

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area All
Date 11 March 2020



CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER THREE 2019/20

NON KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To highlight the Council's performance across key priorities and themes for quarter three 2019/20.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the delivery of priorities which form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across the key themes for quarter three 2019/20, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
- 2.2 That the suite of strategies included in the scope of the new Place of Choice programme, as set out in paragraph 3.4, be agreed, and that the progress being made in identifying associated actions to be tracked for 2020/21 be noted.

- 2.3 That actions to commence implementation of the Corporate Landlord Review, and to ensure the prompt certification of health and safety compliance of non-domestic/non-commercial council buildings in accordance with the compliance contract, are noted and endorsed (para 3.124 and 3.125).
- 2.4 That further improvement plans for the Customer Service Centre are noted and endorsed (para 3.119 to 3.123).
- 2.5 That ongoing implementation of improved practices to support sickness absence management is endorsed (para 3.110 to 3.112).
- 2.6 That issues with the delay in inspections to council garages are recognised and plans to improve garages lettings are noted (para 3.93 to 3.95).
- 2.7 That improvement plans for the collection of rent are endorsed (para 3.72 to 3.73).

3 BACKGROUND

Future Town Future Council Programme

- 3.1 Members approved the Cooperative Corporate Plan in December 2016. It reflects the Council's continuing focus on cooperative working and outlines the key outcomes and priorities for the town over the next five years through the Future Town, Future Council (FTFC) Programme as seen in Figure 1.

Future town future council



Figure 1: Future Town, Future Council Programme

- 3.2 The FTFC Programme was reviewed in March 2018 to ensure that it continued to reflect the Council's priorities. As it was apparent that working in partnership is embedded in the culture of the Council and there is a strong framework for future collaboration with other public sector bodies, the Partner of Choice Programme was closed. Development of partnerships continues as part of day-to-day business and any new shared service proposals will be considered and implemented within the Financial Security Programme.

- 3.3 At the Executive meeting on 11th September 2019, Members requested that officers scope the 'Place of Choice' FTFC strand to incorporate the place based strategies that the Council has developed with partners.
- 3.4 It is proposed that the following existing and emerging strategies/plans are included in the scope of the programme, with associated outcomes as summarised below:

Strategy/Plan	Outcome	Lead Assistant Director
Stevenage Re-imagined 2018-22	Making Stevenage a destination creative town	AD Communities & Neighbourhoods
Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2018-22	Working to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of Stevenage residents	AD Communities & Neighbourhoods
Community Safety Strategy 2018-21	Building resilient communities, reducing crime and disorder and helping people to feel safe	AD Communities & Neighbourhoods
Community Wealth Building Strategy (in development)	Unlocking opportunities for the local economy and our residents, ensuring that future regeneration and growth in Stevenage works for everyone	AD Communities & Neighbourhoods
Climate Change Strategy (in development)	Achieving net zero Council emissions by 2030 and leading work to achieve this aim for the town, its businesses and residents	AD Planning & Regulation
Future Town Future Transport Strategy 2019-31	Establishing Stevenage as a leader in sustainable transport, with enhanced connections, healthy travel options, liveable streets and green transport options	AD Planning & Regulation
Biodiversity Action plan 2017-22	Enhancing Stevenage's biodiversity by conserving, restoring, recreating and reconnecting wildlife habitats, whilst increasing awareness and appreciation of Stevenage's wildlife	AD Stevenage Direct Services

- 3.5 Key priorities are well-established for the existing strategies and are in development for the emerging strategies. Work is now underway to draw out key actions from the constituent strategies to cover the period to the end of March 2021, progress against which will be reported to the FTFC Board and Executive on a quarterly basis through the normal FTFC reporting mechanisms. The scope of this strand will develop further over time as new priorities emerge i.e. a Stevenage focused Local Industrial Strategy.

Customer, Place and Transformation and Support

- 3.6 Council services are organised into nine Business Units across three themes: Customer, Place and Transformation and Support. This structure is focused on delivering the right services, to the right standards, at the right time for the town's residents and businesses, using the most cost/resource effective delivery models.
- 3.7 In addition to monitoring progress on the delivery of the FTFC Programme, performance across these (Council Service) themes is monitored throughout the year to highlight achievements and identify any areas for improvement.

- 3.8 A complete set of performance measures across all themes (FTFC programme, and the customer, place, and transformation and support themes) is attached as Appendix 1. Summaries of performance measure result status are outlined at paragraph 3.10 (FTFC focus) and paragraph 3.55 (Corporate Focus).

Future Town, Future Council Programme progress update

- 3.9 The focus and scope of the FTFC programmes is outlined in Appendix 2. Delivery of the agreed outcomes is monitored to ensure that the Programme remains on track.
- 3.10 In addition to the monitoring of programme milestones, thirteen measures aligned to FTFC delivery were monitored and reported on for April to December 2019. The overview of FTFC focused results for April 2019 to December 2019 is outlined below:

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (urgent improvement action required)
13	12	0	1

- 3.11 Programme delivery updates for the FTFC Programmes together with an outline of any focused activity being implemented to keep the programmes on track are set out in the following paragraphs.

External Facing Future Town, Future Council Programmes

Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration Programme

Programme Outcomes

- A new vibrant town centre delivered through a phased regeneration programme
- Two major regeneration schemes to advance – one completed by 2021 and one to begin 2019/20

- 3.12 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Achieving vacant possession of Swingate House
- Advancing the SG1 scheme
- Progressing the bus interchange project in line with milestones
- Beginning works on the Town Square Public Realm and 'North Block' improvements

- Supporting the LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) to ensure there are robust governance arrangements in place for the regeneration of Stevenage
- Launching the fresh marketing brand, 'Stevenage Even Better' and opening the visitor centre to celebrate and promote the regeneration of the town

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.13 A planning application was submitted in December for the SG1 development by Mace and has been validated. Communications will be led by Mace as the applicant; however internal communications packages have been produced for members and staff.
- 3.14 The project to consider how the Public Sector Hub project could be accelerated, and through doing so, speed up the delivery of other elements of the SG1 scheme is underway. A report is due to be presented to the Executive at its meeting in June 2020.
- 3.15 Construction work has begun on both the Town Square and North Block. Paving is being laid for the first phase in the Town Square and stripping of the building is currently in progress in the North Block. Weekly project meetings are being held with the contractor on site to monitor the delivery of both projects.
- 3.16 A report regarding the bidding opportunity to the Government's Town Fund bid was submitted to the Executive in December. The objective of the Fund is to drive the economic regeneration of towns to deliver long term economic and productivity growth through: regeneration, planning and land use; skills and enterprise infrastructure; and connectivity. This will enable the Towns Fund Board to put forward an Investment Plan which could realise up to £25m funding from within the £3.6bn Fund. The approach was agreed and work will continue to progress the bid.

