Stevenage Borough Council's
Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

What is Corporate Governance?

Corporate governance is both the policies and procedures in place and the values and behaviours that are needed to help ensure the organisation runs effectively, can be held to account for its actions and delivers the best possible outcomes for the community with the resources available. Good governance enables the Council to effectively achieve its intended outcomes, whilst acting in the public interest at all times.

Achieving the intended outcomes whilst acting in the public interest

Figure 1: International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014) '**Achieving the Intended Outcomes While Acting in the Public Interest at all Times' – The International Framework**

The CIPFA/SOLACE* *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework* sets the standard for local authority governance in the UK. The concept underpinning the framework is to support local government in developing and shaping an informed approach to governance, aimed at achieving the highest standards of governance in a measured and proportionate way.

(CIPFA – Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, SOLACE – Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers, IFAC – international Federation of Accountants)*

The Framework is designed to assist authorities with the review of the unique local governance arrangements in place with the overall aim to ensure that:

- Resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities.
- There is sound and inclusive decision making.
- There is clear accountability for the use of these resources to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities.

The Council's responsibility in relation to Corporate Governance

Identifying Local Governance Arrangements

Stevenage Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and to proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999, to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, Stevenage Borough Council is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which include arrangements for the management of risk.

Stevenage Borough Council has adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance that sets out a commitment to corporate governance and summarises the governance arrangements in place to enable the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives, to consider whether those objectives have enhanced delivery of appropriate cost effective services and outlines the activities through which it accounts to and engages with its communities. The Local Code reflects the core and sub-principles outlined in the 2016 CIPFA/SOLACE Framework, 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'

The Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance was revised and approved by Audit Committee in June 2017. The Code has recently been reviewed and Audit Committee will be considering the revised Code at its meeting on 9 June 2020. A copy of the code can be obtained from the Council Offices.

This Annual Governance Statement explains how the Council has continued to comply with the Local Code, summarises the review of effectiveness and identifies areas of governance to be strengthened.

The Statement also meets the statutory requirements in section 6 of the 2015 Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations, which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

How do we know our arrangements are working?

The Governance Framework – How the Council monitors arrangements in place

The local Governance Framework outlines the process the Council applies to review corporate governance arrangements. The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they materialise, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

Stevenage Borough Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of local governance arrangements including the system of internal control.

Governance monitoring and assurance arrangements

The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the senior managers within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Assurance's Annual Report, and also by comments made by external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

To monitor and maintain the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements and drive continuous improvement:
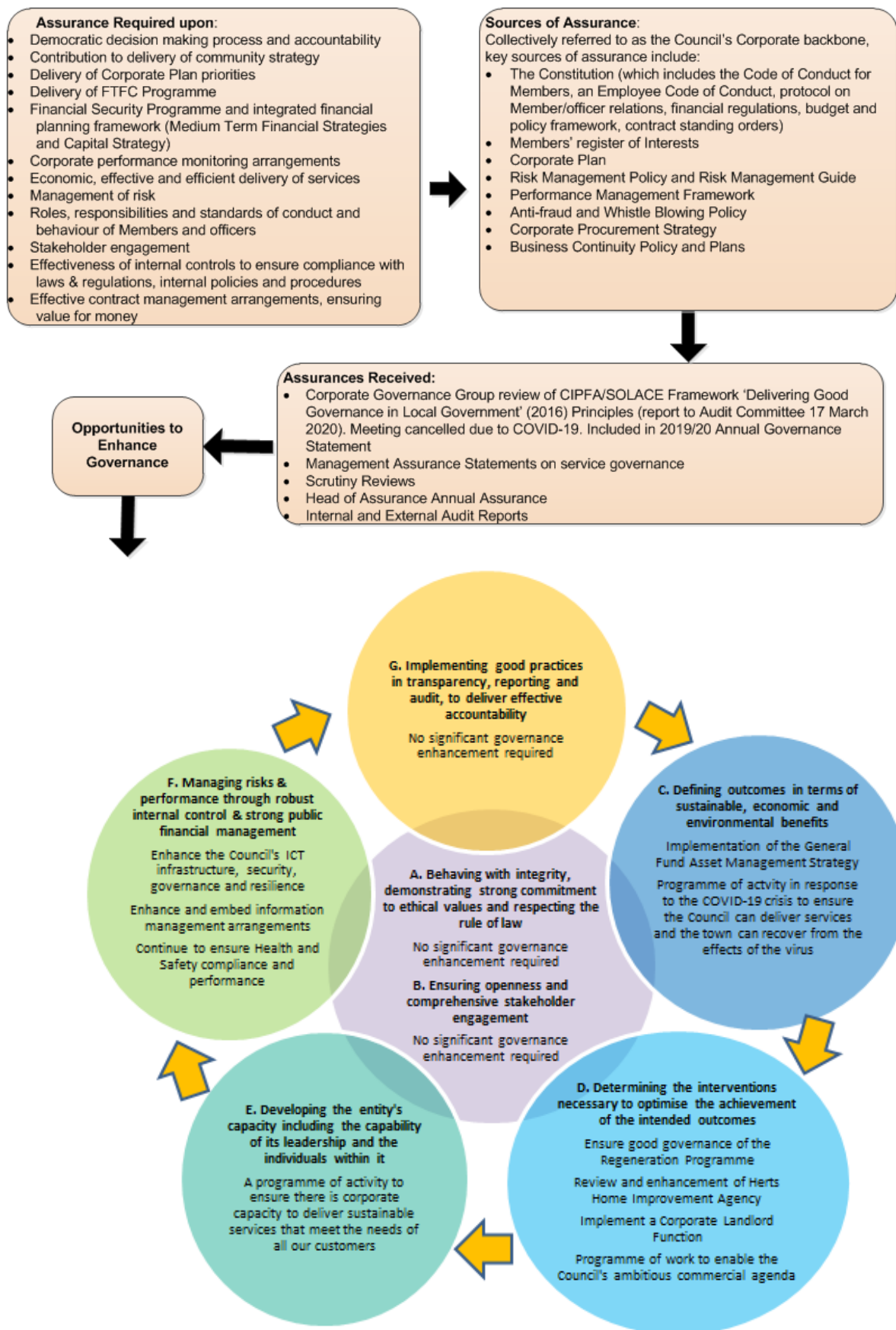
- A Corporate Governance Group meet four times a year to consider the assurance framework from the perspective of the seven core principles of corporate governance in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework - the seven core principles are set out in the diagram on pages one and seven.

- In addition to this proactive in-year review, Corporate Governance Group carries out an annual review of compliance with the behaviours that make up the seven core principles of corporate governance in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework.

- At business unit level, assurance of compliance with the principles of good governance requires all Assistant Directors to complete, certify and return a Service Assurance Statement each year.

- Corporate Governance Group also consider whether any recommendations as a result of external or internal audit activity (and other review agencies and inspectorates), and the Head of Assurance Annual Report, require inclusion in the Statement.

All of these mechanisms of review contribute to overall assurance for the 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement. A summary of the types of assurance required, sources of assurance, assurance received and planned enhancement actions is represented on the next page (page 4) against the relevant principles. More detail is provided throughout the Annual Governance Statement.

The preparation and publication of the Annual Governance Statement in accordance with the requirements set out in the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Governance' Framework (2016) fulfils the statutory requirement for the annual review of the effectiveness of systems of internal control meeting the requirement for 'preparation in accordance with proper practice'.

The Governance Framework summarised in this Statement has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2020 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts. The date for approval of the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts has been extended to November 2020 to allow extra time due to COVID-19.

Figure 2: Overview of sources of assurance to inform review of effectiveness and identification of governance enhancements for 2019/20

Assurance Required upon:
- Democratic decision making process and accountability
- Contribution to delivery of community strategy
- Delivery of Corporate Plan priorities
- Delivery of FTFC Programme
- Financial Security Programme and integrated financial planning framework (Medium Term Financial Strategies and Capital Strategy)
- Corporate performance monitoring arrangements
- Economic, effective and efficient delivery of services
- Management of risk
- Roles, responsibilities and standards of conduct and behaviour of Members and officers
- Stakeholder engagement
- Effectiveness of internal controls to ensure compliance with laws & regulations, internal policies and procedures
- Effective contract management arrangements, ensuring value for money

Sources of Assurance:
Collectively referred to as the Council's Corporate backbone, key sources of assurance include:
- The Constitution (which includes the Code of Conduct for Members, an Employee Code of Conduct, protocol on Member/officer relations, financial regulations, budget and policy framework, contract standing orders)
- Members' register of Interests
- Corporate Plan
- Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Guide
- Performance Management Framework
- Anti-fraud and Whistle Blowing Policy
- Corporate Procurement Strategy
- Business Continuity Policy and Plans

Assurances Received:
- Corporate Governance Group review of CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' (2016) Principles (report to Audit Committee 17 March 2020). Meeting cancelled due to COVID-19. Included in 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement
- Management Assurance Statements on service governance
- Scrutiny Reviews
- Head of Assurance Annual Assurance
- Internal and External Audit Reports

Opportunities to Enhance Governance

G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit, to deliver effective accountability
No significant governance enhancement required

F. Managing risks & performance through robust internal control & strong public financial management
Enhance the Council's ICT infrastructure, security, governance and resilience
Enhance and embed information management arrangements
Continue to ensure Health and Safety compliance and performance

A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law
No significant governance enhancement required

B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
No significant governance enhancement required

C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic and environmental benefits
Implementation of the General Fund Asset Management Strategy
Programme of activity in response to the COVID-19 crisis to ensure the Council can deliver services and the town can recover from the effects of the virus

E. Developing the entity's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
A programme of activity to ensure there is corporate capacity to deliver sustainable services that meet the needs of all our customers

D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
Ensure good governance of the Regeneration Programme
Review and enhancement of Herts Home Improvement Agency
Implement a Corporate Landlord Function
Programme of work to enable the Council's ambitious commercial agenda

The Action Plan outlined on pages 31 to 34 of this document provides more detail in relation to the action required and timescales to deliver the above enhancement activity

Assurance: Internal Audit Arrangements

Annual Audit Coverage

Delivery of the Council's Internal Audit is carried out by the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) hosted by Hertfordshire County Council and managed by the Head of Assurance. Annual audit coverage is determined through a risk assessment, which is influenced by external regulatory requirements and the strategic and operational risks of the Council. By reviewing the Council's systems of internal control, risk management and governance in accordance with an approved Audit Plan, Internal Audit contribute to the Council's corporate governance framework.

