



HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

Date: Thursday, 17 January 2019

Time: 6.00pm,

Location: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Contact: Fungai Nyamukapa

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Members: **Councillors:** Philip Bibby (Chair), Sandra Barr, Lizzy Kelly, Lin Martin-Haugh and Sarah-Jane Potter

Resident Members: Fiona Plumridge (Vice-Chair) (Tenant), Christine Anderson (Tenant), Jon Thurlow (Leaseholder), Len Saunders (Tenant) and Lesley Storey (Tenant)

Staff Members: Jaine Cresser (Assistant Director – Housing and Investment) and Craig Miller (Assistant Director – Direct Services)

AGENDA

PART 1

Item no.	Subject	Lead	Mins allocated	Time
	Refreshments		15 Minutes	5:45pm to 6:00pm
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive apologies for absence and declarations of interest	Chair	2 Minutes	6:00pm to 6:02pm
2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS a. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) meeting held on 25 October 2018 b. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) meeting held on 20 November 2018 Pages 3 – 14	Chair	8 Minutes	6:02pm to 6.10pm

3.	FINAL HRA AND RENT SETTING REPORT 2019/20 To update the HMAB on the final proposals on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets and rent setting for 2019/20 Pages 15 - 98	Clare Fletcher	30 Minutes	6.10pm to 6.40pm
4.	WHOLLY OWNED COMPANY To consider an update on the Business Plan for the Wholly Owned Housing Development Company	Ash Ahmed	30 Minutes	6.40pm to 7.10pm
5.	RENT LETTERS To consider the letters explaining rent and service charges for flats and houses from 01 April 2019 Pages 99 - 114	Elizabeth Ddamulira	20 Minutes	7.10pm to 7.30pm
6.	UPDATE FROM EXECUTIVE MEETINGS To receive update from Executive meetings	Cllr J Thomas	5 Minutes	7.30pm to 7.35pm
7.	REPAIRS AND VOIDS UPDATE To receive Repairs and Voids update	Craig Miller	5 Minutes	7.35pm to 7.40pm
8.	HOUSING ALL UNDER ONE ROOF UPDATE To receive Housing All Under One Roof update	Jaine Cresser	5 Minutes	7.40pm to 7.45pm
9.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS To consider any business accepted by the Chair as urgent	Chair	5 Minutes	7.45pm to 7.50pm
10.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING Thursday 21 February 2019, 6.00pm, Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, SG1 1HN	Chair	5 Minutes	7.50pm to 7.55pm

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

Date: Thursday, 25 October 2018

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: **Councillors:** P Bibby CC (Chair) and L Kelly

Resident Members: F Plumridge (Tenant) (Vice-Chair), C Anderson (Tenant), K Gibson (Tenant), L Saunders (Tenant), L Storey (Tenant) and J Thurlow (Leaseholder)

Staff Members: J Cresser (Assistant Director – Housing and Investment) and C Miller (Assistant Director – Direct Services)

In Attendance D Dharmasuriya (Service Delivery Manager), C Fitzgerald (Repairs and Voids Manager), S Georgiou (Finance Business Partner [HRA]), K Shirley (Housing Policy, Performance and Improvement Manager)

Customer Scrutiny Panel Members: C Danpure (Tenant), D Howell (Tenant) and J Smith (Tenant)

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 7.55pm

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs S Barr, L Martin-Haugh, S-J Potter and J Thomas (Executive Portfolio Holder – Housing, Health and Older People).

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was pointed out that the Tenants' Annual Report (Housing Matters) was not easily accessible on the Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) website (Agenda Item 6 – Tenants' Annual Report and Future Publicity).

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) meeting held on 12 September 2018 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
2. That the Housing Matters newsletters be moved to a more prominent and easily accessible page on the SBC website.

3 CUSTOMER SCRUTINY PANEL VOIDS REVIEW REPORT

The HMAB considered the report on the service review of the SBC Voids process. The review was carried out by four members of the Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP). The review team used a range of methods including document review, staff interviews, work shadowing, benchmarking against other organisations and site visits. The team made eight recommendations.

The Board thanked the CSP team for the review. In response to a question about keys (Recommendation Eight), it was clarified that there was a security risk related to the failure to return fob keys. The Assistant Director (Direct Services) welcomed the report and accepted the eight recommendations. It was indicated that the recommendations resonate with the ongoing Business Unit review. The Council was looking into the possibility of introducing a handyman service – particularly for vulnerable residents. The following recommendations were already being implemented:

- **Recommendation 4** - Involvement of Investment Team staff in void meetings. Response: Investment Team is now involved in regular void meetings.
- **Recommendation 6** - Countersigning of documentation for work to be completed in-situ after a void property has been let. Response: Lettings team now receives details of pending repairs.
- **Recommendation 7** - Provision of tablet computers for officers and operatives. Response: A pilot for the use of the devices has been completed. Devices are to be provided to relevant staff in phases.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the recommendations are accepted
2. That the Assistant Director (Direct Services) provides a written response to the report

4 HRA MTFs REPORT

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Partner presented the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Report for the period 2018/19 to 2047/48. The report covered key principles, assumptions, comparison of current recommendations against 2017 Business Plan and Policy Changes. The presentation highlighted a reduction in Right to Buy (RTB) sales from 50 to 35 leading to a positive impact on Revenue over 30 years and a negative impact on Capital available over 30 years. It was also assumed that there would be 71 additional new homes over 30 years.

The HRA Business Plan considered the following options:

- Base Case – 2017/18 HRA BP adjusted with assumptions
- Scenario 1 – Base Case and the Debt Cap bid of £9.1m

- Scenario 2 – As per Scenario 1 but include Private Sales
- Scenario 2b – As per Scenario 2, but revised interest rates and borrowing to cover shortfalls

Scenario 2b was the recommended option. Members were reassured that the Business Plan would produce a surplus over 30 years. There was no immediate risk associated with interest rate changes because the Council borrowed at fixed term rates. Revenue headroom was very close to the base in 2022/23 and there were financial risks unless the Council introduced efficient measures for collecting fees from leaseholders. The report considered potential government policy changes regarding one-for-one (1-4-1) receipts and the removal of the debt cap. The government had started consultations for 1-4-1 receipts. In response to a question, the Business Partner confirmed that the removal of the debt cap, (subject to affordability) would allow the Council to borrow to build more homes.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report is noted.

5 **RESPONSE TO GREEN PAPER ON SOCIAL HOUSING**

The HMAB considered the draft SBC response to the Green Paper on Social Housing. The Housing Policy, Performance and Improvement Manager informed Members that the tragic fire at Grenfell, raised the profile of social housing and forced a rethink on perceptions about social housing. The Green Paper is divided into the following five chapters:

- Ensuring homes are safe and decent
- Effective resolution of complaints
- Empowering residents and strengthening the Regulator
- Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities
- Expanding supply and supporting homeownership

It was agreed that unless there was financial settlement, grant funding or revised rent policy, the enhancement of the decent homes standard would put pressure on the Business Plans of local authorities. The democratic filter did not serve much purpose in the resolution of complaints. In most cases, parties to a complaint did not do any consultations during the eight week period. It was noted that the Housing Ombudsman did not have a consistent approach to complaint resolution. Members were not in favour of linking performance to funding. League tables did not take into consideration data accuracy, local settings and local authority priorities. It was agreed that increased scrutiny of local authorities was welcome as long as this did not overlap with current arrangements. It was acknowledged that SBC tenants on shared ownership tenancies faced challenges including ineligibility for Right to Buy discounts. SBC was no longer offering shared ownership tenancies.

It was **RESOLVED** that the SBC response is agreed subject to the following additions/amendments:

- The government and landlords should be driving the agenda to tackle social housing stigma
- “Best neighbourhood” awards appeared to be well meaning but they could be

- perceived as patronising
- Gardening competitions should be encouraged to celebrate thriving communities
- Local Planning Authorities should be robust in fulfilling their role and responsibilities in ensuring appropriate housing development

6 REPAIRS AND VOIDS UPDATE

The Assistant Director (Direct Services) provided an overview of Repairs and Voids for the past twelve months. The Assistant Director thanked the Service Delivery Manager and the rest of the Direct Services team for the outstanding performance. Some reporting areas that were below target prior to October 2017 were now consistently on target or above target. Some officers had relocated from Cavendish Road Depot to Daneshill House and this had improved collaborative working with Housing and other teams. It was noted that some major work Voids took a disproportionately long time to complete and this had a bearing on KPIs.

The following projects were now complete:

- Repairs fleet procurement
- Relocation to Daneshill
- Schedule system upgrade
- Recruitment of Repairs and Voids Manager
- Voids Pilot

It was reported that all Repairs Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Standard Voids Repairs turnaround are now on target.

The Business Unit was currently focussing on the following projects:

- Supply chain procurement (December 2018)
- Staff development and performance management
- Housing system upgrade
- Health and Safety Framework

The following projects were scheduled to start soon:

- End of year budget reviews
- Policy and Procedures reviews
- Business Process Mapping – including fourth tier management consultation
- Service Review

There were plans to improve the self-service facility for customers and enable more digital working for officers.

Members commended the Repairs and Voids team for the positive turnaround. It was suggested that the KPIs be revised to cater for the major work voids.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update is noted.

7 **APPROVAL OF HOUSING AND INVESTMENT BUSINESS UNIT FIFTH TIER STRUCTURE**

The Assistant Director (Housing & Investment) clarified that the Item had been brought to HMAB for update and not approval. Following the successful recruitment of Tier Four managers, the Business Unit was reviewing the fifth tier structure so as to streamline the service and avoid duplication. The four week consultation for the fifth tier structure was due to commence on 12 November 2018. Officers affected by the review had been informed. Recruitment for posts on the approved structure would start after the consultation phase.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update is noted.

8 **FEEDBACK FROM COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE**

The Leaseholder representative on the HMAB provided feedback after attending a Community Select Committee meeting on 2 October 2018. A revisit of the Damp and Mould Review and Resident Engagement were on the CSC agenda. Members were informed that a review of Allocations Policy, Housing Services Charges and Allocations and Tenancy Agreement were some of the items on the CSC Work Programme for 2018/2019.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update is noted.

9 **RESIDENTS' NETWORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018**

Following positive feedback about the 2017 Residents' Network Annual Conference in 2017, it was recommended that two HMAB members attend the conference on 06 December 2018.

It was **RESOLVED** that arrangements be made for Christine Anderson and Len Saunders to attend the 2018 Annual Conference in London.

10 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

11 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday, 20 November 2018, 6.00pm, Autun Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, SG1 1HN

CHAIR

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 20 November 2018

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Autun Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: **Councillors:** P Bibby CC (Chair), Lin Martin-Haugh, Lizzy Kelly, Sandra Barr and Sarah-Jane Potter

Resident Members: F Plumridge (Tenant) (Vice-Chair)

Staff Members: C Miller (Assistant Director – Direct Services)

In Attendance: Di Dharmasuriya (Service Manager – Repairs), Andrew Garside (Housing Operations Manager – IHP), Jane Konopka (Co-operative Neighbourhood Manager), Chloe Norton (Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer), Paul O'Donnell (Senior Project Leader - Procurement and Delivery), Dennis Panter (M & E Compliance Manager), Councillor Jeannette Thomas (Executive Portfolio Holder - Housing, Health and Older People) and Elaine Wright (Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager)

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 6.45pm

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Jaine Cresser (Assistant Director – Housing and Investment), Lesley Storey (Tenant) and Jon Thurlow (Leaseholder).

There were no declarations of interest.

2 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The quorum for HMAB meetings is six members with three customers, two councillors and one staff member. Since only one customer was present, the meeting was inquorate.

It was **RESOLVED** that the approval of Minutes of the Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) meeting held on 25 October 2018 be deferred to the next meeting.

3 **HOUSING SERVICE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 2 REPORT**

The HMAB considered the Housing Service Performance Report for Quarter Two. The Corporate Performance and Improvement Officer highlighted the Compliance

and Customer Service measures that had performed below target. The Compliance target had been affected by contract delays and certification issues regarding the statutory and SBC enhanced definition of assets known to be Health and Safety compliant. It was indicated that the Council is working with the contractor to ensure that regulations are met and that compliance certificates are provided.

With regard to the Customer Service theme, Members were informed that the final outcome for Anti-Social Behaviour and customer complaints were below target. The percentage of complaints closed on target was improving. This was partly due to customer care training provided to Housing Staff as part of personal development training.

It was reported that Repairs are being fixed promptly and exceeding target. Officers introduced the following measures to improve voids performance:

- Seeking to re-let properties and reschedule major works while the tenant is in the property
- Collaborative working with investment and empty homes teams
- Remodelling hard to let properties

The Assistant Director informed the HMAB that remodelling hard to let properties was not an easy option because there was no constant flow of suitable properties. The Council was considering revising the policy to include a trigger point for remodelling hard-to-let studio properties to one-bed flats. There were plans to introduce a key performance target for properties that were being remodelled. It was indicated that the Independent Living Team continued to market voids through direct contact with potential tenants and referrals received.

Members were informed that the impact of Universal Credit would not be known until after the middle of next year.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

4 **MAJOR REFURBISHMENT CONTRACT UPDATE**

The Capital Programme Manager provided an update on the Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC).

Members were informed that the SBC Delivery Team has been working very closely with Mulalley and Wates over the past six months to develop processes and procedures to ensure robust management of the MRC programme. Pilot works have gone well and the quality of works from both contractors has been to a high standard. Work is now progressing at a slow pace.

UK Power Networks (UKPN) does not have an obligation to fully align its programmes and timescales to requests by SBC or other contractors. This has been the biggest challenge so far and it has caused delays to the MRC programme. The Council is working closely with UKPN to plan ahead for future years in order to minimise any further delays. It might take the next six to 12 months to resolve current issues and then hopefully start working ahead of the programme.

The duration of works at Southend Close have been extended following the recent discovery of structural issues on the chimney stacks which were not identifiable from ground level when the blocks were surveyed. As a result of this, scaffold will be in place longer than expected while the chimneys are demolished and this is likely to be an inconvenience to the residents. Residents have been invited to a coffee morning and offered face-to-face meetings to discuss the latest developments. The Council will also be writing to all tenants next week. In future, the Council will inform residents prior to works that programme durations may be extended if unforeseen building defects are encountered after works commence.

At a meeting in October 2018, the Executive approved the addition of garage refurbishment works to the MRC contract. This will allow works to be planned and coordinated efficiently and offers economies of scale with the rates. Pilot works on garages are due to commence January 2019.

Following a very successful mobilisation period, the Council is now ready to progress with works to the remainder of the year one programme. This means that productivity will increase significantly over the next two to three months. Officers will monitor progress, quality and communication very closely during this time and for the remainder of the contract. An update will be provided to the HMAB on completion of work on a block.

The Executive Portfolio Holder informed the HMAB that street signs were being refurbished and standardised as part of the MRC. It was confirmed that in the event of any delays, scaffold were removed or stripped to a safe minimum. Members raised concerns about disruptions and parking problems on refurbishment sites. Members were informed that contractors had been advised to minimise the number of vehicles that were parked on sites.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

5 **GAS CONTRACT UPDATE**

The M & E Compliance Manager provided an update on the Gas Contract. Members were informed that there had been significant improvements following a long period of management problems at the contractor (Liberty Group) and poor communication between Liberty staff and Stevenage Borough Council (SBC). The Compliance Manager highlighted the following positive developments:

- A drop in complaints received in July to 15 against 27 in June and a further drop each month since then
- Five (5) compliments received from residents in July and (two) 2 cases where the electrician discovered and highlighted dangerous wiring
- Same day response for the majority of complaints
- Improved communication between SBC Gas Administration team and Liberty Administrations team
- Positive feedback from SBC voids team
- Winter planning is in place. The plan includes stockpiles of heaters, more van stock and re-profiling of services away from winter months to allow more engineers on breakdowns

- Monthly tool box talks involving SBC Gas Manager and all engineers
- Weekly meetings between SBC and Liberty Contract Manager to discuss and update improvement plan and any other issues
- An improvement plan now implemented with actions and deadlines
- SBC is cost saving options such as alternatives to scaffold
- Dedicated contact for damp surveyor to deal with any necessary remedial actions
- More training for all engineers including updated asbestos awareness and Baxi products training
- Direct contact with Gas Supervisor and lead engineer call me directly in an effort to sort out more quickly issues as they arise
- More quality checks to be undertaken including monthly checks on the competency of all engineers
- New phone line provider resulting in relatively less disruption to service. Alternative contact numbers for SBC Customer Service Centre are provided should normal phone lines be inoperative
- Daily reports that allow greater visibility of the contract
- New Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) allow engineers to order parts while they are still at the address. The orders are processed by an embedded Parts Centre member of staff
- Liberty services to be expanded to include the testing of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in each property visited and ensuring that the alarms have not reached end of life
- Liberty's call back feature for the call centre is up and running
- SBC is in the process of implementing the secret shopper and web chat facilities in order to improve the service

The Compliance Manager informed the HMAB that the improvement plan had 49 measures. Twenty-three of the measures were on target, four were below target, 19 were ongoing and three measures were yet to be started. It was indicated that problems at the shared Liberty Call Centre in Liverpool were causing long waiting times. It was confirmed that current Liberty managers were responsive to issues raised by the Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

6 REPAIRS AND VOIDS UPDATE

The Assistant Director (Stevenage Direct Services) provided an update on Repairs and Voids. Members were informed that Repairs and Voids had been reinstated to the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) programme. The Internal Audit covered both the service and management functions. The latest SIAS report indicated substantial compliance for Repairs and Voids. This means that the design and operation of the internal control framework is effective, thereby ensuring that the key risks in scope are being well managed and core objectives will likely be achieved. There are minor reportable audit findings. The SIAS report included recommendations regarding performance data, recharge for works and the review of policies and procedures. It was reported that an external audit had been scheduled for Repairs and Voids.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

7 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair accepted an urgent item on the Asset Management Strategy. The HMAB considered the Housing Asset Management Strategy (AMS) for the period 2018 to 2023. The strategy sets out the key strategic aims & objectives to ensure SBC derives maximum value from its assets. The AMS document covers the background to the strategy, potential changes to legislation, summary of key aims and objectives, profile of the Housing Portfolio, stock condition, stock portfolio management, Investment Planning, Delivering the Strategy and Programme, Capital Programme and Action Plan.

The Housing Operations Manager (IHP) informed Members that the recruitment of the Operations Manager post and projects such as the Major Refurbishment Contract had contributed to delays in the implementation of the AMS. The delays presented the team an opportunity to consider the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy. The AMS had been updated to include current stock statistics, recent changes to building regulations and the retrofitting of fire suppressant sprinkler systems to residential tower blocks.

As a follow up to the September meeting of the HMAB, Members were informed that the “Housing Matters” Annual Report had been moved to a more prominent page on the SBC website.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Housing Asset Management Strategy update be noted
2. That a link to the Housing Matters report be sent to HMAB members

8 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 17 January 2019, 6.00pm, Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, Danestrete, SG1 1HN

CHAIR

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Meeting EXECUTIVE
Portfolio Area Resources/Housing
Date 23 JANUARY 2019



FINAL HRA RENT SETTING AND BUDGET REPORT

KEY DECISION

Authors Clare Fletcher | 2933
Lead Officers Clare Fletcher | 2933
Contact Officer Clare Fletcher | 2933

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Members on the final proposals on the HRA budgets and rent setting for 2019/20, to be considered by Council on 30 January 2019.
- 1.2 To propose the HRA rents for 2019/20.
- 1.3 To propose the HRA service charges for 2019/20.
- 1.4 To update Members on the 2018/19 and 2019/20 HRA budget, incorporating the Financial Security options and fees and charges included in the November Financial Security report, together with any revised income and expenditure assumptions identified since that report.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council be recommended to approve HRA dwelling rents not subject to the 1% rent reduction (currently Low Start Shared Ownership LSSOs) be increased, week commencing 1 April 2019 by 3.4% i.e. £3.86 per week which has been calculated using the existing rent formula, CPI +1% in line with the Rent and Service Charge Policy approved at the January 2018 Council.
- 2.2 That it be noted that HRA dwelling rents, (other than those outlined in 2.1) are subject to the 1% rent reduction from week commencing 1 April 2019 or

£0.96 and £1.60 per week for social and affordable rents respectively, as outlined in the Government's Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016.

