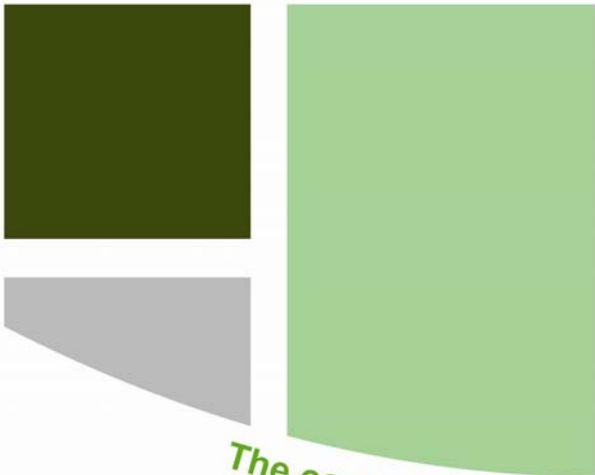




**Sharing the Dividends
2013-2018
Stevenage Borough Council
Corporate Plan**



The council and community working together



A co-operative council



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[INSIDE COVER]

Stevenage Borough Council Performance Management Framework
(to be revised and added following Full Council approval)

Diagrams

Co-op principles link to our corporate plan and service planning-links to performance appraisals and council values

Golden thread SCS 2013-2018

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Message from the Leader

I am pleased to present Stevenage Borough Council's Corporate Plan Sharing the Dividends 2013-2018. This plan outlines the Council's vision and priorities to drive improvement over the next five years. It will ensure we continue to work co-operatively with the community to deliver high quality services that people value and need. The plan builds on our many successes in recent years and outlines how we can all make a difference in the town.

Times have changed since our last Corporate Plan and we all now face tough economic challenges and choices. We are all working hard in Stevenage to deliver effective services despite severe economic constraints. We all have fewer resources and must find creative ways to ensure that front line service quality is not compromised. It is now more important than ever to work with residents, community groups, local businesses and statutory partners.

Working co-operatively is something we do very well in Stevenage. We have a strong history of community action. Over 60 years ago the first new-town residents worked together to develop their homes, establish local services and create the spirit of the town. This ethos of collective action still holds true today. Whilst the town has grown in size and population, it has not abandoned its heritage. Community co-operation remains at the heart of the town. Our residents actively participate in civic life and local voluntary and community sector groups support the most vulnerable in our society.

The council also has a strong history of co-operation. We continue to demonstrate a genuine partnership with local residents involving them in the design, planning and implementation of our services. We want local people to get even more involved. We want them to be active in their neighbourhoods, interact with local councillors, share ideas and knowledge, and work with us to design, lead and deliver local services. A mutual partnership is one where responsibility, accountability and rewards are shared.

In setting our improvement priorities for this Corporate Plan we have looked at local issues, data and statistics and we have listened to what residents have told us are key priorities. This plan focuses on a few key priorities that will improve quality of life in the town rather than listing everything the council continues to do. This does not necessarily mean that other services will stop, however this plan highlights the areas that the council is committing to improve over the next five years. Our aim is for Stevenage's residents to have decent homes, employment, feel safe, and have access to clean and green spaces.

We are continuing with our important and exciting work to regenerate Stevenage town centre. This will involve transforming retail in the town and attracting new businesses to invest in Stevenage. We remain committed to providing quality, affordable housing across the town and ensure that all Stevenage residents and future generations have clean, comfortable and well-planned homes. We will continue to play a key role in the local community safety partnership to ensure that Stevenage stays safe and residents feel safe. Furthermore we are working to revitalise our neighbourhood centres so they continue to be a hub of community life.

We will ensure that the council demonstrates value for money through effective use of resources and delivering a balanced budget. It is imperative to us to maintain the front-line services that you have rated as most important.

In order to do this we must use council resources effectively alongside the passion, commitment and skills of our communities. Working together can ensure that the money we spend goes further, not only providing services but also delivering added social value.

This plan sets out what we as a council will do and also what we will help our residents to do. I am confident that this plan will enable Stevenage to continue to grow and develop. Together, we can achieve a town of which we are all proud and where we can truly share the dividends.



Councillor Sharon Taylor
Leader of the Council

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Welcome to Stevenage

Stevenage began as a Saxon village in the 7th Century. It was called Stith Ac, which means strong oak. Today Stevenage is a medium sized town that is located approximately 30 miles north of London and 30 miles west of Cambridge.