Housing Development Programme

Programme Outcomes

- Increased number of affordable houses in Stevenage
 - Improved access to the housing market in Stevenage for a greater number of residents
- 3.17 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Completing and letting 54 new affordable homes across a number of schemes and 11 private sale homes
 - Starting work on a further 295 new/replacement homes across a range of planned schemes including sites at Shephall Way, North Road and Symonds Green

- Exploring the viability of other potential areas of development across the town including opportunities to work in partnership with other providers
- Continuing to work with partners to enable the delivery of affordable homes
- Forming a Wholly Owned Company to support the delivery of new homes

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.18 The open market acquisitions programme has been scaled up this financial year. The ambition is to purchase properties to be converted for those with additional accessibility requirements as there is a current lack of suitable stock, as well as being utilised for additional temporary accommodation. In this last quarter, a further nine open market acquisitions have been completed, bring the total currently for this financial year to thirty. The Housing Development team are working with colleagues from Legal Services to achieve completion on the pipeline of additional properties.
- 3.19 The Ferrier Road scheme handed over on 7th October 2019 and all affordable rented units have been let with residents moving in throughout October. This scheme delivered 14 units of affordable accommodation including 4 properties which have been let through a nominations agreement with Hertfordshire County Council for adults with additional care needs. The development also includes one private sale unit, the receipts from which will help to fund the other affordable accommodation in the town.
- 3.20 The Burwell Court and Ditchmore Lane developments are progressing well and are on target for anticipated handover in quarter 4.
- 3.21 The tender period for the Kenilworth Close scheme is now finished and evaluation has been completed. A report will be presented to January Executive to consider the appointment of the contractor. On site, the Community Centre has been demolished, and the disconnection of electrics at the site is also completed.
- 3.22 The schemes at North Road (21 Homes), Shephall Way (9 Homes) and Symonds Green (29 Homes) have all continued to progress this quarter. The contractor at the North Road site is carrying out further design work to produce building control drawings ready to start on site. The foundations have been completed and the flooring is beginning to be laid on the Shephall Way site. Also work has been done to extend the hoarding at the Symonds Green site and create a new footpath to ensure access to the park is maintained. All 3 schemes will take 12-18 months to complete.

Co-operative and Neighbourhood Management (CNM) Programme

Programme Outcomes

- Public spaces are more attractive, better cared for by the Council, residents and partners, and help to give people pride in the place they live
- Residents feel that they can work with the Council and other organisations to help meet the needs of the local area
- The Council's Community centres are efficiently run, well-managed and most importantly, meet local needs
- Staff better understand the town's communities and so are more able to facilitate the change that is required

3.23 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Developing the Council's approach to co-operative neighbourhood management, working initially with Stevenage Direct Services, Housing and Investment and Communities and Neighbourhoods
- Continuing the planned roll-out of neighbourhood improvements, with consultation and engagement work starting in Bedwell and Longmeadow
- Completing the Community Centre Review
- Progressing the Garage Programme
- Reviewing and reshaping resident involvement activity in response to the Community Engagement Framework

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.24 Neighbourhood improvements in St Nicholas and Martins Wood identified through community engagement/ participatory budgeting activities were completed this quarter. A programme of works for projects is due to be completed by April 2020.
- 3.25 Planning is now underway for the roll out of CNM in Bedwell and Longmeadow. Community Development Officers have worked on an engagement plan for both wards which commenced in January. Activities also include regular ward patrols by Neighbourhood Wardens, attendance at residents groups and community events as well as bespoke engagement events as planned by the team.
- 3.26 A report was presented to the Executive in quarter three that considered stage two of the review of Council-owned community centres operating across Stevenage in order to form the basis of a proposed future operating model. Implementation work can now begin, in order to address the recommendations of the report through the Co-operative Compact Partnership work.
- 3.27 A high level scoping paper has been drafted to develop a Stevenage approach to Community Wealth Building. The University of Hertfordshire will support phase 1, which will include a desk-based analysis of Stevenage spend. This

was debated further at full Council in January and a report concerning this matter is on the agenda for today's Executive meeting.

- 3.28 Work has progressed on developing the model for future Neighbourhood Management. A report establishing the principles and direction of travel for the roll-out of Cooperative Neighbourhoods, including the prototype neighbourhood of St Nicholas and Martins Wood, was approved by the Executive in December.

Excellent Council Homes Programme

Programme Outcome

- Transforming the Housing and Investment service to better meet the needs of its customers
- 3.29 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Delivery of a major refurbishment programme to our flat blocks (incorporating the MRC, lift replacements and retrofitting of sprinklers)
 - Implementation of a new area-based co-operative neighbourhood management approach in conjunction with staff from Stevenage Direct Services and Communities and Neighbourhoods
 - The launch of a new online account where customers will be able to access housing services 24/7
 - Providing staff with the right business tools and software to enable them to work more effectively out in the community
 - Completing the final phases of the Housing and Investment Future Council Business Unit Review
 - Delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Initiative Strategy and Housing Older Persons Strategy

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.30 The major refurbishment programme (MRC) is a £55 million 5 year programme which commenced in 2019. The majority of year one works had been completed at the end of quarter three with handover by the contractors scheduled in January. Consultations events with leaseholders for the next phase will take place in quarter four.
- 3.31 Progress continues on a new area-based co-operative neighbourhood management approach with Communities & Neighbourhoods and Stevenage Direct Services. More details on progress can be seen in paragraph 3.28.
- 3.32 A presentation outlining progress and principles of the Housing Older People Strategy was presented to the Strategic Leadership Team in October which received positive feedback. The strategy is in development and will now be presented to the Executive during the next financial year.
- 3.33 The Sprinklers contract has been awarded this quarter and a pre-start meeting has been held with the successful contractor. Resident consultation will also take place and is planned for quarter four.