- 2.3 That Council be recommended to approve the 2019/20 HRA budget, as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.4 That Executive approve the revised 2018/19 HRA budget as set out in Appendix A.
- 2.5 That Council be recommended to approve the HRA Fees and Charges as outlined in Appendix C.
- 2.6 That Council be recommended to approve the 2019/20 service charges.
- 2.7 That Council be recommended to approve the minimum level of reserves for 2019/20 as shown in Appendix D to this report.
- 2.8 That the contingency sum of £250,000 within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, be approved for 2019/20 (unchanged from 2018/19).
- 2.9 That Council notes the comments from the overview and Scrutiny Committee as set out in the report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In November 2018, the Executive approved a revised HRA Business Plan which is updated annually. Business Plan projections have needed to undergo a number of reiterations, due to the impacts of Government policy as set out in the 2018 Business Plan update, (November 2018 Executive). The most significant negative financial impact on the HRA has been the four year 1% rent reduction in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. This has resulted in an estimated £225 Million loss of income over a 30 year period. Next year (2019/20) represents year four or the final year of the rent reduction policy. The Government has announced from 2020 social housing providers can increase rents by CPI+1% for a five year period.
- 3.2 With regard to other government policies such as the Higher Value Voids levy (HVV), the Government has confirmed (as part of the social green paper) that this will not be introduced, the HRA business plan had assumed a £29 Million cost over a 30 year period. The Social Housing Green Paper has also now stated that the Government will not restrict lifetime tenancies, at the present time.
- 3.3 The Government's recent 'Use of RTB Receipts' paper consulted on increased flexibilities on the use of 1.4.1 receipts and allowing currently held receipts to be held for five years. These flexibilities would allow councils to use more receipts per new build and keeping them for longer. However, what isn't clear is Government future policy regarding RTB discounts which have more than doubled since 2011/12 from £34,000 to £80,900 in 2018/19. Any increase in the discount rate could influence the level of RTB sales, which again impacts on HRA available resources to fund any improvements or management costs. The Government has not published any outcomes of this consultation and the current rules still apply.
- 3.4 Although the Government has announced its policy on rent increases from 2020, this still causes difficulties in forecasting HRA finances. The HRA BP is

a 30 year view of debt and borrowing costs and the length of payback period for building new social housing is well beyond a five year view, with rent being the major source of income for the HRA and the ability to fund new homes and the life cycle of components of a council home..

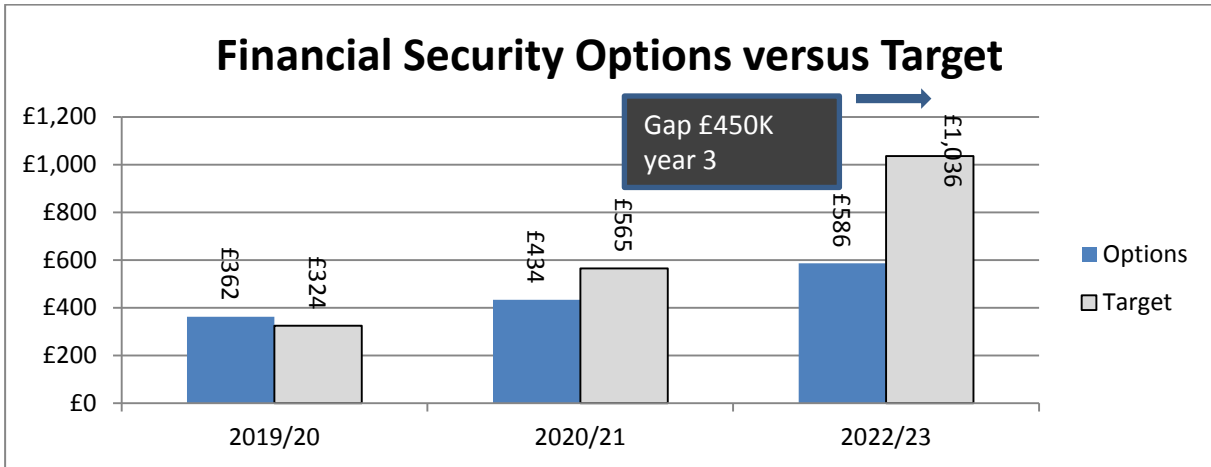
- 3.5 In summary current rent regulations in force require the Council to set a 1% rent reduction for social and affordable rents, the exception being low start shared ownership (LSSOs). There are 87 LSSO properties which equate to 82.15 full house equivalents. Any service charges can be charged at cost and sit outside the rent reduction regulations.
- 3.6 The total number of HRA homes in management at 30 September 2018 is summarised in the table below. The average rents for 2019/20 are based on this housing stock, however any right to buys or new schemes, subsequent to the 30 September, may change the average rent per property type.

Stock Numbers at 30/9/2018	Social	Affordable	Sheltered	LSSO	Homeless	Total
Number of Properties at 30/9/2018	6,835	18	845	87	129	7,914

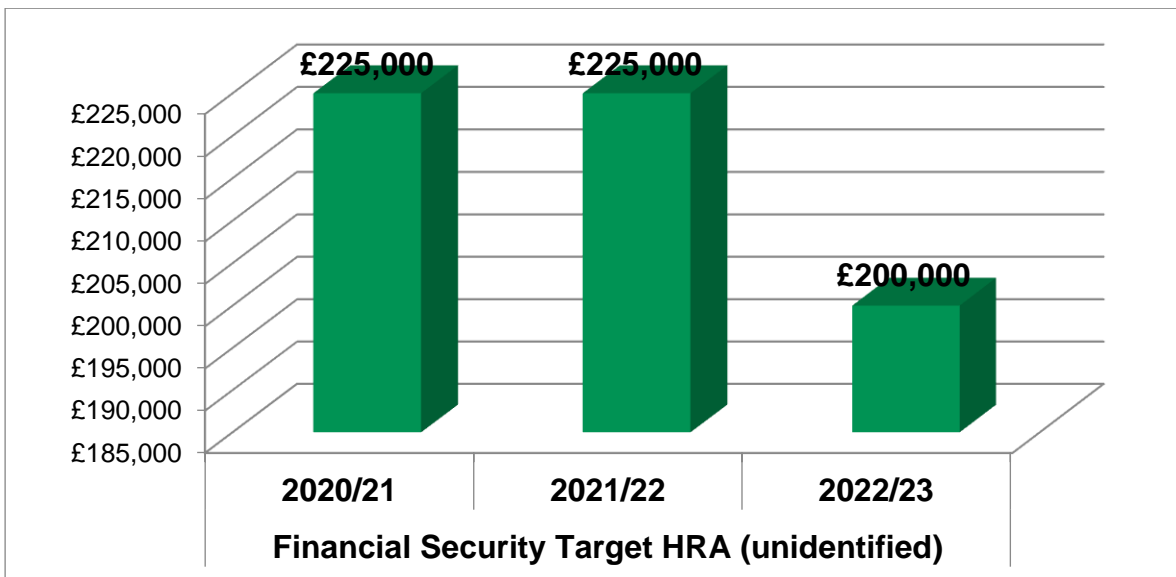
- 3.7 The HRA Business Plan presented to the November Executive has been adjusted for changes including the Financial Security Options and Fees and Charges approved at the November Executive. A summary of the assumptions for the budget are shown in the table below.

Financial Assumptions included in the HRA BP and November FS report	2018/19	2019/20
Rent & Service Charge Increases	1% rent reduction for general stock and 1%+CPI (3.4%) for LSSOs and relets to formula rent	
New Build	50% Affordable 50% Social	
Right-to-Buys	50	35
Bad debt rates	0.60%	0.60%
2019/20 Financial Security options	£0	£354,630
2019/20 Growth bids	£0	£190,000
New Build - Number of Units (HRA BP)	37	66
Repayment of Debt	1,241,760	0
New loans	3,800,000	4,756,508
Capital Deficit in the Business Plan	0	0

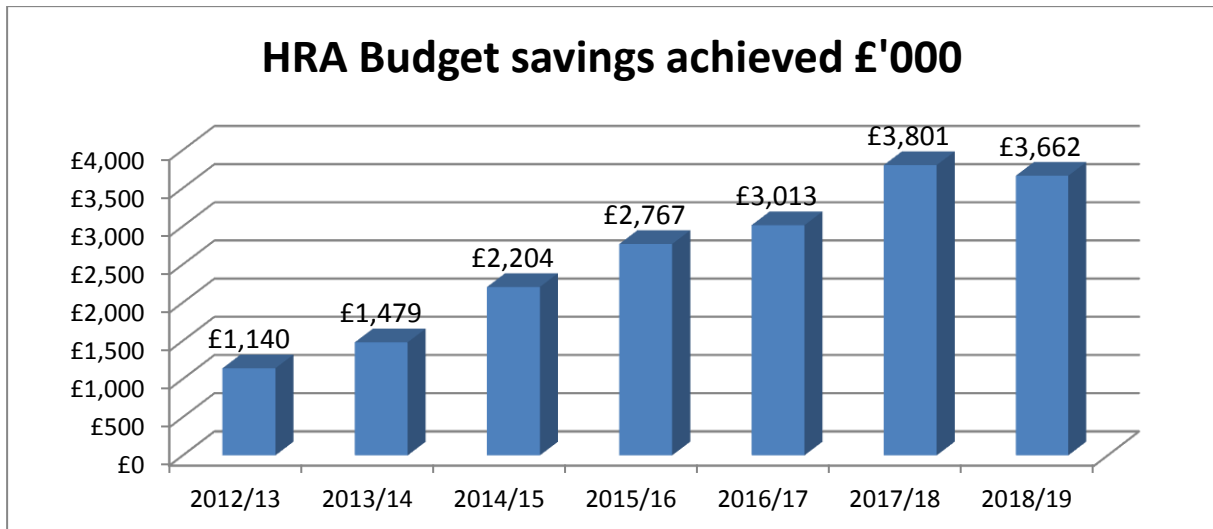
3.8 The November Financial Security report identified that even with the savings presented to the Executive there was a significant financial shortfall by year three or 2022/23.



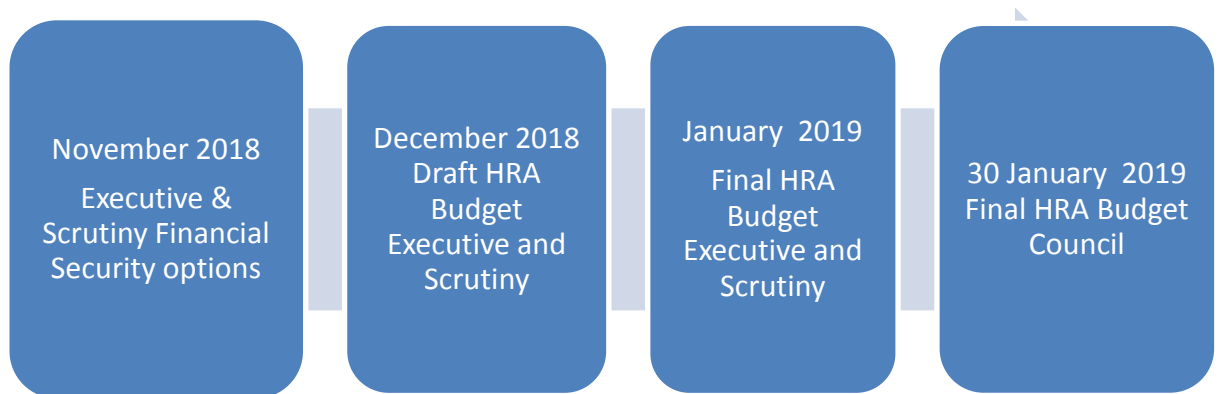
3.9 This resulted in a revision to the Financial Security work stream and future targets as set out below and approved by Members as part of the Financial Security report to the November Executive.



3.10 The HRA has needed to find budget reductions as a result of impacts of government policy on rents (moving to CPI+1%, then 1% rent reduction 2016/17-2019/20), Right to Buy (increase in discounts) and other government policy changes such as apprenticeship levy, national insurance changes and service pressures from welfare reforms. The total identified savings implemented since 2012/13 is summarised in the chart below.



- 3.11 At the November 2018 meeting, the Executive approved a package of Financial Security budget options and fee increases to be included in the 2019/20 Budget and these are detailed in Appendix B & C to this report.
- 3.12 The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Constitution prescribe the Budget setting process, which includes a minimum consultation period of three weeks. Under Article 4 of the Constitution, the Budget also includes: the allocation of financial resources to different services and projects; proposed contingency funds; setting the rents; decisions relating to the control of the Council's borrowing requirement; the control of its capital expenditure; and the setting of virement limits. The timescale required to implement this process is outlined below.



4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Rents

- 4.1.1 The continuing impact of the 1% rent reduction on an average rent is illustrated in the table below. Over the four year period a CPI+1% increase is estimated to be a 10.68% increase in average rents, compared to a 3.94% loss of a 1% rent reduction for four years. This gives an overall difference between the two rents of 14.62% and an estimated rent loss per year by year

four of £5.9Million and in total £12.6Million. The impact over a 30 year period has been estimated at £225Million.

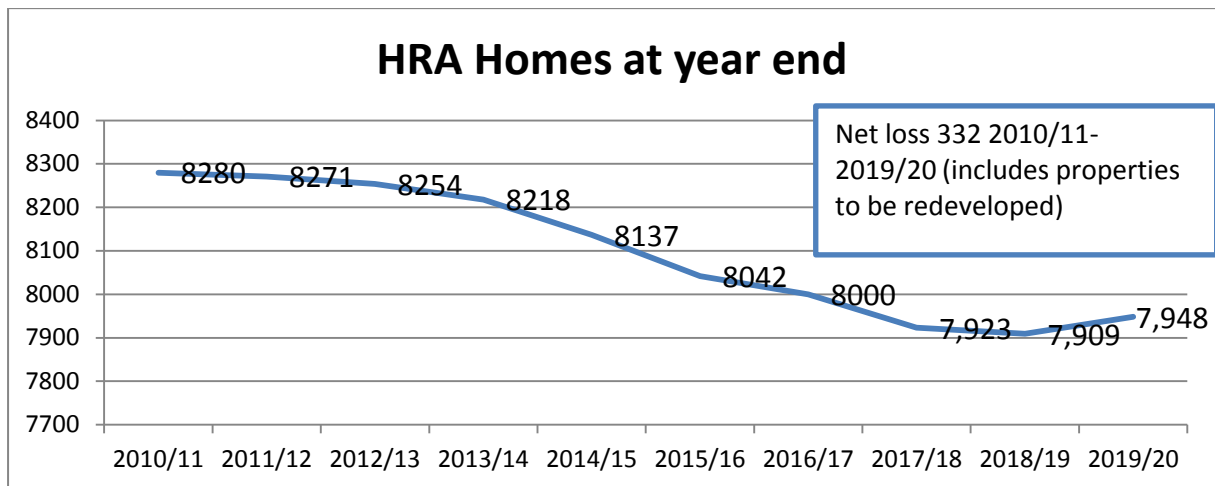
Impact of 1% rent reduction (starting rent £98.59)	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Incr.(decr.) after 4 years £	Incr./decr.) after 4 years
Rent based on CPI+1%	£99.48	£101.47	£105.53	£109.11		
Increase per year	£0.89	£1.99	£4.06	£3.59	£10.53	10.68%
Rent with 1% rent reduction	£97.60	£96.62	£95.66	£94.70		
Decrease per year	-£0.99	-£0.98	-£0.97	-£0.96	-£3.88	-3.94%
Overall loss per average property	£1.88	£4.84	£9.87	£14.41	£31.00	14.62%
Rent loss in £'000	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Incr.(decr.) after 4 years £	Incr./decr.) after 4 years
Estimated rent loss per year £'000	£771	£1,975	£4,005	£5,852	£12,604	

4.1.2 The exceptions to the 1% rent reduction for Stevenage Borough Council, are Low Start Shared Ownership properties (LSSOs). The Council has 87 LSSO properties and owns 82.15 full house equivalents. This report recommends that these rents are set in line with the rent policy CPI+1% or a 3.4% increase for 2019/20, (2018/19 increase 4%).

4.1.3 The proposed average rents for 2019/20 are set out in the table below, there are currently 10 affordable rented properties (ranging from 4 bedroom-2 bedroom houses and flats).

Average Rents 2019/20	LSSO	Incr./ (decr.) %	social	Increase/ (decrease) %	Affordable	Incr./ (decr.) %
Average Rent 2018/19	£113.55		£95.75		£160.21	
Add rent impact 2019/20	£3.86	3.40%	(£0.96)	(1.00%)	(£1.60)	(1.00%)
Total 52 week Rent 2019/20	£117.41		£94.79		£158.61	

4.1.4 The net rental income decrease for 2019/20 is estimated to be £295,580 (Draft HRA budget £291,280), which includes the impacts of the rent reduction and estimated right to buys, offset by estimated new properties and properties taken out of management (awaiting redevelopment). The total number of properties in management is estimated to have reduced by 332 (draft HRA budget 323 homes), between 2010/11 and 2019/20, the 2018/19 & 2019/20 numbers have been temporarily impacted by sheltered properties out of management ready for scheme redevelopment.



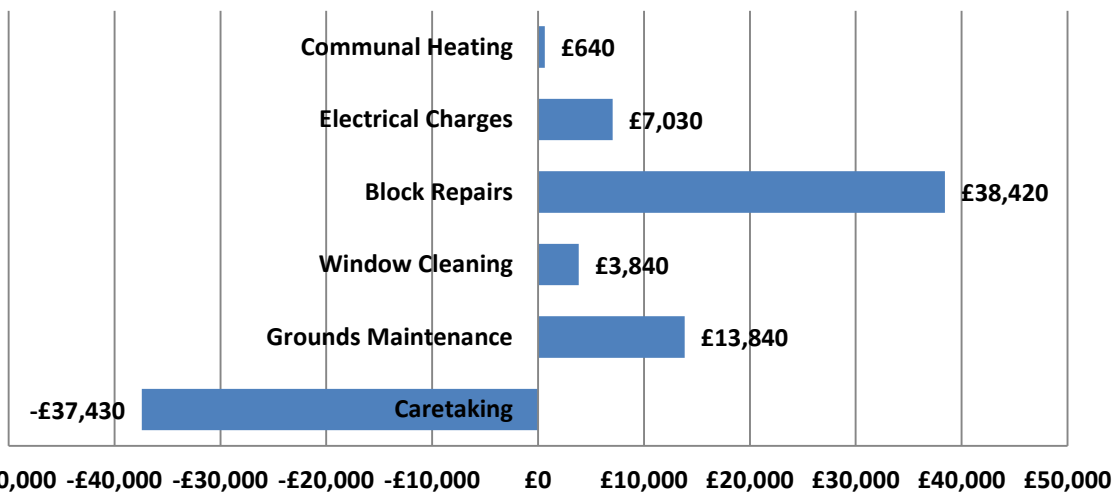
4.2 Service Charges

4.2.1 Service charges are calculated for each block individually for 2,902 properties, (2017/18 2,925) or 37% of current SBC tenanted properties. A review of service charges has been started but not concluded in time for the 2019/20 rent setting and still requires further work followed by tenant and Member consultation. Service charges currently provided, (eligible for housing benefit) are shown below.

