



**EXECUTIVE**

**8 JULY 2020**

**SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA**

**PART 1**

**5. HOUSING FIRST APPROACH AT STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL IN RESPONSE TO THE ROUGH SLEEPING CRISIS**

To update the Executive on Housing First, a multi-agency approach that can be adopted to re-house the rough sleepers accommodated under the COVID-19 provision.

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**7. 2019/20 ANNUAL REPORT AND PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW**

Appendix A – Annual Report 2019/20.

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Part 1  
Release to Press



**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Housing, Older People & Health / Resources  
**Date** 8 July 2020



## HOUSING FIRST APPROACH AT STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL IN RESPONSE TO THE ROUGH SLEEPING CRISIS

### KEY DECISION

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### PURPOSE

- 1.1 In response to the current and evolving resource challenges facing the Council's Homelessness Service to provide housing related support to a very difficult and hard to reach client group it was felt important to bring before Executive a report that outlines the Council's immediate and developing response to meet these client's needs together with the resource pressures this creates. As this is an important and current issue that is influenced by national policy it was felt more expedient to bring a late and urgent item report to Executive than to delay the report to the next Executive meeting in August.

- 1.2 The challenge of preventing homelessness and rough sleeping is both a national and local one and has been exacerbated by the outbreak of Covid-19. Experience in Stevenage has shown that people with precarious housing circumstances have been pushed into street homelessness as a result of the current crisis. As government strategy continues to develop and is in the process of being articulated and communicated with Councils, this report sets out the Council's immediate, medium and long-term proposals to tackle the complex issues raised by the current crisis.
- 1.3 In support of this effort, recommendations are set out in this report for the Executive to instruct officers to marshal resources, monitor budget pressures and investigate opportunities (both funding and land led) linked to improving the housing related offer, including support and the supply of accommodation for tackling the current homelessness crisis in Stevenage.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Executive note the support provided to homeless households during the Covid-19 lockdown and to note the challenges faced by the Council over the coming months ahead, as outlined in this report.
- 2.2 That the Executive notes the current service pressures developing in the Housing and No More service within the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account, which will be monitored by the Council's Finance department and reported to Executive as part of the quarterly budget monitoring cycle.
- 2.3 That Executive requests officers to develop a business case for a new Housing First Model, including the potential construction of a new hostel (as outlined in 4.24), taking into account partner support and funding requirements.

## **3 BACKGROUND: CONTEXT OF THE HOMELESSNESS LANDSCAPE PRIOR TO COVID-19**

- 3.1 In December 2019, the Executive approved the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024 (H&RSS 2019-2024). This strategy outlined the key trends locally and nationally showing that homelessness was on the increase. In Stevenage, the total number of homeless decisions being made had increased by 46% over a 4 year period from 105 in 2014/15 to 193 in 2018/19. Nationally, the Government's own figures showed that there were 25,130 families with children identified as homeless and that the overall number of children living in temporary accommodation hit a 13-year high at 126,020, up 83% since its lowest point in June 2011. Whilst other research (Campaign to Protect Rural England reported in H&RSS) pointed to an even worsening picture of the housing crisis, with growing waiting lists and not enough long term housing being built. As such, the current housing difficulties being faced by Stevenage and the country are not a result of Covid-19, but are a problem that has been exacerbated by the pandemic.
- 3.2 The Council's approach to tackling homelessness in the H&RSS, identified four key priorities:

1. Prevention and relief of homelessness and rough sleeping
  2. Provision of temporary accommodation
  3. Long term increase in housing development
  4. Support for our homeless households
- 3.3 Both Members and Officers recognised that these priorities would be challenging to meet and a partnership approach along the basis of the 'Housing First' approach (a model that provides housing with a wrapped support package from the outset to homeless vulnerable clients) would be necessary to protect the most vulnerable in our communities, given their deep rooted and sometimes multi-dimensional housing, support and clinical needs. The strategy sets out the Council's vision to "work co-operatively to prevent and reduce homelessness and end the need for anyone to sleep rough in Stevenage".
- 3.4 The situation In Stevenage reflects the national picture. Despite the coordinated and co-operative efforts by the Council and partners (including the Stevenage Health & Wellbeing Partnership, the Police, the Haven and other Voluntary and Community Sector organisations) in helping residents to stay in their homes, more and more households were finding themselves homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless.
- 3.5 The week prior to the Covid-19 lockdown (16th March 2020), there were 121 households in Emergency and Temporary Accommodation, including 19 in bed and breakfast accommodation. During June (after the initial lock-down period) this figure had risen to 181 with 69 in bed and breakfast accommodation. This level of demand puts a significant strain on stretched to cater for this vulnerable client group.

