

St Albans District Chamber of Commerce Council Update

Cllr Chris White - Leader

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Introduction

1. About the District
2. COVID -19 Council response
3. Support for Businesses
4. Leaving the EU
5. Corporate Plan
6. Financial Context
7. Public Realm
8. Community Partners Together
9. Future Recovery
 - Recovery with Local Partners
 - City Centre Regeneration
 - The District's Future Plans



About the District



- **148,500** resident population (2019)
- **161** square kilometres
- **81%** green belt
- **9,330** business enterprises
- **£590** gross weekly salary for jobs in the District.
- **65.1%** of residents are in management and professional occupations
- **4.0%** of residents are unemployed (Nov 2020)

COVID-19 Council Response

- The Council is an **Emergency Category 1 responder** and part of the **Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum** - the partnership between all the statutory agencies led by the Chief Fire Officer.
- Together we jointly declared a Major Incident at the end of March last year, and this remains in place.
- Our COVID-19 response is underpinned by our partnership work and informed by the leadership of the Hertfordshire County Council's Director Of Public Health, Professor Jim McManus, and his team.
- Our main response activities relate to COVID-19 humanitarian & financial support activities, support vaccination centres, business premises safety, public safety, self-isolation enforcement, and track and trace.

New Support for Businesses

Businesses legally required to close due to restrictions from 5 November 2020 are eligible for funding for all Tier 3, 4 and National Lockdown periods

For properties with a Rateable Value of:

- **Under £15k:** grants of £1,334 for each 28-day qualifying period, or £667 for each 14-day period plus a one-off payment of £4,000
- **Between £15k - £51k:** grants of £2,000 for each 28-day qualifying period, or £1,000 for each 14-day period plus a one-off payment of £6,000
- **£51k or over:** grants of £3,000 for each 28-day qualifying period, or £1,500 for each 14-day period plus a one-off payment of £9,000

Businesses which have received payments for the November lockdown will need to **re-apply** for support during Tier 4 / national restrictions (from 19 December 2020 / 5 January 2021).

The Council made payments totaling over £3m to over 350 businesses on 19 January. This is funding up to the middle of February 2021. Funding may continue after this date depending on restrictions.

Support for Businesses

Further discretionary support is potentially available via the **Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSB) Open** and **Additional Restrictions Grant** schemes.

Businesses that may qualify include:

- Those **legally obliged to close** under lockdown which are **not rated for business rates**.
- Those that are **not required to close** but that are **severely impacted** by national and/or local restrictions including **home-based businesses**
- Businesses that have already received or are entitled to support but that require **further financial assistance** due to high property-related costs

'Christmas Support Payment' for 'Wet Led' Public Houses

- Pubs that predominately serve alcohol rather than food are entitled to a one-off payment of £1,000 for December 2020. This payment is in addition to other support schemes or grants

Application forms are available at www.stalbans.gov.uk/covid-19-business-grants.

Leaving the EU

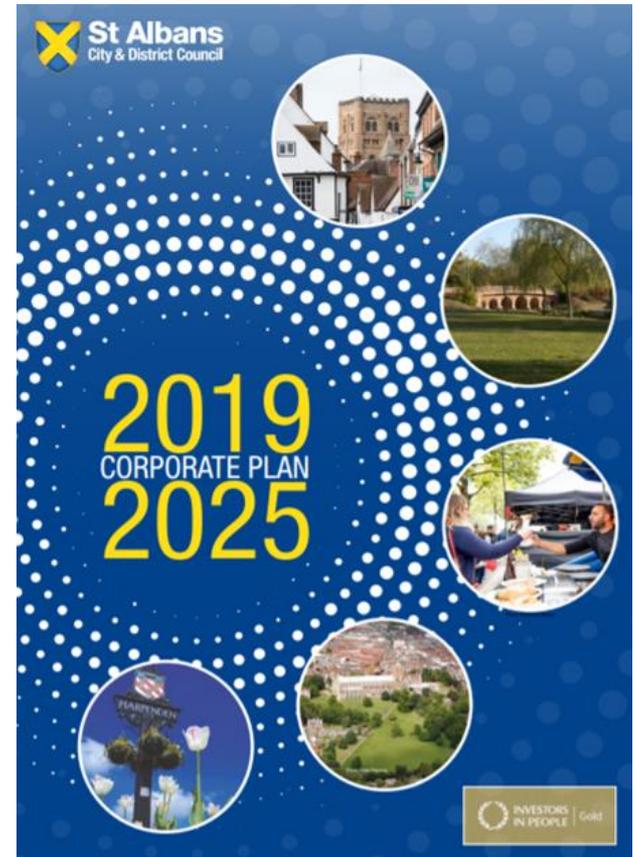
- The Government's portal - www.gov.uk/transition
- **Hertfordshire Better Business for All [EU Transition page](#)** offers guidance and information on available support.
- **Hertfordshire Trading Standards** is supporting local businesses by providing up to date information on legislative changes.
 - Trading Standards **Business Advice Line**: 01707 281401
 - <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/business/business-advice/business-advice.aspx>
- **Hertfordshire Growth Hub** - www.hertsgrowthhub.com
- <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/leaving-european-union>

Council's Draft Corporate Plan 2021- 2026

The draft Plan was agreed by the Council's Cabinet in December and will be considered by Full Council in February for final approval.