The SIAS operates to defined professional standards, i.e. the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the Head of Assurance reports to the Council's Strategic Director (Chief Finance officer and Section 151 Officer) providing updates on internal audit progress and issues at regular liaison meetings. The Head of Assurance provides an independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the system of internal control and this is reported annually to Audit Committee. The main responsibility of the SIAS is to provide assurance and advice on the internal control systems of the Council to both Management and Members. The SIAS reviews and appraises the adequacy, reliability and effectiveness of internal control within systems and recommends improvement where necessary. It also supports management in developing systems by providing advice on matters pertaining to risk and control.

2019/20 Audit Report

The Head of Assurance's Annual Internal Audit Report and Assurance Statement is being reported to the Audit Committee in June 2020. From the internal audit work undertaken in 2019/20, the SIAS can provide the following assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's control environment, broken down between financial and non-financial systems as follows:

ASSURANCE OPINION: FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

Our overall opinion is **Satisfactory Assurance;** meaning the internal control framework is largely working well in managing the key risks in scope, with some audit findings related to the current arrangements.

ASSURANCE OPINION: NON-FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

Our overall opinion is **Satisfactory Assurance;** meaning the internal control framework is largely working well in managing the key risks in scope, with some audit findings related to the current arrangements.

The Satisfactory assurance opinion overall on financial systems has been concluded from ten financial systems audits. Seven received Good assurance and three received Satisfactory assurance. No Critical or High priority recommendations were made in these audits.

The Satisfactory assurance opinion on non-financial systems has been concluded from 18 audits. Nine audits received Good assurance, eight received Satisfactory assurance and one received Limited assurance. Only five high priority recommendations were made across these audits.

A summary of the High Priority Audit Recommendations made by the SIAS from the twenty-eight audits carried out during 2019/20 is shown below:

High Priority Audit Recommendation	Governance Enhancements
Facilities Management: Three recommendations to strengthen the control environment in relation to written procedures and contracts as well as annually renewing contracts to ensure best value	**All three recommendations are complete.** A full suite of procedural documents have now been produced and are available in a Facilities Management Procedure Manual. In relation to the management of contracts, the compliance function will be evolving with the implementation of the Corporate Landlord model. Contract arrangements have been reviewed, and as and when new contracts are procured, the Facilities Management Team will ensure the required forms are completed and stored within the central procurement register.
Stevenage Museum: Two recommendations to further strengthen the control environment and relate to addressing outstanding actions in the Museum Operational Management Risk Reduction Plan and restrict access to the safe and petty cash	**Both recommendations have been implemented.** All actions in the Museum Operational Management Risk Reduction Plan are now complete and new petty cash arrangements are now in place.

Review of Effectiveness of Systems of Internal Audit

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 came into force from 1 April 2015; Paragraph 5 (1) states, "A relevant authority must undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance".

As part of demonstrating the efficiency and effectiveness of the internal audit activity and identifying opportunities for improvement, the Head of Assurance must develop and maintain a quality assurance and improvement programme that covers all aspects of the internal audit activity. This includes an annual self-assessment undertaken by the Head of Assurance against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK. The self-assessment concluded that the system of Internal Audit employed at Stevenage Borough Council is effective.

In addition, PSIAS require that an external assessment or peer review is undertaken at least once every five years. An independent Peer Review was undertaken in 2015/16, which concluded that SIAS 'generally conforms' to the PSIAS, including the Definition of Internal Auditing, the Code of Ethics and Standards. 'Generally conforms' is the highest opinion within the scale of three ratings, and the peer review identified areas of good practice and high standards.

The annual performance indicators for SIAS are set by the SIAS Board which is comprised of the Section 151 Officers from the client authorities within the partnership. The table below sets out SIAS performance against the performance indicator relating to planned days delivery.

Area of Activity	Target	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Planned Days percentage of actual billable days against planned chargeable days completed	**95%**	99%	95%	99%	98%

The assurance arrangements conformed with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2010), as demonstrated through the assessment in the SIAS Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Annual Report being reported to Audit Committee on 9 June 2020.

The CIPFA/SOLACE Core Principles of Governance

Figure 3: International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC 2014)
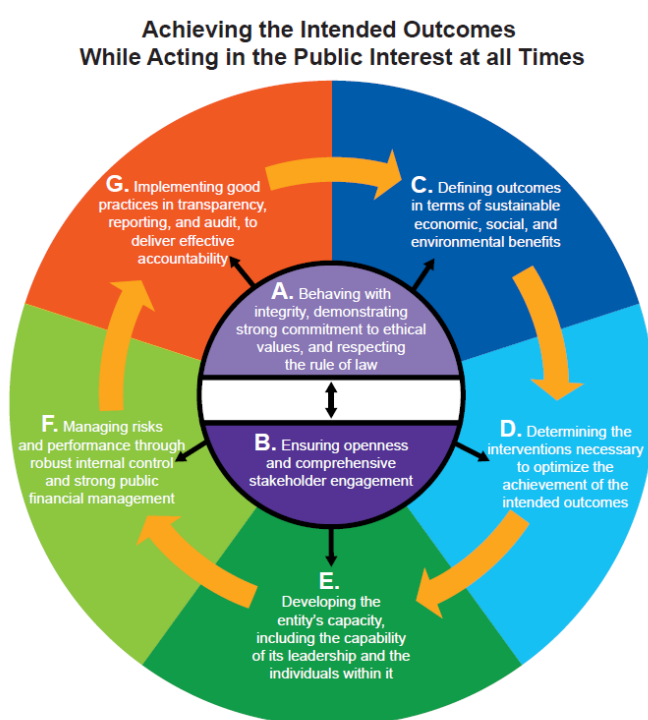
The Council achieves good standards of governance by applying the CIPFA/SOLACE Principles of Governance set out in the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' Framework (2016) represented in the International Framework.

The diagram at figure 3 illustrates how the various principles for good governance in the public sector relate to each other. To achieve good governance the Council should achieve their intended outcomes while acting in the public interest at all times.

As overarching requirements for acting in the public interest, Principles A and B and apply across all other principles (C – G)

A summary of the review of effectiveness of local arrangements in place for 2019/20 against each of the principles is set out on the following pages identifying opportunities for governance enhancements.

Arrangements are monitored throughout the year as set out on page 3. Progress against the delivery of actions identified in the 2018/19 Annual Governance Statement is reflected in the green boxes throughout this Annual Governance Statement.

Principle A: Behaving with integrity and respecting the rule of law

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law is acknowledged as key to the delivery of good governance and underpins the delivery of Council priorities and services for the community.

Summary of 2019/20 Review of Effectiveness:

The Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance identifies the Nolan Principles (Standards in Public Life) as underpinning all local government activity.

The standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of Members and Officers, its partners and the community are defined and communicated through Codes of Conduct and Protocols and the Council's Constitution. Arrangements are in place to ensure that Members and Officers are aware of their responsibilities under these codes and protocols.

The Council's website outlines the arrangements for making a complaint that a member of the authority has failed to comply with the Authority's Code of Conduct and sets out how the authority will deal with such allegations. Complaints about Members and allegations that a Member has breached the Code of Conduct would be dealt with by the Standards Committee and the Borough Solicitor (Monitoring Officer) under the Localism Act 2011. The Council has appointed an Independent Person, to consult on alleged breaches to the Member Code of Conduct.

The Council has a Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members of the Council and deal with any allegations that a member is in breach of the Council's Code of Conduct and to consider changes to the Code as required.

The Council's Constitution sets out the employment procedures for the Head of the Paid Service, Strategic and Assistant Directors, Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer.

Figure 4: Organisational Values

The Council's six organisational Values shown here are underpinned by a behaviour framework for staff. The values are intended to influence the ways in which elected Members and officers think and behave in responding to future challenges.

The Values are embedded into Member and Officer Induction, regular officer meetings with their managers (REAL conversations), the Modern Member training Programme, and management development programmes. A set of desired behaviours associated with each of the Values has been developed and form part of the Council's appraisal process for officers.

The Council has a Whistle-blowing Policy which is based on the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy. The Council's website and intranet have options for the public and staff to report suspected fraud that link to the Shared Anti-Fraud Service webpage.

During 2019/20, the Council carried out one instance of directed covert surveillance in accordance with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

The following governance activity pertaining to best practice has been delivered in 2019/20:

- The Council's Financial Regulations have been reviewed. Approval by Council of the revised Regulations has however been delayed due to COVID-19.
- New Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Bribery Policies have been produced and will be publicised to staff by September 2020.
- Fraud information for staff is now available on the Council's intranet
- Fraud e-learning is now available to staff

> **Arrangements reflect those summarised in the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance - No significant requirements to enhance governance have been identified.**

Principle B: Engaging with local people and other stakeholders

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement is considered essential in meeting the Council's corporate ambitions and framework of values and regarded as key to effective service delivery. Communication supports the decision-making process and helps to improve service quality and foster good relationships between staff, Members and stakeholders.

Summary of 2019/20 Review of Effectiveness:

The Council wants to hear views about Council services. The Council regularly provides local residents, partners and other interested parties with opportunities to influence the planning, prioritisation and monitoring of services. A variety of methods are used to engage the local community, such as: surveys and questionnaires, community roadshows, focus and action groups and stakeholder conferences.

A new Community Engagement Framework has been prepared and agreed. A customer friendly version of the Framework is being produced which will be available on the Council's website. Toolkit development will be ongoing as resources are created for Council teams moving forward.

The Council has a system for recording customer feedback which enables learning from feedback and complaints to facilitate effective monitoring of information provided by customers to review future service delivery.