#### **4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

##### **POST COVID-19 OUTBREAK AND LOCKDOWN AND STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL'S IMMEDIATE RESPONSE**

- 4.1 The global scale and national impact of Covid-19 has been widely documented. Its impact on Rough Sleepers is all the more acute, as this client group is notably more likely to be suffering from issues relating to addiction and support needs for their mental and physical health.
- 4.2 Following the Government announcing that the country was going into lockdown from 23rd March 2020, there was a directive to ensure that rough sleepers were accommodated ("Everyone in for good" 28th March). Whilst the Council responded to this immediately, by securing accommodation via hotels, it was logistically not possible to secure sufficient bookings in a single venue, or solely in Stevenage. Stevenage Borough Council, like many in Hertfordshire, needed to utilise hotel spaces in neighbouring authorities in and outside of Hertfordshire given the urgency of the challenges.

- 4.3 Block bookings (at discounted rates) were secured at the Holiday Inn Express, the Novotel and the Gate Hotel, within Stevenage, as well as a number of rooms at a hotel in Stansted. This provision provided shelter and protection for the vulnerable client group during the national Covid-19 lockdown.
- 4.4 All those who approached the Council as rough sleeping, or at risk of rough sleeping, were offered accommodation and support. The Government advised that this provision should be for a 12 week period up to the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and in the absence of any alternative options or developments from Central Government, this has been extended to the end of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020 (by agreement of the Executive at the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020 meeting).
- 4.5 The projected cost of this accommodation is expected to be in the region of £404,000 and includes accommodation, basic food provision and all security costs. To date the Government has confirmed direct funding of just £11,500 to Stevenage, which has led to a significant pressure on the Council's finite resources.
- 4.6 The Council has engaged three rough sleeper workers, who together with the Council's No More service have administered essential support to homeless clients. The provision for these clients is not just limited to accommodation, but has also included meals and mobile phones, which are essential tools for them to communicate and access both professional and personal support networks.
- 4.7 Security arrangements have been put in place in order to meet with the hotel requirements and provide assurances over safety for clients, members of the public, hotel and council staff. It is disappointing to note, that despite the intensive support, some rough sleepers disengaged from the accommodation, following continual breaches of the hotel accommodation conditions and for participating in criminal activity, including violent antisocial behaviour. Given the complex nature and often multiple challenges facing this client group, visits and inspections have been conducted in conjunction with private security and the police service.
- 4.8 At the time of reporting a total of 48 rough sleepers are accommodated, however this is an evolving number as the service continues to receive new referrals, as well as finding housing solutions for others. The makeup of this number includes those that were long term rough sleepers in Stevenage (approximately 16) but also those that could have been classed as hidden homeless and have been forced on to the streets (28). This includes people that were relying on the good will of family or friends to be able to 'sofa surf' prior to the restrictions that were introduced as part of the social distancing measures. Throughout the lockdown period the Council had received a total of 113 enquiries that have been assessed and supported in some way for varying lengths of time. These 113 are individuals that would not have normally been owned a housing duty, but all have been eligible to claim public funds.
- 4.9 Earlier updates to Executive estimated the cost of the Council's interventions at £419,000 and, as stated earlier, the Council has now spent, or committed to spend £404,000 to the end of July. However, these costs have now been mitigated by an assumption for housing benefit claims and support through

Herts CC for transport and food costs. If these claims are met and, allowing for continuing expenditure over the coming months, the latest projection shows a net revenue cost of £274,000 to the Council. This estimate is under constant review and will depend on the level of benefit claims that can be recovered (currently being processed) and the availability of any further support from the Government. This figure and the implications it poses will be reported in the programmed financial monitoring reports to Executive.

- 4.10 It is important to recognise the legal context and financial implications of the Councils interventions in this area, as they have important implications for both the General Fund (GF) and the HRA. The Council has various statutory housing duties and the resources for remedying these have to be accounted for in accordance with the relevant legislation that is detailed below.
- 4.11 Where the Council has a duty to house an individual under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Reduction Act 2017), then that cost is a cost to the Housing Revenue Account. It is also possible to use section 9 of the Housing Act 1985 to provide housing accommodation, by building or acquiring properties and then letting those properties through the HRA. If the powers under Part 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (section 9) were used for the provision of temporary accommodation, i.e. where a duty to house an individual had not been established, the role of the HRA would be limited to solely being a landlord function and all other costs and additional services would have to be funded from the General Fund.
- 4.12 The single rough sleepers that have been accommodated by the Council are unlikely to fall within any specific housing duty, such as under section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 and therefore are being supported through the Council's general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. Therefore these costs will also have to be resourced through the General Fund.
- 4.13 The Council's Finance team are supporting the Housing and No More Service teams to make sure appropriate funding is available and accurately recorded. This will also allow for budget pressures that are building in Housing services and the Council's No More service to be monitored accurately. At present it is anticipated that a further budget pressure, as a result of the need to support the additional influx of homeless rough sleepers. will place a strain in the order of £77,500 on the Housing Team and a potential £150,000 on the No More service. This is based on the presumption they will be required to provide extended support to all of the current 48 additional rough sleepers for a six month period and secure accommodation into the private sector. At this stage, the extent to which this level of support will be needed has not yet been fully determined (as it requires engagement with the client that is set to receive the support), and therefore the costs associated with it will be monitored in line with the recommendations and be reported in the programmed financial monitoring reports to Executive.

