

**Best Value
Performance Plan
2005/06**

Draft

2/03/05

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Welcome to Stevenage

Stevenage enjoys all the amenities and opportunities of a well planned town situated in pleasant surroundings in the Hertfordshire countryside. In 1946 Stevenage was chosen by the Government as the Britain's first new town to help ease the housing shortage in London. The town grew up around a number of residential neighbourhoods, each with a variety of local facilities including shops, schools, community centres and medical facilities. Today Stevenage is a thriving town of nearly 80,000 people.

Industry and Commerce

Much of our town's success is due to industry and commerce. We have two main business areas in the town – the Gunnels Wood area on the West side of the town, and the Pin Green area in the north-east. The town also provides further employment in shops and service industries, located primarily in the town centre and old town, but also in the schools and neighbourhood centres located throughout the town. According to a recent survey by Lloyds TSB Corporate, Stevenage was identified as one of the most successful areas in the country to do business.

Transport Links

Stevenage boasts excellent communication links - the town is located on the A1(M) just 30 miles from Central London and only 15 minutes from the M25 Orbital. It is also on the main East Coast London to Edinburgh line, with Kings Cross only a 20-minute journey away.

Education

Hertfordshire County Council is the education authority for Stevenage. Within Stevenage, we have 28 primary and 8 secondary schools, as well as 4 schools that offer support to children with special needs. The schools are modern and well equipped with generous sporting facilities. Hertfordshire LEA has a good record of achievement both at primary and secondary school levels. Further Education is provided by North Hertfordshire College, in a new campus situated close to the town centre which was opened by the Queen in March 2003. The College has an intake of approximately 15,000 students a year, the majority being part-time, but with a full-time population of approximately 2,200.

Housing

As a new town, Stevenage was carefully planned from the start to create a high quality of life and a thriving community, with the pioneering planners recognising that families wanted good quality housing set amongst open spaces and trees with transport, schools and other facilities nearby.

There are now 32,758 households in Stevenage, 25.8% are Council homes.

Leisure

Stevenage residents and visitors enjoy a wide range of cultural and leisure activities on offer in the town. Amongst the many attractions, we have a multi-purpose Arts and

Leisure Centre, a newly refurbished swimming pool, our own museum, several parks and play centres, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, a major new leisure park comprising a cinema, bowling and range of bars, restaurants and night clubs and the Old Town with its old pubs and restaurants.

Shopping

Shopping in Stevenage is concentrated into four main areas: the Old Town, the Town Centre, the Retail Parks and the local Neighbourhood Centres. The Old Town dates back to the 12th century and retains much of its old world charm. The town's pedestrianised shopping area consists of over 250 shops, offices, civic building, leisure facilities and indoor and outdoor market.

Local Authority Political Make-up

Political makeup at May 2005:

- 32 Labour
- 4 Liberal Democrat
- 3 Conservative

Average Council Tax 2004/05: (2004/05) £940.58

Message from the Leader of the Council

This has been another very successful year for Stevenage Borough Council with good progress being made on all our ambitious plans for the town.

Stevenage has been identified as a “key centre” with a need for regeneration in the draft East of England Plan. An expansion of the town is currently proposed in the draft plan, together with the ongoing work on the Growth and Delivery Grant projects including Austen Paths, Ridgmond Park and the Manulife and Fire Station site. These will provide additional homes in Stevenage and include a range of **“affordable housing”**.

Developers for the **“regeneration of the town centre”** have been working hard behind the scenes on detailed proposals and we are expecting a planning application to be submitted by the end of the year. In addition to the new shops, transport interchange, Discovery Centre and residential quarter included in these plans, we are embarking on an improvement programme for Queensway. This area will be transformed with contemporary paving, lighting, art works, signage and planting. These schemes will help secure investment in the town and secure Stevenage’s position as a sub-regional shopping centre.

Following a successful pilot scheme for a collection of garden waste for recycling we are extending this service to cover the whole of the town. This service is not only convenient but reduces the levels of waste, protects the environment and helps us to achieve our priority of **“recycling more waste”**.

The Customer Service Centre, which aims to satisfy most enquiries and requests in one call or visit, has been expanded to deal with more services and enquiries including the Housing Repair Service for Council tenants. Customers can now contact the Council by telephone, e-mail and website, both during and outside office hours helping us to deliver our ambition of **“transformed Council services”**. The Customer Service Centre recently received a prestigious European excellence award for the quality of its service.

This Council places a high priority on fulfilling our ambition of **“community leadership”**. We continue to work together with our partners in the Stevenage Partnership to improve the quality of life in Stevenage for residents, employers and visitors. We have also consulted widely on many issues with our residents to make sure that we are delivering the services that are important to them.

Progress has been made towards our priority to **“encourage a fair and inclusive community”** with the publication of our Equality and Diversity Strategy, the Race Equality Scheme, the employment of an Equality and Diversity Officer and the increase in accessibility of Council premises.

We will continue to work in the Stevenage Community Safety Partnership to keep our **“town safe and reduce crime and the fear of crime”**. In areas covered by our CCTV system we have already seen a 50% reduction in crime. The upgrade to a digital system, plus the increasing use of mobile CCTV cameras, will make the system even more effective. The introduction of alcohol free zones to areas of the

town, where youth nuisance has been problematic, will also help reduce incidents of youth nuisance.

Our modernisation programme for Council homes, provision of good quality advice to those in housing need and improving service standards are at the core of our ambition to achieve “**good housing for all**”.

We have continued to support the case for the **sustainable development of Stevenage**. The Inspector’s Report on the Planning Application for the development west of the A1 (M) Stevenage is with the Deputy Prime Minister and we await his decision.

This Best Value Performance Plan sets out in detail how we have performed in the past year and our plans for the town for the next 3-5 years.

Please take the opportunity to read it and let us know what you think of our plans, as they are about your quality of life and your future.

- Are we providing the services you need?
- Do you think our services are of a good quality?
- Are we working on the right priorities?
- What are the main problems affecting the quality of life where you live?

Brian Hall
Leader Stevenage Borough Council

Introduction from Ian Paske, Chief Executive

This document 'Improving quality of life – what you can expect from the Council' is the Council's sixth Best Value Performance Plan.

In the past year, the Council has been building on its 'Good' rating in Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). We are working to deliver our ambitions through the CPA improvement plan and are aiming to become an 'excellent' authority when we are next assessed. The Audit Commission did not undertake a formal assessment of our progress since CPA (a direction of travel assessment). However we have worked with them on our approach to 'User Focus' and 'Equalities and Diversity'. We will be using the results of their visits to shape our work in this priority area.

In 2005/06 I will be implementing my plans to re-structure the Council's management arrangements. My aim is twofold:

- To create a "one Council" approach to managing the Council's business. The objective is to focus more clearly on achieving the Council's aims and ambitions, and to improve how we inter-act with our customers
- To provide cost savings to help reduce the Council's expenditure to a level which can be sustained into the future

As a result of the first phase, the Council's senior management team has been reduced by one, and the new strategic directors, have corporate, rather than departmental responsibilities. The strategic directors will drive the delivery of the Council's ambitions and target 'hot spot' areas for improvement such as crime and disorder and performance management. In line with this change at the top, I will also centralise the administrative, financial and personnel support arrangements this year.

These changes will produce a slimmer, centralised management and administrative structure which should help timely decision making, eliminate duplication of effort and will save money.

The end of the year saw the tragic fire at Harrow Court in Bedwell, in which two firefighters and a resident lost their lives. This has been at the forefront of our thoughts and activities. Following the fire, we worked very hard to look after the residents of Harrow Court and to repair and refurbish the flats so we can get them home.

I am looking forward to what promises to be a challenging and exciting year ahead.

You can write to me, Ian Paske, Chief Executive

Or phone: (01438) 242225

Or email: ian.paske@stevenage.gov.uk

Ian Paske
Chief Executive

The role of the Council

Under the Local Government Act 2000, district councils have a clearly defined role as community leaders as well as traditional local service provider. As a community leader, the Council is responsible for developing and contributing to the sustainable social, economic and environmental development of the town.

The Council's mission, vision and values

Our mission, vision and values underpin our approach to both our community leader and service provider roles.

Mission: "Council and community working together to improve quality of life"

Vision: "A town we can all be proud of. A place where people want to live, work, invest, do business and visit"

We will seek to achieve these by working within the following framework of values:

- ◆ putting the community first
- ◆ developing partnerships
- ◆ providing quality services
- ◆ being a good employer
- ◆ working effectively

The Council as Community Leader

The people of Stevenage receive services from various public bodies including Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council, police, health and North Hertfordshire College. In turn, these bodies work in partnership with local voluntary organisations, community groups, and with local industry and commerce.

In our role as community leader, we work through the Stevenage Partnership which comprises of public, voluntary and private sector bodies to improve public services and to promote and encourage organisations to work together for the benefit of the community.

Over forty organisations are actively involved as members of the Partnership Board and they represent many other public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations.

Members of the Stevenage Partnership have a shared vision for Stevenage of:

"A town we can all be proud of. A vibrant, safe and exciting place in which to live, work, visit and do business."

The Stevenage Partnership has developed with the local community a coherent vision and strategy to secure long-term success for Stevenage as a sustainable community and a successful town. The aim is to reflect the views and aspirations of everyone who has a stake in Stevenage's future. The Community Strategy was published in the summer of 2004.

A copy of the Community Strategy can be obtained from Jim Brown on (01438) 242914 and is available on the partnership's website www.stevenagepartnership.org.uk

The Council as service provider

We provide a wide range of high quality direct services, which focus on improving quality of life for the town's community through the promotion of independent living, public health, community safety, equalities and sustainability, all of which contribute towards improving quality of life for local people.

These direct services include:

Housing - homelessness, housing advice, housing repairs and maintenance, housing management, provision of council housing, housing allocations, leaseholder management, sheltered housing and caretaking

Environmental services – abandoned vehicles, fly tipping, graffiti removal, car parks, cycle tracks, grass cutting, refuse collection, recycling, road/highway maintenance, transport and street cleansing

Environmental health - dog wardens, pest control, food safety, health improvement, air and land pollution, noise control, health & safety, licensing of persons and premises, house renovation grants, disabled facilities grants, private sector housing, disrepair and fire precautions and facilities for houses in multiple occupation

Planning - building regulations, development control, district plan, economic development and regeneration

Leisure – provision of grant aid to Stevenage Leisure Limited (including Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre; Stevenage swimming pool; John Henry Newman leisure centre; Fairlands Valley park and Stevenage golf centre), play schemes, parks and amenities, museum and leisure 50

Community services – community development, community alarms, community transport, community meals, CCTV, partnership services and grant aid, TV licences, concessionary fares and school milk, community safety partnership with Herts County Council and the police

Agency services on behalf of Central Government – Housing and council tax benefits, land searches, council tax and business rates

Democratic services - elections, committee and elected member support

These direct services are supported by a range of strategic and resource functions:

Policy, strategy, media, customer service, communications, information technology and research, asset management, accountancy, audit, anti-fraud, personnel, training, procurement, insurance, facilities management, administration, health and safety and emergency planning arrangements.

The Council services are well received by the community. We achieve high satisfaction ratings in local public opinion surveys and have received a number of confirmations of

Themes for the Stevenage Community Strategy – “Stevenage 21 – Our Town, Our Future”

- A vibrant town centre and thriving neighbourhoods
- A prosperous town
- A creative town
- A healthy and caring town
- A safe town
- A learning town that invests in young people
- A town with strong communities and opportunities for all
- A town that's good to live in – housing, transport and the environment

our success in the form of national awards such as Chartermarks, Beacon Status and successful challenge funding bids.

The Council's ambitions and priorities

We want to ensure that we invest in areas that are priorities for the residents of Stevenage. We work with our customers to find out what their needs and priorities for investment are. In 2003, residents told us that their top 3 priorities for improvement were a clean, green and safe environment; activities for young people and affordable housing. In July 2004 we held a community conference 'Let's talk' here residents told us that the language we use for our ambitions and priorities is confusing and that they would like clearer information. As a result of this information we revised the Council's ambitions and priorities for 2005/06.

In 2005/06 our ambitions and priorities are:

Ambition	Community Leadership – <i>to facilitate the provision of better public services, which reflect and meet the needs of local communities</i>
Priorities	Develop partnership working
	Make the town safer
	Encourage a fair and inclusive community
	Enhance the image of Stevenage
Ambition	The Regeneration of Stevenage – <i>to make Stevenage a town of regional significance with a sub-regional shopping centre and improved neighbourhood community facilities</i>
Priorities	Expand the town
	Develop a vibrant town centre
	Revitalise local neighbourhood centres
	Maintain a clean and green environment
	Recycle more waste
Ambition	Good Housing for All – <i>to ensure all housing in Stevenage meets acceptable standards and those in need of housing receive quality advice</i>
Priorities	Work with partners to provide affordable housing
	Ensure tenants and those in need of housing receive a top quality housing service
Ambition	Transforming Council Services – <i>to ensure the provision of first class customer service and good quality services</i>
Priorities	Make access to Council services easier
	Use information technology to improve the quality of services

What do you want from the Council?

Engaging Local Communities – The Council's Consultation Strategy

We are committed to consulting our customers about how we provide our services and on any major issues about the future of our town. To ensure we do this effectively we have developed a consultation strategy. When consulting residents, visitors or users of our town we will ensure that:

- ✓ We only seek views when it is clear why the information is needed and how it will be used
- ✓ We consult before a decision has been taken, not after
- ✓ We effectively use previous consultation results to inform decisions
- ✓ All relevant stakeholders and sectors of the community have the opportunity and the means to be involved in the consultation
- ✓ Where possible, we undertake consultation jointly with other agencies
- ✓ We achieve value for money when using companies to help us find out residents views
- ✓ All participants of consultation exercises are informed of the decisions made as a consequence of the information provided, and where a decision is contrary to the views of participants, reasons given
- ✓ Consultation is conducted with service users on service standards and areas for development, as well as on major decisions and that will affect either the whole or proportion of the Stevenage Community

The consultation programme

Each year we develop a consultation programme to plan how, when and who we need to consult on what range of issues. In 04/05 we did this through the community conference 'Let's Talk'. In 05/06 we will carry out a residents' survey and in the following year the statutory general BVPI survey. This programme is supplemented by consultation on specific areas.

Consultation undertaken in 04/05 included

- The '**Let's Talk' Community Conference** – to find out the views of residents on the Council's ambitions and spending priorities. The results helped us to reorganise our ambitions and priorities.
- **Open spaces survey** – to find out what residents thought of the parks, woodland, playgrounds etc in Stevenage. Once the results have been finalised these will be used to develop a new open spaces strategy.
- **Services for older people** – to see what people who both use and don't use these services thought of them. The results were used as part of a wider review of these services.
- **Town Centre redevelopment** – an exhibition was held at Stevenage Day to give people an opportunity to ask questions and give their opinions of the plans to redevelop Stevenage town centre.
- **Peartree Park** – in partnership with Groundwork engaged local residents in delivering local improvements

Programme for 2005/06:

- **Town wide residents' survey**, to seek opinions on a range of issues about the Council
- **Have a Say Day**, to seek tenants' views on our housing service
- **Housing consultation** on voids, the repairs appointment system and the decent homes standards with tenants associations
- **Play consultation** – to seek views about play opportunities throughout the town which will help develop a play strategy for the town


AMBITION: Community Leadership

As community leaders we aim to develop and contribute to the sustainable social, economic and environmental well-being of our local communities. To achieve this we must work in partnership with a number of organisations throughout the town.

