



Cabinet

To the Cabinet on Friday, 31 January 2025

Date of meeting: Monday, 10 February 2025

Time: 18:30 Please note start time.

Venue: The Council Chamber

The Symington Building, Adam and Eve Street, LE16 7AG

Members of the public can access a live broadcast of the meeting from the [Council website](#), and the meeting webpage. The meeting will also be open to the public.

- Information Exchange from Portfolio Holders
- Councillor Champion Update – Heritage Champion
- Topical Issues
 - Questions
 - Petitions
 - Notices of Motion

Agenda

- 1 Apologies for Absence
- 2 Declarations of Members' Interests
- 3 DRAFT Cabinet Minutes 20 January 2025 - to follow
- 4 Final Budget 2025/26 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2026/27 to 2029/30) - to follow
- 5 Corporate Plan 2024-31 3 - 52
- 6 Empty Property Strategy and Council Tax Premiums 53 - 84
- 7 Anti-social Behaviour Policy Refresh 2025 85 - 108
- 8 Bad Debt Write Offs (Revenues and Benefits) 109 - 118

9	Car parking pay and display machine contract award	119	-
		126	
10	Approval to renew four contracts over £50,000 to enable preparation of the new Harborough Local Plan	127	-
		134	
11	Any Urgent Business		
	To be decided by the Chairman.		

JOHN RICHARDSON
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HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Circulate to: Jo Asher - Member, Paul Beadle - Member, Simon Galton - Vice-Chair, Mark Graves - Member, Jim Knight - Member, Phil Knowles - Chairman, Darren Woodiwiss - Member

Any exempt items included on this agenda will be heard in private. They have been included on the agenda as no representations against hearing the items in private were received.

Harborough District Council



Report to Cabinet Meeting of 10th February 2025

Title:	Corporate Plan 2024-31
Status:	Public
Key Decision:	No
Report Author:	L. Elliott, Deputy Chief Executive
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Knowles (Leader) – Strategy
Appendices:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Draft Corporate Plan 2024-312. Corporate Plan Consultation Questionnaire3. Corporate Plan Consultations as of January 2025

Executive Summary

- The current Corporate Plan was approved in February 2022 and runs until 2031.
- In May 2023 a new administration was elected for Harborough district, as a result a light touch review of the Key Activities of the corporate plan was undertaken.
- A refresh of the Corporate Plan was undertaken and, as agreed by Cabinet, public consultation and scrutiny has been completed.
- Cabinet now needs to review the consultation results, make any amendments accordingly and agree the recommendation of the new Corporate Plan to Council.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Review the consultation results on the Draft Corporate Plan 2024-31 and advise of any amendments to the documentation they wish to be made
- Recommend to Council that the Corporate Plan 2024-31 is agreed and adopted.

Reasons for Recommendation

- The Corporate Plan outlines the Council's Vision, Priorities and Critical Outcomes. It is essential to engage with the key stakeholders on its content before it is finalised to help the Council deliver better outcomes for communities, which reflects the views of those affected.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Corporate Plan is an overarching strategy document of Council services. The current Corporate Plan was approved in February 2022.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is for Cabinet to review the consultation responses and amend the draft Corporate Plan as necessary before recommending the final Corporate Plan 2024-31 to Council for agreement.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan is the only plan which covers the full range of the Council's responsibilities and is an important tool to set out the Council's ambitions for the district and helps focus the Council's efforts and resources on the right things.
- 2.2 The Corporate plan was written and agreed for a 10 year period in 2022 running until 2031. The current plan outlines the Council's Vision, Priorities, Critical Outcomes and associated Key Activities. A copy of the current plan can be found at [Our policies, plans and strategies - Corporate Plan | Harborough District Council](#)
- 2.3 Each year a review of the key activities is undertaken during the annual service planning process and presented as the Annual Delivery Plan. They are the operational delivery plans to ensure that the strategic corporate plan objectives are delivered.
- 2.4 In May 2023 a new administration was formed, and a light touch refresh of the key activities was undertaken, with a plan to refresh the corporate plan to reflect the new administration priorities at a later date.

3. Details

- 3.1 During 2024 work has been undertaken to identify the new administration's key priorities for the period of its current term and into the future, aligning to the end date of the current Corporate Plan, 2031.
- 3.2 A refreshed Corporate Plan was created based on these priorities and has undergone public consultation and scrutiny.
- 3.3 A draft of the survey that was used in the consultation is attached at Appendix B. In addition to this, the draft Corporate Plan was a topic for discussion at both the Parish Liaison meeting and Youth Council meeting in January 2025. Officers also encouraged participation in the survey by using contact lists for key stakeholders and residents and through social media. The consultation was also an article in the resident's newsletter that was distributed to every household in the district.
- 3.4 The consultation responses and feedback from other groups are shown in Appendix 3. Public consultation responses were very low at only 27. Further consideration on how to improve public engagement and participation will be considered for the next round of consultation.

4. Implications of Decisions

Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The Corporate Plan and the delivery plan outline the Council's vision and priorities, critical outcomes and associated Key Activities. Developing a fit for purpose Corporate Plan is essential in developing an overarching strategic document. It is the only plan which covers the full range of the council's responsibilities and is an important tool to set out our ambitions for the district and help focus our efforts and resources on the right decisions.

Financial

- 4.2 The Council's Corporate Plan feeds into the Council's budget-setting process. The budget is set in accordance with the Council's Constitution and policy framework. The expenditure proposed is within the statutory powers of the Council.

Legal

- 4.3 The Council's Corporate Plan feeds into the Council's budget-setting process. The budget is set in accordance with the Council's Constitution and policy framework.

Policy

- 4.4 No policy issues arise directly from this report.

Environmental Implications

- 4.5 No environmental issues arise directly from this report.

Risk Management

- 4.6 Risks connected to the Corporate Plan will be identified and incorporated into the Key Activity Risks and will be included in Team Plans as necessary. These will be managed through the Council's performance management database, Pentana Risk.
- 4.7 Risk reports are provided to the Cabinet at regular intervals during each year. A Corporate Risk register can be found at [Corporate Risk portal \(pentanarpm.uk\)](https://pentanarpm.uk).

Equalities Impact

- 4.8 Matters of equality are considered as part of the business planning process. Details of equality actions relating to Key Activities are identified in Team Plans, where appropriate, and monitored via the Council's performance management database. Decisions on major changes to service delivery will have an equality impact assessment undertaken before the decision is taken

Data Protection

- 4.9 No data protection issues arise directly from this report.

5. Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 Not to approve the refreshed Corporate Plan for recommendation to Council - this option was rejected as it would leave the Council without an updated understanding of its priorities.

6. Background papers

- Corporate Plan 2022 - 2031.



Corporate Plan 2024 – 2031

Harborough District Council





One way



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Foreword by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive

I am delighted to introduce this refresh of the council's corporate plan for 2024-31.

Since the district council elections in May 2023, we have focussed resources on making things better for local communities. We have invested £6m into our leisure centres in Lutterworth and Market Harborough and created a £1m community fund to support local communities working with Parish Councils and elected members. We have boosted resource to tackle planning enforcement issues and we are making strides in reducing the council's carbon emissions. Other actions include the creation of a community engagement team to enable the council to work more closely with residents on matters that are important to you.

The refreshed corporate plan sets out the council's vision for the entire Harborough District over the next six years and explains how we plan to deliver this, working alongside other agencies, partners, voluntary and community groups and residents.



The health and wellbeing of our residents is paramount and the plan sets out our ambitions for continuing to improve the mental and physical health and wellbeing of everyone in the district including the delivery of new public open spaces.

We take our responsibility to tackle the climate emergency extremely seriously. We are committed to doing everything we can to deliver the services our residents expect alongside making a positive and proactive contribution to the environment.

We are committed to playing an active role in developing the local economy, supporting our town and village centres and will continue our work to support businesses and employment across the district.

Working alongside community groups, partners and local businesses we will continue to ensure that we help residents across the district live their lives to their full potential.

Cllr Phil Knowles – Leader of Harborough District Council



Despite the challenging national economic picture, Harborough District Council is in an excellent financial position to deliver the services you need when you need them.

We have knowledgeable and effective staff who are committed to doing the very best for business and communities. However, there is always a need to look for better ways of doing things, to transform our services and drive innovation in order to improve outcomes. There are also many challenges ahead including the impact of inflation, increased demand for our services, climate change, and the on-going impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our communities.

This refreshed corporate plan is aligned with the priorities set out by the political leadership of the council, our budget plan, our statutory duties, and grant funding that covers particular programmes and projects up to 2031. We will continue to monitor and review progress of the plan regularly.

Over the next few years we will continue to focus on the needs of our residents and communities, keep a watching brief on emerging national policy and funding, and we will look at ways to transform the council to deliver the best services possible within our remit and resource available. We will also work closely with residents and businesses to improve their local areas and seek new opportunities for their communities.

John Richardson – Chief Executive, Harborough District Council



About this plan

The Corporate Plan is the council's overarching strategic document. It is the only plan which covers the full range of the council's responsibilities and is an important tool to set out our ambitions for the district and help focus our efforts and resources on the right things. This is even more important in the context of constrained budgets, increases in demand and continuous change.

By prioritising a clear set of commitments and actions, the Corporate Plan also helps residents to hold the council to account for its performance and challenge it to improve. The delivery of the plan will be monitored in accordance with the council's performance management framework, reporting through both scrutiny and cabinet on the key activities.

The Corporate Plan informs other key strategies and plans, it does not replace them, but it should shape them whenever they are being updated.

Good strategic planning also means aligning financial and service planning. This plan has been developed alongside the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and will be periodically updated in line with the budgets set by the Council. The Council's Annual Delivery Plan will reflect the coming year's budget and will be refreshed each year accordingly.

How the plan was developed

We have built on the feedback that local people have already provided through ongoing customer feedback and the recent strategy consultations, and we will continue to engage with people and shape our plans. This will be a continuous process of dialogue with our residents to ensure we are meeting their needs and aspirations.

In addition to this feedback, we also considered the following:

- **The needs of our communities:** this is vitally important as the needs of our communities vary across the district. We need to focus on issues in a locally sensitive way.
- **Political priorities:** elected councillors are the representatives of their communities, and they will continue to play a key role in developing policies that support this plan. They will also play a key role in holding the organisation to account against its key commitments.
- **The resources we have available:** this Plan was developed alongside the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The budget report, which can be found on the council's website, includes further details along with specific savings and investment proposals.
- **National objectives and statutory obligations:** we have considered the priorities and resources of national Government and our legal responsibilities.
- **Good practice:** finally, we have considered good practice from other councils as well as from across the wider public sector.



Our vision

Working with our communities, we will build a future for the people of Harborough district that gives them the best life chances and opportunities through:

Community leadership to create a sense of pride in our place

Promoting health and wellbeing and encouraging healthy life choices

Creating a sustainable environment to protect future generations

Supporting businesses and residents to deliver a prosperous local economy

The Council will continue to focus on improving the experience of our customers by looking at the needs of people in our communities, and the places they live in, and to focus on improving how residents interact with the council – everything from waste collection to making a planning application – making sure that we can improve and maintain services for everyone into the future.

Our shared vision will be our guide as we embark on this journey together.

We are driven by our ambition to make the Harborough district a place where our residents can live the best lives they can, not only a place to live, but a place to live well in. We want our businesses and economies to thrive and our environment to be managed in a sustainable way, ensuring the needs of these communities are met and that the district maintains its own local identity and unique surroundings. Whilst we will focus on longer-term prosperity and continued growth of the district and provide clarity on what we want the future to look like, we will also deliver short- and medium-term goals to achieve positive outcomes for all.

Securing a prosperous future for Harborough district is a shared responsibility. As a council, we must be focused on the areas where we can have the biggest impact – but we will work closely with all residents, businesses and other public services.

By encouraging collaboration, community cohesion and giving all an opportunity to participate, we will achieve more than any single organisation or a person could achieve working alone. As a council, we will be working to understand our communities' needs and ensuring they have easy access to services that address those needs, whilst promoting healthy life choices, improving wellbeing and a thriving local economy.

Working together, we will shape our district to be an outstanding destination for both business and leisure. This will involve a focus on place shaping and design to preserve what is special about our area whilst embracing future sustainable developments, and reinvigorating our local economies and communities.

Underpinning our ambitious vision, the council-led transformational change programme will focus on working with residents, businesses, and other public services to put robust plans in place and then on delivering those plans. This will be an evolving process which will take time to implement and for the benefits to be fully realised, so, we must all be committed to playing our part.

Within the council, continuous improvement, financial sustainability, value for money, and a relentless focus on resident and business needs will be the new normal. Our services will need to respond more quickly to changes in need and we will work to ensure that we empower residents and businesses to help themselves where possible. The council will lead and advocate for change and collaborate with others to meet local needs where required. Where it is needed, it will move quickly and respond effectively.

To inform this change, we will look to use best practice and modern local government models from across the country and as our communities and local businesses grow and develop, the council will adapt and change to meet the future demands and expectations of our residents.



How the Council will change for you

Our staff have shown great resilience to maintain the quality of our services, whilst also addressing the constraints on resources, in addition to the increasing demand for those services. We have invested where we can in extra resources to ensure we are delivering on our promises to our residents.

We will use this plan to shape service delivery for the future, building on these foundations and continue to support the residents and businesses of our district.

1

Underpinning this ambitious vision, a **Council-led transformational change programme** will focus on working alongside residents, businesses, and other key stakeholders to put a robust plan in place and then on delivering that plan.

2

Within the Council, **continuous improvement, financial sustainability, value for money, and focusing on resident and business needs** will be the new normal. Our services will need to respond quickly to changes in need and we will work to ensure that we empower residents and businesses to help themselves where possible. Where the Council does not need to be involved it should not be. Where it is needed, it will move quickly and respond effectively.

3

To inform this change, we will look to **use best practice** and modern local government models from across the country and as our communities and local businesses grow and develop, the Council will adapt and change to meet the future demands and expectations of our residents.



Where we are now

Harborough, located in the heart of England, has a heritage to be proud of, the most picturesque villages and countryside, unique market towns, iconic historic sites, thriving businesses and independent shops.

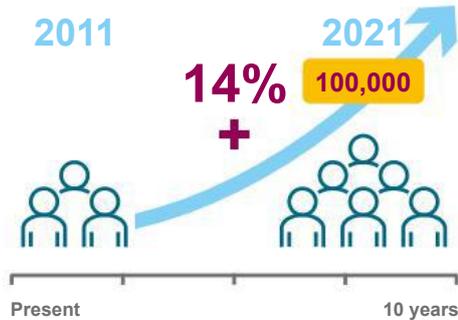
But as we look to the future, we must start with a clear understanding of the challenges we face. Only with a clear understanding of exactly where we are as a District can we hope to deliver on the aspirational change set out in this Plan.

Social profile update 2024/25

What the data tells us

What it means for us

Population Growth



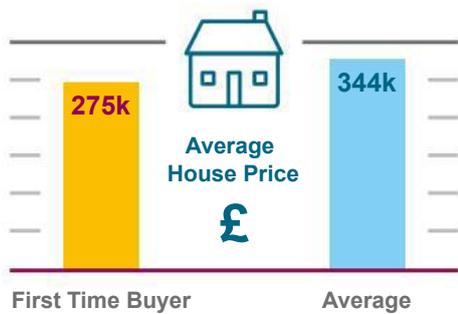
Latest population estimates are just above **100,000**. In the census of 2021, Harborough population had grown by 14%.

Increased demands for services due to demographic changes – Harborough has a population which is both growing and living longer, this is good news, but it does increase demand for public services and puts additional pressure on the infrastructure available.

What the data tells us

What it means for us

Housing Growth

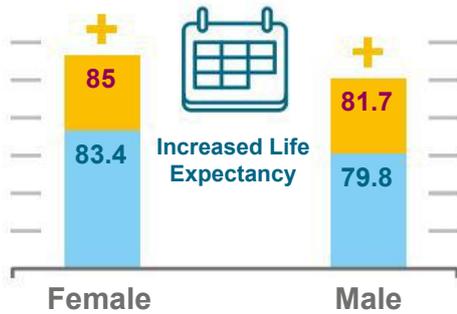


44,413 households were recorded in the 2021 census, a rise of 21% on previous census.

Average house price in May 24 was £344,000, the average first time buyer paying £275,000.

Increased demands for services, however increased revenue from council tax. Ensuring homes are affordable and that there is a selection of housing types should be evidenced in the local plan and housing strategy.

Life Expectancy



Life expectancy levels above the national average:

Females 85 (Eng 83.4) and Males 81.7 (Eng 79.8)

Harborough district population is rising in the over 65yr category and accounts for 22% of the population.

25.7% of over 16yrs are retired.

Long and healthy lives are enjoyed by residents of Harborough District. The council needs to recognise and plan how to meet the needs of an aging population.

Life Satisfaction

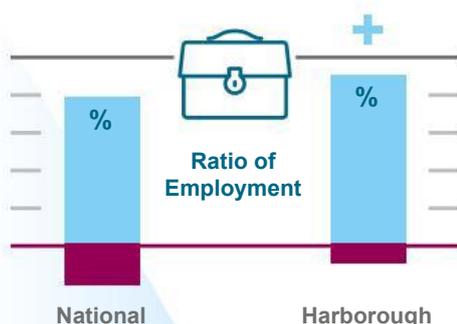
(surveyed by Leicestershire County Council)



94.7% of people say they feel satisfied with Harborough as their place to live.

Councils play a significant role in enhancing the life satisfaction of their residents. Strategies and policy's to promote accessibility to green space, leisure and tourism, employment and recreation all help make life more satisfying.

Employment



Modelled unemployment rate is 3% which is lower than UK average of 3.4%. 80% of people 16-65 are employed. Higher than the national average of 76.8%.

Sustained efforts by the council to keep employment levels high by encouraging the right environments for employment.

Climate

(surveyed by Leicestershire County Council)



Climate ambition of Net Zero by 2030

68.2% of people in Harborough feel they have **made a change to their lifestyle to help climate change**. Strategy and policy's to promote behavioural change are used by the council to create a sustainable future for Harborough such as waste and recycling, electric charging point accessibility.

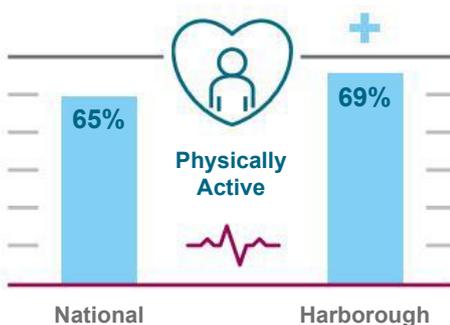
Emissions



Carbon Dioxide Emissions have reduced per capita by 39.5% since 2005, however remain relatively high, compared to those in Leicestershire and the East Midlands. More than half of emissions are attributable to the transport sector.

The council works with Partners to monitor and effectively manage air quality.

Health



87.3% of the population described their health as good or very good in census 2021 - (82.8% very good).

69% of adults are physically active higher than UK average of 65%.

The level of preventable circulatory diseases is 23% which is lower than the national average of 28.2%.