Service Charges:
Caretaking
Grounds maintenance
Window cleaning
Block repairs (including pest control)
Electrical charges
Communal heating

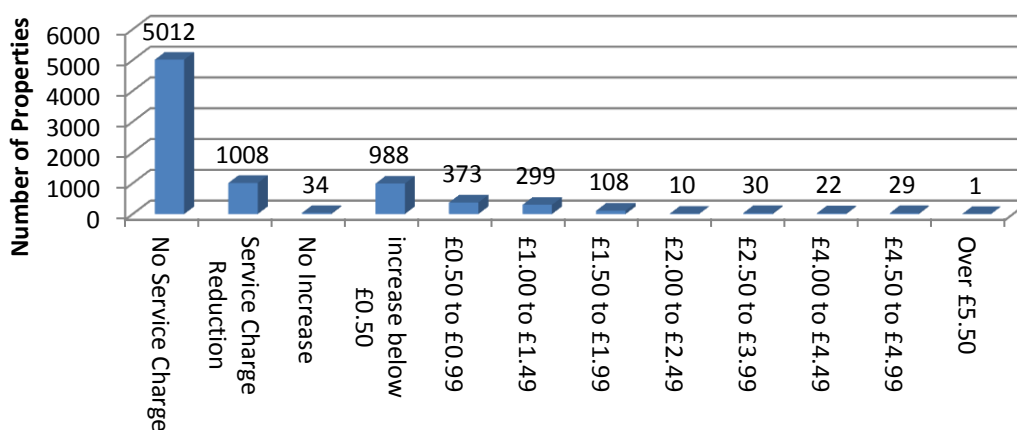
4.2.2 Service charges are not subject to the 1% rent reduction regulations, but are based on cost recovery. For 2019/20, service charge costs will increase with inflationary pressures and changes in usage. The chart below identifies the changes between 2018/19 and 2019/20 for service charges. The increase in grounds maintenance and block repairs has impacted on a number of tenants as identified in paragraph 4.2.3.

Changes to Service Charges recharged to Tenants



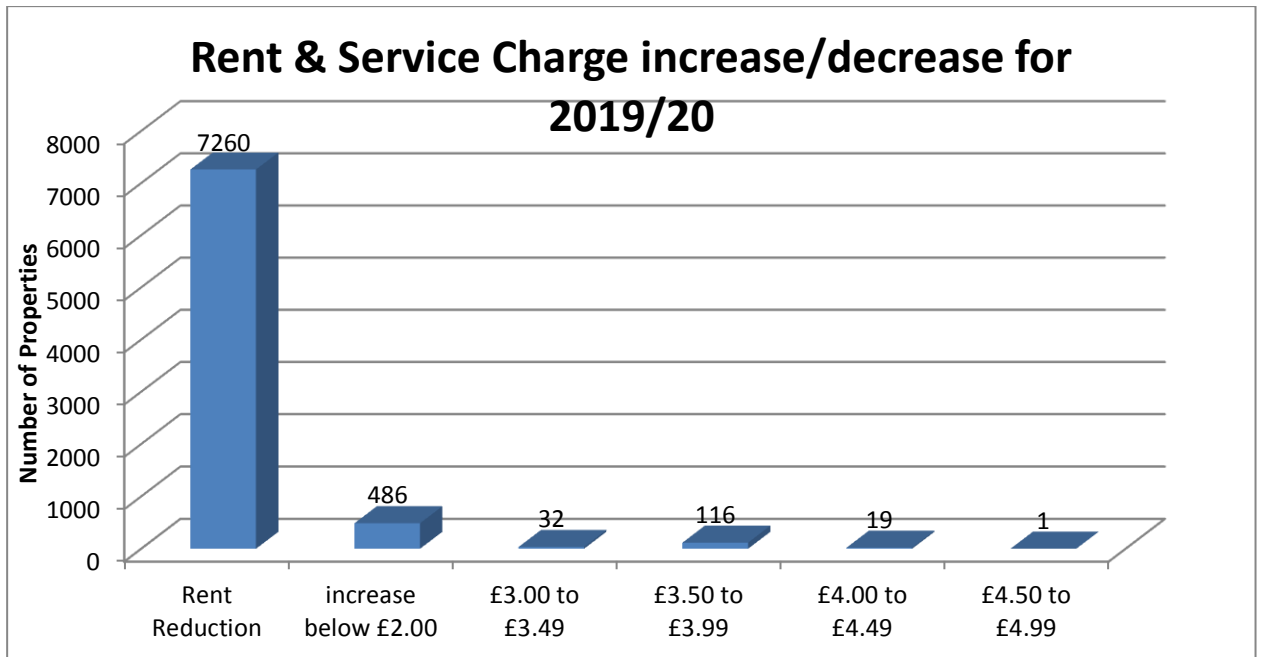
4.2.3 The spread of service charge increases (for current homes) for 2019/20. The impact of the changes in service charges (including caretaking), means 1,008 or 35% of homes (who get a service charge) will receive a service charge reduction, even though service charges have fluctuated between individual services as shown above. There are 30 properties with an increase above £4.50, of which one home has an increase over £5.50 due to in part increased costs for block repairs. A summary is shown in the chart below

Service Charge increases for 2019/20

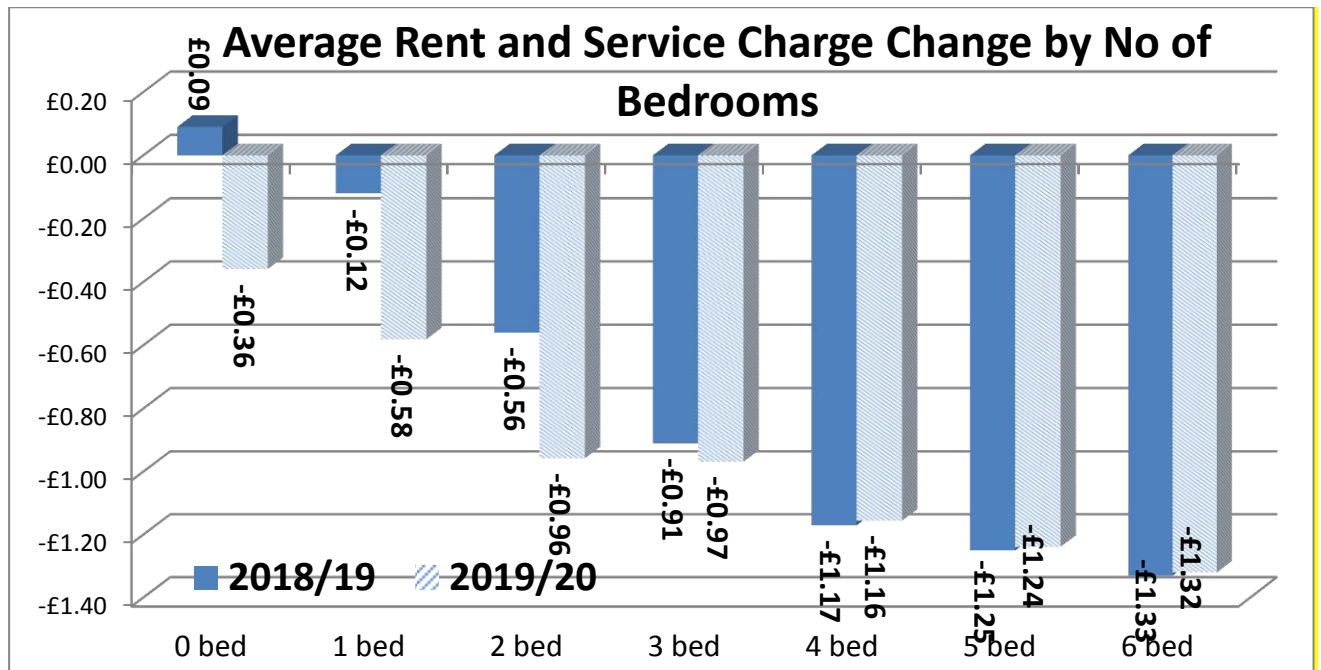


4.3 Rents and Service Charges

4.3.1 The 2019/20 rent reduction and service charges impact is that 7,260 (or 92% of council tenants) compared to 84.6% in 2018/19 receive a rent and service charge reduction. There are 136 properties with an increase of more than £3.50 with one home having an increase of between £4.50-£4.99. The spread of the 2019/20 rent and service charge changes are summarised in the chart below.



4.3.2 The average rent and service charge increase/(decrease) by bedroom size has also been calculated and summarised in the chart below and compared to the 2018/19 data and remains unchanged from the December Draft 2019/20 HRA budget .



4.3.3 The comparison between HRA property rents per week and private sector rents per week for one to four bedroom properties is shown in the chart below. A three bedroom private sector rental property costs an additional 140%, (2017/18,138%) more per week than a SBC council home and 40% more than the affordable let properties,(2017/18 38%).

	SBC Social Rent	SBC Affordable Rent	Median Private Rent	Local Housing Allowance (LHA) 2018/19	Median % v SBC Social	Median % v SBC Affordable
1 Bed Property	£80.96	£126.06	£160.00	£129.81	98%	27%
2 Bed Property	£94.32	£154.59	£213.00	£160.03	126%	38%
3 Bed Property	£105.33	£180.92	£253.00	£197.81	140%	40%
4 Bed Property	£116.07	£223.56	£322.00	£253.34	177%	44%

Private rent Data from Home track housing intelligence system re Oct-17 to Nov-18 (Updated Nov 2018). SBC rents are 2019/20 and the private rents are 2018/19 rents

4.3.4 **The Local Housing Allowance (LHA)** shown in the table above is the maximum amount of housing benefit payable by property size for private rented properties.

4.4 Borrowing

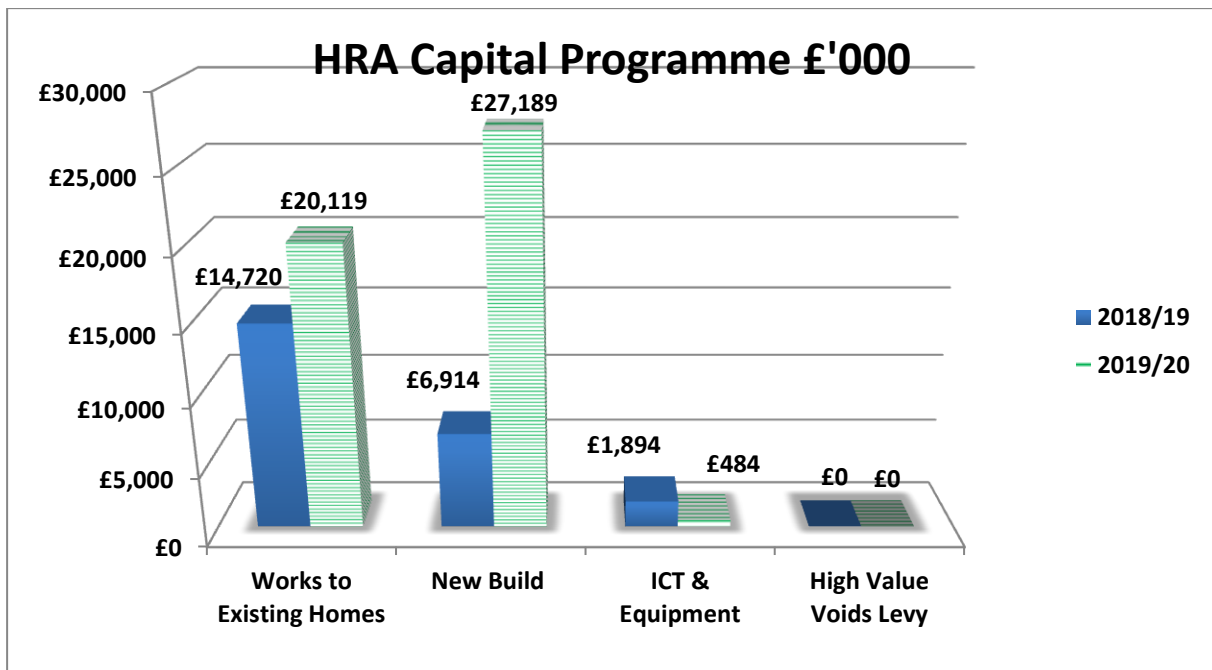
4.4.1 The HRA Business Plan's (HRA BP) existing loans have an average interest rate of 3.37% based on £205.614Million of borrowing. The revised budgets for 2018/19 and 2019/20 makes allowance for new loans totalling £3,800,000 in 2018/19 and £4,756,508 in 2019/20. The decision when to take the new borrowing will be reviewed, weighing up the cost of carry and the prevailing PWLB rates. The interest payable in 2018/19 and 2019/20 is estimated to be £6,867,010 and £6,960,390 respectively.

4.4.2 The HRA Business Plan update to the November 2018 Executive identified that in light of the lifting of the HRA borrowing cap by the Chancellor, the HRA would not be constrained by the £217.685Million borrowing cap set as part of the self-financing settlement. The HRA Business Plan needed to look at a revised approach to borrowing, versus using revenue contributions to capital. This will be based on the HRAs need to borrow and affordability as identified in the action plan, (Appendix A to the November Executive report).

4.5 Contributions to Capital Expenditure

4.5.1 A large part of the capital programme has been funded from HRA revenue resources and the HRA BP has identified a further £105Million over the next 15 years. As stated in 4.4.2 above the HRA action plan will review revenue contributions to capital and this will be brought back to Members in 2019/20. The level of revenue contribution for 2018/19 and 2019/20 are £7,675,440 (unchanged from the working budget) and £13,946,930 respectively. The 2019/20 revenue contribution has reduced by £1,180 compared to the December draft budget report.

4.5.2 The 2019/20 budgeted depreciation allowance to be transferred to the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) to fund the capital programme is £12,156,450, (unchanged from the December report). A summary of the 2018/19-2019/20 capital programme is shown in the chart below



4.5.3 Over the next 15 years of the Business Plan the HRA is projected to use £105Million of revenue receipts because prior to the lifting of the debt cap the HRA had very little room to borrow. However, with the subsequent lifting of the cap there is scope to convert this to borrowing to increase the size of the capital programme based on identified need but this must be also based on affordability. This review will come back to Members during 2019/20.

4.5.4 The Capital programme for 2019/20 onwards includes two schemes which were submitted to the Government prior to the lifting of the debt cap and this borrowing totals £9.05Million and was also included in the HRA Business Plan to the November Executive.

4.6 Use of One for One Receipts

4.6.1 The new build programme was introduced in 2012/13 alongside HRA self-financing and the 2018 Business Plan projects to spend £581Million with an estimated 2,132 new council homes (including 107 replacement properties) over a 30 year period.

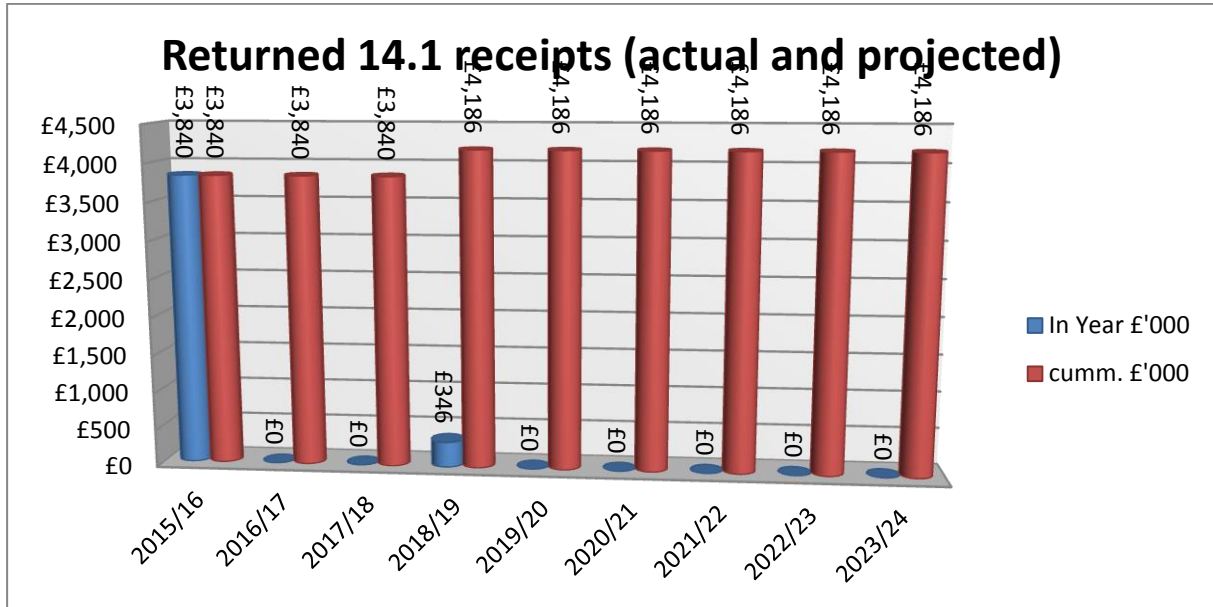
4.6.2 Despite having an ambitious new build programme, the value of 1.4.1 receipts has continued to increase with house prices and the number of RTBs increased in previous years, peaking at 106 in 2015/16, with 2018/19 projected to be 25 sales (19 sales as at January). To date only £3.9Million of receipts have been returned to the Government to avoid the punitive interest rate penalties (4% above the Bank of England base rate).

4.6.3 Members have been previously advised that receipts may need to be returned in 2018/19 and this is now estimated to be £346,232 for April- December 2018. There are estimated interest payments of £55,383 to be paid which can be funded from the debt receipt portion of RTB receipts. The projection for the

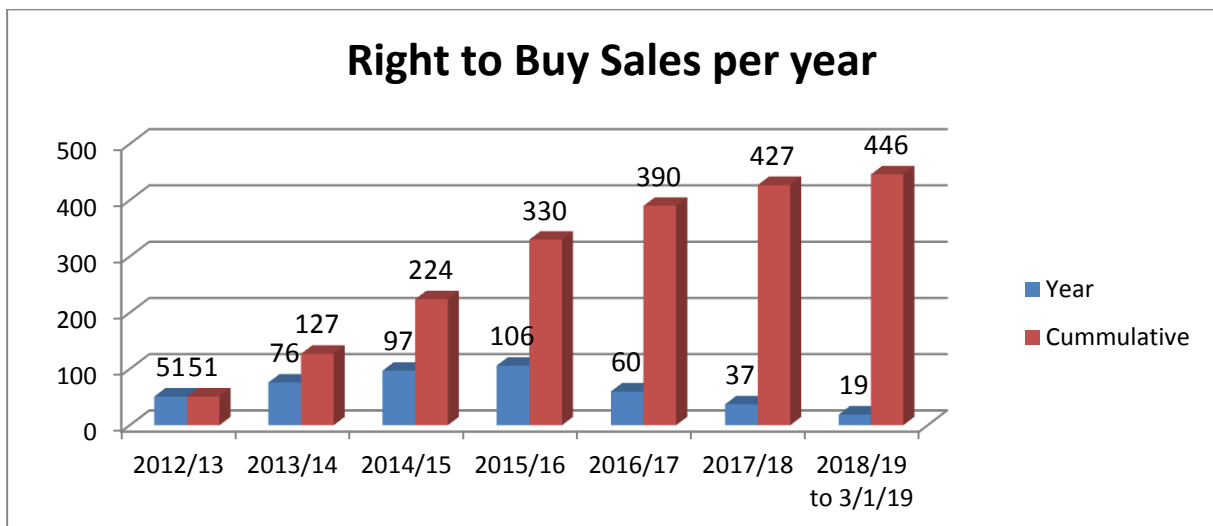
remainder of the year is that if all spend is incurred as profiled no further receipts need to be returned for 2018/19.

4.6.4 The government did indicate in their consultation on RTB receipts that existing receipts may be able to be kept for five years and that interest may not be chargeable on existing returned receipts, however no announcement on the governments intentions have yet been made.

