

## ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT – SIX MONTHS PROGRESS UPDATE

Action	Six Month Progress Update
<p><b>To implement the General Fund Asset Management Strategy the following activity is planned</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue the review of the Council's commercial portfolio</li> <li>• Continue with Locality reviews of the Council's current land and buildings to identify new opportunities for better use of existing buildings</li> <li>• Identify further potential sites for release for sale and identify land for the Council's own housing building programme</li> </ul>	<p>The Locality Review Structure is now well established. All three tranches of land identified for disposal have now been agreed by Executive. Other elements of the Council's portfolio are to be considered.</p> <p>The current Asset Management system is being reviewed to see if it can meet the needs of the service. If the system does not meet the needs of the service then a new system will need to be procured. The review of the commercial assets is reliant on the Asset Management system being set up so this is currently on hold.</p>
<p><b>To ensure good governance of the Regeneration Programme the following activity is planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring measures are being taken to reduce the risk of construction delay and protect project budgets</li> <li>• Ensure contracts and adequate funding is available to carry out the regeneration work as planned</li> <li>• Creation of business cases for projects and work in relation to governance, resourcing, engagement and financial planning in light of the £37.5M Town Funds award</li> <li>• Continue to implement good governance arrangements in relation to the programme and key projects</li> </ul>	<p>To secure the allocated Towns Fund package, all business cases must be completed and signed-off by the Accountable Body with the accompanying project summary sheets submitted to MHCLG by March 2022.</p> <p>A report outlining progress of the regeneration programme and progress of the Town's Fund programme was considered at Council in October 2021. At this meeting, Council approved the creation of an Officer Panel to support the discharge of the Council's obligations as Accountable Body and delegated the review and approval of Business Cases in relation to the Town's Fund programme to the Executive. Council also noted the inclusion of £37.5 Million within the Council's Capital Strategy. It is anticipated that the first tranche of project business cases will be approved at November Executive. The programme team have scoped out the next 7 months in terms of the business case approval process.</p> <p>Regeneration and Housing Development meetings have been separated to maximise the effectiveness of the meetings. Regular updates on key projects are provided at each meeting. FTFC milestones have been adjusted following Covid-19, although the majority of progress remains unaffected.</p> <p>Regular Steering Group meetings are held with key members of the Mace and SBC teams, with two-weekly operational meetings between the project teams</p>

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<p><b>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:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of a permanent Facilities Manager</li> <li>• Implementation of a new Asset Management System</li> <li>• Setting up of an Asset Management Board</li> <li>• Produce a Strategic Plan for implementation of the Corporate Landlord function</li> <li>• Procedures for documenting air circulation risk assessments to be reviewed.</li> </ul>	<p>A permanent Facilities Manager has now started in post. The current Asset Management System is being tested to see if it can meet the needs of the service and a new Data Manager has been appointed to oversee this work.</p> <p>An Asset Management Board has been set up and initial meetings of the group have taken place.</p> <p>A Strategic Plan for implementation of the Corporate Landlord function has been produced.</p> <p>A full portfolio assessment of the current and required air circulation requirements has been carried out and suitable arrangements have been implemented as required.</p>
<p><b>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:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of the Commercialisation Action Plan</li> <li>• Ensure greater flexibility around income generation and savings opportunities</li> <li>• Implementation of the Commercial Communications and Engagement Plan</li> <li>• Recruitment of additional post to increase commercialisation capacity</li> </ul>	<p>Delivery of the action plan is progressing well. The new Trade Waste Officer is now in post and has started to generate additional revenue.</p> <p>A new Commercial Officer has also started in post.</p> <p>An overarching Advertising and Sponsorship contract went live in June 2021. The income from advertising and sponsorship will increase over time as advertising is built up.</p> <p>A new Debt Management Working Group has been set up.</p> <p>The bulky waste charging proposal has been agreed in principle and will be implemented through 2022/23 fees and charges.</p> <p>A commercial resource centre has been set up and is available on the Council's intranet.</p> <p>Contract Management training has been carried out.</p>
<p><b>In response to the challenges which could result from the Government's Local Government Reform and Devolution White paper the following</b></p>	<p>The ten Hertfordshire districts and the County are continuing to work together through the Hertfordshire Growth Board to develop a County Deal submission subject to discussion with Government officials.</p>