We encourage all organisations that have an interest in the development of the town to work together. We aim to *develop partnerships* which add value and lead to improvements in the quality of life for everyone who lives, works and visits our town.

We work through the Stevenage Partnership which comprises of public, voluntary and private sector bodies to facilitate the provision of better public services which reflect and meet the needs of the local communities.

The Stevenage Partnership has developed, in consultation with local communities, a vision and strategy to secure long-term success for Stevenage– ‘*Stevenage 2021 – Our Town, Our Future*’.

Throughout this document where we have worked in partnership to achieve something you will see this symbol 

We work with the Stevenage Partnership to achieve a number of its themes. In our role as community leaders we work with the Partnership to develop Stevenage as a safe, clean and green town which has a good supply affordable housing, is *fair and inclusive* and has a *positive national image*.

We also work with the Community Safety Partnership, which is committed to tackling *crime and anti-social behaviour* in the town, as well as ‘fear of crime’, a major issue for the town.

Community Leadership Priorities

- Develop partnership working
- Make the Town safer
- A fair and inclusive community
- Enhance the image of Stevenage

PRIORITY: Develop Partnership Working 🍷

Why is this a priority for the Council?

We aim to work in partnership wherever it will add value to the work we do and improve the quality of life for residents.

Working in partnership can, and has, produced a number of enhanced benefits for the town's communities. We are committed to developing the capacity of existing partnerships as well as exploring new ways of working with our partners.

We work through a number of partnerships including the Community Safety Partnership to reduce crime throughout the town, and the Stevenage Partnership to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of Stevenage. The outcomes and achievements of these partnerships can be seen in the *community leadership* section as well as throughout this document. This section sets out how we have developed the partnerships and how we will contribute to their future development.

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- ✓ Published the Stevenage Community Strategy 'Stevenage 2021', and sent a summary to every household in the town
- ✓ Ran a stakeholder conference on Back Injury in partnership with Primary Care Trust (PCT), Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and North Herts DC
- ✓ Improved our monitoring system for the actions in the Community Strategy
- ✓ Established The Stevenage Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
- ✓ Set up the Social Inclusion Forum to deliver joint solutions to promoting inclusion.
- ✓ Established the Cultural Forum, which includes representatives from the arts and heritage, sports development and leisure provision in Stevenage.

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- Host an 'education summit' for the Stevenage Partnership in the town which will bring together key partners and address how we are going to raise educational standards in the long term.
- Develop the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership to lead on educational issues in the town
- Run a 'healthy workplace' initiative for the Stevenage Partnership

- Implement the recommendations of the teenage pregnancy in Stevenage review - a joint review between the Primary Care Trust (PCT), Hertfordshire County Council, the Patient Participation Forum and Stevenage Borough Council
- Hold an Annual Review of the Stevenage Partnership and its work programme
- Implement and monitor the partnership initiatives set out in the Community Strategy

What are our future plans?

- * Develop partnership working to sustain the drive for improved local services in Stevenage through to 2021
- * Carry out a 'peer review' of the Stevenage Partnership to develop its effectiveness and build its capacity.
- * Complete an Equality Impact Assessment of the Community Strategy and Stevenage Partnership to ensure its policies are non-discriminatory
- * Work with partners to meet a number of challenging targets for the Local Public Service Agreements (LPSA) Round 2 with the aim of gaining increased government funding for shared local priority areas

How are we measuring progress?

Indicator	2004/05 actual	2005/06 target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (5 years) 2010	Target 10 years 2015
Percentage of Quality of Life performance indicators that have improved					
Percentage of residents satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live (net)					
Percentage of residents who think that over the past two years their neighbourhood has got better (net)					

PRIORITY: Make the Town Safer 🍷

Why is this a priority for the Council?

The Council wants to ensure that people who live, work and visit Stevenage *are* safe, and *feel* safe.

The fear of crime is higher than is justified by the actual risk of being a victim of crime. A recent survey (BVPI survey 2003/04) found that two thirds of Stevenage people do not feel safe being out in their neighbourhood after dark.

Local people have identified community safety and dealing with anti-social behaviour as one of their main priorities for improvement. We work together with the Community Safety Partnership to tackle anti-social behaviour, public disorder, and alcohol and drug related crime. We will work together to create a safer environment for all those who live, work and visit Stevenage.

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- ✓ **Reduced theft, commercial burglary, vehicle crime and disorder**
- ✓ Introduced a pilot 'Alcohol Free Zone' in Bandley Hill and Shephall
- ✓ Implemented an Anti-Social Behaviour Policy, which brought new powers to deal with noise, high hedges and nuisance behaviour
- ✓ Set up a team of 9 Police Community Support Officers to tackle crime and disorder in the neighbourhoods
- ✓ Assumed responsibility for licensing from the magistrates court, following the introduction of the Licensing Act 2003
- ✓ Set up pubwatch in partnership with the Police and the Licensing Trade
- ✓ Introduced environmental improvements at each of the local shopping areas to reduce crime and disorder
- ✓ **Provided a programme of accessible and affordable youth activities throughout the town during school holiday periods, which included 'Summer Fest'**
- ✓ Worked with partners to identify persistent anti-social behaviour offenders, which include appointing an Anti-Social Behaviour Coordinator. As of December 2004 we have issued 43 verbal warnings, 15 anti-social behaviour contracts, and 2 anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs)
- ✓ Used 4 new mobile CCTV cameras and police CCTV vans to reduce crime and disorder in hotspot areas of the town, and brought offenders to court with evidence from these

✓ Completed an audit of crime and disorder and developed a new Community Safety Strategy 2005-08 for publication in April 2005. This will continue joint agency initiatives to reduce crime and the fear of crime

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- Reduce a wide range of crimes by 17.5 %, including violent crime, domestic burglary, vehicle crime, arson and others that the British Crime Survey identified as being of concern to citizens nationally
- Increase levels of 'feeling safe' factors during the day and night
- Introduce Alcohol Free Zone in Town Centre and Leisure Park
- set up a Pub Watch Scheme for the town centre and leisure park pubs and clubs that will work with the Police, use banning orders and discourage under age drinking
- Continue Community Safety Action Plans in the Oval, and develop and deliver Community Safety Action Plans for the town centre
- Deliver the 'Safe Town' objectives in the Community Strategy
- Invest in Neighbourhood Watch to assist us in tackling community problems
- Deliver the Community Safety Strategy 2005-08, which tells partners and the community more about what the Community Safety Partnership does
- Run at least 3 Environmental Action Days with the Police, Fire Service and DVLA which will look at anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs), rubbish, fly-tipping, and untaxed vehicles in hotspot areas of the town

What are our future plans?

- * Work with the town centre developers to help design out crime in the new town centre
- * Enable localised information about community safety to be available to the community through the e-government programme
- * Seek further external funding to invest in communities in the areas of most need
- * Enable Wardens and Police Community Support Officers to record information using handheld devices, and mainstream the sharing of this information across the Council, including:
 - the reporting of criminal damage to Council property,
 - residential noise
 - abandoned motor vehicles,
 - fly tipping,
 - rubbish

Indicator	2003/04 Actual	2004/05 Target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (10 years) 2015
Domestic burglaries per 1,000 households	10.69	7.34		
Violent offences committed by a stranger per 1,000 population				
Violent offences committed in a public place per 1,000 population				
Violent offences committed in connection with licensed premises per 1,000 population				
Violent offences committed under the influence per 1,000 population				
Vehicle crimes per 1,000 population				
All recorded crime				
All recorded Disorder				
Criminal Damage				
Domestic Violence				
Racial Incidents				
Residential noise complaints per 1000 population				

PRIORITY: A Fair and Inclusive Community 👍

Why is this a priority for the Council?

We are committed to ensuring that our delivery of services and employment practices reflect the highest possible equality standards. This means that we recognise and value difference, and aim to be fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory in carrying out all our responsibilities.

We want to ensure that there is fair access to services and non-discriminatory employment practices and that all our customers and communities are consulted on decisions that affect them.

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- ✓ Achieved Level 1 out of 5 of the Equality Standard for Local Government
- ✓ Developed a model for equality Impact Assessments, and completed pilot assessments on Community Services, Recruitment and the Customer Service Centre
- ✓ Incorporated Diversity Awareness training into the officer and member training programmes
- ✓ Appointed to the new post of Equality and Diversity Officer
- ✓ Improved access to Council buildings for people with a disability
- ✓ Used Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to map deprivation and ethnicity in Stevenage, which has allowed us to see where we need to target certain services
- ✓ Developed a system to report racial incidents at the Council
- ✓ Held the Community Conference 'Let's Talk', which offered local people an opportunity to influence our ambitions and priorities, including young, disabled and black and minority ethnic residents.

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- Commence Year 1 of the rolling programme of Equality Impact Assessments that over 3 years will assess all Council policies and services to ensure they are non discriminatory
- Promote awareness that the Council can provide documents in alternative formats and languages and interpreters to help access our services
- Develop our programme for improving access to Council buildings for people with a disability to include communal areas
- Set up forums to advise the Council on race equality and disability issues by working with groups like the World Forum and React

What are our future plans?

- * Comply with any further legislation e.g. age discrimination
- * Complete the 3-year programme of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure all Council service and policies are non discriminatory
- * Complete our Job Evaluation and implement the Equal Pay Review

How are we measuring progress?

Indicator	2004/05 actual	2005/06 target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (5 years) 2010	Target 10 years 2015
BV 2a - Equalities Standard for Local Government level			3	5	5
BV 2b – The duty to promote race equality					
BV 11a - The percentage of top 5% of earners that are women			29%	34%	50%
BV 11b - The percentage of top 5% of earners from black and minority ethnic communities			8%	10%	10%
BV 16a - The percentage of local authority employees declaring that they meet the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 disability definition					
BV 16b The percentage of economically active disabled people in the authority area					
BV 17a - The percentage of local authority employees from minority ethnic communities					
BV 17b - The percentage of the economically active minority ethnic community population in the authority area.					
BV 156 - The			72%	80%	80%

percentage of authority buildings open to the public which all public areas are suitable and accessible to disabled people					
BV 164 - Does the authority follow the Commission for Racial Equality's code of practice in rented housing?					

BV 174 - The number of racial incidents recorded by the authority per 100,000 population			2.5		
BV 175 - The percentage of racial incidents that resulted in further action			100%	100%	100%

PRIORITY: Enhance the image of Stevenage

Why is this a priority for the Council?

We want Stevenage to be seen as a place where people want to live, work, visit and do business.

The image of the town and its reputation are important to attract investment and funding. For the town to succeed, both the perceptions of the town and the aspirations of its residents must be enhanced but remain realistic.

Every household in Stevenage receives the Council's magazine *Chronicle*. In the 2001 Residents' Survey 85% recalled seeing the magazine. In a 2003 survey (BVPI), 70% of residents thought we kept them well informed. We aim to build on this and develop further methods of enhancing the town's image for residents.

Stevenage gains a variety of positive national media coverage and we are keen to promote the town at a national level. In partnership with the business community we successfully promoted Stevenage at a national level through the [Innovations@Stevenage](#) campaign, which was attended by the Queen.

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- ✓ Increased positive national and regional media coverage including articles about our Museum ('Millennium Galleries'), town centre regeneration plans, the award of a £5m Growth Area Development Grant from the Government, Haven homelessness hostel and the 'Let's Talk' community conference
- ✓ Increased national and specialist media coverage to promote best practice initiatives within services, including Choice Based Lettings
- ✓ Commenced major promotional campaigns for the East of England Plan and town centre regeneration
- ✓ Implemented information campaigns for major initiatives including the launch of the Community Strategy and the Council's ambitions and priorities 👍
- ✓ Published a new look A-Z of services, which gives details of how to access all local services and distributed it to all homes in the town and produced Braille and audio versions 👍

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- Promote that we can provide documents in a range of languages and formats
- Publish a new look Official Guide to Stevenage Borough Council
- Increase the coverage of regeneration and community safety initiatives locally and nationally

What are our future plans?

- * Assess current access to tourist information in Stevenage
- * Develop a 'Welcome to Stevenage' DVD
- * Review the Council's existing corporate identity and brand

How are we measuring progress?

Indicator	2004/05 actual	2005/06 target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (5 years) 2010	Target 10 years 2015
% of residents who can recall seeing 'Chronicle'	85%				
% of residents who feel the council keep them well informed					
Number of regional/national news stories					
% of those that were positive					

AMBITION: The Regeneration of Stevenage

The environment has a huge impact on people's quality of life. The appearance of buildings, the use of public areas, cleanliness and well-maintained green spaces all contribute significantly to people's sense of well-being. As Britain's first new town, much of Stevenage was built in the architectural style of the 1950s and 1960s. Many of these buildings now require intervention and investment.

We have developed some ambitious plans for regenerating the town that will improve the quality of life for people who live, work and visit our town. These include supporting the *expansion of the town* to the west of Stevenage and *redeveloping the town centre*. We want Stevenage to be at the forefront of the Government's growth plans for the East of England and to re-establish the town centre as a major shopping destination in the region.

The *regeneration of neighbourhood centres* is a priority. We aim to develop the centres as the focus of commercial and community life through environmental improvements, encouraging the growth of local businesses and promoting community activity.

In a recent survey (BVPI Survey 2003/04), residents told us that clean streets and good quality parks and open spaces were important in making somewhere a good place to live. We want to provide an environment we are all proud of. We aim to *provide high quality parks and open spaces and maintain a high level of cleanliness* throughout the town.

70% of residents believe that recycling has improved over the last three years. Whilst this demonstrates that we are moving in the right direction, residents have also told us that we could improve on the cleanliness of the streets after we collect your recycling and on the variety of items that can be recycled in the town. The Government is keen for people to *recycle more* and has set annual targets for the amount of waste we recycle. We want to meet or exceed these targets for recycling by increasing the availability of recycling facilities so that residents can recycle as much of their waste as possible.

Regeneration Priorities

- Expand the Town
- Develop a vibrant Town Centre
- Revitalise local neighbourhood centres
- Maintain a clean and green environment
- Recycle more waste

PRIORITY: Expand the Town

Why is this a priority for the Council?

The demand for housing in Stevenage is greater than the supply of houses available. As Stevenage is relatively small geographically, the number of new sites for development are limited. The Council supports the proposed development to the West of Stevenage for up to 15,000 new homes. The development would make a significant contribution to meeting the growth needs of the Eastern region.

We also want to encourage the growth of the town's economy. To do this we are, and will continue, to work with developers and landowners to attract new businesses to Stevenage.

