

Corporate Plan

2026–2031

Executive summary

We are committed to delivering high-quality services that meet our residents' needs while ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience well beyond the impending local government reorganisation in April 2028.

Our operating model is designed to deliver efficient, effective, and value-for-money services through a combination of in-house delivery, shared services, and carefully managed outsourced partnerships. An independent assessment in 2025 by the Local Government Association praised us for our stable politics. It noted our strong governance, prudent financial management, and a collaborative culture that enables us to respond flexibly to changing circumstances.

Our strategic priorities

Our strategic priorities are framed by our People, Planet, Place model, which reflects our ambition to balance environmental responsibility, community well-being, and economic vitality:

- **People: health, skill, and opportunity.** We will promote health, well-being, and inclusion, ensuring that all residents have access to the skills, support and opportunities they need to thrive.
- **Planet: climate emergency and protecting our environment.** We will lead on looking after nature, cut carbon emissions, and act on climate change to keep Hart green and healthy for the future.
- **Place: infrastructure-led growth and the Local Plan.** We will bring forward a new Local Plan that will seek to deliver the new homes required by the government, and shape vibrant, sustainable communities through investment in affordable housing, infrastructure, and local economic development, to places where people want to live, work, and visit.
- **Prepare for the North Hampshire Authority.** Make services transfer-ready, protect residents' and businesses' experience, and make sure we leave a legacy to ensure there is strong continuity and benefits that endure beyond the new Authority's vesting day on 1 April 2028.

This Corporate Plan sets out how we will deliver on these priorities even while preparing for future challenges, including the anticipated Local Government Reorganisation. We are committed to transformation and innovation, strengthening our digital capabilities and enhancing governance to ensure clear roles and accountability. Through partnerships such as Here for Hart, we will continue to work collaboratively with local organisations, the voluntary sector, and health partners to deliver preventative and community-focused services.

Vision

Our vision is to keep Hart as a district that is environmentally responsible, socially inclusive, and economically resilient, while ensuring that the Council and any new

authority remain financially sustainable and ready for the future.

Values

Our values shape how we work and serve our community:

- **Helpful** We listen, respect others, and provide support to help people achieve their goals
- **Approachable** We are open, friendly, and easy to engage with
- **Responsive** We act quickly, get things right first time, and look for ways to improve
- **Take ownership** We take responsibility, deliver on our commitments, and work together to make a difference.

Strengths we build on

- Sound and responsibly managed finances
- The benefits of Here for Hart as a model of innovation and community focus
- Highly regarded partnerships and responsiveness to partners
- Strong performance in core services with visible outcomes
- Our MHCLG recognised approach to cyber security
- Our Finance Team's national recognition as the Finance Team of the Year
- The Green Flag status for the management of our country parks and open spaces
- Our innovative approach to delivering biodiversity net gain
- A council that quietly and effectively delivers — time to tell our story with confidence.

People: health, skill, and opportunity

What we will deliver:

Here for Hart

- Strengthened impact measurement and reporting

- Broadened engagement with local organisations and voluntary groups
- Create more opportunities for residents to engage with Here for Hart and its member organisations
- Here for Hart as a best practice model to be adopted by the future North Hampshire authority.

Housing Strategy 2026-2031

- Optimising the supply of high-quality, new affordable housing to meet local needs
- Making the best use of the private rented sector and new and existing affordable housing
- Working in partnerships to create sustainable, energy-efficient affordable homes and healthier communities.

Community safety

- Maintain strong partnerships and deliver targeted responses to anti-social behaviour and environmental crime.

Preventing homelessness

- Reinforce early intervention and partnership working
- Provide tailored support for households at risk of homelessness.

Affordable housing

- Secure new affordable homes prioritising social rented homes through planning policies, agreements, and opportunities to purchase on the open market
- Explore all possible opportunities to provide funding support and investment or forward funding to deliver affordable homes
- Launch a rightsizing incentive programme to free up family-sized homes
- Support rural and community-led housing initiatives.

Private rented sector standards

- Ensure compliance and improve housing quality
- Promote energy efficiency upgrades to reduce fuel poverty
- Develop landlord engagement programs to sustain tenancies and reduce vacancies.

Voluntary and community sector funding

- Maintain the Council's core funding for community organisations with annual

inflationary increases

- a new local community projects fund, building on the success of Hart's UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to help fund local schemes that increase capacity and engagement.

Leisure facilities

- Extend and improve leisure facilities in the district, including fitness provision at Hart Leisure Centre.

Regulation

- Efficient and effective, but common-sense application of regulation and enforcement.