Helping the community recover from COVID -19

- Tackling the climate emergency.
- Providing more social housing.
- Improving community facilities.
- Enhancing local businesses.



Financial Context



2020/21 Financial Year

- Financial impact in 2020/21 of COVID 19 is severe.
- Particular pressure is on income.
- We expect much of this to continue in 2021/22.
- We are making a high level of savings and using up our reserves.

Business Rates

- In a usual year £60m is collected, £2.5m retained by the Council.
- 2020/21 amount billed is about £30m due to retail holiday.
- Proposed Council Tax increase for 2021/22 is 2.75% (£5).
- Proposed rent increase for Council tenants of 1.5%.
- Government policy on increases is based on Consumer Price Index plus 1%.

Public Realm

Markets

- Food market remains open during the pandemic (govt. guidance).
- To minimise the loss, replacement of traditional stalls with gazebos.
- The BID has also set up other markets in the City Centre.



Road closure

- High Street, Market Place and George Street closed to traffic as a temporary measure in order to support social distancing (Hertfordshire County Council).
- George Street is gated.
- Positive feedback received through many local businesses fed back through St Albans BID.

Parking

- Pressure on kerb side spaces growing as more people are working from home and residents can use nearby car parks in certain circumstances.
- Additional free time in car parks.
- Giving parking concessions to critical care workers.

Community Partners Together



The Hub and St Albans District Healthy Hub

- www.stalbans.gov.uk/healthy-hub
- A partnership including services from: Citizens Advice, Communities 1st, The Living Room, Herts Help, Thrive Young Person's Clinic, Youth Talk, St Albans Women's Outreach, Emmaus, Mind in Mid Herts, Age UK, and others.

Rough Sleepers

- Accommodation options have been provided to all rough sleepers.
- We continue to work with partners to ensure rough sleepers have access to the support they need to move onto secure accommodation.
- The Council has received funding to help with provision of accommodation for rough sleepers as a result of COVID-19

Future Recovery

The future in a post COVID-19 world

The economic future in the longer term is positive for the District.

- A high proportion of residents will continue to work from home.
- Hospitality, despite the current situation, will return.
- Local footfall in retail was high in the summer as shoppers returned.
- We hope in 12 months time we can start rebuilding and getting back to providing all the vibrancy and events you have come to expect.

Recovery with Local Partners



Local community partners are working on a variety of plans:

City Centre Vision St Albans Civic Society and the BID:

- To create a City Centre Vision that has planning statutory status.
- The formation of a Neighbourhood Forum, which can then draft a City Neighbourhood Plan.

Destination Management Plan District wide – St Albans District Visitor Partnership coordinating:

- Aims to increase footfall for the District over the next five years.

St Albans District Job Forum The Council with key partners including St Albans District Chamber and Stanta:

- Local labour market, job opportunities, training and skills provision.
- Involvement in the Government's Kickstart scheme.

City Centre Regeneration



City Centre Opportunity Site (CCOS) South

6,000 square metres of flexible commercial space, 60 private market units and 33 social rented units

- Regenerate a large City centre site.
- Improve the public realm.
- Deliver a high quality of design.
- Improve pedestrian flow through City Centre.
- Planning permission granted with completion 2023.

City Centre Opportunity Site (CCOS) North

- Currently preparation of bid document, Steering group March 2021. Open tender April – May 2021.

The District's Future Plans

St Albans BID www.stalbansbid.com

- BID going for a second term for a further 5 years, bringing economies of scale business led investment into the City and beyond.

Herts IQ herts-iq.co.uk/

- Development of (278,709 square metres) of new commercial space aimed at sustainable construction and agri-tech.
- Tax breaks for low carbon operations and free business support for SMEs through Herts Growth Hub.
- Opportunities to collaborate with innovation partners: construction industry [BRE Group](#), global pioneers in agricultural research [Rothamsted Research](#) and the University of Hertfordshire.



Local Plan

- Evidence gathering process began last July – adoption anticipated end 2023.
- Plan will meet the deadline of being submitted to Government by 2023.
- Opportunities to embed sustainability into local development activities.

Any questions?

These slides will be sent to all attendees