

Meeting EXECUTIVE
Portfolio Area Resources, Transformation & ICT
Date 18 JANUARY 2023



DRAFT CAPITAL STRATEGY 2022/23-2027/28

KEY DECISION

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is:
- (1) to seek approval for the proposed revisions to the 2022/23 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme and;
 - (2) to outline the draft Capital Programme for 2023/24 for consideration.
- 1.2 To provide Members with an update on the Council's draft five-year capital strategy and the resources available to fund the Capital Strategy.
- 1.3 To provide Members with an update on the Council's investment strategy as required by the updated prudential code.
- 1.4 To set out the Council's approach to funding its key Future Town Future Council Cooperative Corporate Plan priorities.
- 1.5 The Capital Strategy is part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, and hence a decision on the draft Strategy cannot wait until the February Executive.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the:

- 2.1 Draft General Fund Capital Budget for 2023/24 of £34Million, as set out in Appendix C to the report, be proposed for consultation purposes subject to funding (paragraph 4.2.3).
- 2.2 Draft HRA Capital Budget for 2023/24 of £62.4Million, as set out in Appendix D to the report, be proposed for consultation purposes.

- 2.3 Updated forecast of resources 2023/24 as detailed in Appendix C (General Fund) and Appendix D (HRA) to the report be approved subject to the consultation process.
- 2.4 That GF and HRA capital budget re-profiling of £15.2Million from 2022/23 to future years be approved.
- 2.5 That GF capital budget adjustments (paragraph 4.1.3) be approved.
- 2.6 That the approach to resourcing the General Fund capital programme as outlined in the report (Paragraph 4.5) be approved.
- 2.7 General Fund growth bids identified for inclusion in the Capital Strategy (paragraph 4.2.1, table five and Appendix A to the report) be approved in principle, subject to further review work on Capital Priorities being undertaken.
- 2.8 That £28K for the installation of solar panel to 8 existing fleet vehicles to be funded from the business rates reserve (paragraph 4.2.5).
- 2.9 HRA budget increases identified for inclusion in the Capital Strategy (paragraphs 4.8.4, table ten and Appendix B to the report) be approved.
- 2.10 2023/24 de-minimis expenditure limit (section 4.10 of the report) be increased from £5K to £7.5K.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The purpose of the Capital Strategy is to outline how the Council determines its priorities for capital investment and how much it can afford to borrow as well as setting out any associated risks.
- 3.1.2 The framework the government uses to control how much councils can afford to spend on capital investment is known as the Prudential Framework. The objectives of the Prudential Code, which sets out how this framework is to be applied, are to ensure that local authorities' capital investment plans are:
 - affordable, prudent, and sustainable and that:
 - treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good professional practice;
 - local strategic planning, asset management planning and proper option appraisal are supported.
- 3.1.3 The Government issued guidance on the disclosures required in the Capital Strategy from 1 April 2018 onwards which includes:
 - an Investment Strategy;
 - disclosure of other investments and their contribution to service delivery objectives and/or place making role;
 - indicators that allow Members and the public to assess a local authority's total risk exposure as a result of investment decisions, including how these investments have been funded, rate of return and additional debt servicing costs taken on;
 - the approach to assessing the risk of losses being made before entering and whilst holding an investment; and

- the steps taken to ensure that elected Members and Statutory officers have the appropriate skills and governance.

3.1.4 Some of these disclosures may be outlined in the Treasury Management Strategy instead of the Capital Strategy.

3.2 General Fund Investment Strategy

3.2.1 For a number of years capital spend has been prioritised due to the limited availability of capital receipts and the Council's ability to afford borrowing costs. Accordingly, the council applied a 'fix on fail' approach to assets with no significant asset improvements being funded, with the exception of those supported through external funding or partially through external funding (for example Garage and Play Improvement programmes).

3.2.2 The Asset Management Strategy approved by the Executive at its meeting on the 11 July 2018 included a key action for the Council to undertake locality reviews of its current land and buildings. The locality reviews would seek to generate new opportunities for better use of existing buildings, to identify potential sites to release for sale along with land options for the Council's own home building programme. This was consistent with seeking to meet a range of Council priorities.

3.2.3 Building condition Surveys were completed in 2019 and they were used to inform growth bids approved in previous Capital Strategies. It should be noted though that the surveys were focused on keeping existing sites operational rather than making improvements or future proofing them.

3.2.4 The Council plans to utilise New Homes Bonus (NHB) to fund the playground improvement programme as below:

Table 1: Use of New Homes Bonus	2022/23	2023/24
Play area improvements & Litter Bins Expenditure	£230K	£253K

3.2.5 The remaining schemes within the Capital Strategy include 'Transforming our Town' projects, Housing Development initiatives and IT investment (predominantly related to schemes identified through the joint ICT Partnership Strategy between East Herts District Council and Stevenage Borough Council).