What this means for residents

- Easier access to local support and services
- Safer, cleaner, and more connected communities
- Earlier help to prevent homelessness
- Better access to affordable, high-quality homes
- Improved leisure facilities
- Continued community support and engagement
- Business-friendly regulation.

Planet: climate emergency and protecting our environment

What we will deliver:

Climate Change

- use the actions in our Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2029 to drive change and mitigate the impacts of climate change across Hart

Buildings and energy

- retrofit and decarbonise our owned buildings and assets
- support the appropriate development of green energy projects across the district
- improve energy management
- guide residents and landlords to grants and advice.

Transport and active travel

- increase electric vehicle charging points

- expand current Green Grid pilot projects by developing a comprehensive plan to attract and secure grant and developer funding.

Nature and water

- maintain Green Flag countryside sites
- protect habitats through high-quality Sites of Alternative Natural Green Space
- mitigate impacts on Special Protection Areas.

Our plan for Fleet Pond

- deliver the Fleet Pond enhancement plan to enhance ecology through habitat restoration, water quality improvements, and biodiversity gains.

Biodiversity Net Gain at scale

- create and manage habitats, with Whitewater Meadows serving as a flagship wetland and woodland project to enhance biodiversity, flood resilience, and access.

Engagement and reporting

- run climate-related content and schools' engagement programmes.

What this means for residents:

- Warmer, more efficient public buildings and easier access to retrofit advice and grants for homes
- Safer, more attractive walking and cycling routes connecting communities, enhancing access to green spaces and more sustainable living
- Improved local nature with better-connected green spaces, new wetlands and resilient woodlands
- Clear, regular information on progress and practical steps people can take.

Place: infrastructure-led growth and the Local Plan

What we will deliver:

New Local Plan

- supported by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, we will have submitted by Local Plan to the government for examination by April 2028. This long-term planning framework will set out where homes, jobs, and infrastructure should go and will include policies to protect the environment, promote sustainable growth, and provide a clear framework for planning decisions.

Employment and skills

- Collaborative efforts with our north Hampshire partners to focus on

supporting small and medium enterprises through initiatives that promote green skills and digital connectivity, ensuring north Hampshire remains competitive and inclusive.

What this means for residents:

- New developments will be planned with the right infrastructure plans in place
- Homes and communities will be designed to be attractive, safe, and environmentally friendly, with measures to address climate change
- Improved internet and digital services will support work, learning, and business.

Preparing for the North Hampshire Authority

What we will deliver:

Prepare for Local Government Reorganisation

- The overriding aim is to protect services for Hart's residents ahead of local government reorganisation and ensure a seamless transfer to the new authority
- We will make sure that, as Hart prepares for the handover, the council remains financially secure and lays the groundwork for a viable, well-prepared successor authority
- We will maintain momentum on key programmes, such as climate change initiatives, and ensure that both residents and council officers are supported through the transition to a new authority, with the aim of leaving a positive legacy
- We will create an Opportunities and Investment Panel to review legacy investment opportunities. It will assess each potential opportunity, business plans, risks, funding choices, and how we plan to deliver on these investments in advance of local government reorganisation
- We will maintain ongoing discussions within the voluntary sector about future collaboration and the role of the council's legacy in supporting community organisations during and after the reorganisation.

Financial stability

- Throughout the transition period to the new North Hampshire Unitary Authority, maintaining financial stability is crucial. To achieve this, we will maintain a balanced Medium-Term Financial Strategy, ensuring the council's finances remain robust and sustainable. Prudent reserves will be maintained to safeguard against unforeseen challenges, providing a buffer that protects essential services and supports continuity for Hart's staff and residents
- Disciplined capital investment will be prioritised, with a focus on projects that

deliver lasting value and can be easily transferred to the successor authority. This approach ensures that, as Hart prepares for the handover, the council remains financially secure and lays the groundwork for a viable, well-prepared successor authority.

Working with our partner authorities, prepare a local government reorganisation plan

- A fully resourced implementation plan is put in place to make sure that services will continue with minimal disruption during the change to the new North Hampshire Unitary Authority
- Efforts are made to keep essential programmes easy to transfer, ensuring continuity for everyone
- Financial decisions are made openly, with careful management of budgets and investments to safeguard public funds
- Staff are supported and trained to ensure they are upskilled and ready for the transition
- Digital systems and data prepared so that online services and information remain accessible
- Communication is clear and regular, so residents know what's happening and what's changing
- All legal requirements are completed to make the transition official and secure
- Programmes and their funding are recorded to ensure they can be transferred easily to the new authority.