

2016/17 ANNUAL REPORT



Co-operative Councils
Innovation Network

Stevenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Another successful year for Stevenage



Sharon Taylor, Leader, Stevenage Borough Council

Welcome to our 2016/17 Annual Report. This has been yet another successful year for Stevenage. Through the hard work of our councillors, staff, volunteers and partners we have been able to drive forward our exciting regeneration plans. Together, we have built more new homes, improved key services and sites, and made the town a safer place to live, work, and play.

Financial support from central government has been reduced by 40% over the past few years. This reduction will continue and by 2020 we will no longer receive any government grant. Despite this, we still have an ambitious agenda. By embracing our co-operative principles, we continue to work with the community and our partners to deliver high quality services that people value and need.

I am proud of the successes achieved over the past 12 months and look forward to what the coming year will bring.



Scott Crudginton, Chief Executive - Stevenage Borough Council

As our Future Town Future Council programme is beginning to gain real momentum, I would like to thank our residents for the valuable feedback we received throughout the year. This is helping to shape the future of our council and the vast range of services we provide.

We are continually reviewing how we can work differently to deliver better value for money, remain an attractive employer, and ensure our services are the best they can be.

I look forward to seeing us deliver even more for our residents in 2017/18.



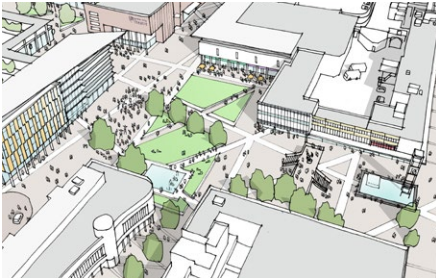
Future Town Future Council

Future Town Future Council is delivering key improvements that our residents told us they want to see.

Included in this five year programme are plans to regenerate the town centre, provide housing that works for all, make services more accessible, and invest in our town's neighbourhoods.

Work on many of these has already started and the benefits are already beginning to show.

Regenerating Our Town



Stevenage First, our public sector partnership group, has secured **£31m** of public investment to develop new homes, shops, office space, and a community hub.

While Network Rail have committed towards a fifth platform for Stevenage train station.

Our ambitions for Stevenage have made us one of the largest regeneration zones in the east of England, with a **£1 billion** redevelopment plan for the town.

More than **200** people attended our regeneration events where we promoted our plans and get your thoughts on how you would like our town to look.

2016/17 has been a year of recognition for our parks: we won **3** Green Flag Awards for our open spaces – Fairlands Valley Park, Town Centre Gardens, and Hampson Park.

We also helped **8** new traders start their own business in the Indoor Market.

For the coming year, we will be investing almost **£1m** in improving local areas.

£1 billion regeneration of the town	£31m public investment secured	Fifth platform planned for Stevenage train station	200 people engaged with	3 Green Flag Awards
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As part of our Future Town Future Council programme, in 2017/18 we will:

- Brighten up areas of the town centre with new trees and street furniture.
- Talk to developers to identify the best partner that can help regenerate Stevenage.
- Develop plans for our 'one-stop shop' public sector hub where residents can access services from the Council and our partners.



Building New Homes



We have made excellent progress with the Stevenage Borough Local Plan – our exciting vision for the town.

And we've received great feedback from you through public hearings and consultation events and this Plan has been successfully submitted to the Government.

Our Local Plan:

Outlines policies that will protect our open spaces, community facilities, and wildlife areas.

Addresses our housing challenge by allocating sites to provide **7,600** new homes by 2031.

Ensures that at least **60%** of these homes are built on previously developed land.

Guarantees at least **20%** of new homes will be Affordable Housing, with the aim of achieving **40%**.

Highlights the need to support housing development with sustainable transport links and parking facilities in Stevenage.

Within the next ten years, we aim to build more than **500** new council homes. This will provide housing to those most in need and will help reduce our waiting list.

In fact, already we've started.

This year we've built **43** new council homes, with **30** at Archer Road.

We've also commissioned construction of **4** homes at Vincent Court, on top of buying **28** homes on the open market over the past two years.

