



Hertfordshire joins forces to implement the Government's community initiatives

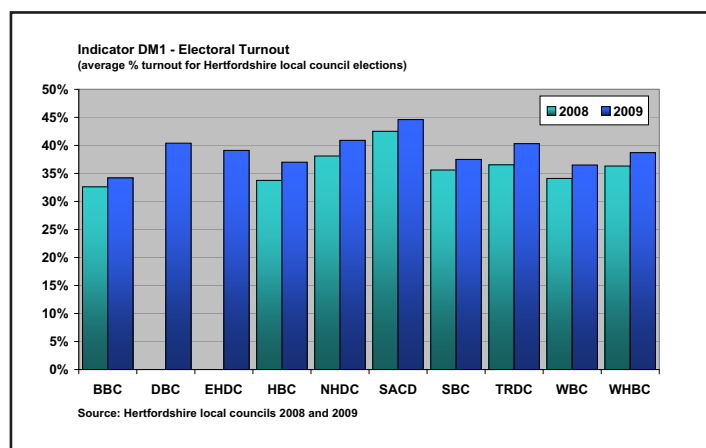
In 2009 there was again a marginal improvement in Hertfordshire's electoral turnout. However, it is well-known that this kind of community participation is often poorly supported and that there are a number of other ways it can be represented. With a White Paper, a new survey and range of indicators, the Government has clarified how civic renewal could improve public service design and delivery.

Indicator DM1 - Electoral Turnout (average % turnout for Hertfordshire County Council Elections)¹

The Hertfordshire County Council elections took place on Thursday 4th June 2009. Turnout ranged between 34.2% and 44.6%.

Indicator DM1 – Electoral Turnout Average % turnout for Hertfordshire local council elections		
Local Authority	2008	2009
Broxbourne	32.60%	34.2%
Dacorum	No election	40.4%
East Hertfordshire	No election	39.1%
Hertsmere	33.76%	37.0%
North Hertfordshire	38.10%	40.9%
St Albans	42.51%	44.6%
Stevenage	35.61%	37.5%
Three Rivers	36.53%	40.3%
Watford	34.10%	36.5%
Welwyn Hatfield	36.32%	38.7%

Source: Hertfordshire local councils 2008 & 2009



Communities in control: real people, real power

Launched in 2008, the UK Government's White Paper "Communities in control: real people, real power"² is concerned with democracy and how those practices and ideals can be applied to a complex, modern society. Key themes are:

- Power, influence and control;
- Who has power;
- On whose behalf is it exercised;
- How is it held to account; and
- How it can be diffused throughout our communities.

Supporting these themes, Hertfordshire County Council took the unprecedented step in 2008 of inviting local charities to comment on the spending priorities of the county's Primary Care Trusts. The county's Local Strategic Partnership, Hertfordshire Forward, also drew up a Local Area Agreement (LAA) with Central Government which included the promotion, encouragement and enhancement of opportunities to empower local communities. Three out of a possible eight performance indicators for measuring decision making and community participation were chosen in the LAA for Hertfordshire (2009-11):

NI 1 Percentage of people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area

NI 4 Percentage of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality

NI 7 Environment for a thriving third sector³

Read more on Hertfordshire's Local Area Agreement 2008-2011 www.hertslink.org/hertfordshireforward

Although there is a clear desire from the Government to increase community engagement, the extent to which people want this is far less clear. The evidence suggests a range of interests, with only a small minority at one end who actually want to be actively involved. A larger minority have no interest at all, whilst most people are in the middle and appear indifferent. It does appear there is a significant proportion who want more of a say, but this needs to be provided through a variety of ways – rather than just through traditional governance mechanisms like public meetings and resident boards – because they are less successful at encouraging such people to come forward.

National Indicators

A suite of new performance indicators apply to decision making and community participation.

decision making and community participation



National indicators that apply to community participation	
No.	Description of New National Indicator
NI 3	Civic participation in the local area
NI 2	Percentage of people who feel that they belong to their neighbourhood (community)
NI 4	Percentage of people who feel that they can influence decisions in their locality
NI 5	Overall general satisfaction with local area
NI 6	Participation in regular volunteering
NI 24	Satisfaction with the way police and local council dealt with anti-social behaviour
NI 27	Understanding of local concerns about anti-social behaviour and crime by the local council and police

Source: National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions

Local Democracy Week

Local Democracy Week is a national annual campaign devised by the Local Government Association to persuade young people to participate in the future of their community from an early age. Together with councils and other groups, it encourages them to work together to create positive changes within a young person's community. Providing a range of tools via its website on leadership, ideas and examples of good practice, it also encourages the setting aside of stereotypes and prejudices. Aiming to connect young people with local politics and politicians, the 2009 Local Democracy Week ran from 12th to 18th October. Events were held across the county and throughout Britain. See www.lga.gov.uk for campaign ideas and case studies.