Expanding the town will help us to achieve on a number of our priorities:

- ✓ To *develop a vibrant town centre* which will be a major shopping and leisure centre for the region
- ✓ To *revitalise local neighbourhood centres*
- ✓ To provide more *affordable homes*

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- Put forward the case for the development of Stevenage West in the Public Inquiry. The decision on the go ahead for the development is now with the Deputy Prime Minister
- Secured the designation of Stevenage as the growth point in Hertfordshire in the draft East of England plan

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- Ensure that Stevenage's designation as the growth point in Hertfordshire in the draft East of England plan is adopted following the Public Re-examination in September
- Agreement by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for the Stevenage West development
- Adopt a Local Development Scheme as the first step towards the replacement of the current District Plan
- Work with North Hertfordshire District Council on a Joint Area Action Plan regarding the area west of the A1(M) as part of the work needed to complete our Local Development Framework

What are our future plans?

- Explore options to co-ordinate effectively the expansion of Stevenage
- Adopt a Joint Area Action Plan, with North Hertfordshire District Council, for the land west/north of the town, as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF)

What is affordable housing?

Affordable housing is housing that is built or acquired by a Registered Social Landlord. Affordable housing can be keyworker housing, shared ownership and intermediate renting as well as the traditional social rented homes. The "affordable" factor is that the rent/mortgage costs of the eventual occupant will be less than the market level because of the subsidy.

In a recent survey nearly half of residents in Stevenage said that affordable housing was important to making somewhere a good place to live.

How are we measuring progress?

Indicator	2004/05 actual	2005/06 target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (5 years) 2010	Target 10 years 2015
The cumulative number of homes developed at West of Stevenage	0	0	0	400	2500
Percentage of new small businesses (1-10 employees) successfully trading after 12 months	75	75			

PRIORITY: Develop a vibrant town centre

Why is this a priority for the Council?

A modern and attractive town centre is an important factor in attracting inward investment. For our town centre to thrive we need to have the right balance between shopping, leisure and housing and a thriving economy that attracts all age groups.

Our town centre was designed over forty years ago and it has not kept pace with the times. Recent developments such as the Plaza, Westgate and The Forum have seen some improvement but there is still a long way to go. To improve the quality of the town centre we are driving forward a major redevelopment programme of the town centre alongside on-going environmental improvements.

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- Appointed a preferred developer for the town centre following a development competition held in 2003/04
- Consulted local people and partners about the proposals for the town centre before agreeing to the design of the final development 👍
- Supported preparation of planning applications and other procedures to enable the town centre redevelopment

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- Environmental improvements to the town square and Queensway North
- Environmental impact assessments for the town centre re-development to ensure its development is sustainable
- Finalise the town centre scheme drawings
- Finalise the number of affordable houses to be built as part of the redevelopment
- Submit the outline planning application

What are our future plans?

- Assist the development of a department store in the town centre
- Create a transport interchange by relocating the bus station from the town square
- Improve public areas of the town by resurfacing the pedestrian walkways and installing new street furniture, attractive lighting and signage
- Develop the southern part of the town with a substantial residential element
- Relocate the Council's museum closer to the library and creating a new 'Discovery Centre'

How are we measuring progress?

Indicator	2004/05 actual	2005/06 target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (5 years) 2010	Target 10 years 2015
Percentage of shoppers who think the town centre has improved					
Ranking in national					

retail hierarchy					
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PRIORITY: Revitalise Local Neighbourhood Centres

Why is this a priority for the Council?

We want to ensure that local neighbourhood centres are the focus for commercial and community activity by creating an environment where residents have

- Good job opportunities
- Good variety of shops
- Good amenities and facilities
- An excellent environment, which is clean and attractive

When Stevenage was built, it was planned around a network of self-contained neighbourhoods that were intended to be the heart of each community with up to 30 shops and associated public and social facilities.

Fifty years on, the way people lead their lives has changed considerably. Greater car ownership, supermarkets and out-of-town shopping centres has led to a decline in the use of local neighbourhood centres. If the town's neighbourhood centres are to retain their role at the heart of the community they need to be changed and updated.

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- Completion of the 6th year of the neighbourhood regeneration programme and developed means of assisting the community projects set up, to continue when Government funding stops
- Continued delivery of the St Nicolas Pathfinder Project in which a number of groups including local residents, voluntary groups and the Council work together to create a better future for the St. Nicholas area 🍷
- Developed youth activities with partners at the Oval, Chells, Hyde and Shephall neighbourhood centres including Mentoring Basketball Academy youth groups which offer a range of activities to young people and attract around 400 visitors a week 🍷
- 93% occupation of commercial premises owned by the Council
- Increase in the range of shops available in the neighbourhood centres, serving the diverse needs of our community

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- Implement neighbourhood action plans to improve the neighbourhood centres
- Redevelop Austen Paths neighbourhood centre by demolishing the existing garages and replace them with 24 new residential units and a single shop that will be let as a general store

What are our future plans?

- Implement a strategy for the Regeneration of the Neighbourhood centres
- Apply for Growth Area Delivery Grant to help meet the cost of regeneration of the Oval Neighbourhood Centre

- Carry out improvement works at neighbourhood centres, including security works at the Oval, improvements at Archer Road and behind the shops and industrial units at Bedwell Centre

How are we measuring progress?

Indicator	2004/05 actual	2005/06 target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (5 years) 2010	Target 10 years 2015
Void rate for commercial property	xxxxxx				

Number of community groups set up – SRB???

PRIORITY: Maintain a Clean and Green Environment

Why is this a priority?

We want to provide and maintain public areas to the highest of standards, to create a town we can all be proud to live, work and do business in.

By maintaining a clean and green environment of which we can all be proud, we can improve the quality of life for all in the town. In a recent survey (BVPI Survey 2003/04) residents told us that clean streets and parks and open spaces were two of the most important things in making an area a good place to live. While 74% told us that they were satisfied with parks and open spaces, over a third thought we could improve the cleanliness of the streets.

What was achieved in 2004/2005?

- ✓ Erected gum targets in the town centre to encourage people to dispose of their gum properly and removed all gum on the pavements in the town centre
- ✓ Established successful partnership with *Groundwork Hertfordshire* to deliver projects at Ely Dell and Peartree Park 🍷
- ✓ Commissioned a comprehensive assessment of open spaces in Stevenage
- ✓ Opened Fairlands Valley Park Café terrace garden to the public
- ✓ Completed *Premier Play Area* at Fairlands Valley Park
- ✓ Improved security to park pavilions across the town
- ✓ Carried out over 40 environmental schemes on behalf of the Area Committees including landscape improvements to Colestrete Close, installation of multi-use games area to Chells Park, tree planting on Hydean Way, additional play equipment to play areas including Burydale, Canterbury Way Playing Fields 🍷
- ✓ In partnership with the Police and Fire Brigade held an Environmental Action Day which removed flytipping, untaxed cars, abandoned vehicles and repaired environmental damage from hotspots in the town 🍷

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- ✓ Use the Open Spaces Assessment to support the development and implementation of a series of strategies, including Parks Strategy, Open Spaces Strategy and an Environmental Strategy
- ✓ Promote allotments to increase uptake across the town
- ✓ Acquire new sponsorship opportunities with local companies to fund environmental improvements across the town
- ✓ Deliver further improvements to Peartree Park in partnership with Groundwork Trust including creating a multi-use games area on old tennis court site, skate facility, new playground, trim trail, tree planting and improved lighting
- ✓ Participate in future environmental action days with Police, Fire Service and DVLA to target hotspots of fly tipping, anti social behaviour, environmental damage, abandoned vehicles and untaxed cars
- ✓ Complete playing pitch improvements at Ridlins Playing Field.

What are our future plans?

- ✓ Work with ENCAMS to develop education and enforcement activities, including encouraging local schools to become 'ECO-schools'
- ✓ Work with Herts Groundwork Trust to bring forward a programme of local green space improvements
- ✓ Acquire further capital investment in public space improvements
- ✓ Develop and implement a series of Environmental Management and Green Space Strategies following the audit of public space
- ✓ Market test cleansing and grounds maintenance service to ensure value for money
- ✓ Review environmental maintenance arrangements for flat blocks and courtyards in conjunction with the caretaking service
- ✓ Implement the local Biodiversity Action Plan to assist with species conservation, habitat protection, and the creation of wildlife corridors
- ✓ Implement a programme of improvements for parks pavilions

How are we measuring our progress?

Indicator	2004/05 actual	2005/06 target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (5 years) 2010	Target 10 years 2015
Percentage of people satisfied with cleanliness standards	xxxxxx				
The proportion of relevant land and highways assessed for cleanliness as being:					
a. Clean					
b. Light					
c. Significant					
d. Heavy					
Percentage of first site inspections following receipt of complaint about an abandoned vehicle on the next working day		95%	95%	95%	95%
Percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 2 working days of notice expiring		95%	95%	95%	95%

PRIORITY: Recycle more waste

Why is this a priority for the Council?

We aim to encourage residents to recycle by providing top quality, user-friendly services. We continually seek opportunities to provide new and enhanced recycling services to meet the public demand.

We must continually increase the volume of waste we recycle to meet with Government targets. Recycling is not just of national importance, but is also an important local issue.

In Stevenage, each household produces over one ton of rubbish each year. This amount has been progressively rising, despite an increase in the quantity of material recycled.

Due to tighter regulations on how we can dispose of our waste and the reduction in space available at landfill sites, the need to reduce the amount of rubbish for disposal is crucially important.

In a recent survey (BVPI Survey 2003/04), 82% of residents told us that they were satisfied with the recycling services that we provide. They did, however, say that we could improve on the cleanliness of the streets after collections are carried out, and that they would like to be able to recycle a greater variety of items in the town.

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- Implemented a green waste pilot scheme in order to evaluate the cost effectiveness of such a scheme in raising the amount of waste recycled by residents
- Visited 20,000 properties to encourage participation in recycling schemes
- Continued the year on year increase in the amount of materials collected through recycling schemes
- Refurbished all neighbourhood recycling sites
- Launched cash-back scheme to encourage use of re-useable nappies
- In partnership with Aylesford Newsprint Limited (a recycling company) implemented a £50 incentive for a randomly selected household who correctly recycles to encourage residents to recycle more often 🍷

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- Introduce a town-wide collection scheme for garden waste alongside an information campaign to increase recycling
- **Meet the Government recycling target of 24% of household waste**

What are our future plans?

- Increase the amount of waste the variety of items we recycle

How are we measuring progress?

Indicator	2004/05 actual	2005/06 target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (5 years) 2010	Target 10 years 2015
Percentage of household waste recycled		24%			
Percentage of residents satisfied with the provision of local recycling facilities (net)					
Percentage of residents satisfied with the provision of door-step recycling (net)					
Percentage of residents satisfied with the household waste collection service (net)					

AMBITION - Good Housing For All

The quality and affordability of houses is of national and local importance. As the town's largest social landlord we aim to set the benchmark in providing good quality rented houses to those in need. In partnership, we aim to facilitate the building of affordable homes to ensure that the local demand is met.

We aim to make all of our houses meet acceptable standards of repair, warmth and have modern facilities. For those in need of housing we aim to give them good quality and timely advice from. We also want our customers to be fully consulted on decisions about the service.

In 2003/04 73% of our tenants were satisfied with the overall service provided by us. In addition 56% of our tenants were satisfied with the opportunities for participation in the way the service is run. We are committed to improving the service we provide to our customers. The actions we will take to do this are set out under the priority '*provide a top quality housing service to tenants and those in need of housing.*'

We aim to ensure, with our partners, that there is appropriate housing available for those in need. In recent years this has become increasingly more difficult as demand for local housing is rising at a greater rate than the number of available affordable homes. In 2004/05, 40 affordable homes were built in Stevenage; to meet local demand it is estimated that 435 affordable homes need to be built every year. The actions we will take to address this need are set out under the priority '*work with partners to provide affordable housing.*'

Priorities for Good Housing for All

- Work with partners to provide affordable housing
- Provide a top quality housing service to tenants and those in need of housing

PRIORITY: Work With Partners to Provide Affordable Housing

Why is this a priority for the Council?

The 2004 housing needs survey calculated that 435 affordable homes need to be made available every year to meet the current and predicted future housing needs in the town. In 2004/05 40 houses were built.

As the town is relatively 'new' and geographically small there are a limited number of brownfield sites (sites which have previously been built on and can be redeveloped) that can be developed for affordable housing. **However we ensure that a minimum of 40% of Council land that is released for development is for affordable housing.**

What is affordable housing?

Affordable housing is any housing that is built or acquired by a Registered Social Landlord. Affordable housing can be keyworker housing, shared ownership and intermediate renting as well as the traditional social rented homes. The "affordable" factor is that the rent/mortgage costs of the eventual occupant will be less than the market level because of the subsidy.

In a recent survey nearly half of residents in Stevenage said that affordable housing was important to making somewhere a good place to live.

In order to alleviate the housing pressures in the town it is important that the proposed expansion to the west of Stevenage is agreed. We will ensure, in partnership with the Housing Corporation, Registered Social Landlords and private developers that there is appropriate provision of social and affordable housing to meet local need as part of this development.

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- ✓ Held a ballot of residents in the Stonyhall Estate on its future development – 92% were in favour of a stock transfer to the William Sutton Housing Association who will carry out a £15 million regeneration scheme, demolishing six existing blocks of flats and replacing them with new homes. The regeneration scheme will take five years to complete and create one hundred and forty new affordable homes 👍
- ✓ **Have secured 10 sites in Stevenage for the building of affordable homes**
- ✓ **£5million Growth Area Delivery Grant received from central government to provide affordable homes on three sites in the town – Manulife House, Ridgemoor Park and Austen Paths**
- ✓ Planning permission granted for Austen Paths
- ✓ Planning permission granted for 198 affordable homes on Fairview Road Playing Fields
- ✓ In 04/05 we agreed on average that 50% of houses built on land released by the Council would be affordable

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- ✓ Work with partners to provide supported housing for vulnerable young people
- ✓ Work with The Haven, the homeless shelter, to provide move-on accommodation, to free up much needed emergency bed spaces
- ✓ Work with NHDC and HCC and the Crouchfield Trust to develop a scheme to offer education, training, employment and housing opportunities to disadvantaged young people
- ✓ Use the £5 million Growth Area Delivery Grant received from central government to provide affordable homes in the town

- ✓ Ensure that 40% of the homes built on land released by the Council are affordable
- ✓ Work with partners to facilitate the provision of affordable housing on non-allocation sites

What are our future plans?

- ✓ Assess future opportunities for the provision of affordable housing following the completion of the Housing Options Appraisal
- ✓ Dependent upon the adoption of the East of England Plan identify suitable sites for housing and develop policies to deliver an appropriate supply of affordable dwellings

How are we measuring progress?

Indicator	2004/05 actual	2005/06 target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (5 years) 2010	Target 10 years 2015
Percentage of affordable homes as a proportion of all new homes	xxx	20%	Subject to approval of East of England Development Plan and Stevenage West development		
Number of affordable units built per annum	xxx	35			

PRIORITY: A top quality housing service to tenants and those in need of housing

Why is this a priority?