7,600
new homes
by 2031

43
new council
homes built
this year

As part of our Future Town Future Council programme, in 2017/18 we will:

- Start work on 41 new homes in 2017/18.
- Set up our own housing company to provide a variety of housing in Stevenage, including more council homes for our residents.



Repairing and Maintaining our Homes

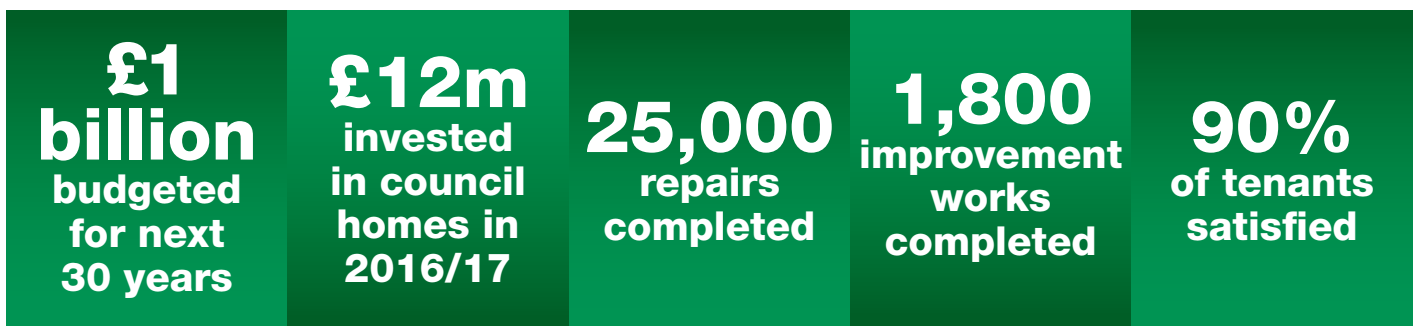


We have budgeted **£1bn** for the next 30 years to invest in our housing stock so that we can continue to provide high quality homes as well as efficient services for all our tenants and leaseholders.

In 2016/17, we invested **£12m** to improve our council homes.

- The housing repairs team completed **24,500** repairs
- We carried out more than **1,800** improvement works
- **90%** of tenants who responded to our survey were satisfied with these improvements.

During 2016/17, we brought more than **600** homes up to a decent standard. We installed more than **160** new windows and **340** new doors. We also insulated more than **100** and provided **1,120** homes with new roofing.



As part of our Future Town Future Council programme, in 2017/18 we will:

- Continue to improve our homes including insulating, replacing boilers and rewiring.
- Begin work on the refurbishment of our 550 flat blocks.

Excellent
council
homes for life

Improving Stevenage Neighbourhoods



We have recruited **3 neighbourhood wardens** who will help to tackle local issues in our neighbourhoods.

We consulted with more than **320** children and parents about improvements to six play areas across the town.

In total, we'll be spending **£1.5m** to improve all 57 of our play areas.

£1.5m
to improve
our play
areas



Garages are key assets for our neighbourhoods, and we've surveyed all **6,600** of ours during 2016/17. Over the next five years we'll be reroofing, repainting, and renewing concrete to bring them up to a good standard.

We have already replaced **30** litter bins and are busy installing many more across the town.

We cut **9,300** acres of grass – that's more than 4,600 football pitches.

Our refuse and recycling team collected **32,000** tonnes of waste from **36,300** households.



We're carrying out a variety of other works, including cleaning signs and improving shrub beds to spruce up neighbourhoods.

We are working with local residents to create a neighbourhood agreement that will mean that you can play a bigger part in shaping your community.

We continue to work with our partners and local communities in the conservation of Stevenage green spaces and raising awareness of the town's habitats and associated wildlife. We will be updating our Biodiversity Action Plan in the coming year.

As part of our Future Town Future Council programme, in 2017/18 we will:

- Complete our Public Space works in Pin Green and Shephall.
- Improve and develop a further 9 play areas across the Borough.
- Ask you to have your say on whether you feel satisfied with your local area in our resident survey.

Co-operative
neighbourhood
management

Community and Safety



Stevenage has the **lowest** rates for domestic burglary in Hertfordshire.