The council will Advocate healthy lifestyles and choices to improve health and wellbeing, and ultimately quality of life for residents.



Our outcomes, key activities, and performance indicators

We are embarking on an ambitious programme of change to deliver what our residents need over the coming years. We need clear priorities to achieve our vision as a thriving place where everyone is given a chance to flourish. We are determined to improve the life chances for everyone. This means closing the gap for the most vulnerable members of our communities and ensuring everyone has the opportunity to realise their full potential.

The Corporate Plan looks to deliver outcomes across four principal areas.

Place and community – ensuring there is housing to meet local needs of all ages, that growth provides employment and is designed well, recognising the rural nature of the district and that communities are involved in how that growth is shaped.

Healthy lives – giving the guidance and support to all our residents to make healthy life choices, to live longer healthier independent lives, not only physically but in good mental health too.

Environment and sustainability – enhancing and protecting our natural environment with improved access to open and green spaces, addressing climate issues proactively looking to future sustainable options and reducing environmental crime to further protect the environment.

Economy – that local employment options are available to allow residents to prosper in our district, developing and retaining the skills our employers need and supporting businesses to be successful, promoting the area to both employees, employers, and visitors to ensure a stable future economy.

The Plan identifies a clear set of outcomes and actions that will be taken for every priority to guide the council's development and to help deliver the necessary transformational change.

Our ambition for the medium term

The Coalition administration here at Harborough District Council has over the last year taken time to understand what the council is doing to support its residents and businesses, but more importantly what it can do to enhance and improve this going forwards. The residents voted for change in May 2023 and the coalition is committed to making changes that make a difference to the lives of the residents it serves.

The administration commends the work that all the staff and members of the council have been doing, and continue to do, to support people and deliver services.

The current Corporate Plan gives some structure to the high-level ambitions and priorities that the council needs to achieve. The new administration has reviewed its own priorities and has agreed a strategic direction it wishes to take forwards. This direction is not to change the current plan but to put further emphasis on some of the priorities which align to the mandate given by the people and the political manifestos and pledges of the coalition parties.

Our ambition is to ensure the highest quality of life for all our residents, supporting their needs and wellbeing, and having a positive impact on how they live. We want to make the people of our district proud and prosperous and that our district remains a great place to live, work and visit.

We will lead the district with confidence, aligned to our values, making decisions that are right for our people, our place, and our planet. We will put our customers at the heart of all we do, making sure that what we do is focused on their needs.

The coalition commits to:

- Supporting businesses and prosperity for all
- Supporting the needs of residents, especially those that are vulnerable
- Strengthening our communities and our links with them
- Taking care of the environment and providing a sustainable future
- Tackling climate change in our own actions, and encouraging others to do the same
- Improving the housing choices and availability across the district, to allow our residents to remain in the district in safe communities and affordable homes
- Promote sustainable growth, preserving the nature of the district and ensuring the impacts of growth are mitigated as far as possible
- Advocate healthy lifestyles and choices to improve health and wellbeing, and ultimately quality of life for residents
- Creating a place that supports the needs of residents and businesses to live well, work and thrive in our area

To do this we will invest in our people and places, both through our own service delivery and use of our assets, but also through investment in our communities to help them become more resilient. We have already put in place several schemes to do this and will continue to do so.

To allow us to do this we will look to make sure that our own organisation runs as smoothly and efficiently as possible, so that we can make sure that we maximise the resources and look for further funding to put into our people and places. We are in a sound financial position, which allows us to focus on community need as well as our long-term sustainability.

We will need to work collaboratively with others, such as our businesses, voluntary sector, and community partners to boost our opportunity for improvement. As a coalition we are founded on sharing and collaborating for the greater good of the people we serve, and this aligns with our values and principles. We want to work together to shape our place according to the need of those that live in it, and to build community relationships to take advantage of the skills and passions that are outside our own organisation.

We will focus our own resources and assets to deliver for the district, across all areas and communities. We will lobby for improvements where we feel that changes need to be made that are outside our control.

We will ensure that we consider the impacts on the environment and climate change in all we do, and it will become a key consideration in decision making, further enhancing our Net Zero pledges, and encourage and incentivise others to follow our lead.

In doing this we will ensure we;

- Communicate regularly with our communities, sharing information and maintaining transparency
- Undertake meaningful engagement to understand both the needs and aspirations of our people, enhancing and ensuring effective scrutiny is in place
- Give our residents and businesses easy access to our services, in line with their needs, using our assets and resources effectively and efficiently.
- Listen and respond to concerns
- Include communities in shaping policies that impact on them
- Deliver excellent quality value for money services, learning from best practice and continually improving service delivery and customer experiences
- Maintain an inclusive approach and consider the social value of our actions
- Promote good relationships with members, officers and our communities using champions and dedicated portfolio holders to promote the work we are doing and maintain a constructive dialogue with all parties on different options and opinions, ensuring the best outcomes and decisions are achieved

The coalition is committed to delivering all the outcomes outlined in the Corporate Plan over the long term. However, there are a number of those that have a more pressing need for delivery. Those that we will focus on in the coming years have been marked with **(MTP)** to indicate a medium-term priority. The Council's Annual Delivery Plan shows which Key Activities will be delivered in the short term.

Place and community

Priority 1: Community leadership to create a sense of pride and belonging

Where we live and our local community is central to our quality of life. We are fortunate that our district is largely prosperous, and most people live in good neighbourhoods, with strong community involvement and valuable community facilities. However, there are some areas we need to improve and strengthen such as: increasing involvement and access to services for our communities and supporting and safeguarding the most vulnerable.

We want to really listen to residents, understand their needs and recognise their strengths. We will improve our methods of engagement, ensuring we address needs in a consistent way, and put in place easily accessible ways to receive and provide information to keep our residents informed, using technology to effectively connect with our communities.



We will create a sense of pride in our district by ensuring that we build and create new, resilient communities that recognise the unique nature of the district, with a strong focus on good design to ensure developments are in line with our agreed planning guidance. We will look to ensure that housing across a range of prices and tenures is available to meet local demand and help our residents to remain in the district.

We will continue to address community safety issues, tackling anti-social behaviour and crime through strong and appropriate action, in partnership with our partners and communities.

We will seek to be as inclusive as possible with all communities across the whole district and will continue to engage and support those with specific needs on access to our services, recognising the diversity of the district and its residents.

The people who live and work in our district, and who make up our communities, are at the heart of all we do as a council, and we will strive to ensure we meet their needs as they grow and develop. We will do this by working alongside the residents and assisting them to thrive.

What we want to achieve, our critical outcomes

- **CO1: (MTP)** There will be an adequate supply of housing to meet local needs across all tenures and price ranges, and reducing the potential for homelessness
- **CO2: (MTP)** Our local plan will ensure growth in the area is balanced with employment opportunities and transport and infrastructure needs are met
- **CO3:** The rural nature of the district will be recognised, and our heritage and cultural assets are preserved
- **CO4: (MTP)** Our local communities, the voluntary and charitable sector are more engaged and actively managing their own localities and shaping their own places
- **CO5:** The district will be shaped through good design, that addresses local needs and promotes healthier life choices

Healthy lives

Priority 2: “Promoting health and wellbeing and encouraging healthy life choices”

We want all our residents to live healthy, active lives. Our Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be developed to ensure that throughout all stages of their lives our residents have access to services that will help them to do this, to start well, to live well and to age well. We will not only focus on physical wellness but also mental health, the environment we live in and our lifestyle choices.

Healthy outcomes for our residents will be supported through the provision of services that promote living well and encourage positive lifestyle choices, many of which will be delivered close to the communities that need them.

What we want to achieve, our critical outcomes

- **CO6:** Our residents will be able to live more independent lives, with the right support and guidance in place to allow this
- **CO7:** The aging local population will have access to services that help them to live well for longer
- **CO8: (MTP)** Activity will be increased, through the use of active travel routes and the provision of a varied leisure offer throughout the district
- **CO9: (MTP)** The district will have improved public safety and confidence, through the use of community safety initiatives and tackling crime together with our partners
- **CO10: (MTP)** Physical and mental health needs will be addressed to prevent crisis and support those that are the most vulnerable in our communities, including those that face loneliness, food, and fuel poverty and those that need support to remain in their own homes

Environment and sustainability

Priority 3: “Creating a sustainable environment to protect future generations”

The council has a clear ambition to address the climate emergency and has put in place an action plan, which supplements this plan, to do this. We will look to reduce our carbon footprint and manage our resources in a sustainable way, as well as encouraging others to do the same.

We want to create an outstanding natural environment, developing our parks and open spaces and promoting green travel solutions, such as increasing the number of electric vehicles charging points across the whole district. We will also promote the biodiversity of our area, respecting the rural nature, and promoting the green and open spaces as places where nature can flourish.

We will proactively challenge and enforce against environmental crimes, such as littering and fly tipping, and promoting responsible behaviours that reduce waste and encourage recycling. We are committed to providing a cleaner, greener district for everyone to enjoy.

What we want to achieve, our outcomes

- **CO11: (MTP)** Our natural environment will be protected and enhanced, with improved access to green open spaces and increased biodiversity
- **CO12: (MTP)** In line with our climate action plan, our carbon footprint will be reduced, ensuring a sustainable future
- **CO13:** Environmental crime will be reduced, and enforcement will continue to be used to achieve this
- **CO14: (MTP)** Green practices, such as energy provision and recycling, will be positively encouraged and usage increased across the district to help meet our net zero targets
- **CO15: (MTP)** We will have robust plans in place to ensure the long-term sustainability of the council, maximising the use of our resources and assets to create community benefits
- **CO16:** The environmental impacts of growth are mitigated as far as practically possible

Economy

Priority 4: “Supporting businesses and residents to deliver a prosperous local economy”

Over the last few years our local economy has been significantly impacted by the ongoing pandemic. The council has supported businesses and residents throughout this period and will continue to drive our economic recovery and growth in the future. A vibrant economy will attract new businesses, which in turn will provide more jobs and opportunities for our residents and encourage further growth and investment across our district.

The council will continue to look to improve town centers and local business centers, so that they become high-quality places to live and work, providing opportunities to retain local talent and skills and improve social mobility.

By providing local opportunities, supporting businesses and employers, and investing in our town centres we will create places that attract and retain people who want to invest, live, work, and visit our area.

What we want to achieve, our critical outcomes

- **CO17:** Local employment average salary levels are sufficient to allow residents to live and work locally, retaining our skilled workforce for the benefit of our local economy
- **CO18: (MTP)** Skills and education opportunities for the young are promoted to allow them increased access to employment opportunities
- **CO19: (MTP)** Enterprise and innovation are supported, helping businesses to adapt and survive and to sustain our local economies
- **CO20:** Inward investment is targeted to increase local opportunities and regeneration of our town centres and growth in business communities
- **CO21:** Tourism is increased through the showcasing of our local culture and heritage
- **CO22:** Growth in SMEs (Small and Medium sized Enterprise) and business start-ups is stimulated through guidance and support, in partnership with our local partners
- **CO23: (MTP)** Working with partners a wide range of local employment opportunities are generated for the future growth and prosperity of the area

What we will do to measure this; our key activity and how we measure success

We are accountable for the delivery of the outcomes contained within this plan and will ensure that the delivery and performance against these will be fully reported and scrutinised through the production of an Annual Delivery Plan. The Annual Delivery Plan will be refreshed each year to reflect the work already done and the changes and development of innovative approaches to service delivery, based on engagement and feedback from our customers and partners.

We will remain transparent in our reporting of performance through quarterly updates and scrutiny review and will demonstrate with Key Performance Indicators our measures of success. This will ensure that there is a link between the work we are doing towards key activities and the outcomes in the Corporate Plan. Our plans will be ambitious but deliverable.

We will develop the use of information and external data to further demonstrate how our actions are impacting on the residents of the district and to help inform the future direction of the Corporate Plan and our Key Activities. As we will not have full control over these outcomes and some are long term trends, we will look to measure this through the direction of travel and as such these will not have specific targets assigned to them. However, monitoring them will identify trends over time and changes we might need to react to.





The journey ahead

The corporate plan sets out our ambitions for the future of the district. To turn this ambition into reality we need to work together with all our communities and partners in an integrated approach to place shaping and community development.

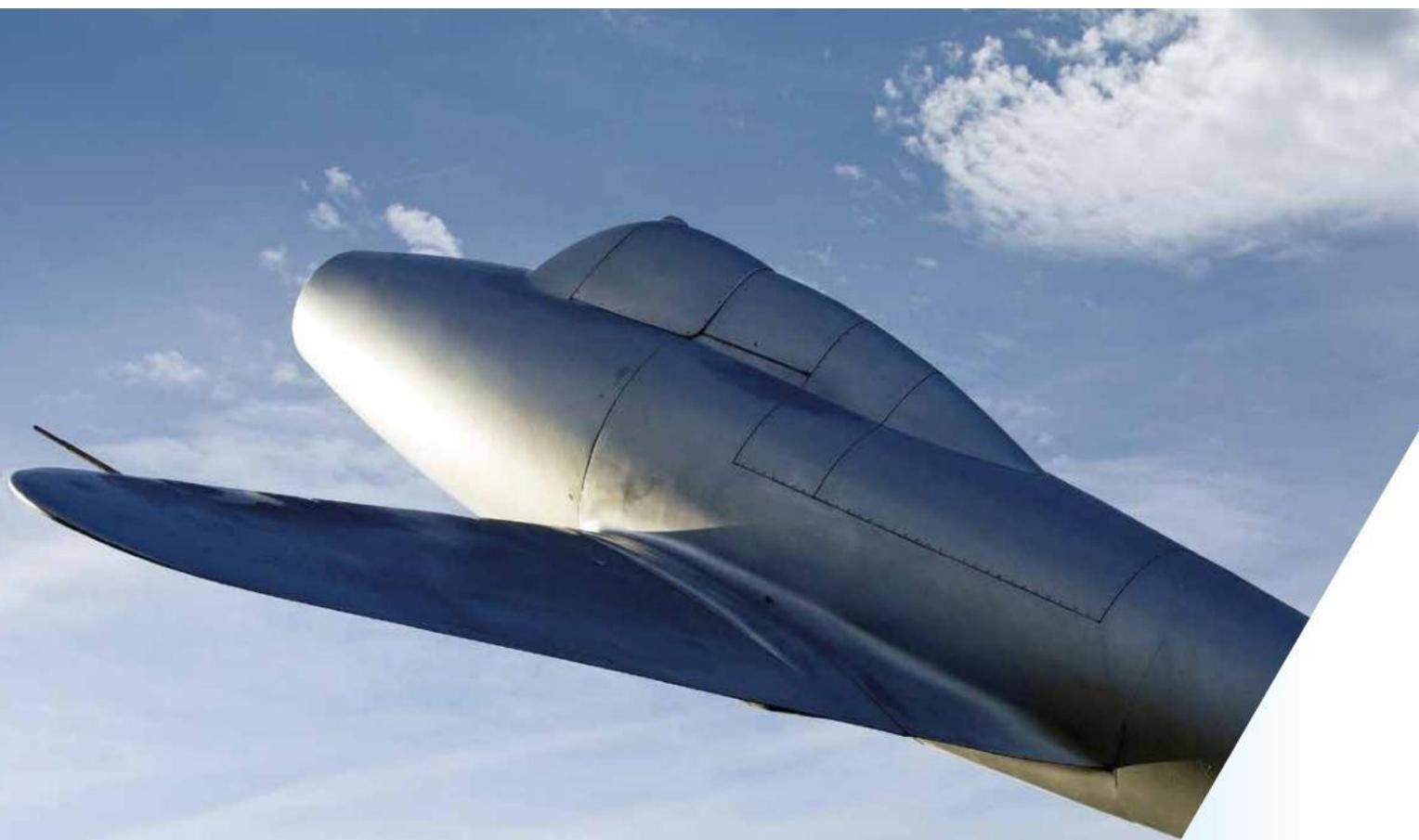
We will be looking to develop a new place shaping narrative and a community commitment to developing those who are vested in the area, delivering for our residents and with our communities, with the long term interests of our place, our people and our planet at its heart.

The council will monitor the delivery of the outcomes and activities it has set itself, taking action to ensure that our commitments are met in line with the policies and strategies we have agreed.

Our culture, values and behaviours will be an essential part of implementing this plan and depends on having the right people and skills in place. We need to retain, recruit, and develop our staff to deliver the best services for our residents and businesses. Member development will be equally important as councillors are the elected representatives of our residents and the conduit for those residents to hold the council to account.

In addition to this, we need to transform our services and structures to put customers at the heart of all we do, generating efficiencies, maximising the use of our assets, and ensuring all our decisions are transparent and based on sound evidence. We live in an ever changing environment and need to keep up to date in the way we deliver services and work with our communities, and as such we will look at how we can ensure there is easy access to our services, in a way that reflects modern practices and customers needs, using our assets and technology to help deliver this.

We believe that we can deliver this ambitious plan, that will transform the lives of our residents, underpinned by our commitment to do the very best for the people of our district.





Let's do it together

We all have a stake in our district's future. We invite everyone – people, community groups, organisations of every sort, whether public, private, or voluntary – to make a commitment to fully embrace the change we all want to see. Everyone has a right to access high-quality services and live in a thriving, healthy and green place. In return, we also have responsibilities to our district and to our local communities.

We will:

- 1 Treat you well and fairly:** we will provide you with the best possible public services with the resources we have. We will always respond promptly when you contact us, resolve issues as quickly as possible, and treat everyone with respect and fairness. We will be transparent about our decisions.
- 2 Let you decide what is best for you:** we will always look to involve you in decisions that affect your life.
- 3 Fight your corner:** if you have complex problems in your life, we will work with you to help you live your best life. No one will need to deal with their problems in isolation.
- 4 Be lean and use our resources well:** as we face financial challenges, we will look for efficiencies internally before we cut any services. We will deliver the best value for money we can.
- 5 Innovate:** we will create a culture which promotes innovation, always looking for ways to improve our services and our relationship with communities and individuals.

Help us by:

- 1 Doing your bit to make Harborough green, clean and safe:** keep your local neighbourhood clean and tidy through not littering, graffitiing, or fly-tipping. Make more sustainable choices, recycle, and minimise your waste. If you can walk or cycle instead of driving, then do it – protect the environment and your own health.
- 2 Having a healthy lifestyle:** from staying active to having a balanced diet, there are multiple ways to improve your health and wellbeing. Embrace them!
- 3 Contributing to your community:** there are many ways to leave a positive mark on your community: volunteer, become a mentor to someone who would benefit from your experience, donate blood, organise a charitable event, help your neighbours.
- 4 Choosing Harborough:** choose Harborough as a place to live, work and play. Spend your money locally and support local businesses. If you are a local business, invest locally and employ local people.
- 5 Talking to us:** have a say in decisions that affect you and let us know if we are not delivering what we promised.