We are the town's largest social landlord; as such we have a responsibility to our tenants to provide an excellent service, and by example set high standards that other landlords should meet.

The Government, for the first time, has set minimum standards of repair, heating and facilities for social houses throughout the country – the Decent Homes Standard. We are required to ensure that all social houses in Stevenage meet these standards by 2010.

We have begun a programme to ensure that our houses not only meet the minimum standards required by the Government but exceed these to provide a house that meets our customers' expectations. In order to see what work needs to be done we commissioned a stock condition survey in 2004/05. When the results are finalised we will be able to assess what needs to be done across the town.

The Government also requires the Council to look at how it manages its housing stock. We are currently undertaking an 'options appraisal' to do this. In consultation with the residents we will look at a number of options for the future management of our stock.

We aim to provide timely and quality advice and assistance for those who are in need of housing. We will expand the range of housing advice services to prevent anyone in the town becoming homeless.

What was achieved in 2004/2005?

- ✓ Held 'Have a Say Day' which sought tenants' views on how we can improve service delivery and take forward issues they were concerned about
- ✓ Calls to our repairs line are now integrated with our Customer Service Centre to provide a quicker and more efficient service
- ✓ Implemented a procedure to tackle racial harassment to our tenants
- ✓ Introduced 'Interfinder' which allows tenants to report repairs online

What is options appraisal?

The Government has required all councils to complete an investigation into the future of their housing services by July 2005.

The options appraisal is designed to look at a number of areas

- how the council will meet the decent homes standard by 2010
- the level of demand for affordable social housing in the Borough and what the demand is likely to be in the future
- what tenants and leaseholders see as their priorities for the future of their homes and housing service
- how housing services could be improved
- what money the council is likely to have to meet their tenant's needs

To implement the improvements identified we are, in consultation with tenants, looking at implementing one of the following options:

- a) for the council to keep ownership and management of its homes
- b) to set up a separate organisation to manage the homes known as an Arms Length Management Organisation
- c) to contract with an outside organisation to deliver the improvements. This is known as a Private Finance Initiative
- d) to transfer the ownership and management of the housing to a not-for-profit registered social landlord

- ✓ Introduced court cost amnesty scheme in which waived £6,000 of debt to produce £19,000 of extra income and 46 tenants discharged their CCJs
- ✓ Continued the subsidised decoration scheme for OAPs with no increase in charge
- ✓ Doubled the number of door entry schemes

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- ✓ Complete the review of the allocations policy to enable choice based lettings to be rolled out across all properties
- ✓ Review homelessness wardens service and temporary accommodation management
- ✓ Hold 'Have a Say Day' to involve tenants in the housing service
- ✓ Continue to upgrade our houses to meet the Decent Homes Standard
- ✓ Introduction of an electronic appointment system for repairs
- ✓ Develop and introduce handheld technology for Housing staff

What are our future plans?

- ✓ Implement findings of the housing options appraisal and ensure that social housing is delivered at the same standard regardless of the provider
- ✓ Comply with the Decent Homes Standard by 2010
- ✓ Consider and develop with tenants, options for the future of sheltered schemes in Stevenage
- ✓ Visit tenants on a regular basis in order to improve access to services and improve satisfaction

How are we measuring our progress?

Indicator	2004/05 actual	2005/06 target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (5 years) 2010	Target 10 years 2015
Satisfaction of tenants with the overall service provided by their landlord	No Survey (2004 73%)	No Survey	86%	86%	86%
Satisfaction of tenants with opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to housing services provided by their landlord	No Survey (2004 56%)	No Survey	86%	86%	86%
Proportion of rent collected			99.20%	99.60%	99.60%
The average length of stay in i) Bed & Breakfast ii) hostel accommodation of households which					

include dependent children or a pregnant woman and are unintentionally homes and in priority need					
The proportion of LA homes which were not decent at 1 st April of each year				0%	0%

AMBITION: Transforming Council Services

We provide a wide range of services to a diverse community – people who live, visit and do business in the town. We aim to consistently provide good quality services that are customer focussed and can be easily accessed.

We want our customers to consistently receive a first class customer service. We aim to enable our customers to contact us by telephone, email or using an interactive website at times when they choose. Our achievements and future plans to meet these aims are set out under *'make access to Council services easier'*

Use of new technology will be a critical success factor in our approach to transforming our services. We aim to use new technology to make our services more accessible, responsive and cost effective. We also aim to use technology to make our work more open and accountable. Our achievements and future plans to do this are set out under *'use information technology to improve the quality of services'*

Priorities for Transforming Services

- Make access to Council services easier
- Use information technology to improve the quality of service

PRIORITY: Make access to Council services easier

Why is this a priority for the Council?

We want our customers to have a good experience when they contact the Council and be satisfied with the outcome. We aim to make our services accessible for all sectors of the community at times and by methods that suit them.

During 2001 a review to test the experience of our customers resulted in a major change to the way we operate. On 18th August 2003 the Council opened its first Customer Service Centre, which has now successfully handled over 290,000 customer contacts and is providing a single point of access to a growing list of Council services. We will continue to expand the number of services that are dealt with through our Customer Service Centre.

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- ✓ Housing repairs are now handled through the Council's Customer Service Centre
- ✓ Introduced services on-line through the Hertfordshire-wide community portal, www.hertslink.org. Currently customers have access to information about Retirement, Planning and Local Democracy in the County
- ✓ Remote working made possible for some services
- ✓ Consultation with residents on use of the Council's website which will be used to improve our website

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- Promote new Customer Service Standards so that our customers know what level of service to expect from the Council
- Increase the range of services available through the Customer Service Centre
- Review the Council's website – www.stevenage.gov.uk - to improve the design and structure
- Increase the number of services available to customers via the internet using the Hertslink community portal and the Council's own website

What are our future plans?

- Help customers to access web services using the customer service centre
- Increase the availability of kiosks in the community
- Research electronic methods of communication such as subscription to text message alerts

Indicator	2004/05 actual	2005/06 target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (5 years) 2010	Target (10 years) 2015
% of calls answered within 30 seconds		85%	90%	90%	90%
% of visitors served within 20 minutes		85%	90%	90%	90%

% of visitors served within 5 minutes with appointments to see an advisor		90%	90%	90%	90%
% of calls abandoned		5%	4%	3%	3%
% of customers self serving online			90%	90%	95%
% of contacts fully resolved at point of contact on services handled by the customer service centre		80%	85%	90%	90%
% of customers satisfied with service in customer service centre		90%	90%	90%	95%

PRIORITY: Use information technology to improve the quality of services

Why is this a priority for the Council?

We want to ensure we provide first class services that are cost effective. This requires the successful implementation of new technology in combination with changed business processes to deliver improvements.

The Government have set an ambitious target for all public services to be electronically available by December 2005. The Council has put together a challenging programme, which focuses on being able to deliver services through its Customer Service Centre, or on-line via the internet. The Council's current Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) Statement sets out how the national targets will be achieved locally.

New technology alone will not improve quality of services. The Council has recognised that it also needs to reshape the way in which it works to maximise the benefits of new technologies. This has influenced how the programme has been put together and why it is focussed on transforming services, not solely implementing new IT systems.

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- ✓ Investigated our requirements for ICT systems and procured the most appropriate systems to deliver document management, workflow and a geographical information systems
- ✓ Completed a business processes review of all major council services
- ✓ Agreed a development plan for the Customer Relationship Management System (CRM) to provide the Council with better information about its customers
- ✓ Updated the Council's ICT infrastructure to enable staff to work remotely

What do we want to achieve in 2005/06?

- Deliver Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) priority outcomes for delivering services electronically by December 2005
- Implement and utilise the Geographical Information System across the Council to enable services to pinpoint and review information on a town wide basis
- Upgrade current ICT systems to enable service delivery using new methods for example via the internet or staff working remotely
- Invest in electronic documents and records management and workflow systems to minimise the manual processing of information
- Link ICT systems so that information can be share easily between services
- Prioritise work on high volume services that are customer facing such as Housing Repairs and Environmental Services

What are our future plans?

- Learn from Phase two of the transforming programme and roll out technology and better working practices to all areas of the Council

Indicator	2004/05 actual	2005/06 target	Target (3 years) 2008	Target (5 years) 2010	Target (10 years) 2015
BV 157 – The number of types of interactions that are enabled for electronic delivery as a percentage of the types of interactions that are legally permissible for electronic delivery.	60.1%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The Capacity of the Organisation: Efficiency Savings

Why are we improving the efficiency of our organisation?

Following the 2004 Spending Review and the completion of the Gershon review, the Government announced the new efficiency agenda. The efficiency agenda is about improving productivity – getting more from the same resource, or achieving the same results for less resource. Cuts in service do not count as efficiency gains.

The Spending Review 2004 requires local government to achieve efficiency gains totalling £6.45 billion by 2007/08. Over the next three years, each local authority is expected to achieve 2.5% per annum efficiency gains compared to their 2004/05 baseline. Local authorities will have full flexibility on how and where to achieve those gains.

At least half of the efficiency gains made should be cashable, which means they will release funding for use elsewhere in the Council, either for reinvestment in frontline services or holding down Council Tax levels.

What did we achieve last year?

The key objective for 2004/05 was to develop systems for the Council to measure and report the efficiency gains achieved.

Consequently, our first Annual Efficiency Statement has been produced. The Statement outlines our expected efficiency gains and the strategy for achieving them, and retrospectively looks at the efficiency gains achieved in the previous year (this part will be first produced at the end of 2005/06).

In addition, it has been necessary for the Council to identify the various areas where we will deliver our efficiency gains. So far we have identified the following areas relating specifically to district council's :-

Council Housing
Local Transport
Culture and Sport

Supporting People
Environmental Services

Plus, the following cross cutting areas :-

Corporate Services – These include, but not limited to, Finance, HR, ICT, Procurement (the function not the spend), Legal, Facilities Management, Security, Marketing and Communications.

Procurement – Procured goods and services include commodity goods and services – utilities. Commodity IT, equipment & supplies, telecoms, vehicles etc – as well as professional services, temporary labour and construction.

Productive Time – The focus for this workstream is on increasing the productivity of front line staff and those who support them.

Transactions – This area applies to those efficiencies that can be gained through such means as combining activities to produce more efficient ways of dealing with customers or streamlining processes, or making a major shift from manual to electronic processing.

Transactions includes areas such as council tax collection, housing benefit administration and collection of non-domestic rates.

The target efficiency gain for Stevenage Borough Council is calculated as an additional 2.5% of 2004/05 baseline expenditure each year. This means the following set of efficiency gains are required by the Council over the next three years;

Stevenage Borough Council Target Efficiency Gain 2005/06 to 2007/08 Council Gershon Baseline Expenditure : £19.8 million				
	Year on Year Improvement	Total Improvement Relative to 2004/05	Year on Year Improvement – Cashable	Total Cashable Improvement Relative to 2004/05
2005/06	£495,000	£495,000	£247,500	£247,500
2006/07	£495,000	£990,000	£247,500	£495,000
2007/08	£495,000	£1,485,000	£247,500	£742,500

What will we achieve in 2005/06?

The Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) states what gains we will annually make. This is signed by the Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer. Our Annual Efficiency Statement for 2005/06 is as follows:

Stevenage Borough Council Annual Efficiency Statement 2005/06
<p>Strategy for Securing Efficiency Gains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We will draw together the efficiency improvement programmes currently in operation across the Council in order to deliver a joined up approach to targeting efficiency gains and deliver both the Governments Efficiency Target and address the current budget gap identified in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. ▪ These efficiency programmes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implementation of E-Government / ICT utilisation ○ Strategic Organisational Change Programme ○ Business Process improvement ○ HR Strategy Review ○ Base Budget Review and Review of Fees & Charges ○ Strategic Procurement & Cost Reduction ○ Asset Management & Rationalisation
<p>Key Actions to be Taken During the Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify what we must do - current activities that must be continued – duties, compliance and governance activities ▪ Determine what we should continue to do - identify current activities that add value to the Council's Services ▪ Determine how we can reduce cost – Determine opportunities to gain economies

of scale – such as shared services, partnerships or alternative sourcing.

- Identify what we should stop doing - discretionary activities that add no or little value or are not in line with the Council's ambitions
- Identify who else we could work with to improve the way services are delivered and reduce overheads.

Expected Efficiency Gains :

	Expected Annual Efficiency Gains	...of which is Cashable
Culture & Sport Various Budget Efficiencies	£7,750	£7,750
Environmental Services Various Budget Efficiencies	£40,720	£40,720
Local Authority Social Housing	-	-
Non-School Education Services	-	-
Supporting People	-	-
Cross Cutting Efficiencies		
- Corporate Services Various Budget Savings Implementation of e- payments (BACS)	£127,860 £6,000	£127,860 £6,000
- Procurement Gains from e- Procurement	£20,000	£10,000
Gains from reduction in prices	£6,000	£6,000
- Productive Time Improved Staff Absence Management	£75,000	-
- Transactions Implementation of e-Pay facilities	£10,000	£10,000
- Miscellaneous Efficiencies Inflation Suppression	£200,000	£200,000
Total	£511,330	£426,330

What are our future plans?

The efficiency agenda is a developing area. It is expected that through the Council's active participation in the Regional Centres of Excellence we will become better placed to achieve and preferably exceed the efficiency targets set for the Council. This approach is essential in order to address the Council's current forecasted budget gap and to achieve the objectives set out in the Government's 2004 Spending Review.

THE CAPACITY OF THE ORGANISATION: Human Resources

Why are we developing the capacity of our people?

Our staff are the key to improvement as only they can provide the quality services our community demand.

We can achieve service improvement by employing people who:

- have the skills and knowledge to do their jobs effectively
- do not feel threatened by change and challenge
- can be flexible enough to embrace different methods of working
- are managed, developed and rewarded appropriately.

We want to have structures in place that support the delivery of the Council's ambitions and priorities. These structures need to be responsive and flexible to support project team working across departmental boundaries and our partnership work with other organisations.

We need to have systems in place that support and enable us to achieve our goals. These systems must be appropriate, timely, flexible and consistent.

We want to develop a "can do" culture, in which all employees are supported to achieve their optimum performance and where we are all encouraged to learn, especially from our mistakes.

What did we achieve last year?

- ✓ Introduced more harmonised terms and conditions to ensure staff are treated fairly and equitably and that we can attract and retain the best employees
- ✓ Supported staff through change including the implementation of new organisational structures
- ✓ Carried out a staff attitude survey, the results of which show we need to improve internal communications. Work to improve this will be done in 2005/06
- ✓ Developed a workforce planning and development tool to enable us to better predict our needs for the skills and abilities of our current and future workforce
- ✓ Addressed essential skills deficits within the organisation in particular by enhancing the role of organisational learning reps
- ✓ Reviewed the Managing Sickness Absence Policy to support managers and their staff which has helped reduce the Council's sickness levels towards its target

What will we achieve in 2005/06?

