



Like many districts East Herts operates in a complex political landscape with 48 town and parish councils as well as the county council. Many district councillors are also town or parish and/or county councillors which can bring efficiency in mobilising support and resources but can also come with challenges – with five distinct towns alongside over 100 individual villages and hamlets there are many separate identities within East Herts, as opposed to an overall district wide identity. In the last election (2015) all 50 Council seats were won by the Conservative Party. Since then the make-up has changed to 43 Conservative, 4 Independent and 1 Liberal Democratic (alongside 2 vacancies which are being held until new elections in May 2019).

The council's Executive has plenty of ambition which is demonstrated by its commitment to propose investing £28m in leisure facilities, £13.5m in Hertford Theatre and significant amounts (yet to be agreed) in the Old River Lane site at Bishop's Stortford (including a new arts centre, multi-story car park, commercial, retail and residential units). Partnership working, collaboration, and consensus building are essential requirements for officers at all levels in the organisation to realise these ambitions. Reporting in to the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive are 8 service areas with responsibility for delivering services through a mixture of in-house, shared and contracted arrangements (the net cost of which is around £14m in 2018/19).

A peer review took place in December 2018 which concluded that East Herts is recognised as having bold ambition with the Leader at the forefront of driving the growth agenda in Hertfordshire. There is a stable financial platform having managed budgets effectively throughout periods of austerity with relatively few reductions or “cuts” in services since 2008 and staff are deemed to be open, friendly and committed. Equally there are challenges to consider as we move forward. As with many councils we face skills shortages and recruitment difficulties in key service areas and have further work to do on ensuring the capability and capacity of our workforce matches the ambition. Momentum on transformation and change needs to be sustained and realising the new commercial strategy is also key to ensuring the long term viability of the council.

For more information on East Herts:

<https://sportinherts.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/03/East-Herts-Health-Profile-2017.pdf>

<http://www.rsnonline.org.uk/economic-factsheets-2017>

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/article/35671/Annual-Reports>

<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/article/34767/Vision--Corporate-Priorities>

<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=119&MId=3382&I=1>