

Annual Report

2016/17

About Huntingdonshire

Huntingdonshire is the largest district by population in Cambridgeshire with a population of 175,700 in over 75,000 dwellings. Approximately half of the population lives in the four market towns of Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Ramsey and the remainder in almost 100 villages. A number of large villages act as local service centres for surrounding areas.

We are represented by 52 Councillors in 29 Wards.

What do we do?

We provide a range of services to residents, businesses and visitors. These include refuse and recycling, business growth support, car parks, elections, environmental health, housing advice, housing and Council Tax support, leisure centres, markets, parks and open spaces, planning and conservation.

Huntingdonshire District Council by numbers

The Council provided a vast range of services to the 175,700 residents and nearly 8,800 businesses that were based within the district in 2016/17.

In 2016/17, the Council:

- Paid out around £2.8m each month in housing benefit payments
- Received benefit claims of which over 97% were made on-line
- Collected over 68,510 tonnes of residential waste from 75,000 homes with 55.5% of this being recycled or composted. This was collected by our fleet vehicles using 567,311 litres of fuel to do so
- Dealt with approx. 1,500 planning applications and carried out nearly 5,000 site inspections on building regulation applications
- Received approximately 1,867 customer visits per day to our main website
- Collected £97.5m in Council Tax, a 98.6% collection rate
- Provided 211 Disabled Facilities Grants and helped 290 households to successfully avoid homelessness
- Provided 5,000 licences for taxis and licensed premises
- Monitored approx. 100 CCTV cameras (c. 260 including cameras located in Cambridge)
- Had more than 2.3 million visits to our 5 One Leisure sites, including over 450,000 visits made by school children
- The Local Government Ombudsman received 16 complaints of which one was upheld



Welcome to our Annual Report for 2016/17

Here we look back at the past year and look forward to some of the challenges and opportunities ahead.

The previous year has been challenging as Huntingdonshire District Council, like other councils, has been faced with the task of providing services on a decreasing budget. The grants that Central Government gives to councils are being significantly reduced, and these may disappear in the future.

Huntingdonshire District Council has one of the lowest levels of Council Tax in England, and strives to strike a balance between maintaining low tax levels and avoiding service cuts, despite the reduction in government grants.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Plan sets out our vision, strategic priorities and objectives for the fiscal year. These were:

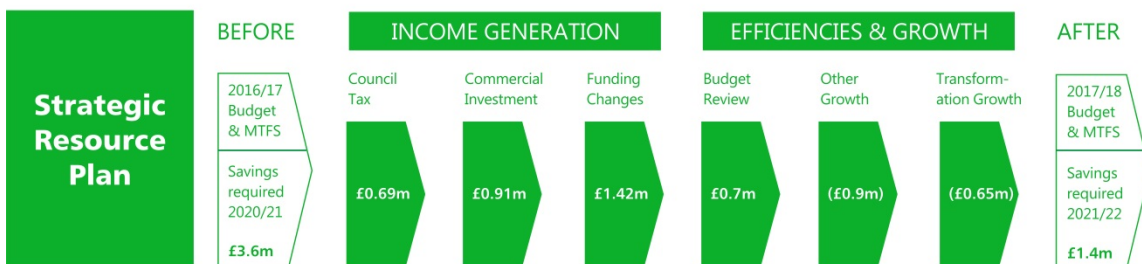
- **Enabling communities**
- **Delivering sustainable growth**
- **Becoming a more efficient and effective council**



“We want to improve the quality of life, deliver economic growth and provide value for money services for the people of Huntingdonshire”

Huntingdonshire District Council's vision

Plan on a Page



Financial Strategy

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Net expenditure	£17.211m	£16.810m	£16.977m	£17.365m	£17.737m
Budget surplus / (deficit)	£3.032m	£1.927m	(£1.307m)	(£1.333m)	(£1.364m)
Earmarked Reserves Adjustments	(£0.066m)	£0m	£2.674m	£2.674m	£2.674m
Budget requirement	£20.177m	£18.737m	£18.344m	£18.706m	£19.047m

Our 'Plan on a Page' is a simple summary that presents our strategic priorities in the context of the financial challenge and shows the initiatives that will deliver the savings and new income streams required, while still meeting customer needs.

Essentially we aim to reduce the council's reliance on Central Government funding and create a sustainable financial platform.