- Implement an integrated HR/Payroll System to improve efficiency and the quality of information available to managers
- Develop a range of policies to enable staff to work more flexibly. This includes changes to the current flexible working policy
- Enhance existing consultation mechanisms to make them a more effective way to involve staff in the process of change, by introducing

mechanisms to include the views of all staff including those who are union members

- Develop appropriate and relevant structures, systems and people to enable the organisation to continue to develop its services
- Review our recruitment procedures to ensure they are non discriminatory
- Develop the leadership capacity of the organisation by developing appropriate structures and individual managers to lead service planning and delivery improvements. We will develop a set of management competencies to assist this process

What are our future plans?

- Develop modern reward systems for staff that attract, retain and develop a skilled and flexible workforce
- Introduce a pay management strategy
- Develop career pathways for staff in both technical/professional areas and support staff roles
- Develop a competency framework linked to performance management
- Undertake a skills audit in support of workforce planning and development
- Ensure Stevenage Borough Council continues to be recognised as an Investor in People

Asset Management

Why is asset management important to us?

We want to ensure that:

- ◆ Properties owned by the Council are used for the benefit of the community
- ◆ Surplus or under used properties are sold to support the our capital programme, or put to better use

Our non-housing properties are one of our most valuable assets and they have a significant impact on the delivery of services to our customers, and on our financial position. By managing our properties effectively we can help to improve the delivery of services to our customers and help ensure that we are in a good financial position.

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- ✓ Our Asset Management Plan was assessed by the Government as being 'good'
- ✓ Anticipated net receipts from disposals of more than £4 million

What do we want to do in 2005/06?

- ◆ Monitor the effectiveness of how well sustainability principles inform Council policies and practices
- ◆ Implement years 3 - 5 of the performance improvement plan developed as part of the Best Value Review 'The Management of the Council's Properties'
- ◆ Identify sites and properties for disposal and alternative use, as part of the Asset Review process. It is anticipated that sites sold in and 2005 and 2006 will result in more than 100 new affordable homes being provided
- ◆ Improve the management of our stock of 7,000 garages by; improving letting processes, completing a condition survey and implement a programme of planned maintenance

What are our plans for the future?

- Implement proposals for the regeneration of the Neighbourhood Centres, including regeneration of the Oval
- Relocate a number of key services and partners of the Council into more appropriate premises, freeing up their existing sites for redevelopment
- Bring forward residential development sites to meet the need for additional housing and, in particular, affordable housing
- Complete a strategic review of the garage compounds and undertake a programme of redevelopment of redundant sites, and investment in other sites
- Review our operational properties

How are we measuring progress?

Indicator	Current Performance	Target 2004/05	Target 3 Years (2007)	Target 5 years (2009)	Target 10 years (2014)
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	(2005)				
Occupancy rate of Council owned property (currently at 95%)	93%	95%	95%	95%	95%
The percentage of rental income received (currently at 95%)	92.3%	95%	96%	97%	97%

Procurement

Why is procurement important to us?

Procurement is the process of acquiring goods, works and services from third parties. The process spans the whole life cycle from identification of needs, through to the end of a service contract or the end of the useful life of an asset. It includes option appraisal and the critical 'make' or 'buy' decision.

We want to ensure that best value is obtained through planning and skilful procurement in respect of all goods, works, and services

Our Corporate Procurement Strategy identifies 9 principles, which outline our aims for procurement. These principles have been established to support our core values and strategic ambitions and are summarised below:

High Professional Standards and Best Practice - Procurement shall be conducted in a professional manner and ensure the highest standards of transparency, probity and accountability, in accordance with contract standing orders and financial regulations. We will support collaborative, partnership and alternative arrangements and its procedures will be flexible to allow for this.

Skilled Professionals - Staff engaged in procurement and contract management shall be suitably qualified and trained for the purpose.

Best Value – We will support in-house providers where they offer value for money and operate in the best interest of service users. Best value procurement will generate the most advantageous balance of quality, service and cost and will be driven by desired outputs and results.

Management and Control of Contracts - Arrangements shall ensure that all contracts are adequately managed and monitored with a view to achieving completion of service delivery on time, within budget, and in accordance with the specification.

Assessing and Minimising Risk - The risks associated with all procurement shall be assessed and minimised accordingly.

Social, Economic and Environmental Well-being - All major procurement shall recognise the impact on social, economic and environmental well being.

E-Procurement - We have adopted an e-procurement strategy to ensure we take full advantage of e-Procurement and will keep abreast of new solutions that are appearing in the marketplace.

Workforce Matters – We have resolved that it will fully adopt the principles of the 'Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts', when dealing with contracts involving the transfer of staff.

Equality for All - The Council values diversity and will ensure that suppliers, contractors and partners act in a fair and non-discriminatory way.

The Procurement Principles have been established to achieve the following:

- ◆ Commitment to encouraging competition where appropriate
- ◆ Commitment to achieving value for money
- ◆ Commitment to continuous improvement
- ◆ Commitment to quality and equality
- ◆ Commitment to operational efficiency
- ◆ Commitment to effective management, systems and procedures

What was achieved in 2004/05?

- ✓ Promoted the new Corporate Procurement & E-procurement strategies
- ✓ Implemented new financial systems to improve the management and monitoring of procurement spend
- ✓ Established a suite of performance measures to monitor both the service and performance of corporate procurement activity
- ✓ Reviewed and updated our Contract Standing Orders

What do we want to do in 2005/06?

- ◆ Develop and introduce a Best Practice Procurement Manual
- ◆ Design and implement a training programme for staff on effective procurement
- ◆ Achieve target savings of £16,000 and a further £10,000 in efficiency gains
- ◆ Develop and maintain a central contracts database
- ◆ Investigate opportunities to enter into joint procurement arrangements with other organisations

What are our plans for the future?

- ◆ Investigate the suitability of differing forms of E-procurement, and implement where appropriate. For example, web ordering, purchase cards, electronic invoicing and e-auctioning
- ◆ Develop a Procurement Internet site, to provide suppliers and other interested parties with information regarding our procurement activities
- ◆ Review procurement practices in line with our social, economic and environmental policies

How do we know we have achieved what we want to achieve?

Indicator	Current Performance (2005)	Target 2005/06	Target 3 Years (2008)	Target 5 years (2010)	Target 10 years (2015)
Savings Target	£25,00	£16,000	£75,000	£125,000	£250,000

Risk Management

Why is managing risk important to us?

We want to ensure that:

- ◆ risk is effectively managed to enhance its ability to:
- ◆ deliver strategic and operational objectives successfully
- ◆ safeguard our assets
- ◆ protect our reputation

Risk can be defined as the threat that an event or action will adversely affect an organisation's ability to achieve its objectives. Risk management provides a framework for us to identify, understand and manage risks by mitigating, transferring or accepting them. Risk management, therefore, as well as providing a means of overcoming threats, provides the means to maximise the opportunities available to an organisation.

Risk management is about making the right decisions at the right time and about achieving objectives once those decisions have been made. Improved risk management arrangement will result in:

- ◆ an increased likelihood of achieving strategic and operational objectives
- ◆ better planning and prioritisation of resources
- ◆ early warning of problems before they occur
- ◆ all relevant staff having the skills required to identify and manage risk within their services

Where did we achieve in 2004/05?

- ✓ Agreed a Risk Strategy
- ✓ Implemented Phase I of strategy involving training of officers
- ✓ Successfully managed risk in major projects

What are we going to do in 2005/06?

- ◆ Develop a Corporate Risk Register and monitor it regularly

What are our plans for the future?

- ◆ Identify members' roles with respect to risk management
- ◆ Embed risk management into systems for procuring, evaluating and managing contracts

Stevenage Borough Council's Customer Service Centre

Your one-stop for Council services

We have transformed the way we provide services to the people of Stevenage with the introduction of our first ever Customer Service Centre.

At the forefront of delivering our ambition of 'transforming Council services', the Customer Service Centre is the first point of contact for any of our services.

The ground level Centre contains a fully accessible 'walk-in' area, situated next to the telephony section where Customer Service Advisors provide an excellent level of help and assistance. Everyone who uses the Centre to enquire about Stevenage Borough Council services should go away with either their query resolved or at least with the information needed to move their query forward.

It is hoped that customers will not have to wait long, however, during particularly busy periods waiting may be unavoidable. In this case, people who have been waiting for longer than fifteen minutes will be offered an appointment to see an Advisor, at a more convenient time for them.

What's more, customers can also book appointments with specialist housing and benefits staff at the Centre.

There is much information about local services (such as voluntary and community groups and businesses), accessible from various information points within the Centre. There is also a 24-hour touch-screen kiosk located in the front door behind glass for information about Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council services.

With translation facilities and '*Here to Help*' cards for customers with communication difficulties, the Centre has been designed to ensure that everyone can access our services and information.

Thanks to the Centre's *Packline* facility, customers can now receive application forms and information which tell them everything they need to know about some of the most commonly requested services; junk and bulk waste collections, bus passes and TV licence refunds. This is in the form of a pack that customers receive in the post upon request by telephoning 01438 242599 or it can be picked up from the 'walk-in' area of the Centre in Danestrete.

The Customer Service Centre is situated in Danestrete, Stevenage (next to HSBC) and is open from 8.30am - 5.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Telephone: 01438 242242 (an answer phone will operate during out of hours)

Minicom textphone: 01438 242555

E-mail: customerservicecentre@stevenage.gov.uk

A-Z of service performance and achievements

This section shows how individual day-to-day services have performed over the past year and, where appropriate targets that have been set to improve performance.

This is not a comprehensive list of all of our services. For more detailed information about all local services in Stevenage please refer to 'Your Guide to Local Services in Stevenage 2004/05' which is available from our Customer Service Centre (telephone 01438 242242, email: customerservicecentre@stevenage.gov.uk).

Abandoned Vehicles

We remove vehicles that have been abandoned on public roads or Council land. Burnt out or wrecked vehicles may be removed within 48 hours of being reported. Other vehicles are removed as quickly as legal process allows.

- ✓ Close to six hundred vehicles removed as abandoned and scrapped
- ✓ Almost seventy vehicles were removed at the owners request

Access to Council Buildings

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires us, to remove all physical barriers in the built environment in order that disabled people can access our services The level of alterations required is subject to a test of "reasonableness"; that is it must take into account the size of the organisation and the resources at its disposal.

- ✓ An Access Audit was commissioned for all of our buildings to determine the level of work needed and financial provision has been made to carry out the recommended alterations
- ✓ Buildings not covered by this indicator such as community and leisure buildings will also be upgraded as part of this programme

Indicator	2003/0	2004/0	2004/0	2005/0
	4	5	5	6
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
The percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable and accessible to disabled people (excluding public conveniences)	57%	90%	67%	90%**

Animal Control

This service covers the control of pests such as rats and mice, the dog warden service and provision of licenses to keep dangerous animals or run a pet shop or boarding establishment.

- ☑ Legal proceedings were taken against xx dog owners for failing to control their dogs

- ☑ xx stray dogs were impounded; the vast majority of which were either returned to their owners or re-homed

Indicator	2003/0	2004/0	2004/0	2005/0
	4	5	5	6
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
The percentage of requests for the treatment of public health pests responded to within 2 days	99%	90%*		95%
% of requests for the dog warden service responded to within 3 days	99%	92.5%*		95%

Anti Fraud

This area covers the detection, prevention and investigation of suspected fraudulent claims for Housing & Council Tax Benefit made against Stevenage Borough Council.

Indicator	2003/0	2004/0	2004/0	2005/0
	4	5	5	6
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
The number of claimants visited per 1,000 caseload	167.6	150	194.2	198
The number of prosecutions and sanctions per 1,000 caseload	7.8	10	7.1	10
Number of Cases Investigated	495	500	448	500
Number of Fraudulent Claims identified	150	170	146	170
Fraud Detected (WIBS)	£65,000	£80,000	£101,970	£60,000

Benefits

We administer and processes Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit for residents.

- ◆ The Benefits Service received a 'Fair to Good' assessment of its current performance from the BFI (Benefits Fraud Inspectorate)

Indicator	2003/0	2004/0	2004/0	2005/0
	4	5	5	6
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Average time for processing new claims	43.8 days	40 days		36 days
Average time for processing notifications of changes of circumstance	7.6 days	8 days		7.5 days
Percentage of renewal claims processed on time	48%	Not required	Not Required	Not Required
Percentage of cases for which amount of benefit due was correct, for a sample of	99.8%	98.4%		99.2%

cases checked post-determination				
The percentage of recoverable overpayments (excluding Council Tax Benefit) that were recovered in the year	47.6%	55%		60%

Building Control/Building Regulations

We regulate the design and construction of buildings in respect of the health, safety and welfare of people in and around buildings, the conservation of fuel and power and access and facilities for persons with disabilities.

- Provided an out of hours dangerous structure call out in partnership with North Hertfordshire District.
- Maintained commercial partnerships with North & East Herts NHS and Croudace

Indicator	2003/0	2004/0	2004/0	2005/0
	4	5	5	6
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Building Control to determine building regulations for all full plan applications within the statutory 5 week period or 2 months where extended by the client/agent	100%	100%	100%	100%
To carry out all statutory inspections of works in progress within the statutory period	100%	100%	100%	100%

Bus Passes/Concessions

We administer a national scheme of half fare bus passes for pensioners and some residents with disabilities, as well as providing our own fare free scheme.

Indicator	2003/0	2004/0	2004/0	2005/0
	4	5	5	6
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Number of Subsidised Bus Passes provided:	653	700	700	700
National statutory scheme – ½ fares				
Local scheme – No. of free fares	5,554	5,550	5650	5700

Caretaking (Part of Tenancy Services)

We provide a caretaking/cleaning service to most flat blocks in the town. Recent improvements to the service included:

- Change from two-person to three-person working to ensure that larger tasks are tackled quicker
- Increased frequency of blitz-cleaning in autumn

- ☑ Increased Caretaking presence at tower blocks on summer evenings, reducing youth nuisance
- ☑ Implemented programme of electricity meter readings to reduce energy costs.
- ☑ Implemented charging scheme for one-off services

Car Parks

We operate 12 car parks within the town centre. Most are open for general use on a 24-hour basis. Recent improvements to the service include:

- ◆ A programme of maintenance including concrete repairs, waterproofing and resurfacing
- ◆ Resurfacing the first of Westgate Multi Storey to include new walkways & disabled bays
- ◆ Implemented a £1million programme of replacing car park equipment which allows customers to use credit/debit cards, pay with notes and top-up season tickets.
- ◆ Networked car park management information and season ticket production to provide a more efficient service to customers.

Civic Events

We run a number of events in recognition of the town and its residents.

- ☑ Organised the Remembrance Sunday Parade and Service in partnership with the Royal British Legion
- ☑ Held an Armistice Service in the Town Centre on the 11th November to observe the two minutes silence
- ☑ Held the Annual Council and organised the inauguration of the incoming Mayor
- ☑ Organised visits of representatives from our Twin Towns – Ingelheim, Autun, Shimkent and Kadoma
- ☑ Commemorated Holocaust Memorial Day with a tree planting ceremony in the Town Centre Gardens
- ☑ Held a 3 minute silence on 5th January for the Tsunami Disaster

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

We currently provide 65 closed circuit television cameras around Stevenage – in the town centre, old town, neighbourhood centres, Stevenage Leisure Park and the retail parks.