3.2.6 Prudential Borrowing remains an option to fund capital schemes, but due to the on-going net cost to the General Fund, any such proposals would require a business case to be completed to determine the benefit to the Council. Generally, this approach would be used to fund income generating schemes which support the Making Your Money Count ambitions. The issue of affordability has been exacerbated by the recent pandemic and cost of living (through increases in interest rates) on the Council's finances.

3.2.7 The Council has approved some land and asset disposals and some further key disposal assets and consideration will have to be given as to how these assets are used to meet the Council's priorities. The CFO will bring a report setting out some specific proposals during the 2023/24 financial year.

3.2.8 In addition to the land disposals mentioned in paragraph 3.2.7, there are SG1 receipts (not included in the revised Capital Strategy at the current time), other

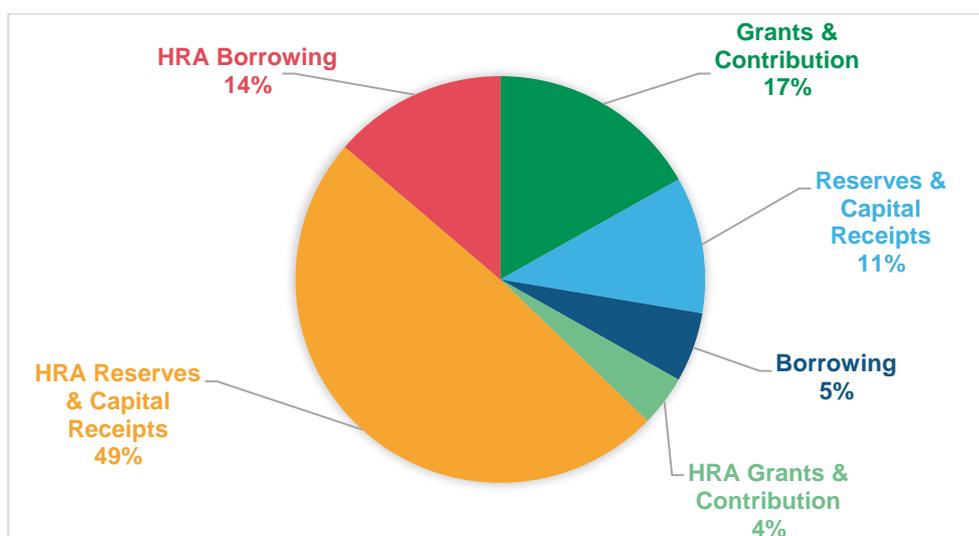
ring-fenced Regeneration receipts and Locality receipts. The potential land disposals identified through the Locality Reviews will help maintain the resilience of General Fund balances, reducing the revenue contribution to capital and to fill in the gap of NHB funding to the capital reserve. Locality reviews are discussed further in section 4.3 of this report.

3.2.9 The Capital Strategy includes the use of Section 106 (S106) monies that have yet to be allocated to any current and future capital schemes. The table below shows the categories they can be used for:

Table 2: S106 contribution Available		Amount
		£000
Environmental Improvements		170
Engineering		14
Stevenage Works		12
Regeneration		36
Older apps (pre 15/00253/OPM)		104
Total		336

3.2.10 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge introduced by the Planning Act 2008. The Council started charging CIL in April 2020 and the current balance is £139k with an additional forecast in-year income of £387K (total £526K). Any allocation of funds to relevant capital projects will be brought forward for approval later in the year- and require Executive approval above £75K.

3.2.11 The current years capital programme (approved February 2022 and as subsequently amended through the quarterly monitoring and supplementary reports), is fully funded, and shown in the chart below which reflects the quarter one and two monitoring report to the October 2022 Executive.



3.2.12 The increase in the grant funding is mainly as a result of the inclusion of the £37.4Million Towns Fund Grant. This grant is fully allocated to specific regeneration projects.

3.3 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Investment Strategy

3.3.1 **Background:** The HRA capital programme was revised as part of the HRA Business Plan (BP) update to the December 2019 Executive. The 30-year HRA capital programme included £1.485Billion with additional borrowing.

3.3.2 The 2019/20 HRA BP included more borrowing than in the 2018 HRA BP, a more ambitious new build programme and an increase in capital works to existing homes. The new borrowing in the 2018 BP totalled £116.6Million, however the 2019 update included new borrowing of £322.2Million.

3.3.3 The additional capital expenditure that was approved as part of the HRA BP over the 30 years included £201Million of projected capital expenditure as well as revenue growth which funded planned maintenance, anticipated changes relating to the Hackett review and decent homes works.

3.3.4 The new build programme increased from £582Million to £645.6Million in the 2019 HRA BP, with 2,433 new build homes in total over the life of the Business Plan and an additional 175 units in the first 10 years of the programme.

3.3.5 Subsequently a number of delegated approvals were taken by the Executive including an increase of £11.3Million for the Kenilworth scheme procurement (reported to the Executive in January 2020), the updated figures for which were included in the Final Capital Strategy approved by the Executive and Council in February 2020. The net change to the approved budget for the period 2019/20 to 2024/25 was £10.2Million.