In 1946 Stevenage was chosen by the Government to be Britain's first new town and was carefully planned to create a high quality of life and strong communities. Set in the Hertfordshire countryside, it was intended to be a self contained community, consisting of self sufficient neighbourhoods interspersed with green spaces with facilities nearby. There are approximately 35,000 dwellings in Stevenage and the industrial, commercial and residential areas are segregated. The town has now has a population of 83,957 which is expected to increase to almost 93,000 by 2035.

Stevenage is situated just off the A1M and has easy access to the M1, M11 and the M25 orbital. It has good rail links via East Coast mainline and is on the main London to Edinburgh line, with Kings Cross just a twenty minute journey. The town also has excellent air links, being in close proximity to both Luton and Stansted airports.

Stevenage was the first fully pedestrianised town centre and is served by 45 km of cycle ways. These provide a green route connecting all residential neighbourhoods to the industrial areas and town centre. Cycling is promoted as a healthy and safe form of transport across the town. The town centre has over 250 shops, offices, leisure facilities, plus an indoor market.

Stevenage has a mixed workforce, with technology and pharmaceuticals being the main employment sectors. MBDA and EADS Astrium are world leaders in the aerospace sector and the GlaxoSmith Kline £700 million European Research Centre was built here.

Stevenage is a safe place to live and work with lower rates of crime and disorder than the national average. Between 1 April 2012 and 30 March 2013, all crime in Stevenage fell by 11.2%. There were significant drops in antisocial behaviour (27%), acquisitive crime (20.4%) and criminal damage (18.6%). Furthermore the majority of our residents feel safe during the day and after dark. In our last Residents Survey you told us that only 5% of you feel unsafe during the day and only 29% feel unsafe after dark. This is much lower than other areas in Hertfordshire, and similar areas in England.

Residents and visitors to Stevenage enjoy a diverse range of leisure and cultural activities including: The Gordon Craig Theatre, Boxfield Art Gallery, Stevenage Museum, Stevenage Leisure Park with its cinema, clubs, bowling alley and restaurants. Stevenage is also home to two of Britain's best parks. The Town Centre Gardens and Fairlands Valley Park were recently awarded green flags.

Stevenage has a higher than average number of young people and like many areas an ageing population.. Approximately 15.7% of the population of Stevenage have a disability this is below the national average of 17.6% but above the Hertfordshire average of 14.3%. Stevenage has approximately 8,550 unpaid carers in Stevenage which equates to 10.2% of our population. The town also has a higher than average number of lone parent households with 8.6%.

The most recent census in 2001 highlighted that 83% of the Stevenage's population is white British which is higher than the Hertfordshire and England averages of 80.8% and 79.8% respectively. The BME population now stands at 16.9% and this diversity includes communities from central and eastern Europe, India, Ireland, France, Africa and the Philippines. In Stevenage 54% of the population state their religion to be Christian and 34% state that they have no religion. The town also has a range of other faiths such as Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh. Recent national surveys have helped us to estimate that between 1.1% and 2.4% of the Stevenage population identify themselves as lesbian, gay or bisexual. This diversity of race, background and faith adds to the rich cultural tapestry of the town.

You can find out more about the history and development of Stevenage by visiting the Stevenage museum or reading the Stevenage Book. For more information (insert link)

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Sharing the Dividends 2013-2018

The council's Corporate Plan Sharing the Dividends runs from 2013 through to 2018. It outlines the council's vision for a strong and sustainable Stevenage, which will be achieved in co-operation with residents and community organisations. The plan articulates our ambitions to work with partners and the community to address local priorities. It is the council's main strategic planning document and sets out the actions we will undertake to achieve our vision.

The vision and priorities identified take account of local issues and are shaped by the views of residents. Stevenage Borough Council listens to its residents through:

- Face to face meetings
- Community Conference
- Written correspondence
- Facebook and Twitter, our online social networking pages
- Online consultations
- Our Residents Survey
- Café Choice
- Councillor surgeries.

We have a good reputation for providing high quality services that are value for money and reflect our communities' views and needs. In the council's most recent Resident's Survey you told us that we are performing well with 66% of residents satisfied with the way the Council runs the town and 80% satisfied with Stevenage as a place to live. We will ensure that we continue to perform well and address the town's issues in an effective way.

Sharing The Dividends will link to our budget setting and performance management systems ensuring that we have the resources in place to effectively deliver against the priorities identified in this plan. An action plan will be developed that supports this plan to turn all the objectives and priorities into meaningful and SMART (specific, measureable, achievable, relevant, time bound) actions and activities. Progress on the delivery of this plan will be regularly monitored and reported to the council's Executive Members and senior officers. An Annual Report on our progress will be published on our website www.stevenage.gov.uk and a summary in Chronicle, our residents' magazine.