Figure 5: Residents' Newsletter

The Council uses a variety of media to communicate with its residents, businesses and customers, for example Stevenage Chronicle which is the Council's quarterly magazine for residents which provides the latest information about Council initiatives and services, community news and events, the Council's website, press releases and social media.

In November 2017 a LGA Peer Review of the Council's communications arrangements was carried out. The review has informed a restructure of the Communications Team and how the Council communicates with its stakeholders.

In response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Council has played an active role in promoting and signposting residents and businesses to the Government's package of guidance and support measures. The Council's website has lots of information and links and these have also been publicised on social media.

The Council has also engaged with businesses and voluntary sector organisations in relation to a potential no-deal Brexit, promoting and signposting them to government information and guidance.

A dedicated Coronavirus section has also been set up on the Council's website which includes Frequently Asked Questions, Government advice, and information about changes the Council has made to its services. A special Coronavirus edition of Chronicle was distributed to all households in Stevenage as well as being available online.

As part of its response to COVID-19, the Council has worked closely and collaboratively with its partners to respond to the crisis. The Council has been working in partnership with the Hertfordshire

LEP, Chamber of Commerce, Wenta and the Hertfordshire Growth Board to ensure that businesses in the town are supported and informed.

The Council has also been working with the voluntary sector, Police, Citizens Advice Stevenage, British Red Cross, Foodbanks and other voluntary services in Stevenage as well as a range of local charities to provide help and advice to those who are particularly vulnerable and are facing hardship during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Council has over the past few years established a number of shared service arrangements to provide efficient and effective shared service provision and governance arrangements facilitate effective stakeholder engagement to deliver agreed outcomes.

To facilitate the Council's drive for continuous improvement, a Partner of Choice Programme was established to achieve stronger partnerships with key agencies to better deliver the Council's strategic priorities. In March 2018 it was apparent that working in partnership is now embedded in the culture of the Council and there is a strong framework for future collaboration with other public sector bodies. This led to the Partner of Choice programme being considered complete. 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.

The following governance activity pertaining to best practice has been delivered in 2019/20:

- The Annual Report and Performance Review highlighting the Council's achievements over the past year and plans for the next twelve months was approved by Executive and published on the Council's website.
- New Customer Feedback Policy approved and published.
- New Freedom of Information e-learning launched.
- Mace held a public consultation to get feedback on the latest proposals for the regeneration of SG1. The event was well attended with over 500 people engaging in the process.
- People in the town were asked for their views about the plans to relocate and improve the bus interchange to improve transport and connectivity links in the town.
- Consultation was carried out to seek residents' views about the Council's proposals to improve the Old Town and Roebuck Play Areas.
- Consultations regarding current and future community centre use and facilities took place with over 340 responses recorded and 42 focus group consultations. Executive approved a set of recommendations as part of the Community Centre Review in December 2019.
- Consultation was carried out to inform the creation of both the new Housing Older People Strategy and the Homeless Strategy. There has also been consultation to inform the development of the Climate Change Strategy, including piloting a new engagement tool via social media.
- The Major Refurbishment Contract has promoted social value by utilising local employment, with over 40% of materials and subcontract labour being supplied by local supply chain partners.
- Proposals on a Community Wealth Building approach were agreed by Council.
- Approval was given by Executive to the establishment of six Co-operative Neighbourhood areas. The six teams will form the basis of the Council's strategic approach to delivering localised, responsive, coordinated and collaborative services; working with partners, and engaging with the different communities of Stevenage.
- A series of ward walkabouts with elected members and relevant officers took place. This has informed future projects and celebrated recent successes.

- The procurement process for an integrated digital solution provider was concluded and the supplier has commenced work on the replacement of the existing Customer Relationship Management system. The new software will enable integration between systems, to join up Council service delivery and provide better customer facing online service channels.

- A Customer Charter developed in conjunction with the Stevenage Direct Services Change and Action Team was agreed and adopted. Built on the Council's values, the charter sets out how the service will conduct its operations and business and details what customers can expect. The charter also explains how customers can help to deliver effective services.

- The Community Select Committee's review of resident involvement is now complete with clear actions defined in the development of a wider Community Engagement Framework and toolkit for the Council. This will also help to inform the development of existing resident involvement groups linked to Housing and Investment.

Arrangements reflect those summarised in the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance - No significant requirements to enhance governance have been identified.

Principle C: Defining outcomes – the Council's vision and priorities

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social and environmental benefits. The focus of the Council's governance arrangements is to deliver the best possible outcomes for the community and the Council's vision for the town. It is essential that the Council seeks customer feedback and works with partners, to pool resources and skills

Summary of 2019/20 Review of Effectiveness:

The Council's vision:
Stevenage: a prosperous town with vibrant communities and improved life chances

Working in partnership

Stevenage Together, Stevenage's local strategic partnership includes a range of diverse partner agencies. Its ethos is to foster innovative ways of working together, to improve the lives of people who live, work and visit Stevenage.

Stevenage Together is responsible for producing a Community Strategy and making sure that it is carried out. The Community Strategy (Stevenage 2021: Our Town, Our Future) is the main strategic plan for the partnership. It outlines the partnership's vision and how the partnership will work together to improve Stevenage and contribute to the development of the town.

Stevenage Together oversees three themed groups: Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP), Community Safety Partnership (SoSafe), Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

The aims of the partnership are to generate pride in the borough, develop communities, help people feel safe and improve residents' health

Stevenage Together has adopted five co-operative principles:

- The Partnership as a strong community leader
- Working together with the community and other agencies to provide services based on needs
- Communities empowered to design and deliver services and play a role in their local community
- A clear understanding between the partnership and our communities – this is what we do, this is what we will help you to do
- Joined-up and accessible services that offer value for money and focus on the customer

Future Town, Future Council

The Future Town, Future Council (FTFC) programme consists of nine key programmes that aim to deliver improved outcomes and real change for Stevenage residents. The Future Town Future Council programme serves to enhance governance arrangements, particularly through the three programmes that deliver the changes required to ensure the Council is well placed to meet the service demands of the future:

- Financial Security
- Performing at our Peak
- Employer of Choice

The focus and scopes of programmes is monitored to ensure that the FTFC Programme continues to deliver the Council's priorities.

Work is progressing on scoping a new FTFC programme called 'Place of Choice'. It has been agreed that this will incorporate the activities associated with a number of existing and emerging strategies that focus 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. The following existing and emerging strategies/plans are included in the scope of the programme:

- Stevenage Reimagined
- Healthy Stevenage
- Community Safety
- Community Wealth Building
- Climate Change
- Future Town Future Transport
- Biodiversity Action Plan

Where it has been possible and in line with the government's restrictions, key FTFC delivery programmes have continued during the COVID-19 crisis. The regeneration schemes at Queensway and Town Square continue to be progressed, with contractors working in accordance with government guidance. The Housing Development programme continues on existing sites. A number of critical ICT projects are also continuing to progress as planned.

There will however be an impact on the FTFC programme as a result of COVID-19 and Officers have therefore conducted a review of the FTFC programme for 2020/21 to help identify which planned projects can be delivered or where necessary adapted, noting the FTFC programme will be a key element of the Council's COVID-19 recovery programme. Officers have engaged with Executive Members and the Opposition Group Leaders to help shape the direction of this programme for 2020/21, to identify priorities and test the progress and deliverability of key projects.

This process has set out a range of programmes that the Council will continue to prioritise during the crisis and in the recovery phase, including the continuation of Town Centre Regeneration projects and the SG1 scheme and the Stevenage Development Board which is working up the bid for the Towns Fund and unallocated Growth Deal monies, the delivery of high quality affordable housing projects, the work underway to create a new and effective online customer service offer to adapt to the current environment, investment to enhance the current housing stock and improve the offer to

Figure 7: Future Town Future Council

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residents and tenants, and the continued delivery of Cooperative Neighbourhood Management arrangements. Officers will also continue to prepare strategies and action plans for key objectives such as Community Wealth Building, Climate Change and the next phase of the Future Town Future Transport programme. These projects and strategies will be brought together as part of the emerging COVID-19 recovery plan for Stevenage.

Figure 8: Corporate Plan
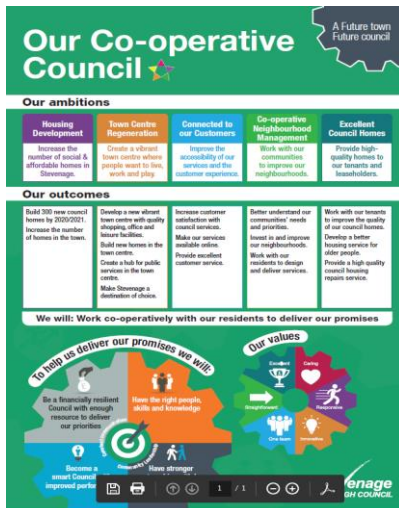
The Co-operative Corporate Plan (FTFC) reflects the ambitions and projects and articulates to the public the Council's key priorities and objectives that support the achievement of the FTFC programme over the next few years.

Every year we consider progress against our priorities as part of our annual plans and this informs important decisions about where to spend the budget. The Annual Report summarises the Council's achievements over the past year and outlines what it plans to do in the next twelve months and is published on the Council's website.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the Council's key General Fund financial planning document and sets out the Council's strategic approach to the management of the General Fund including Council tax levels, capital funding and treasury management. This strategy underpins the Council's key priorities for Stevenage as set out in the FTFC agenda and other strategic documents of the Council. The key aim of the Strategy is to facilitate the Council in achieving the outcomes set out in those documents, by setting out MTFS principles, which generates the need for Financial Security targets, identifies financial pressures and any additional resources for priorities to ensure the Council has a financially sustainable plan.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was reported to Executive in September 2019, updated in the November 2019 Executive Financial Security report and as part of the General Fund budget report to the January 2020 Executive.