3.4 Budget and Policy Framework

3.4.1 The process for approving capital budgets is set out in the Budget and Policy Framework in the Constitution. This includes a consultation period and the timescale required to implement this is outlined below:

Date	Meeting	Report
Jan-23	Executive	Draft 2023/24 General Fund and HRA Capital Strategy
	Overview and Scrutiny	Draft 2023/24 General Fund and HRA Capital Strategy
Feb-23	Executive	Final 2023/24 General Fund and HRA Capital Strategy
	Overview and Scrutiny	Final 2023/24 General Fund and HRA Capital Strategy
Feb-23	Council	Final 2023/24 General Fund and HRA Capital Strategy

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

4.1 Capital Programme – 2022/23-2023/24 General Fund

4.1.1 Due to the ongoing financial pressures arising from the cost of living and the need to focus on improving General Fund resilience, the CFO recommended adopting the following approach to officers with regards to submitting Capital Bids for 2023/24:

- Review existing budgets in the Capital Strategy for completeness and to advise if circumstances have changed, and
- Only submit bids that are urgent or support the delivery of a top priority as funding is limited

A full review of the Strategy is planned to be carried out for 2023/24.

4.1.2 Officers have identified net slippage and reductions of £9.492Million from 2022/23 to future years or removal, this represents 27% of the total revised budget approved at October 2022 Executive. This mainly relates to:

- Public Sector Hub (£4.95Million) – The capital budgets relating to SG1 including the Hub previously included an assumption about the first phase of SG1 receipts receivable in the Developer agreement, however this would not be the full cost of the SG1 works and the CFO has recommends that until the Super Capital Strategy is published later in the year which will include a funding strategy for the Council's priorities, only the initial design works for stages RIBA 1 &2 should be included in the current Strategy. The works have been funded primarily from the ring-fenced regeneration receipts.
- The Railway Station Multi-Storey Car Park budget profiling did not align with the construction plan and has been corrected in the current Strategy with £6Million now included in the 2022/23 budget from2023/24.
- Kenilworth - private sale (£7.2Million) - The current budget relates to phase two which is unable to proceed until completion of phase one which remains under construction and was impacted by pandemic related delays. The total overall budget is also subject to a reduction pending a decision on phase two design which has been prompted by changing market conditions. An alternate scheme design is likely to result in lower capital expenditure and improve viability.
- Wholly Owned Housing Development Company (WOC) (£3Million) – The Council approved WOC allocated borrowing of £15Million for new scheme opportunities and the £3Million is the remaining amount yet to be allocated to a scheme.
- Play Area Improvement Programme (£342K) - This has been impacted by recruitment challenges and as a result Project Managers are unable to deliver the remaining capital improvement due in 2022/23. The Council have confirmed their commitment to completing this programme of works.

4.1.3. A review of the Capital Programme currently in the strategy has been undertaken and the following adjustments made (other than that identified above):

2023/24

- The Council is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the current and future provision of community facilities across the Borough (Locality Review). Pending the outcome of this review capital investment in community facilities have been held for 2023/24 (unless relating to health and safety) and not included in the proposed capital programme. These budgets amount to £380K.
- There was a notional budget in the 2023/24 capital programme of £630K for the provision of five food waste collection vehicles planned for 2023/24. However, this is not proposed to be included in the approved Capital Strategy, as this should be eligible for new burdens funding and Councils are still awaiting the outcome of the government's Resource and Waste Strategy and any new burden funding announcements. However, if government funding was not forthcoming the Council would need to identify the required resources.

2024/25

- A LEP loan repayment due in the Capital Strategy current period has been included in the programme in 2024/25 £1Million. This funding has been used for Regeneration projects up to 2023/24. The remaining loans are due for repayment by 2030.

4.1.4. The result of this exercise is summarised in table four below and is set out in full in Appendix A (Growth bids) and Appendix C (General Fund Capital Strategy).

Table 4: Update following 2023/24 Capital Bids process						
	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	Total £'000
Current strategy total	36,104	28,307	10,799	7,548	0	82,758
Slippage & removals	(9,493)	3,479	6,201	0	0	187
Removed	0	(1,010)	0	0	0	(1,010)
LEP loan repayment	0	0	1,000	0	0	1,000
Growth Bids (see 4.2)	0	3,250	360	5	5	3,620
Adjusted total	26,611	34,026	18,360	7,553	5	86,555

(reduction)/increase in forecast expenditure

4.2 Capital Bids Included in the Capital Programme

4.2.1 The capital growth bids received and recommended for inclusion in the Capital Strategy (subject to funding) by Leaders Financial Security Group (LSFG) and the Council's Senior Leadership (SLT) have been classified against a number of different categories, as set out in table five below and are detailed in Appendix A. These bids total £3.6Million over the period 2023/24 - 2027/28, £3.2Million of which fall in 2023/24.

