

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT – SIX MONTHS PROGRESS UPDATE

Action	Target Date	Six Month Progress Update
<p>To implement the General Fund Asset Management Strategy the following activity is planned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete locality 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 	<p>December 2020</p> <p>March 2021</p>	<p>Executive at its meeting in September 2020 agreed a pipeline of site disposals identified as part of the Locality Ward Asset and Land Review to support the funding of the Capital Strategy and reduce the revenue contribution to capital from the General Fund.</p>
<p>To ensure good governance of the key regeneration projects including the Queensway and SG1 Schemes the following activity is planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>Ongoing to March 2021</p> <p>March 2021</p> <p>Ongoing to March 2021</p> <p>September 2020</p> <p>Ongoing to March 2021</p> <p>Ongoing to March 2021</p>	<p>The Regeneration and Housing Development meetings have been separated to run on separate dates, to maximise the effectiveness of the session. Regular updates on the key projects in the programme at each session have been provided, as well as focus on a key topic area or emerging project. This has included a session dedicated to Queensway/ Marshgate which Reef attended and presented, and a number of sessions focusing on the Town Investment Plan.</p> <p>The Stevenage Development Board, with an independent Board and wide range of local stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, including the business sector, has been established. Terms of Reference have been adopted and approximately seven meetings held so far in 2020.</p> <p>Steering Group meetings have been held regularly with key members of Mace and SBC teams, with two-weekly operational meetings between the project teams. This has been very valuable when dealing with challenging issues, and regular communication has been a real positive. QLLP continues to run smoothly with regular board meetings and reporting with Reef.</p>

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		<p>The implementation of the audit recommendations has been challenging given the changes to the team over the past nine months. There is now stability, additional programme support, and more capacity, and the team is in the process of fully implementing all recommendations. An example of this is the reforms to internal governance and programme management, with quarterly programme reviews.</p> <p>FTFC reporting has gone smoothly, and our milestones have been adjusted to reflect the impact of Covid-19 although the majority of progress remains unaffected. Due to the range of internal and external governance, FTFC reporting is less embedded into service delivery, and there may be further opportunities to work more efficiently through the transformation programme.</p> <p>Monthly meetings are held with the LEP. There continues to be significant pressure on spend deadlines due to the restriction of GD3 funds for three years, but SBC and the LEP are working together to maximise opportunities for delivery. The majority of meetings have been attended by the Assistant Director, Regeneration Manager and Programme Manager, which provides a robust and resilient structure.</p>
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<p>March 2021</p> <p>March 2021</p>	<p>The Executive at its meeting on 6th October 2020 considered a report which provided information on the Council's second year of participation in the HHIA. The report proposed that the Council remains a member of the HHIA and this was agreed by the Executive.</p> <p>All of the key measures of outputs of the service have improved since 2018/19 and now represent an improvement over both that year and the last year it was provided in house by SBC.</p> <p>A follow up audit was completed by SIAS in August 2020. SIAS were satisfied that systems have been amended to improve the quality and accuracy of information</p>

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<p>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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance financial monitoring and reporting • Enhance performance monitoring and reporting 	<p>March 2021</p> <p>March 2021</p>	<p>recorded on the internal management information systems. The evidence from their testing demonstrated significant improvements since the last audit, as well as improved checks by management to review such progress. The HHIA has continued to work on a refreshed business case and business plan to assess and organise for the longer-term financial sustainability of the service. The HHIA have put in place robust systems to track and report on the progress of all recommendations from the initial audit with progress periodically reported to the Board.</p> <p>The HHIA, whilst addressing recommendations, have sought to identify other improvements that can be made to further improve the service.</p> <p>SIAS have been able to provide good assurance over the direction of travel for the HHIA and satisfactory assurance over the completion of recommendations. Thirteen of the original eighteen recommendations have been completed (including five high priority) while five recommendations are in progress (including two high priority) with revised target dates.</p>
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>December 2020</p> <p>September 2020</p>	<p>The Buildings and Facilities Management Teams are now part of the Estates Team.</p> <p>The buildings compliance contract has been brought in house and Responsible Officers have now been assigned to all operational buildings.</p> <p>Compliance work continues to be progressed and regular compliance checks have been programmed. The compliance audit has largely been completed for operational buildings, community centres and the depot. Risks have been identified and these are being prioritised.</p> <p>Major works have been identified.</p> <p>A new Compliance Management System is being procured. A data manager is to be</p>