The Officer's Assets and Capital Group ensures effective arrangements are in place for the design and delivery of capital projects and resources.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan is the Council's 30 year strategic plan for managing and maintaining its housing stock. It sets out the Council's short-to-medium term plans and priorities for its housing management services and provides a long term perspective on stock investment and financial plan. The HRA Business Plan has recently been reviewed to reflect legislative changes which have impacted on HRA finances. The revisions were agreed at Executive in December 2019 and ensure there are sufficient HRA funds to support the Council's Housebuilding and Acquisitions Programme and Housing Asset Management programme. The Council's HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy looks at these plans over a five year horizon in greater detail setting out the principles which generates the need for Financial Security targets.

The HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy underpins the Council's key housing priorities for Stevenage as set out in the FTFC agenda 'Excellent Council Homes' and 'Housing Development' and in the Housing Asset Management Strategy. The Council continues to work co-operatively with housing customers to help shape these priorities and associated programmes.

The Council also has a five year Capital Strategy. The purpose of the Capital Strategy is to show how the Council determines its priorities for capital investment, how much it can afford to borrow and sets out any associated risks. As a result of changes to the Prudential Code, this Strategy now shows how capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services and implications for future financial sustainability. All capital schemes are regularly reviewed and prioritised to determine whether they should be included in the Capital Strategy. The

Officers' Capital Group ensures that effective arrangements are in place for the design and delivery of capital projects.

Revision to the 2019/20 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme and approval of the draft Capital Programme for 2020/21 was considered by Executive and then by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2020 and the final Capital Programme was approved by Council in February 2020

After over a decade in the making and over a year being held by the Secretary of State, in May 2019 the Council proudly adopted its new Local Plan for Stevenage. The Plan sets the planning policies up until 2031 for 7600 new homes and space for over 2000 new jobs; a revitalised town centre, 3 new sustainable neighbourhoods with the protection of our green infrastructure.

An updated Local Development Scheme was agreed by Executive in April 2019. The Scheme sets out milestones for the examination of the Local Plan and its adoption. It also sets out timeframes for the adoption of the Community Infrastructure Levy and a new Area Action Plan relating to the Railway Station area.

A five year Housing Asset Management Strategy and action plan for implementation of the strategy over the next five years was approved in March 2019. The Strategy sets out the underlying principles which sit behind excellent asset management and the key strategic projects and programmes to ensure the Council derives maximum value for its assets whilst providing high quality homes for its tenants. The Strategy will allow the Council to meet its strategic goals of having fit for purpose, safe, well maintained and well-presented housing stock, with a view to optimising housing development opportunities where appropriate.

The General Fund Asset Management Strategy and rolling five year action plan will guide the Council's future strategic property decisions to make sure the estate is managed sustainably and efficiently so it can adapt and remain fit for the future, and help the Council meet its FTFC aims. The new Strategy sets out clear financial targets to achieve during the next five years to meet the Council's financial challenges. To help reach these financial targets, the Strategy recommends seven clear areas for change, including undertaking local asset reviews to identify new opportunities to release surplus land and buildings for sale and opportunities to generate new sustained revenue income as well as improving efficiency and utilisation of assets with partners. The Strategy will remain in place until 2023 and the Action Plan is the key change document and main focus, to be updated annually. A Local Asset Review Board has been established and an approach to the review has been agreed by the Board. A new post funded from the business rates pool is now in place and will support the community engagement associated with this work.

As a result of COVID-19 and the government restrictions there has been significant impact on the Council's income, expenditure and cash flow. There has been a loss of income from parking fees, use of leisure facilities, Council Tax as well as other sources of income. The Council has incurred additional expenditure in relation to its response to the crisis and there has been an impact on the Council's cashflow.

A return was submitted to the MHCLG on 15 May 2020 which estimates potential losses for the Council of £5.4 Million for the General Fund and up to £2 Million for the HRA in 2020/21. The Government allocated an additional £1.6B in March and a further £1.6B in April to support local government finances. Stevenage Borough Council's share of this allocation has been £917K. The Council has been engaging with MHCLG to highlight the significant financial implications of COVID-19 on the Council's finances. The information submitted to MHCLG on 15 April estimated that the adverse impact on the Council's finances just for March and April 2020 was £1M, more than the grant received.

There will be an update on the MTFS to the June Executive; setting out plans to ensure the General Fund balances are resilient enough should no further government be forthcoming.

The Council has also submitted information regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the capital programme and to ask for a number of initiatives such as retaining right to buy pooling receipts longer and lower borrowing rates via PWLB.

Progress of significant governance (2018/19 AGS) action to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework:

Housing Asset Management Strategy: A new five year Housing Asset Management Strategy (2019-2024), with an action plan for implementation of the strategy over the next five years was approved by Executive in March 2019. The Strategy sets out the underlying principles which sit behind excellent asset management for the Council and the key strategic projects and programme to ensure the council derives maximum value from its assets whilst providing high quality homes for its tenants.

Progress against the five year action plan during 2019/20 is as follows:
- A stock condition survey of the Council's housing stock, including tower blocks, is underway and will help inform the HRA Business Plan.
- The Major Refurbishment Contract is underway for flat blocks and is now entering into Phase 3, along with a number of other significant programmes such as communal heating refurbishment; sprinkler retrofitting and reviewing the compliance contract and lift replacement/refurbishment.
- A new contractor is being procured to deliver the Decent Homes Standard
- Development of effective programmes to deliver the objectives of the Housing Asset Management Strategy and wider Council strategies is complete.
- The Council has agreed to review its acceptable SAP rating in response to the climate change emergency and to understand the associated cost.
- The Aids and Adaptations Policy has been reviewed and was approved by Executive in March 2020.
- The Repairs and Voids service and the Lettings Team are working closely to carry out a review and implement recommendations to provide quality homes and sustainable tenancies whilst limiting the time properties are void.

Delivery of the Housing Asset Management Strategy is now ongoing and has not been included as an AGS action for 2020/21.

General Fund Asset Management Strategy: The General Fund Asset Management Strategy had a key action for the Council to undertake Local Asset reviews of its current land and buildings.

Progress against this key action during 2019/20 is as follows:
- Local Asset reviews for three wards have now taken place
- A Local Asset Review Board which includes officers from different business units and is currently sponsored by AD (Finance and Estates) has been established and now meets monthly.
- Planning colleagues have been consulted to determine viable asset management options and the Local Asset Review Board have recommended options which merit further work.
- New property data management software has been installed.
- Local Asset Review work will continue during 2020/21. The outcome should be a list of high level opportunities to be consulted on and a site disposal list

Information regarding continued enhancement activity proposed for 2020/21 and timeline for delivery is reflected on page 31).

Ongoing monitoring is planned in mitigation of risks relating to the delivery of agreed outcomes:
The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan is under ongoing review to ensure a balanced HRA financial plan for the next 30 years. In December 2019 Executive approved revisions to the Business Plan to ensure there are sufficient HRA funds to support the Council's Housebuilding and Acquisitions Programme and Housing Asset Management Programme. The HRA Business Plan will need to be reviewed as a result of the review of the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy to assess the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the strategy.

In addition, the following governance activity pertaining to best practice has been delivered in 2019/20:

Hertfordshire Growth Board commissioned a development programme to help consider the implications of growth in Hertfordshire. This six month supported programme explored how issues relating to housing, infrastructure and funding can be jointly addressed in future and a forward work programme and memorandum of understanding for this has been approved.
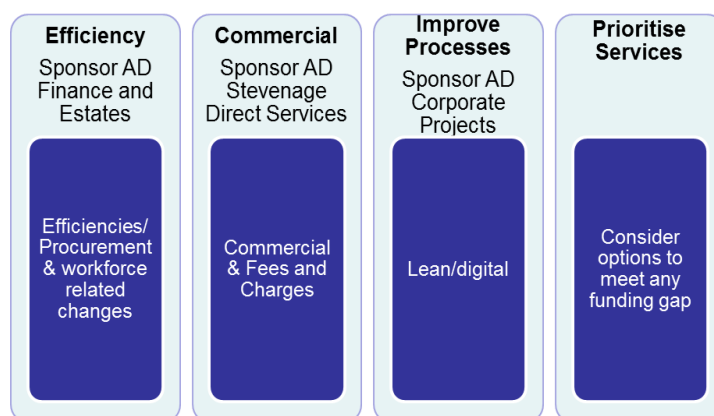
Principle D: Determining Intervention

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of outcomes requires robust monitoring and decision-making mechanisms to ensure that actions identified are sustainable within available resources.

Summary of 2019/19 Review of Effectiveness:

Financial Governance Arrangements:

The Financial Security Programme has been redesigned with new workstreams, with Assistant Directors taking key leads in relation to Efficiency, Commercial, and Improving Processes. There is a further workstream to prioritise services to meet a funding gap should the need arise. The Financial Security programme continued to enhance the financial resilience of the Council by ensuring resources are being used effectively and efficiently and through the development of commercial and entrepreneurial skills and services.

Figure 9: Financial Security Work Streams

Efficiency	Commercial	Improve Processes	Prioritise Services
Sponsor AD Finance and Estates	Sponsor AD Stevenage Direct Services	Sponsor AD Corporate Projects	
Efficiencies/ Procurement & workforce related changes	Commercial & Fees and Charges	Lean/digital	Consider options to meet any funding gap

Internal financial control is based on a framework of management information, financial regulations and administrative procedures, which include the separation of duties, management supervision, appropriate staffing structure including appropriately skilled, trained or qualified staff, and a system of delegation and accountability.

The Council's framework of internal financial control is supported by Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders. The regulations provide the framework for managing the Council's financial affairs. They set out the procedures that the Council has adopted for financial planning, budgeting, risk management, auditing, treasury management and procurement of goods and services.

Monitoring performance:

The performance and quality of each FTFC programme is monitored through a monthly Programme Board. The corporate programme is monitored through assessment of progress against target for a set of corporate performance measures aligned to service priorities.

As part of the Performing at our Peak programme, a new performance management framework was introduced to monitor performance measure results associated with the FTFC Programme together with measures to monitor the delivery of effective services (the corporate programme).