4.6.5 The chart below identifies that receipts returned/ need to be returned.

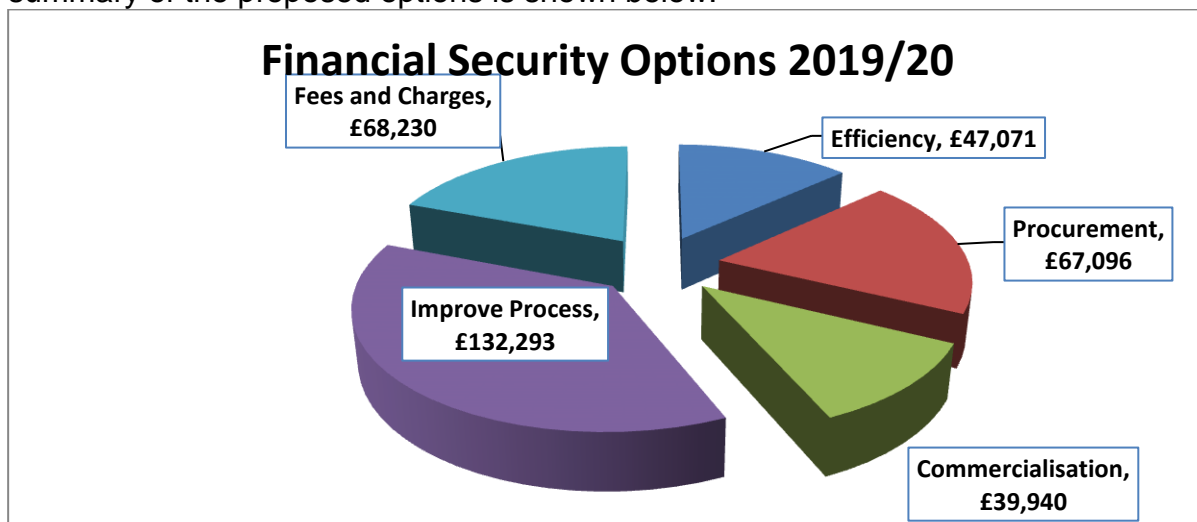


4.6.6 Future projections on returned receipts are based on future estimated sale receipts, officers will keep this under review to minimise the cost to the HRA, however the level of 1.4.1 receipts projected to be returned has reduced as the level of RTB sales have reduced as shown in the table below.



4.7 Financial Security Options

4.7.1 At the November Executive, Members approved Housing Revenue Options of £354,630 (including fees and charges), detailed in Appendix B and C. A summary of the proposed options is shown below.



4.7.2 Officers together with the Leaders Financial Security Group (LFSG) will be working towards achieving the unidentified Financial Security target as summarised in paragraph 3.9 which totals £650K.

4.8 Final Budget Proposals

4.8.1 The Final 2019/20 HRA budget is estimated to be a net expenditure of £9,076,320, which is an increase of £186,870 over that reported in the draft December HRA budget report. The main increase relates to the inclusion of a repair budget to help address damp and mould issues identified in the housing stock. The reasons for the changes are summarised in the table below.

Summary of 2019/20 budget movements		
Draft HRA Budget		£8,889,450
Increases in Income/Reductions in Expenditure:		
NEW: Reduction in Revenue Contribution to Capital	(£1,180)	
NEW: Reduction in Financial Security options-cost of implementation, budget required in 2018/19	(£15,580)	
Decreases in Income/Increases in Expenditure:		
NEW: Reduction in projected rental income	£4,300	
NEW: Increased inflation pressures- salaries	£31,470	
NEW: Increase in recharges from the General Fund	£7,520	
NEW: Repair budget to deal with damp and mould issues in the housing stock	£150,000	
NEW: Other	£10,340	
Total Changes:		£186,870
Draft HRA 2019-20 budget		£9,076,320

- 4.8.2 A budget has been requested for 2019/20 to fund the cost of dealing with damp and mould cases in the housing stock. A budget of £100K was identified from the repairs budget in the current year, however this is not considered to be sufficient in 2019/20. Members are asked to approve the additional expenditure which has not been scrutinised as part of the savings and growth process.
- 4.8.3 The **2018/19 HRA projected working budget** is estimated to be £4,060,920 (draft HRA budget report £3,967,090) an increase of £93,830 over that reported in the December Executive report and £331,000 lower than the working budget approved as part of the November BP update. A summary of the changes are summarised in the table below.

Summary of 2018/19 budget movements		
Working Budget		£4,391,920
Increases in Income/Reductions in Expenditure:		
change in profile of decant costs (reported in Draft December report)	-£423,890	
Other	-£940	
Decreases in Income/Increases in Expenditure:		
NEW: Cost of treating infestation at Brent Court	£50,000	
NEW: Equipment required to set up temporary accommodation units (replaces £100K capital bid in the HRA Business Plan report to the November Executive)	£20,000	
NEW: Microsoft licence costs (3 months)	£8,250	
NEW Financial Security options-cost of implementation required in 2018/19 (there is a compensating reduction in 2019/20 budget)	£15,580	
Total Changes:		-£331,000
Revised 2018/19 HRA budget		£4,060,920

- 4.8.4 The 2019/20 HRA projected year-end balance is now projected to be £10,997,428, the summary of balances is shown in the table below. HRA balances in excess of the minimum balances (held for assessed risks in year), are required to fund the HRA 30 year capital programme, subject to any review as outlined in 4.4.2.

HRA Balances:	2018/19 £	2019/20 £
HRA Balance 1 April	(24,114,668)	(20,053,748)
Use of balances in Year	4,060,920	9,076,320
HRA Balance 31 March	(20,053,748)	(10,977,428)

- 4.8.5 The Assistant Director (Finance and Estates) has completed a risk assessment of the level of balances required in 2019/20 for the HRA. The total required for the assessment of in year risks is £1,945,972 and is summarised in Appendix D to this report. Remaining balances are required to fund the capital programme in future years however this is due for review as outlined earlier in the report and is based on using revenue contributions to capital rather than borrowing.
- 4.8.6 The amount of HRA expenditure that the Executive can approve over and above the amounts set out in this report without referring back to Council for approval is recommended to be unchanged from the previous limit set at £250,000.

4.9 Consultation –review and update as per HRA BP

- 4.9.1 The Council remains committed to working in partnership with council tenants and leaseholders to shape, strengthen and improve council housing services and sets out a range of options to enable housing customers to be involved. The Business Unit review in Communities and Neighbourhoods will seek to further develop the offer of engagement to the wider community.
- 4.9.2 The Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) acts as an advisory body to the Executive for council housing-related matters, including participation in the HRA budget-setting process and the development of the HRA Business Plan. HMAB currently includes one leaseholder and five tenant representatives in addition to Member and officer representation. The Board receives quarterly reports on progress in delivering HRA Business Plan commitments. Feedback from resident and STAR surveys (see below) is also considered by HMAB to give a broader context. On 16th August and 25th October 2018, HMAB received presentations on the HRA Business Plan and MTFS update.
- 4.9.3 The draft HRA budget and rent setting proposals contained in this report are scheduled to be presented to HMB at their meeting on 17 January 2019 and their comments will be fed back to the Executive prior to the final budget report being recommended to the Council.
- 4.9.4 Targeted consultation will be carried out with staff, customers and stakeholders directly affected by the financial security options agreed by the Executive in November 2018. All tenants will be notified of changes to their rent and service charges in February/March 2019.
- 4.9.5 There are plans to review service charges ahead of implementing a new and more transparent service charge model in 2020/21. This review will include consideration of both service charges and support charges and will involve consultation with tenants and leaseholders
- 4.9.6 The Council periodically seeks the views of housing customers through a postal survey. This ‘STAR’ survey is used across the housing sector and enables the council to assess levels of customer satisfaction and to identify customer priorities. The most recent STAR survey was undertaken in early 2018 and for the first time included leaseholders and sheltered housing tenants in addition to general needs tenants.

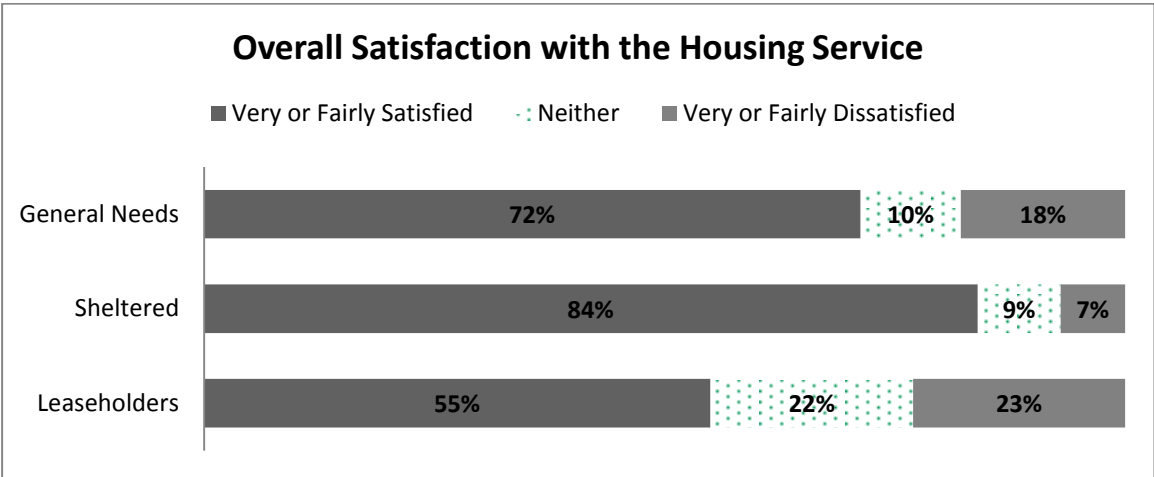
4.9.7 Respondents were asked to say what was most important to them from a list of options. The top five priorities for each group of customers are shown in the table below:

STAR Survey respondents' top five priorities

Priority*	General Needs Tenants	Sheltered Tenants	Leaseholders
1	Repairs & maintenance (87%)	Repairs & maintenance (60%)	Repairs & maintenance (74%)
2	Overall quality of your home (61%)	Emergency call system (50%)	Value for money for service charges (64%)
3	Value for money for rent and charges (35%)	Supported housing manager (34%)	Overall quality of your block of flats (58%)
4	Neighbourhood as a place to live (26%)	Overall quality of your home (33%)	Dealing with ASB (39%)
5	Keeping residents informed (25%)	Keeping residents informed (33%)	Keeping residents informed (23%)

* 1= most important

4.9.8 Overall satisfaction with the housing service is summarised in the following chart and the survey also drilled down into satisfaction with specific areas of the service.



4.9.9 Satisfaction levels with value for money for rent, service charges and support charges were as follows:

- 68% of general needs tenants and 83% of sheltered tenants were satisfied that their rent provides value for money
- 55% of general needs tenants, 72% of sheltered tenants and 33% of leaseholders were satisfied that their service charges provide value for money
- 76% of sheltered tenants were satisfied that their support charges provide value for money

4.9.10 Officers have drawn up action plans in response to the survey outcomes, much of which is closely aligned to the investment and improvement plans associated with the HRA Business Plan and MTFs.

4.10 Overview and Scrutiny Consultation

4.10.1 The Overview and Scrutiny committee considered the draft HRA rent and service charge proposals and budget at their meeting of the 13 December 2018. The Assistant Director (Finance & Estates) introduced the report and Members raised a number of questions concerning service charges and were advised that the a review of service charges was to be undertaken in 2019 and this would potentially increase choice and lead to greater transparency of charges.

4.11 Leaders Financial Security Group

4.11.1 The LFSG chaired by the portfolio holder for Resources on behalf of the Leader and with cross party representation met in October and the group;

- Reviewed the HRA assumptions regarding the 2019/20 onwards saving target
- Review of the HRA 2019/20 Financial Security package
- Reviewed the HRA 2019/20 Fees and charges

4.11.2 The LFSG considered the options above and scored the Financial Security options and fees and charges for inclusion in the HRA budget.

4.12 Chief Finance Officer's Commentary

4.12.1 The Chief Finance Officer is the Council's principal financial advisor and has statutory responsibilities in relation to the administration of the Council's financial affairs (Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988). This commentary is given in light of these statutory responsibilities.

4.12.2 The Council has evolved its budget strategy to meet the ongoing challenging economic conditions because of funding cuts, welfare reforms or inflationary increases. The Financial Strategy to deal with this is the 'Financial Security' strand of 'Future Town Future Council'.

4.12.3 Officers regularly update the MTFS to ensure that a clear financial position for the Council can be demonstrated over the next five years. This medium term view of the budget gives a mechanism by which future 'budget gaps' can be identified allowing for a measured rather than reactive approach to reducing net expenditure. The Financial Security year round approach to identifying budget options means that work is on-going throughout the year to bridge the gap.

4.12.4 In addition officers regularly update the 30 year HRA Business Plan which is approved by Members annually and is the period over which the self-financing borrowing was initially taken. The last approved version of the business plan (November 2018) had a de-minimus £4.9Million deficit over the 30 year plan . The November update contained an action plan to consider the implications of lifting the HRA borrowing cap and the ability to use borrowing

rather than revenue contributions to capital. This would be on an affordability basis and reported back to Members during 2019.

- 4.12.5 The Council has taken significant steps over recent years to re-balance the HRA as a result of significant changes in government policy relating to RTB discounts and rent decreases. One of the principle aims of the MTFS is 'Provide funding to build 2000+ new homes over 30 years, new social and affordable rented homes that contribute to meeting local housing demand and the needs of an ageing population. This is still projected to be achieved however Financial Security targets have been added each year to the HRA business plan and there have been revisions to capital works to the existing stock.
- 4.12.6 The HRA is also moving into large scale housing developments, (a top council and resident priority) and this priority will come with the risk of potentially needing to invest more resources.
- 4.12.7 The HRA MTFS has been updated along with the HRA business plan and will be kept under regular review in 2019/20.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 Financial implications are included in the body of the report

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.2 Legal implications are included in the body of the report

5.3 Staffing Implications

- 5.3.1 The unions are being consulted on the options approved at the November Executive on 19 December 2018. Human Resources staff are co-ordinating centrally the implementation of any staff related savings. However there are no compulsory redundancies within the options for the HRA

5.4 Risk Implications

- 5.4.1 There is considerable risk in setting HRA spend as there have been so many Government policy changes concerning rent and welfare reforms, making medium to long term planning difficult. Between 2014/15-2020/21 there will have been four different rent policies, with an estimated loss of £225Million from the four year 1% rent reduction between 2016/17-2019/20. The HRA has one main income source and changes in Government policy can have a significant impact on the affordability of revenue and capital plans, particularly if there is a move to convert revenue resources into borrowing
- 5.4.2 There is the impact of Universal Credit (UC) and other welfare reforms on tenants, currently 54% or £20Million of benefit is paid to the HRA from the benefits system rather than to tenants and experience has shown that for

other local authorities, arrears have increased significantly with the roll out of UC.

- 5.4.3 There is a potential adverse financial impact on the HRA as a result of high inflationary pressures, when rents are suppressed. If inflation rises above that assumed in the business plan, as a result of BREXIT, further reductions in spend may need to be made.
- 5.4.4 Since 2012/13 the RTB discount has increased from £34,000 to £80,900 in 2018/19. Reducing the cost of purchase for a property has a double negative effect on the HRA, not only does it lose the rental supporting the capital programme, it also cannot afford to replace the property with the resulting receipt.
- 5.4.6 As a result of the number of risks outlined above the authority did not borrow up to the now removed debt cap. With the change in focus on using borrowing rather than using revenue receipts, revenue headroom will be required to be retained for unforeseen events as opposed to borrowing headroom.
- 5.4.7 The HRA has an unidentified Financial Security target to achieve, which for 2020/21-2021/22 is £225,000 and £200,000 thereafter.
- 5.4.8 The Major Works Contract completes works to leasehold as well as tenanted flats and the HRA capital programme relies on the recovery of those service charges.
- 5.4.9 There may be further changes in regulations as a result of the Hackett report which could increase the cost of works to tower blocks. The council in advance of the recommendations has already approved the retrofitting of sprinklers to the high rise blocks.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.5.1 In carrying out or changing its functions (including those relating to the provision of services and the employment of staff) the Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 which is the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Act replaced three previous equality legislations – the Race Relations Act (section 71), the Sex Discrimination Act (section 76A) and the Disability Discrimination Act (section 49A). The Council has a statutory obligation to comply with the requirements of the Act, demonstrating that as part of the decision-making process, due regard has been given to the needs described in the legislation. These duties are non-delegable and must be considered by Council when setting the budget in January 2019.
- 5.5.2 To inform the decisions about the Budget 2019/20 officers have undertaken Brief Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for service-related budget savings proposals. Where there is a potentially negative impact, officers have identified further action needed to inform a final decision and to mitigate the impact where this is possible. These EqIA are included at Appendix E to this report together with an EQIA for the rent and service charges increase for the January Executive.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

BD1 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy (2018/19-2022/23) - November Executive

BD2 Draft HRA Rent Setting and budget report – December Executive

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Final HRA Summary

Appendix B – Financial Security Options

Appendix C – Fees and Charges

Appendix D – Risk Assessment of Balances

Appendix E – EQIA for HRA and General Fund Services

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SUMMARY

	ACTUAL 2017/18 £	ORIGINAL BUDGET 2018/19 £	WORKING BUDGET 2018/19 £	ORIGINAL BUDGET 2019/20 £
SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE				
SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT	9,013,049	9,589,250	9,890,880	9,383,960
SPECIAL SERVICES	4,361,272	4,583,620	4,664,490	4,573,260
RENT, RATES, TAXES AND OTHER CHARGES	506,635	390,600	483,350	485,450
REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE ⁽¹⁾	5,254,612	6,324,680	6,349,110	6,226,170
CORPORATE AND DEMOCRATIC COSTS	210,694	344,280	0	352,060
CONTRIBUTION TO THE BAD DEBT PROVISION	146,139	255,270	255,270	217,620
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	19,492,401	21,487,700	21,643,100	21,238,520
SUMMARY OF INCOME				
RENTAL INCOME:				
DWELLING RENTS	(39,680,054)	(39,587,650)	(39,353,930)	(39,254,050)
NON DWELLING RENTS	(192,892)	(123,920)	(124,020)	(110,490)
	(39,872,946)	(39,711,570)	(39,477,950)	(39,364,540)
CHARGES FOR SERVICES & FACILITIES - TENANTS	(1,716,795)	(1,950,940)	(1,977,380)	(2,104,430)
LEASEHOLDER SERVICE CHARGES	(856,933)	(912,820)	(1,051,190)	(940,810)
CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS EXPENDITURE	(360,440)	(304,260)	(295,560)	(324,180)
REIMBURSEMENT OF COSTS	(342,514)	(358,010)	(325,510)	(358,010)
RECHARGE INCOME (GF & CAPITAL)	(1,617,833)	(1,646,880)	(1,646,880)	(1,741,540)
TOTAL INCOME	(44,767,460)	(44,884,480)	(44,774,470)	(44,833,510)
DEPRECIATION	11,620,202	11,792,190	11,792,190	12,156,450
INTEREST PAYABLE	7,016,875	6,960,140	6,867,010	6,960,390
INTEREST RECEIVABLE	(287,341)	(274,360)	(384,110)	(392,460)
NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT FOR YEAR	(6,925,323)	(4,918,810)	(4,856,280)	(4,870,610)
APPROPRIATIONS:				
REVENUE CONTRIBUTION TO CAPITAL OUTLAY	60,230	7,675,440	7,675,440	13,946,930
SELF FINANCING CONTRIBUTION TO DEBT REPAYMENT	2,500,000	0	1,241,760	0
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BALANCE				
NET EXPENDITURE/(INCOME) FOR YEAR	(4,365,093)	2,756,630	4,060,920	9,076,320
BALANCE B/FWD 1 APRIL	(19,749,571)	(24,114,664)	(24,114,664)	(20,053,744)
HRA BALANCE C/FWD 31 MARCH	(24,114,664)	(21,358,034)	(20,053,744)	(10,977,424)

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		Fund	Implementation costs	Staff	2019/20	2021/22	2022/23
		General Fund RECOMMENDED	58,920		215,244	189,889	239,142
		HRA RECOMMENDED	52,080		354,630	413,046	498,282
STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL		Total Options	111,000	8	569,875	602,935	737,424