Get in touch

Be involved in shaping the future of Harborough:

Visit our website: www.harborough.gov.uk

Email us: customer.services@harborough.gov.uk

Keep in touch – sign up to our online newsletters:

For residents: www.harborough.gov.uk/newsletter

For businesses: www.harborough.gov.uk/business-newsletter

Call us: 01858 828282 (available from 8am to 5pm - closed for training from 9am to 9.30am on Wednesdays)

Text: 07860 041 908

Write to us at: Harborough District Council, The Symington Building, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 7AG

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Adam and Eve Street,
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Leicestershire,
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Email: customer.services@harborough.gov.uk

Cover and back cover photos, and images on
pages 4, 8 and 10 @Osborne Photography

Corporate Plan 2024-2031, Consultation of the key Priorities and Critical Outcomes

* Required

* This form will record your name, please fill your name.

The corporate plan is a key document for the council, enter text

Your opinion is important to us - please take 10 minutes to complete this survey before XXX January 2025

1. How much do you agree with the council's vision statement: Our vision is working with our communities, we will build a future for the people of Harborough district that gives them the best life chances and opportunities through: *

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Neutral
Community Leadership to create a sense of pride in our place	<input type="radio"/>				
Promoting health and wellbeing and encouraging healthy life choices	<input type="radio"/>				
Creating a sustainable environment to protect future generations	<input type="radio"/>				
Supporting businesses and residents to deliver a prosperous local economy	<input type="radio"/>				

2. Please rank the priorities (by using the up and down arrows) in the order of importance to you: *

Community Leadership to create a sense of pride in our place

Promoting health and wellbeing and encouraging healthy life choices

Creating a sustainable environment to protect future generations

Supporting businesses and residents to deliver a prosperous local economy

3. Given the Social Profile on page xxx do you agree that these 4 priorities should be the focus for the Corporate plan 2024-2031? *

Yes

No

4. If you answered No to question 2, are there any other priorities you think are important for the council to deliver over the period of the Corporate plan 2024-2031? *

5. How much do you agree/disagree that these mid term critical outcomes are the most important to support the "Community Leadership to create a sense of pride in our place" priority? (found on page xx): *

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Neutral
There will be an adequate supply of housing to meet local needs across all tenures and price ranges, and reducing the potential for homelessness	<input type="radio"/>				
Our local plan will ensure growth in the area is balanced with employment opportunities and transport and infrastructure needs are met	<input type="radio"/>				
Our local communities, the voluntary and charitable sector are more engaged and actively managing their own localities and shaping their own places	<input type="radio"/>				

6. How much do you agree/disagree that these mid term critical outcomes are the most important to the support the "Promoting health and wellbeing and encouraging a healthy life choice" priority? (found on page XX) *

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Neutral
Activity will be increased, through the use of active travel routes and the provision of a varied leisure offer throughout the district	<input type="radio"/>				
The district will have improved public safety and confidence, through the use of community safety initiatives and tackling crime together with our partners	<input type="radio"/>				
Physical & mental health needs will be addressed to prevent crisis & support those that are the most vulnerable in our communities, including those that face loneliness, food, and fuel poverty and those that need support to remain in their own homes	<input type="radio"/>				

7. How much do you agree/disagree that these mid term critical outcomes are the most important outcomes to support the "Creating a sustainable environment to protect the future" priority? (See page xx) *

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Neutral
Our natural environment will be protected and enhanced, with improved access to green open spaces and increased biodiversity	<input type="radio"/>				
In line with our climate action plan, our carbon footprint will be reduced, ensuring a sustainable future	<input type="radio"/>				
Green practices, such as energy provision and recycling, will be positively encouraged and usage increased across the district to help meet our net zero targets	<input type="radio"/>				
We will have robust plans in place to ensure the long-term sustainability of the council, maximising the use of our resources and assets to create community benefits	<input type="radio"/>				

8. How much do you agree/disagree that these mid term critical outcomes are the most important to the support the "Business and residents to deliver a prosperous economy" priority? (see page xx) *

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral
Skills and education opportunities for the young are promoted to allow them increased access to employment opportunities	<input type="radio"/>				
Enterprise and innovation are supported, helping businesses to adapt and survive and to sustain our local economies	<input type="radio"/>				
Working with partners a wide range of local employment opportunities are generated for the future growth and prosperity of the area	<input type="radio"/>				

9. What other critical outcomes would you consider important for the council to deliver over the mid term period of the Corporate plan? *

10. How would you prefer to be involved in the decision making process? *

- Complete consultations on policies of the council
- Discuss issues with the local ward councillor
- Be part of a focus group
-

11. How would you prefer to find out about the key successes of the Corporate Plan? *

- In the council's residents' newsletter
- Via the local Media
- Council social media accounts
- Council's website
- Council's Committee papers/process
- Other

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Appendix 3 - Corporate plan Consultation Summary as of January 2025

Online consultation

An online consultation was launched on the 26th November 24, on the councils website at [Corporate plan 2024 - consultation - Consultation - Harborough District Council](#). The online survey has been promoted via the District Councils social media channels, as well as within the resident newsletter. Other avenues that were utilized include the Community's Team Newsletter and throughout other networks such as the community safety partnership, health and wellbeing partnership, grant applicants and community groups.

Overall, there have only been 27 responses to the online consultation and a summary of the information gathered is presented in more detail in annex 1.

A summary is presented here:

	Critical outcome	% Agree (combined score strongly and agree)
CO1	Adequate supply of housing across tenures	51
O2	Local plan balancing growth, employment, transport and infrastructure	66
CO4	Communities managing and shaping places	79
CO8	Increasing activity through active travel and leisure	79
CO9	Improved public safety	79
CO10	Meeting physical and mental health needs	74
CO11	Natural environment protected and enhanced	80
CO12	Climate action plan and reducing carbon footprint	48
CO14	Green practices such as energy provision and recycling encouraged	67
CO 15	Plans in place for a sustainability Council	71

CO18	Young people's skills and education	78
CO19	Supporting enterprise and innovation	78
CO23	Generating employment opportunities	81

Parish Liaison Meeting

During the parish liaison meeting on the 13th January 2025, 18 parish councilors or parish meeting contacts attended the online meeting where the Corporate Plan and consultation was discussed, and a workshop run to establish their top priorities in terms of the critical outcomes. The top three critical outcomes they would like to see focused on in 2025/2027 are below;

CO1	Adequate supply of housing across tenures	4
CO2	Local plan balancing growth, employment, transport and infrastructure	4
CO4	Communities managing and shaping places	5
CO8	Increasing activity through active travel and leisure	2
CO9	Improved public safety	4
CO10	Meeting physical and mental health needs	4
CO11	Natural environment protected and enhanced	2
CO12	Climate action plan and reducing carbon footprint	2
CO14	Green practices such as energy provision and recycling encouraged	1
CO 15	Plans in place for a sustainability Council	0
CO18	Young people's skills and education	3
CO19	Supporting enterprise and innovation	2
CO23	Generating employment opportunities	2

Youth Council Consultation

On Thursday 30th January the council held its first Youth Council meeting. 25 Young people from across Harborough Secondary Schools took part in an interactive session about the corporate plan critical outcomes, to find out what areas are the most important to young people in the district,

10 key themes were presented to young people to discuss and stickers were used to identify the critical outcomes that are most important. The top 5 areas are (ranked highest to lowest)

CO18	Young people's skills and education	
CO12	Climate action plan and reducing carbon footprint	
CO10	Meeting physical and mental health needs	
CO11	Natural environment protected and enhanced	
CO1	Adequate supply of housing across tenures	

Conclusion

Whilst the top ranking critical outcome was slightly different between the different consultee groups there was a strong emphasis from both the online consultation and focus groups on the Environment, seeing the preservation of the area and tackling climate change as important and Skills and employment.

Annex 1

Priorities in rank order

3. Please rank the priorities (by using the up and down arrows) in the order of importance to you:

[More details](#)



Critical Outcomes

6. How much do you agree/disagree that these mid term critical outcomes are the most important to support the "Community Leadership to create a sense of pride in our place" priority? (found on page 21):

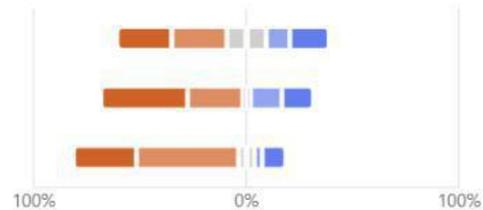
[More details](#)

● Strongly Agree ● Agree ● Disagree ● Strongly disagree ● Neutral

There will be an adequate supply of housing to meet local needs across all tenures and price ranges, and reducing the potential fo...

Our local plan will ensure growth in the area is balanced with employment opportunities and transport and infrastructure nee...

Our local communities, the voluntary and charitable sector are more engaged and actively managing their own localities and...



7. How much do you agree/disagree that these mid term critical outcomes are the most important to support the "Promoting health and wellbeing and encouraging a healthy life choice" priority? (found on page 22)

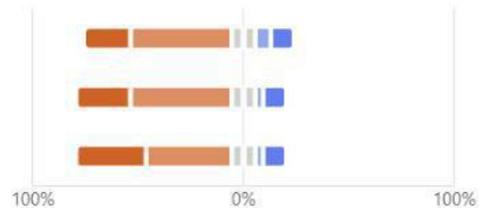
[More details](#)

● Strongly Agree ● Agree ● Disagree ● Strongly disagree ● Neutral

Activity will be increased, through the use of active travel routes and the provision of a varied leisure offer throughout the district

The district will have improved public safety and confidence, through the use of community safety initiatives and tackling crim...

Physical & mental health needs will be addressed to prevent crisis & support those that are the most vulnerable in our communitie...



8. How much do you agree/disagree that these mid term critical outcomes are the most important outcomes to support the "Creating a sustainable environment to protect the future" priority? (See page 23)

[More details](#)

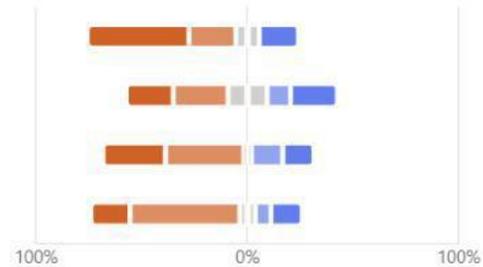
● Strongly Agree ● Agree ● Disagree ● Strongly disagree ● Neutral

Our natural environment will be protected and enhanced, with improved access to green open spaces and increased biodiversity

In line with our climate action plan, our carbon footprint will be reduced, ensuring a sustainable future

Green practices, such as energy provision and recycling, will be positively encouraged and usage increased across the district to...

We will have robust plans in place to ensure the long-term sustainability of the council, maximising the use of our resources...



9. How much do you agree/disagree that these mid term critical outcomes are the most important to the support the "Business and residents to deliver a prosperous economy" priority? (see page 24)

[More details](#)

● Strongly Agree ● Agree ● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral

Skills and education opportunities for the young are promoted to allow them increased access to employment opportunities

Enterprise and innovation are supported, helping businesses to adapt and survive and to sustain our local economies

Working with partners a wide range of local employment opportunities are generated for the future growth and prosperit...



Summary of comments on other areas of Focus for the Council : -

- Remove all aspects of the Net Zero/Climate Change scam and concentrate on real world issues
- Proper consideration for communities outside of Market Harborough. The plans rarely reflect the reality of what this council does.
- Spending council tax sensibly
- explore the creation of a Town council to strengthen the communities voice
- No housing in already over developed villages
- Address the issue that most residents feel the town is growing population wise but the infrastructure development is lagging behind. Roads and schools need investment, flooding is still a problem. How will these be addressed specifically rather than in very broad generalisations as expressed in this document?
- Kibworth By-Pass

- Limit on housebuilding to avoid areas being swamped and losing their individual identity
- Inclusion of the whole community, including those on the outskirts of the 'map', having a 'critical mass' centered around the town isolates and disengages those on the edges who increasingly rely on neighbouring districts for leisure, growth, health, exercise, etc
- Better transport
- Growth of the district requires match funding to support infrastructure development in lock-step. Currently, building on greenfield sites is continuing apace without necessary scaling up of the surrounding infrastructure.
- Transport and access to town centers from rural locations, including, but not limited to, on demand bus systems, increased parking access, improved roads
- Improving the efficiency of the Council. Ending homelessness.
- protecting heritage and landscape
- Avoid above inflation increases in Council Tax
- Support for older people in the district
- Further emphasis on Ecological Development
- A greater emphasis on local opinion in major planning decisions
- Health care provision and flood provision
- Ensure that the town is safe litter free and welcoming to visitors
- New housing must be supported by sufficient services in that locality e.g doctors, shops, schools, pubs / restaurants
- get on with delivering services - don't waste time on putting together these glossy brochures than men nothing to us ordinary people - cant imagine how much staff time and cost were put into this which could have been written on one page of A 4 and its very doubtful if even that was needed. Let's get back to true values and deliver the services the public pay you for

Scrutiny Committee feedback

A joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting was held on 22 January 2025 which reviewed the Draft Corporate Plan.

The approach to consultation was discussed considering only 27 responses were received and what could be done in future consultations to encourage greater participation. The Scrutiny meeting suggested having more opportunities to engage directly with residents in face-to-face settings. The survey questions also needed to be made easier to understand and respond to.

Other comments were that the document was “wordy” although the pictures and info graphics used this time were an improvement. The language also needed to be simplified so it could be more easily understood, focused more on what the council actually does and what residents' needs and priorities are. The Key activities and performance indicators that had previously been included will be shown in a separate Annual Delivery Plan to be agreed by Cabinet later in the year.

It was suggested that locations need to be added to the pictures so that it was clear where they were and how they related to the district. This will be done for the final version presented to Council.

Youth Council Feedback to be added

Harborough District Council

Report to Cabinet Meeting of 10th February 2025



Title:	Empty Property Strategy and Council Tax Premiums
Status:	Public
Key Decision:	Yes
Report Author:	Elaine Bird Head of Regulatory Services
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Knight – Portfolio for Wellbeing
Appendices:	A. Empty Property Strategy B. Feedback from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Summary

Members will recall that at January's Cabinet¹ they gave their agreement to consult on the Draft Empty Property Strategy and the proposals relating various Council Tax Premiums. The consultation took two parts; firstly members were consulted via the Joint Budget Overview & Scrutiny Panel meeting on 22 January; their conclusions are shown at Appendix B. Secondly, a public consultation started on 21 January 2025 concluded on 10 February 2025. A verbal update on the conclusions will be given at this meeting.

Recommendations

That Cabinet

1. Approve the Draft Empty Property Strategy as set out in Appendix A
2. Approves
 - i) PROPOSAL 1 – From 1st April 2025, remove one month 100% Council Tax Discount for empty unoccupied and unfurnished empty properties and charge full Council Tax from point of ownership.
 - ii) PROPOSAL 2 – From 1st April 2025, charge properties empty for one to five years, twice standard Council Tax (200%). Empty Properties for five to ten years, three times standard Council Tax (300%). Empty properties ten years or more, four times standard Council Tax (400%)
 - iii) PROPOSAL 3- From 1st April 2026 second homeowners would pay double Council Tax (a 100% surcharge) from day one.

Reasons for Recommendations

- iv) The updated empty homes strategy and the changes to council tax premiums, discounts and exemptions should help to incentivise the owners of respective empty or second homes to bring them back into residential use.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To report back to Cabinet the outcome of the consultation on the empty property strategy and review of the Council Tax Premiums for empty and second homes.
- 1.2 To seek approval of the Empty Property Strategy
- 1.3 To seek approval of the Council Tax Premiums from 1st April 2025 for empty properties as set out in Proposals 1 and 2 in section 3.6.
- 1.4 To seek approval of the introduction of Council Tax Premiums from 1st April 2026 for second homes as set out in Proposal 3 in section 3.6.

2. Background

- 2.1 At the Cabinet meeting of the 20th January 2025, members considered the draft Empty Property Strategy and the introduction of additional Council Tax Premiums for empty properties and second homes.
- 2.2 The Empty Property Strategy and additional Council Tax Premiums was considered by the Joint Scrutiny Panel on the 22nd January 2025 and feedback from this committee is included in the report for consideration.
- 2.2 The Empty Homes Premium and Second Homes Premium are additional charges levied on properties that are not the primary residence of the owner. The Empty Homes Premium applies to properties that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for a specific period, while the Second Homes Premium targets properties used as a secondary residence
- 2.3 Following this meeting the draft strategy and proposed additional Council Tax Premiums was subject to public consultation between 21st January 2025 to 10 February 2025. The results of the public consultation will be verbally updated at this meeting.

3. Details

- 3.1 There is no statutory duty to bring empty properties back into use, however it is recognised that long term empty properties can have a detrimental impact on the local community and when brought back into use can provide much needed accommodation
- 3.2 The draft strategy as set out in appendix A consolidates all the powers/initiatives currently available to the Council in relation to bringing empty properties back into use into a single document and introduced a tool for officers to use to prioritise their work on empty properties. This enables resources to be targeted to properties where there is the greatest impact.

- 3.3 The Empty Property Strategy Review focused on the following priority areas

- Utilising the application of council tax premiums for empty properties as a deterrent against continued long-term empty properties (see later).
 - Standardising the application of Council Tax Premiums across the Leicestershire Revenues and Benefits Partnership
 - Establishment of a risk matrix of empty properties that will enable a programme of redevelopment to be undertaken that will award the community the widest benefit in based on the principles of value for money.
 - Consideration of the use of financial assistance to owners of long-term empty properties which are suitable to be used to tackle temporary accommodation issues.
 - Provision of a dedicated resource to tackle empty properties across the district.
- 3.4 As part of the review of the Empty Property Strategy review, the Council conducted a review of the council tax discounts and exemptions with the focus on empty homes and second homes to promote occupancy and reduce the impact of housing shortages. The proposed changes align with other local authorities in the Leicestershire Revenues and Benefits Partnership.
- 3.5 Currently the Council applies the following discounts and premiums to empty properties

Empty, Unoccupied and Unfurnished Discounts - a property that is empty and unfurnished is not be charged Council Tax for one month

Empty Property Premium - a Council Tax premium of 50% for properties empty between two and five years is applied.

- 3.6 The Council Tax review focused on three proposals

PROPOSAL 1 - From 1st April 2025, remove one month 100% Council Tax Discount for empty unoccupied and unfurnished empty properties and charge full Council Tax from point of ownership.

PROPOSAL 2 – From 1st April 2025, charge:

- **Properties empty for one to five years, twice standard Council Tax (200%).**
- **Empty Properties for five to ten years, are charged three times standard Council Tax (300%).**
- **Empty properties ten years or more, are charged four times standard Council Tax (400%)**

PROPOSAL 3- From 1st April 2026 second homeowners would pay double Council Tax (a 100% surcharge) from day one.

- 3.7 The draft empty property strategy and proposed changes to the Council Tax Premiums were considered by the Joint Scrutiny Committee on the 22nd January 2025. A summary of their conclusions is shown at Appendix B.

4. Implications of Decisions

Corporate Priorities

4.1 This report contributes to the delivery of the following corporate priorities:

Place and Community; there will be adequate supply of housing to meet local needs across all tenures and price ranges and reducing the potential for homelessness.

Environment and Sustainability; In line with our climate action plan, our carbon footprint will be reduced ensuring a sustainable future.