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		<p>appointed.</p> <p>Policies, procedures and guidance to be produced for all users of council buildings. Preventative maintenance is being investigated and prioritised. Empty properties are now being inspected weekly for damage, leaks etc.</p>
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and approval of a Commercial Strategy • Implement a programme of training 	<p>September 2020</p> <p>November 2020</p>	<p>On 12th August 2020 the Executive approved the Council's Co-operative Commercial and Insourcing Strategy 2020-2023 and associated action plan.</p> <p>A new Commercial and Investment Executive Sub Committee has been established, terms of reference have been agreed and the first meeting was held on 22nd October 2020.</p> <p>Commercial key performance indicators have been agreed. These will be reported to the Commercial and Investment Executive Committee on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>A Commercial Culture and Skills Audit has been carried out seeking responses from SBC staff. A Skills and Culture Learning and Development Plan will be developed based on the outcomes of the audit.</p>
<p>New for 2020/21: In response to the challenges which could result from the Government's Local Government Reform and Devolution White paper which is due to be published in Spring 2021, the following action is proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a review of the White Paper and its implication once it has been published • Engage with other Hertfordshire District and Borough councils to consider a response to the White Paper 	<p>September 2020</p> <p>September 2020</p>	<p>MHCLG officials attended the Hertfordshire Growth Meeting on 4th August 2020 to observe the collegiate way in which the ten Hertfordshire authorities are working together for the good of Hertfordshire communities.</p> <p>Engagement with other Hertfordshire Authorities is continuing and all Districts/Boroughs are working together to ensure appropriate reform options are considered.</p> <p>A residents' poll of more than 2000 people across the county has been carried out.</p> <p>Discussions are taking place with other Local Authorities who have recently</p>

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		undergone or are considering devolution options to inform the debate in Hertfordshire.
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>June 2020</p> <p>June 2020</p> <p>Sept 2020</p> <p>Aug 2020</p>	<p>A review of the General Fund and HRA Medium Term Financial Strategies in light of the financial pressures arising from the pandemic has been carried out and reported to Executive in June 2020.</p> <p>Executive in July 2020 approved the Council's Recovery Plan and actions are in placed embedded in the Council's FTFC reporting process.</p> <p>Plans are developing for an Economic Taskforce to tackle the effects of the impending recession.</p> <p>Stevenage Together Partnership is working on a joint recovery action plan for the town, covering areas from health, to jobs and skills, environment, regeneration and support to those who need it most.</p>
<p>To ensure there is corporate capacity to deliver sustainable services that meet the needs of customers, the following activity is planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>December 2020</p> <p>September 2020</p> <p>December 2020</p> <p>December 2020</p>	<p>The Council's new Workforce Strategy was approved by Executive in October 2020. The Strategy is a critical enabler for delivering the Council's strategic ambitions over the next three years. The Strategy identifies actions that will improve employees' experiences and position the Council as an 'Employer of Choice'.</p> <p>The Strategy has identified five key strategic themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New ways of working • Attracting and retaining the best people • Engagement and communications • Inclusion and wellbeing • Organisational development <p>The majority of the Council's business unit reviews are now complete. Initial proposals for the business unit review within Digital</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit to a number of key posts across the Council to enhance capacity and key skill requirements 	March 2021	<p>and Transformation have been developed, alongside proposals for the Garages and Markets service.</p> <p>Recruitment of key roles has continued during the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure corporate capacity is maintained. A new Assistant Director for Finance and Estates has recently been recruited and will start in post in December 2020. Other key recruitment includes a new Head of Estates role and the substantive appointment of the previously interim Assistant Director for Regeneration.</p>
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 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 	<p>March 2021</p> <p>December 2020</p> <p>December 2020</p> <p>March 2021</p> <p>September 2020</p>	<p>A number of ICT actions have been delayed due to the impact of Covid-19 and the work which has been undertaken by the ICT team to ensure that staff can work from home.</p> <p>Detailed design was completed in September. Training and Communications are scheduled to be rolled out by the end of March 2021.</p> <p>A Disaster Recovery Team is to be created to review all documentation and plans are in preparation for the upcoming changes.</p> <p>The hardware installation is now complete. The microwave link is due to go live by end of December 2020.</p> <p>The replacement of Council's firewalls and implementation of controls and management tools to monitor and control the ICT network are in the soft market testing phase. Procurement is schedule for March 2021.</p> <p>The roll out of Windows 10 Operating system, which is a pre-requisite for Microsoft 365 and a key requirement of the Security Enforcement Programme, is currently undergoing application suitability testing.</p>

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<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>March 2021</p> <p>June 2020</p> <p>June 2020</p>	<p>Discussions have now resumed between the ICT Partnership and relevant suppliers after being paused due to Covid-19. A planned formal procurement is now being scoped to ensure the solution meets council requirements.</p> <p>The review of data sharing arrangements is now complete</p> <p>Supplier agreements have been updated. This work is now complete.</p>
<p>To continue to ensure health and safety compliance and performance across the Council the following activity is planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p>March 2021</p> <p>November 2020</p> <p>November 2020</p>	<p>A RAG monitor of all the Council's high health and safety risks is now being produced which identifies the responsible officer/actions/status commentary. All high risks are reviewed by the Strategic Health and Safety Group and reported to Corporate Risk Group and the Senior Leadership Team quarterly. The monitor is also reviewed by the Chief Executive at the monthly HR meetings.</p> <p>The Health and Safety team have assisted to ensure that all Council buildings are Covid Secure. New Covid working arrangements for Daneshill and Cavendish Road have been implemented to ensure the health and safety of staff. The team have also provided support and advice to frontline staff to ensure their safety and the safety of customers. PPE requirements for specific operational settings have been identified and procured. Staff communication messages have been provided to advise staff of Covid-19 guidance.</p>