

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL 2019/20 ANNUAL REPORT



Another successful year for Stevenage



Message from Sharon Taylor - Leader, Stevenage Borough Council

Welcome to our 2019/20 Annual Report. In another successful year we are proud to have commenced work on the much needed multi-million pound regeneration of Stevenage town centre. We are committed to ensuring this ambitious programme of work continues to revitalise the town's infrastructure and assists in ensuring we have fit for purpose, flexible work and retail space, along with affordable living for all.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our residents, businesses, community organisations, partners, councillors, staff, and volunteers for everything you are doing to help make Stevenage a great place in which to live, work and do business. Listening to and working with you is fundamental to our ethos as a co-operative council and it ensures our plans meet your expectations and needs.

This short report showcases some of the past year's highlights, successes and celebrations and gives an outline of priorities for the coming year. In these difficult times, we are more committed than ever to build on these successes and to do everything we can to protect services and to support our community through the current crisis.

As I write this, we are in the throes of the Coronavirus pandemic and we are doing all we can to support those affected. Details of our co-operative work to address the impact on our local community will be outlined in our emerging recovery plans, in which our Future Town Future Council programme will play a pivotal role.



Message from Matt Partridge, Chief Executive - Stevenage Borough Council

Over the past year, we have seen substantial progress across our cooperative 'Future Town Future Council' programme and despite the difficulties the current coronavirus outbreak has placed on residents, business and ourselves, the council is in a good position to continue our ambitious programme of work to ensure both the town and the council are reformed and revitalised for the 21st century.

With a renewed focus on Stevenage as a 'place of choice', we will use our co-operative approach to help us address the

economic and social recovery challenges in the year ahead. This will be coupled with our commitment to meet the climate change challenge head on through sustainable local growth via partnership and resident engagement across the town.

I warmly invite you to get involved with local initiatives in your neighbourhood, through our numerous engagement opportunities and look forward to hearing more of your aspirations and priorities for the town over the coming year.

Future Town Future Council

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

Included in this five year programme are plans to regenerate the town centre, provide social and affordable housing that works for all online, make services

more accessible, and invest in our town's neighbourhoods.

For 2020 we are launching a "Place of Choice" strand to our programme which will incorporate some of our place-based strategies in areas such as health, culture and climate change and key work we carry out with our partners.



Co-operative Council

The Stevenage Cooperative Commitment

Stevenage Borough Council wishes to develop innovative solutions alongside our communities to enable us to improve the town and deliver effective services. This year the council has undertaken an extensive review of our co-operative working. This has included, among other things, an evaluation of our local working practices under our Co-

operative Neighbourhood initiative adopted by the council this year and to be rolled out across the town during 2020-21. In addition specific work has been undertaken to review the town's network of community centres, as well as to extend the council's engagement with minority communities in the town.

Below are just a few examples of how we have worked co-operatively this year:

Launched in late 2019, the Stevenage Neighbourhood Volunteers Association (SNVA) brings together residents keen to support neighbourhood improvements in their local areas with support from the council's Neighbourhood Wardens. One early SNVA-initiated activity was community litter picks across the town. The council has cooperatively supported these by providing equipment (litter pickers, gloves), risk assessment templates and organising clearance of rubbish accumulation.

We continue to work co-operatively with our 10 community centres, each overseen by voluntary community trustees. The community centre review undertaken this year consulted with 384 Stevenage residents through surveys and focus groups to gauge not only what currently brings people to Community Centres, but what residents would like to see in the future.



Co-operative Councils
Innovation Network



Through the Stevenage Reimagined: Arts and Heritage Strategy, the council has been working cooperatively with local artists who have collaborated on local arts and heritage initiatives including the new town centre mural, 'meanwhile use' of retail space, and underpass and cycle way art. This has culminated in the formation of the cooperative Junction 7 Creatives community interest company of local artists and creatives.



In 2020/21 we will:

- Launch our Co-operative Neighbourhoods working model which will enable all our services in one locality to work more closely together to engage with residents on what matters to them and ensure a coordinated, efficient and effective response to the needs in your area.
- Work cooperatively with the newly formed Junction 7 Creatives and others in the local creative community on areas such as the council cycleway and underpasses, Stevenage Day and the town centre.
- Launch an Inclusive Economy Charter as part of our commitment to Community Wealth Building – ensuring local people and businesses benefit from opportunities we create.
- Progress our work on Climate Change in co-operation with our local communities, businesses and other stakeholders.

Regenerating Our Town



Over 500 people

attended our public consultation with our town centre regeneration developer Mace, to hear the plans for the SG1 programme that they're delivering in the heart of Stevenage.