- 3.34 The lift refurbishment programme is on target for delivery, despite some early delays. A further 3 lifts have been renewed and are expected to be completed and in service in quarter four.
- 3.35 The Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Initiative Strategy was presented to and agreed by the Executive in quarter three. The strategy has now been published on the Council's website and distributed to all parties involved in its production. Additionally it has been shared on social media platforms, as well as an article published in the local press. Monitoring of the underpinning action plan will begin from April 2020.
- 3.36 The online Housing account is due to go live during quarter 4. This will enable housing and Investment customers to access our services 24/7. They will be able to view their rent, service charge and sundry accounts, make payments, set up direct debits, report repairs using a visual aid and bid for council homes. We will be encouraging our customers to make contact with us through this on line account complying with data protection regulations. The development of this account has been with a number of stakeholders including customers and Citizens Advice.
- 3.37 The final structure for the business unit review will be shared with staff in quarter 4, which will highlight the opportunities that are available. The structure has been designed to support the co-operative neighbourhood management model as well as responding to changes in government legislation in terms of welfare reform and building safety. The new structure will go live in quarter one.

Connected to our Customers Programme

Programme Outcomes

- Use of self-service is encouraged, so more time can be spent with customers that need extra help
 - Increased customer satisfaction for residents interacting with key services
 - Online customer data will be protected, better used to provide useful insight, and the technology reliable
 - The Council uses technology to meet its ambitions and make its workforce more modern, efficient and responsive to customer needs.
 - A simple and clearer website with more self-service choices
- 3.38 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:
- New website testing and launch
 - Finalising procurement of the digital platform and plans for implementation.
 - Phased implementation of digital platform capabilities starting with replacement CRM and quick wins for self-serve options
 - Customer and Business Account functionality placed into the new website, providing a single view of the customer and establishing a new centralised digital customer relationship

- Developing a service redesign approach that will optimise new technology and new ways of working
- Developing a Channel Shift Strategy which will clearly set out the Council's approach to optimising the take-up of the new digital services whilst ensuring access for everyone, so that no-one is left behind
- Implementation of the Environmental Services case management system; integration into the digital platform to enable self-serve
- Working with services to understand desired new ways of working and technology to support mobile, agile and area working.
- Planning for how the Council wants to work from the new Public Sector Hub

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.39 There have been changes to key staff, with the programme manager and sponsor both moving to new roles in other authorities in quarter three. Interim arrangements have been put in place, enabling the programme to proceed with minimum delays.
- 3.40 Progress with the new website has continued this quarter with more than 90% of new web pages completed. Public launch of the beta site has been delayed and discussions are taking place with the supplier to resolve these issues. A new launch date will be confirmed in due course.
- 3.41 Development of the new integrated digital solution, Firmstep, has progressed, and launch is anticipated in the CSC for quarter four, replacing the existing system. The new software will enable integrations between systems, to join up council service delivery and provide better customer facing online service channels
- 3.42 Firmstep will be integrated into Environmental Service's new management system, 'Bartec', which is anticipated to "go live" in March. This will remove administrative burden and speed up processes, by automating a number of tasks. It will also significantly improve the information available to Customer Services and online self-service when handling residential waste and recycling enquires.
- 3.43 The Council recognises there are significant engagement and communication requirements to move staff and customers towards online service delivery. These requirements have been scoped in order to develop a comprehensive engagement project plan and communications plan. These plans will include specific actions and interventions to ensure that non-digital provisions are enhanced for customers that are unable to readily access services online.
- 3.44 Work has commenced on describing a new customer offer for online, telephone and in-person interactions, as well as community neighbourhood working. These service delivery descriptions in the short, medium and longer term (as envisioned at the Public Sector Hub) will form the basis for a service plan for CSC to transition its resourcing and service delivery ambitions from current state to future state. This is being supported by a new Customer Promise.

Internal Facing Future Town, Future Council Programmes

Financial Security Programme

Programme Outcomes

- To meet the Financial Security three year savings target
- To ensure that the General Fund expenditure equals income without the use of balances from 2022/23 onwards
- To ensure the Housing Revenue Account has sufficient funding to meet the capital needs of the Housing Asset Management Strategy and identified revenue needs
- To identify Financial Security options using the three revised workstreams (efficiency, commercial and improved processes), before recommending any service rationalisation options, as summarised below.