Corporate Plan 2016/17

Strategic Priorities and Objectives

Enabling Communities

We wanted to make Huntingdonshire a better place to live, to improve health and well-being and for communities to get involved with local decision making. Our objectives were to:

- Create, protect and enhance our safe and clean built and green environment
- Support people to improve their health and well-being
- Develop stronger and more resilient communities to enable people to help themselves



Some of our achievements for 2016/17 included:

Create, protect and enhance our safe and clean built and green environment

- Diverting 55.5% of residential waste from landfill (an increase from 55.4% in 2015/16)
- Maintaining clean open spaces to Environment Protection Act standards (87% to standard)
- Adopting a new Design Guide as a Supplementary Planning Document
- Creating or upgrading seven play spaces across the district

Support people to improve their health and well-being

- Increasing attendances at our One Leisure sites and higher numbers participating in our Active Lifestyles activities, which promote physical activity and health
- 290 successful homelessness preventions, including 105 where households were helped into new private sector rented tenancies
- 97% of food premises rated at 3 or above on the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme

Develop stronger and more resilient communities to enable people to help themselves

- Updating our Neighbourhood and Community Planning Guide and working with a number of Town and Parish Councils on Neighbourhood Plans
- Awarding £60,000 Community Chest funding, now claimed by all successful organisations
- Completing competitive tendering process leading to the award of three year funding arrangements for the provision of advice and guidance to residents and capacity building in the voluntary sector

Delivering sustainable growth

We wanted to make Huntingdonshire a better place to work and invest and we wanted to deliver new and appropriate housing. Our objectives were to:

- Accelerate business growth and investment
- Remove infrastructure barriers to growth
- Develop a flexible and skilled local workforce
- Improve the supply of new and affordable housing, jobs and community facilities to meet future need



Some of our achievements for 2016/17 included:

Accelerate business growth and investment

- Delivering the Marketing Strategy, with the Invest Huntingdonshire website and business newsletter the main focus and highlights including interest from a Chinese delegation

Remove infrastructure barriers to growth

- Continued work via the Local Growth Strategy Group to support the LEP, particularly recently with the development of the evidence base for a refresh of their Strategic Economic Plan
- Active input into the delivery stage of the A14 and lobbying for dualling of the A428 and improvements to the A1

Develop a flexible and skilled local workforce

- EDGE partnership work continues with c.100 people currently registered and actively looking for work, 82 already helped into work, 16 into training, 8 to apprenticeships, 1 into volunteering and 4 into self-employment
- An apprenticeship event was held in March and a careers fair in December saw over 700 students attending

Improve the supply of new and affordable housing, jobs and community facilities to meet future need

- Delivering 188 affordable homes, exceeding the target and significantly higher than the 2015/16 outturn (55)
- Housing land supply of 5.24 years confirmed through the Annual Monitoring Report 2016
- Completion and occupation of the first houses and school at Alconbury Weald in September

Becoming a more efficient and effective council

We wanted to continue to deliver value for money services. Our objectives were to:

- Become more efficient in the way we deliver services providing value for money services
- Become a customer focussed organisation



“We are aiming to be self-financing by 2020/21... This is ambitious but we believe that this is good news for the residents of Huntingdonshire”

Councillor Jonathan Gray, Executive Councillor for Strategic Resources

Some of our achievements for 2016/17 included:

Become more efficient in the way we deliver services providing value for money services

- Generating a trading surplus of over £200k from our One Leisure centres despite a fall in income received
- Collecting 98.6% of Council Tax due in year and collecting 99% of Business Rates payable
- Continuing to process new claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support in an average of 23 days, despite a reduction in staffing equivalent to two full-time employees

Become a customer focussed organisation

- Paying 98.5% of invoices within 30 days
- 90% or more of our Call Centre and Customer Service Centre customers were satisfied
- Achieving a 4* rating for our website (one of only 16 shire district councils nationally)
- Increasing our website visitors (up 20%) and social media reach (Twitter followers up by over 40% and Facebook likes up by 50%)

One of the Council’s main focusses in 2017/18 and beyond will be its ‘Mosaic’ transformation programme.

“The Council is moving in the right direction having undergone great change with more ahead. Increasing the pace of modernisation and transformation will enable it to be well positioned for the enabling and delivery of services to residents and businesses.”



MOSAIC

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge report, 2016