We have begun work on the Town Square and Town Square North Block where new paving, lighting and drainage are being introduced. The work on the North Block will upgrade the existing space, introducing mixed-use facilities, including conference and flexible working offices to previously unused retail space.

We opened our Visitors Centre – and have welcomed **nearly 5,000 visitors**

The centre contains information about all of our planned regeneration programmes, two scale models of the plans, exclusive video content including a 3-D fly through and a LEGO replica of Stevenage Town Centre.

Work continued on the £50m

Queensway North scheme, along with our partner Reef, are introducing a range of new retail, flexible working, conference, and bar and restaurant space into one of our town's most iconic areas.

- **Free wi-fi** launched in the town centre.
- Events were held in the town centre including the Summer beach and Christmas market.
- Over **£100k** of external investment has been secured for the town since the launch of the Arts and Heritage Strategy.
- **72 new jobs** and **57 new business start-ups** at the Business and Technology Centre.

New branded hoarding has been erected round the Town Square and other development sites. The designs outline our plans, some key points from the town's history as well as highlighting the support of our key development partners.

We launched our regeneration website – www.Stevenage-Even-Better.com and new Instagram and Twitter channels (@StevenageBetter) – the website has been visited by over

40,000
unique visitors
since launching.

In 2020/21 we will:

- Launch major construction work on Phase 1 of the £350m+ SG1 project in conjunction with Mace (subject to planning permission). The first sites marked for development are the former police station on Southgate and Swingate House.
- Finalise the retail stages of the £50m Queensway North programme with our development partner Reef. A range of new facilities are being introduced into the former M&S unit and the adjoining spaces.
- Introduce new hoarding and branding to our key development sites where work has not yet begun.
- Complete work on Town Square and Town Square North Block projects.
- Work with partners towards making Stevenage a sustainable travel town.
- Work with the Stevenage Development Board to create a Town Investment Fund bid to seek greater funding for a range of projects.

Building New Homes

This year we have continued to focus on building new social, affordable and private homes, as part of our ambition to build 300 homes by 2020.

65

Affordable Homes were delivered, including schemes at Blackwell Close and Burwell Court providing much needed housing for local people.



This brings the total to
238
since 2014.

Developments at North Road, Shephall Way and Symonds Green are onsite and will deliver

59

more homes for the town.



10

private sale homes at Ditchmore Lane are due for completion this spring. The sale of these will help us to re-invest in other developments in the town.



The contractor for the **Kenilworth Close** scheme has been appointed, which will provide over
200 homes
including a state of the art independent living scheme.

In 2020/21 we will:

- Complete work on 10 new homes at Ditchmore Lane, and continue working on a further 240+ homes.
- Seek planning permission on future schemes for approximately 300 more new homes.
- Commence work on site at Kenilworth Close including the flagship older persons housing scheme.
- Continue to work with partners to enable the delivery of more affordable homes.
- Explore other potential areas for council housing development across the town.

Managing and Improving Our Homes

- We celebrated **100** years of social housing including burying a time capsule and visiting our long standing residents
- We launched our Homelessness and Rough Sleeper strategy
- We supported **525** households who were in danger of losing their homes
- We carried over **17,000** day to day repairs during the year
- **98%** of Repairs appointments were made and kept
- **98%** of our repairs were fixed first time
- **93%** of our customers were satisfied with our repairs service

Through our Major Works contracts we delivered:

99 Bathrooms

40 new electrical re-wires

121 new doors

50 new windows

200 Kitchens

127 Heating Installs - (Including boilers)

7 lifts have been completed this year as part of our lift refurbishment programme in our flat blocks.

We replaced or renewed communal heating systems at **7 sheltered housing schemes**, with works in a further 8 schemes planned.

Contractors Wates Living Space and Mulalley completed major refurbishment works at **74 flat blocks**

Housing online launched to provide housing customers with access to housing services online.

In 2020/21 we will:

- Launch our Housing Older People's Strategy.
- Support homeless people by delivering our Homeless and Rough Sleeper Action plan.
- Continue to refurbish the lifts in our flat blocks.
- Continue to deliver improvements to our flat blocks.
- Begin works on fitting sprinklers to residential buildings over 18 metres in height as well as other associated fire safety works.
- Continue to improve services to our housing customers, with a focus on online services, repairs and caretaking.

Improving Stevenage Neighbourhoods and the Environment

We are working to make public spaces more attractive and better cared for by both the Council and residents.

We have invested and made improvements in St Nicholas and Martinswood including renewing footpaths, upgrading road signs and repairing/replacing fences, bollards and brick walls.