Tomorrow's voters enjoy a citizenship lesson with a difference

Over 200 11-year-olds enjoyed a 'real-life' citizenship lesson on Thursday 15th October 2009, as they took part in a special forum at Three Rivers District Council to mark National Local Democracy Week. Youngsters from St Joan of Arc School in Rickmansworth had the chance to put their questions to Councillors Ann Shaw, David Sansom and Francis Durham, who participated in a lively Councillors' Question Time session. Members of staff from the Leisure, Environmental Protection and Community

Safety teams finished off the morning with fun quizzes about how their work affects the local community.

Events of this kind have been held at Three Rivers District Council for five years running and have proved to be a great success with pupils and teachers.



St Joan of Arc pupils take part in Local Democracy week

Hemel Hempstead pupils get a taste of democracy and local decision making

70 pupils from schools across Hemel Hempstead went to a Local Democracy Event held at Dacorum Borough Council. The Mayor opened the event and students (and some councillors) then took part in a democracy quiz. A Question Time session followed where a panel including Mike Penning MP, the Council Leader, the Council Chief Executive and councillors from the county, borough and a town council were subjected to a grilling from the students. Topics ranged from identity cards to what Dacorum Borough Council was responsible for and a hearty debate about Hemel Hempstead Hospital.

The students then broke into groups for workshops where they were asked to contribute to the four cross cutting themes of the Dacorum Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy:

- promoting health and caring lifestyles;
- developing community cohesion;
- rejuvenating Dacorum; and
- acting on climate change.

After a brief presentation from each workshop back to the whole group, lunch was served where students were able to chat further to the panel.

decision making and community participation

Gina from Longdean School said:

“It’s important for young people to get involved in decision making as they are a significant part of the local community and should have a say in decisions that affect them.”

Sustainable Community Strategies and Plans

Sustainable Community Strategies (SCS) are overarching documents that sit at the apex of all the strategic and service plans of organisations with an interest in local public service delivery. They promote a long term vision for improving sustainability, i.e. the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area. There is a statutory requirement for their creation and so 11 Community Plans and Strategies exist in Hertfordshire which are supported by a variety of partners and key stakeholders.

In November, Hertfordshire Forward held their annual conference which focused on the county’s economy. Speakers from Tesco, John Lewis and GlaxoSmithKline gave their thoughts on doing business in Hertfordshire and opportunities for future investment. David Frost from the British Chambers of Commerce and Industry also discussed his views on the UK economy in the next 10 years. A new draft Economic Development Strategy for the county was launched, focusing on a knowledge based and low carbon economy, encouraging enterprise and developing skills. For further information see the Economy & Employment section of this report.

Hertfordshire Community Plans and Strategies
Broxbourne Community Plan 2010-2021
Towards 2021 – the Dacorum Sustainable Community Strategy
Everyone Matters: A Sustainable Community Strategy for East Herts 2009 – 2024
Hertsmere together Community Strategy 2006 – 2020
North Hertfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy
St Albans and District Community Strategy: Shaping Our District Together for 2020
Stevenage 2021: Our Town – Our Future
Three Rivers Community Strategy 2006 – 12
Watford’s Community Plan 2006 – 2026
Welwyn Hatfield 2021 – the Borough’s Corporate & Community Plan
Hertfordshire 2021: A Brighter Future
Source: Strategic Partnerships Unit, Hertfordshire County Council

Place Survey

As part of a national survey designed by Central Government to capture local people’s views of the area they live in, around 40,000 questionnaires were sent to Hertfordshire residents at the end of September 2008. The questionnaire was created to capture information on a range of issues, concerns and services including:

1. **Your local area:** what is important in making somewhere a good place to live; what most needs improving locally; overall satisfaction.
2. **Your local public services:** local public service performance; police, GPs, hospitals and councils.
3. **Information:** how well-informed people feel, how to get involved in local decision-making and what to do in an event of a large-scale emergency.
4. **Local decision-making:** whether people feel they can influence decisions affecting the local area.
5. **Helping out:** how often people give help voluntarily.
6. **Getting involved:** whether people are involved with local decision-making bodies.
7. **Respect and consideration:** questions about respect and social cohesion.
8. **Community safety:** do people feel safe during the day and night, the extent of problems around vandalism, drugs and drunkenness. How well local services tackle anti-social behaviour and crime.

Notes about the Place Survey:

- In Hertfordshire the survey was conducted jointly between county and district councils, the police, health services and local agencies, as part of Hertfordshire Forward, the Local Strategic Partnership.
- To provide a reliable sample at least 1,100 responses are needed from local people in each district.
- Data was submitted to Central Government at the end of January 2009 from which full verified results were made available from November 2009.
- The full questionnaire and guidance for the survey provided by CLG and the Audit Commission is online at www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/placesurveymanual0809

1 *Local Elections Handbook 2007* (Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher) 2007.

2 See www.communities.gov.uk

3 *Third sector – Organisations in this sector share common characteristics: non-governmental, value-driven, principally reinvest any financial surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. The term encompasses voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals both large and small.*