- ◆ Recorded over 35,000 incidents and assisted with 5,000 arrests since the scheme began
- ◆ Operate 150 cameras covering Stevenage, Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston, Baldock and Hertford
- ◆ Issued weekly press releases to maintain successful profile
- ◆ Increased number of mobile cameras from 3 to 10
- ◆ Police Officer based in control room for evidence viewing and to assist intelligence led deployment

- ◆ Introduced Automatic Number Plate Reading (ANPR) which has led to 1000 arrests for various crimes including credit card theft, drugs, offensive weapons, stolen vehicles, tax, insurance and MOT evasion.
- ◆ Introduced new CCTV systems to schools using the Hertfordshire Schools Network for learning with access to all 448 schools across Hertfordshire should they require CCTV monitored Systems
- ◆ Provided evidence to enable the Council to issue ABCs and ASBOs
- ◆ Installed local CCTV system at the museum
- ◆ Installed CCTV systems at Ridlings sports pavilion and Fairlands Valley Lakes.

Community Alarms

Our Careline service assists older and disabled people to live independently and provides personal safety and security in their home by enabling users to summon help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- ☑ Carried out a comprehensive user survey – 92% of users were satisfied with the speed of response and helpfulness of mobile staff responding to alarm calls
- ☑ Continued to upgrade community alarm equipment incorporating new developments in communication technology
- ☑ Contributed to funding a national telecare research project

Indicator	2003/0	2004/0	2004/0	2005/0
	4	5	5	6
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Number of Community Alarms installed	149	165		150
% of calls answered by the Careline Centre within 30 seconds	89%	80%		80%
within 60 seconds	96%	98.5%		98.5%

Community Development

The Community Development Team supports a diverse range of social and community initiatives. The team supports both existing and new voluntary organisations and community groups.

- ☑ Supported the Stevenage Youth Council including their Annual Conference and an Open Forum with Barbara Follett MP and Richard Howitt MEP in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council.
- ☑ Co-ordinated 'Summer Fest', a programme of youth activities during the summer holiday period.
- ☑ Supported Stonyhall residents with the consultation that led to the decision to transfer the stock to the William Sutton Trust.
- ☑ Supported the Partnership and Community Scrutiny Panel in a review of community centres.
- ☑ Established and provided ongoing support to the Asian Women's Network and to a subsequent Asian Men's Group.

- ☑ Supported the travelling community through educational development and integration within the community in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council.
- ☑ Supported 'Celebrate', a multi-cultural community event.
- ☑ Supported the Oval Residents Association and the development of youth provision at The Oval.
- ☑ Provided ongoing support to the Stevenage Credit Union.
- ☑ Supported the development of the Stevenage COMPACT through the Compact Action Team.
- ☑ Supported the development of 'Megamix' providing a programme of activities to disabled young people and their families.
- ☑ Managed the grant aid programme including provision of grants to two new organisations, Asian Women's Network and Positive Strides.
- ☑ Supported Positive Strides in the award winning 'Pukka project'.

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Percentage of people satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.	-	-	-	New
Percentage of people who feel their neighbourhood has got better over the last two years.	-	-	-	New

Community Meals

Any resident who is over 60 years of age or disabled and has difficulty preparing a meal for themselves can qualify for our meals service.

- ☑ Developed a set of 'Quality Standards' and agreed a programme of continuous service improvement with Apetito.
- ☑ Agreed a programme of service improvements for the Community Centre luncheon club service including a capital budget for kitchen improvements as part of the Being Independent Best Value Review.

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Number of meals supplied	74,752	78,226	71,094	71,589
Level of customer satisfaction with the service	90%	95%	90%	95%

Community Safety

We work in partnership with Hertfordshire Constabulary, Hertfordshire County Council and over sixty other local bodies to promote and develop crime reduction and community safety initiatives.

- ◆ Recruited an Anti-social Behaviour Officer and increased the number of anti-social behaviour contracts and orders.
- ◆ Increased the number and use of mobile CCTV cameras.

- ◆ Reduced vehicle crime using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology.
- ◆ Expanded the use and quality of information sharing with partners using a Geographical Information System for both preventing and detecting crime and disorder at local level and Neighbourhood Centres.
- ◆ Integrated the neighbourhood warden and police community support officer (PCSO) schemes and provided financial support to Hertfordshire Constabulary to provide an expanded PCSO scheme

Indicator	2003/04 Actual	2004/05 Target	2004/05 Actual	2005/06 Target
Domestic burglaries per 1,000 households	10.69	7.34		
Violent offences committed by a stranger per 1,000 population				
Violent offences committed in a public place per 1,000 population				
Violent offences committed in connection with licensed premises per 1,000 population				
Violent offences committed under the influence per 1,000 population				
Vehicle crimes per 1,000 population				
All recorded crime				
All recorded Disorder				
Criminal Damage				
Domestic Violence				
Racial Incidents				
Residential noise complaints per 1000 population				

Community Transport

We provide specialist transport for older people with a disability, for day care and community centre visits/shopping as well as excursions out of Stevenage.

- New vehicle purchased with more capacity for wheelchairs and improved comfort
- Greater choice of journeys introduced

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Number of journeys	9,303	9,350	8,552	9,000
Level of customer satisfaction	93%	95%		

Development Control/Planning Applications

The Development Control service deals with all development enquiries and planning applications.

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Percentage of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks	28%	60%		60%
Percentage of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks	39%	65%		65%
Percentage of other planning applications determined within 8 weeks	60%	80%		80%

District Plan

The Stevenage District Plan is a development plan for the town. It is prepared by the Council and gives guidance for new development proposals.

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
The percentage of new homes built on previously developed land	43%	25%		25%
The percentage of development sites allocated in the District Plan developed in accordance with District Plan policy	100%	100%		100%
Percentage of affordable housing completed on suitable sites	0%	20%		25%
Proportion of environmental assets maintained and enhanced in accordance with District Plan policies. Targets:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net loss of Principal Open Spaces 	0%	0%		0%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net Loss of Wildlife Sites 	0%	0%		0%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net loss of Green Links 	0%	0%		0%

Economic Development

The Economic Development Unit supports existing and potential Stevenage businesses, promotes the town as a premier business location and improves employment prospects for local people.

- Pin Green business partnership firmly established and could lead to Stevenage's first Business Improvement District
- Grants from Intereg 3B programme awarded for two trans-national projects:
 - o Waste recycling programme sponsored by employers for the environment (E4E)
 - o Improve image and identity of Stevenage
- Launched Gunnels Wood initiative aimed at bringing about lasting improvement to the town's largest business area
- Awarded £800,000 from Phoenix Fund for Enterprising Communities. This service provides assistance to small business development and social enterprise, for hard to reach groups

Description	2003/04 Actual	2004/05 Target	2004/05 Actual	2005/06 Target
Number of representatives attending funding fairs	80	75	156	75
Number of organisations assisted with one to one advice	90	90	100	90
Total amount raised for Council-run projects	£130,000	£300,000	£1,300,000	£4,460,000
Total amount raised for voluntary/community organisation run projects	£410,000	£500,000	£110,000	£150,000
Total number of voluntary/community organisation project approvals	33	25	34	30
Percentage of new small businesses (1-10 employees) successfully trading after 12 months		80	75	75

Electoral Register and Elections

We maintain a rolling register of all residents who are eligible to vote. Local elections are held each year in Stevenage.

Indicator	2003/04 Actual	2004/05 Target	2004/05 Actual	2005/06 Target
The percentage turnout for local elections	53%	35%*	39.4%	39.4%*

(*No pilot scheme allowed)

Environmental Maintenance

We maintain a range of green space throughout the town including parks, woodlands and grassed areas. We are also responsible for street cleansing. Residential areas are cleaned weekly, whilst the Town Centre, High Street and Local Centres are cleaned daily. This work includes the removal of fly tipping, graffiti, fly posters and abandoned shopping trolleys.

- 85 % of streets were of high or acceptable standard of cleanliness on random inspection
- 60% of residents satisfied with cleanliness of streets

- ☑ ENCAMS cleanliness survey resulted in a score of 68.75 which is above the East of England regional average
- ☑ The Stevenage in Bloom Forum achieved a Silver Gilt Medal at the Anglia in Bloom awards in 2004 and continues to engage volunteers in promoting and organising the Stevenage in Bloom competition.
- ☑ The environmental campaigns team have talked to over 4000 school children about a range of environmental issues. Fourteen schools have signed up to the Encams Eco School Programme.
- ☑ Participated in three environmental action days in partnership with the Police, the Fire Service and the DVLA to tackle abandoned and untaxed vehicles, fly tipping and graffiti.
- ☑ 30 play spaces improved with fencing, signs, seats, bins, safety surfacing and some new equipment
- ☑ New pavilion and spectator stand built and commissioned at Ridlins Playing Field
- ☑ Three new sponsorship deals agreed for roundabouts and floral displays
- ☑ New allotment fencing installed at various sites to improve security.

Food Safety

The Environmental Health Division inspect food premises standards and enforces hygiene and safety standards.

Indicator	2003/0	2004/0	2004/0	2005/0
	4	5	5	6
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Percentage of food hygiene inspections in high risk premises which were carried out	99.6%	100%		100%

Garages

We manage and let out a number of garages across the town.

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/0	2005/0
	Actual	Target	5	6
			Actual	Target
Number of void garages as a % of stock	18.36%	15%	16.87%	15%

Health Improvement

A number of events were held in 2004/05 by the Environmental Health division in conjunction with various partners including:

- ☑ 'Plumbing for the older person' with the PCT
- ☑ Freshers' fair at North Herts College promoting healthy eating
- ☑ Ran two promotions on child safety seats in cars in partnership with HCC Road Safety Unit and Herts Fire and Rescue and the Police.
- ☑ Provided a food hygiene training courses at three levels plus a new professional trainer course

Homelessness

We aim to prevent homelessness wherever possible and to provide a high quality service and support to those in temporary accommodation.

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Average length of stay in				
(i) bed & breakfast	0 days	0 days		0 days
(ii) hostel accommodation of households which include dependent children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless & in priority need	49 days	35 days		35 days
Percentage of homelessness decisions made within 33 days	79%	80%		80%
Average time waited for a housing advice appointment in days	5.6 days	10 days		10 days

Housing Repairs Maintenance

Our housing repairs and maintenance service includes programmed maintenance, responsive repairs, aids and adaptations, the emergency call-out service and other maintenance services as required to our houses and garages.

- Undertook a review of the repairs service and identified key areas for action
- Repairs calls now handled through a new performance managed telephone system
- Repairfinder and Interfinder introduced which have improved out of hours access for our customers

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Decent Homes:				
a) the proportion of LA homes that were non-decent at 1 April 2002;		70%		
b) the percentage change in proportion of non-decent LA homes between 1 April 2002 and 1 April 2003		13%		
Percentage of urgent repairs completed on time		100%		
Average time to complete non urgent repairs		19 days		

Indoor Market

We run an indoor market in the town centre which opens from 9 am to 5.30 pm Wednesday – Saturday.

Completed a major refurbishment

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
To ensure a minimum average occupancy rate of 93% per annum	97%	95%	98%	98%

Land Searches

We provide a land searches register service and processes search inquiries in respect of land and property within the town.

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
The percentage of standard searches carried out in 10 working days	100%	100%		100%

Museum

Our award winning museum offers a range of exciting special exhibitions plus regular displays charting the history of Stevenage and the surrounding areas.

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
The number of visits/ usages to the museum per 1,000 population	791	700		875
The number of those visits/ usages that were in person per 1,000 population	472	514		510
Number of exhibitions and events	130	54		
Number of visitors to Stevenage Museum	37,869	42,000		42,000
Percentage of users very satisfied with the museum service	96%	80%		90%
Number of pupils visiting museums and galleries in organised school groups	3,950	4,250		4,000

Noise Problems

Every year we deal with over 500 domestic noise problems such as barking dogs, noisy parties, noise from amplified music and noise in the street.

The Council served xx noise abatement notices and took legal proceedings against xx people who failed to comply with these notices

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target

Number of complaints received regarding noisy neighbours per 1000 population	6.5	6.2		6.5
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Nuisance "For Sale" Vehicles

It is not permitted on any land in the open air maintained at public expense to be used to display vehicles advertised "For Sale". We remove such vehicles if earlier requests to withdraw are ignored.

- * Since October 2004 close to 300 owners have removed illegally "For Sale" advertisements from vehicles parked on public maintained land.
- * Since October 2004 seven vehicles have been removed from public maintained land where owners have failed to withdraw illegal "For Sale" advertisements from the vehicle.

Play

Children between 5 and 14 are provided with play opportunities in adult supervised environments throughout the year at the Council's play centres and through holiday playschemes. *Toddler Initiatives* support 29 groups to provide toddler play.

- Recommendations from the play review (2003/04) implemented
- Comprehensive play strategy commissioned and consultation published
- Design brief for replacement of Canyon play centre produced

Private Sector Housing

The Environmental Health Division deal with problems of disrepair in properties rented from a private landlord. Landlords of some shared houses can be required to install fire precautions and additional amenities. In addition we provide a wide range of grants and loans to assist people in maintaining their properties.

- Introduced a new policy on the provision of assistance to home owners, including, for the first time, the provision of loans to help pay for essential repairs and improvements
- Assisted xxx householders with grant/loan aid
- Secured additional funding for energy efficiency grants through a partnership with London Electricity
- Reduced CO2 emissions from private sector dwellings by over 300 tonnes as a result of energy efficiency grants
- Completed an inspection programme of known houses in multiple occupation
- An in-house occupational therapist is based at the Council to streamline the application process for adaptations for the disabled, which is done jointly with Hertfordshire County Council
- Introduced, in partnership with the Primary Care Trust, the County Council and Anchor Staying Put (a Home Improvement Agency) a handyperson scheme to help the over 60s with small repairs and improvements to their homes

Indicator	2003/0	2004/0	2004/0	2005/0
	4	5	5	6
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
The proportion of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority	5%	5%		5%
The number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation during the year as a direct result of action by the local authority	11	12		12

Recycling

We provide a combination of recycling collections and neighbourhood recycling centres, as well as promoting home composting and a range of waste reduction and re-use measures. A weekly "twin box" kerbside collection of paper, glass and cans is available to all houses in the town. The scheme is supported by the "Waste Wizard" public engagement programme. Promotional activities include; advertising, exhibitions and schools activities.

- Introduced mini-recycling centres for use by residents of flats. Currently 97% of houses and flats receive weekly collections of paper, glass and cans. Evidence suggests that approximately 70% of households use facilities provided.
- Up to the end of January 2005, residents using the scheme had recycled 7114 tonnes of paper, 3810 tonnes of glass and 629 tonnes of cans.
- Promoted, in partnership with the County WasteAware scheme a greater awareness of waste issues throughout the County.
- Visited 20,000 households to raise awareness of recycling and increase participation of schemes.
- A pilot scheme for the collection of green garden waste collected 751 tonnes of material for composting from 8,000 households during 2004. Following the success of the pilot scheme, a townwide scheme will be launched during March 2005.
- Refurbished all of the Town's neighbourhood recycling centres.
- Achieved our Government target to recycle or compost 16% of household waste by 2003/04 and predict we will achieve our next target of 24% by 2005/06.