APPENDIX B

Ref No	Ranking	Name of Service	Description of Savings Proposal	Implementation costs (any redundancy/capital)	If staff affected indicate no. of staff	Financial Security Option in 2019/20	Financial Security Option in 2020/21	Financial Security Option in 2021/22	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Impact of Saving Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc. (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	Barriers/Interdependencies	Requires Capital Investment (Y/N)	Requires ICT Investment (Y/N)	Potential Timing (put the date you estimate it will be implemented, consider any consultation required)	% General Fund (note 1) Finance can help how much is charged to the GF/HRA	Budget 2018/19	Actual 2017/18	
CATEGORY A - IMMEDIATE EFFICIENCY OPTIONS																		
SA1	2.00	Development (Hsg)	Budget review HRA - licences budget (Home track)		0	1,750	1,750	1,750	Y	None as under utilised spend in licences currently	none	N	n	19/20	0%	£5,520	£3,690	
SA3	2.00	Training	Maximising government apprentice levy to give a compensatory reduction in professional training budgets by 15%.		0	26,703	26,703	26,703	Y	There is a risk that the funding is not interchangeable and the levy funding is not applicable for the departmental related training budgets. Professional training budgets for 2018/19 are £117K (GF) and £61K (HRA) and the levy paid in 2017/18 was £76K. In addition there are £74K of corporate training budgets	Requires corporate allocation of apprentice levy and work force planning	N	N	1 April 2019	56%	£75,000	£0	
SA5	2.00	Stevenage Direct Services	Historic/Surplus Equipment Sales	14,000	0	64,000	0	0	N	There a number of surplus assets that have been identified for sale. The cost of implementation is to take the plant and equipment to auction	Dependant on market prices	N	N	December 2018	50%	£0	£0	
SA11	1.60	Constitutional Services	Reduce non staff budgets that are available to support Scrutiny function from 2.5k to 1k		0	1,500	1,500	1,500	Y	Budget has underspent in previous years.	None identified - not fully spent for a number of years.	N	N	1 April 2019	89%	£2,500	£422	
SA12	1.60	Corporate Policy	Undertake the Town wide Residents Survey every three years rather than every two years.		0	17,810	-7,190	17,180	Y	Would require budget to be increased every third year to £25k. Principle could also equally be applied to the HRA Star Survey.	Needs to be considered as part of the future consultation and engagement strategy.	N	N	1 April 2019	98%	£17,810	£20,065	
SA14	1.60	Council wide	Withdraw Retirement Gifts to employees (£34.10 for each year of completed service at SBC)		retiring staff										100%	£0	£11,000	
SA18	2.00	Stevenage Direct Services	Removal of depot supervisors use of vans for home to depot travel		0	2,750	2,750	2,750	Y	Some supervisors take home a vehicle but attend the depot before starting work, the staff have been notified and the saving is based on fuel savings and could be more in practice removing depot to home mileage.		N	N		64%	£398,310	£307,163	
TOTAL				14,000	0	114,513	25,513	49,883								£499,140	£342,340	
CATEGORY B - PROCUREMENT OPTIONS																		
SB1	2.00	External Audit procurement	Reduction in contract for 2018/19 Audit		0	14,721	14,721	14,721	Y	The reduction in the EY fee is dependent on no additional fees being charged. The Council went to arbitration for the 2016/17 fee and had to pay £9.5K of the £18.5K requested by the Council's external auditors.	Increased fees charged by EY for perceived additional costs incurred on the audit	N	N	1 April 2019	70%	£64,000	£64,000	
SB3	2.00	ICT Shared Service	Reduction in MFD (Multi functional Devices) costs / print - estimated 20% decrease in contract cost - current MFD costs for SBC are £46,000 (2017) - delivery for 2019/20		0	2,000	9,000	9,000	Y	Improved service / management information enabling business units to control their own MDF print costs and output	Aligning with HCC MFD supplier contract - Compliance Manager at EHDC in negotiations.	n	n	within 2018/19 and staff briefing needed / training on use	66%	£45,620	£53,000	
SB8	2.00	Leasehold Management	Reduction in cost of administering Leaseholder (S20) Mortgages		0	62,000	62,000	62,000	y	The contract for administration of the loans has been procured and is less than estimated based on current numbers projected and requires less staff resource.	If the number of mortgages increase this could reduce the projected saving as the cost of the contract is based on the number of mortgages above which the cost increases.	n	y		0%	£170,630	£203,411	
TOTAL				0	0	78,721	85,721	85,721								£280,250	£320,411	
CATEGORY C - NEW INCOME GENERATION/COMMERCIALISATION OPTIONS																		
SC2	2.00	housing	FOR NOTE- requires business case: Once Housing company established - seek an even distribution of on costs away from HRA		0	25,000	25,000	25,000	y	Idea for Housing Company is already known. Based on Housing Development Company business plan. September Executive	Requires Business Case Approval	y	n		0%	£0	£0	
SC3	2.00	Procurement	Shared Service with East Herts- subject to approval by EHDC		3	15,121	15,121	15,121	Y	This is dependent on the type of service EHDC want, currently they are paying on an hourly rate basis but want a cheaper service cost. The option assumes a 20% management cost payable by EHDC.	CFO from EHDC to meet with SBC CFO in July 2018 to discuss the way forward. Possible recruitment of staff for EHDC	N	N	1 April 2019	67%	£0	£0	
SC23	2.00	Housing & Investment	Charge for retrospective permissions granted		0	5,000	5,000	5,000	Y	£100 per case x 50 cases approx. Policy required to reduce costs to rectify and homes left in a safe condition. LSFG recommended higher charge of £100 to £500 for more serious changes	figures based on assumed numbers of cases			01 April 2019	0%			
SC25	1.90	Human Resources	Introduce a holiday purchase scheme - 1 additional day per year.		all staff	15,000	30,000	30,000	Y	Figures are based on 7.5% of staff taking up the option per year. Could be extended up to 2 or 3 days a year which could further increase this figure. Ideally would be introduced prior to amending the Council's Flexi Scheme. Part of wider employee benefits package	TU consultation and Executive required. Fairly easy to implement - process will be required. Uncertainty is the level of take up. Staff consultation would be required to assess interest in such a scheme.	N	N	Could be introduced in year during 2018/19	67%	£0	£0	
TOTAL				0	3	60,121	75,121	75,121								£0	£0	
																Total Target	£0	£0

Ref No	Ranking	Name of Service	Description of Savings Proposal	Implementation costs (any redundancy/capital)	If staff affected indicate no. of staff	Financial Security Option in 2019/20	Financial Security Option in 2020/21	Financial Security Option in 2021/22	Ongoing (Y/N) or No of further years available	Impact of Saving Proposal on Public/ Customers/ Staff/ Members/Partnerships etc. (include any impact on key corporate programmes/performance indicator measures) .	Barriers/Interdependencies	Requires Capital Investment (Y/N)	Requires ICT Investment (Y/N)	Potential Timing (put the date you estimate it will be implemented, consider any consultation required)	% General Fund (note 1) Finance can help how much is charged to the GF/HRA	Budget 2018/19	Actual 2017/18										
CATEGORY D - SERVICE REDESIGN/PROCESS CHANGES INCLUDING WORKFORCE PLANNING																											
SD1	2.00	Accountancy	Reduce Legal paralegals by 1.5FTE* indicative saving	0	0	58,620	58,620	58,620	Y	There were two posts transferred back to SBC plus non applicable HCC overheads. It is anticipated that 0.5FTE may be required if functions can be successfully transferred to other departments.		maybe a need for new system	maybe a need for new system	1 April 2019	67%	£524,700	part year 2017/18										
SD2	2.00	Payroll	Introduce for staff pension (like "AVC wise") scheme.	0	0	12,420	12,420	12,420	Y	The salary sacrifice scheme linked to pensions means no reduction in pension, but savings for the staff/employer on NI. Example based on 50 Grade 7's made a £150 AVC contribution, keeping their tax and NI saving. Saving on Employer NI with no assumption about investing the tax saving in the AVC. (Portsmouth have introduced)- Employer of choice option	Dependent on staff taking up the option, based on 50 with no tax, NI savings reinvested. Would require a scheme set up and an AVC provider. May require some up front costs	N	N	1 April 2019	67%	£2,058,820	£1,732,382										
SD9	1.70	ICT Shared Service	Print Room review - options appraisal underway to consider viability of the in house shared print service. (Redundancy based on worse case scenario, based on two redundancies out of three posts).	59,000	3	8,750	35,000	35,000	Y	There are Shared service cost savings. (this is across SBC and EHDC). Options could include 1. Reduce cost of existing service (1FTE saving but new equipment required-option being costed). 2. Service delivered through partner 3. Self Serve-bigger machines where needed with some external print as now. Or a combination of the above.	Shared Service Partner - East Herts ICT partner wish to maximise savings opportunities. Timescale based on partnership alignment. This will be dependent on staff consultation and outcome.	n	n	Member consultation - already aware of options appraisal in hand. Statutory staff consultation required for print staff	50%	£94,510	£133,892										
SD11	1.80	All	Reduction in paper and print / use of MFD s - move to paperless. Based on a managed reduction in click charges - new MFD contract means this is better enabled with print unit management information. Renegotiate paper contract	0	0	7,500	12,500	12,500	y	Change in culture and requires business unit oversight and management and review of paper contract	Information and records management strategy, digital document management solutions etc.				67%	£45,620	£53,000										
SD52 (was SA16)	2.00	Housing Policy and Performance	Creation of new Corporate Policy and Business Support Team and housing ICT systems team	38,000	2	100,000	100,000	143,000	Y	There are three managerial posts to be deleted (policy x 2 & performance x1). Proposed restructure of one new post management post. (One post has been vacant during the past 12 months and processes to be streamlined).	TU and Staff consultation would be required. This will be dependent on staff consultation and outcome	N	N	March 2019	59%	150,540 (working budget. OB = 0)	?? (HRA code in 17/18??)										
SD21	2.00	Housing and Investment	Additional Management savings as a result of Senior Management Review (SMR) and Business Unit Reviews (BUR)	0	0	61,000	61,000	61,000	Y	The 4th Tier BUR for housing management has negated the need for a management post (Grade 12) as the revised structure has consolidated housing functions	There may be cost pressures which arise as a result of restructures below tier 4 as the H&I BUR restructure is not yet complete.			immediate	0%												
TOTAL																97,000	5	248,290	279,540	322,540					Total Target	£2,723,650	£1,919,274
CATEGORY E - FEES & CHARGES																											
SC18	1.90	Supported housing	Increase contribution to support costs to £2 per year rolling as part of phased support costs agreed in 2016/17		0	62,400	124,800	187,200	Y	The service cost was £17.70p in 2016/17. A charge of £2 pw was introduced in that year for those who were previously receiving the service for free (funded previously from supported housing grant), it is proposed that charges will increase by £2 pw per year until the cost of the service is fully recovered. Figures based on 624 users.					0%	£211,900	£143,000										
SE6	1.80	Various	Fees and charges HRA Appendix C		0	5,830	12,240	16,960	Y	Based on inflation of 2% increase HRA fees and charges See Appendix C					0%												
TOTAL																0	0	68,230	137,040	204,160					Total Target	£211,900	£143,000
				111,000	8	569,875	602,935	737,424																			

FEES AND CHARGES -RECOMMENDED FEE INCREASES FOR 2018/19 (1/4/2018)												
Service	Scoring (scale of 0-3, with 0 = "No you do not agree" to 3 = "Strongly Agree")	Description of Chargeable Service	2018/19 Price £	2019/20 Price £	Increase £	Increase %	Total Budget 2018/19 £	Income changes included in budget options	Budget Increase £	Total Budget 2019/20 £	Fee Principles Applied (Y/N)	Options considered/Rationale
Housing Revenue Account												
Supported Housing:												
Guest Bedrooms		All schemes other than those listed below (per night, per person)	£11.00	£11.40	£0.40	3.64%					Y	We are looking to consult with residents about not providing guest flats (those that are studios) and putting them back as a rental property.
	HG110 955300	Norman Court/Hobbs Ct/Gladstone Ct/Shafesbury Ct/Truro/ Pitt Court/Grosvenor Ct per night. (any bedsit type guest room, per night, per person)	£20.00	£20.70	£0.70	3.50%	8,850			8,850	Y	
Short Stay Unit		Assessment (per day)	£10.00	£10.35	£0.35	3.50%					Y	
	HG610 977700	Other, including an element of support (per day)	£20.00	£20.70	£0.70	3.50%	660			660	Y	
							9,510		390	9,900	Y	
Laundry Charges		Sheltered schemes first wash	FREE	FREE							Y	This will be included in the revised charges rather than separated out and is subject to ongoing work. This is to be considered as part of service charge review - service charge review to be effective for April 20.
		Second wash and thereafter	£2.45	£2.55	£0.10	4.08%					Y	
		Guest bedrooms and short stay (per wash)	£2.45	£2.55	£0.10	4.08%					Y	
	HG110 977500						5,870		130	6,000	Y	
Room Hire		Hairdressing at Silkin/Fred Millard, (per hour) *	£2.35	£2.60	£0.25	10.64%					Y	In order to encourage external service providers into the scheme for the benefit of the tenants, consideration has been given in the setting of the charges to ensure they are not cost prohibitive. Work underway to determine the number of customers who benefit from these services and to review the pricing on a more commercial basis. Both chironpodist and hairdresser are mobile
		Private chiropodist and other services, (per hour) *	£2.50	£2.60	£0.10	4.00%					Y	
	HG110 977700						1,180		120	1,300	Y	
Support Services and careline for HRA tenants		Sheltered housing support * (includes all services shown under careline alarms)	£17.70	£18.30	£0.60	3.39%	253,940		62,400	316,340	Y	Increase by 3.3% RPI - linked into the service charge review - splitting costs between rent , communal management charge and support. This will be effective from April 2020.
	HG110 977807	SIM Careline Unit (additional weekly charge)	£2.20	£2.30	£0.10	4.55%					Y	
	now HG110 & HL410 911300	Independent living and flexi care support charge for previous HRS protected clients and new residents entitled to HB	£2.00	£4.00	£2.00	100.00%					Y	Proposed increase to £4 towards the true cost of the support service.
		response service for new customers (50 weeks)	£6.00	£6.70	£0.70	11.67%	137,890		4,110	142,000	Y	This needs to be the difference between the monitoring charge and the full charge
		Response service phased (50 weeks)*	£4.95	£6.00	£1.05	21.21%					Y	
		Response service to other provider equipment (50 weeks)*	£3.70	£3.80	£0.10	2.70%					Y	
		Monitoring only service (50 weeks) *	£2.80	£2.90	£0.10	3.57%	Y					
							391,830		66,510	458,340		

Service	Scoring (scale of 0-3, with 0 = "No you do not agree" to 3 = "Strongly Agree")	Description of Chargeable Service	FEES AND CHARGES -RECOMMENDED FEE INCREASES FOR 2018/19 (1/4/2018)								Fee Principles Applied (Y/N)	Options considered/Rationale
			2018/19 Price £	2019/20 Price £	Increase £	Increase %	Total Budget 2018/19 £	Income changes included in budget options	Budget Increase £	Total Budget 2019/20 £		
Careline Alarm-private (Shortfall funded from General Fund)		Response service (50 weeks) *	£6.00	£6.70	£0.70	11.67%					Y	This budget relates to private careline tenants and any increase in income means the General Fund subsidy is reduced.
		Response service phased (50 weeks)*	£4.95	£6.00	£1.05	21.21%					Y	There is a risk that we could lose customers if the cost gets too high.
		Response service out of area (50 weeks)*	£6.50	£6.75	£0.25	3.85%					Y	
		Response service to other provider equipment (50 weeks)*	£3.70	£3.80	£0.10	2.70%					Y	
		Monitoring only service (50 weeks) *	£2.80	£2.90	£0.10	3.57%					Y	
	HG110 941100							115,950		5,050	121,000	This Saving (£5,050) is for the GENERAL FUND - shown on there as a "one liner" - and only shown here for REFERENCE
Replacement Pendants Key Safe Lock Change		Careline keys*	£9.40	£9.75	£0.35	3.72%					Y	actual cost of key is £4.42 - this includes a £5 admin fee. We don't know the cost yet for 19/20
		Fobs - Sheltered Schemes	£11.90	£12.35	£0.45	3.78%					Y	this includes a £5 admin fee
		All Pendants	£47.70	£49.30	£1.60	3.35%					Y	cost of pendant not known yet so £47 plus 3.3% RPI.
		Supply	£19.42	£20.00	£0.58	3.10%					Y	
		Fit	£55.55	£57.50	£1.95	3.51%					Y	Repairs service to advise what the costs will be 19/20
	HG110 968800							3,300		100	3,400	
General Needs Tenants and Leaseholders:												
Key Fobs												
	HJ990 976202		£19.90	£20.60	£0.70	3.52%						Actual cost of key fobs is £11.50 + VAT - this also include a £5.00 admin charge consistent with Sheltered scheme keys.
Communal door entry keys												
	HJ990 976200	Replacement keys for entry doors to flat blocks.	£18.55	£19.25	£0.70	3.77%	1,260			40	1,300	Actual cost of keys is £10.40 + VAT. Previously same charge was levied for key fobs and keys, however as the costs are different we are proposing different charges. Includes £5.00 admin as above.
Laundry charges - Roundmead												It is recommended that we apply at least 2% increase annually each year from 2017, which will ensure that we recover reasonable costs at any one time rather than apply a large increase at any given point. New lets should be signed up to a direct debit to ensure that there is little/no cost in collecting the rent due. Based on actual costs (electricity, water, repairs, depreciation). Benchmarked launderette costs are £4 (small wash), £6 (large) and £8 (large wash).
		Wash tokens	£5.15	£5.35	£0.20	3.88%						Y
		Dry Tokens	£2.75	£2.90	£0.15	5.45%						Y
Management Fees for Westwood Court & Kilner Close												Administration fees help to recover the administration of the management fees each year in line with our SBC administration set fees
		Administration Fees	£0.70	£0.75	£0.05	7.14%						Y
Laundry charges - Brent And Harrow												
		Wash tokens	£5.15	£5.35	£0.20	3.88%						Y
		Dry Tokens	£2.75	£2.90	£0.15	5.45%						Y
	HJ990 977500							Average 7,660		240	7,900	2017/18 Actuals only £5k

FEEES AND CHARGES -RECOMMENDED FEE INCREASES FOR 2018/19 (1/4/2018)													
Service		Scoring (scale of 0-3, with 0 = "No you do not agree" to 3 = "Strongly Agree")	Description of Chargeable Service	2018/19 Price £	2019/20 Price £	Increase £	Increase %	Total Budget 2018/19 £	Income changes included in budget options	Budget Increase £	Total Budget 2019/20 £	Fee Principles Applied (Y/N)	Options considered/Rationale
Stores													17/18 Actuals only made £14k.
	HC110 978101			£4.20	£4.35	£0.15	3.57%	20,600		400	21,000	Y	
Lock change													This charge is levied if tenants call out emergency repairs service out of office hours. It acts effectively as a deterrent. The charge figure relates to a lock change in this instance, but the call out could a number of repairs.
	HR613 976200		Callout	£113.75	£117.50	£3.75	3.30%	3,800				Y	
	HA110 992200		Admin charge	£34.20	£35.50	£1.30	3.80%	9,900				Y	Schedule of Rates charges for lock change is £91.35.
			Charge	£101.00	£104.50	£3.50	3.47%					Y	
								13,700		300	14,000	Y	2017/18 Actuals only £7.5k
Leasehold charges for services - VAT not applicable. All fees are additional income for SBC													
Solicitors enquiries/standard pre-sale enquiries*			10 working day response	£160.00	£160.00	£0.00	0.00%					Y	Would not be deemed reasonable if challenged at FTT to charge more
Solicitors enquiries/standard pre-sale enquiries*			3 working day response	£240.00	£240.00	£0.00	0.00%					Y	Would not be deemed reasonable if challenged at FTT to charge more
Re-mortgage enquiries*			Enquiries raised at a time of remortgaging	£55.00	£55.00	£0.00	0.00%					Y	Would not be deemed reasonable if challenged at FTT to charge more
Copy of lease*			fee for providing a copy of the lease	£30.00	£30.00	£0.00	0.00%					Y	Cost of obtaining from the land registry is considerably lower, and therefore would not be deemed reasonable if SBC were to charge more
Requests for landlord's consent*			where leaseholder wants to carry out alterations - permission must be sought from SBC.	£100.00	£100.00	£0.00	0.00%					Y	Would not be deemed reasonable if challenged at FTT to charge more
			charge for inspection post completion of works	£50.00	£50.00	£0.00	0.00%					Y	Would not be deemed reasonable if challenged at FTT to charge more
Retrospective landlord's consent*			where leaseholder is seeking permission for works carried out retrospectively.	£200.00	£200.00	£0.00	0.00%					Y	Would not be deemed reasonable if challenged at FTT to charge more
			additional inspection fee	£50.00	£50.00	£0.00	0.00%					Y	Would not be deemed reasonable if challenged at FTT to charge more
Copies of quarterly service charge invoice*			additional inspection fee	£5.00	£5.00	£0.00	0.00%					Y	Would not be deemed reasonable if challenged at FTT to charge more
Copies of service charge estimate or actual statement*			additional inspection fee	£5.00	£5.00	£0.00	0.00%					Y	Would not be deemed reasonable if challenged at FTT to charge more
Deed of Postponement			(This is a new fee being introduced for 19/20)	none	£85.00								
Notice of Charge			(This is a new fee being introduced for 19/20)	none	£25.00								
Notice of Transfer			(This is a new fee being introduced for 19/20)	none	£25.00								
			HA114/941***					0		73,280	0		
			GRAND TOTAL					£569,600	£0	£73,240	£642,840		

Additional Income (fees & charges) £73,280
Less: £5,050 (G Fund Saving) £68,230

Notes
1.charges are rounded to the nearest 5p
2.All charges are inclusive of VAT @ 20% with the exception of items marked with an *
3.Careline and Community Support are subject to VAT for private residents unless they complete an exemption declaration.