We collected around **30,000 tonnes** of waste from Stevenage households

Hours given by Green Space Volunteers: **1,116 hours**



Shephalbury Park has been awarded a Green Flag Award! This now takes Stevenage's total to **four Green Flag Awards**, including: Fairlands Valley Park, Town Centre Gardens, Hampson Park and Shephalbury Park.

Works were completed to improve **3 play areas** across Roebuck and the Old Town, following consultation with around **450** children and young people.

We launched our water refill scheme in partnership with town centre businesses, providing free water refills to shoppers and residents, reducing plastic waste.

We delivered **12** community events including Wonders of Winter Woodlands, Teddy Bears Picnic and Big Butterfly Count.

We supported the creation of a new 'People's Orchard' on open space in Symonds Green.



Over **300** new style litter bins have been installed to replace the old concrete, plastic and dog bins throughout Longmeadow and Roebuck.

We implemented a new management system for Environmental Services to help with both in house and online requests.



Climate emergency declared – with consultation on the Draft Climate Change Strategy drawing over **1,500 responses.**

In 2020/21 we will:

- Continue to invest and make improvements to neighbourhoods across the town, specifically Longmeadow and Bedwell.
- Continue our garage improvement programme.
- Continue to review the council's assets across our neighbourhoods.
- Recruit more Green Space volunteers and develop volunteering activities.
- Develop a new Waste Strategy that will set out future plans for waste and recycling.

Community Safety

We continue to work closely with our partners to keep our residents safe. As a result, we have seen fantastic achievements through our Community Safety team...

334

cases of fly tipping investigated

89

new referrals to the No More service

Completed our **£million investment** in a new state of the art CCTV Control room and undertaken a governance review to ensure effective CCTV coverage for the town's public realm.




497

SADA referrals, assisted with 10 cases of homeless domestic abuse survivors and hosted weekly drop-ins

60

service providers and partners attended the SADA hosted "Through Emily's Eyes" domestic abuse conference.


SADA attended a number of secondary schools in Stevenage to provide healthy relationships talks to Year 7 and above with partners



Our community safety team hosted pop up hubs in the tower blocks to enable residents to report ASB and speak to different teams within the council

Contactless Box Project

The Community Safety team launched a 'Contactless Box Project' in partnership with Stevenage Rotary Club. The contactless boxes allow members of the public to provide contactless donations to local homeless people, which in turn, are developed into resources for Stevenage Haven to support those accessing its services.



Our award-winning Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) service/ programme secured over £224,000 from the government to help survivor of domestic abuse Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.

In 2020/21 we will:

- Tackle perceptions of ASB, by giving the public the facts and evidence.
- Improve awareness of safeguarding issues in our community.
- Deliver initiatives to respond to the key Community Safety priorities of Violent Crime, Hate Crime and Community Reassurance.

Healthy Living, Leisure and Play

Across Stevenage we are working to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of all of its residents, younger and older.

Over

4,224

children registered with the play service with almost 50,000 play sessions taking place



3,200

walkers took part in Health walks



over **400** people attended the cycling festival



Healthy Hub had a total of **5,502** resident visits for sessions including smoking cessation, mental health, physical activity and carers support services

over 1,000

Children and their families attended our national playday celebrations

600

families attended the annual walking festival. The event won the Modeshift National Sustainable Travel award for Best Partnership

Volunteers from Glaxo helped the play team with a number of projects around the Pin Green Playcentre. These included turning a decked path into a gravel path fixed the treehouse, painted a mural in the under-fives area and generally helped to tidy up the grounds.



We celebrated Stevenage Day's 60th Anniversary

In 2020/21 we will:

- Work with local High Schools to launch a Young People's Healthy Hub.
- Launch a Creative Meanwhile Use scheme in the town centre.
- Pilot new heritage activities as we develop plans for a new museum for Stevenage in the town centre.

Delivering Excellence For You

The Customer Service has

160,837
calls handled

8,238
emails handled

90%
satisfaction
with CSC

205
social media
enquires handled

A new Customer Relationship Management system was implemented to provide customers with a better experience when they contact us.

Social media

Over **6,800**
page likes and
7,300 followers on
Facebook

Over **1,800**
followers on
Instagram

Over **9,000**
followers on
Twitter

98%
Rent collection

96%
Council tax
collection

99%
Business rates
collection



Launched our joint IT Strategy with East Herts to improve our digital services for staff and customers

In 2020/21 we will:

- Be changing the look and feel of our Customer Service Centre.
- Deliver a simple, clearer accessible website and straightforward online self-service options for key council services.
- Continue to protect services where possible to ensure the town's most vulnerable are supported and protected.