Refuse Collection

We collect domestic refuse weekly from the boundary of every household in Stevenage and also provide a (paid for) bulky waste service.

- 99.9% of collections completed on scheduled day each week
- 97% of junk collections within 10 working days
- 80% satisfaction score (2003 MORI survey)

Sheltered Housing

We have a number of sheltered housing schemes which provide independence for older people in their own self-contained home but with the peace of mind of regular contact from a warden/supported housing officer and assistance in an emergency 24 hours a day.

- Carried out a detailed service appraisal for Sheltered Housing as part of the Being Independent' Best Value Review of services for older people and will implement a range of improvements over the next 5 years.
- Upgraded security in a number of housing schemes
- 88% of tenants are either satisfied or very satisfied overall with their accommodation, with only 3% expressing dissatisfaction.
- 76% of tenants are either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall warden service
- 82% of tenants think that living in sheltered housing helps them to be more independent

Indicator	2003/0	2004/0	2004/0	2005/0
	4	5	5	6
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Utilisation – occupied units as a % of available units	95.4%			
Service users who maintained independent living as % of all users				

Stevenage Leisure Limited

Stevenage Leisure Limited is a non-profit making organisation limited by guarantee. Stevenage Leisure Limited manages eight of the town's major leisure facilities and two facilities on behalf of Mid Beds District Council.

Local facilities include: Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre; Gordon Craig Theatre; [Fitness@tlc](#); Stevenage Swimming Centre; John Henry Newman Leisure Centre; Fairlands Valley Park & Sailing Centre; Shephall Leisure Centre and Stevenage Golf & Conference Centre.

Stevenage Leisure Limited made some significant achievements:

- For the first time, the Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre hosted a New Years Eve combined show "That'll Be The Day" and Dinner which sold out to 500 people in 48 hours.
- In December Stevenage Swimming Centre had its first Quest Assessment and achieved a very creditable score of 69%, putting it in the top 15% in the UK.
- In November Saxon Pool & Leisure Centre had its second Quest Assessment and increased its score to 71% putting them in the top 10% in the UK.
- In October SLL launched a unique initiative "Food for Fitness" rewarding children in 4 local schools with free swimming if they choose healthy school dinners.
- In September, in partnership with the Herts LTA, Lister Tennis Club and the Stevenage School Sports Partnership, Shephall Leisure Centre launched a new satellite Tennis Scheme for youngsters.

- ☑ In the summer of 2004, The Gordon Craig Theatre Produced a unique and highly acclaimed in house production of *TITANIC* involving many talented local people which sold out every night for a week and now holds the box office sales record. The Sunday Express gave it 5 stars and said “it is the best musical and production I have seen all year”
- ☑ In May SLL were presented with a Regional winners Best Practice award for its Business Environmental Training Initiatives.
- ☑ SLL made major improvements in 2004 at Fairlands Valley Park including the enlargement of the children’s play area and the enhancement of footpaths, seating and cycle ways. Stevenage Borough Council funding has also enabled the installation of a DDA / pushchair friendly bridge to the north of the millennium lake replacing the ornamental Chinese bridge.
- ☑ Also in 2004, SLL in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council completed the refurbishment of the Stevenage Golf Centre Driving Range.
- ☑ Completed a £750,000 refurbishment at fitness@theleisurecentre - the Health and Fitness Facility at Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre, in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council
- ☑ Completed a £250,000 refurbishment of the Stevenage Golf and Conference Centre Clubhouse in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council
- ☑ Opened the Shephall Leisure Centre in June 2002 in partnership with Herts County Council, Stevenage Borough Council and Barnwell, Heathcote and Greenside Schools.
- ☑ Stevenage Leisure Limited now run sports centres in North Hertfordshire and Bedford on behalf of their local authorities

Indicator	2003/04 Actual	2004/05 Target	2004/05 Forecast	2005/06 Target
To support Stevenage Leisure Limited with grant aid and encourage them to increase the number of visits to:				
◆ Stevenage Arts & Leisure Centre				
○ Sports and Leisure	143,571	143,000	138,000	140,000
○ Special (Non Concert) Events	42,933	45,000	31,000	32,000
○ Fitness @ tlc – Members	31,684	32,000	43,000	44,000
○ Fit: Non Members (Pay & Play)	24,112	25,000	32,000	33,000
○ Theatre & Concert Hall	146,089	147,000	140,000	142,000
○ Visual Arts & Boxfield Gallery	41,083	42,000	47,000	48,000
○ Conference Rooms	35,814	37,000	42,000	43,000
◆ Stevenage Swimming Centre	259,348	260,000	244,000	245,000
◆ Fairlands Valley Park Sailing Centre	9,184	10,000	9,000	10,000
◆ John Henry Newman Leisure Centre	56,038	57,000	61,000	62,000
◆ Stevenage Golf Centre – Main	39,620	40,000	33,000	34,000

Course				
◆ Stevenage Golf Centre – Pitch & Putt	16,591	17,000	15,000	16,000
◆ Stevenage Golf Centre – Conference/Events	9,659	10,000	8,500	9,000
◆ Shephall Leisure Centre	27,795	27,000	38,000	39,000
◆ Saxon Pool and Leisure Centre	271,814	272,000	279,000	280,000
◆ Flitwick Leisure Centre	N/A	250,000	300,000	302,000

Television Licenses

We give a refund of up to £25.50 on the TV licence to people aged 65 and over. People over 75 years are entitled to a free licence under a Government scheme.

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Number of television licence subsidies provided	2,979	2,950	2700	2700

Tenancy Services (Management of Council Housing)

The Tenancy Services Section is responsible for the day-to-day management of our housing, including rents, debts and tenancy issues including nuisance and anti-social behaviour, tenancy issues and disputes, lettings and terminations, and Tenant Participation.

- Achieved top-quartile rent collection performance
- Introduced Court Costs Amnesty scheme for tenants with serious arrears
- Adopted a pro-active approach to ending Tolerated Trespass and Reviving Tenancies
- Introduced collection of Supporting People Charges
- Introduced a new Focus Group – the Stevenage Standard Group, to look at the quality and range of housing improvements offered by the Council
- Achieved a 92% turnout for the Stony Hall stock-transfer ballot
- Signed 15 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts with nuisance youths and their parents, and two Acceptable Behaviour Agreements with adults causing nuisance.
- Obtained two Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, one against a tenant causing nuisance, one against a tenant's child causing nuisance
- Obtained our first possession order against a tenant causing nuisance
- Introduced new criteria for Door-Entry Systems for flat blocks based on nuisance suffered by residents, and funded by £100,000 (treble last year's budget)
- Implemented Introductory Tenancies for 229 new tenants

Indicator	2003/04	2004/05	2004/05	2005/06
	Actual	Target	Actual	Target
Rent collection and arrears: proportion	98.45	98.70%		98.60%

of rent collected	%			
Satisfaction of tenants of Council housing with opportunities for participation in management and decision making in relation to services provided by their landlord	56%	No Survey	No Survey	No Survey
Satisfaction of tenants with the overall service provided by their landlord	78% overall	No Survey	No Survey	No Survey
Does the Authority follow the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice in Rented Housing and follow the Good Practice Standards for social landlords in tackling harassment included in the Code of Practice for Social Landlords: Tackling Racial Harassment	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rent arrears:				
As a % of debit	2.28%	2.2%		2.1%
Number of tenants in arrears	21.70 %	20%		20%
% owing £250 or 13 weeks rent	4.5%	4.4%		4.3%

Transport

We work with Herts County Council, transport operators and businesses to help shape the future of transport provision in Stevenage.

- Worked with businesses in the Pin Green Industrial Area to promote Green Transport
- Implemented Decriminalised Parking Enforcement in partnership with East Herts and Welwyn Hatfield Councils following the Police withdrawal of the Traffic Warden service.
- Developed a new "scoring and ranking" system for assessing all the streets on the Parking Problem database and implementing residential parking schemes at the top 5 sites as part of the Council's continuing Annual Capital Programme.
- Worked with Hertfordshire County Council to develop Northern Hertfordshire Area Transport Strategy with a view to adoption of Stevenage Transport Plan.
- Looking to reduce car dependency in association with the Gunnel's Wood Initiative.
- Worked with Developer(s), the County Council and other organisations involved in the bus/rail industry to determine a suitable site for relocating the bus station and aiming to achieve better links to the Railway Station.
- Produced a map of the Great North Cycleway in partnership with neighbouring authorities.
- Worked with Hertfordshire County Council to find highway solutions to major redevelopment schemes throughout the town.

CPA Improvement Plan - Summary

The Council achieved a 'good' rating for Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Following the result and report in May 2004 we produced an improvement plan that was agreed with the Audit Commission. The CPA improvement plan links directly to the Council's change programme. Each programme reflects the Council's ambitions and priorities. The table below summarises the programmes of work, the achievements for some of the projects 2004/05 and our plans for 2005/06. More detailed information can be found under each of the ambitions on the previous pages.

Programme (Programme Director)	Linked priorities	Projects	Achievements 2004/05	Plans for 2005/06
Community Leadership (Ian Paske)	Make the town safer Develop partnership working Encourage a fair and inclusive community Enhance the image of Stevenage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Strategy Phase 2 • Community Safety Action Plan • Equalities Strategy and Action Plan • BVR – Being Independent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published Community Strategy • Ran 3 pilot Equalities Impact Assessments • Completed BVR – Being Independent, action plans now being implemented • Reduced levels of theft, commercial burglary, vehicle crime and disorder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement 2005 -2008 community safety strategy - Role out programme for Impact Assessments across the Council - Hold an 'education summit' for the Stevenage Partnership
Regeneration and Sustainability programme (Nick Parry)	Expand the town Develop a vibrant town centre Revitalise local neighbourhood centres Maintain a clean and green environment Recycle more waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stevenage West • Town Centre Regeneration • Sustainable Communities project • Neighbourhood Centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secured Stevenage as a growth point in the draft East of England Development Plan • Appointed preferred developer for town centre regeneration • Increased the range of shops available in the neighbourhood centres, serving the diverse needs of our community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work to ensure that Stevenage's designation as the growth point in Hertfordshire in the draft East of England plan is adopted following the Public Re-examination in September - Make environmental improvements to Queensway North - Produce Neighbourhood action plans to improve

				local areas
Housing programme (Celia Twomey)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Options Appraisal • Housing Technical Services project • Decent Homes • Stonyhall project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensively reviewed repair service, key areas for action identified • Held a ballot at Stonyhall for a stock transfer, 92% were in favour. The estate will be transferred to the William Sutton Housing Association • Consulted tenants about the housing options • Continued work on decent homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete the Housing option appraisal - Consult tenants on the decent homes standard
Customer Service and E-government programme (Celia Twomey)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-Procurement • Graphical Information System (GIS) • Personnel/Payroll system • Electronic Documents & Records Management System (EDRMS) • Intranet, Internet and Content Management • Customer Service Centre Development • Delivery of BVPI 157 and ODPM Priority Service Transformation Outcomes (PSTOs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repairs service transferred to the Customer Service Centre • New Personnel and Payroll system implemented • GIS Manager appointed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement Business Process Reengineering proposals ▪ Publish Council-wide service standards ▪ Review Council's website, and provide more services on line through Hertslink community portal ▪ Implement corporate GIS system ▪ Complete ODPM priority outcomes
Capacity Building programme	Building Blocks:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People Strategy Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of new Financial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of Job Evaluation

(Bill Welch)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources • Efficiency savings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Strategy • Procurement Strategy • Managing Performance project • PMB Refresh project • Risk strategy Action Plan • Member Development Strategy • Job evaluation • Workforce Plan 	<p>System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BVPI Improvement Clinic established • Launch of 'Top Team' award • Workforce Plan produced • Member training in equalities and scrutiny • Procurement savings delivered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a risk register • Procure performance management software
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Our Resources

The Overall Financial Position

The Executive maintains a strategic overview of the Council's financial position. For a number of years we have had a medium term financial strategy in place for our General Fund, which is continuously revised and updated.

The interrelationships between the Revenue and Capital accounts have become increasingly complex consequently we have developed an overall medium-term strategy, integrating the General Fund, HRA and Capital accounts, which seeks to strike a balance between limited resources and growing expenditure pressures.

Two of the key issues in this respect concern the cessation of the statutory 'negative subsidy' transfer from the HRA to the General Fund and the introduction of the Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) to address housing stock condition issues. The Government has put in place transitional arrangements, which authorities can use to make transfers to cushion General Fund, but the maximum amount of these diminishes year by year. We are financing the bulk of the Housing major repairs programme from capital receipts, which will enable a transfer to be made under the transitional arrangements.

We have been 'debt-free' i.e. has no outstanding long-term borrowing since March 2001 which has delivered substantial financial benefits.

From 2004/05 the Government has introduced pooling of housing capital receipts under which 75% of dwelling sales and 50% of other housing receipts are to be paid over. For debt free authorities like Stevenage the new arrangements will be phased in over 3 years.

As well as striking a balance between the needs of the HRA and the General Fund, in both areas we have sought to achieve savings and maximise resource deployment opportunities. Balances on financial resources will be used in a phased and planned way to protect services and bridge the gap between net expenditure and core resources over the medium term.

General Fund Financial Strategy and the Council's approach to Efficiency Improvements

The current medium term financial planning process has been in place for a number of years and is an essential part of the budget setting process. Our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) provides a financial forecast of the cost of providing our General Fund services, and the resources that are likely to be available, over the medium term – thereby giving early warning of predicted 'budget gaps'.

Our financial position has been difficult over the last few years, with each budget round bringing further budget cuts, fee increases and rounds of efficiency savings. The Corporate Planning process has helped focus and redirect resources to priorities, but with increasing pressures and expectations on us to deliver more with less, there is a need to step back and look to the medium term financial position and work out how this can be achieved.

This year we aim to identify savings and other measures for implementation

A key objective in the achievement of Best Value is the demonstration of continuous improvement within all the services we provide. As a result, it is expected that efficiency savings will be delivered.