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**APPENDIX D: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT
BALANCES 2019/20**

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Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Income from areas within the base budget where the Council raises "Fees and Charges"	Potential risk that the budgeted level of income from activities where the Council is charging for services will not be achieved. This is anticipated largely to be as a result of the downturn in economy, but could also be as a result of increased void rates, lower collection rates, disputed bills, All "fees and charges" income is reviewed as part of the monthly/quarterly budget monitoring process. All budgets are profiled over the year based upon previous experience.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Income	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Rechargeable works not raised or recovered	£158,670	10.00%	£15,867
Leaseholder charges not realised (excluding insurance)	£750,000	5.00%	£37,500
Rental income (increase in voids rates)	£39,207,820	0.50%	£196,039
Service Charges (increase in voids rates)	£1,552,260	0.50%	£7,761
Heating charges	£195,950	5.00%	£9,798
Total			£266,965

Potential Risk Area	Comments		
Demand Led Budgets	Potential risk that spending on parts of the budget where the Council has a legal duty to provide the service increases significantly. Individual budgets reviewed as part of the monthly budget monitoring process. All budgets are profiled over the year based upon previous experience and so any variances should show up during the year.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required

**APPENDIX D: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT
BALANCES 2019/20**

Storm damage and fire damage uninsured costs (excess is £25,000 for fire damage)	£25,000	100.00%	£25,000
Response and Emergency repairs increase as a result of inflationary pressures or unforeseen repairs	£6,227,330	5.00%	£311,367
Unforeseen Capital works not budgeted for requiring a contribution to capital (based on a proportion of the capital programme)	£47,794,580	1.50%	£716,919
Inflation pressures on capital works requiring additional revenue resources to fund the shortfall	£47,794,580	0.25%	£119,486
NEW Insufficient budget identified for damp and mould works	£150,000	20.00%	£30,000
NEW Cost of decanting tenants from redevelopment sites is higher than budgeted for	£290,102	5.00%	£14,505
Total			£1,217,277

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Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors
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**APPENDIX D: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT
BALANCES 2019/20**

Changes since budget was set	Potential risk that things change since the budget estimates were made and the estimates are then under budgeted for		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Increase in borrowing costs for internal borrowing	£2,338,422	0.25%	£5,846
Transitional Vacancy Rate 4.5% not achieved	£182,920	10.00%	£18,292
Increase in bad debt provision	£217,620	10.00%	£21,762
Utility inflation (Electricity increase in April 2018, Gas increase from Oct 2018)	£578,280	5.00%	£28,914
Business Unit Reviews (BUR)implementation costs/restructure costs increases the pay bill (% of pay bill for the General Fund)	£7,363,100	0.50%	£36,816
Total			£111,630

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Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors
Income from areas within the base budget where the Council raises "Fees and Charges"	Potential risk that changes in government policy and legislation mean income from activities where the Council is charging for services will not be achieved.
	Calculated Risk

**APPENDIX D: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT
BALANCES 2019/20**

Specific Areas	Estimated Income	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Increased Right to buys as a result of Government initiatives reducing the amount of collectable rent. Assume an additional 15 RTB's increasing the number to 50 in 2019/20	£36,933	50.00%	£18,467
higher rent arrears as a result of the introduction of the benefit cap.	£217,620	2.50%	£5,441
Total			£23,907

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Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors		
Other Risks	Potential risk that savings options will not be realised as a result of delay or unforeseen circumstances.		
		Calculated Risk	
Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Savings Options delayed or not realised	£354,630	10.00%	£35,463
Total			£35,463

Potential Risk Area	Comments including any mitigation factors
Estimated balances required for any over spend or under -recovery of expenditure	This calculation replaces the calculation based on Net Expenditure

**APPENDIX D: RISK BASED ASSESSMENT OF THE LEVEL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT
BALANCES 2019/20**

Specific Areas	Estimated Exposure	Calculated Risk	
		Risk assessed at	Balances Required
Gross Expenditure (excluding fixed interest costs and depreciation and RCCO)	£19,382,080	1.50%	£290,731
Total			£290,731
Level of Balances Assumed in Housing Revenue Account Based on risk			£1,945,972
Balances held for future debt and capital programme.			£9,031,455
Total Required balances			£10,977,427

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Equality at Stevenage Borough Council

Stevenage Borough Council as a service provider, employer and community leader is committed to achieving equal opportunities for everyone. We want to deliver services that are fair, accessible and open to everyone who needs them.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are an important part of the process in ensuring that our intention is translated into action. They help to ensure that decisions are made in a fair, transparent and accountable way, considering the needs and the rights of different people in the community.

Based on the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, the EqIA considers the impact on the following groups when making decisions, updating policies and starting new projects:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marital status
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

Although non-statutory, the Council has chosen to adopt the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion in considering the impact on people in terms of their social or economic background.

EqIAs also help the council to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). The Duty states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under this Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Savings Proposals 2019/20

Prior to their consideration at Executive in November 2018, all savings proposals were reviewed to determine any potential impact on Stevenage residents in terms of their protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The majority of these have no public impact and so have not been subject to any further EqIA.

Where a negative, positive or disproportionate impact is likely, assistant directors and other appropriate managers have drafted Brief or Full EqIAs. These have been summarised over the following pages and will inform the recommendations made at Executive on 23 January and 13 February 2019. Action to further analyse or mitigate the impact on equality groups is identified where appropriate.

The following activity has been taken / will take place:

- November 2018 – February 2019 EqIAs finalised considering further evidence as necessary
- January and February 2019 Consideration of all completed EqIAs at Council meetings

Summary of Equality Impact Assessments-APPENDIX E

Saving Ref	Saving proposed	Summary of impact	Action	Contact Officer
SA2	Cease payment of excesses on strimmer claims	<p>Unequal impact:</p> <p>Socio Economic Lower income households may have only basic car or home insurance that does not provide coverage and/or may find it more difficult to pay the excess.</p>	No further action or EqIA is required	Clare Fletcher
SC23 Page 51	Charge for retrospective permissions granted	<p>Unequal impact</p> <p>Disability Disabled tenants who need adaptations would apply via Stevenage Borough Council as an OT assessment would need to be carried out before any works are completed. The works are paid from the aids and adaptation budget.</p> <p>Socio Economic Tenants on lower incomes may find it more difficult to make the payment. Arrangements could be made to negotiate payment plans on a case by case basis according to circumstances through the concessions policy.</p>	<p>Full EQIA completed</p> <p>Publicise the introduction of the charges as widely as possible in February 2019 before implementation in April 2019.</p> <p>Provide adequate training and support for Customer Service Centres (CSC) and Housing & Investment Team</p> <p>Ensure that staff identify low income and vulnerable residents and follow the concessions policy</p>	Jaine Cresser

Saving Ref	Saving proposed	Summary of impact	Action	Contact Officer
Page 52			<p>Consult on the new terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement which includes recharges of retrospective permissions</p> <p>Review after 6 months to assess the impact and see if it has adversely affected particular equality group(s)</p> <p>Review of the charges to be undertaken as part of annual fees and charges setting mechanism as normal</p>	
SE2	Replacement waste container charges	<p>Negative impact: Socio Economic Replacement container charges may discourage residents to participate with refuse and recycling services if they are charged for a replacement container.</p>	<p>The council will seek to apply a concessionary rate for those receiving income derived benefit. Replacement containers will be provided free of charge where irreparable damage or loss of a container is the fault of the council.</p> <p>The charge will be</p>	Craig Miller

Saving Ref	Saving proposed	Summary of impact	Action	Contact Officer
			reviewed alongside corporate fees and charges setting process 2019/20	
HRA Page 53	Rent and service charge setting for 2019/20	<p>Positive impact:</p> <p>Socio Economic The rent decrease will be applied across all tenancies prescribed by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 regardless of circumstances.</p> <p>Those who receive services for which a service charge is made will be charged the actual cost of these services. Some of these service charges will be eligible for UC Housing Cost element and HB.</p> <p>Unequal impact:</p> <p>Socio Economic The rent reduction applies to all tenants subject to Clause 21 of the Welfare Reform and Work act 2016. However, properties exempt from this clause will have the rent increased by CPI + 1%. (Currently this is circa 87 LSSO properties and one shared ownership property – it may also include emergency and temporary accommodation).</p> <p>52% (as at the end of 2017/18) of tenants are reliant on HB to cover the rent and HB eligible service charges. Only some service charges are eligible for Universal Credit (UC) Housing Cost element and HB. For example heating charges are exempt and tenants and</p>	<p>Full EQIA completed (HRA & SC18 combined)</p> <p>Communicate rent and charges through notification letters, FAQ sheets and the website, giving the opportunity for residents to discuss their concerns with staff and get support in applying for any relevant benefits.</p> <p>Review whether any elements of the independent living service should be eligible for housing benefit</p>	Jaine Cresser

Saving Ref	Saving proposed	Summary of impact	Action	Contact Officer
		leaseholders are expected to pay this. Water charges are also exempt from the decrease and UC Housing Cost element and HB.		
Page 54 SC18	Increase contribution to support costs to £2 per year as part of phased support costs agreed in 2016/17	<p>Positive impact:</p> <p>Socio Economic Results from the STAR survey in 2018 have shown that residents identified that the emergency alarm service and the supported housing officer as the 2nd and 3rd most important priority in living in their property. The application of the support charge will help to ensure that the council can continue to deliver this service.</p> <p>Negative impact:</p> <p>Age Residents of independent living and flexicare schemes who will have to pay the increased charge are predominantly older people. Conversely however, the costs are currently subsidised by the wider tenant population, who have a younger age profile and do not benefit from the service.</p> <p>Disability The residents that are charged a support charge are predominantly older and disabled people as this accommodation is for people over 55 years old or for people with a disability.</p> <p>Socio Economic The support charge is not eligible for housing benefit and could have a negative impact for those on lower incomes in terms of affordability.</p>		Jaine Cresser

Saving Ref	Saving proposed	Summary of impact	Action	Contact Officer
		<p>This group of residents may also be affected by increases in Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) affecting the overall amount that older and disabled people can afford to pay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HCC now charge for some of their community based adult social care services that they used to provide for free. This has impacted on many people over 60 in the independent living/flexicare schemes as they are in receipt of some care due to their age/medical conditions. The low care band in flexicare doubled and this has had an impact on residents being able to afford care and HCC have received a number of complaints. • HCC funding for Flexicare housing related is due to end on 31st March 2019 which would mean more cost to Stevenage Borough Council which we may need to pass on to residents. <p>However, the introduction of the charge is considered to be fairer than under current arrangements, whereby support charge costs are subsidised by the wider tenant population who do not benefit from the service.</p> <p>Furthermore, the charge has been introduced on an incremental basis, to mitigate the impact, rather than applying the full amount of £18.30 per week in one 'hit'.</p> <p>For those tenants who are not eligible for Housing Benefit (HB) or who are on partial HB, the rent reduction will to some extent offset the impact of the charge.</p>		
SE11	Charge an	Possible negative impact	Review of charge	Craig

Saving Ref	Saving proposed	Summary of impact	Action	Contact Officer
Page 56	administration fee for managing the VCO garages	<p>Age, Race, Disability, Religion or belief and Socio Economic characteristics Financial implication associated with £104 annual charge per garage. Cost is considered to be proportionate and reasonable within the context of overall operating costs of VCO's.</p> <p>Possible positive impact</p> <p>Age, Race, Disability, Religion or belief and Socio Economic characteristics Will stimulate review of the organisations actual need for a garage and may provide an opportunity to rationalise liabilities associated with use of a third party resource/asset.</p>	application and EQIA to ensure continued applicability.	Miller
SC11	Broker the council's commercial skip business through a third party provider	<p>Socio-economic The council will continue to ensure that the charges applied for the provision of skips remain proportionate and are reasonable in terms of market conditions at the time of being set.</p>	Charges will be reviewed as part of the annual fees and charges setting mechanism as normal.	Craig Miller
SC 6	Provide Sanctum vaults for ashes interments at the Almonds Lane & Weston Road Cemeteries	<p>Positive Impact</p> <p>Disability Sanctums can be located along path edges and access routes within Cemeteries. These memorial types can as a result be a more accessible memorial solution for mourners who are less mobile.</p> <p>Socio Economic Sanctums may provide a more affordable burial option for low income households when compared to costs associated with</p>	No further action or EqIA is required	Craig Miller

Saving Ref	Saving proposed	Summary of impact	Action	Contact Officer
		<p>standard grave burials.</p> <p>Unequal Impact</p> <p>Religion or Belief Sanctums would not be a viable option for faith denominations that only utilise grave burials for their deceased.</p>		

Brief Equality Impact Assessment For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?	Insurance Claims - Damage Caused To Property owned by Members of the Public by Grasscutting Operatives Using Strimmers		What are the key aims of it? To enforce the legal protocol/process of dealing with these claims thus saving taxpayers' money.		
Who may be affected by it?	Customers: External				
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	N/A				
Form completed by:	Debbie Gibson	Start date	01/10/18	End date	TBA
		Review date		30/04/19	

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What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Internal PL Claims Experience	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	No
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	n/a	Race	n/a
Disability	n/a	Religion or belief	n/a
Gender reassignment	n/a	Sex	n/a
Marriage or civil partnership	n/a	Sexual orientation	n/a
Pregnancy & maternity	n/a	Socio-economic ¹	Unequal impact: Lower income households may have

¹Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

			only basic car or home insurance that does not provide coverage and/or may find it more difficult to pay the excess
Other	N/A		

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:				
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities		Encourage good relations

What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
None - but note that where we have been negligent in not complying with health and safety legislation and risk then liability may be conceded.	Debbie Gibson	Delivered by Insurance Team following due process and monitored by the Insurance Manager (depending on volume of claims and follow on regarding any post claim complaints)	N/A

Approved by Assistant Director (Finance and Estates)

Date: 1st November 2018

Full Equality Impact Assessment

For a policy, project, service or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		Introduction of Retrospective permissions Charge – 1 year pilot			
Lead Assessor	Karen Long			Assessment team	Elizabeth Ddamulira
Start date	31 Dec 18	End date	04 Jan 2019		
When will the EqIA be reviewed?	4 Jan 2019				

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Who may be affected by it?	Residents who carry out property alteration before applying for permission.
What are the key aims of it?	<p>We reviewed retrospective permissions requested over the last three years and found that this number has increased and this has impacted on current resources.</p> <p>It is proposed that we introduce a charge to all residents that carry out property alteration without permission first, which is a breach of the Tenancy terms and conditions.</p> <p>The proposed charge will vary between £100-£500 depending on the extent of the alterations carried out and whether the alterations meet the required regulations and standards.</p> <p>To encourage tenants to request permission before any alterations are made to the property so that we can offer an expert opinion on whether they are viable or compromise the integrity of the building.</p> <p>To generate income to cover the cost of processing and administrative cost incurred by Council.</p>

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities	This also aligns to the Council's aim to be financially sufficient and recover costs of services where possible.	Encourage good relations	

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	There has not been any direct public consultation with regard to this particular decision; however, it was taken as a proposal to Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) on 25 th October 2018 and it was supported. HMAB includes resident members. It will also be included as part of the consultation on the revised tenancy agreement in January/early February 2019. It is understood that residents will not welcome the proposed and this is to be expected.
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In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?	<p>The proposed charges will apply to all equality groups of Council tenants, although we will be looking at the concessions policy to ensure that this does not impact negatively on vulnerable and low income households as soon as is practicably possible.</p> <p>There are currently no proposals to consider any other exemptions.</p> <p>It is difficult to estimate who could be potentially impacted by this charge. We therefore intend to take all possibilities into consideration when assessing the equality impacts of this charge. We will review the pilot after 6 months to assess the impact and see if it has adversely affected particular equality group(s).</p> <p>We can utilise information primarily from our demographic profile to ensure that any service users that are vulnerable or on low incomes are not adversely impacted by this pilot.</p>
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Evidence and impact assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

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Age					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	<p>The introduction of a charge will be equally applicable to all users and no potential impact has been identified specific to this equality group.</p> <p>In addition, the proposal does not exclude an individual or group with a protected characteristic from contacting/speaking/emailing/writing with officers regarding their issue.</p>
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Disability e.g. physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	The introduction of a charge will be equally applicable to all users and no potential impact has been

					<p>identified specific to this equality group.</p> <p>In addition, the proposal does not exclude an individual or group with a protected characteristic from contacting/speaking/emailing/writing with officers regarding their issue.</p> <p>For those tenants who need adaptations they would apply via Stevenage Borough Council as an OT assessment would need to be carried out before any works are completed. The works are paid from the aids and adaptation budget.</p>
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Gender reassignment N/A					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	<p>The introduction of a charge will be equally applicable to all users and no potential impact has been identified specific to this equality group.</p> <p>In addition, the proposal does not</p>

					exclude an individual or group with a protected characteristic from contacting/speaking/emailing/writing with officers regarding their issue.
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Marriage or civil partnership N/A					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	<p>The introduction of a charge will be equally applicable to all users and no potential impact has been identified specific to this equality group.</p> <p>In addition, the proposal does not exclude an individual or group with a protected characteristic from contacting/speaking/emailing/writing with officers regarding their issue.</p>
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Pregnancy & maternity – N/A					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	<p>The introduction of a charge will be equally applicable to all users and no potential impact has been identified specific to this equality group.</p> <p>In addition, the proposal does not exclude an individual or group with a protected characteristic from contacting/speaking/emailing/writing with officers regarding their issue.</p>
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Race – N/A					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	<p>The introduction of a charge will be equally applicable to all users and no potential impact has been identified specific to this equality group.</p> <p>In addition, the proposal does not exclude an individual or group with a protected characteristic from</p>

					contacting/speaking/emailing/writing with officers regarding their issue.
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Religion or belief – N/A					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	<p>The introduction of a charge will be equally applicable to all users and no potential impact has been identified specific to this equality group.</p> <p>In addition, the proposal does not exclude an individual or group with a protected characteristic from contacting/speaking/emailing/writing with officers regarding their issue.</p>
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Sex – N/A

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	<p>The introduction of a charge will be equally applicable to all users and no potential impact has been identified specific to this equality group.</p> <p>In addition, the proposal does not exclude an individual or group with a protected characteristic from contacting/speaking/emailing/writing with officers regarding their issue.</p>
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

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Sexual orientation – N/A
e.g. straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual

Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	<p>The introduction of a charge will be equally applicable to all users and no potential impact has been identified specific to this equality group.</p> <p>In addition, the proposal does not exclude an individual or group with a protected characteristic from contacting/speaking/emailing/writing</p>
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					with officers regarding their issue.
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

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Socio-economic² e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	<p>The introduction of a charge will be equally applicable to all users.</p> <p>In addition, the proposal does not exclude an individual or group with a protected characteristic from contacting/speaking/emailing/writing with officers regarding their issue.</p> <p>However, tenants on lower incomes may find it more difficult to make the payment. Arrangements could be made to negotiate payment plans on a case by case basis according to circumstances through the concessions policy.</p>

²Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Other – N/A			
please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts			
Positive impact	Negative impact	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
Future Review and Monitoring			

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What are the findings of any consultation with:

Staff?	None	Residents?	
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?			