Prosperous local economy; Ensure that Harborough District's towns, villages and rural areas remain attractive and vibrant places to live, work invest and visit

Consultation

4.2 In line with the Council's commitment to transparency and community engagement, a consultation has been conducted regarding updated Empty Property Strategy and proposed changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions. The consultation was issued to gather feedback from stakeholders.

4.3 The primary goal of the consultation is to assess the potential impact of the proposed changes on the community and to gather valuable feedback that will inform the decision-making process. By engaging with residents and local authorities, the Councils aim to create a fair and equitable Council Tax system that reflects the needs of our community.

4.4 The feedback collected during the consultation will be crucial in shaping the Council's approach to dealing with empty properties and the final proposals for Council Tax discounts and exemptions.

4.5 Details of the consultation of the Joint Budget Overview & Scrutiny Panel are shown at Appendix 1, together with the responses. In respect of the public consultation these will be verbally updated at the meeting as the closing date was 10 February 2025.

4.6 The survey asked for opinions on
Empty Property Strategy

- The council's approach to identifying and prioritising empty properties
- The council's approach to providing help and assistance to owners of empty properties
- The council's approach to enforcement to deliver the empty property strategy

Council Tax Premiums

- Proposal 1 - Remove one month 100% council tax discount for empty, unoccupied and unfurnished properties and charge full council tax from the point of ownership.
- Proposal 2 – Charge Empty one to five years, twice standard council tax (200%), Empty five-10 years three times the standard council tax (300%), Empty 10 years or more four times the standard council tax (400%).
- Proposal 3- Second Home owners would pay double Council Tax (a 100% surcharge) from day one

Financial

4.7 The cost relating to the update of the Empty Homes Strategy will be met from within current resources. However, there are specific elements that will have individual financial implications which are included in the draft 25-26 budget; these include:

- i. Consideration of the use of financial assistance to owners of long-term properties which are suitable for to be used to tackle temporary accommodation issues.
 - The council could provide capital funding to support redevelopment costs; this would be linked to potential overage/clawback upon sale. An allocation of £100k is included in the 2025/26 capital programme.
- ii. Provision of dedicated resource to tackle empty properties across the district.
 - The 2025/26 budget includes a proposition of a full-time, 2-year fixed term contract post to support the delivery of the empty property strategy.
- ii. Application of council tax premiums and discounts to deter against the continuation of long-term empty properties and use of second homes.
 - If the premiums and discounts are agreed, the Leicestershire Revenues & Benefits Partnership will be able to administer a 3-partner approach to the application of premiums and discounts.
 - Based on the number of empty properties in Table 1 (and no reduction in such properties); the estimated net total council tax income (for all preceptors and the billing authority) is £556k in 2025/26; £981k in 2026/27. For the council alone (billing authority), the net council tax income is £35k in 2025/26, £69k in 2026/27.

Legal

- 4.8 The legislation for charging premiums on empty homes and second homes is derived from the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

The Act gives the Council as a billing authority the power to charge a discretionary Council Tax premium for properties empty for at least one year up to a maximum level set by law, depending on the length of time the property has been empty. There are a number of discounts and exemptions which would prohibit the ability to charge a premium.

Section 11C of the 1992 Act inserted by the 2023 Act gives the Council as a billing authority power to charge a discretionary Council Tax premium of up to 100% for properties which are periodically occupied, referred to as second homes.

A second home is defined as a dwelling that is substantially furnished and has no resident (i.e., it is not someone's sole or main residence). Section 11C (3) of the 1992 Act requires that the first decision to impose a premium for second homes must be taken at least 12 months before the financial year to which it would apply

Environmental Implications

- 4.9 Long term empty properties have the potential to increase anti-social behaviour in a local community. Focusing resources on the long-term empty properties can reduce the impact of anti-social behaviour.
- 4.10 Bringing empty properties back into use provides an opportunity to promote sustainable housing practices through improved energy efficiency measures.

Risk Management

- 4.11 Bringing empty properties back into use can be challenging and time consuming. Enforcement action may be costly and there is no guarantee that all enforcement cost will be recovered.

- 4.12 The introduction of higher Council Tax premiums may increase the amount of nonpayment which will increase the demands on the debt recovery process or result in owners of empty properties employing strategies to evade the premium, taking into consideration the exemptions.
- 4.13 The Empty Property Officer resource, will be funded for a fixed term of 2 years. Working with empty property owners can be resource intensive and time consuming. Following the 2-year period, the lack of a dedicated resource will have an impact on the effective delivery of the strategy.

Equalities Impact

- 4.14 An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken as part of this review. There has been a large increase in the number of applications to the Council's housing register over recent years. Bringing empty properties or underutilised second homes back into use can help meet this demand for housing.

Changes to discounts and exemptions may disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including low-income families, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. It is essential to assess how these groups might be impacted by increased financial burdens and to ensure that support mechanisms are in place. We will continue to monitor the impact of the introduction of additional premiums on vulnerable groups

Data Protection

- 4.15 There are no data protection issues associated with this report.

5. Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 The Council does have the option not to implement a strategy and/or make changes to the Council Tax Premiums or discounts and do nothing. However, there is a high demand for suitable accommodation across the district and bringing empty properties back into use could meet some of this unmet need.

Doing nothing with empty underutilised and problem properties may create further social consequences and implications for Council resources and service delivery, including more enforcement action which requires more significant invention.

6. Recommendation

That Cabinet

- Approve the Draft Empty Property Strategy as set out in Appendix A
- Approves
 - a. PROPOSAL 1 – From 1st April 2025, remove one month 100% Council Tax Discount for empty unoccupied and unfurnished empty properties and charge full Council Tax from point of ownership.
 - b. PROPOSAL 2 – From 1st April 2025, charge properties empty for one to five years, twice standard Council Tax (200%). Empty Properties for five to ten years, three times standard Council Tax (300%). Empty properties ten years or more, four times standard Council Tax (400%)
 - c. PROPOSAL 3- From 1st April 2026 second homeowners would pay double Council Tax (a 100% surcharge) from day one.

7. Background papers

[Report to Cabinet Meeting 20 January 2025](#)

[Report to Joint Overview and Scrutiny Meeting 22 January 2025](#)

EMPTY PROPERTY STRATEGY

2025

Foreword

In 2015, Harborough District recognised the potential problems caused by long-term empty properties and thus produced an Empty Property Strategy. Since then, our intervention has resulted in some empty properties being brought back into use that might otherwise have still been standing vacant.

Harborough District Council recognise that there are many reasons why properties become empty and that bringing them back into use can be complicated.

Harborough District Council want to work with owners to support them to bring their properties back into use wherever possible. Formal action will be reserved for the most difficult cases, where the local community is impacted by the properties remaining empty.

This is our first strategy review and action plan update and includes new initiatives designed to reduce even further the number of empty properties in the district. We intend to continue to take action both informally and if necessary, formally to continue our record of success in dealing with empty properties in the district.

Introduction

The Government has clearly stated that it is essential that better use is made of existing housing stock to assist in the supply of housing. One way of achieving this is to take action in respect of private sector houses, left vacant by their owners for more than six months.

In November 2023 the Local Government Association published national statistics relating to empty homes from 2018 to 2022 in their document "[A Practical Approach for Councils on Dealing with Empty Properties](#)" Nationally the number of long term empty homes which have been empty for six months or more has increased from 227,953 in 2018 to 256,872 in 2022 – an increase of over 12%.

In Harborough District in April 2022 there were 528 properties empty for more than 6 months, of which 121 properties were empty for more than 2 years. In October 2024 there were 286 properties empty for more than 6 months of which 123 were empty for more than 2 years. The Council's adopted Local Plan 2011 to 2031 set a target of developing 532 new homes per year, with 40% affordable housing, which indicates the level of housing need in the district. The current emerging Local Plan will set new targets for affordable housing within the district.

There is no recognised definition of an empty property and it is not always as straightforward to identify an empty property as it may seem. Generally, and for the purpose of this strategy, an empty property is a domestic property which is void of people and furniture/possessions for at least 6 months.

There are many reasons why a property becomes empty and is not brought back into use. Here are some examples:

- Owner is in residential care and would wish to return (but often is unable to do so)
- Reluctance to let or sell the property
- Unclear ownership or probate issues
- Being marketed for sale or rent at unrealistic asking price
- Property needs repair, improvement, refurbishment or complete redevelopment
- Property has been abandoned

In addition, there are many reasons why they remain empty, including:

- Lack of knowledge/skills to refurbish or manage an empty property
- Lethargy or indifference – maximisation of wealth from assets is not a priority for an individual or company
- Business disputes
- Inheritance disputes

- DIY owner – a property is acquired as a renovation project, but expense or unforeseen problems escalate
- Owner inertia – owners who do not wish to sell or rent due to previous bad experiences or sentimental reasons, often there are mental health issues and vulnerability that contribute to the problem
- Property owner has died and there are no traceable descendants
- Land-banking – owners waiting for values to increase and not wanting to offer the property for rent in the meantime
- Obstruction – owners who simply refuse to bring the property back in to use

There is a significant need and demand for housing in the Harborough district and empty properties which could otherwise be made available for sale or rent are a wasted resource. In many cases, the longer a property is left empty the more money it will cost to bring it back into use as the condition of the property deteriorates. This makes it increasingly difficult for some owners to be able to afford to bring a property back into use and so the property remains empty and continues to deteriorate.

Apart from the estimated cost to an owner, empty properties have a detrimental effect upon a neighbourhood and often detract from both the appearance and value of adjacent properties. It has been estimated that the presence of a boarded-up property can reduce the valuation of an adjacent property by as much as 10%. There have been examples in other parts of the country where the presence of empty properties has undermined confidence in the area. This in turn has resulted in the creation of areas where nobody wants to live.

Empty Properties are often used for a range of anti-social behaviour and can be the source of a substantial number of complaints from members of the public. Properties are often vandalised and used for the dumping of refuse and there have been numerous examples of properties being fire-damaged, which can present grave risks to the occupiers of adjoining properties. Experience has also shown that empty properties can be used for prostitution and drug abuse. In addition to the environmental problems, properties left vacant deny affordable houses to those in housing need.

It is the Council's experience that the longer a property is left vacant, its condition will worsen and as a result the more problems it will cause. This can then impact on the eventual cost of returning the property back into use. As such it is important that empty properties are identified as early as possible to enable contact to be made with an owner and hopefully a quick return of the property into occupation.

Harborough District Council's Approach

Harborough District Council's Empty Property Strategy was adopted in 2015. A targeted approach has been employed to bring properties back into use, applying a range of potential solutions appropriate to the property and situation. This will ensure

that action is taken based on consistent and transparent policy criteria and will combine an approach based on incentives and enforcement.

The Council wishes to prevent properties being left vacant in the long-term and will take preventative action wherever necessary to intervene. Understanding the reasons why a property has been empty for more than 6 months is the key issue in tackling empty properties. Reasons for vacancy may vary according to owner and property circumstances and the local authority has a key enabling role to try to bring the property back into use with the owner's cooperation. Appendix 1 highlights the intervention path that the Council will follow, when dealing with an empty property.

Strategic objectives

Our strategic objectives can be summarised as follows:

- to identify and monitor both derelict and long-term empty properties
- to rate the risk that empty properties pose and target those with the greatest risk
- to raise awareness of empty property issues
- to encourage an owner to take action to secure the re-occupation of a property
- to initiate formal action to bring a property back into use

Identification and monitoring of long-term empty properties

A list of properties that are long term empty has been collated and is maintained and updated regularly. This list identifies the addresses of the properties concerned together with basic information concerning current action being taken. The list will be periodically updated and will contain both newly identified properties and those where action has been successful in bringing a property back into occupation.

Council tax records, His Majesty's Land Registry and the Electoral Register will all be used to secure information regarding the ownership of a property.

In addition, we will react to the complaints we receive from members of the public, we will also look to access any other information available to us, either internal or external to Harborough District to identify private sector empty properties.

Rating the Risk of Empty Properties

Most empty properties in the District are returned into occupation without any interventions by the council. In order to target the most problematic properties a system of prioritisation has been adopted to ensure that the most serious cases receive the most urgent attention.

The following table of criteria will be used to determine the properties to be prioritised for action. Individual cases will be reassessed in the case of changing circumstances.

Table 1: Assessment Framework for Prioritising Empty Properties

Issue	0 points	1 point	2 points	5 points
Length of time property has been left empty		Over 6 months	6months to 12 months	Over 12 months and +1 point for every year after
Area of high housing demand	No demand	Low	Moderate	High demand
Number of complaints received about the property	No complaints	1 - 2	3 - 4	5 +
Listed building Status	Not listed	Grade II	Grade II*	Grade I
Level of impact on the surrounding neighbourhood	No Impact	Low	Moderate	High impact
Property state of repair	No disrepair	Low	Moderate (e.g. Cat 2 hazard)	High (e.g. Cat 1 hazard) +10 points for multiple Cat 1 hazards
Attracting secondary problems i.e. fly tipping/anti-social behaviour	No associated problems	Low	Moderate	High

The ongoing assessment of properties on the list will enable the Council to target the most problematic properties first, considering where there is the greatest housing need, and to develop a delivery plan for individual properties including timeframes for bringing the property back into use.

Information affecting the prioritisation of empty property action will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that intervention remains responsive to changing needs in line with the Action Plan set out in Appendix 3 of the strategy.

Raising awareness of empty property issues

We would make every attempt to seek to use the media in advertising the action we are taking in the hope that this firstly reassures the public affected by such properties

and secondly, encourages empty property owners to work with us in bringing properties back into use.

In addition, we will engage with national campaigns as appropriate to raise awareness of the issue of empty properties. Our website will include the various ways that the council can support owners to bring homes back into use. The Council signposts owners of empty properties to various schemes that enable them to become accredited private landlords.

Re-occupation – informal action

Harborough District Council wants to work with owners to bring their properties back into use. Once an empty property has been identified, steps will be taken to establish ownership of the property and the current whereabouts of the owner. All reasonable attempts will be made to trace the whereabouts of an owner to commence discussions, but it should be made clear that failure to do so does not preclude the District Council from taking any action that may be legally necessary to deal with both short and long-term issues pertaining to the property.

Since 2013, councils in England have had the power to charge additional council tax on long-term empty homes. In accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 2012, the Council has exercised its discretion regarding Council Tax discounts. In 2019 an empty property premium of 50% was introduced for properties empty for more than 2 years.

In Act also so phased in over the two years further increases for properties empty for longer than five years (200%) and ten years (300%). Recent changes to the legislation strengthened the powers to council so that they can charge the premium on homes that have been empty for 1 or more years (rather than the previous 2 years).

In addition, the legislation allows for the introduction of premiums on second homes. A second home is defined as a dwelling that is substantially furnished and has no resident (i.e., it is not someone's sole or main residence). Second homes can contribute to a shortage of available housing for local residents. When properties are often taken off the market for long-term rentals, exacerbating the housing crisis.

Once an owner has been identified we will enter into dialogue with them to determine what his/her proposals are for the future of the property, together with an associated time scale. Providing that the owner has plans in place to bring the property back into occupation, no further action will need to be taken by the Council, other than monitoring the property to ensure that progress is being made. Action that could be taken by the owner to secure the re-occupation of the property could include any of the following:

- ◆ Re-occupation by the owner
- ◆ Property let to tenants

- ◆ Property placed on the open market for sale
- ◆ Leasing arrangements
- ◆ Discretionary grants available to owners to assist in bringing empty properties back into use.

The Council's Environment Team has responsibility for providing advice for owners and residents. There is advice available on the Council's Web Site including how to report an empty property and information for homeowners and landlords on bringing empty properties back into use.

In some cases, subject to available resources, the Council may be able to support owners to bring empty properties back into use through the provision of an Empty Properties Grant. The grant will provide a contribution towards some of the costs required to bring the property back into a state of good repair. The grant will be discretionary and will be subject to an inspection of the property to identify the works which must be carried out before the property can be reoccupied. The grant is also reclaimed by the council once a property is sold.

The Council considers opportunities to put owners in touch with private or third sector organisations that can support the owner in renovating a building to either rent or sell.

There may be instances where a person is interested in purchasing one of the properties that we are dealing with. We will not break data protection legislation but acknowledge that freedom of information would entitle an applicant to a list of these properties. Whilst we may not be able to disclose the identity of an owner, we will where we feel an interest is genuine, advise the owner of that interest in the hope that he/she will approach the prospective purchaser directly. In other situations, we will gladly act as an intermediary in an attempt to put relevant parties in touch with each other.

Re-occupation – formal action

The Council want to enable owners to bring their empty properties back into use themselves and will work with them to try to achieve this. However, this is not always possible, and the Council can, if necessary, use a range of legislative tools to ensure that empty properties do not become a nuisance, Appendix 2 details the legislation available.

If an empty property becomes a nuisance to neighbours/the local community and informal avenues have been exhausted, then the council will consider using legislation to enforce action and this could include:

a) Nuisance and unsecured properties

Where properties have been vandalised, are open and allowing unauthorised access or being used to dump rubbish, an owner will be required to undertake works to abate

any nuisance being caused. Owners will usually be given the opportunity to do the necessary work themselves, but if they fail to do so, then the Council may undertake the work in default and an appropriate charge will be made on the property. There is also the option of prosecution dependent upon the seriousness of the offence(s).

b) Adversely affecting the amenity of a neighbourhood

The condition and appearance of an empty property can have a blighting affect and can also often be described as 'adversely affecting the amenity of a neighbourhood'. This could include for example the level of disrepair, dumped rubbish, the general appearance of the property or the overgrown state of a garden. In such situations, owners will be required to carry out appropriate work to improve the appearance of the property pending its re-occupation. Failure to fulfil this legal obligation could result in the Council undertaking the necessary work in default, placing a charge on the property and/or undertaking a prosecution.

c) Community Protection Notice

Under the Crime and Policing Act 2014 an individual can be served with a notice to bring a property up to a certain standard, where it is creating a nuisance to neighbours/the local community. In this case the action is against the person and not the property. Formal action follows and incremental approach and an individual would be first warned that they would be served with a Community Protection Notice (CPN).

d) Enforced sale

Enforced sale is a procedure that can be used by the Council which not only assists in bringing empty properties back into use but also ensures that debts owed to the Council are recouped.

Mention has already been made that the Council can undertake work in default on behalf of an owner to ensure that problems with an empty property are resolved. The owner does, however, still have a liability and will be expected to pay for the cost of these works together with any other costs incurred by the Council. In certain circumstances where debts go unpaid the Law of Property Act 1925 can be used to 'force' the sale of the property to recover these debts. The subsequent sale not only ensures that the Council recovers the money owed to it but will also result in new owners undertaking the renovation and reoccupation of the property.

d) Compulsory purchase orders

The use of compulsory purchase powers is viewed by the Government as a 'last resort' for Councils to use in situations where they have failed to secure the co-operation of an owner in bringing an empty property back into use. The Council views compulsory purchase as a valuable tool in dealing with empty properties and will use these powers in situations where the co-operation of the owner is not forthcoming.