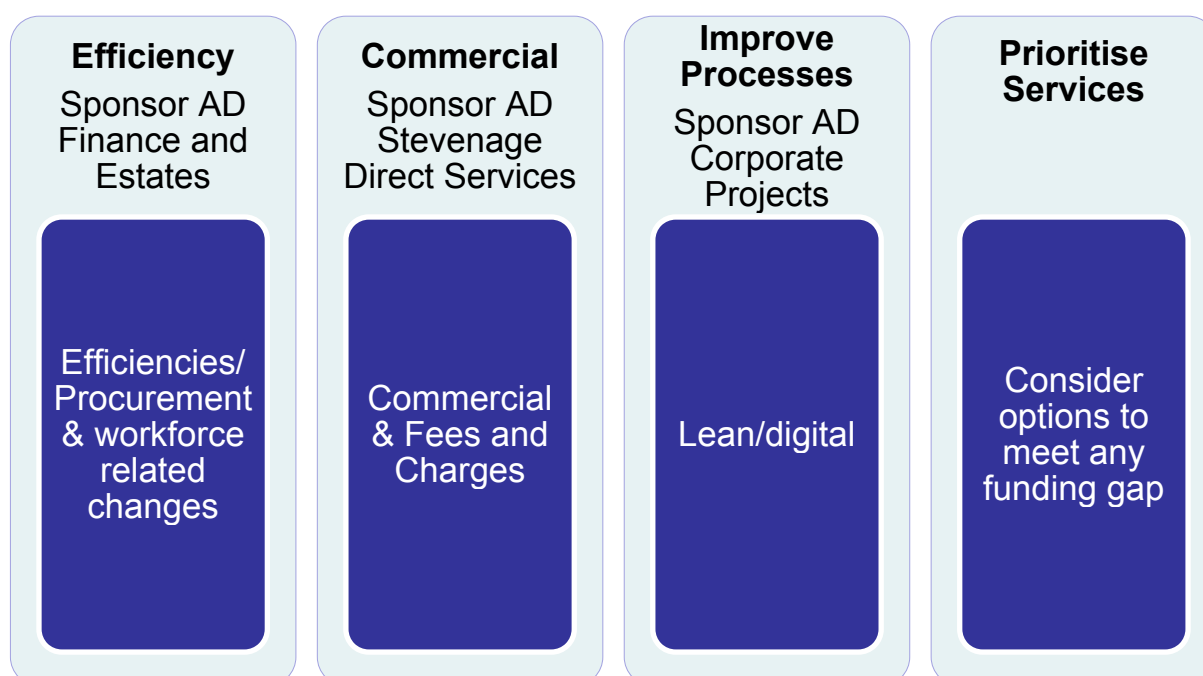


Figure 2: Financial Security Work streams.

3.45 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Identifying Financial Security options that meet the three year target (£2.2 million General Fund and £1 million Housing Revenue Account) and as amended by the report to the September Executive for the General Fund MTFS and the November Executive for the HRA.
- Identification of Financial Security options to meet the General Fund and HRA funding gap for the period 2020/21-2022/23 via the Financial Security workstreams
- The financial security options should include the output from the review of leases for the Commercial Portfolio, to ensure they are reviewed in a timely manner to protect the Council's revenues

- Purchase of Investment Properties to meet the General Fund target of £200,000
- Completion of Local Asset Reviews to meet the objectives of the General Fund Asset Management Strategy
- Review of fee-earning services to determine fee versus cost
- Identify options to improve productivity via use of digital interventions
- Review of budgets for cross-cutting reviews
- Presentation of Financial Security options to the Leader's Financial Security Group before approval by the Executive in November 2019

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.46 Preparations continued in quarter three to finalise the 2020/21 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund (GF) budgets. This included Financial security options to meet the Council's saving targets, updated fees and charges and Capital Strategy for the next three years.
- 3.47 Further discussions have taken place on the Council's commercial and insourcing strategy. A timeline for delivery will be progressed following the appointment of new AD (Stevenage Direct Services) and the Council's Commercial Manager.

Employer of Choice Programme

Programme Outcomes

- Improved employee engagement
 - Right person, right place, right time – recruiting/retaining staff to hard to fill posts
 - Improved managerial competency
 - Improved reputation as a place to work
 - Evidence of staff progressing to higher grades and new roles
- 3.48 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Establishing a compelling employer brand with a competitive pay and benefit offer, including development of the new e-recruitment module of the HR System
 - Developing and implementing a competency framework for staff from Grade 1- 9 of the Council's pay structure
 - Enabling new ways of working to equip staff for the future including policies, practices and culture
 - Developing digital skills and tools to enable staff self-service.
 - Creating a new Learning and Development Strategy

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.49 The Council's Competency Framework for grades 1-9 was agreed and is now in place. Briefings are taking place with managers on how to use the framework. The Communications team are supporting an internal campaign, showcasing staff demonstrating values and behaviours in the Competency

Framework which commenced in December. Work is now underway to develop sets of interview questions to sit alongside the competency framework.

- 3.50 Work is underway on the Learning & Development (L&OD) Strategy based on identified learning needs analysis. A policy has been written and a map of L&OD is currently being developed. Discussions took place at a Senior Leader Team meeting in December and all ADs committed to developing learning plans for their business units in January 2020.

Performing at our Peak Programme

Programme Outcomes

- The provision of high quality performance management tools
- Streamlined governance structures that ensure effective and timely decision making
- A strong performance culture is embedded across the organisation

- 3.51 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Enhancing our business insight through data connectivity, and ensuring service managers have the right skills to use the tool robustly to analyse information and make informed decisions that result in improved services for our customers
- Developing our insight culture through the effective engagement and use of our new tools and procedures, to enable lasting performance improvement
- Delivering a new scheme of delegations to officers in respect of Executive powers

Programme Delivery Update

- 3.52 Work continues to improve the use of the performance management system, Inphase. The set-up of the risk management element of the system has been reviewed and enhancements have been made to make it more 'user friendly'. This will form the basis for a full roll-out of operational risk registers on the system, which had been piloted within Corporate Services and Stevenage Direct Services.
- 3.53 An Inphase upgrade was completed in December 2019, and moving forward this will enable further improvements to the usability of the system in quarter 4.
- 3.54 The annual review of performance measures is underway. The Corporate Performance and Improvement team is engaging with Assistant Directors and 4th tier managers to review their existing performance measures and to identify new operational measures, with a view to building them into the Council's performance suite during 2020/21.

Corporate Performance highlights and areas for improvement

- 3.55 Results for the full set of current corporate performance measures across all themes (FTFC programme and the Customer, Place and Transformation and Support themes) are attached as Appendix 1. The overview of corporate focused results for April 2019 to December 2019 is outlined below:

3.56

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (urgent improvement action required)	Missing Data
42	35	1	5	1*

* Data cannot be verified for Assets5b: Percentage of assets known to be health and safety compliant (as per SBC definition)

- 3.57 A summary of highlights and areas for improvement for April 2019 to December 2019 is set out in the following paragraphs across the three key delivery themes: Customer, Place, and Transformation and Support.

A: Customer Theme

- 3.58 The Customer Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

- Housing and Investment
- Communities and Neighbourhood

Housing and Investment

Highlights and Achievements

- 3.59 The Homelessness and Housing Options team made a successful bid for the Rough Sleeper Initiative for £177,500.