Overall conclusion & future activity

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	Consideration will be made in line with the concession policy. Following the 6 month review outcome consider the annual review of the charge.
	2b. Continue as planned	Sustainable service provision is reliant upon us being able to collect income where it is possible to do so.
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Publicise the introduction of the charges as widely as possible in February 2019 before implementation in April 2019.	This will help communication and understanding of this charge. It will also encourage proactive permission requests coming through.	Elizabeth Ddamulira	28 Feb 19	
Provide adequate training and support for Customer Service Centres (CSC) and Housing & Investment Team	This will help communication and understanding of this charge.	Elizabeth Ddamulira	28 Feb 19	
Ensure that staff identify low income and vulnerable residents and follow the concessions policy	This will address some of the social economic challenges faced by residents.	Elizabeth Ddamulira	Ongoing	
To consult on the new terms	This will help communication	Keith Wilson	Mid Feb	

and conditions of the tenancy agreement which includes recharges of retrospective permissions	and understanding of this charge. It will also encourage proactive permission requests coming through.		19	
Review after 6 months to assess the impact and see if it has adversely affected particular equality group(s)	To ensure that a particular equality group(s) are not adversely impacting on.	Elizabeth Ddamulira	Oct 19	
Review to be undertaken as part of annual fees and charges setting mechanism as normal	This is to ensure that charges are value for money and transparent.	Elizabeth Ddamulira	July 19	

Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Jaine Cresser, Assistant Director (Housing and Investment)

Date:

Please send this EqIA to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk

Brief Equality Impact Assessment For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

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What is being assessed?	Proposal to apply a £40 per wheelie bin and £6 per recycling box for replacement waste containers.	What are the key aims of it?	The council is proposing a charging policy for waste containers provide as replacements for those lost or damaged by residents. A charge of £40 for a replacement wheelie bin and £6 for a replacement box is proposed.		
Who may be affected by it?	All low rise households within Stevenage.		The council spent £80,000 on replacement containers in 2017/18.		
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	A full EqIA will be carried out as part of the second phase of the Business Unit Review of Stevenage Direct Services. This will inform the operating model and ensure services understand who the council's customers are and their current and future needs.		This proposal along with a pilot to implement a more cost effective solution for recycling boxes aims to reduce expenditure on replacement containers. The council will provide a replacement container free of charge where damage or loss is caused by the collection resource. A concession will be applied for those who receive income derived benefits.		
Form completed by:	Lloyd Walker	Start date	31/10/18	End date	01/11/18
		Review date	01/11/2020		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Replacement waste container data and benchmarking data for container charges applied by other local authorities.	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	None
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	n/a	Race	n/a
Disability	n/a	Religion or belief	n/a
Gender reassignment	n/a	Sex	n/a
Marriage or civil partnership	n/a	Sexual orientation	n/a
Pregnancy & maternity	n/a	Socio-economic ³	<p>Negative impact: Replacement container charges may discourage residents to participate with refuse and recycling services if they are charged for a replacement container.</p> <p>The council will seek to apply a concessionary rate for those receiving income derived benefit. Replacement containers will be provided free of charge where irreparable damage or loss of a container is the fault of the council.</p>
Other	n/a		

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	No	Promote equal opportunities	No	Encourage good relations	No

³Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
Review of charge application post application	Lloyd Walker	Review alongside corporate fees and charges setting process.	February 2020

Approved by Assistant Director (Stevenage Direct Services)

Date: 2nd November 2018

Full Equality Impact Assessment

For a policy, project, service or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		HRA Rent and Service Charge (HRA) and Support Charge (SC18)			
Lead Assessor	Karen Long			Assessment team	Kelly Potts Elizabeth Ddamulira Ann Tomlin
Start date	1 Dec 18	End date	31/12/18		
When will the EqIA be reviewed?	4 Jan 2019				

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Who may be affected by it?	<p>SC18: Residents living in independent living/flexicare housing that are in receipt of housing benefit, fairer charging, universal credit (UC) or 2003 protected (i.e. those in the service prior to the government supporting people grant funding starting in 2003). As at 1 January 2019 this affects 604 people. The remaining residents in independent living/flexicare already pay the full charge.</p> <p>HRA: All tenants paying rent and all tenants and leaseholders paying service charges</p>
What are the key aims of it?	<p>SC18: To contribute to the recovery of costs for providing the support/emergency response service to people living in independent living/flexicare schemes that historically have not had to pay anything towards the cost as we received housing related support funding from Hertfordshire County (HCC). The support/alarm service is not eligible for housing benefit, but in order to be able to continue this service to residents we needed to introduce the initial weekly contribution of £2.00 in 2018/19 and propose to increase this to £4.00 in 2019/20. The total cost of the support/alarm service will be £18.30 per week so Stevenage Borough Council will still be subsidising the £14.30 per week. This option has the support of the housing portfolio holder.</p> <p>HRA: To reduce social rents by 1% until 2020/21 (for the properties as described in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016) To increase the rents for all excluded properties by CPI + 1% To set the rent for all new homes or where adaptations or extensions have resulted in the property being increased in size (for example, and additional bedroom), in accordance with the formula rent as detailed in the rent and service charge policy.</p>

	<p>Subject to the Welfare reform and Work Act 2016, the rent payable by new tenants of existing social rent housing will be charged at the higher of the formula rent (i.e. the 'social rent rate'), or the actual rent (i.e. the 'assumed rent rate'), with the appropriate rent reductions applied.</p> <p>To charge actual costs for service charges.</p>
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What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	SC18: This will remove discrimination against other residents that pay the full cost for not being in receipt of housing benefit or fairer charging.	Promote equal opportunities	SC18 & HRA: This also aligns to the Council's aim to be financially sufficient and recover costs of services where possible.	Encourage good relations	

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What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data of those on full/partial housing, fairer charging, universal credit or those that are protected due to supporting people implementation in 2003. • Age profile of independent/flexicare housing tenants • Northgate - Rent account information • Welfare reform and work Act (http://services.parliament.uk/Acts/2015-16/welfarereformandwork/documents.html) • Rents for social housing from 2020-21 - GOV.UK • http://www.parliament.uk/documents/impact-assessments/IA15-006F.pdf • Rent and service charge policy agreed by Exec 19 January 2016. • Rent and service charge increase/decrease for all properties (see chart below) • Rent, service charge and support charge increase/decrease per property in independent/flexicare living schemes (see tables below)
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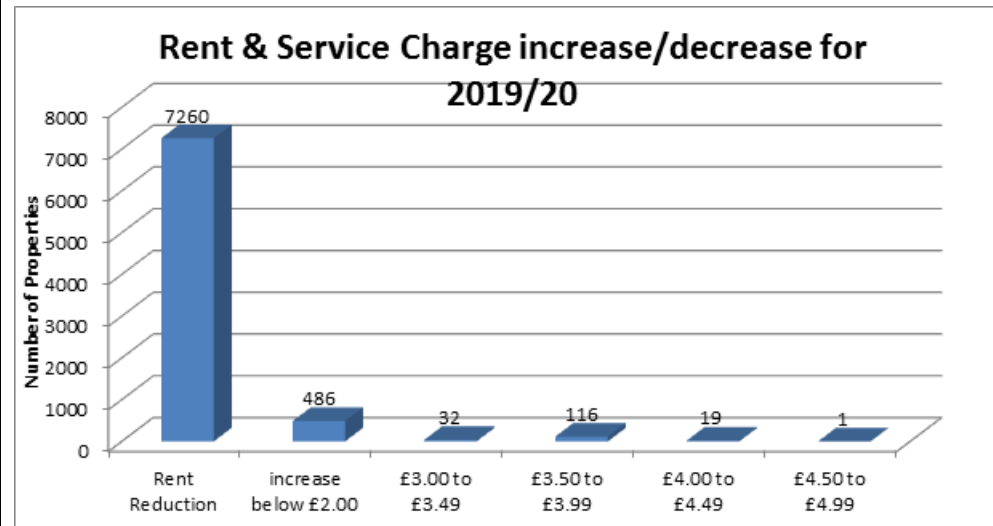
Independent/Flexicare living schemes – combined rent, service charge & support charge:

Actual 2019/20 Increases	
Total Change Year on Year Groupings Table A (Including £2 Support Charge Increase)	
Row Labels – weekly amount	Count of Property Ref
£2.00 to £2.49	79
£2.50 to £2.99	127
£3.00 to £3.49	9
increase below £2.00	
£2.00	542
Over £5.50	51
Rent Reduction	37
Grand Total	845

If CPI +1% had been applied this year (see table below)

Total Change Year on Year Groupings Table A (if CPI +1% had been applicable)	
Row Labels	Count of Property Ref
£2.00 to £2.49	5
£2.50 to £2.99	196
£3.00 to £3.49	293
£3.50 to £3.99	124
£4.00 to £4.49	125
£4.50 to £4.99	7
Rent Reduction	2
increase below £2.00	35
Over £5.50	51
£5.00 to £5.50	7
Grand Total	845

All Properties (rent and service charge only):



In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?

SC18: 542 properties in independent living/flexicare will have an increase of less than £2 per week (this includes rent, service charges and support charge) However, it should be noted that those residents who are on full Housing Benefit, will still have to pay the additional £2 per week support charge because their Housing Benefit will be adjusted to reflect any rent/service charge reduction.

51 properties are due an increase of over £5.50 per week – this is due to their block charges increasing from last year. 42 of those properties are in receipt of full housing benefit or partial housing benefit which will be adjusted to take account of some of this increase.

HRA: 7260 properties will have an overall decrease in rent and service charges. 654 tenants will get a rent and service charge increase (including 87 LSSOs) of which 74% is below £2 per week.

The requirement to decrease rents by 1% for 4 years, including next year, required the HRA business plan to be reviewed which resulted in reprioritising services delivered and investment in the housing stock.

	<p>The 1% per annum decrease from 2016/17 to 2019/20 has led to a £12 million shortfall in the original Business plan (Nov 14) in the first 4 years, escalating to £225 Million over the 30 year plan.</p> <p>Those who receive services for which there is a service charge payable may have an increase on their weekly charge. This relates to those that live in flats predominantly. We recognise that this may cause financial difficulty and we will provide assistance and support to help those who may have difficulty in making these payments.</p> <p>It is unknown how many tenants are likely to migrate to UC in 2019/20 in line with the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. Migration is phased until the scheduled completion date of March 2023.</p>
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Evidence and impact assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Age	
Negative impact	
<p>SC18: The residents that are charged a support charge are predominantly older and disabled people as this accommodation is for people over 55 years old or for people with a disability.</p> <p>Conversely however, the costs are currently subsidised by the wider tenant population, who have a younger age profile and do not benefit from the service.</p>	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this	Age profile of independent/flexicare housing residents

assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Disability e.g. physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness				
Unequal impact				
SC18: The residents that are charged a support charge are predominantly older and disabled people as this accommodation is for people over 55 years old or for people with a disability.				
Page 80	Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Northgate report on disability profile for independent/flexicare residents and also whole population living in SBC properties.		
	What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Northgate data on tenants relating to tenants with disability was collected a number of years ago and is not up to date. This information was also disclosed at the tenant's discretion so some tenants may not have provided it. We have introduced a support services module on Northgate where we are able to collate more data on disability and this will inform future EQIAs.

Gender reassignment N/A			
Positive impact		Negative impact	Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this			

assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Marriage or civil partnership N/A			
Positive impact		Negative impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

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Pregnancy & maternity – N/A			
Positive impact		Negative impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Race – N/A			
Positive impact		Negative impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are		What do you still need	

there to promote equality and inclusion?		to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
--	--	---	--

Religion or belief – N/A			
Positive impact		Negative impact	Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

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Sex – N/A			
Positive impact		Negative impact	Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Sexual orientation – N/A e.g. straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual			
Positive impact		Negative impact	Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment			
What opportunities are there to promote		What do you still need to find out? Include in	

Socio-economic⁴

e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement

Positive Impact:

SC18:

Results from the STAR survey in 2018 have shown that residents identified that the emergency alarm service and the supported housing officer as the 2nd and 3rd most important priority in living in their property. The application of the support charge will help to ensure that the council can continue to deliver this service.

In January 2018 we held drop in sessions at each scheme for residents to come and discuss the charge and for us to explain what it is for. We had a lot of positive comments with the majority understanding the need to pay towards the service. Some residents recognised that housing associations had withdrawn the emergency service and scheme manager and didn't want it to happen to them. One person wanted to pay more.

HRA:

The rent decrease will be applied across all tenancies prescribed by the Welfare and Work Act 2016 regardless of circumstances. Those in receipt of Housing Benefit will have their award recalculated.

Those who receive services for which a service charge is made will be charged the actual cost of these services. Some of these service charges will be eligible for UC Housing Cost element and HB.

Negative Impact:

SC18:

The support charge is not eligible for housing benefit and could have a negative impact for those on lower incomes in terms of affordability. However, of 103 residents where we had to chase payment following last year's introduction of the £2 weekly

⁴Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

contribution only one resident said they couldn't afford it and was referred to the debt and advice support worker.

This group of residents may also be affected by increases in Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) affecting the overall amount that older and disabled people can afford to pay:

- HCC now charge for some of their community based adult social care services that they used to provide for free. This has impacted on many people over 60 in the independent living/flexicare schemes as they are in receipt of some care due to their age/medical conditions. The low care band in flexicare doubled and this has had an impact on residents being able to afford care and HCC have received a number of complaints.
- HCC funding for Flexicare housing related is due to end on 31st March 2019 which would mean more cost to Stevenage Borough Council which we may need to pass on to residents.

However, the introduction of the charge is considered to be fairer than under current arrangements, whereby support charge costs are subsidised by the wider tenant population who do not benefit from the service.

Furthermore, the charge has been introduced on an incremental basis, to mitigate the impact, rather than applying the full amount of £18.30 per week in one 'hit'.

For those tenants who are not eligible for Housing Benefit (HB) or who are on partial HB, the rent reduction will to some extent offset the impact of the charge.

During 2019/20, officers will also review whether any elements of the independent living service should in fact be eligible for housing benefit.

Unequal Impact:

HRA:

The rent reduction applies to all tenants subject to Clause 21 of the Welfare reform and work act 2016.

Properties exempt from this clause will have the rent increased by CPI + 1%.

(Currently this is circa 87 LSSO properties and one shared ownership property – it may also include emergency and temporary accommodation).

52% (as at the end of 2017/18) of tenants are reliant on HB to cover the rent and HB eligible service charges..

Service charges will be recovered in full and only some service charges are eligible for Universal Credit (UC) Housing Cost element and HB. For example heating charges are exempt and tenants and leaseholders are expected to pay this.

Water charges are also exempt from the decrease and UC Housing Cost element and HB. The rate is set by the Water Authority. SBC collects the water charges on behalf of the Water Authority.

Communication

The rent notification letter (which is a statutory requirement) sent out at the end of February will offer an explanation of why the rent has decreased and also explain that in most instances there has been an increase in service charges. This notification will also give the opportunity for residents to end their tenancy if they feel they no longer want to pay the charges.

To ensure this is clear, those properties where there is only rent and water charges to pay, may overall see a slight decrease in the weekly amount due i.e. the decrease in the rent element will offset the increase of the water charge.

Where a property has a number of service charges the service charges will be explained, with an overall summary of how the weekly charge has increased overall.

Where support charges are also included (mainly but not exclusively for independent and flexi care schemes) separate notifications will be sent out to these residents to ensure there is clarity of how each element of the weekly charge is made up.

To ensure that this is explained as clearly as possible there will be a FAQ sheet and details on the website.

HMAB will agree and /or make recommendations for the content of the letters on the 17 January 2019, with the portfolio holder signing off the final letters.

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Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment

- Comments from drop in sessions held in January 2018.
- A copy of charges for community based care from HCC
- Spreadsheet detailing those who hadn't paid £2 weekly contribution and their comments.
- Rent and service charge tables
- HB figures: 394 of the 604 affected (as at 1 January 2019) are in receipt of full HB,

		203 on partial HB and 1 on universal credit. Of the 51 where their rent, service charge and support charge increases to over £5.50 per week, 42 are either on full or partial HB and their benefits will be adjusted for the new rent and service charges.	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	<p>SC18: We have clearly explained what the support charge covers and the reasons for charging. A notification letter will be sent in January 2019 to explain the increase to contribution of £4 per week.</p> <p>HRA: The rent notification letters will offer customers the opportunity to discuss their concerns with staff and get support in applying for any relevant benefits.</p>	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

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Other – N/A					
please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact	Negative impact		Unequal impact	Yes	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>HRA: Those in properties exempt from the 1% decrease will have their rent increased by CPI +1%. Service charges will also reflect actual charges and the overall impact will be an increase in rent and service charges. Where these tenants are in receipt of UC Housing Cost element and HB, the award will be recalculated and the correct amount of benefit awarded.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Rent notification letters, FAQ's and the website	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

What are the findings of any consultation with:

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Staff?	None	Residents?	<p>SC18: Results from the STAR survey in 2018 have shown that residents identified that the emergency alarm service and the support housing officer as the 2nd and 3rd most important priority living in their property.</p> <p>In January 2018 we held drop in sessions at each scheme for residents to come and discuss the charge and for us to explain what it is for. We had a lot of positive comments with the majority understanding the need to pay towards the service. Some residents recognised that housing associations had withdrawn the emergency service and scheme manager and didn't want it to happen to them. One person wanted to pay more.</p> <p>HRA: Letters and FAQ due for HMAB consultation 17 Jan 2019.</p>
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?			