Table 5: Submitted Growth Bids by Priority						
		23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000	26/27 £'000	Total £'000
Priority 1	Return on investments	1,228	0	0	0	1,228

Table 5: Submitted Growth Bids by Priority

		23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000	26/27 £'000	Total £'000
Priority 2	Income generating	80	0	0	0	80
Priority 3	Mandatory requirements (including Health & Safety)	287	5	5	5	302
Priority 4	Schemes to maintain operational efficiency	950	355	0	0	1,305
Priority 7	Urgent works (that reduce the risk of litigation)	65	0	0	0	65
Priority 9	Schemes that reduce or mitigate risks included in the Corporate Risk Register	630	0	0	0	630
Priority 11	New Burden	10	0	0	0	10
Total General Fund Capital Growth Bids		3,250	360	5	5	3,620

4.2.2 LSFG agreed bids totalling £3.350Million for 2023/24, after review by the SLT the following changes are recommended:

- Cavendish Road - Penstock valve installation recommended for inclusion £50K.
- St Georges MSCP - conversion of storeroom and boiler room to office space of £50K been removed as this is not required in the immediate future for the team out of hours and could be deferred.
- Food waste collection vehicle of £100K (in addition the removal of the existing 2023/24 budget of £630K) to be deferred until the outcome of the government's Resource and Waste Strategy and any new burden funding announcements (see also paragraph 4.1.3).

4.2.3 The current funding gap if all the bids are approved is £177K with a deferred works budget available for overruns, deferred or urgent works of £1.259Million, which may not be sufficient in the current period of high inflation and an assessment of deferred works required and residual resources to allow for a delay in capital receipts being realised is required. Therefore, it is recommended that the bids totalling £3.6Million are noted by the Executive and the February Capital Strategy report will update Members on the level of spend that can be approved, recommended bids and the funding strategy.

4.2.4 The growth bids for 2023/24 of £3.25Million include £1.2Million for investment in the leisure facilities included in the retender of the Council's leisure provision due to Commence 1 April 2023.

Summary of Priority Bids.

4.2.5 Priority 1 – Return on Investment

i. Vehicle Solar Panels

Through its Climate Change Strategy (2020) the Council has set out its ambition to be net zero by 2030. To help achieve this, decarbonisation of the Council's existing fleet of vehicles is required. Investment of £28K to fit solar panels to 8 lorries will reduce fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions by up to 1,100

litres of diesel and 2,900kgs per vehicle respectively. This bid will potentially save £13k in fuel costs and it is recommended that this is funded from the business rates reserve and the saving in fuel costs contributes to the Making Your Money Count (MYMC) savings target for 2024/25.

4.2.6 **Priority 2 – Income Generation**

i. Memorial Tree (Weston Road)

This is a General Fund income generating (MYMC) option and the implementation costs of £23K are included in the General Fund proposed revenue budget.

ii. Hampson Park Depot

This is a General Fund income generating MYMC option and the implementation costs are included in the General Fund proposed budget. This will generate income but requires the SDS external depot will be moved from Shepalbury Nursery to Hampson Park.

iii. Additional Headstone Plinths

Investing £16K to create additional headstone capacity at the Weston Road cemetery will provide local residents with more burial options and help generate additional revenue for the site.

4.2.7 **Priority 3 – Mandatory Requirements**

i. Timebridge Community Centre

Public spaces are community assets, and it is important that these are well maintained to improve the quality of life of Stevenage residents and encourage ownership, responsibility and pride within the community. The floor in the preschool area at the Timebridge Community Centre is deteriorating and £20K investment is required.

ii. Indoor Market Shutters and Car Park Fuse Boards

Following a review, it is recommended that the roller shutter in the Indoor Market (£9k) and the fuse boards in the Multi Storey Car Park (£8K) needs to be replaced during 2023/24.

iii. Fairlands Valley Sailing Centre and Aqua Park

The running of the Sailing Centre and Café is not included in the new leisure contract and will be directly managed by the Council by 1 April 2023. The opportunity to enhance this area and create a local destination is aligned with the Council's ambition to create an enhanced experience for visitors as part of its Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving strategic priority. The existing seating and ventilation at the kiosk are not appropriate for periods of warm weather and a £35K investment in equipment is required to help combat this. In addition, the Aqua Park floor surface is deteriorating and needs to be replaced at a cost of £35K. By investing in the centre, kiosk and aqua park the Council have an opportunity to provide a desirable local destination for residents and encourage more visitors to the area.

iv. Clock Tower

The Town's Clock tower is an iconic grade II listed structure, it is lit-up at night-time throughout the year and is a focal point during commemorative periods, such as the death of Queen Elizabeth II. A permanent £25K lighting installation, which avoids the need for contractors to climb the clock tower, is required to avoid ongoing costs and make best use of Council resource as part of its commitment to MYMC priority. Although bid is supported by LFSG and SLT, it is recommended that officers will bid for funding to support the growth and that the spend is conditional on this.

v. Stock Condition (Leisure Asset)

To pre-empt maintenance and asset requirements it is necessary to undertake a stock condition survey at the start of the new leisure contract. By undertaking this £150K survey work, the Council can make informed capital investment decisions.

vi. CCTV Mobile Camera Replacement

Additional investment is required to support the ongoing maintenance and rolling camera replacement of the Council's CCTV systems. This £20K (over four years) investment is aligned with the Council's commitment to responding effectively to Anti-social Behaviour issues as part of the SoSafe Community Safety Strategy (2021-24) and in response to resident priorities indicated as part of the Residents Survey (2021).