Spotlight: Health and Safety compliant non-domestic/non-commercial Council buildings (falling under the compliance contract)

- 3.60 The percentage of health and safety compliant assets (statutory definition) has maintained good performance this quarter. The compliance team is now working with the contractor to ensure this level is maintained.
- 3.61 The Compliance team are unable to provide a result for 'Assets 5b: Percentage of (Council) assets known to be Health and Safety compliant (as per SBC enhanced definition)' for the second consecutive quarter. The team are reviewing the contract to ensure that there is an improved performance around non-statutory low level repairs included in this performance measure. Consequently, results are unable to be provided as the contractor's performance is being scrutinised, and an improvement plan is being put in place.

- 3.62 The Compliance team have audited the report provided by the contractor and are currently unable to verify the figures reported. In the absence of reliable information no data is able to be reported. The compliance team is working with the contractor to ensure that the necessary assurance is given.
- 3.63 It should be noted that performance measures 'Assets 5a' and 'Assets 5b' relate to council premises such as civic offices, community centres, play centres, pavilions, cemetery buildings, depots etc. and refer to Compliance Services via the ComplyFirst Framework. These services relate to the provision of regular compliance servicing and related maintenance of fire, water, electrical, gas, air conditioning and minor building works. Officers are currently working on a corporate landlord project to map the management of compliance across all council buildings and this could impact on the future definition of these measures.

Spotlight: Households in Emergency/Temporary Accommodation

- 3.64 The number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation at the end of December 2019 was 89 against a target of 75. In the previous quarter it was reported that there were an additional 58 households that had not been included in the total figure but were deemed to be in a form of temporary accommodation. This is because these cases have been accepted as being owed a homeless duty, but were placed into non-secure tenancies which cannot be a final offer of accommodation.
- 3.65 Due to the process in place at the time, discharge of duty was not formally completed and as a result these are still officially designated as temporary accommodation. These cases are being reviewed and a programme is in place to rectify this. Currently 8 of the 58 original cases have been moved into alternative accommodation or have been made a permanent offer for their current accommodation.
- 3.66 The improvement plan in place should result in completion of outstanding cases by the end of the current financial year, subject to customer engagement and any appeals received.
- 3.67 The team are looking to review this performance measure as a result of the Executive approving the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper strategy in quarter 3. The new performance measure will incorporate those in non-secure tenancies, as well as the designated temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast.

Spotlight: Rent Collection Rate

- 3.68 The rent collection rate at the end of quarter 3 was 0.50% below target at 97.3%. The trend for collection for December is lower than anticipated, which is in part related to the increase in numbers of tenants in receipt of Universal Credit (UC). Further to this performance has been affected by staff vacancies, in part related to the Business Unit Review.

- 3.69 The number of council tenants in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) was 896 as at 7 February 2020. This figure has been double-checked using the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Landlord Portal. It should be noted that this figure relates to a particular point in time and also that as individual tenants' circumstances change, they may come on and/or off UC. Officers are continuing to monitor the fluctuating UC position.
- 3.70 53% (£407, 773.64) of the overall total of arrears is attributed to tenants who are in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) and are in arrears, standing at 646 as at 7 February 2020.
- 3.71 Meanwhile, the number of tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) has continued to decrease and currently stands at 41% of all current tenants.
- 3.72 An income and arrears collection action plan is in place, focusing on proactive and preventative approaches. The Income Services team's collective and individual efforts are directed towards increasing income collection to expected levels and tenancy sustainment, whilst supporting those tenants experiencing financial challenges. The team has started to carry out campaigns such as telephone campaigns and home visits, in particular targeting those that are in receipt of UC and over 5 weeks in arrears (allowing for the 5 weeks claim assessment time). This will be closely monitored to ensure that collection of all income streams under the service is maximised.
- 3.73 All stage one Business Unit Review interviews for the Income Services team have been completed since the end of the quarter and it is expected that there will be a full team in place from 9 March 2020.

Communities and Neighbourhoods

Highlights and Achievements

- 3.74 The Community Centre review was completed with a report and recommendations signed off by Executive in December. The recommendations will be implemented in 2020, with a view to developing more sustainable community centres to serve the town in future years.
- 3.75 Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) has now been commissioned by East Herts, following on from the success of the expansion of the service to North Herts. A pilot is also due to take place in Welwyn and Hatfield in 2020.
- 3.76 The Community Safety team launched a 'Contactless Box Project' in December in partnership with Stevenage Rotary Club. The contactless boxes allow members of the public to provide contactless donations to local homeless people, which in turn, are developed into resources for Stevenage Haven to support those accessing its services.
- 3.77 The annual firework event took place at Fairlands Valley Park in November and maintained high attendance despite poor weather conditions.
- 3.78 The Healthy Stevenage Partnership has worked to shape the district offer with Public Health this year. The focus on young people and wellbeing has led to

the formation of healthy hub proposals at a number of secondary schools in the town. In December the partnership hosted a session with Adult Social Care and the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership to shape the future county wide strategy. In addition the play service has been commissioned by the University of Hertfordshire to lead some action research into child and family wellbeing.

- 3.79 In October the full Council debate focused on the role of culture in the future of the town and welcomed presentations from the Arts Council and MACE. Over £100k of external investment has been secured for the town since the launch of the Arts and Heritage Strategy and future plans for Arts and Heritage will feature in regeneration plans moving forwards.

B: Place Theme

- 3.80 The Place Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

- Planning and Regulation
- Stevenage Direct Services
- Regeneration
- Housing Development

(The Regeneration and Housing Development Business Units are primarily focused on delivery of the Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration and Housing Development Programmes of FTFC. Delivery updates for these programmes are summarised in paragraphs 3.13 to 3.16 and 3.18 to 3.22 respectively)

Planning and Regulation

Highlights and Achievements

- 3.81 The team are leading on the work for our new Climate Change, Action Plan, Business Charter and Community Pledge list.
- 3.82 The Council has agreed to introduce CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) from the 1st of April 2020. CIL would be a mandatory floor space charge on new development in the borough which would be used to fund key infrastructure to support growth in Stevenage.
- 3.83 Planning applications continue to be determined within corporate and statutory targets, including hearing the North of Stevenage application.
- 3.84 The Parking team have been consulting upon residents parking restriction in the Old Town.