A performance and governance system (InPhase) has been introduced to monitor performance and risk and is providing improved insight into corporate priority delivery. The new system is providing a range of corporate performance monitoring relating to service delivery, finances, staff, and customers, alongside consideration of the risks associated with the delivery of objectives in order to provide strategic insight and facilitate prompt implementation of any necessary improvement plans.

The status of performance for both the FTFC programme and the corporate programme with proposed improvement plans, where necessary, are discussed by senior management prior to Executive on a quarterly basis. In addition the Executive receive separate regular updates on the Council's financial position and quarterly overview reports.

A Performance Guide is available to staff on the Council's intranet. The guide sets out the Council's approach to:

- Identifying appropriate performance measures aligned to corporate and services priorities and resource
- Monitoring and reviewing performance measure results to help identify activity to improve outcomes for the community
- Identifying and celebrating business achievements
- Identifying and managing risk
- Ensuring that the overall governance of the organisation is robust.

All of this information provides business insight that helps to drive improvement and deliver outcomes that benefit the community.

The Council also has a Data Quality Policy which outlines the Council's commitment to ensuring data quality and arrangements are in place to monitor and enhance the quality of performance data.

Housing Development Programme

The Housing development programme aims to increase the affordable and social housing provision in the town (both within the town centre and the suburbs).

The Housing Development and Regeneration Executive Committee receives updates on the Housing Development Programme. During 2019/20 reports have been considered by the Executive as required. Progress of the programme and against key milestones is reported each month to the FTFC programme board. Budgets are also monitored by the Assets and Capital Board which meets bi-monthly to ensure spend is in line with predictions. New build schemes within the HRA form part of the HRA Business Plan, and the General Fund schemes are reported to Executive as part of the Capital Strategy updates.

On 19 July 2019, the Executive approved the procurement approach for the Kenilworth Housing Development Scheme. An internal audit of the procurement process was carried out in March 2020 and advised they were satisfied the decision to appoint the developer was made in line with internal procurement rules, there is good evidence to demonstrate the rationale for the procurement approach and SIAS were able to confirm that elected members were consulted and kept informed as the process evolved. SIAS advised that the procurement process had been subject to and passed several stages of extensive internal scrutiny from elected members

The various contracts for the building works commissioned by the Housing Development team are monitored through monthly site meetings attended by an officer representative as well as the contractor and an independent Employers Agent whose role is to administrate the effective running of the contract.
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Regeneration

The Council, along with its development partners will be delivering a major, twenty year, £1bn regeneration programme designed to transform Stevenage. Stevenage First, the partnership formed of Stevenage Borough Council, Local Enterprise Partnership, Hertfordshire County Council and the Chamber of Commerce are leading this regeneration work.

As part of the regeneration programme, the Council has partnered with Mace to deliver a £350m scheme called SG1. SG1 is a 14.5 acre site including a minimum of 1700 new homes, 60,000sq feet of ground floor retail and restaurant space, new public spaces and a public services hub, combining

community assets such as health services, library, voluntary sector, café and Council offices. Following a competitive tender process, the Council selected Mace as its development partner to deliver SG1. The governance arrangements for this scheme include fortnightly Project Team meetings and monthly Steering Group meetings between Stevenage Borough Council and Mace with issues resolved through the business plan.

The Council has also signed a £50m development deal with Reef Estates to redevelop Queensway North. Development of the Queensway North area will form a significant early and important part of Stevenage's regeneration programme. Queensway North is a mixed-use redevelopment scheme transforming an existing town centre site into retail and leisure units, office space, and delivering 110 residential units. This will completely reposition a partly empty asset which included the vacant Marks and Spencer site, derelict for a number of years, and will act as a major regeneration catalyst.

On 1st November 2019, the government issued the Town Fund prospectus inviting 100 towns to develop proposals to benefit from up to £25M funding. 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. In December, Executive agreed the approach and governance arrangements to enable the Council to make a Town Fund bid. A Stevenage Development Board has been set up which meets monthly and its terms of reference have been agreed.

Progress of significant governance (2018/19 AGS) action to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework:

Governance of Key Regeneration Projects: The Housing Development and Regeneration Executive Committee receives updates on both the Housing Development Programme and an overview of the Regeneration Programme. Integrating regeneration into this existing meeting to become a joint meeting has been very positive and enabled Councillors to have sight of emerging opportunities. During 2019/20 regular reports have been considered by the Executive as required. Progress of the programme and against key milestones is reported each month to the FTFC programme board. Monthly and quarterly reporting with Hertfordshire LEP takes place, together with Stevenage Borough Council financial reported to track LEP related expenditure.

Board-level meetings are held with two of our key partners, Mace and Reef, on a monthly and quarterly basis respectively. This is supported by regular operational meetings. The strength of these partnerships has been vital in preparing COVID-19 mitigation measures in March 2020.

Good progress has been made towards implementing the recommendations of a recent internal audit. Key actions completed to date include the streamlining of governance functions to ensure a single highlight report is used to update multiple meetings, and a shift in emphasis towards empowering project managers and project sponsors to operate more autonomously within established criteria.

The Council also opened the Stevenage Regeneration Visitor Centre where visitors can learn more about the town's regeneration plans in an informative and interactive exhibition and a specialist officer is on site to answer questions. Thousands of residents have visited the centre and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, both towards the proposals and the way in which we are engaging in a transparent and co-operative way

The Council launched Stevenage Even Better. Stevenage Even Better is the result of work from a number of organisations, including Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce. Stevenage Even Better launched its own interactive website this year and has received positive engagement with residents through social media.

The terms of reference for the new Stevenage Development Board which is working up the bid for the Towns Fund and unallocated Growth Deal monies, have been agreed and monthly meetings are now being held of the Board to progress the Town Investment Plan. Information about the Board will soon be added to the Stevenage Even Better website.

Information regarding continued enhancement activity proposed for 2020/21 and timeline for delivery is reflected on page 32).

Progress of significant governance (2018/19 AGS) action to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework:

Community Safety: Changes to procedures to enhance document retention arrangements in relation to the enforcement of anti-social behaviour action have been implemented. This action is therefore now complete and will not be carried over to 2020/21.

Progress of significant governance (2018/19 AGS) action to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework and SBC Local Code of Governance:

Shared Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA) service: In 2017, Hertfordshire County Council created the HHIA as a specific model for collaborative working between the upper and lower tiers of local government in Hertfordshire, with the aim of providing a centralised service to assist residents to improve or adapt their home for continued independent and safe living. Stevenage Borough Council joined this centralised service in April 2018. In In response to an internal audit of the new shared service, the following action has been taken to ensure that the Service can deliver its financial targets in the medium term, as well as ensure that minimum key standards are being met, enhance its governance structure and ensure the HHIA Board is offering value for money the following activity is planned by Hertfordshire County Council:

- A new senior management team is now in place and a new Business Analyst has been appointed to provide strategic and operational statistics alongside case monitoring.
- A new Case Worker and Technical Officer have also been appointed.
- Standard Operating Procedures have been produced and a review of the service's team structure is taking place.
- The Customer Management System has been reviewed and process mapping is complete. A report is to be submitted to the HHIA Board regarding potential options which could include replacing the CMS system when the current contract ends in September 2020.
- All HHIA staff have undertaken training to ensure all staff are 'up skilled''.

Information regarding continued enhancement activity proposed for 2020/21 and timeline for delivery is reflected on page 32).

Ongoing monitoring is planned in mitigation of risks relating to the delivery of agreed outcomes:

The Council continues to assess the potential impact of Welfare Reform changes on the community. In October 2018, Universal Credit Live was rolled out in Stevenage. The Council is continuing to identify and work with tenants affected by the reduction in the benefit cap, and under occupancy charges, together with migration to Universal Credit and more recently to support mixed age couples where the youngest partner is below pension credit age. The council are continuing to support tenants on legacy benefits and council tax support

In addition, the following governance activity pertaining to best practice has also been delivered:

- A new ICT Programme Management Office has been established and is implementing procedures to ensure that ICT projects are delivered to a consistent standard with appropriate governance arrangements.

- A new Data Analyst is working with performance measure owners to review the potential to extract performance data automatically from systems and to input it directly into the Council's performance management system.

Principle E: Leadership capacity and capability

Principle E: Developing the organisation's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it. The appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills and values, enable the Council to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve the best possible outcomes for the community.

Summary of 2019/20 Review of Effectiveness:

The Council's Political Management Structure:

Figure 10: Political Management Structure 2019/20
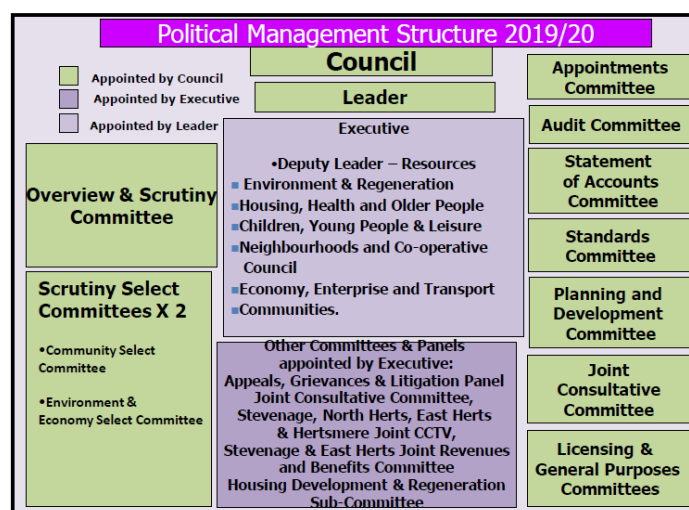
The Political Management Structure diagram summarises the Council's political structure.

All Councillors meet together as the Council. Meetings are generally open to the public and feature a main topical debate item. The Council has an approved Constitution which details how the Council operates, how decisions are made, including delegation of decisions and the procedures that are to be followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. The Monitoring Officer ensures that the Constitution remains fit for purpose, that legal requirements are met and that the public interest is paramount in all decision making.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the government has recently brought in new arrangements for meetings to be held remotely. The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ('the Regulations') came into force on 4 April 2020 and apply to local authority and police and crime panel meetings that are required to be held, or held before 7 May 2021. The Council has therefore put in place arrangements for meetings to be held remotely in line with these new regulations. A protocol has been written for the management and conduct for remote meetings. Meetings can be viewed by the public via YouTube.