4.2.8 Priority 4 - Schemes to maintain operational efficiency

i. Vehicle and Equipment Replacements

This investment represents the ongoing fleet management and equipment replacements required when assets reach the end of their operational life £677K (2023/24), £355K (2024/25).

ii. The remaining nine items with a priority four can be found in Appendix A and totals £273K.

4.2.9 Priority 7 - Urgent works (that reduce the risk of litigation) – relates to two items as follows, further details can be found in Appendix A:

- Cavendish Road - Manhole covers £50K
- Weston Road Cemetery – Pothole repairs £15K

4.2.10 Priority 9 - Schemes included in the Corporate Risk Register

i. Cavendish Transfer Station Safety works

This investment is part of the fire safety improvement works to the depot and is Phase two fire protection works totalling £350K, installation of roof structure over the residual waste bay £150K and thermal image cameras £80K. The Council has already spent £590K on fire safety works (phase one) in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

ii. Penstock valve installation

This requires £80K for the installation of the valve to contain waste fire water in the event of a fire at the site. This is a requirement of the water authority to avoid contamination and the Environment Agency.

4.2.11 Priority 11 - New Burden

- i. Weston Road Cemetery - Improvements to Welfare facilities totalling £10K which have come to the end of useful life and are required for the staff working on site.

4.3 Locality Review Update

4.3.1 A key recommendation from the June 2020 MTFS COVID recovery report was that a pipeline of land disposals be identified from Locality Reviews to help maintain the resilience of General Fund balances, by removing the revenue contribution to capital. There was also a need to generate additional capital receipts to help fund any shortfalls from the reduction or cessation of New Homes Bonus (NHB).

4.3.2 The current position is detailed below and shows a reduction in receipts for the year of £347,600 from reduced valuations on several properties and the removal of property from the list of disposals. A further two disposals are included on the February Executive agenda.

Table 6: Locality Review Site Disposals		
Tranche	Estimated receipt £'000	Q2 22/23 Updated F/cast £'000
Tranche 1 – Year 1 2021/22 Actual	£0	£0
Tranche 2 – Year 2 2022/23 Estimate	£2,598	£2,250
Tranche 3 – Year 3 2023/24 Estimate	£960	£960
Total Forecast Locality Review Receipts	£3,558	£3,210

4.4 Summary Capital Programme 2022/23-2027/28

4.4.1 The revised Capital Strategy for 2022/23-2027/28 totals £86.6Million, including the growth bids totalling £3.6Million. This is summarised in table seven below, and in detail in Appendix C.

Table 7: Revised Capital Programme							
	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Total £000
Stevenage Direct Services	4,090	6,124	1,325	133	0	0	11,672
Housing Development	2,425	13,046	6,071	0	0	0	21,542
Finance and Estates	2,861	1,003	90	0	0	0	3,954
Digital & Transformation	418	422	104	0	0	0	944
Regeneration	14,610	11,230	10,150	7,400	0	0	43,390
Communities and Neighbourhoods	873	1,540	55	20	5	0	2,493

Table 7: Revised Capital Programme

	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Total £000
Planning and Regulatory	275	461	365	0	0	0	1,101
Deferred Works Reserve	1,059	200	200	0	0	0	1,459
Total GF Schemes	26,611	34,026	18,360	7,553	5	0	86,555

4.4.2 The General Fund Investment Strategy has been to maintain existing assets in their current condition by following a fix-on-fail approach, incurring expenditure as necessary for operational purposes and with limited improvements via Regeneration activities, new Housing Development and the improvement programmes covering Play Areas, Garages and Vehicle/Plant. This has been the case due to necessity as a result of their being limited resources. m

4.4.3 The current programme does include a contingency of £1.259Million for the two financial years (2022/23 and 2023/24) in total and this represents 2% of those budgets and this needs to cover any inflationary pressures (i.e., from increase inflation) or any health & safety emergency works. An assessment of the level of contingency required and level of unused Capital Resources will be assessed and included in the February Capital Strategy as set out in paragraph 4.2.3.

4.5 Capital Resources for the General Fund Capital Strategy

4.5.1 The projected resources used to fund the Capital Strategy total £86.6Million, which includes the growth bids of £3.6Million. This is summarised in table eight below, and detailed in Appendix C. This includes a funding gap currently of £177k if all general capital receipts are utilised.