Stevenage Direct Services (SDS)

Highlights and Achievements

- 3.85 Following investment via the capital programme, four play areas (Fairlands Valley Park, Blenheim Way, Holly Leys and Balmoral Close) were improved and opened in time for the October half term.

- 3.86 In quarter 2 Stevenage Direct Services launched a Recycling Bag Pilot, which continued into quarter 3. Around 270 households were invited to participate in a pilot for the use of recycling bags in place of the current plastic boxes provided. Focus group sessions are being held in quarter 4 with residents who are interested in providing feedback.
- 3.87 During Quarter 3 the Green Space volunteers collectively gave over 250 hours (equivalent to £2,580) to help with maintenance of the Town Centre Gardens and delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan activities. In November the team worked in partnership with Yes Futures to provide 60 secondary school students in Stevenage with an opportunity to undertake volunteer work in the town. Over 3 days students undertook tasks at Weston Road Cemetery, Fairlands Valley Park and Town Centre Gardens.
- 3.88 Repairs are being fixed promptly and time taken to complete them continues to be better than the target level. The team have placed major focus on a case management approach to each case dealt with. This, coupled with efforts to review and improve processes, has improved performance and productivity.
- RepTime1: Emergency Repairs - Average end to end repairs time (days), December 2019: target 1 day, achieved 0.88 days.
 - RepTime2: Urgent Repairs - Average end to end repairs time (days), December 2019: target 5 days, achieved 2.77 days.
 - RepTime3: Routine Repairs - Average end to end repairs time (days), December 2019: target 20 days, achieved 7.08 days.
- 3.89 The time taken to re-let Standard general needs voids has increased since last quarter (30.27 days), however it still remains within target. In October and November the performance was behind target, however performance in December was far better and therefore kept Quarter 3 performance overall within target. Officers are currently identifying ways to further improve relet times.
- Voids General Needs: The time taken to re-let standard general needs voids (days) December 2019: target 32 days, achieved 31.82 days

Spotlight: Waste and Recycling Rate

- 3.90 The percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting was estimated to be 37% against a target of 41%. The figure reported here is an estimate based on the figure for the same period last year, which estimates this measure will not meet its target. However, the actual figure for Q3 will not be available until March 2020.
- 3.91 Trends over the past eight years show that figures for Q3 and Q4 are lower than the previous two quarters. We are still on track to meet our annual target.
- 3.92 A new draft waste policy seeks to introduce mechanisms that will support an increase in recycling figures for Stevenage. In addition, officers are also

nearing completion of a project with the Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to consider separate weekly food waste collections and other initiatives to support the emerging policy and drive up recycling rates.

Spotlight: Garage Void Rate

- 3.93 The void rate of garages has increased this quarter to make it a red measure (14.74% against a target of 12%). This has increased due to a change in our inspection process, whereby each garage is inspected by a qualified asbestos surveyor, prior to letting a garage out.
- 3.94 The asbestos inspections have increased the time taken to relet garages. A large number of garages have been returned by the contractor for letting and the Garage team is now in the process of offering these garages out to customers.
- 3.95 A project is also underway to modernise the current garage letting process and ensure that the available units are effectively marketed. In the medium term the intention is to allow customers to view the available garages, sign up and make payments on-line. As an interim measure, the waiting list is also be reviewed to ensure that time is not being spent making offers to customers who are no longer interested.

C: Transformation and Support Theme

- 3.96 The Transformation and Support Theme incorporates the following Business Units:
- Corporate Services
 - Digital and Transformation
 - Finance and Estates

Corporate Services/Digital and Transformation

Highlights and Achievements

Customer Services

- 3.97 Service delivery through the Customer Service Centre (CSC) was first identified as a focus for improvement (spotlight) at quarter three 2017/18 (March 2018 Executive). Since then, the CSC Improvement Plan has supported the recovery of performance levels but in quarter three 2019, the CSC did not achieve 2 of its 4 corporate performance measure targets. As forecasted, performance has been on a downward trend during the quarter.
- CSC4: Percentage of telephone calls to the Customer Service Centre answered within 20 seconds: target 55%, April to December 2019 achieved 49.6%
 - CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre: target 8%, April to December 2019 achieved 15.1%

- CSC5: Percentage of walk-in customers to the Customer Service Centre served within 20 minutes: target 80%, April to December 2019 achieved 79.8%
 - CSC13a: Percentage of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors): target 65%, April to December 2019 achieved 62.1%
- 3.98 Historical performance data demonstrates performance in the Customer Service Centre is closely related to the amount of skilled advisers available.
- 3.99 The new recruitment model has helped to reduce the impact on performance by reducing the time taken to recruit new advisers into the team. The improved training delivery and upskilling of CSC advisers will have a positive impact on performance. At the end of Q3 the establishment is at 20.8 FTE, this is 82% of the establishment. These vacant posts are recruited to through the adviser pool and are expected to be in post in February. However, since April 2019 12 advisers have moved on either to other roles in the Council or left for other reasons. This has meant the service has continued to lose skilled staff, and this has created a heavier than normal burden on recruitment and training. Further actions are now being planned and undertaken to further improve recruitment and investigate ways to improve staff retention.
- 3.100 The focus on this service area will be retained until initial performance improvement can be seen to be sustained across the full set of CSC measures.

Technology

- 3.101 The joint ICT strategy has been given final approval from both councils. This will ensure a united vision for the IT service over the next three years.
- 3.102 The tender for virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) hosted desktop has completed this quarter and the ICT team are now working through designs and implementation. On completion this will mean that all users will be supplied with Windows 10 desktop on the latest version and VMware Horizon on new hardware. This will increase performance, in particular login times, and due to changes in the software structure will enable ICT to update systems with less impact on the entire council.
- 3.103 Microwave (resilient link) implementation is underway which on completion will give a secondary link alongside a cable connection between both datacentres, meaning that if one of the connections is disrupted there will be no reduction in provision of the virtual desktop and access to systems as either connection can supply required connectivity.