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<p><b>action is proposed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a review of the White Paper and its implication once it has been published</li> <li>• Engage with other Hertfordshire District and Borough councils to consider a response to the White Paper</li> </ul>	
<p><b>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:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue with incident response management arrangements as required in response to the Covid-19 emergency.</li> <li>• Review the General Fund and HRA Medium Term Financial strategies in light of the financial pressures arising from the Covid-19 response.</li> <li>• Implement the agreed town wide Recovery Plan</li> <li>• Review the corporate performance measure suite and targets, to ensure they support the monitoring of the Council's recovery efforts and are realistic in the context of Covid-19 impacts on delivery</li> </ul>	<p>IMT meetings have continued to be held monthly and Executive Members have received monthly Covid briefings. SBC Environmental Health continues to represent SBC on the Hertfordshire Outbreak Tactical Co-ordination Group.</p> <p>The General Fund and HRA Medium Term Financial strategies have been reviewed and reported to Executive. Ongoing work continues to review the Council's financial position via regular monthly monitoring and quarterly review.</p> <p>A deep dive is taking place into post-lockdown customer cases. Engagement is in place with the Local Resilience Forum's Recovery Co-ordinating Group regarding county-wide recovery activities, with local plans in place via the Council's FTFC programme and through the Stevenage Together Partnership, focussing on recovery.</p> <p>The corporate performance measure suite and targets have been reviewed and were agreed at Executive in July 2021.</p>
<p><b>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:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completing the replacement of all the Council's firewalls</li> <li>• Completing the upgrade from Windows 7 to Windows 10</li> <li>• Roll out of Microsoft Office 365</li> <li>• Installing and roll out of network security and reporting tools</li> <li>• Creation of a Disaster Recovery Team to review all ICT documentation and update</li> </ul>	<p>The new ACI network has been installed, which enables the delivery of other vital projects such as a new desktop, Windows 10 and Microsoft 365, as well as vastly enhancing the reliability of Council systems. The new desktop (also known as the VDI upgrade) work has commenced. Roll out of new VDIs is expected to commence January 2022 and will take 4-5 months to complete.</p> <p>Work is continuing on the Windows upgrade programme and Microsoft 365 security. The Firewall replacement programme and network security management work is currently on hold due to other priorities. Work has however been carried out to delete old firewalls and this, together with the installation of</p>

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<p>the ICT Disaster Recovery Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of Microwave Link</li> <li>• Horizon VDI Update</li> </ul>	<p>the new ACI, has improved the security of our IT systems. The current firewalls are considered sufficient so this delay is not posing an increased cyber security risk.</p> <p>The microwave link has been installed and is protecting our storage at present. IT will be moving into the network migration phase shortly and as services migrate across to the new network they will automatically benefit from the additional resilience provided by the new microwave link.</p> <p>A third party quality assurance review of the ICT Strategic Programme and Operation is scheduled. It is expected this work will be carried out over an eight week period. The outcome of this review will inform a new IT strategy.</p>
<p><b>To continue to ensure health and safety compliance and performance across the Council the following activity is planned:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train SLT in IOSH Leading Safety</li> <li>• Continue the rolling programme of internal and external audits for medium and high risk services</li> <li>• Strategic Health and Safety Group to continue to meet quarterly and report high health and safety risks to Corporate Risk Group and the Council's Senior Leadership Team quarterly.</li> </ul>	<p>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 and are currently assisting with the work required to implement the new hybrid ways of working for staff and assisting staff to return to the office.</p>
<p><b>Transformation Programme:</b> To deliver a productive and resilient Council which can deliver the Council's strategic priorities, protect outcomes for residents, and provide excellent customer experiences, the need to implement a transformation programme has been identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation of a work plan and report for consideration by Executive</li> <li>• CFO and AD Digital and Transformation to prepare a resourcing plan to support the programme, including new resources to deliver where appropriate.</li> <li>• Recruitment of a new Transformation Delivery Manager.</li> <li>• Establishment of an Officer Programme</li> </ul>	<p>The Transformation Delivery Manager has been appointed and has started in post. A Transformation Programme Board has been set up and is meeting regularly.</p> <p>Executive at its meeting in August 2021 agreed the transformation approach to improve customer experience, deliver increased productivity and ensure sustainability.</p> <p>The two main priority areas have been identified for Phase 1. Customer (work programmes to make changes and enhancements to our customer offer, including online services and improved processes) and Resources (changes to some internal processes and activities to reduce cost).</p>