Table 8: Revised Capital Programme

	22/23 £000	23/24 £000	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	Total £000
Capital Receipts	5,326	7,083	2,835	153	5	0	15,402
Locality Review receipts	2,250	960	0	0	0	0	3,210
Grants and other contributions	11,513	18,986	9,650	7,400	0	0	47,549
Revenue Reserves	15	101	0	0	0	0	116
Capital Reserve (Housing Receipts)	804	375	379	0	0	0	1,558
Capital Reserve (Revenue Savings)	44	0	0	0	0	0	44
New Homes Bonus CNM	230	253	0	0	0	0	483
Funding Gap – Growth Bids	0	177	0	0	0	0	177
Borrowing	6,429	6,091	5,496	0	0	0	18,016
TOTAL	26,611	34,026	18,360	7,553	5	0	86,555

4.5.2 The table above shows Capital financing for the current year and over the five-year period consists of 21% borrowing; 55% capital grants, 23% useable capital receipts and the remaining 1% relates to the General Fund reserve.

4.5.3 The use of capital receipts is dependent on delivery of the disposal sites to the market. Assuming that all the General Fund Growth Bids in Appendix A are approved, the revised capital strategy includes the following forecast capital receipts. The table below includes both General Capital Receipts and Locality

Review Receipts as they are available for use in the Capital Programme. Ring-fenced Town Centre Transformation and SG1 receipts have been excluded

Table 9: GF Capital Receipts Forecast

	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Total £000
Opening Balance	3,641	3,136	0	7,838	5,188	5,188	3,641
General Capital Receipts	3,507	3,888	10,173				17,568
Locality Review Site Disposal	2,250	960					3,210
Receipts used in year	(6,459)	(7,984)	(2,335)	(2,649)	0	(5)	(21,204)
Closing Balance	3,136	0	7,838	5,188	5,188	5,182	5,182

4.6 Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

4.6.1 MRP is applied where the council has to set aside a revenue allocation for provision of debt repayments (borrowing in the capital programme). MRP replaces other capital charges (e.g., depreciation) in the statement of accounts and has an impact on the council's bottom line. MRP will increase and decrease throughout the programme and is sensitive to both expenditure and funding changes. The council will continue to balance the use of capital receipts, internal borrowing and external borrowing to ensure the most efficient use of resources, including the need to fund MRP.

4.6.2 The Council has an on-going capital programme and will continue to invest in capital projects beyond 2027/28 and will therefore need to ensure that funds are set aside for the future cost of borrowing.

4.6.3 The other main risks to the capital programme are:

- Potential for scheme overspends
- Potential for delay in realising capital receipts – there are £3.9Million of land/asset sales to be achieved in 2023/24 as shown in table nine, however the Locality Review Receipts are required for later years.
- The deferred works budget of may not be sufficient to fund any schemes not currently funded in the Strategy due to the ongoing fix-on-fail approach.
- Potential for money spent as capital on some Towns Fund projects to revert to a future revenue liability if projects do not progress to physical completion, e.g., only feasibility and early design are completed
- Cost volatility and increased client risk in construction projects due to the impact of cost of living, which has resulted in supply chain pressures and significant price increases across the construction sector.

4.6.4 The officer Strategic Town Centre Transformation Board and the Stevenage Development Board also need to ensure that external funding is maximised to reduce risks to the Council's finances.

4.7 Other capital investments and Finance Lease

4.7.1 The Council purchased several properties in the town centre to enable it to meet its regeneration aims. These properties were purchased using LEP funding. These properties have been purchased for regeneration purposes and therefore do not fall under the Property Investment Strategy. Prior to making these strategic

acquisitions full risk assessments were undertaken to ensure the cost of carrying these assets in the short to medium term could be met by the Council. The Regeneration Asset allocated reserve has been setup specifically to cover these costs.

4.7.2 The Council undertook a long-term finance lease for a mixed development scheme on Queensway in the town centre. This is a lease arrangement and falls outside the scope of capital investment. Prior to the decision to proceed being made a risk assessment was undertaken and presented to Members. Key Officers were given training on their roles and responsibilities for the new governance arrangements associated with the Limited Liability Partnership.

4.7.3 External legal, financial, and commercial advice is procured to ensure the validity and viability of business cases presented to Members.

4.8 Capital Programme - Housing Revenue Account (2022/23-2027/28)

4.8.1 The majority of the HRA capital expenditure as set out as part of this strategy will be spent on the development of new homes and the maintenance, repairs and upkeep of existing stock.

4.8.2 Alongside the General Fund exercise set out in paragraph 4.1.2, officers have also identified some slippage in the HRA capital programme of £5.5Million from 2022/23 to 2023/24.