Stevenage: A Co-operative Council

The council has adopted a framework of principles that promote and support the close working relationships we have with the town's residents and organisations, as well as amongst council staff and councillors, to deliver high quality and effective services. These principles reflect a move towards greater involvement and co-operation with local people in shaping and providing services in Stevenage. The principles are:

- The council as a strong community leader
- Working together with the community and other agencies to provide services based on needs
- Communities empowered to design and deliver services and play an active role in their local community

- A clear understanding between the council and our communities – this is what we do, this is what we will help you to do
- Joined up and accessible services that offer value for money and focus on the customer.

These principles underpin the vision and outcomes of Sharing the Dividends, highlighting what we will do for the community and what we can help the community to do.

This way of working enables the council to ensure that the money we spend goes further, that it achieves its primary purpose of providing local services and adds even more social rewards to give back to the community. This is sharing the dividends. We will ensure that our approach for each of our priorities involves the community and we will develop clear dividends that can be shared.

For more information on how Stevenage Borough Council is working co-operatively please see the Council's Co-operative Council Commitment document on the council website.

The Vision

Stevenage: a prosperous town with vibrant communities and improved life chances.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enshrines the role of the council as a community leader to shape and lead its communities. Stevenage Borough Council demonstrates this through leading and co-ordinating SoStevenage, a local partnership of public, private and voluntary and community groups in the town. The partnership shapes the vision and direction for the town, which is outlined in the Stevenage Community Strategy.

Our Corporate Plan Sharing the Dividends outlines what the council will do to address issues in the town and how we will work with partners and residents to make Stevenage better. We aim to see a town where people have opportunities, even in a difficult economic climate.

The Stevenage Community Strategy and the Council's Corporate Plan were developed alongside each other to ensure that the town and council's visions and priorities are aligned. The Council and other local organisations are working towards a shared vision for the town.

The Council Mission

A flexible council that works with the community to provide value for money services for all and effective support for the most vulnerable.

The council continues to work alongside community and voluntary groups and residents to shape and deliver services. Our co-operative approach enables residents' voices to be heard and valued and ensures that council services reflect local views. Despite a reduction in our funding the council will where possible continue to protect the front line services that our residents value. We want to provide value for money services and support the most vulnerable through improving life chances.

Our outcomes and priorities

In early 2012 Opinion Research Services carried out a postal survey on the council's behalf. We received 1,008 responses from a representative range of people across Stevenage. Residents told us that they are satisfied with the way the Council runs the town but highlighted a number of areas for improvement. Using and analysing this and other data, service information and statistics we have developed the key outcomes we wish to achieve and priorities for improvement for the next five years.

Outcome	Priorities
A Vibrant Town	Improve the economy and encourage financial resilience
	Regenerate the town centre and neighbourhoods
A Quality Environment	Provide affordable homes and housing growth
	Help people feel safe
An Excellent Council	Deliver value for money
	Putting customers first

Outcome: A Vibrant Town

Stevenage was chosen to be the first New Town in 1946. It was designed to provide homes, jobs and a good quality of life to many who moved from London and other areas following the Second World War. The vision for the town was to have a vibrant town centre, strong community oriented neighbourhoods with ample facilities and green spaces with separate industrial and commercial areas to provide jobs. This outstanding achievement in planning has led to the Stevenage we know today.

In order to keep Stevenage a vibrant town we must continue to support and grow businesses, regenerate the town centre and neighbourhoods and support residents to manage their money. A regenerated Stevenage ensures provision of homes and creates a town with social and economic opportunities, strong employment, energised neighbourhoods and revitalised communities.

Priority: Improve the economy and encourage financial resilience

Stevenage is a strong urban centre in the centre of the London-Stansted-Cambridge-Peterborough employment zone. From its inception the New Town aimed to be a town with a population of 100,000 residents. The population is steadily increasing in line with this vision and currently stands at 84,000. In order to guarantee a high quality of life for all residents, now and in the future, it is vital that the town and the economy continue to grow.

Despite the severe economic conditions of recent years Stevenage continues to have a vibrant economy. We are determined to not just maintain, but strengthen this economy and not be restricted by national or economic constraints. The local economy can be further expanded through supporting existing business in staying economically stable, attracting new businesses to the town, encouraging the development of small and medium enterprises and up-skilling local people for the local economy.