The timescale for possible compulsory purchase action will be greatly determined by the response of an owner. The council will offer every opportunity for an owner to submit proposals for the reoccupation of a property together with agreed timescales. It will only be in instances where no such proposals are forthcoming or not honoured when compulsory purchase action will be commenced.

Prior to commencing compulsory purchase procedures, owners will be advised of the council's intention to consider such action in a final attempt to encourage activity on their part.

Compulsory purchase orders, once made by the council, need to be confirmed by the relevant Government office. Prior to a decision being made, a local public inquiry may be necessary in situations where owners object to the making of an order.

In the event of a compulsory purchase order being confirmed we will seek to dispose of the property to somebody who is prepared to enter into an agreement with the council to renovate and reoccupy within a specified period of time. The council may apply covenants to any sale that takes place to control the future occupation of the property.

e) Empty dwelling management orders

As part of its ongoing commitment into ensuring that empty properties are brought back into use, the government introduced Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO) in the Housing Act 2004.

An EDMO can be applied to a dwelling that has been empty for at least six months. In appropriate cases an EDMO might be considered as an alternative to using compulsory purchase powers. It must be stressed that EDMOs will not be appropriate in all cases, but they do enable the Council to in effect take over the management and control of a dwelling. Unlike compulsory purchase orders, an owner still retains ownership of the property. The Council would, however, spend money on the renovation, repair and management of the property and these costs would be recoverable.

Monitoring and Review

This strategy is operational from 2025 to 2030 and builds on the Strategy from 2015.

It will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to ensure it remains responsive to local and national issues, changes in legislation/guidance and operational requirements.

Any case requiring intervention in the form of Compulsory Purchase, Enforced Sale or Empty Dwelling Management Order, will be subject to the appropriate authorisation of the Council.

Achievements to date

Action on empty homes since the introduction of the strategy has been delivered in several areas that had been identified in the previous Action Plan, specifically:

- Revoking the discount offered to empty property owners and introducing a 50% empty homes premium. This has led to conversations with owners of long-term empty properties, which has helped signpost them to support.
- There are regular inspections of long-term empty properties on the list to evaluate risk. These are done on an area-by-area basis and are used to update the council tax records. Properties that remain empty are then targeted for intervention. The number of interventions is reported monthly.
- There is ongoing engagement with some of the properties that have been identified as problematic. This follows the process identified for dealing with empty properties (see Appendix 1).
- There is information on empty properties on the council website. This often leads to complaints about properties that are empty.
- Some of the online complaints have related to empty properties that are exempt from the list, for example because probate is still in process. Others have led to the identification of some properties that are incorrectly reported to council tax.
- There is ongoing engagement with partners, including social housing providers to find opportunities for intervention. Further engagement with private and third sector organisations has taken place to try to find possible services that homeowners could access. This work is ongoing.

Action Plan

The revised Action Plan is included as Appendix 3. This includes some actions that continue from the original Action Plan for 2015- 2020 but introduces some new actions.

A joined up approach across the council is effective way to work to ensure that the most appropriate course of action is taken in relation to the more problematic long-term empty cases. The approach includes officers from housing, planning, council tax and environmental health, with support from legal services.

Further work on building partnerships with private and third sector organisations to support homeowners to return their properties to use, has also been identified as a priority. This will allow the council to offer homeowners a wider range of support.

Further work on communications and promoting the return of empty homes to use is also a priority.

Performance and targets

Our performance and targets are intended to reflect the 'direct action' taken by the District Council in securing the re-occupation of an empty property. The number of interventions, including inspections, formal letters, meetings and other contact, will be recorded monthly. The number of empty properties will be reported annually.

Table 2 below provides information in terms of the number of empty private sector properties in the Harborough District over recent years.

Statistical data regarding the number of empty properties is taken from the District Council's Housing Investment Programme submission document.

Table 2: Empty properties in the Harborough District

	2015/ 16	2016/ 17	2017/ 18	2018/ 19	2019/ 20	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	2022/ 23	2023/ 24
Total number of empty properties	672	670	657	662	721	805	703	703	742
Number of empty properties for more than 6 months (October 2020)	347	355	331	322	379	528	377	383	396
Number of properties classed as empty and being charged the empty homes premium	0	0	0	103	113	121	127	150	138

Equality Assessment

The equality assessment recognised that bringing empty properties back into use would have a positive impact on the local community by reducing the issue of blight and the risk of anti-social behaviour in the area.

The strategy recognises that enforcement action will only be considered as a last resort and in the event of such action due consideration will be given to human rights and equality legislation throughout the process.

Contact Information

Should you have any comments about this strategy or require any further information on empty property issues, please contact the Environment Team at:

Harborough District Council

The Symington Building

Adam & Eve Street

Market Harborough

Leicestershire

LE16 7AG

Email: environmentteam@harborough.gov.uk

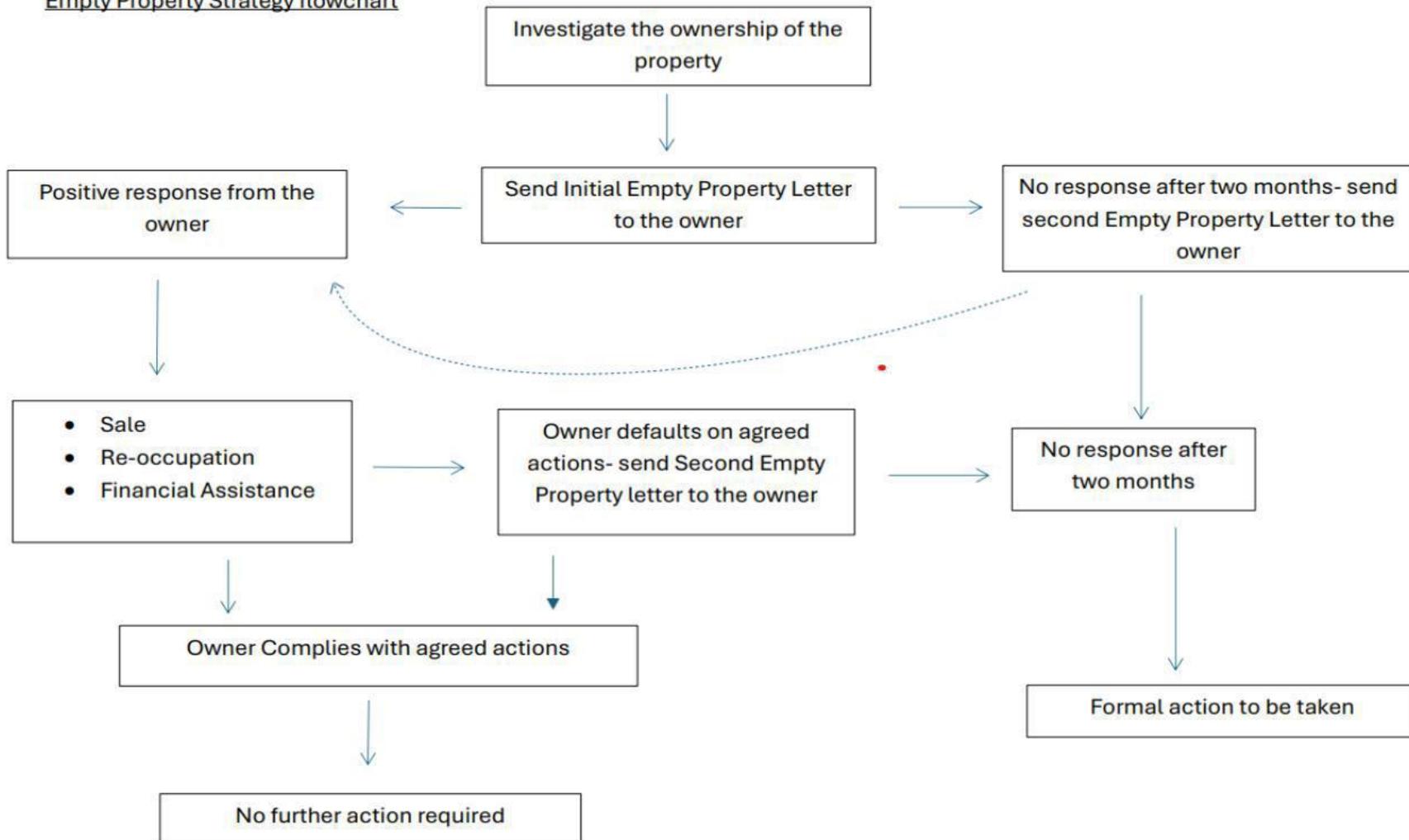
Empty properties can also be reported via the Council website at www.harborough.gov.uk

Appendices

1. Intervention Process Map
2. Enforcement powers available to the council
3. Action Plan

Appendix 1: Intervention Process Map

Empty Property Strategy flowchart



Appendix 2: Enforcement Powers Available to the Council to Tackle Long-Term Empty Properties

Problem	Legislation	Power Granted
Dangerous or dilapidated buildings or structures	Building Act 1984 Sections 77 and 78	To require the owner to make the property safe (Section 77) or enable the Local Authority to take emergency action to make the building safe (Section 78).
	Housing Act 2004 Part 1	Under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System local authorities can evaluate the potential risks to health and safety arising from deficiencies within properties and take appropriate enforcement action.
	Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section 80	To determine whether any premises is in such a state as to be prejudicial to health or a nuisance.
Unsecured properties (where it poses a risk that it may be entered or suffer vandalism, arson or similar)	Building Act 1984 Section 78	To allow the Local Authority to secure the property.
	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Section 29	To require the owner to take steps to secure a property or allow to board it up in an Emergency.
Blocked or defective drains or private sewers.	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 Section 35	To require the owner to address obstructed private drains.
	Building Act 1984 Section 59	To require the owner to address blocked or defective drainage.
	Public Health Act 1961 Section 17	To require the owner to address blocked or defective drainage.
Vermin (where it is either	Public Health Act 1961 Section 34	To require an owner to remove waste so that

present or there is a risk of attracting vermin) that may detrimentally affect people's health.	Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 Section 4	vermin is not attracted to the site.
	Public Health Act 1936 Section 83	
	Environmental Protection Act 1990 Section 80	
	Building Act 1984 Section 79	
Unightly land and property affecting the amenity of an area.	Public Health Act 1961 Section 34	To require the owner to remove waste from the property (see above).
	Building Act 1984 Section 79	To require the owner to address unightly land or the external appearance of a property.
	Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 215	To require the owner to take steps to address a property adversely affecting the amenity of an area through its disrepair.
	Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014	To require the owner to take steps to address a property adversely affecting the amenity of an area through its disrepair.

Appendix 3: Action Plan 2025 to 2030

Actions	Justifications	Milestones	Responsible Officer/Team	Funding/Resources	Timescales	Expected outcomes
Regular sharing of information on empty properties between Revenues and Benefits and Enforcement Officers	Informed use of strategic information in support of further service development	Annual Audit of Council Tax Information to meet deadline for Government returns Sharing of empty property information	Council Tax Team Leader Partnership Manager (Revenues and Benefits)	Operational budget	Annual Monthly	Reduce discrepancies in Council Tax data. Sharing information to shape the prioritisation of interventions
Maximise the application of Council Tax Premiums on empty properties	The increased cost to owners of long-term empty properties and second homes should encourage them to bring them back into use without enforcement intervention	Consultation on the proposed changes Align the approach of Council Tax Premiums across the Revs and Bens Partnership Review and evaluate the impact of the	Partnership Manager (Revenues and Benefits)	Operational budget	Introduced XX	Voluntary Reduction in the number long term empty properties and second homes

		introduction, quarterly.				
Remain responsive to issues affecting owners/landlords that impact on vacancy rates.	Support for landlords and the local economy leading to increased sustainability of occupation	Development and promotion of information for landlords / owners via South Leicestershire Landlord Forum Empty Property Grant linked temporary accommodation Aquisition	Environment Team Leader Housing Team	Operational budget	On going	Increased number of accredited landlords To allow every opportunity for empty home owners to engage with the authority informally
Promote the strategy to highlight the issues presented by empty homes, and promote the successes and benefits of bringing empty homes back into use	Reduction in number of empty properties through education and service awareness.	Update website content and other information available Participate in Empty Homes Week	Environment Team Leader	Operational Budget	On going	Increased awareness of the impact of empty properties Streamlined process for reporting problematic empty properties

Develop links with third sector organisations and private companies that can support empty property owners to bring them back into use	Support homeowners to access a range of possible services that could help them to find a way to move the empty property to market	Establishment of links with companies and third sector renewal organisations	Environment team Leader	Operational Budget External funding	On going	Re-occupation of properties through owners' own actions
To risk assess the list of properties for enforcement action based on prioritisation criteria.	To ensure that the most problematic issues are addressed first To provide a transparent criteria for the prioritisation of empty property action	Maintenance of project plan for top priority properties including timeframes for interventions including cross team action to coordinate the approach	Environment Team Leader	Operational budget	Annual review, with monthly updates	Properties for enforcement action identified and reviewed until resolved To pursue enforcement action and to progress with the appropriate tools where there is no reasonable prospect of the property being brought back into use

Appendix B

Feedback from the Joint Scrutiny and Oversight Committee of the 22nd January 2025

- Concern about the high number of empty properties and whether there is any information available on why they are empty.
- Assurance sought on whether there is scope to apply discretion to the application of CT premiums
- It was noted that there was no evidence in the report that second homes/empty properties contribute to the lack of affordable housing
- The panel were not supportive of the removal of the 1 month grace for CT charge to apply
- The panel queried the governance around the approval of an empty property grant policy and the conditions around nomination rights. Nomination rights would provide some assurance that a property receiving a grant would be let following completion of the works
- The panel queried whether the policy would apply to social rented accommodation. Confirmation that other legislative controls are in place to penalise social landlords for having voids

Harborough District Council



Report to Cabinet Meeting of 10th February 2025

Title:	Anti-social Behaviour Policy Refresh 2025
Status:	Public
Key Decision:	No
Report Author:	Sarah Pickering, Community Safety Partnership Manager
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Jim Knight
Appendices:	A. Draft ASB Policy 2025 B. EIA for ASB Policy C. Quarter two ASB figures

Executive Summary

- i. This report presents the proposed HDC Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy 2025 which is reviewed every 5 years.
- ii. There have been some minor amendments with the addition of obnoxious odours and Neighbour disputes in the list of types of ASB that should be reported to HDC.
- iii. Names of partners have been updated and Weblinks added.
- iv. The Community Trigger has changed its name to the ASB Review.

Recommendations

- :
1. That Cabinet approves the HDC ASB Policy 2025.

Reasons for Recommendations

- I. To ensure HDC has a robust ASB policy in place, to help achieve sustained low levels of anti-social behaviour thus creating a safer environment.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To approve the refreshed HDC ASB Policy 2025

2. Background

HDC Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

- 2.1. The policy was last reviewed in 2019 and is reviewed every 5 years. There have been no major national legislative changes regarding ASB since the last policy, but the Community Trigger has changed its name to the ASB Review. The ASB Case Review, is a statutory process for victims of anti-social behaviour or hate incidents who believe they have not had a satisfactory response to their complaints. Where a locally determined threshold is met, victims can require the relevant bodies in the local area to undertake a formal review of the case, and those bodies have a statutory duty to undertake that review. Further details on the ASB Review can be found on the Council's web-site: [What is an ASB Case Review? | ASB Case Review | Harborough District Council](#)
- 2.2. The draft policy has been agreed at the Council's internal Corporate ASB group which includes, Environmental health, Environmental Services, Community Safety and planning Enforcement. It has also been presented to CMT and has been through Scrutiny in October 2024.
- 2.3. The Community Safety Team deal directly with around 100 ASB cases per year, these are case managed on a LLR wide system shared with the police – Sentinel. The Council also work jointly with Housing Associations and the police on cases that need multi-agency input. Police figures for ASB for last year to end March 2024 for the Harborough District were 383, down from 397 the year before.
- 2.4. High Risk cases and ASB hotspots are taken to a monthly Joint Action Group (JAG) for multiagency input and a Housing Liaison meeting meets monthly to discuss lower level ASB cases involving Housing Association properties to ensure joint working.
- 2.5. As well as enforcement tools and powers as set out in the ASB Policy the Council work closely with the Community Safety Partnership members including Leicestershire Police, with ASB being one of the main priorities of the present Three-Year Plan. This includes use of the CSP Vehicle to visit Towns and Villages across the District engaging with residents, to reassure and give advice. The Council also have a re-deployable camera that can be deployed in hotspot areas where there is suitable infrastructure. The CSP Vehicle and camera were part of a partnership plan to reduce ASB on Wellington place in Market Harborough earlier this year, along with the placing of signage regarding the use of motor vehicles and police patrols, resulting a reduction of calls to both HDC and the police.

3. Details

HDC ASB Policy 2025

- 3.1 There have been some minor amendments with the addition of obnoxious odours and Neighbour disputes in the list of types of ASB that should be reported to HDC - this will take into account the action the Council can take around the smell of cannabis using the incremental approach. Names of partners have been updated and Weblinks added. The Community Trigger has changed its name to the ASB Review.
- 3.2 The cessation document is under review at the moment by LCC and the final version of this will be added via a weblink. It may be that this process has been superseded by the ASB review process.

4. Implications of Decisions

Corporate Priorities

4.1. This report promotes the following corporate priorities of the Council:

Priority 2: Promoting health and wellbeing and encouraging healthy life choices

Priority 4: Supporting businesses and residents to deliver a prosperous local economy

Consultation

- 4.2. Consultations took place as below, with some minor amendments and additions to wording requested and completed.
- 4.2.1. Presentation of draft and discussion at internal corporate ASB group with Environmental Health and Planning Enforcement,.
- 4.2.2. Presentation of draft and discussion at Corporate Management Group.
- 4.2.3. Presentation of draft and discussion at Scrutiny October 2024

Financial

- 4.3 No direct financial implications arising from this update. There are no changes to the Community Safety Team budget required, with enforcement being delivered within existing resources.

Legal

- 4.3. The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides the police, local authorities and other local agencies with flexible tools and powers that they can use to respond quickly and effectively to antisocial behaviour.
- 4.4. The Crime & Disorder Act 1998 sets out the legal requirements for local authorities, the police and other key partners & agencies to work together to tackle crime and disorder in their area in partnerships. Under the Police and Justice Act 2006, a duty was placed on the partnerships to join together in a formal strategic group to undertake frequent strategic assessments of levels and patterns of crime and drug

misuse in their area and to produce annual rolling Three-year community safety plans.

Environmental Implications

- 4.5. There are no implications to achieving net zero within the refreshed ASB policy.
- 4.6. The Council aim to be as environmentally sustainable as possible, in the work around anti-social behaviour.

Risk Management

- 4.7. There is also a wider General Enforcement Policy for HDC.

Equalities Impact

- 4.8. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken for the ASB Policy – please see Appendix B.

Data Protection

- 4.9. There are not any impacts or issues relating to data protection arising from the report.

5. Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1. No alternatives were considered.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1. The Anti-Social Behaviour Policy is approved for the next 5 years.