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<p>Board to prioritise the projects which will have the most impact.</p>	
<p><b>As a result of the combined socio-economic impacts of welfare reform, the Covid-19 pandemic, and an economic downturn following a programme of activity has been identified:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close management of the Council's financial position via the MTFS</li> <li>• Bidding for available short-term Covid-related funding from government to help recover costs</li> <li>• Monitor key service performance and pressures via Performance Management Framework</li> <li>• Continue to implement the Arrears Action Plan</li> <li>• Stevenage Economy Taskforce to continue to meet to create jobs and upskilling opportunities</li> <li>• Continue to support key partnerships including SoSafe, Healthy Stevenage and the Social Inclusion Partnership to deliver socio economic, environmental and health related outcomes</li> <li>• Deliver the Construction Industry Training Board initiative and create a Stevenage Works fund and job brokerage service</li> <li>• Implement the Community Wealth Building Strategy and programme to help address the financial inequalities that exist</li> <li>• Launch of a new inclusive Economy Charter</li> <li>• Implementation of the £37.5M Town Deal Programme to create enhanced economic opportunity</li> <li>• Working with local government representative bodies to lobby for longer-term sustainable funding settlement for local government</li> </ul>	<p>The CFO continues to assess the financial impact of the pandemic. The 2021/22 General Fund Report considered by February 2021 Council sets out the impact of Covid on the Council's General Fund budgets. Members have approved financial resilience measures that improved General Fund balances for this and future financial years.</p> <p>Corporate performance targets have been reviewed in light of the impact of Covid-19 and new performance targets were agreed at Executive in July 2021.</p> <p>A Community Wealth Programme Manager has now been appointed. A bid has been made to the Community Renewal Fund on behalf of all ten Hertfordshire districts to accelerate community wealth building plans and is currently awaiting consideration by MHCLG. Plans to reform a SBC Governance Group for Community Wealth Building (CWB) are moving forwards. The group will serve to bring together all the CWB focused activities throughout the Council.</p> <p>The Construction Industry Training Board initiative has been implemented and the Stevenage Works funding agreement has been agreed. The first cohort of people carrying out placements has completed them.</p> <p>The Council continues to support the co-ordination of its key partnerships (Stevenage Together, Economic Taskforce, Healthy Stevenage, SoSafe, Social Inclusion) and partnership action plans are in place. There is an established governance structure and action plan in place for the Community Safety Partnership. The Healthy Stevenage Partnership meets quarterly and has an agreed action plan. The Economic Taskforce has now been re-established. The Social Inclusion Partnership continues to meet regularly.</p> <p>Monthly review meetings in relation to the Arrears Action Plan and work associated with the action plan is progressing.</p>

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<p><b>The following activity is planned to enhance compliance with Payment Cards Industry Data Security Standards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key stakeholders across the Council to be identified and a Working Group set up to carry out the review.</li> <li>• Payment methods to be reviewed and a replacement payment system to be considered.</li> </ul>	<p>An initial working group has taken place with key stakeholders and following this the Customer Service Centre are no longer taking card payments over the phone (except in exceptional circumstances whereby the customer cannot use the automated line). Further work will be undertaken over the coming months</p>
<p><b>The Council to continue to work with its leisure contractor to ensure recovery of leisure services after the pandemic.</b></p>	<p>Meetings between SBC Officers and SLL are taking place monthly. The Executive at its meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> June considered a report regarding a proposed work programme to enable the Council to determine the strategic delivery of its leisure and cultural offer post March 2023 when the current leisure contract ends.</p>