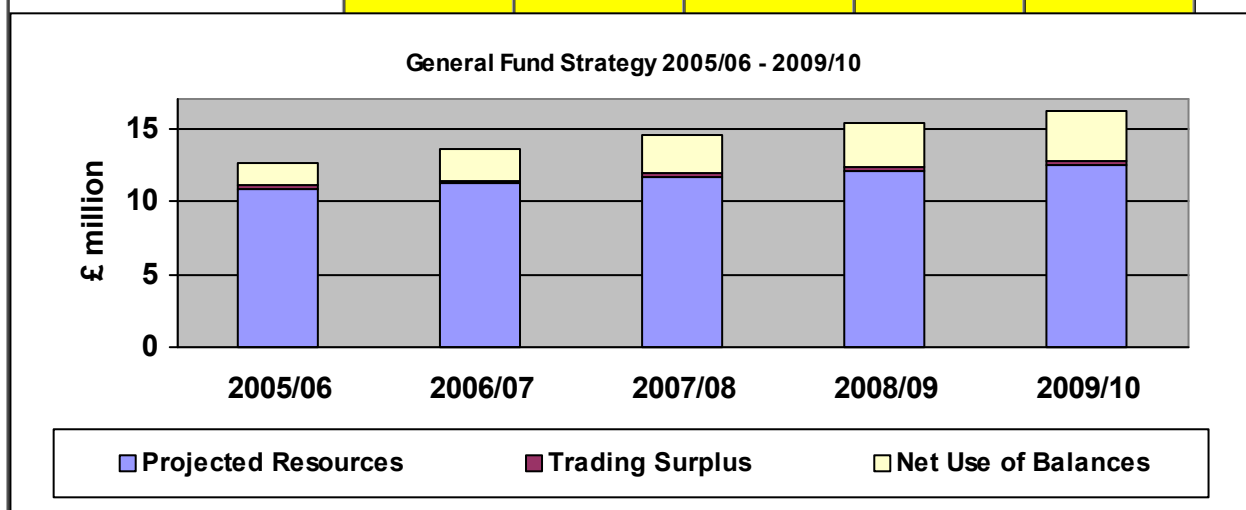
Every effort is made to provide a comprehensive range of services within the financial parameters set by Council. To achieve this, we formally review the level of service provision as part of the annual budgetary process. This process also includes the identification of savings and new service priorities.

During 2004/05 our medium term financial strategy identified the need to review our spending on services to achieve ongoing financial efficiencies. As part of this years budget process we identified £1.4 million of net savings with £565,000 of these savings being ongoing. These savings were delivered without the need for service reductions.

The continued identification of efficiency savings, in line with the Governments Spending Review, is necessary to ensure we maintain a sustainable revenue position. Consequently, plans for growth and changing priorities are now more clearly linked to available funding and distribution.

A Business Process Reengineering project is being undertaken that will review all major services. The review has already identified opportunities to make savings through efficiencies resulting from the introduction of new ICT systems and further transfers of services to the Customer Service Centre. The General Fund Financial Strategy position is shown in summary below :-

	2005/06 £'000s	2006/07 £'000s	2007/08 £'000s	2008/09 £'000s	2009/10 £'000s
Committee Spending	12,566	13,611	14,591	15,394	16,113
Trading Surplus	(215)	(225)	(225)	(225)	(225)
	12,351	13,386	14,366	15,169	15,888
Projected Resources	(10,840)	(11,187)	(11,683)	(12,090)	(12,517)
Net Use of Balances	1,511	2,199	2,683	3,079	3,371



General Fund Budget 2005/06

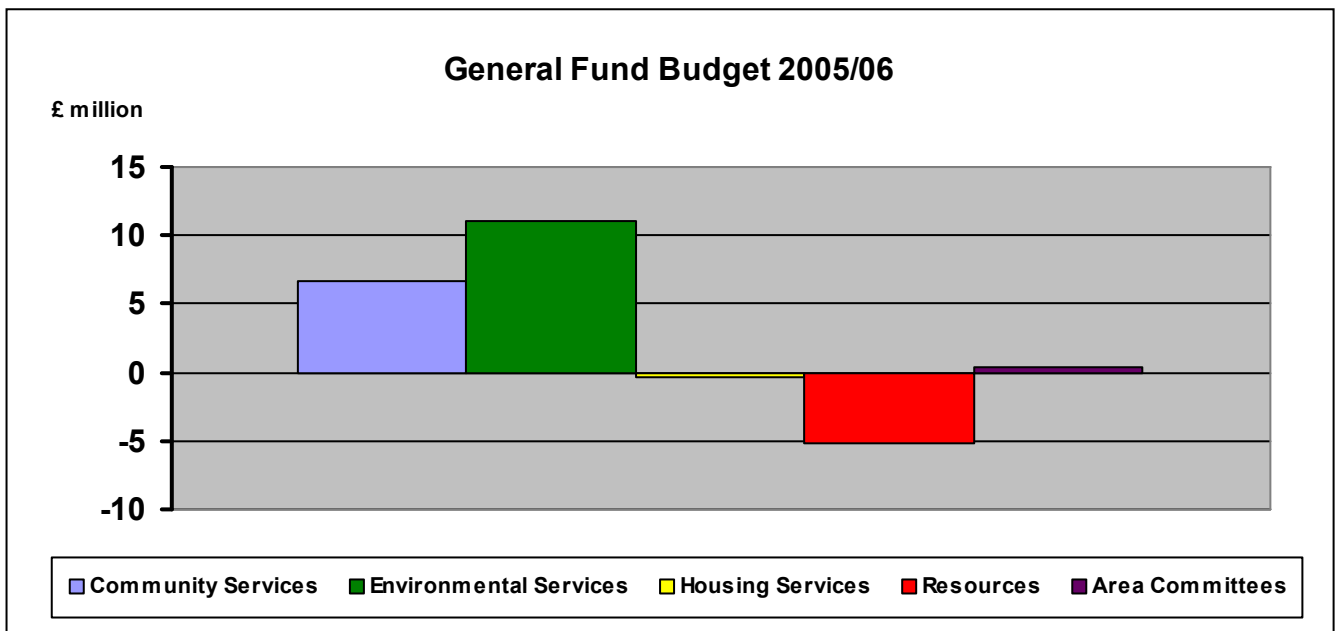
The General Fund includes all expenditure and income chargeable to taxpayers.

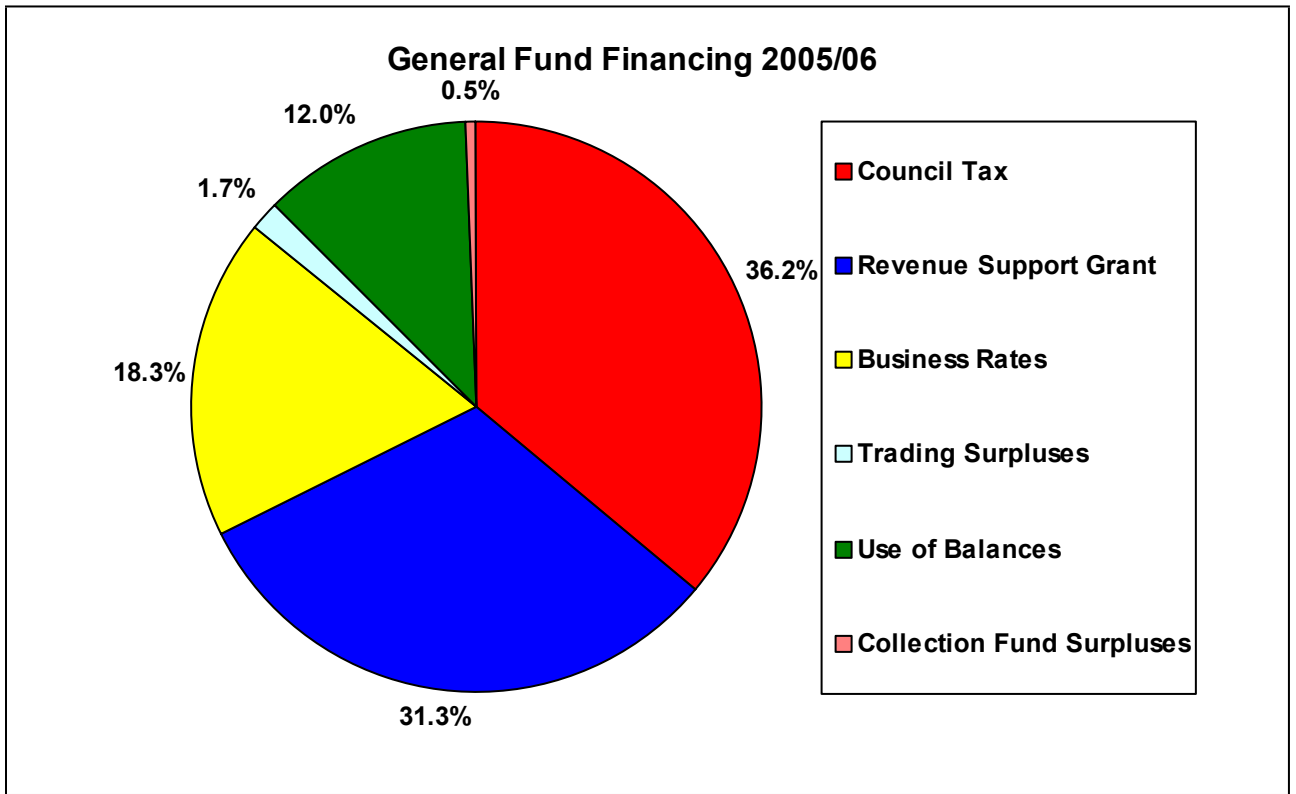
We raise money from fees and charges and local taxpayers. We also receive money from Central Government.

We currently collect £39 million from business ratepayers and pay this into the Government's national rating pool. Allocations to councils from this pool are based on population statistics and Stevenage will receive around one fifteenth of what it pays in.

The General Fund Budget for 2005/06 together with the estimated outturn for 2004/05 is shown below.

Portfolio Area	2004/05 Estimate £'000s	2004/05 Probable £'000s	2005/06 Estimate £'000s
Community Services	6,210	6,723	6,651
Environmental Services	9,459	11,022	11,080
Housing Services	(824)	(320)	(376)
Resources	(2,889)	(6,016)	(5,166)
Area Committees	379	505	377
Total Net Expenditure	12,335	11,914	12,566
Financed By:			
Council Tax	4,357	4,357	4,540
Revenue Support Grant	3,887	3,887	3,936
Business Rates	2,170	2,170	2,301
Trading Surpluses	201	222	215
Use of / (Contribution) to Balances	1,690	1,248	1,511
Collection Fund Surpluses	30	30	63
Total Financing	12,335	11,914	12,566





Direct Service Organisation (DSOs)

The Council provides most of its direct service requirements through its own DSOs

A summary of the 2005/06 DSO estimates is shown below:

DSO	Income £'000s	Expenditure £'000s	Surplus £'000s
Building Maintenance	2,518	2,518	0
Street Cleansing	1,542	1,483	59
Refuse Collection	2,709	2,567	142
Grounds Maintenance	2,703	2,689	14
	9,472	9,257	215

Capital Expenditure

Capital expenditure is accounted separately from revenue expenditure, although revenue resources can be used as a means of financing capital ventures.

As a 'debt-free' authority, we were able to utilise all of our capital receipts from the disposal of assets for re-investment in capital expenditure. From 2004/05 under receipt pooling legislation 75% of dwelling sales and 50% of other housing receipts are to be paid over. Debt free authorities can phase in the new arrangements over 3 years.

A summary of our capital programme for 2005/06 is shown below, together with the sources of funding.

	2005/06
Programme	£'000s
Housing	16,683
General Fund	
- Buildings	2,622
- Car Parking	1,304
- Pavilions	360
- Environmental Improvements	867
- Information Technology	1,604
- Other	4,995
Total Expenditure	28,435
Resources	
- Capital Receipts/Contributions	22,250
- Major Repairs Allowance	5,529
- Other	656
Total Resources	28,435

Housing Revenue Account

The Housing Revenue Account is the account where all income and expenditure is chargeable to rent payers. The account is "ring fenced" from the General Fund which cannot support it in revenue financing.

A summary of the Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2005/06 and the estimated outturn for 2004/05 is shown below:

<u>Expenditure</u>	2004/05 Estimate	2004/05 Probable	2005/06 Estimate
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
HRA Subsidy Withdrawal	16,207	16,232	16,352
Repairs	5,772	6,030	6,276
Major Repairs	6,018	6,018	6,120
Supervision and Management	7,836	8,015	8,223
Revenue Contribution to Capital	647	647	

Total Expenditure	36,480	36,942	36,971
Financed By:			
Rents	26,860	26,833	27,303
Interest	1,459	1,615	1,612
Use of/(Contribution to) Balances		373	(157)
Fees and Charges	1,456	1,429	1,465
MRA Subsidy	6,018	6,018	6,120
Support People Grant	613	600	560
Defects Grant	74	74	68
Total Income	36,480	36,942	36,971

If you require further information about our resources or approach to efficiency improvements, please call Scott Crudgington - Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on (01438) 242185 or email scott.crudgington@stevenage.gov.uk.

The Council's Political and Decision-Making Arrangements

The Constitution

In October 2001 we adopted a Constitution in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 with a Leader and Executive model for its Member level decision-making structure

Decision Making

Under the Constitution decision-making is either the responsibility of the Council, or the Executive.

Specific matters are reserved for Council decision and these include the Budget and Policy Framework of the Authority. Other matters that are the responsibility of the Council may be delegated to Council Committees or Officers for decision; these include decisions on planning applications and licensing matters.

Matters that are not reserved for Council decision are the responsibility of the Executive that has also delegated responsibility for particular matters to Committees, Panels or Officers.

The Council

The Council is made up of all 39 Stevenage Borough Councillors and meets at least 5 times a year including the Annual Council in May when the Mayor is elected and political appointments for the next Municipal Year are agreed.

The Executive

The Executive meets on a monthly basis and comprises the Leader of the Council, an Opposition Member and 8 other Councillors from the Majority Group who have a specific area of responsibility, or Portfolio. The Portfolios areas are –

- › Housing
- › Community & Culture
- › The Environment
- › Health & E-government
- › Resources
- › Personnel
- › Community Safety
- › Performance & Improvement
- › Personnel

In addition to taking decisions on executive functions, the Executive also consider matters that are referred for Council decision, and make recommendations to Council accordingly.

The Executive has appointed a Performance, Priorities and Improvements Group who may commission specific Best Value Reviews and other work from the Council's four Review Panels.

Scrutiny

All decisions taken by the Executive are submitted to the Scrutiny Overview Committee who may choose to review a decision and pass on comments to the Executive.

In addition to scrutinising decisions, the Scrutiny Overview Committee and its four Scrutiny Panels may review proposals for future policies and services prior to Council or Executive taking any decisions.

Standards Committee

The Standards Committee comprises three Councillors and two independent, non-elected members, one of whom serves as Chair. This Committee is responsible for the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Councillors published in November 2001, which set out the standards of ethics and probity to be followed by all Councillors.

Area Committees

The six Area Committees each meet on a three monthly basis at local venues and give the communities of the respective areas the opportunity to be involved in discussions of issues and projects within their area.

Putting the community first

The Council wants all major decisions to be informed by public consultation, ensuring that service users are involved in developing services, decisions are fully explained to the community, the community participates in the democratic process, the community is informed about performance levels and the Council acts as the community's representative.

Progress 2004/05

- ✓ Continued development of the Council's Scrutiny function.
- ✓ Continued development of telephone registration for the Annual Audit of the Electoral Roll.
- ✓ The establishment of a licensing Committee in accordance with the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003.

Performance indicator	Actual 2004/05	Target 2005/06	Actual 2005/06	Target 2006/07
The number of people attending Area Committee meetings	616	650		650
Percentage turnout for local elections	39.4%	40%		no local elections
The percentage of electoral 'A' forms returned	94.5%	91%		92%