7. Background papers

- 7.1 None



Harborough District Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

February 2025 -draft V2

1. Introduction

Harborough District Council aims to achieve sustained low levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB), thus creating a safer environment. This Anti-Social Behaviour Policy is an integral part of achieving these objectives

This document provides a clear statement of the District Council's policies, and the way in which the Council will tackle anti-social behaviour. The content includes information on what a number of different agencies can do to address anti-social behaviour, reflecting how a partnership approach is the most effective means of dealing with anti-social behaviour.

Policy Statement

"Harborough District Council is committed to tackling anti-social behaviour. We recognise the need to respond in a measured and appropriate manner in order to address the concerns of all the citizens of the District."

Aims and Objectives.

In meeting the aims of the policy the Council accepts that:

- Individuals have the right to their chosen lifestyle – providing this does not spoil the quality of life for others – and that this implies some degree of tolerance of, and respect for, the requirements and needs of others.
- The problem of ASB is robustly challenged across the district.
- Awareness and education of communities is required and residents and visitors of all ages have a key part to play in resolving problems.
- Local residents feel confident to report their concerns.
- Enquiries will be dealt with in a timely manner as set out in our customer service standards.
- Local residents feel satisfied with our response in relation to their complaint and the outcome achieved.
- Vulnerable people in our communities are identified and supported.
- As part of the Equality Act 2010, the Council, as a local authority, has a duty to pay 'due regard' to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Definitions of Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is defined as:

“Acting in a manner that causes or is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as themselves” (Crime and Disorder Act 1998).

“Conduct causing, or likely to cause, a nuisance or annoyance to a person residing, visiting, or otherwise engaged in a lawful activity in the locality” (Housing Act 1996).

Both definitions will be used according to the circumstances of the identified behaviour.

2. Types of Anti-Social Behaviour and how to report them.

Anyone may report ASB whether as a victim, witness or a third party.

Guidance on how to report the various categories of ASB will be available through the Council’s website, by visiting or calling the Council’s customers services or contacting your local police.

The following should be reported to Harborough District Council, by telephone 01858 828282, or email at customer.services@harborough.gov.uk or online via our website www.harborough.gov.uk

- Dumping, Littering and Fly-Tipping
- Graffiti
- Abandoned Vehicles
- Noise Nuisance – including music, vehicles, alarms
- Nuisance dogs
- Neighbour disputes
- Obnoxious odours

The following types of behaviour should be reported to Leicestershire Police on 101 (in an emergency call 999) or online www.leics.police.uk

- Vandalism and Graffiti;
- Threatening and abusive behaviour;
- Hate related ASB
- Drunk and rowdy groups;
- Drug related anti-social behaviour.
- Misuse of fireworks
- Nuisance vehicles

In cases of anti-social behaviour in social housing, the relevant Housing Association will investigate complaints and can pursue a course of action that can result in injunctions, committal proceedings and eviction. Harborough District Council and the police work closely with housing providers to help with enforcement action and support for victims.

Elected Members (County, District and Parish) – Community Leadership

Elected members have a key role in the response to anti-social behaviour. As community leaders and advocates they can often be the first point of complaint by residents.

Members should not commence any form of investigation but, ideally, provide initial support and guidance to victims – to call HDC or 101. It is fundamental that anti-social behaviour is recorded and co-ordinated by the relevant HDC department.

Support for Victims and Complainants

All HDC's services will take all complaints of anti-social behaviour seriously, whether made in person, writing or over the telephone. We will ensure that complainants and victims will be dealt with sympathetically, and treated in total confidence.

We will:

Arrange to keep the complainant informed of the progress of their complaint.

Seek the complainant's permission before contacting anyone else about the anti-social behaviour. Failure to give permission will mean that it may be difficult and slower to resolve the problem.

Do everything we reasonably can to find an effective solution to stop the anti-social behaviour and will advise the complainant if we decide to close the case.

With the consent of the complainant/victim, make referrals to specialist support, where available e.g. counselling services, victim support.

Discuss every stage of legal action with witnesses.

In certain cases, further information or intelligence is required to provide evidence of anti-social behaviour. Complainants or witnesses may be asked to complete a written record – in the form of an incident diary kept over a period – to show the pattern of the behaviour, evidence of the nature of the complaint, and to aid in the identification of any offender(s).

Supervision and Monitoring Arrangements

At each monthly Joint Action Group meeting all high risk ASB cases will be discussed and trends and patterns in anti-social behaviour identified. The Chair will ensure appropriate action is taken around issues identified by the meeting.

In the event that the numbers of complaints start to show local hot spots or persistent complaint areas this information will be passed to the Community Safety Partnership's Delivery Group with a view to implementing intervention and diversionary initiatives to seek medium to long term solutions.

3. Prevention

Community Safety Partnership

Harborough District Council is part of the Harborough District Community Safety Partnership (HDCSP) which aims to maintain low levels of crime and promote safe, strong communities and produces a yearly Action Plan. Since April 2013 the Partnership Responsible Authority Members are:

Police - Leicestershire Police

Local Authority - Harborough District Council & Leicestershire County Council

Fire and Rescue - Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service

Health -Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Integrated Care Board

Probation -Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland Community Rehabilitation Company

Diversionsary Activities

It is widely recognised that, for a significant number of young people, being engaged in activities, or having a space to meet and socialise in, can have a positive impact on the levels of anti-social behaviour in a community. This policy seeks to put in place a framework through which the Council can work with local communities to ensure the needs of young people are met within their community.

In order to ensure that cases of escalating ASB are dealt with, the Council will work with other members of the HDCSP and with other agencies who have the skills and resources to deal with more challenging behaviours. These may include;

- **Family Help – Children and Family Wellbeing Service**
- **Violence Reduction Network**
- **Youth & Justice**
- **Children and Adult Social Care**
- **Substance Abuse services**

Education

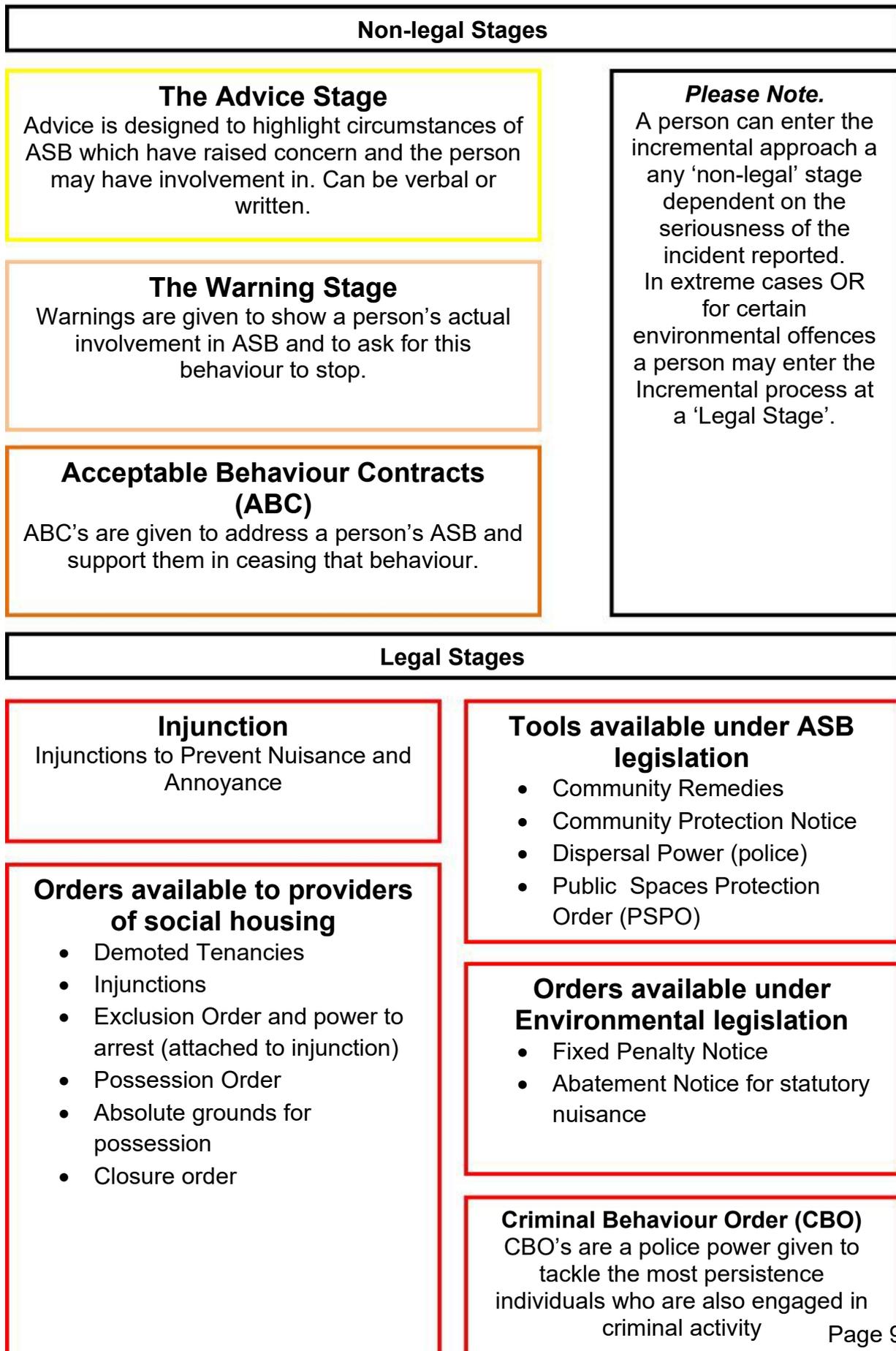
HDCSP work with internal HDC departments and external agencies to raise awareness of ASB. Including prevention, how to report and enforcement using awareness campaigns, community engagement and training opportunities. These include Noise Action Week, ASB Awareness Week, Fly-tipping campaigns and Incremental Approach Training.

Planning – Built Environment

When appropriate and within the District Council's planning procedures, consideration will be taken on the impact of the risks of anti-social behaviour when designing/ approving planning applications and working with developers. Planning services will consider all the principles of designing out risk of anti-social behaviour in order to comply with the statutory requirements under section 17 Crime and Disorder Act 1998, as amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006.

4. Enforcement

Summary of Incremental Approach to tackling ASB



There are a range of formal methods that are available when dealing with instances of anti-social behaviour. Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland have all agreed to follow an incremental approach to ASB, using the new tools and powers granted in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

For further details on ASB Powers [Home Office Guidelines of ASB powers 2014 \(Revised March 2023\)](#)

The Council also has a General Enforcement Policy which can be found here - https://www.harborough.gov.uk/directory_record/551/enforcement_policies

Neighbour Disputes

Not all neighbour disputes should be dealt with as anti-social behaviour. Depending on the circumstances of a complaint, a complainant may be advised to seek their own legal advice in relation to their complaint.

Cessation Document

This County agreement provides a structure for the closure of long standing cases of anti-social behaviour and disputes where the expectations of the complainant outweigh the ability of agencies to find a solution; or where complainants are unwilling to follow advice and guidance offered by agencies in finding a resolution.

For further details -Cessation Document **add weblink**

Community Remedies

The Community Remedy gives victims of low-level crime and anti-social behaviour a say in the punishment of offenders out of court. This means victims will get justice quickly, and the offender has to face immediate and meaningful consequences for their actions.

Punishments could include the offender signing an acceptable behaviour contract, paying compensation to the victim, or doing local unpaid work in the community. Any arrangement is determined in consultation with the victim of the anti-social behaviour.

5. ASB Review

The ASB Review is a process which allows members of the community to ask Harborough District Community Safety Partnership to review their response to complaints of anti-social behaviour. The ASB Review can be used in the following situations:

- If you (as an individual) have complained to the Council, Police or a Registered Housing Provider (social landlord) about three separate incidents in your locality in the last six months.
- If you have been a victim of a Hate Crime or Incident in the last six months.

- and
- you believe that no effective action has been taken.

For further details see - ASB Review on our website [What is an ASB Case Review? | ASB Case Review | Harborough District Council](#)

6. Statutory Obligations

- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Housing Act 1996

HDC Due Regard (Equality Analysis)

Due Regard (Equality Analysis) is an on-going proactive process which requires us to consider the effect our decisions are likely to have on local communities, service users and employees, particularly those most vulnerable and at risk of disadvantage.

This template has been designed to assist in the collation of information and evidence required to support the 'Due Regard' process when introducing new policies/procedures/functions and services or reviewing existing ones.

Name of policy/procedure/function/service being analysed: ASB Policy 2024

Department and section: Community Safety

Name of lead officer: Sarah Pickering

Other people involved (assisting or reviewing – including any service users or stakeholder groups etc.):

Date assessment completed: 17th September 2024

Step 1: Defining the policy/procedure/function/service

Is this a new, amended, or reviewed policy? What are the aims, objectives and purpose and how will they be achieved? What are the main activities and which communities are likely to be affected by these activities? What are the expected outcomes?

This is a reviewed policy with minor amendments updated from 2019.

Harborough District Council aims to achieve sustained low levels of anti-social behaviour (ASB), thus creating a safer environment. This Anti-Social Behaviour Policy is an integral part of achieving these objectives.

It provides a clear statement of the District Council's policies, and the way in which the Council will tackle anti-social behaviour. The content includes information on what a number of different agencies can do to address anti-social behaviour, reflecting how a partnership approach is the most effective means of dealing with anti-social behaviour.

It clarifies types of anti-social behaviour and how it will be investigated, how victims will be supported and options for enforcement.

Aims and Objectives.

In meeting the aims of the policy the Council accepts that:

- Individuals have the right to their chosen lifestyle – providing this does not spoil the quality of life for others – and that this implies some degree of tolerance of, and respect for, the requirements and needs of others.
- The problem of ASB is robustly challenged across the district.

- Awareness and education of communities is required and residents and visitors of all ages have a key part to play in resolving problems.
- Local residents feel confident to report their concerns.
- Enquiries will be dealt with in a timely manner as set out in our customer service standards.
- Local residents feel satisfied with our response in relation to their complaint and the outcome achieved.
- Vulnerable people in our communities are identified and supported.

Step 2: Data collection & evidence

What relevant evidence, research, data, and other information do you have and is there any further research, data or evidence you need to fill any gaps in your understanding of the potential or known effects of the policy on different communities? Include quantitative data as well as qualitative intelligence such as community input and advice.

The ASB Policy is aimed at supporting all Harborough District residents.

Harborough District Census Data 2021 (Data from initial releases so may be unrounded)

Total Population: 97,631, an increase of 14.3% since 2011 which is significantly higher than the overall increase for England of 6.6%.

Total number of households: 40,400

Age	Number of residents	% of Harborough District population
Census Question: What is your date of birth?		
All usual residents:	97,631	100.0%
Aged 0-4 years	4,719	4.8%
Aged 5-9 years	5,371	5.5%
Aged 10-15 years	7,106	7.3%
Aged 16-19 years	4,200	4.3%
Aged 20-24 years	4,344	4.4%
Aged 25-34 years	10,487	10.7%
Aged 35-49 years	18,336	18.8%
Aged 50-64 years	21,570	22.1%
Aged 65-74 years	11,429	11.7%
Aged 75-84 years	7,336	7.5%
Aged 85 years and over	2,733	2.8%

Household Composition

One person household aged 65 and over	5,335 (13.2%)
One person household other	5,179 (12.8%)
Lone parent household with dependent children	2,066 (5.1%)

Ethnic Group

Census Question: What is your ethnic group?	Number of residents	% of Harborough District population
All usual residents:	97,623	100.0%
Asian/Asian British:	5,298	5.4%
Black/Black British/Caribbean/African:	699	0.7%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups:	2,003	2.1%
White:	88,851	91.0%
Other ethnic group	205	0.24%

Population by residents born in the UK: Harborough 92.8%

Household Language

All adults in household have English as a main language	39,029 (96.6%)
At least 1 but not all adults in household have English as main language	721 (1.8%)
No adults but at least 1 person aged 3 to 15 has English as main language	143 (0.4%)
No people in household have English as a main language	520 (1.3%)

Main Language: Top 10

English	92,200 residents
Gujarati	363 residents
Panjabi	335 residents
Polish	307 residents
Romanian	222 residents
Portuguese	99 residents
Spanish	92 residents
Hungarian	72 residents
Greek	56 residents

Sign Language, 23 residents (British Sign Language, 16 residents)

Gender

Census Question: What is your sex?	Number of residents	% of Harborough District population
All usual residents:	97,625	100.0%
Female	49,276	50.5%
Male	48,349	49.5%

Gender Identity

Census Question: Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

	Number of residents	% of Harborough District population
All usual residents aged 16 and over	80,430	100.0%
Gender identity the same as registered at birth	76,560	95.2%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given	69	0.1%
Trans woman	44	0.1%
Trans man	40	0.0%
Non-binary	24	0.0%
All other gender identities	15	0.0%
Not answered	3,678	4.6%

Health

Census Question: Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

	Number of residents	% of Harborough District population
Day to day activities limited a lot	5296	5.4%
Day to day activities limited a little	9413	9.6%
Day to day activities not limited	82917	84.9%

Legal Partnership Status

Census Question: What is your legal marital or same-sex civil partnership status?