Our staff

- 3.104 Employees are continuing to engage in regular and meaningful REAL conversations with their managers. These conversations typically include objectives, development, engagement and wellbeing, but they are also tailored to address individual matters.

3.105 Agency usage is back within target in Quarter 3, this is the first time this financial year. Agency usage is likely to remain slightly higher whilst the programme of Business Unit Reviews continues.

- Agency usage as a percentage of the total workforce: target 12%, April to December 2019 achieved 11.4%

3.106 The figure of 11.4% agency usage is profiled as follows:

- 3.06% are workers covering on an ad-hoc basis at Cavendish Road
- 6.11% are agency workers covering established posts
- 2.18% are covering key strategic projects

Spotlight: Sickness Absence

3.107 The Sickness Absence measure is currently rated as red. The number of sickness days per FTE has not been within target for the past year. Sickness absence has decreased by 2.4% compared to last quarter.

- Sickness absence rate for the current workforce (per FTE): target 8 days, twelve months to March 2019 achieved 8.86 days; twelve months to June 2019 achieved 9.49 days, twelve months to September 2019 achieved 9.8 days, twelve months to December 2019 achieved 9.56 days

3.108 The rise in sickness has been due to an increase in the number of complex long term sickness absences (accounting for 59% of sickness).

3.109 In the last 12 months 62 staff have been off long term sick with 47 having returned to work. The breakdown of length of long term sickness absence is: 64% of staff have been off for less than 3 months, 26% 3 to 6 months and 10% over 6 months. The breakdown of reasons for long term sickness absence is: 36.4% anxiety/stress/depression, 26.16% hospital surgery, 12.86% cancer related illnesses, 6.73% heart/respiratory, 4.69% muscular/skeletal and 11.39% other absence.

3.110 The Council has introduced a third party sickness reporting service, which went live in quarter three. This service provides advice and challenge on fitness for work to both individuals and managers, and ensures consistency of approach/advice on sickness absence. They will also follow up to ensure appropriate application of policy and return to work and provide regular and timely management information. Initially it is expected that the introduction of this sickness reporting service will show an increase in sickness absence levels.

3.111 There are some proactive interventions in place to try and reduce sickness absence levels. These include free flu jab provisions, physio and counselling services for staff and the introduction of the annual leave purchase scheme to support an employee work life balance.

- 3.112 The Senior Leadership Team will continue to monitor the performance and management of sickness absence until revised policy and practice results in a sustained reduction in levels of sickness absence.

Finance and Estates

- 3.113 The Revenues and Benefits service continues to exceed targets for Council Tax collection rates.
- 3.114 The percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority has exceeded target for the quarter.
- 3.115 The time taken to process housing benefit new claims and change events is 1.4 days below target.

Senior Leadership Team Perspective

- 3.116 Good performance across all three key delivery themes (Customer, Place, Transformation and Support) has been achieved in quarter three, with the majority of corporate performance measures meeting or exceeding targets. The main focus for improvement is the Transformation and Support theme. Outcomes that significantly exceed expectations (measures achieving 'green plus' status) include the following:

- % of complaints progressing to stage 2 and 3 that are upheld or partially upheld
- % repairs fixed first time and average responsive repair end-to-end times
- % of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) that are broadly compliant
- % planning applications determined within national target timescales
- Number of Homelessness preventions

- 3.117 The Senior Leadership Team request that the Assistant Directors responsible for areas of improvement focus assess the factors impacting on performance and develop/implement plans that will provide sustainable performance improvement.

- 3.118 At the end of quarter 2 2019/2020 (September 2019), the following improvement plans were identified for ongoing focused monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team:

- Continuing to embed the new service model in the Customer Service Centre
- Ensuring that pressure continues to be applied to the contractor to enable compliance with Health and Safety regulations to be effectively monitored and recorded
- Reducing re-let times and developing plans to achieve the 2% efficiency saving in the repairs and voids service
- Managing sickness absence more effectively and aligning it to council health and well-being policy.

- Ensuring that the issues around temporary accommodation are resolved and monitored

Customer Service Centre

- 3.119 As reported in paragraph 3.97, new improvement measures in place from 2018/19 have improved and stabilised CSC performance results. There are some key activities that have supported recovery:
- Implementation of a new resource planning function
 - New recruitment practices and training to upskill CSC advisers
 - Review and re-design of the CSC's performance framework
 - Re-focus on sickness management
 - Additional management posts – increased available resource for both service and team development
- 3.120 Performance was impacted in Q3 by several resource challenges. Several long term sickness cases caused an estimated 15% reduction in the CSC4 measure (percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds). In addition the CSC currently has three staff on maternity leave and two seconded to other areas of the business. These roles are back-filled, however performance is still impacted as skilled and high performing advisers are lost and time is spent on recruiting and upskilling cover staff.
- 3.121 Upskilling throughout Q4 will increase skill sets across the staff who are either single or dual service (working on one or two telephone lines). This increases flexibility, particularly during peak periods and times of unplanned absence. To diversify the age and background of job candidates, recruitment adverts tailored to attract different kinds of people will be developed and methods for broadening advertising reach identified. Experience has also shown that people talented at customer service are not always as strong at writing lengthy job applications. We will therefore be reducing the written application process, and instead placing more emphasis on candidate interviews and test scenarios. To support staff retention research will be undertaken with our staff to understand more about their motivations for staying in Customer Services, and their drivers for moving to other roles.
- 3.122 There are some challenges for Q4, which include the implementation of a new digital platform, Firmstep. There is approximately 50 hours of training planned for advisers. There are also two planned upgrades to major systems, Academy and Northgate, which will need to be monitored carefully. The final quarter also traditionally holds some of the worst weather we face and can lead to additional customer demands at short notice.
- 3.123 There are also a number of other improvements planned for Q4. A new workforce management system implementation is planned that will enable faster resource modelling scenarios, easier and better demand forecasting and help to inform decisions about staffing skills vs demand. The possibility of

setting up a formal CSC standby rota in key services will be investigated, to make additional resource available during times of high demand, such as bad weather. To reduce unexpected high demand caused by poor communications to customers, clear guidelines for service managers are being developed to help them write better letters and other messages. Over several years the CSC team leaders have only had limited investment in their management skills, so options will be considered to help support their development.