Overall conclusion & future activity

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	<p>SC18: The future viability of the support and alarm service in independent/flexicare living is reliant upon us being able to recover the cost of service provision where it is possible to do so. Results from the STAR survey support the value of the service from residents by them rating the emergency alarm and supported housing officer as their 2nd and 3rd priority (behind the repairs to their property).</p> <p>HRA: The HRA business plan relies on an income to be viable.</p>
	2c. Stop and remove	

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Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
Review whether any elements of the independent living service should be eligible for housing benefit	This is to ensure fair charging of service.	Karen Long	Jan 2020	

Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director: Jaine Cresser Assistant Director (Housing and Investment)
Date:

Please send this EqIA to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk

Brief Equality Impact Assessment

For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

Page 89

What is being assessed?	Proposal to apply a £2 per week charge for the administration of supplying a garage 'rent free' to Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations.	What are the key aims of it?	The council has reviewed its policy regarding the provision of non-charged garages to Voluntary & Community Sector Organisations (VCOs) as part of the annual fees and charges setting process.		
Who may be affected by it?	72 Voluntary and Community Sector Groups and Organisations that currently benefit from a 'rent free' garage(s). A total of 87 garages are provided under this arrangement.		The council recognises that the current economic climate presents challenges for the operational viability of VCOs. However, the management and administration of providing non-charged garages to VCOs accounts for a significant amount of time, liaising with the organisations to get up to date details, organising repairs and undertaking inspections, which has a cost to the service.		
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	A full EqIA was carried out in the following report on the 10/07/12: New Arrangements for Letting Garages to Voluntary and Community Sector Groups and Organisations		This approach is broadly in line with the principles detailed in the "New Arrangements for letting garages to Voluntary and Community Sector Groups and Organisations" report approved by Executive on the 10 July 2012, but proposes that an administration charge is applied as opposed to charging a subsidised rent		
Form completed by:	Carlo Perricone	Start date	26/10/18	End date	31/10/18
		Review date	01/11/2019		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	There are 87 Voluntary and Community Sector Groups and Organisations information held on a spreadsheet and we are using this information to carry out the Brief EqIA.	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	None
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	<p>37 VCO garages are provided to organisations that work with younger persons.</p> <p>Possible negative impact – Financial implication associated with £104 annual charge per garage. Cost is considered to be proportionate and reasonable within the context of overall operating costs of VCO's.</p> <p>Possible positive impact – Will stimulate review of the organisations actual need for a garage and may provide an opportunity to rationalise liabilities associated with use of a third party resource/asset.</p>	Race	<p>One VCO garage is provided to an organisation whose work involves race related matters.</p> <p>Possible negative impact – Financial implication associated with £104 annual charge per garage. Cost is considered to be proportionate and reasonable within the context of overall operating costs of VCO's.</p> <p>Possible positive impact – Will stimulate review of the organisations actual need for a garage and may provide an opportunity to rationalise liabilities associated with use of a third party resource/asset.</p>
Disability	Four VCO garages are provided to organisations	Religion or belief	Eight VCO garages are provided to organisations

	whose work involves or supports persons with disability. Potential impacts as for “Race” cell above.		whose work involves or supports religious or belief matters. Potential impacts as for “Race” cell above.
Gender reassignment	No VCO garages are provided in this category.	Sex	No VCO garages are provided in this category.
Marriage or civil partnership	No VCO garages are provided in this category.	Sexual orientation	No VCO garages are provided in this category.
Pregnancy & maternity	No VCO garages are provided in this category.	Socio-economic ⁵	Seven VCO garages are provided to organisations whose work involve or supports socio-economic matters. Potential impacts as for “Race” cell above.
Other	30 VCO garages are provided to organisations that provide services to all. Potential impacts as for “Race” cell above.		

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	No	Promote equal opportunities	No	Encourage good relations	No

What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
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⁵Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.



Review of charge application and EQIA to ensure continued applicability.	Carlo Perricone	Review alongside corporate fees and charges setting process.	February 2019
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Approved by Assistant Director (Stevenage Direct Services)

Date: 2nd November 2018

Brief Equality Impact Assessment

For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

Page 93

What is being assessed?	Proposal to broker the council's commercial skip business through a third party provider.	What are the key aims of it?	To ensure that the council's skip business is financially viable and provides a sustainable income into the future.		
Who may be affected by it?	Residents & Commercial Customers		The skip provision industry is hugely competitive and the council has seen demand reduce over a number of years and profitability reduce. The service is currently projecting a loss due to reduced demand and overhead costs.		
Date of full EqlA on service area (planned or completed)	A full EqlA will be carried out as part of the second phase of the Business Unit Review of Stevenage Direct Services that considers the council's commercial offering.		This proposal seeks to facilitate continued service provision under the Stevenage Borough Council brand. The operational element of the service will however be delivered on the council's behalf by a third party under a brokering arrangement. Skip charges will be offered at competitive market rates.		
Form completed by:	Lloyd Walker	Start date	31/10/18	End date	01/11/18
		Review date	01/11/2020		

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	SBC skip accounts and business profiles.	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	None
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	n/a	Race	n/a
Disability	n/a	Religion or belief	n/a
Gender reassignment	n/a	Sex	n/a
Marriage or civil partnership	n/a	Sexual orientation	n/a
Pregnancy & maternity	n/a	Socio-economic ⁶	<p>The council will continue to ensure that the charges applied for the provision of skips remain proportionate and are reasonable in terms of market conditions at the time of being set.</p> <p>Charges will be reviewed as part of the annual fees and charges setting mechanism as normal.</p>
Other	n/a		

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	No	Promote equal opportunities	No	Encourage good relations	No

What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
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⁶Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

Brief Equality Impact Assessment For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

Page 95

What is being assessed?	Proposal to provide Sanctum vaults for ashes interments at the Almonds Lane & Weston Road Cemeteries.	What are the key aims of it?	The council is seeking to enhance services offered for ashes interment burial at Almonds Lane & Weston Road Cemeteries.			
Who may be affected by it?	All residents, but may provide a more affordable burial solution for low income households.		Sanctums can provide a more affordable and accessible memorial solution for our residents and customers.			
Date of full EqIA on service area (planned or completed)	A full EqIA will be carried out for the Cemetery Service as part of the 2019/20 fees and charges setting process.		Sanctum vaults could be located along pathways at the cemetery site offering capacity that could help provide for future burial demands as the population of the town increases.			
Form completed by:	Claire Skeels	Start date	31/10/18	End date	01/11/19	
		Review date	01/11/2019			

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	Existing fees and charges for Cemetery services and benchmarking of other Local Authorities offering Sanctums as a burial option.	Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	None
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Explain the potential positive, negative or unequal impact on the following characteristics and how likely this is:			
Age	n/a	Race	n/a
Disability	Positive Impact Sanctums can be located along path edges and access routes within Cemeteries. These memorial types can as a result be a more accessible memorial solution for mourners who are less mobile	Religion or belief	Sanctums would not be a viable option for faith denominations that only utilise grave burials for their deceased.
Gender reassignment	n/a	Sex	n/a
Marriage or civil partnership	n/a	Sexual orientation	n/a
Pregnancy & maternity	n/a	Socio-economic ⁷	Positive Impact Sanctums may provide a more affordable burial option for low income households when compared to costs associated with standard grave burials.
Other	n/a		

Where there is a likely positive impact , please explain how it will help to fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	No	Promote equal opportunities	No	Encourage good relations	Yes – enhances service offer and potentially accessibility to services for those in low access households and those with disabilities or mobility issues.

⁷Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
n/a			

Approved by Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services

Date: 2nd November 2018

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Explanation of rent and service charges from 01 April 2019 for flats

Changes to your rent charges from 01 April 2019

This year, your basic rent will be reduced by 1% and will be lower than last year. This reduction will not apply to any service charges, heating and water charges. The council calculates service charges on the actual costs of providing and delivering essential and obligatory services in flat blocks. The water charge increase is calculated by the water company and sent to us each year in February.

Despite the basic rent being decreased by 1%, some tenants will find their weekly charges have increased, because their service charges have increased. Each year the council sends you a letter about planned changes to your rent, service charges and fees for the coming year. This year the letter notifies you of the changes to your rent amount, giving a detailed breakdown of any service or water charges and shows you the total amount due for your home.

Your total rent payments

The total amount you are required to pay each week is calculated by adding together the basic rent charge, any service and/or water charges and fee (where applicable) for the whole year. The total is then divided into 50 equal payments. This amount is the weekly rent we charge you to live in your home. Your rent is payable weekly in advance, each Monday.

There are two rent-catch-up weeks each year. If you are behind and owe rent, these rent free weeks give you the opportunity to catch-up with your payments. The rent-catch-up weeks are the last week in December 2019 (week beginning the 23 December 2018) and the last week in March 2018 (week beginning the 23 March 2019). If you do not have rent arrears, you do not need to pay rent on either of these weeks.

If you pay your rent by direct debit, your payments are calculated on a monthly basis; therefore we will collect the monthly payment as usual in December 2019 and March 2020. You do not need to do anything.

Basic rent

This is the weekly amount you pay for landlord services, including basic repairs and improvements to your home. This varies from property to property and the set weekly amount is in your Formal Notice of Rent Changes letter..

Management fees

A few of our properties are charged a management fee. The management fee (where applicable) is calculated using the actual costs of providing and delivering essential and obligatory services in flat blocks by an appointed management agent.

Changes to service and other charges from 01 April 2019

If you live in a flat block, or your home is attached to a sheltered or supported housing scheme, your charges include a contribution towards the upkeep of the communal areas of that building. These charges apply whether you use the communal areas or not.

These charges will be shown separately on the rent notice. The charges will reflect the actual cost of providing the service.

The charge	What it covers
Caretaking & cleaning service charge	Cleaning of communal areas, removal of fly tipping, etc.
Communal block repairs	This charge covers repairs to communal areas in flat blocks. This includes items such as communal glazing or repairs to handrails.
Communal block electrics	The cost of the electrical supply for communal lighting.
Water charges	Included in your rent notification letter.
Grounds maintenance	Grass cutting, weeding shrub beds and clearing litter in landscaped and communal areas around blocks of flats and sheltered/supported housing schemes.
Window cleaning service charge	Covers the cost of providing communal window cleaning.
Estate Service Charge	This charge covers the costs of repairs, estate lighting ground maintenance and cleansing of the areas and roads around your flat block.
Heating charge	Communal heating fuel supply costs (often in sheltered schemes/tower blocks).
Support charge (optional)	To provide a Supported Housing Officer to offer help, support and advice alongside emergency assistance as and when required.
Careline charge (optional)	Contributes towards the cost of the Careline alarm service.
Community Support Charge (optional)	Covers the cost of the visiting and support service provided by supported housing officers
Pest control	Covers the costs of dealing with pest infestation in communal areas
Management fee	Covers the inclusive costs of providing and delivering essential and obligatory services in flat blocks by an appointed management agent.

How do these changes affect my housing benefit claim?

If you claim benefit claim, the heating charge and water charge are not covered by housing benefit. You are required to make these payments yourself.

Garage rents

If you rent a garage, you will be notified separately about any change in the standard garage rent charge. For more information about garages please visit www.stevenage.gov.uk/garages

Council Tax

Your council tax is paid separately to your rent. Any changes to your council tax will be sent to you separately. You will receive this during March 2019. If you are in receipt of UC Housing costs and housing benefit, you may be illegible Council Tax support contact the Benefit services on 01438 242440

Paying your rent

You will need your nine-digit reference number to make a rent payment.

If you do not have a rent account card with your reference number on it you can apply for a new one at www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay or contact us on 01438 242666.

Method	How to Pay
Online account	Simply log on to: www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay and follow the prompts.
Direct Debit	Set this up on the councils website at www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay or contact the customer service centre for further information
Online on the Council's website	www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay . Debit or credit card (we do not accept American Express or Diners club).
Customer Service Centre – Payment Kiosk	Cash, cheque or debit card payments can be made at the payment machine in our Customer Service Centre
By telephone Automated Number	If you have a debit or credit card you can pay using our automated payments system on 01438 242345.
At the Post Office	Payment can be made at any Post Office using your account card.

Useful contact details

	Email address/Website	Teleph one	Opening Hours	Address
Customer Service	csc@stevenage.gov.uk www.stevenage.gov.uk	01438 242666 Monday – Friday 8am to 6pm	Centre is open Monday-Friday 08.30am to 5:30pm	Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage, SG1 1HN
Benefit Service	www.stevenage.gov.uk/benefits benefits@hertspartnership-ala.gov.uk	01438 242440	Monday – Friday 9am to 5pm	The Benefits Service, East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council, Wallfields, Hertford, SG13 8EQ
Council Tax Support	Same as above	01438 242440	Monday – Friday 9am to 5pm	
Department of Works Pensions – Job Centre Plus	www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit	0800 169019 0 0800 169031 0 (Steven age branch)	Stevenage Job Centre Plus: Monday and Tuesday 9am to 5pm Wednesday 10am to 5pm Thursday and Friday 9am to 5pm	38 – 44 The Forum, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 1EZ
Citizens Advice Bureau	www.stevenagecab.org	0344 411 1444	Drop-in-session: Monday and Tuesday 10am to 3.30pm Wednesday (appointment only) Thursday 10am to 3.30pm Friday 10am to 12.30pm Telephone/Email: Monday – Friday	Swingate House, Danestrete, Stevenage, SG1 1AF

			10am to 4pm	
National Debt Helpline	www.nationaldebtline.org	0808 808 4000	Monday – Friday 9am to 8pm Saturday 9.30am to 1pm	
Housing Options	housing.options@stevenage.gov.uk	01438 242242	Monday – Friday 9am to 5pm	Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage, SG1 1HN
StepChange Debt Advice	www.stepchange.org	0800 138111 1	Monday - Friday 8am to 8pm Saturday 8am to 4pm	StepChange Debt Charity Wade House Merrion Centre Leeds LS2 8NG
Tenancy Support Service (SBC)	tenancysupport@stevenage.gov.uk	01438 242242	Monday – Friday 9am to 5pm	Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage, SG1 1HN

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Explanation of rent and water charges from 01 April 2019 for houses

Changes to your rent charges from 01 April 2019

This year, your basic rent will be reduced by 1% and will be lower than last year. This reduction will not apply to service charges and water charges you pay unless you have a water meter. The water charge increase is calculated by the water company and sent to us each year in February.

The council letter notifying you of the changes to your rent amount including water charges will show you the total amount due for your household.

Your total rent payments

The total amount you are required to pay each week is calculated by adding together the basic rent charge and water charges for the whole year. The total is then divided into 50 equal payments. This amount is the weekly rent we charge you to live in your home. Your rent is payable weekly in advance, each Monday.

There are two rent-catch-up weeks each year. If you are behind and owe rent, these rent catch-up weeks give you the opportunity to catch-up with your payments. The rent catch-up weeks are the last week in December 2019 (week beginning the 23 December 2019) and the last week in March 2020 (week beginning the 23 March 2020). If you do not owe rent, you do not need to pay rent on either of these weeks.

If you pay your rent by direct debit, your payments are calculated on a monthly basis; therefore we will collect the monthly payment as usual in December 2019 and March 2020. You do not need to do anything.

Basic rent

This is the weekly amount you pay for landlord services, including basic repairs and improvements to your home. This varies from property to property and the set weekly amount is in your Formal Notice of Rent Changes letter.

Estate Service Charge

This charge applies to properties in some of our recent developments and covers the costs of repairs electricity, ground maintenance and cleansing of the areas and roads around your home.

How do these changes affect my Universal credit (UC) housing costs and housing benefit claim?

If you claim UC Housing costs and housing benefit, the water charge will not be covered by housing benefit. You are required to make these payments yourself.

Garage rents

If you rent a garage, you will be notified separately about any change in the standard garage rent charge. For more information about garages please visit www.stevenage.gov.uk/garages

Council Tax

Your council tax is paid separately to your rent. Any changes to your council tax will be sent to you separately and you will receive this during March 2019. If you are in receipt of UC Housing costs and housing benefit, you may be illegible Council Tax support contact the Benefit services on 01438 242440

Paying your rent

You will need your nine-digit reference number to make a rent payment.

If you do not have a rent account card with your reference number on it you can apply for a new one at www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay or contact us on 01438 242666.

Method	How to Pay
Online account	Simply log on to: www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay and follow the prompts.
Direct Debit	Set this up on the councils website at www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay or contact the customer service centre for further information
Online on the Council's website	www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay . Debit or credit card (we do not accept American Express or Diners club).
Customer Service Centre – Payment Kiosk	Cash, cheque or debit card payments can be made at the payment machine in our Customer Service Centre
By telephone Automated Number	If you have a debit or credit card you can pay using our automated payments system on 01438 242345.
At the Post Office	Payment can be made at any Post Office using your account card.

Useful contact details

	Email address/Website	Telephone	Opening Hours	Address
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Strategic Director (Community)

Matthew Partridge

Your Ref:
Phone: 01438 242666
E-mail: csc@stevenage.gov.uk
Date:

Dear (insert tenant/s name/s)

FORMAL NOTICE OF A CHANGE TO YOUR RENT

Below you will find the changes to your rent, effective from **01 April 2019**. We have also included the new water charges, applicable from 01 April 2019 for those who pay their water charges to Stevenage Borough Council. If you are eligible for housing benefit, please note that this is not included in the calculations below.

The council calculates the rent due on your home for the next financial year. We then divide that figure by 51, so you pay rent to us for 51 weeks each year.

Notice of Variation -

Total rent payable each week from 01 April 2019 is £XXX.XX

Below is the breakdown of your rent and service charges payable each week;

Tenancy and Details	Weekly Charge
Address	
Basic rent	
Block caretaking	
Block electrics	
Block repairs	
Estate Charge	
Grounds maintenance charge	
Window cleaning charge	
Water charge	
Pest control	
Management fee	
Administration charge	
Service charge capping	

For further explanation of the rent changes and the above charges, please visit www.stevenage.gov.uk/council-housing where you will find information that explains the charges, what the charges cover and contact details for other organisations that offer advice and support. Hard copies are available on request.

EFFECTIVE DATE

The variation to your rent will become effective from 01 April 2019

Also enclosed with this letter is Leaflet with information on all the other personal charges that may apply to you.

If you

- would like to start paying by Direct Debit which is our preferred method of payment ,please email income@stevenage.gov.uk or call us on 01438 242666.
- have questions relating to your rent change or wish to discuss any aspect of this notice further, please contact the Customer Service Centre at Daneshill House on 01438 242666.
- need to apply for Universal credit (UC) housing costs and housing benefit or notify the Department of Works and Pensions(DWP)/Job Centre plus and Housing benefit services of your rent change, contact them on 01438 242440 or 01438 242707 and Department of Works Pensions - Job Centre Plus on 0845 6043719.
- are having difficulties paying your rent and would like to find smaller accommodation or are considering finding employment and would like assistance with this, please contact us for support as soon as possible by email income@stevenage.gov.uk, via our website www.stevenage.gov.uk or call us on 01438 242666.
- have financial difficulties and are claiming Housing Benefit or housing costs as part of your Universal Credit and you are struggling to pay your rent and/or council tax, you may be eligible for a temporary Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to cover a shortfall in your income. Please email income@stevenage.gov.uk or call us on 01438 242666.

For customers who would like to pay their rent directly to us and check balances at their convenience, we now have the online payment facility which is faster and easier. Simply log on to: www.stevenage.gov.uk/pay and follow the prompts.

You can access your account 24 hours a day; 7 days of the week and check your transaction history by going online to: www.stevenage.gov.uk and clicking onto customer accounts at the top of the page. If you don't have an online account, why not sign up for one now using the above link? You also pay your council tax, garage rent, leasehold charges, business rates (NNDR) and invoices directly through our website.

You are entitled by law to terminate your tenancy; by doing this you would avoid any rent increase. You would need to give written notice to the council one month before the effective date of the rent increase and move out of the property before the increase takes effect. We hope that you do not wish to do this; however, we are required to inform you of your statutory right.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Partridge
Strategic Director (Community)

Councillor Mrs Jeannette Thomas
Executive Councillor (Housing)

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Important information on other charges not related to your property effective as from April 2019.

Support Charges

Following the introduction of the initial weekly contribution of £2.00 in 2018/19, we will be increasing this charge to £4.00 as from 01 April 2019. This charge will contribute to the recovery of costs for providing the support/emergency response service.

This charge will apply to tenants living in independent living/flexi care housing that are in receipt of housing benefit, fairer charging, universal credit (UC) or 2003 protected (i.e. those in the service prior to the government supporting people grant funding starting in 2003).

The support/alarm service charge is not eligible for housing benefit. The total cost of the support/alarm service will be £18.30 per week and Stevenage Borough Council will be subsidising the £14.30 per week.

All other tenants in independent living/flexicare already pay the full charge.

Retrospective permissions

As for 01 April, we will be charging for retrospective permissions. This charge will be between, £100 – £500. The cost will depend on the scale of the work. The charge will apply to all tenants who carry out alterations to homes owned by Stevenage Borough Council without prior permission.

This will cover the costs of administering and processing of retrospective permissions.

This charge will not to tenants who apply in good time in line with the tenancy agreement.

Lock Changes and replacement of lost property keys

This is a reminder to all tenants that you remain responsible for the safekeeping of all keys to your property and for the cost of

changing the locks and replacing any keys that are lost. Your tenancy agreement and repairs handbook also make it clear that if you lose your keys and cannot gain entry to your home, you are responsible for contacting a private locksmith and paying for a gain entry.

To prevent such unwanted costs, you may wish to ensure a spare key is left with a third party, or invest in a key safe.

For more information on other service charges not related to your property, please visit our website:

<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/housing/council-housing>