What we will do:

- Attract new businesses to Stevenage through a branding and marketing campaign
- Encourage and support local business development
- Work in partnership to reduce the effects of the economic downturn
- Provide advice and support to businesses, community groups and organisations
- Implement measures for a low-carbon economy
- Develop technical and scientific knowledge based industry sectors within Stevenage
- Improve opportunities for young people to economically participate in the town

Priority: Regenerate the town centre and neighbourhoods

Stevenage, like many other new towns, is in need of an update to its town centre. Regeneration will ensure Stevenage continues to offer excellent leisure, shopping and working opportunities in the region. Much of the town centre infrastructure dates from the establishment of the new town with significant wear to the urban environment. We are currently developing a regeneration plan for Stevenage. We are working with developers to ensure the creation of a new centre of excellence in the town with the right mix of retail units, leisure opportunities and an improved physical environment. The Council will work with retailers and developers to inspire confidence in Stevenage as a location of choice. We want the people of Stevenage to be proud to live, work and shop locally and we want to create an environment that attracts shoppers from elsewhere.

Stevenage consists of six residential neighbourhoods which are self-sufficient communities with their shop, health and school facilities and are surrounded by green spaces and play areas. There are twenty two neighbourhood centres across the town with many in need of rejuvenation. It is important that the council ensures the future sustainability and viability of these neighbourhoods to ensure strong communities with a high quality of life for residents. We are therefore committed to the review and regeneration of these centres to ensure that Stevenage remains a neighbourhood focussed town.

What we will do:

- Develop plans for a prosperous town centre
- Inspire confidence in Stevenage as a retail destination and improve the retail and leisure experience
- Develop a local regeneration and development plan for Stevenage
- Review our Neighbourhood centres and develop renewal plans and programmes.

Outcome: A Quality Environment

We aspire for Stevenage to be clean and green, with residents that are active in the local area and with neighbourhoods that are and feel safe. We want a Stevenage is well designed with a quality built and natural environment and has excellent transport and communication links.

If a neighbourhood is well maintained it encourages a strong sense of place, promotes investment and encourages responsible behaviour. We will continue to ensure decent social housing and a mix of housing types in the town. We will work with local organisations, partners and residents to promote and maintain Stevenage's environment.

Over recent years we have worked co-operatively with the Police, local community groups and residents and have made great strides in reducing crime and disorder across the town. We want to build on these strong foundations and to help local people feel reassured that Stevenage is a great, safe place to live.

Priority: Provide Affordable Homes and Housing Growth

In Stevenage we want to continue delivering the original New Town vision to provide everyone with access to a home of decent quality at a price they can afford. We are faced with significant housing pressures due to increased demand for social and affordable housing across the town. We do not just wish to meet housing demand, we want to grow and develop and meet the aspirations of our residents.

The council can use its position as a leader in the town to stimulate the development of affordable homes. Recent changes in local government finance now enables the council to begin building council homes. We are committed to a council building programme to ensure residents have access to quality homes.

There are just over 35,000 dwellings in Stevenage. Approximately 23% are social rented housing that is owned by the council. The Localism Act, introduced major reforms to homelessness, allocations and tenancies. In response we have developed a new tenancy strategy outlining our approach to housing allocation.

We are committed to providing a high quality housing management service. We will continue to invest in our stock to improve tenants' homes and the standard of customer service. We are keen to increase the involvement of tenants and leaseholders in decision making. We will provide opportunities for our tenants to have their say.

What we will do:

- Increase the number of affordable homes in the town
- Use our assets to deliver new homes
- Work with our community to develop a new District Plan to provide the homes the town needs
- Improve our housing stock
- Implement the new Housing Allocation Strategy

- Help first time buyers to get onto the housing ladder.

Priority: Help People Feel Safe

Stevenage is a safe place to live and work. Crime has fallen year on year and continues to fall. This is due to the excellent work of the council, police and other partners who work together in SoSafe, the Stevenage Community Safety partnership. Feeling safe and tackling crime remains a top priority for residents. We want to improve feelings of safety, address anti-social behaviour and the harm caused by domestic abuse and continue to reduce all crime across the town.

Times have changed since our last corporate plan and in a climate of reduced resources we need to work closer with the community to shape and deliver community safety in Stevenage. We are committed to working with our communities to reassure, involve and empower them to make Stevenage a safer place.

