2021. • Complete review of cleaning schedules on strategic routes and review litter bin provision - estimated September 2021. • Engage with Parish Councils to become actively involved in the implementation of the Litter Management Strategy. Summarise progress through Parish Conference: Autumn 2021. | Leisure, Heritage and Public Realm | Community Services |

What else do we plan to do to manage the climate emergency?

Other background work:

| | Department(s) |
|--|---|
| Implement key outcomes of the Council's 'Towards a Wilder St Albans' project delivery partnership with Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. | Community Services |
| Develop a plan to encourage walking and cycling. | Planning and Building Control |
| Pedestrianisation of Market Place and more 20 mph zones (with Herts County Council). | Community Services |
| Take forward a Citizens' Assembly to drive community engagement in addressing the climate emergency. | Community Services Chief Exec & Policy |
| Develop plans for car exclusion and no car idling zones around schools. | Community Services |
| Develop plans to encourage the introduction of electric taxis. | Community Services |
| Develop a plan for greater use of solar panels on Council-owned property. | Housing |
| Where we have influence, encourage businesses to reduce single-use plastics. | Community Services |
| Improve the energy efficiency of Council office buildings. | Commercial & Development |
| Ensure the energy efficiency of Council-sponsored developments. | Commercial & Development |
| Establish a partnership to reduce the cost of trade waste for businesses. | Community Services |
| Review the method statement for replacing damaged bins, benches and planters to ensure they can be repaired or replaced as efficiently as possible. | Community Services |
| Continued campaign work with the Herts Waste Partnership and evidence-based enforcement action and use of Fixed Penalty notices to reduce fly-tipping. | Community Services |
| Further develop recycling rates in flats including through engagement with managing agents, visits, and the supply of information boards. | Community Services |
| Actively support our Green Triangle partners: the Building Research Establishment; Rothamsted Research; and the University of Hertfordshire. | Chief Exec & Policy |
| Act as a champion for rail commuters and use our influence to work with rail partners to seek improvements to local rail services and facilities. | Chief Exec and Policy |

Deliver more social housing

What we are doing to achieve this priority

Priority projects for 2021/22

| Priority Projects and Targets | Lead | Lead Department |
|-------------------------------|------|-----------------|
|-------------------------------|------|-----------------|

| | Portfolio | |
|---|---|----------------------------|
| <p>Progress a high-quality development at the St Albans City Centre Opportunity Site (CCOS) South (subject to planning approval):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 social apartments • 60 apartments for sale • 6,064 sq metres of office space • 100 car parking spaces | Commercial, Development and Wellbeing | Commercial and Development |
| <p>Progress a high-quality development at the St Albans City Centre Opportunity Site (CCOS) North (subject to planning approval).</p> | Commercial, Development and Wellbeing | Commercial & Development |
| <p>Progress social housing on Council owned land:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holyrood Crescent garage site –development of 2 two-bedroom houses on former garage site - due for completion in June 2021; • The Hedges mobile home site – redevelopment of former temporary accommodation site for social housing - estimated completion April 2022; • King Offa and Norman Close mobile home site – redevelopment for social housing - estimated completion June 2022; • Progress feasibility studies on 3 sites for future social housing development by March 2022. | Housing, Inclusion and Protection | Housing |
| <p>Continue to progress the redevelopment of Ridgeview in London Colney to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 apartments for use as temporary accommodation for homeless people including families - estimated completion November 2022; • 19 private rental homes. | Commercial, Development and Wellbeing | Commercial & Development |
| <p>Complete the development of Noke Shot in Harpenden by March 2022 to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 three-bedroom social rented houses; • 4 three-bedroom houses for sale, and 2 two-bedroom bungalows for sale. | Commercial, Development and Wellbeing | Commercial & Development |
| <p>Complete the development of land at Leyland Avenue in St Albans by October 2021 to provide 7 three-bedroom houses for sale.</p> | Commercial, Development and Development | Commercial & Development |
| <p>Progress the development of Harpenden Public</p> | Property, | Commercial & |

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| Halls to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 social rent apartments; • 16 apartments for sale; • 300 sq metres of commercial space; • 26 car parking spaces. | Commercial and Development | Development |
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What else do we plan to do to deliver more social housing?