Health and Safety Compliance of non-domestic/non-commercial Council Buildings (under the compliance contract)

- 3.124 It is positive to report that in quarter three the contractor achieved 100% compliance in respect of servicing and inspecting assets that have a statutory health and safety requirement. However, concerns continue with regard to the provision of certification and documentation associated with servicing and inspection in accordance with the Council's enhanced definition, resulting in not being able to report performance figures for quarters two and three. Officers are reviewing the contract to ensure an improved performance around non-statutory, low level repairs included in this measure. Performance of the contractor is currently being scrutinised in order to deliver an improvement plan resulting in an increased level of performance.
- 3.125 A Corporate Landlord programme has been initiated which has a number of associated projects and actions. One of the actions is to do a complete compliance audit across all the Council's buildings to review compliance checks in place. This will be completed in the next few months and will inform the compliance contract needs going forward. The project is sponsored by the Chief Finance Officer.

Repairs and Voids Service

- 3.126 As noted above, high levels of performance in the repairs service have been sustained into 2019/20. A key focus during 2018/19 was on re-let times for major works voids, which were classified as having a 'red' status throughout the year. Performance has significantly improved in this area, and has been below target for 2019/20.
- 3.127 Although re-let times are generally within target, the cost of void loss is higher than expected. This is due to the average rate of property turnover (67 per month) being higher than expected (40 per month). There are advantages to a higher turnover rate; however, a more ambitious re-let target is required to achieve the void loss target. A plan is being developed to address this.

Sickness Absence

- 3.128 The management of sickness absence was initially identified as a 'spotlight' area at March 2018 Executive and has continued to be a focus for the Senior Leadership Team. Whilst sickness absence improved throughout the year to December 2018, an increase was observed in quarter 4 of 2018/19 and this trend has continued into 2019/20, in the main associated with an increase in the number of complex long term sickness absences. Improvement plans

advised in previous performance reports continue to be implemented and further details of proactive interventions can be seen in paragraphs 3.110 to 3.112.

Temporary Accommodation

- 3.129 As referred to in paragraphs 3.65 to 3.67, an action plan is in place to address issues relating to under-reporting of temporary accommodation and the number of cases in non-secure accommodation is gradually reducing.

Next Quarter Focus

- 3.130 In view of both the above assessment, and the new red and amber measures arising at December 2019, the following improvement plans have been identified for ongoing focused monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team:

- Beginning to implement the Corporate Landlord review in respect of asset maintenance and compliance and ensuring that pressure continues to be applied to the contractor to enable compliance with Health and Safety regulations to be effectively monitored and recorded (paragraphs 3.124 to 3.125 refers)
- Continuing to embed the new service model in the Customer Service Centre (paragraphs 3.119 to 3.123 refer)
- Maximising the collection of rent by ensuring the associated action plan is fully implemented (paragraphs 3.72 to 3.73 refer)
- Ensuring that issues with the delay in inspections to council garages are recognised and performance is monitored closely; and initiating a marketing campaign to enhance lettings activity (3.93 to 3.95 refer)
- Developing plans to achieve more ambitious re-let targets (paragraph 3.127 refers)

- 3.131 In addition, the development and implementation of the IT strategy will continue to be monitored by the IT Shared Service Partnership Board to ensure that services are delivered that meet customer needs and are fit for the future.

- 3.132 The Council's approach to performance management and monitoring allows the organisation to proactively identify issues and challenges and ensure prompt management intervention. The fluid nature of the framework enables the Senior Leadership Team to amend targets to ensure that they continue to reflect revisions to service delivery models where necessary and to support and drive forward additional improvements in services for the benefit of internal and external customers.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The information presented in this report is collated from the information provided to monitor delivery of the Future Town, Future Council Programme and corporate performance for the quarter. It aims to give Executive an overview of the achievements the Council has made for the year to date, with a

focus on the previous quarter and identifies plans for continued improvements in some areas to ensure the Council is fit for the future.

- 4.2 The Senior Leadership Team and Service Managers have been consulted to determine the appropriate content and to identify the key achievements.
- 4.3 As referred to in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.5, work has progressed on scoping the new 'Place of Choice' FTFC programme. Officers propose this will incorporate the activities associated with a number of existing and emerging strategies that are focussed on improving the quality of life of residents and visitors. This programme is intended to provide overarching governance, to ensure that these strategies are well aligned, and that the FTFC Board are tracking key deliverables and priorities for each year. In addition, bringing this programme together does provide the opportunity to promote, celebrate and market the success of Stevenage more widely as a thriving, successful town providing a range of opportunities for residents and businesses. The Executive is asked to agree the suite of strategies included in the scope of the programme, as set out in paragraph 3.4 and note the progress being made in identifying key actions that will be incorporated into the FTFC programme of activity in 2020/21.
- 4.4 A number of areas have been identified in section 3 of this report where a particular focus on improvement is required and outline plans have been set out. The Executive is recommended to note and endorse these improvement plans.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for improvement activity identified will need to identify and consider any resulting financial implications.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for improvement activity identified will need to identify and consider any resulting legal implications.

5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.3.1 The report outlines performance against key priorities that form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across key business unit themes. Where necessary, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for improvement activity identified.

5.4 Risk Implications

- 5.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s). Officers responsible for developing performance

improvement plans will need to consider any risk implications from the improvement activity identified.

- 5.4.2 The Council has an embedded approach to risk management that mitigates any adverse effect on delivery of the Council's objectives and internal control processes and also provides good governance assurance.

5.5 Other Corporate implications

- 5.5.1 Improvement activity outlined may impact on the development of future policy or procedure.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Executive Report 10 July 2019: 2018/19 Annual Report & Performance Overview

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Compendium of Performance Results
- Appendix 2 : Future Town, Future Council Programme Scope/Focus for 2019/20