Green space is important as it contributes to residents' health and wellbeing, enhances feelings of social safety and creates a sense of place and identity in the town. When Stevenage New Town was developed it was carefully designed and planned to ensure communities had access to open green spaces and wildlife corridors to improve quality of life. We will encourage residents to take part in their local area and help us to manage and support the natural environment in Stevenage. We will continue to work with partners to ensure that future development and growth of the town is not at the expense of the green environment.

We have seen big improvements in our recycling rates over recent years. We will maintain this positive trend and continue to encourage residents to conserve the environment by reducing domestic waste, re-using where appropriate and increasing recycling rates. The council will also review its own processes and practices to ensure we are delivering services where possible in an environmentally friendly way. Together we can continue to ensure that Stevenage remains clean and green for future generations to enjoy.

What we will do:

- Develop a joined up response to address domestic abuse
- Work in partnership to reduce antisocial behaviour and crime
- Improve feelings of safety through an effective communications campaign
- Ensure green spaces in new developments
- Maintain our clean streets and green spaces

Outcome: An Excellent Council

Stevenage Borough Council aims for excellence across the entire organisation. The council is committed to demonstrating value for money by delivering excellent services that reflect the needs of our communities. We want to have a stable and balanced budget and to use our resources effectively and efficiently. We continue to aim for accessible, accountable and fair services for residents.

As a co-operative council that works in partnership with our communities we will provide joined up services, offer value for money and focus on the customer. We will ensure that we have the right processes and staff in place to respond to the views of our communities.

Priority: Deliver Value for Money

Effective management of our resources is vital to ensure that we can meet our priorities to deliver better outcomes for the town. Our funding from central government has been reduced therefore the major challenge for the Council is the achievement of a balanced and sustainable budget. We will continue to explore shared services where appropriate. We will also examine all our practices to work more effectively and ensure good customer services.

The council has a number of properties and assets across the town. It is vital that we use these assets effectively to deliver appropriate local services. We will review our assets and see where we can work more efficiently and involve the community in their usage and management.

Our staff play a vital role in maintaining a high standard of service design and delivery for Stevenage. With a highly skilled, flexible and committed workforce we will be able to achieve our vision for a strong and confident town. We will provide opportunities for staff to do their jobs effectively. We want our employees to be confident, feel valued and be proud to work for the council. We want to ensure that we have good people and the right processes in place to deliver excellence.

What we will do:

- Continue to deliver a sustainable and balanced budget
- Ensure the council has the right structures, services, staff and skills to be fit for the future
- Share support services where appropriate
- Work with the community to make best use of our council assets.

Priority: Putting Residents First

The council strives to deliver excellence to residents, businesses and visitors in the town. We aim to put our customers first. We will continue to develop an in-depth understanding of our customers to shape service delivery.

Effective community engagement can lead to better outcomes for the people of Stevenage. As a co-operative council, we see great value in listening to our residents' views to understand local need and inform our planning. We are committed to improving our methods of consultation and engagement. We think it is important that people have the opportunity to have a say on local issues and decisions.

It is also important to tell you what we have done as a result of your consultation feedback. We will improve our communication inform residents how their views have shaped decisions. We will provide regular and consistent information on the priorities that matter most to you in the town. We will maintain our council website so it is accessible and up-to-date and ensure that council communications make sense.

We are committed to improving the accessibility of services and will simplify how residents interact with us. We will work to recognised standards to ensure all our customers are aware of what to expect and can judge whether we have delivered a quality service.

What we will do:

- Simplify the customer experience
- Promote equality and improve service accessibility
- Develop an effective consultation and engagement programme to increase opportunities for residents to get involved in decision making
- Ensure effective and clear communication with our residents and partners.

Our commitment to Equalities

Stevenage is a diverse town. Our residents come from a variety of backgrounds, which brings an added richness to life in the town. We want communities that are strong and cohesive, where diversity is valued and where residents can access good quality services.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been used to inform the development of this plan. The assessment has considered the implications of the plan on equality groups to ensure that it is compliant with the Equality Act 2010. We want to ensure that residents have equal life chances, fair access to services, are confident and resilient and can work with us to share the dividends.

How we will measure success

It is important that we measure our performance to ensure that we achieve the outcomes we have set out in this plan. We will develop SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable/Attainable, Realistic, Time bound) measures and targets. Our performance will be monitored regularly through the council's internal governance arrangements and performance tracked through the council's Balanced Scorecard.

Work with Us

If you would like more information on this plan, or how you can work with us then please contact us at consultation@stevenage.gov.uk. If you would like this in a different format or language please contact us at csc@stevenage.gov.uk.