Other background work:

| | Department(s) |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Maintain the number of voids (empty Council homes) below 1%. | Housing |
| Work with key contractors to deliver a high percentage of repairs completed at first visit and customer satisfaction above 4.5 out of 5 (using the 'Rant and Rave' tool implemented in 2020). | Housing |
| Review the way we provide adaptations to existing Council properties and new homes which we develop occupied by people with disabilities. | Housing |
| Seek fresh sites and develop them as a developer in our own right, or through joint ventures, or through a wholly owned company. | Housing Commercial and Development |

Enhance business

What we are doing to achieve this priority

Priority projects for 2021/22

| Priority Projects and Targets | Lead Portfolio | Lead Department |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Achieve break-even against budget at St Albans Museum + Gallery by the end 2021/22. | Leisure, Heritage and Public Realm | Commercial and Development |
| Implement revised Markets Service operational structure, moving towards break-even against budget. | Business, Tourism and Culture | Community Services |
| Engage market traders and the BID more formally in the development and management of the market in the city. | Business, Tourism and Culture | Community Services |
| Progress the Hertfordshire IQ enviro-tech enterprise zone. | Planning | Planning and Building Control |
| Work in partnership with the BID to deliver a | Business, Tourism and | Chief Exec and |

| | | |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| successful BID renewal. | Culture | Policy Finance and Legal |
| Support the Visitor Partnership (through the BID) in implementing a new visitor economy strategy for the District. | Business, Tourism and Culture | Chief Exec and Policy |
| Support the BID in developing a Vision and Neighbourhood Plan for the City Centre. | Planning | Planning and Building Control |

What else do we plan to do to enhance business?

Other background work:

| | Department(s) |
|--|---------------------|
| Hold a third business summit and promote other opportunities for businesses to engage with, and influence, the Council. | Chief Exec & Policy |
| Work with partners to make businesses aware of how to appeal Valuation Office assessments. | Finance and Legal |
| Consider having a local discretionary relief for 2022/23 or grants direct to businesses (subject to budget constraints). | Finance and Legal |
| Maintain the engagement with government and parliament about the need to reform business rates. | Chief Exec & Policy |
| Continue close liaison between the Council, BID and other partners to develop new Covid-secure cultural events. | Community Services |

Support our communities

What we are doing to achieve this priority

Priority projects for 2021/22

| Priority Projects and Targets | Lead Portfolio | Lead Department |
|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Progress a new Local Plan. | Planning | Planning and Building Control |
| Progress the redevelopment of Marlborough Pavilion in St Albans with new community and leisure facilities – due to open in early 2022. | Commercial, Development and Wellbeing | Commercial and Development |
| Progress play area development proposals and initiatives, including at Clarence Park. | Leisure, Heritage and Public Realm | Community Services |
| Progress the redevelopment of Fleetville Community Centre for anticipated delivery in | Commercial, Development and | Commercial and |

| | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| November 2023. | Wellbeing | Development |
| <p>Progress the development of a new Mausoleum at the London Road cemetery. In 2021/22:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed scheme design and feasibility work completed: estimated May 2021. Project construction plan agreed for implementation: estimated August 2021. | Climate, Environment and Transport | Community Services |

What else do we plan to do to support our communities?

Other background work:

| | Department(s) |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Continue with leisure contract procurement exercise with the aim of achieving an outcome which maintains high quality, popular leisure facilities which generate income for the Council. | Commercial and Development |
| Work towards a plan to support redevelopment of the St Albans Sub Aqua Club venue. | Commercial and Development |
| Progress the refurbishment of the Clarence Park Pavilion. | Commercial and Development |
| Through the property and investment strategy and plan completed in 2020, consider longer leases/licences to enable local groups to bid for a wider range of external funding. | Commercial and Development |
| Continue to engage with St Albans City Football Club to support it in finding a new stadium. | Planning and Building Control |
| Explore opportunities for a community or social based Sunday transport scheme. | Planning and Building Control |
| Develop new Homelessness Strategy. | Housing |
| Work with our partners in the local Community Safety Partnership to provide strong safeguarding of vulnerable residents, including victims of domestic violence, modern slavery and radicalisation. | Chief Exec & Policy |
| Continue rolling programme of reviews of Controlled Parking Zones to assess residents' views. | Community Services |