

decision making and community participation



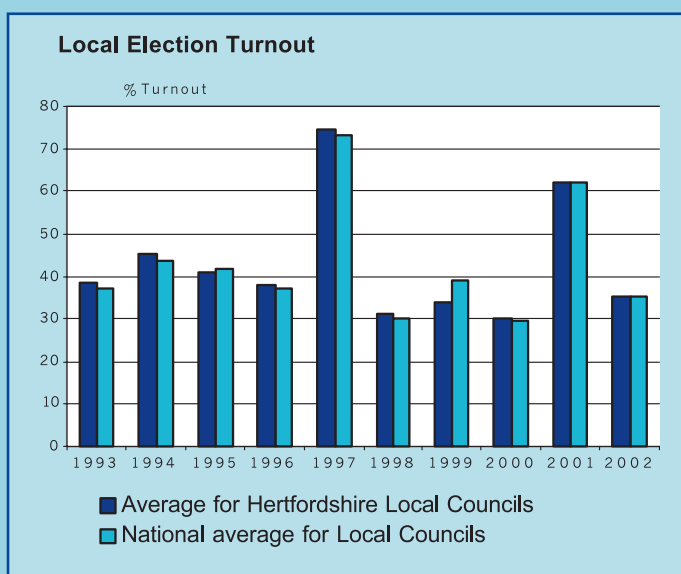
To vote is to make a contribution to your community. Participation in local elections is a good indicator of community involvement and citizenship. Many policies that affect the communities we live in are influenced through voting. These can include issues such as energy use, transport, building development and council spending. A low turnout suggests a lack of conviction, both that voting can make a difference and that local representatives actually represent and stand for the issues that concern the public.

This year Hertfordshire celebrated Local Democracy Week (13th-19th October) through a range of activities.

At the county level residents were asked for their views on the current structure of the council with the introduction of three Options for Change which included a range of proposals for change.

Question Time offers residents a chance to pose questions in a public forum to County Councillors about issues that concern them. More information on these initiatives can be found on the County Council website www.hertsdirect.co.uk.

DM1 - Electoral Turnout (average % turnout over ten year period, for Hertfordshire Local Councils and National Average for Local Councils).



St Albans City and District Council held an event on youth democracy, with school debating competitions, held e-elections, and developed a young people's manifesto published on www.voteyourway.org.uk.

East Herts Council also supported the Youth theme with a great debate on Whether voting age should be reduced to 16, involving youth councillors and young people from across the district and presented by a local radio DJ.

North Hertfordshire District Council held a seminar aiming to find ways in which to involve young people in decisions that affect their lives. Delegates heard about a project piloted by the council, called Youth RAPP (Youth Rural Area Participation Partnership), which provides guidance and information to rural communities on involving young people in decision-making.

Many other of Hertfordshire's District and Borough councils have also been working toward engaging with the public and encouraging more active participation in local decision-making processes over the year as part of the national Government's reform strategy for streamlining delivery of local services to communities.