- HRA New Build Housing Development (£2.3Million) – Schemes delayed due to the building Industry still experiencing a shortage of key materials. Only costs for demolition and architects required this year.
- Planned Investment including Decent Homes (£3.2Million) - Under the Major Repair Contract programme a number of blocks will be in progress but not be fully complete in 2022/23 and spend will occur in 2023/24.

4.8.3 The majority of the growth relates to decarbonisation and building safety works. The decarbonisation works will relate to the success of the latest grant bid for Government funding, and this has been included within the current budget proposal.

4.8.4 The result of this exercise is summarised in table below and is set out in full in Appendix B (Growth bids) and Appendix D (HRA Capital Strategy).

Table 10: Update following 2022/23 Capital Bids process							
	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Total £000
Slippage	(5,569)	5,569	0	0	0	0	0
Growth Bids		5,068	4,988	3,690	3,690	3,060	20,496
TOTAL	(5,569)	10,638	4,988	3,690	3,690	3,060	20,496

4.8.5 The revised draft capital strategy budget for 2022/23 - 27/28 totals £207.1Million is set out in Appendix D and summarised below.

Table 11: Revised Capital Programme

	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	Total £000
Capital Programme Excl New Build (Housing Investment)	23,469	25,442	20,070	21,429	18,063	3,060	111,534
Special Projects & Equipment	63	25	25	1,141	1,141	0	2,395
New Build (Housing Development)	25,060	36,706	13,659	12,342	4,615	0	92,383
Digital & Transformation	494	246	51	0	0	0	792
Total HRA Schemes	49,086	62,420	33,806	34,912	23,819	3,060	207,104

4.9 Capital Programme – HRA Resources (2022/23-2027/28)

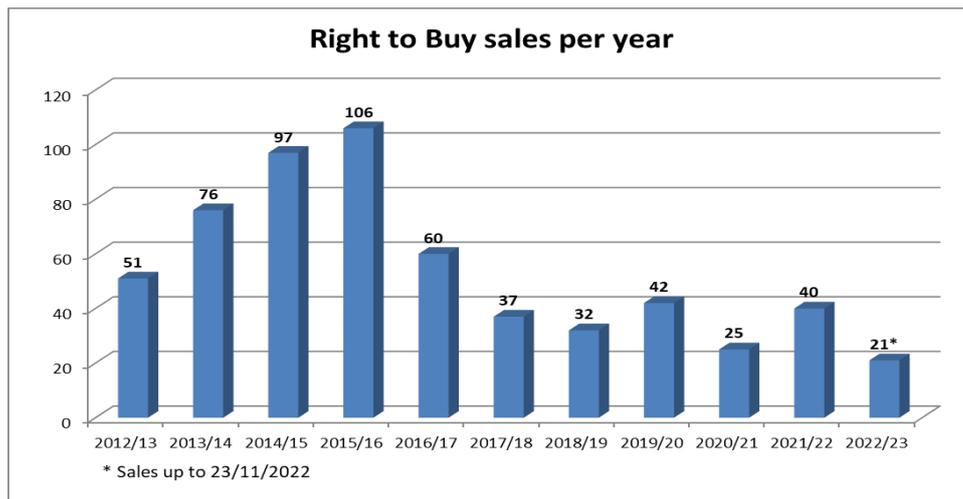
- 4.9.1 The resourcing of the current HRA capital programme funding is summarised in the table below. The largest percentage is funded by the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) via depreciation charges (46%) followed by borrowing (16%). Capital receipts from right to buy sales of council houses (New Build 1-4-1 receipts) forms 12% of total funding. This aligns to the HRA budget report to this Executive.

Table 12: Revised HRA Capital Programme

	22/23 £000	23/24 £000	24/25 £000	25/26 £000	26/27 £000	27/28 £000	Total £000
MRR (Self Financing Depreciation)	17,983	20,755	19,705	17,870	12,635	2,710	95,971
New Build Land Receipts	5,713	1,420	0	2,100	4,373	0	13,606
(RTB) new Build provision	5,127	11,579	4,217	4,403	2,196	350	23,983
Debt Provision Receipts	936	976	1,058	1,102	0	0	3,136
Section 20 Contribution	500	1,130	568	0	0	0	2,197
Borrowing	8,756	24,964	175	0	0	0	34,146
S106	736	0	0	0	0	0	736
Developer Contributions (Kenilworth)	4,729	0	0	0	0	0	4,729
Revenue Contribution to Capital	2,204	238	6,725	9,437	4,615	0	23,481
Grant	2,403	1,358	1,358	0	0	0	5,119
TOTAL	49,086	62,420	33,806	34,912	23,819	3,060	207,104

Use of One for One Receipts

- 4.9.2 The Government has now amended the rules regarding the use of capital receipts arising from the sale of Right to Buy (RTB) properties and the Council has entered into a new retention agreement that reflects these changes. This has reduced pressure on the use of RTB receipts, particularly as the Council is currently delivering major developments that can use these restricted funds.
- 4.9.3 Sales of properties remain lower than the peak in 2015/16 and it looks likely that they will be in line with projected estimates of 35 properties for 2022/23. The budget for 2023/24 continues to assume sales of 35 properties for rent budgeting and capital receipts purposes. The graph below shows recent sales activity by year.