Audit Committee meets quarterly and its duties include advising and commenting on internal and external audit matters, anti-fraud and corruption issues, risk management and governance, the Council's Constitution in respect of Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and the Statement of Accounts and related Capital determinations. The Audit Committee has been constituted in line with best practice recommendations from CIPFA guidance.

The Council has structured its processes and procedures for the Executive and Scrutiny

Committees plus other Committees such as the regulatory ones, to minimise the risk of it acting in contravention of its own policies and external laws and regulations. The Council also appoints officers qualified to undertake statutory responsibilities, such as:

- Chief Financial Officer (Strategic Director (Chief Finance Officer)) as contained within Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
- Monitoring Officer (Borough Solicitor) to meet Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

There is a Modern Members Programme which provides Members with a programme of training to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to ensure effective and informed decision making. This training programme covers essential skills such as understanding budgets as well as topical items and briefing on new legislation. The Modern Members Programme is arranged for all elected members, based on their feedback and requests. There is also a programme of induction training and meetings with key officers for newly elected Members.

The Council's Officer Structure:

The Council aims to create a flexible, collaborative, creative and modern workforce to ensure the Council can deliver the priorities set out in the FTFC programme and give residents the standard of services they expect.

The senior leadership team has been structured to drive the development of a sustainable, customer orientated and commercial operating model. The model is focused upon 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.

A number of key appointments to strategic posts have taken place this year. The Council appointed its new Chief Executive in July 2019. This led to the appointment to the roles of Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director.

An additional Strategic Director (Chief Finance Officer) role was created to ensure the Council can meet future financial challenges and opportunities and this role has recently been appointed to. This has led to the post of Assistant Director (Finance and Estates) becoming vacant and an appointment to this post has been made.

The roles of Assistant Director Digital and Transformation and Assistant Director Stevenage Direct Services have both now been appointed and they will both be taking up their new roles in May 2020.

The Council's Employer of Choice programme is transforming the way the Council works, ensuring staff have the skills, abilities and experience to deliver excellence.

The Council uses a Human Resources Management system to support workforce planning, training, development and the implementation of the Council's new competency framework structure. The Council's Competency Framework provides a map of the behaviours, as well as the skills, that are valued and recognised by the Council.

The Council has a staff Performance and Improvement Policy and Manager Toolkit, as well as associated policies (Absence Management, Dignity at Work, Disciplinary, Grievance and Appeals policies, Organisational Change Policy, Sickness Absence Policy) to encourage all employees to personally deliver the highest standards of service possible and for managers to proactively address performance issues. The Council has a rolling appraisal process called REAL Conversations with regular meeting arrangements providing a framework for achieving the best performance on a day to day basis. These conversations typically include objectives, development, engagement and wellbeing, but they are also tailored to individuals.

Progress of significant governance actions (2018/19 AGS) to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework:

Corporate Capacity: Activity to ensure the Council has corporate capacity to deliver its FTFC aims as well as deliver sustainable services that meet the needs of customers the following activity has taken place:

- There has been a significant amount of work on Future Council Business Unit Reviews. The Fourth Tier (roles reporting to Assistant Directors) review is now almost complete across the whole Council.

- Work has commenced to establish a Manager's Leadership forum and work is underway to develop a leadership vision and an aligned development programme to support and empower manager's to deliver that vision. Wider business unit skill gaps will be assessed once business unit reviews are complete and staff have been recruited for the posts.

- The Council introduced a new Managing Organisational Change policy which is more holistic and considers how to manage change and the impact on our people. Managers also received training on this at the time of launching the new policy.

- A Manager and Senior Leadership Team Development Programme was agreed and is now in place.

- The Leadership Competency Framework was developed and implemented during 2016 to signal to the organisation the expected behaviours and skills that would be valued. The Competency Framework has now been extended for all staff. A communications plan to publicise the Competency Framework to staff has been developed and agreed and will link to the Council's employer brand.

- As part of the Council's response to COVID-19 we have prioritised key roles for recruitment and these processes are continuing remotely with interviews taking place through video conferencing.

Information regarding continued enhancement activity proposed for 2020/21 and timeline for delivery is reflected on page 33).

In addition, the following governance activity pertaining to best practice has also been delivered:

- The Council adopted the charity Mind's Wellbeing Action Plan which helps individuals manage their mental health

- The Council's approach to sickness management was enhanced with the launch of First Care. This nurse led service provides advice and guidance on health concerns and informs managers of any sickness absence

- Council staff attended fraud awareness training in areas such as procurement and contract fraud, housing/tenancy fraud and identity fraud.

- An e-learning package for staff and Members to raise awareness of fraud as a risk is now available

- Stevenage Anti-Fraud Service Managers now form part of the Council's Corporate Governance Group and also sit on the Joint Action Group, which is a partnership of police and the Council, set up to tackle various low level but prolific or persistent offending

- A newly developed Learning and Development Module for staff is now available on the MyView system.

- A new Learning and Development Policy has been produced and a map of Learning and Development is currently being developed. Work is currently underway on a new Learning and Development Strategy.

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management. Risk management, together with a strong system of financial management are integral parts of a performance management system and are crucial to the achievement of outcomes.

Summary of 2019/20 Review of Effectiveness:

Risk Management

The Council consider and counter risk across a broad range of areas. The Council has an approved Risk Management Policy and a Risk Management Guide is available to all employees. Strategic risks are linked to the Council's priorities and the Strategic Risk Register is reviewed and monitored on a quarterly basis. Operational risks are also developed and monitored.

Figure 13: Risk Management Arrangements
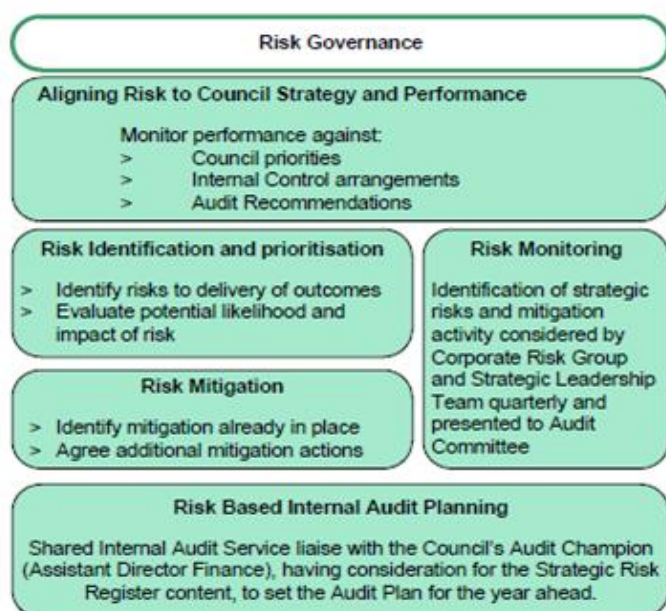
A Corporate Risk Management Group meets quarterly to oversee and review the process and development of the Council's approach to risk.

To support service delivery improvements, the Council welcomes constructive challenge as a result of scrutiny from internal/external audit activity, the work programme of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other external review agencies and inspectorates.

The Shared Anti-Fraud Service's annual Action Plan ensures compliance with the best practice issued by central government, National Audit Office and CIPFA. The Council has an Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy as well as a Whistle-blowing Policy. Data Protection and Information Security responsibilities for staff, and processes for the management of both electronic and manual records are also available.

Information Technology

The ability to identify and assimilate new technologies is an integral part of the Council's aim to achieving its strategic objectives. The Council has a Shared IT service with East Herts which is responsible for developing the shared IT platform as well as delivering IT services. The shared service was established through a partnership agreement between the two Councils in 2013.

The Councils have established an Information Technology Steering Group (ITSG), which meets on a monthly basis and oversees the operation of the Shared IT Service. In addition, the Councils have established an ICT Partnership Board, which also meets on a monthly basis and is responsible for the strategic direction of the service. Both the ITSG and the ICT Partnership Board include senior members of staff from both Councils.

The IT Steering Group and the IT Programme Management Office function facilitates delivery of the projects that supports the Council's Future Town, Future Council programme and the Council's Business Unit reviews alongside the day to day IT service.

The IT service is committed to embracing new digital opportunities to better meet the needs of residents, achieve savings and transform services. A secure, resilient, effective and forward looking Technology Service is critical in delivering these aims.

A new ICT strategy and Road Map, approved in 2019/20 by both Council Stevenage Borough Council and East Herts District Council and provides a united vision for the ICT service over the next three years. The ICT Strategy articulates the ICT vision and objectives now and in the future. The Partnership vision is to create a modern, secure, resilient and transformational ICT service that drives and supports delivery of joined up services to customers through the effective use of technology.

Health and Safety

Figure 14: Council's Health and Safety Framework
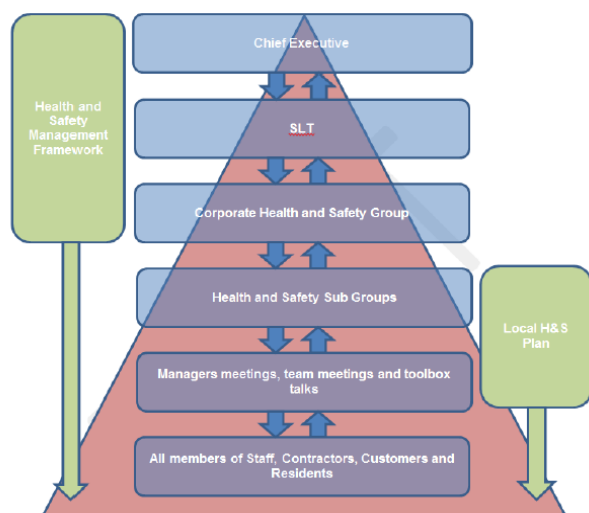
To ensure and maintain corporate wide oversight and clarity on health and safety compliance and performance across the Council, a new corporate health and safety governance structure is in place that provides assurance to senior management that health and safety assessments and activity across the Council are being effectively managed. Assistant Directors have ensured that health and safety responsibilities at each level of management within their business units are clear. An ongoing schedule of review by Assistant Directors and internal/external peers is providing assurance that key health and safety risks are being suitably controlled while identifying areas where improvements can be made and including these into the ongoing action plan. Senior management representation on the Corporate Health and Safety Group ensures the group is providing senior management with the assurances that are required. The Council has a complete database of health and safety risk assessments for all services and all Assistant Directors have carried out self-audits of their services.