Theft from the person decreased by over **20%** compared to last year.

The number of rogue traders has decreased by around **50%** since 2014.

A total of **59** victims (all who completed the sessions) have worked with the Domestic Abuse service since May 2016.

For Baby's Sake is the UK's first whole family change programme related to domestic abuse, starting in pregnancy. So far, **21** Stevenage families have been supported, with **10** receiving intensive help.



SoSafe is the name given to the Stevenage Community Safety Partnership. It brings many organisations together who work to prevent crime, anti-social behaviour, and domestic abuse.



SoSafe representatives had more than **800** face-to-face conversations with older and vulnerable people, advising and reassuring them about scams, personal safety, and reporting crime.

We signed up more than **1,200** new people to Neighbourhood Watch, and are building up a large network of neighbours who are looking out for each other.



Charity groups received subsidies of more than **£48,000** this year to use our garages at a reduced rate.

£69,400 has been given to our local community centres to provide services in our neighbourhoods.

24 Community events were delivered in our parks.

During 2016/17, 34 Green Space Volunteers gave more than **2,000** hours to help improve 15 sites across Stevenage.

Finally, we celebrated our **70th Birthday** as a new town this year with lots of events and activities held for our residents and partners.

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50%
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800
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people

24
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community
events

£69,400
given to
local
community
centres

In 2017/18 we will:

- Ask in our residents' survey if people still feel safe in their neighbourhood.
- Launch our Hate Crime Strategy and hold a conference to see how we can work together to try and tackle these issues in Stevenage.

Leisure and Play



Each session at our play centres had an average attendance of **56** children.

Over **1,100** children and families attended National Playday celebrations in August.

1,600 people got moving and took part in SoActive projects, a partnership aimed at increasing residents' physical activity.

2,600 people visited the Stevenage Healthy Hub to receive information, advice and support to improve their health and wellbeing.



In Numbers:

840,000 people visited our leisure centres.

33,600 swimming lessons were attended.

135,000 theatre seats filled.

8,000 people attended the Pearl Izumi Tour in June.

2,000 came to watch our Christmas lights being switched on.

Tens of thousands of people attended Stevenage Day in June and our fireworks display in November.



Stevenage Youth Hub opened in November 2016 at The Hyde, Shephall.

Our partners One YMCA and Youth Connexions will use it to deliver activities for young people in Stevenage including Homework Club and Young Health Champions.



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In 2017/18 we will:

- Consult with children and young people to improve more of our play areas.
- Support existing play associations and develop a 'play map' for Stevenage.
- Support the child poverty, obesity, and health & wellbeing agendas.

Excellence and Process



We have a **balanced budget** this year despite money from central Government decreasing.

We have made savings on our gas contract amounting to **£1.9m**.

We've successfully rented the second floor of our Daneshill House office. This will generate more than **£193,000** over three years, which will be reinvested back into services for our residents.

24,500 housing benefit new claims and 'changes in circumstances' were processed, on average **7.88** days per application. This is the best result since 2009/10.



Our Council Tax collection rate this year was **96.6%** - our best result since 2010/11.

A prestigious award of '**Leader of the Year**' was presented to the council's Leader highlighting the organisation's delivery of excellent services despite continued austerity.

This year we have recruited **14** new apprentices, and **2** new graduates to different areas of the council.

We have launched a benefits and discount scheme to staff.

The Council Tax collection rate was 96.6%



Continuing to Improve

There were **208,100** calls and **34,400** visits to our Customer Service Centre last year.

88.83% rated the Customer Service Centre's service overall as very good or good.

We were quicker to respond to your complaints, with **90%** being closed within our target date, up by **15%** from the previous year.

100% of the customers who completed our end user satisfaction survey were satisfied with the way their case was handled.



As part of our Future Town Future Council programme, in 2017/18 we will:

- Continue to recruit apprentices and graduates.
- Look for further partnership opportunities to help improve our services.
- Explore new ways of making the council more energy efficient.
- Look at better ways of connecting with our customers by investing £2m over the next three years to become more digital.
- Buy commercial property with the view to generating money for the council to become more independent from central Government.