	Number of residents	% of Harborough District population
All usual residents aged 16 and over:	80,428	100.0%
Never Married or registered a Civil Partnership	23,779	29.6%
Married or in a registered Civil Partnership	42,622	53.0%
Separated/Divorced or formerly in a Civil Partnership	8,889	11.0%
Widowed or surviving Civil Partnership partner	5,138	6.4%

Religious Belief**Census Question: What is your religion?**

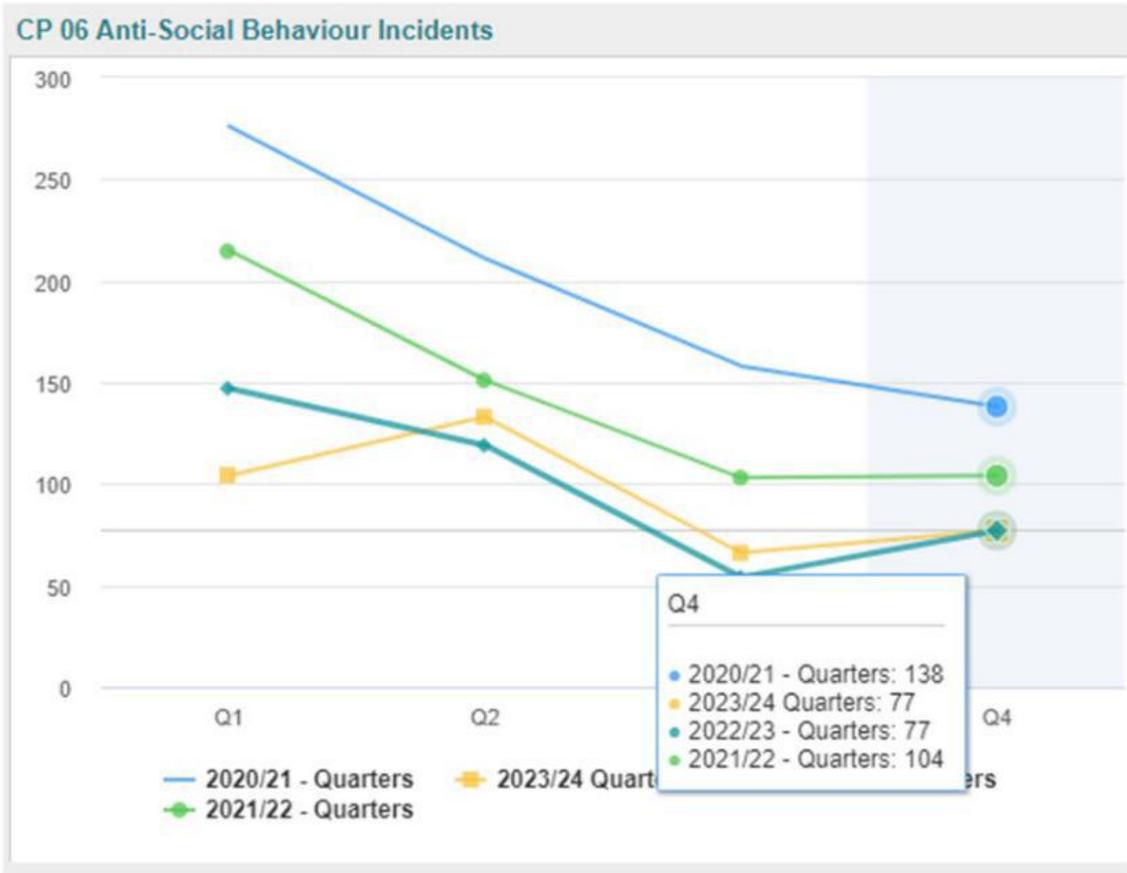
	Number of residents	% of Harborough District population
All usual residents:	97,624	100.0%
Buddhist	256	0.3%
Christian	49,046	50.2%
Hindu	2,477	2.5%
Jewish	118	0.1%
Muslim	1,120	1.1%
Sikh	1,467	1.5%
Other religion	379	0.4%
No religion	37,480	38.4%
Religion not stated	5,281	5.4%

Sexual Orientation**Census Question: Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?**

	Number of residents	% of Harborough District population
All usual residents aged 16 and over	80,427	100.0%
Heterosexual or Straight	73,899	91.9%
Gay or Lesbian	923	1.1%
Bisexual	620	0.8%
Pansexual	90	0.1%
Asexual	36	0.0%
Queer	8	0.0%
All other sexual orientations	6	0.0%
Not answered	4,845	6.0%

Households not deprived in any dimension: Harborough 57.9%

Population who have previously served in any UK armed services: 3,145 residents (3.9%)



Overall ASB data from police above.

Hate Incidents

Rolling 12-month data to March 2024 shows a small increase of 39 “all hate Crime and offences” year to date of 36% to 147. The majority of the incidents relate to the characteristic of race (58.9%) with the next largest category being in relation to sexual orientation (18.2%), disability (14%),religious (6.2%) and transgender (1.4%). In terms of offence type, the majority of these incidents were “violence against the person” (110 incidents). There was an increase in HATE recorded on Sentinel (ASB system) from 6 to 14.

Home Office Survey – Anti-social behaviour: Impacts on individuals and Local communities. 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impacts-of-anti-social-behaviour-on-individuals-and-communities/anti-social-behaviour-impacts-on-individuals-and-local-communities#personal-factors-influencing-asb-impacts>

Part of this survey looked at personal factors influencing ASB – Key findings were:

- Demographics were a key factor in the scale of impacts experienced by the individual. Based on the national survey, those that were more likely to experience a significant negative impact from ASB included younger people (those aged 18 to 34), men, those living in London or Wales, people from white ethnic backgrounds, people with higher incomes and those who lived in more deprived areas.
- Personal and circumstantial factors also played a role in the severity of ASB impacts. Those who had pre-existing mental or physical health conditions, those who were pregnant and those who had children all experienced greater ASB impacts.
- There was a perception among many qualitative participants that the elderly faced more severe consequences of ASB. However, survey data demonstrated that younger people (those aged 18 to 34) were more likely to feel a significant negative impact from ASB compared with other age groups overall. This was likely driven by the types of ASB they more commonly experienced (aggressive begging and sexual ASB).
- A paradox was observed in more deprived areas. While ASB tended to be more prevalent, fewer incidents were reported to the relevant agencies and organisations. More affluent communities were perceived to be less tolerant of ASB, whereas more deprived communities tended to accept a higher level of ASB.

Step 3: Consultation and involvement

Have you consulted and if so outline what you did and who you consulted with and why.

Consultation has not specifically taken place regarding this policy, but ASB remains a high priority for HDC and the Community Safety Partnership. Priorities were decided through data and through consultation taken place with residents via a survey monkey questionnaire which had been widely advertised through various social media channels and through our Parish email newsletter. The survey has also been sent out via Leicestershire Police's neighbourhood link, through partnership networks. There is also a Leicestershire County Council insight survey. Face to face consultation took place with Harborough Action Team which is a district wide group for people with learning disabilities and also for families/carers. List of main surveys below used to inform our priorities:

Violence Reduction Network Community Safety Survey 2023

Parish Community safety Survey 2023

Leicestershire Community insight Survey Sept 2023

Police Neighbourhood link

Step 4: Potential impact

Considering the evidence from the data collection and feedback from consultation, which communities will be affected and what barriers may these individuals or groups face in relation to Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Other groups e.g. rural isolation, deprivation, health inequality, carers, asylum seeker and refugee communities, looked after children, current and ex-armed forces personnel (Veterans), deprived or disadvantaged communities and also the potential impact on Community Cohesion. Remember people have multiple characteristics so the impact of a policy on a particular community may impact people within the community differently. Where possible include numbers likely to be affected.

Through the ASB policy for HDC and the priorities and range of actions outlined within the Community Safety Plan there should be a positive impact on all individuals who share a protected characteristic as the Plan aims to help people be and feel safe within the Harborough district. In some areas, such as Hate reports there will potentially be a particularly positive and supportive impact for people with the protected characteristics of ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religions or belief and gender reassignment through targeted hate awareness campaigns.

ASB Policy requires officers to have regard to the underlying reasons behind behaviour and vulnerabilities of perpetrators and victims. This will mean that no single approach is suitable in each case but the approach to assessing the situation is consistent.

All reports of ASB that go through the Community Safety Team are recorded on a joint system with the police -Sentinel- and all of these incidents are risk assessed and any safeguarding issues or vulnerabilities taken into account and supported.

Step 5: Mitigating and assessing the impact

If you consider there to be actual or potential adverse impact or discrimination, please outline this below. State whether it is justifiable or legitimate and give reasons. If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is illegal, you are required to take action to remedy this immediately. If you have identified adverse impact or discrimination that is justifiable or legitimate, you will need to consider what actions can be taken to mitigate its effect on those groups of people. Consider what barriers you can remove, whether reasonable adjustments may be necessary and how any unmet needs have identified can be addressed.

There are perceived to be no adverse impacts identified in relation to the ASB Policy. This policy aims to provide a framework for which all the various anti-social behaviour types can be considered in a holistic way to enable partners to respond collectively to better meet the needs of all individuals and communities.

More detailed guidance on specific types of ASB and reporting will be kept updated on our website.

Step 6: Making a decision

Summarise your findings and give an overview of whether the policy will meet Harborough District Council's responsibilities in relation to equality, diversity and human rights. Does it contribute to the achievement of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty – eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations?

The Harborough District ASB Policy meets Harborough District Council's responsibilities in relation to equality, diversity and human rights. It contributes to the achievement of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty – eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Step 7: Monitoring, evaluation & review of your policy/procedure/service change

What monitoring systems will you put in place to promote equality of opportunity, monitor impact and effectiveness and make positive improvements? How frequently will monitoring take place and who will be responsible?

Police anti-social behaviour statistics are looked at on a quarterly basis by the Community Safety Partnership and any trends used to inform how funding is directed towards projects and initiatives such as use of re-deployable camera, visits using the Community Safety Vehicle.

The Community Safety team monitor internal figures on a monthly basis and report via Pentana and to portfolio holder.

A Satisfaction Survey will be developed with an expected change of the Countywide ASB recording system in 2025-2026.

Equality Improvement Plan

Equality Objective :

To look at the possibility of collecting statistics around characteristics of victims and perpetrators in particular ages, and running a quarterly report.



Officer Responsible: Community Safety Manager **By when:** End of Quarter 3 (December 31st 2024)

Equality Objective :

Action: Satisfaction Survey to be developed for new recording system in 2025-26

Officer Responsible: Community Safety Manager

By when: June 30th 2025

Equality Objective :

Action:

Officer Responsible:

By when:

Equality Objective :

Action:

Officer Responsible:

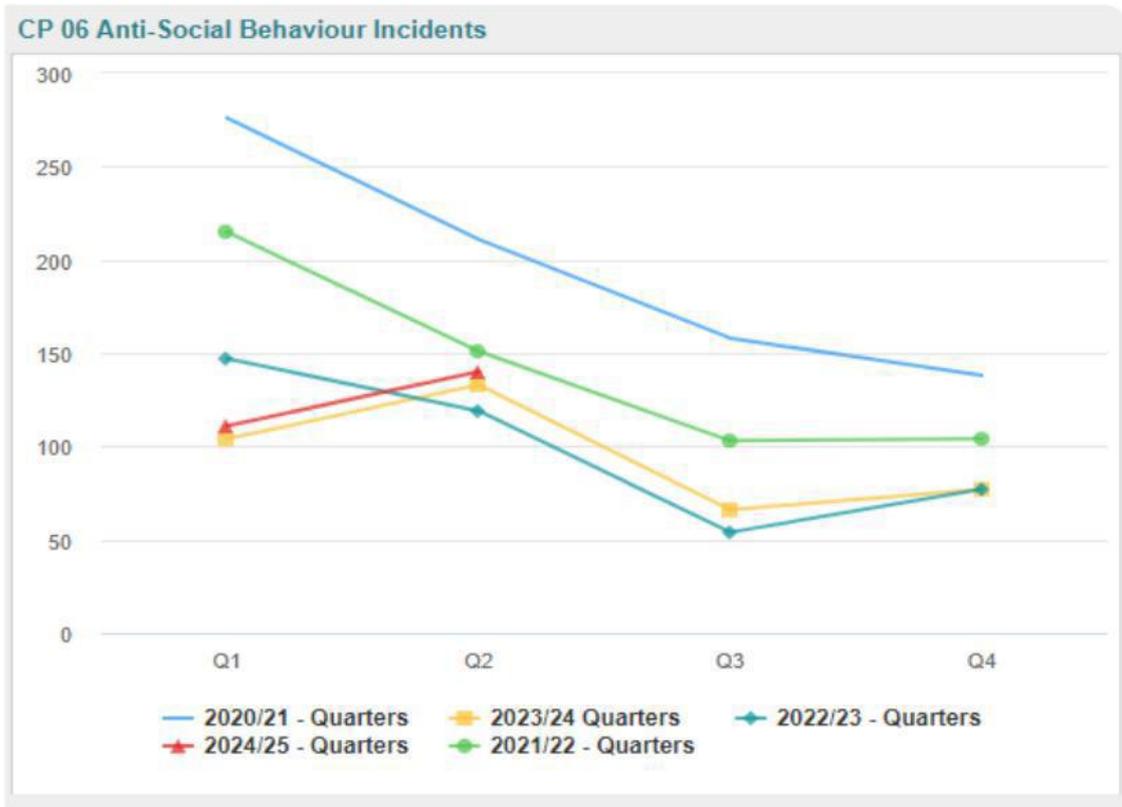
By when:

Signed off by:

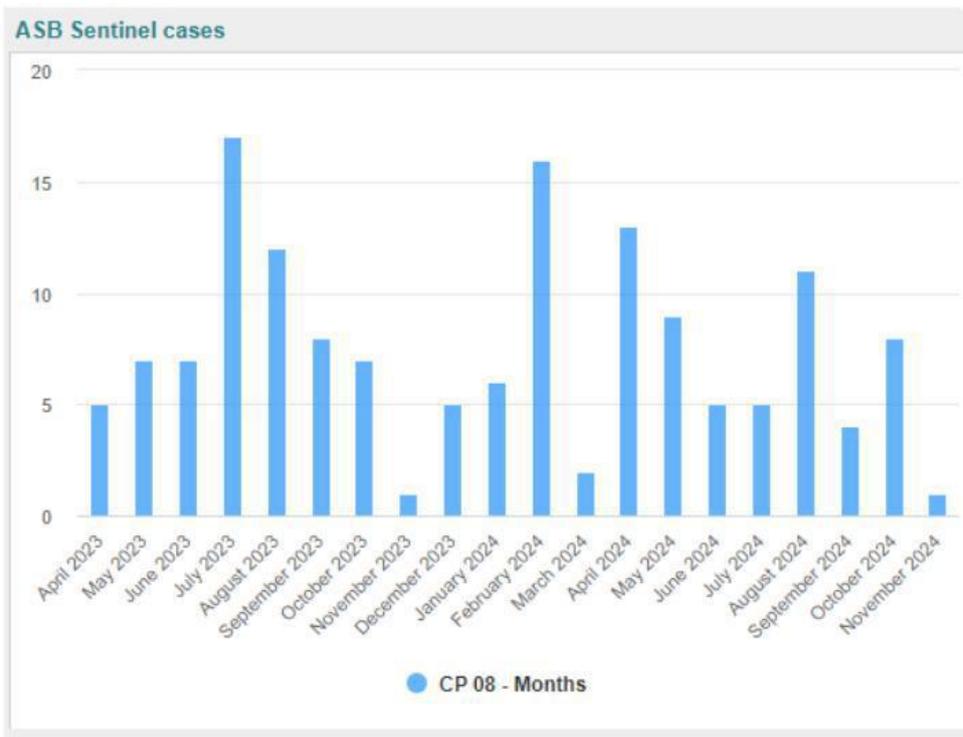
Date:

Once signed off, please forward a copy for publication to Julie Clarke, Equality and Diversity Officer
e-mail: j.clarke@harborough.gov.uk , telephone: 01858 821070.

Pentana data – ASB Figures for Harborough District – Police figures to September 2024



ASB Sentinel cases for HDC only - to November 2024



Harborough District Council

Report to Cabinet Meeting of 10th February 2025



Title:	Bad Debt Write Offs (Revenues and Benefits)
Status:	Public
Key Decision:	Yes
Report Author:	Storme Coop (Revenues & Benefits Manager – Leicestershire Revenues and Benefits Partnership) Telephone contact 01455 255706
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Mark Graves
Appendices:	Appendix A – National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) Schedule of Write Offs over £10,000 Appendix B – Housing Benefits Overpayments (HBOP) Schedule of Write Offs over £10,000

Executive Summary

The Leicestershire and Revenues and Benefits Partnership is responsible for the collection of: Council Tax, National Non-Domestic Rates and Housing Benefit Overpayments.

The report informs Members of the debts written off for these revenue streams. Debts up to the value of £10,000 can be written off by the Head of Partnership, under delegated authority. Permission needs to be sought from the Cabinet to write off individual debts with a value of more than £10,000.

Cabinet is asked to note that the following debts have been written off under delegated authority and amount to:

Council Tax £73,411

Business Rates £7,671.97

Housing Benefit Overpayments £12,994

Cabinet is asked to approve the writing off the following debts which have an individual value exceeding £10,000 and amount to:

Business Rates £70,475.54

Housing Benefits Overpayments £20,443.21

Recommendations
That cabinet notes the amounts written off under delegated powers as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report.
That Cabinet approves the write off of the amounts listed in Appendix A in respect of Business Rates totalling £70,475.54.
That Cabinet approves the write off of the amounts listed in Appendix B in respect of Housing Benefit Overpayments totalling £20,443.21.
Reasons for Recommendations
All reasonable steps to recover the debt have been taken, and therefore where write off is recommended it is the only course of action that is left available.

1. Purpose of Report

This report seeks approval to write off debts in respect of National Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates) and Housing Benefit Overpayments (HBOP), and to advise members on what debts have been written off this financial year for the revenues and benefits service area.

2. Background

This report forms part of the formal debt write-off procedures included the Leicestershire and Revenues Benefits Partnership Write Off Policy. This can be accessed through the following link: www.harborough.gov.uk/directory_record/4136/write_off_policy

3. Details

3.1 In accordance with 'Write off policy' debts are categorised into the following areas:

- Bankruptcy/Liquidation
- Debt Relief Order
- Deceased – no estate
- Absconder – no trace
- Statute Barred debt > 6 years
- Uneconomical to collect
- Local authority error
- Small balance
- Total costs written off associated with any above

Cabinet Approval for Write-Off

4. In supporting the recommendation that £70,475.54 be written off this has been summarised below (detailed information shown in **Appendix A**)

- 3 Limited Companies entered into liquidation.
- 1 Limited Company has absconded from the premises leaving no forwarding address.

In supporting the recommendation that the housing benefit debt of £20,443.21 be written off this has been summarised below (detailed information shown in **Appendix B**)

- Claimant has sadly passed away. Tenancy terminated 13th December 2020

Write-Off by Delegation

4.1 The tables below summarise what has been written off by delegation for Council tax, Non-Domestic Rates and Housing benefit overpayments for the period 1st April through to 6th January 2025.

2024/2025

Council Tax	Debts Written Off this period under £10k (net to include credits)	
Debt Reason analysis -		
Bankruptcy / Liquidation	£22,488	£73,411
Debt Relief Order	£27,071	
Deceased - no estate	£1,109	
Absconder - no trace	£17,056	
Uneconomical to collect	£1,079	
Small Balance	£24	
Pre 1997 band adjustments	£494	
Costs written Off against all categories	£4,090	

2024/25

Non-Domestic Rates	Debts Written Off this period under £10k (net to include credits)	
Debt Reason analysis -		
Bankruptcy / Liquidation / Insolvency	£7,197.38	£7,671.97
Absconder	£373.91	
Small balance	£7.18	
Costs written Off against all categories	£93.50	

2024/25

Housing Benefit Overpayments	Debts Written Off this period under £10k (net to include credits)	
Debt Reason analysis -		

Uneconomical to collect	£123	£12,994
Absconder	£496	
Small balance	£26	
Other and deceased	£12,349	

5. Implications of Decisions

5.1 Corporate Priorities

No priorities linked with Corporate Plan.

5.2 Financial

There is no additional financial effect as all the debts are met from the Authority's bad debt provision for previous years arrears or from in year income if the debts relate to the current financial year.

5.3 Legal

No legal issues arise directly from this report

5.4 Policy

No policy issues arise directly from this report

5.5 Environmental Implications including contributions to achieving a net zero carbon Council by 2030

No environmental issues arise directly from this report.

5.6 Risk Management

If proper debt management and accounting procedures are not followed in the management and writing off of debt, then the council could be criticised by the external auditor.

5.7 Equalities Impact

No equalities issues arise directly from this

5.8 Data Protection

No data protection issues arise directly from this report.

6. Summary of Consultation and Outcome

Not applicable.