The COVID-19 emergency, the most serious public health crisis in the UK for over a Century, has and will continue to present a challenge for the Council to ensure the health and safety of its staff, Members and customers. Risk assessments and appropriate measures and changes to service delivery arrangements have been put in place to ensure that the government restrictions and guidelines are adhered to throughout the crisis. This has included closure of buildings, cessation/limiting of services, provision of PPE to appropriate frontline staff, as well as other measures. Further work will be required to ensure that future Government guidance is reflected in the Council's working arrangements as the national and local position changes.

Business Continuity

The Council has business continuity plans for all of its key services and a Corporate Business Continuity Plan is in place to manage the corporate response to an incident. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak and to ensure business continuity of its essential services, the Council instigated an Incident Management Team which is co-ordinating the local emergency response within Stevenage. This includes the establishment of eight response cells each led by an Assistant Director or senior Manager, which includes a Business Continuity Cell.

Information and Records Governance

New General Data Protection Regulations were approved by the EU Parliament on 14 April 2016 and were enforced on 25 May 2018. The primary objectives of the GDPR are to give citizens and residents back control of their personal data and to simplify the regulatory environment.

Overall responsibility for information management at the Council has been assigned to the Council's Information and Records Governance Manager, who is also the joint Data Protection Officer for both Stevenage and East Herts Councils since December 2019. The Council has a Corporate Information Governance Group in place, which oversees the Council's information governance arrangements.

The Council has identified and documented its information assets and data flows and developed an information asset register. The Council has an Information Management Policy and a Security Incident Management Policy which define the Council's procedures with regards to information governance and the management of data security incidents. Both of these policies are currently under review. Specific guidance on records management with defined responsibilities of information asset owners is also in development which will apply to all staff across the organisation. Document retention guidance has been produced and communicated to all members of staff, which includes a defined and enforced corporate records retention schedule in line with the requirement of the GDPR and good practice. There are also defined procedures in place for the disposal and destruction of information.

Progress of significant governance actions (2018/19 AGS) to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework:

Cyber Security and IT Resilience: Improvement activity has continued to ensure the Council's ICT and telephone systems continue to provide a secure and high performing ICT environment:

- A new ICT strategy and road map was approved by both Stevenage Borough Council and East Herts District Council.

- Migration of the Council's telephone system is now complete.

- A Security and Network Team has now been established.

- New email and website security software has been implemented to ensure outgoing emails are being encrypted.

- The shared service storage hardware has been replaced and 99% of the Council's systems and data are running on it. The remainder is scheduled to be transferred shortly.

- Work has commenced to upgrade from Windows 7 to Windows 10 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.

- A project to install new network security and reporting tools has commenced.

- 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.

- Upgrading of Horizon VDI desktops has started and the project to install a microwave link between the data centres at Daneshill House and Cavendish Road is nearing completion.

Information regarding continued enhancement activity proposed for 2020/21 and timeline for delivery is reflected on page 33-34).

Progress of significant governance action (2018/19 AGS) to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework:

Information and Records Governance: Improvement activity has continued to enhance and embed information and records governance to ensure that best practice records management across the Council continues to be applied and customer data is stored securely and appropriately managed.

- Progress has been made with completion of third party information sharing agreements with over 80% of agreements completed.

- The GDPR team are continuing to work with SBC service teams and the Shared Legal Services in requiring lead partners to update relevant protocols and framework that involve the sharing of information to reflect GDPR requirements

- As part of the wider ICT Improvement Strategy, recent notable developments in GDPR related security have taken place regarding emails and internet security to protect Council data.

- Work has commenced to produce a suite of ICT Data Security Policies.

- The Council's Information Governance Manager is working in liaison with the HR team to review the next offering of mandatory e-learning GDPR training to ensure the content is relevant to Council services.

- GDPR tailored bitesize sessions were held for staff covering key topics affecting staff in their everyday working practices.

Information regarding continued enhancement activity proposed for 2020/21 and timeline for delivery is reflected on page 34).

Progress of significant governance action (2018/19 AGS) to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework:

Corporate Health and Safety: Health and safety arrangements have been enhanced by:

- Training requirements appropriate to role have been identified and training is being carried out as required.

- The Health and Safety Team have delivered the IOSH Managing Safety Course for Managers.

- Alongside e-learning health and safety packages there is now a range of tool box talks available, plus courses on Risk Assessment, Construction, Design and Management Regulations, Manual Handling, COSHH, Hand Arm Vibration, Legionella, Needle sticks, Sharps and Diseases, Hot Works and Noise.

- Embedding of the Health and Safety framework is being achieved by a process of internal and External audits, peer reviews, shadow health and safety inspections, risk assessment reviews, training to upskill managers, health and safety group meetings, hazard monitoring and action plans

- Twenty-one Health and Safety policies were updated during 2019/20.

- SIAS Health and Safety Audit achieved a Good assurance opinion. SIAS concluded that monitoring and recording compliance with health and safety policies is in place. In addition, this has created action plans for teams across the Council to complete. These action plans include controls put in place to mitigate risks identified through the Council's annual risk assessment process. The Health and Safety Team take on board any lessons learnt. Induction and training arrangements are provided to help ensure all processes run smoothly.

- Governance mechanisms, risk assessment and working practices have been reviewed at the Cavendish Road Depot. This work has been informed by independent external audits of the main work streams in the unit. Follow up external audits have confirmed the improvement made and compliance with assessment thresholds for all areas audited. Ongoing monitoring and action plans are now implemented to ensure this position is maintained.

- Work is underway to procure a new digital Health and Safety System.

- Health and safety goals and priorities were agreed with the Council's Senior Leadership Team

Information regarding continued enhancement activity proposed for 2020/21 and timeline for delivery is reflected on page 34).

Progress of significant governance actions (2018/19 AGS action) to facilitate compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework:

CCTV Partnership: A thorough review of the governance framework of the CCTV Partnership was carried out and a new suite of governance arrangements, including refreshed company business plan were approved by the CCTV Joint Executive and Company Board of Directors. A follow-up SIAS audit signed all of these actions as complete in November 2019. This action is therefore not being carried over to 2020/21

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability will ensure that the Council provides information regarding the completion of actions in a timely and understandable way.

Summary of 2019/20 Review of Effectiveness:
Reporting on performance, value for money, the stewardship of resources and the assessment of robust corporate governance arrangements are provided throughout the year through:

- Quarterly financial monitoring reports to Executive
- Quarterly FTFC and corporate performance status reports to Executive
- Annual publication of Statement of Accounts
- Publication of the Annual Governance Statement
- the Council's Annual Report

Compliance to provide information as outlined in the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 is monitored throughout the year by Corporate Governance Group.

The Council's internal audit provision is delivered by the Shared Internal Audit Service hosted by Hertfordshire County Council. A summary of 2019/20 arrangements is set out on pages 5 to 7 of this Statement outlining assurance for both financial and non-financial systems.

For 2019/20 the Shared Internal Audit Service assigned 'satisfactory' assurance for financial systems and 'satisfactory' assurance to non-financial systems. Actions to enhance governance for the areas highlighted have been identified and prioritised.

The Council's External Auditors, Ernst and Young, advised Audit Committee in March 2020 in their Annual Audit Letter for 2018/19 that the Council's financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council at 31 March 2019 and its expenditure and income for the year then ended. The letter also advised that other information published with the financial statement was consistent with the Annual Accounts. The Auditors also concluded that the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in our use of resources and that our Annual Governance Statement for 2018/19 was consistent with the Ernst and Young's understanding of the Council.

Arrangements reflect those summarised in the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance – No significant opportunities to enhance governance have been identified.

Corporate Governance Calendar 2019/20

The following corporate governance calendar on the next two pages summarises activity delivered throughout the year to ensure compliance with the corporate governance arrangements outlined in the Council's Local Code.

Corporate Governance Calendar April 2019 – September 2020

Apr 2019

- Internal Audit of **Corporate Governance** arrangements achieves **'Good'** assurance for areas assessed

- Internal Audit of **Risk Management** arrangements achieves **'Good'** assurance for areas assessed

- **Corporate Governance Group** carried out a **review of Principle E** of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework

- New **Local Development Scheme** agreed by Executive

May 2019

- **Annual Council** agree the political management structure of the Council

- **New Members** attend **induction programme**

- **Local Plan (2011-2031)** adopted **on 22 May 2019**

June 2019

- **Audit Committee** recommended the **2018/19 AGS** to **Statement of Accounts Committee**

- **Head of Assurance** confirms to Audit Committee the **'fitness for purpose'** of **internal audit** to carry out the work that informs the assurance opinion for 2019/20

- **Twelve month review of shared Herts Home Improvement Agency** considered by Executive

- Executive receives an update on the **Town Centre Regeneration Programme**

July 2019

- **Annual Scrutiny Report** submitted to Council

- **Council** appoints its new **Chief Executive**

- **2018/19 Annual Report and Performance Review** approved by Executive

- **Corporate Governance Group** carried out a **review of Principles C and G** of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework

- **Q4 Financial Monitoring reports** considered by **Executive**

Aug 2019
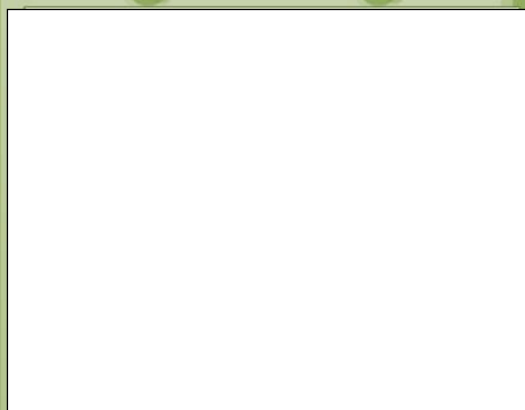
Sep 2019

- Executive approves **General Fund and HRA MTFS 2019/20-2022/2023**

- Annual report of Shared **Anti-Fraud Service for 2018/19** to Audit Committee

- Annual report of **Shared Internal Audit Service** for 2018/19 to Audit Committee

- Audit Committee consider **HHIA Audit report**

- **Executive** consider **Q1 Performance and Financial Monitoring reports**

Corporate Governance Calendar October 2019 - March 2020

Oct 2019

- Council approves the **Annual Treasury Management Review of 2019/120 including prudential code**

- **Corporate Governance Group** carried out a **review of Principles A and B** of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework

- **Executive** approves the **ICT Joint Strategy and Action Plan (2019/20 – 2021/22)**

Nov 2019

- New **Strategic Director** appointed

- **Audit Committee** considered the six month progress review of AGS and Service Governance actions

- **Executive** considers **Q2 financial monitoring reports**

Dec 2019

- **Executive** consider the **Q2 Corporate Performance** report

- **Executive** approves **the Hertfordshire Growth Board's Memorandum of Understanding**

- **Executive** receives a report in relation to the **Towns Fund**

- **Executive** approves changes to the **HRA Business Plan**

Jan 2020

- Council approve the **Housing Revenue Account Final Budget Proposals, Rent Setting and Draft Council Tax Support Scheme 2020/21**

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the **2020/21 Draft Capital Forward Plan, Five Year Capital Strategy Update and 2020/21 Council Tax setting and General Fund** Budget for submission to Executive and Council

Feb 2020

- **Council** approves the **2020/21 Council Tax, General Fund and Capital budgets, and the Annual Treasury Management Strategy including Prudential Code Indicators 2020/21**

- **Members' Allowances Scheme 2020-21** approved at **Council**

- **Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21** approved by **Council**

- Appointment Committee appoints new **Strategic Director (Chief Finance Officer)**

Mar 2020

- **Quarter 3** Performance and Financial Monitoring reports considered by Executive

- **External Auditors** advise **Audit Committee** that the council's **financial statements give a true and fair view** of the financial position of the Council at 31 March 2019 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended

Planned Improvement Activity for 2020/21:

Significant internal control and governance issues identified as part of the 2019/20 review of the Governance Statement are summarised on page 4, identified in the relevant section throughout this Statement and set out in the following Action Plan.

Enhancement activity is deemed significant if recommended for reflection in the Annual Governance Statement by the Shared Internal Audit Service following reviews of control arrangements to meet the Audit Plan, or if identified as key to the management of 'very high/high level' strategic risks. By adopting this approach, any concerns over key controls that have a material effect on corporate governance arrangements and the associated delivery of priority outcomes should be addressed.

There are currently a few high level strategic risks where related mitigation activity is identified throughout this document as ongoing governance monitoring rather than as enhancement activity, such as:

- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, (agreed by Executive November 2018 and reviewed and updated in December 2019) is under ongoing review to ensure a balanced HRA financial plan for the next 30 years, and to ensure there are sufficient HRA funds to support the Council's Housebuilding and Acquisitions Programme and the Housing Asset Management Strategy.

  The HRA and General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategies and Capital Programme are under ongoing review to ensure finances remain robust in the long term and ensure the Council can deliver the ambitions set out in its Future Town Future Council Programme; deliver a once in a generation investment in the town, through town centre regeneration, housing development and investment in neighbourhoods and become financially self-sufficient. The General Fund and HRA Medium Term Financial Strategies and Capital Programme will need to be urgently reviewed to reflect the significant impact on the Council's financial situation as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

- Risks associated with the impact of Welfare Reform on the community and Council have been identified. The Council is continuing to assess potential impacts through business insight.

Action Ref	Action	Target Date
1	**To implement the General Fund Asset Management Strategy the following activity is planned** - Continue the review of the Council's commercial portfolio - Complete Local Asset reviews of the Council's current land and buildings to identify new opportunities for better use of existing buildings - Identify potential sites for release for sale and identify land for the Council's own house building programme	August 2020 December 2020 March 2021

Action Ref	Action	Target Date
2	**To ensure good governance of the key regeneration projects including the Queensway and SG1 Schemes the following activity is planned:** • Continued progress reporting on key projects to Housing Development and Regeneration Executive Committee • Anticipating the implementation of new partnership governance for regeneration schemes, as part of agreed GD3 funding package and new opportunities indicated in Town Deal prospectus • Continuation of the partnership governance arrangements between SBC and Mace; and Queensway Limited Liability Partnership and Reef • Implementation of recommendations arising from the internal audit review of Regeneration Programme Management • Continued internal programme reporting via FTFC Programme Board • Continued monthly and quarterly reporting with Hertfordshire LEP, in addition to Stevenage Borough Council financial reporting to track LEP related expenditure	Ongoing to March 2021 March 2021 Ongoing to March 2021 September 2020 Ongoing to March 2021 Ongoing to March 2021
3	**To ensure that the Shared Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA) service, operated by Hertfordshire County Council, can deliver its financial targets in the medium term, as well as ensure that minimum key standards are being met, enhance its governance structure and ensure the HHIA Board is offering value for money, the following, the following activity is planned by Hertfordshire County Council:** • Review the current business continuity and succession planning arrangements to ensure the service can continue to function in the absence of key officers • Further training to be provided to HHIA staff to ensure the case management system is completed and updated and carry out regular data quality checks to obtain assurance that records are updated in an accurate and timely manner • Enhance financial monitoring and reporting • Enhance performance monitoring and reporting	March 2021 March 2021 March 2021 March 2021
4	**New for 2020/21: To ensure there is a clear governance structure through a corporate landlord function and ensure compliance of the Council's non-housing property, a review of the current arrangements and responsibilities for managing non-housing property is required. This will be achieved by:** • Implementation of the new action plan (informed by a recent CIPFA review) to implement a new Corporate Landlord function. • Produce a preferred model for provision of the compliance contract	December 2020 September 2020

Action Ref	Action	Target Date
5	**New for 2020/21: To ensure that the Council's ambitious commercial agenda can be achieved, a programme of work is required to enhance the capacity, information, financial and legal skills of those involved in complex investment or commercial decision making. This will be achieved by:** • Development and approval of a Commercial Strategy • Implement a programme of training	 September 2020 November 2020
6	**New for 2020/21: In response to the COVID-19 crisis and to ensure the Council can reinstate and continue to deliver services, continue to meet its FTFC ambitions and enable recovery from the effect of the virus in the town, the following action is planned:** • Carry out a review of the General Fund and HRA Medium Term Financial strategies in light of the financial pressures arising from the COVID-19 emergency • Carry out a review of the FTFC Programme to help identify which planned projects can be delivered in the year or where necessary adapted. • Produce and implement a town wide Recovery Plan • Produce and implement an internal Stevenage Borough Council Recovery Plan	 June 2020 June 2020 Sept 2020 Aug 2020
7	**To ensure there is corporate capacity to deliver sustainable services that meet the needs of customers, the following activity is planned:** • Through strategic workforce planning, undertake skills/capacity gap analysis and put in place targeted management and staff development activity in response. • Introduce tools and techniques to manage change effectively whilst maximising levels of staff engagement • Develop communication/engagement strategies that enable all staff to have a clear understanding of organisational direction and the desired culture, behaviours and ways of working • Continue to implement the restructure of services through Future Council Business Reviews • Recruit to a number of key posts across the Council to enhance capacity and key skill requirements	 December 2020 September 2020 December 2020 December 2020 March 2021
8	**To enhance IT infrastructure, cyber security, governance arrangements, policy framework and resilience the Shared IT service to continue to develop and implement a strategy and programme of activity as follows:** • Horizon VDI Upgrade to be carried out to improve resilience resulting in 100% of desktops being available at each data centre, allowing the ability to resolve issues without down time. • Update the ICT Disaster Recovery Plan to reflect new infrastructure	 December 2020 December 2020

Action Ref	Action	Target Date
	and arrangements • Install a secondary microwave link between the Council's two data centres to almost eliminate chances of link breakage and therefore ICT interruption. • Replacement of the Council's firewalls • Implementation of controls and management tools to monitor and control the ICT network • Replace Windows 2008 to Windows 2019	December 2020 September 2020 September 2020 September 2020
9	**To continue to enhance and embed information and records governance to ensure that best practice records management across the Council continues to be applied and customer data is stored securely and appropriately managed the following activity is planned:** • Use of data discovery tool to identify all relevant personal data and allow decisions to be made regarding the processes and procedures for teams handling this data. • Continue the review of data sharing arrangements with local authority partners and public agencies to reflect GDPR requirements on information sharing obligations • Update supplier agreement which involve the processing of personal data in line with GDP requirement	Currently on hold June 2020 June 2020
10	**To continue to ensure health and safety compliance and performance across the Council the following activity is planned:** • A monitor of all corporate high health and safety risks to be produced for review by the Strategic Health and Safety Group and monthly HR meetings • The Council's Senior Leadership Team to receive Institution of Occupational Safety and Health training • Implement revised health and safety arrangements in line with COVID-19 Government guidelines and restrictions for staff, Members and customers	March 2021 November 2020 July 2020

Approval of Statement:

Approval of Statement by Chief Executive and Leader of the Council

We have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Strategic Leadership Team, relevant officers and the Audit Committee, and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework. Areas to enhance the governance framework already addressed are summarised in this Annual Governance Statement. Areas to be addressed and ensure continuous improvement are set out in the table above on pages 31-34.

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters, to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed ………………………………
Date ………………………………
Cllr Sharon Taylor
Leader of Stevenage Borough Council

Signed ………………………………
Date …………………………………..
Matthew Partridge
Chief Executive of Stevenage Borough Council