4.10 De Minimis Level for Capital Expenditure 2023/24

- 4.10.1 Accounting best practice recommends that the Council approves a de minimis level for capital expenditure, or a value below which the expenditure would not be treated as capital. This would mean that the expenditure would not be recorded on the asset register nor be funded from capital resources.
- 4.10.2 The 2023/24 de-minimis expenditure limit be increased from £5,000 to £7,500 per scheme be proposed for consideration by the Executive.

4.11 Contingency Allowance for 2023/24

- 4.11.1 The contingency allowance for 2022/23 is £250,000, the contingency proposed for 2023/24 remains at £250,000, for schemes requiring funding from existing capital resources. A limit of £250,000 is also set for schemes for each Fund that have new resources or match funded resources identified in addition to those contained within this report. This limit applies individually to both the General Fund and the HRA. This contingency sum constitutes an upper limit on both funds within which the Executive can approve supplementary estimates, rather than part of the Council's Budget Requirement for the year.
- 4.11.2 The contingency allowance for 2022/23 is £500,000 in relation to the use of restricted use or 1.4.1 receipts for registered providers to ensure that the Council achieves nominal rights and doesn't have to return 1.4.1 receipts to the government. This contingency allowance is a recommended to remain at the same level of £500,000 for 2023/24.
- 4.11.3 Separate to the contingency allowance in paragraph 4.12.1, is the delegation to Executive or Portfolio Lead/Leader of the Council to approve increases to the capital programme for grant funded projects, when external funding sources have been secured. Officers propose that this contingency allowance remains as £5,000,000 where a scheme is fully funded from 3rd party contribution/grant.

4.12 Looking Forward

4.12.1 **Super Capital Strategy** - a revised Capital Strategy Report will be coming to a future Executive. This will outline the aims and objectives of future General Fund capital expenditure and investment plans. Focus will include decarbonisation, leisure services, Transformation bids, community assets and electrification of the fleet.

4.12.2 **Regeneration Joint Venture** – a report will come back to Executive in 2023 and will outline options for the delivery of the first phase of SG1. This could potentially include a Joint Venture arrangement and may have implications for the future Capital Strategy.

4.12.3 The **HRA will have a full business plan review in 2023/24** to make sure that capital and revenue spend remains affordable over the life of the plan.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 This report is financial in nature and consequently financial implications are included in the above.

5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 The legal implications for each individual scheme within the capital programme will be considered when approval is sought for that particular scheme. Each scheme within the capital programme will be approved in accordance with the council's constitution.

5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

5.3.1 None specifically in relation to this report.

5.4 Risk Implications

5.4.1 The significant risks associated with the capital strategy are largely inherent within this report.

5.4.2 There is a risk that the value of land sales is not realised due to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis reducing demand and prices lower than anticipated as a result.

5.4.4 The Council manages this risk by reviewing and updating the Strategy quarterly, including resources where a sale is likely to complete. This will enable action to be taken where a receipt looks doubtful.

5.4.5 A significant risk exists that works maybe deferred due to lack of resources and materials. A reasonable assessment has been made in the prioritisation process to try to keep this risk to a minimum.

5.5 Climate Change Implications

- 5.5.1 In their current form the Council's buildings do not currently support the climate change agenda in terms of energy efficiency or divestment of use of fossil fuels.
- 5.5.2 However, there is an opportunity through the local asset review programme to build in design principles to improved / future assets in terms of energy efficiency and sustainable energy sources. This should be a core principle of any future designs arising from the local asset reviews. There would be a further benefit of reduced energy costs.
- 5.5.3 The climate change agenda is far wider than the buildings the Council uses. For example, the Council is also examining the vehicle fleet and consideration will be given to reducing its carbon impact and the HRA growth includes a £9.7Million investment to ensure all homes meet the minimum EPC rating of C.
- 5.5.4 In addition to existing assts, new buildings being planned as part of the regeneration of Stevenage – e.g., the Hub and new Leisure Centre will be designed and equipped to meet modern standards.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 Quarter 1 and 2 monitoring report (Executive, 20 October 2022)
- BD 2 Final Housing Revenue Account Rent Setting & Budget report 2023/24 (January 2023 Executive) – elsewhere on this agenda
- BD 3 Medium Term Financial Strategy: Housing Revenue Account – Business Plan Review (including 1st and 2nd Quarter HRA Revenue Budget Monitoring 2022/23) (November 2022 Executive)
- BD 4 HRA Business Plan 2022 update (December 2022 Executive)
- BD5 Regeneration Programme Update and SG1 programme implementation (December 2022 Executive)

Appendices

- A - General Fund Capital Bids for consideration
- B - HRA Capital Bids for consideration
- C - General Fund Capital Strategy
- D - HRA Capital Strategy