7. Alternative Options Considered

A number of remedies are available to Local Authorities to recover debts and therefore before a debt is written off each of these is considered. This may include the use of enforcement agents and or credit searches. However, there are instances where a local authority deems it appropriate not to continue with recovery action where for example the debtor has sadly passed away (and there is no money left within the estate) or where we are prevented from continuing because the business is no longer in existence.

8. Background papers

None

Appendix A

NNDR Schedule of Write Offs Over £10,000

<u>Year</u>	<u>Company</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Reason</u>
2023/2024	SEL SPV Ltd	£ 2,345.03	Company entered administration on 2 nd July 2024.
2024/2025	Unit 20A Swannington Rd, Broughton Astley	£ 823.01	
2023/2024	SEL SPV Ltd	£ 3,872.02	
2024/2025	3 Stanier Road, Broughton Astley	£ 4,950.35	
	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>£11,990.41</u>	
2021/2022	Welham Roofing & Driveways Ltd	£ 4,588.75	Company was dissolved on 14 th February 2024
2022/2023	Stable View, Bowden Lane, Welham	£ 6,112.75	
2023/2024		£ 5,576.64	
	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>£16,278.14</u>	
2021/2022	Greer Manufacturing Ltd Unit C4 Welland Ind Est, Market Harborough	£ 1,027.73	Company was dissolved 23 rd July 2024
2021/2022	Greer Manufacturing Ltd	£ 2,719.35	
2022/2023		£ 9,605.75	
2023/2024	Unit D1 Welland Ind Est, Market Harborough	£ 5,127.08	
	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>£18,479.91</u>	
2022/2023	Deli Time Ltd 103A Bath Street, Market Harborough	£ 8,307.97	Business vacated the premises. No forwarding address provided. Tried to locate forwarding address on Companies
2023/2024		£ 9,693.75	
2024/2025		£ 5,725.36	

			House but post returned. Despite tracing we have been unable to locate a new trading address.
	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>£23,727.08</u>	

OVERALL TOTAL: £70,475.54

Appendix B

Housing Benefit Overpayment Schedule of Write Offs Over £10,000

<u>Year</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Reason</u>
2014/2015	£2,700.28	Claimant Passed away leaving no estate from which the payment could be made.
2015/2016	£4,743.44	
2016/2017	£4,696.12	
2017/2018	£4,665.44	
2018/2019	£3,637.93	
	<u>£20,443.21</u>	

Overall total: £20,443.21

Summary reason

The DWP sent a notification on 7 October 2019 that benefit entitlement had ceased and as a result of their findings housing benefit entitlement was cancelled from the 12 February 2014 to the 8 January 2019.

Prior to the debtor passing he had suffered with mental health issues and was supported by a social worker.

Harborough District Council



Report to Cabinet Meeting of 10th February 2025

Title:	Car parking pay and display machine contract award
Status:	Public with exempt appendix not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972. Having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because of commercial sensitivity of the bid information.
Key Decision:	Yes
Report Author:	Elaine Bird Head of Regulatory Services
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Darren Woodiwiss (Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change)
Appendices:	A. Procurement Assessment (Exempt)

Summary

- I. The report seeks to award the contract for the replacement of the car parking pay and display machines following the conclusion of the procurement process.
- II. The current parking machines were installed in 2017 and are coming to the end of their life and require upgrading to mitigate against the switching off of the 3G mobile network.
- III. The procurement method used for the contract was an open procedure, compliant with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 managed by Welland procurement partnership supporting the Council.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet approves the award of a contract for replacement of the car parking pay and display machines to contractor 3 identified through the recent open procedure tender process.
2. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change together with the Head of Legal services to negotiate and finalise the contract, including minor variations

Reasons for Recommendations

- I. To ensure that the Council appoints a suitable contractor to replace the car parking pay and display machines
- II. The evaluation panel agreed that Contractor 3 should be offered preferred provider status based on the tenders submitted.
- III. Awarding a contract based on the tender submitted by Contractor 3 offers the best option for the replacement of the parking machines

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval to delegate the award of the preferred contractor for the replacement of the car parking pay and display machines for car parks in Market Harborough and Lutterworth.

2. Background

- 2.1 The current machines were installed in 2017 and are coming to the end of their lives and with the national switch off of the 3G mobile network, it is necessary to either upgrade the existing machines or procure new machines.
- 2.2 There are known issues with the connectivity of the existing machines and following customer survey, ease of use was identified as an issue by service users.

3. Details

- 3.1 Harborough District Council resolved at Cabinet on 12 February 2024 and at Council on 26 February 2024 that the allocated budget be included in the approved Capital Programme for 2025/26.
- 3.3 It is a routine procurement exercise that represents 'business as usual' and is essential to maintain the Council's ability to provide an effective car parking service. The contract is for the provision of goods and services in respect of the supply and maintenance of 33 car parking machines in need of replacement. The tender was a mixture of card only payment machines along with standard cash & card payment machines. The split equates to 18 machines able to take cash & card payments with 15 machines being solely for card payments.
- 3.4 The tender was conducted using ESPO framework as this was deemed to be the best option as it includes several suppliers that Harborough wanted to offer the opportunity to.
- 3.5 The procurement approach is in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015, and is a call off from a Framework (ESPO – Parking Management Solutions 509_23 Lot 1). The Framework itself was advertised on the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) OR Find a Tender Service (FTS) The procurement followed the process set out in

the tender documentation, being managed by Welland procurement partnership, supporting the Council. The procurement method used was a single stage with no short-listing. As such, the completed response document comprises the entirety of a bidder's tender submission.

3.6 On publication of the opportunity, organisations were asked to register their interest via the Council's "ProContract" e-Sourcing portal, where Tender documents were available. A total of 8 suppliers were invited to submit a bid, resulting in 3 Tender submissions.

3.7 The Award Questionnaire carries a total weight of 100%. Each tender has been evaluated based on quality and price, to determine the most economically advantageous tender. The criteria are made up of:

- Quality - 60%
- Price - 40% Details of the pricing model are included as Appendix A (exempt)

The evaluation of the price included both the installation costs of the new machines but also the on-going back office and maintenance service for the length of a 5-year contract.

Tenders were evaluated by a panel of internal officers. Three tenders were received; all of the tenders were compliant and judged acceptable by the evaluation panel, and there was consensus within the panel.

3.8 The evaluation panel, therefore, agreed that contractor 3 should be awarded preferred provider status and the installation of the car parking pay and display machines; the decision was subject to a statutory 'standstill' period of ten days. Award of the contract is subject to Cabinet approval, and agreement of the final contract.

4 Implications of Decisions

Corporate Priorities

4.1 The recommendations will enable the Council to secure value for money and financial sustainability, whilst acknowledging the importance of creating a sustainable environment and carbon reduction and allowing action to support these goals throughout the term of the contract

Consultation

4.2 Direct consultation was not undertaken as part of this procurement process, however as part of the car parking strategy review, which included payment methods for parking, views of service users were sought. Ease of use and speed of transactions were issues raised in the customer surveys.

Financial

4.3 Appendix A (Exempt) provides details of the financial implications for the Council.

4.4 The recommendation offers the best means of achieving value for money and financial sustainability for a 5-year contract period.

4.5 Year 1 of the maintenance contract is included in the installation costs.

4.6 The ongoing operational costs are to be met within existing revenue budgets for the provision of car parking. A capital sum of £107k is included in the 2024/25 capital programme.

Legal

- 4.7 The Council would lay itself open to legal challenge if it failed to comply with EU procurement directives, UK law and its own constitution.
- 4.8 Award of the contract is subject to Cabinet approval and the option of deciding not to proceed is available. However, the decision regarding the choice of provider could not be overturned without exposing the Council to a serious risk of legal challenge.
- 4.9 The Council can either award a contract to Contractor 3 or award to no provider and seek an alternate approach through undertaking a further procurement process or not replacing the existing machines but to consider replacing the internal modem of the units however due to the age and other issues relating to the useability of the machines, this option would not resolve all the issues raised by service users.

Environmental Implications

- 4.11 There are no direct environmental implications in this report.

Risk Management

- 4.12 Failure to appoint a suitable provider could jeopardise the ability to provide an effective service in the chargeable car parks.
- 4.13 Failure to resolve the operational issues with the current car parking machines could result in reputational damage over the longer term as the machine become older and more likely to fail.
- 4.14 Failure to ensure compliance with the Council's statutory and regulatory obligations would leave the Council at risk of legal challenge and would potentially have similar implications. The risks will be mitigated through an effective, efficient, and compliant procurement process.

Equalities Impact

- 4.15 The machine designs comply with BS 8300:2018 – Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment
- 4.15 The ability to pay by cash will remain in car parks.
- 4.16 The large touchscreen simplifies the transaction process for users.
- 4.17 The flexibility of the card only payment terminals means that they can be sited at locations which are convenient for all users.

Data Protection

- 4.18 The supplier complies with the PCI Data Security Standards (PCI DSS) and to ensure full compliance, the machine and the data used for analysis is completely independent of the live transactional process. The transaction data records received from the terminal are purely for reporting, auditing, receipt, and support purposes.

5 Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 The options available to the Council are.
- Appoint Contractor 3 which is the preferred option; or
 - Not award the contract, which is not the preferred option as this would impact the delivery of the car parks in Market Harborough and Lutterworth.
 - Not to replace the existing machines but to upgrade the internal modem to ensure continued connectivity when the 3G network is switched off. This is not

the preferred options as the issues such as ease of use and the machines coming to the natural end of life will not be addressed.

6 Recommendation

- I. That Cabinet approves the award of a contract for replacement of the car parking pay and display machines to contractor 3 identified through the recent open procedure tender process.
- II. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change together with the Head of Legal services to negotiate and finalise the contract, including minor variations

7 Background papers

None

Cabinet – 10th February 2025

Section 100A (4) Local Government Act 1972

**The following item is suggested to be dealt with under the above legislation.
To comply with the Act the following resolution needs to be passed.**

“That the public and press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the matters yet to be discussed involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972”.

Car Parking Pay and Display Machine Contract Award

- **Exempt: Appendix A 'Procurement Assessment'**

Harborough District Council



Report to Cabinet Meeting of 10th February 2025

Title:	Approval to renew four Contracts over £50,000 to enable preparation of the new Harborough Local Plan.
Status:	Public with exempt appendix not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972. Having regard to all the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because of the commercial sensitivity of the contracts.
Key Decision:	Yes
Report Author:	David Atkinson (Director of Planning)
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Simon Galton (Portfolio Holder for Planning)
Appendices:	Appendix A - Exempt

Summary

- i. This report seeks approval from Cabinet to award four contracts with a value of between £50,000 and £100,000 to service providers, as detailed in the exempt Appendix A, to enable the efficient preparation of the new Harborough Local Plan.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the renewal of the four contracts set out in the Exempt Appendix A from 1st February until 30th September 2025.**
- 2. Renew delegated authority to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Planning and the Head of Legal Services, to negotiate (including minor variations) and finalise all necessary legal agreements to facilitate the transaction.**

Reasons for Recommendation

- i. To ensure experienced, specialist, technical support, contracted to the council under fixed-term contracts to prepare the new local plan, are retained until all local plan preparation processes up to, and including, submission of the new local plan for public examination, are concluded in accordance with the programme set out in the updated Local Development Scheme to be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 20th February.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval by Cabinet for approval of four contracts related to the preparation of the Local Plan, and to renew delegated authority to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Planning and the Head of Legal Services, to negotiate and finalise the contracts, including minor variations.

2. Background

- 2.1 Full Council at its meeting on 18th December 2023 approved the preparation of the new Local Plan. Significant progress has been made in preparing the new plan and work is now at an advanced stage. In December 2024 the Government published a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which amended the timescale available to prepare the new local plan. Therefore, an updated Local Development Scheme is being prepared and considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 20th February 2025. In order to ensure the council retains the experienced specialist technical support it currently has to ensure the preparation of the new local plan to submission for public examination remains on programme, there is a need for Cabinet to approve the renewal of the four fixed term contracts set out in the Exempt Appendix A.
- 2.2 The new draft, Regulation 19 stage, local plan will now be considered by Cabinet for recommendation to Council on 20th February 2025, subsequently Council will consider the new local plan for publication for public consultation on 3rd March 2025. It is anticipated that, should this be approved by Council, public consultation on the new local plan will run for a minimum of 6 weeks from mid-March. Not publishing the plan for public consultation by 12th March 2025 would mean that the requirements of the NPPF transitional arrangements would not be met. This would mean that the council would not be able to progress the preparation of the new local plan under the provisions of the December 2023 version of the NPPF, but rather, would need to prepare the new plan under the provisions of the December 2024 NPPF. This scenario would have led to higher housing numbers for the district. It is important to ensure that a new local plan is put in place to guide new development in the district as soon as possible, so being able to progress a new local plan under the NPPF transitional arrangements is important in achieving that goal. It is also important to note that the council have been made aware that the deadline for submission of the new local plan of 30th June 2025 no longer exists meaning that the council is able to submit its new draft local plan for examination a little later in the year which allows some more time for preparation for submission.

- 2.3 Following the public consultation period, detailed analysis of what is potentially going to be a considerable number of representations received to the Regulation 19 stage, local plan will be undertaken. Additionally, a considerable amount of work will be required to prepare various documents to enable the new local plan to be submitted later in the year. It is anticipated that this work will be completed to enable the local plan to be submitted for public examination in the late summer/early autumn of 2025. In light of this significant new programme of work, partially arising from the publication of the new NPPF, and partially from work that would be needed to be done in any event, Cabinet are recommended to extend the four contracts listed in Exempt Appendix A from 1st February 2025 up to 30th September 2025, to enable the considerable amount of work required in this period to be successfully completed and for the preparation of the new local plan to remain on track. It is important to ensure the new local plan is prepared in the shortest possible timescale in order to protect the Harborough District from unwanted, and potentially unsustainable, speculative development.

3. Implications of Decisions

Corporate Priorities

- 3.1 The preparation of the new local plan is a corporate priority for the council in order to protect the district from unwanted speculative development taking place in potentially unsustainable locations that are not best suited to the needs of the community. The new local plan will help deliver the following corporate priorities:
- CO1: There will be an adequate supply of housing to meet local needs across all tenures and price ranges and reducing the potential for homelessness.
 - CO2: Our local plan will ensure growth in the area is balanced with employment opportunities and ensure that transport and infrastructure needs are met.
 - CO3: The rural nature of the district will be recognised, and our heritage and cultural assets are preserved.
 - CO4: Engagement of our local communities, the voluntary and charitable sector and ensuring they actively manage their own localities and shape their own places.
 - CO5: The district will be shaped through good design, that addresses local needs and promotes healthier life choices.

The policies of the new local plan will set out how these corporate priorities are to be met and achieved. The new policies will be assessed in the light of these corporate priorities to ensure they meet the aims and objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Consultation

- 3.2 As this is an internal council governance matter there is no need for consultation.

Financial

- 3.3 No additional resources are required. Funding is available from within the existing Local Plan budget.

Legal

- 3.4 Subject to approval of the recommendations, the contractual obligations will need to be properly documented as required by the District Council's Constitution and also in accordance with all enabling legislation in force. It is also important to ensure audit trails are in place and maintained for transparency purposes to minimise the risk of reputational harm to the District Council.

Environmental Implications

- 3.5 The new Local plan will have implications in relation to the spatial planning of the district, it will guide the delivery of development in a plan-led way and coordinate environmental protection. The wider environmental implications of the scale and distribution of development and associated supporting infrastructure will be assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan, which incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive. The SEA Directive is important to the preparation of the local plan. It is one of the key documents that ensures that the spatial strategy of the plan is sustainable and that the plan delivers sustainable development. This will ensure that the plan provides the best possible benefit to the district because development planned for and undertaken in accordance with the plan, will be delivered in a way that minimises its impact on the local environment in the area.

Risk Management

- 3.6 Extending the four contracts set out in Exempt Appendix A will enable the preparation of the new local plan to remain on track and in accordance with the programme set out in the updated Local Development Scheme.
- 3.7 Not meeting the government deadline to publish the new draft, Regulation 19, local plan for public consultation by 12th March 2025 would mean that the council would not be able to prepare a plan under the NPPF transitional arrangements. This would mean the council would not be able to prepare a new local plan under the provisions of the December 2023 version of the NPPF as this will be redundant and deleted. The council would then need to prepare its new local plan under the provisions of the December 2024 NPPF. This would mean higher overall housing numbers that the plan would need to provide for. Post public consultation, the removal of the requirement of the previous government to submit the new local plan for public examination by 30th June 2025 provides more time for the council to prepare the plan for submission to the Planning Inspectorate for independent public examination. For these reasons it is important to ensure the new draft, Regulation 19, local plan is published for public consultation by 12th March 2025 and then submitted for public examination as soon as possible thereafter, ideally no later than late summer/early autumn of 2025. This scenario will ensure that the district is able to adopt a new local plan at the earliest possible date, and thereby protect the district from unwanted, and potentially unsustainable speculative development as soon as possible. Cabinet approving the recommendations set out in this report will facilitate this being achieved.

Equalities Impact

- 3.8 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) for the Local Plan will be prepared and updated at key stages of the Local Plan making process. In addition, an EIA will be prepared for each public consultation stage.

Data Protection

- 3.9 Where appropriate, consultants undertaking evidence studies and technical specialists, will be required to meet the provisions of the UK General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 2018 in respect to any data handling.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 *Option 1: Not to renew the four contracts set out in Exempt Appendix A.* This is not Recommended because this would mean that the council would no longer have sufficient resources to complete the preparation of the draft, Regulation 19, local plan in time for consideration by Cabinet and Council to allow publication for public consultation of the draft local plan by the government deadline set out in the December 2023 NPPF transitional arrangements of 12th March 2025. It would also mean the council would no longer have sufficient resources to effectively manage the public consultation and prepare the plan for submission to the Planning Inspectorate for public examination by late summer/early autumn 2025. This would take would prevent delivery of the local plan in accordance with updated Local Development Scheme timelines. For the council to adopt a new local plan as quickly as possible to ensure a plan-led approach to the delivery of sustainable development is maintained across the district, it is important that the local plan preparation timetable set out in the updated Local Development Scheme is met. It is for this reason that the timelines in the updated Local Development Scheme are tight. By approving the recommendations of this report, Cabinet will be supporting the continued efficient preparation of the new local plan.

5. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the renewal of the four contracts set out in Exempt Appendix A from 1st February until 30th September 2025.**
- 2. Renew delegated authority to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Planning and the Head of Legal Services, to negotiate (including minor variations) and finalise all necessary legal agreements to facilitate the transaction.**

6. Background papers

6.1 There are no background papers to accompany this report.

Cabinet – 10th February 2025

Section 100A (4) Local Government Act 1972

The following item is suggested to be dealt with under the above legislation. To comply with the Act the following resolution needs to be passed.

“That the public and press be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the matters yet to be discussed involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972”.

Approval to renew four contracts over £50,000 to enable preparation of the new Harborough Local Plan

- **Exempt: Appendix A ‘Schedule of Local Plan Contracts exceeding £50,000 for renewal’**