## **MEDIUM TERM RESPONSE: MOVING FORWARD WITH MORE SECURE HOUSING OPTIONS AND DEVELOPING CLIENT SUPPORT NETWORKS**

- 4.14 A more secure and sustainable accommodation and support offer is needed for homeless clients. The fact that hotel accommodation may no longer be open to councils, as the hotel industry seeks to return to normal operational practices, creates an urgent need to identify and secure alternative accommodation. Housing however, has to be matched to need and the inability of some clients to manage independently is a key factor that will need to be taken into account.
- 4.15 Whilst in hotel accommodation, the Council's No More service and Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators have been able to visit and communicate with the clients on a daily basis. They have begun to develop personalised support plans and establish referrals to other professional services. These personalised support plans cover the clients housing, health and specific clinical wellbeing needs. These plans are now being assessed to determine what category of accommodation is realistically open and an option for the client. The plans seek to identify pathways into new housing options for individuals, based on their capacity to sustain particular housing, the risks associated with independent or shared living, as well as the availability of housing opportunities. In summary, Pathway One is intended for individuals who can manage or have managed to live independently before, but have recently been forced to sleep rough. They will be assisted to secure private sector accommodation and either establish or sustain support networks. Pathway Two, is for those that display a higher level of need, as a result of more frequent or sustained level of rough sleeping that has caused them to lose networks of support and become isolated. These individuals will need a greater level of support. Pathway Three is for clients who display acute levels of need and require intensive, crisis intervention measures, usually in 24 hour managed supported housing, or hostel schemes, in order to manage complex challenges.

Through adopting a multi-agency approach pathways will be developed to help clients into more secure forms of accommodation. These pathways are described in the following table:

<b>Support Need</b>	<b>Housing Options</b>	<b>Estimation of Numbers</b>
<p><b>Pathway one:</b> Low support needs with established professional and clinical support networks</p>	<p>Secure accommodation directly into Private rented sector or via temporary stay in Council Emergency Accommodation /Temporary Accommodation (EA/TA) if time does not permit</p> <p>Consider shared accommodation with Floating Support.</p>	<p>Current estimation is that approximately 10 existing clients will fall into this category</p>

<p><b>Pathway Two:</b> Medium level support needs with greater connections and referrals to professional support needed</p>	<p>This is for those that experienced a sustained level of rough sleeping and require far more support.</p> <p>Consider shared TA/EA via staffed Council premises or independent accommodation with higher frequency of multi-agency support before finding alternative private sector or Council/Registered Social Landlord accommodation subject to eligibility</p>	<p>Current estimation is that approximately 18 existing clients will fall into this category</p>
<p><b>Pathway Three:</b> High level client needs that require the most intensive support due to addiction or underlying clinical issues</p>	<p>Seek specialist partner agency accommodation such as that offered by the Haven hostel for a sustained period before move on accommodation is sought.</p>	<p>Current estimation is that approximately 10 existing clients will fall into this category</p>
<p><b>Reconnected</b></p>	<p>Through support, and professional agency referrals it is possible on occasions to secure reconciliation between family networks.</p>	<p>1</p>
<p><b>Yet to be completed assessments</b></p>	<p>Support plans are not yet fully developed to enable assessment due to additional multi agency input</p>	<p>5</p>
<p><b>Unsuccessful and showing signs of disengaging</b></p>	<p>Sadly, due to violent anti-social behaviour and other criminal activity some clients disengaged or were taken into custody by the Police</p>	<p>4</p>

4.16 Whilst the analysis provided above hugely under-represents the personalised interventions that support staff have been delivering, with huge effort and skill, it does help to highlight that the Council will need to secure more accommodation and support resources to help cater for the increased needs of the clients involved.

- 4.17 It is possible that increased accommodation resources will be needed to cope with providing the interim pathway accommodation to the group of rough sleepers that are not eligible for long term secure housing support from the Council.
- 4.18 As such Officers are considering increasing the stock of temporary and emergency accommodation, available to the Housing Options teams, should these be needed to accommodate individuals on a temporary and interim basis. Alternatively, the Housing Options team may also grant additional direct offers of accommodation to people who would be eligible for such housing offers, to free up supported accommodation for other homeless clients with complex needs.
- 4.19 At this stage officers are unable to predict precisely how many of the former rough sleepers will be able to be accommodated into the private sector, or how this group will engage with support and therefore it is difficult to determine the level of the accommodation resource required at this stage.
- 4.20 Clients that could manage their own tenancy with minimal support will be assisted through the Council Rent Deposit Scheme, to help secure private sector accommodation. It is envisaged that the Council will assist up to an additional 20 households through this scheme, depending on the availability of private rented accommodation.
- 4.21 In the event that further accommodation resources are needed, they will be requested for a time limited and defined purpose, in connection with this current crisis. They will be further subject to the accounting and appropriation regulations governing any transfer of resource from the General Fund and HRA and officers will seek approval in accordance with constitutional and statutory processes.
- 4.22 Other options under consideration for increasing the supply of accommodation include; repurposing existing Council general needs stock and retail buildings, further open market acquisitions or repurposing some existing HRA new build schemes, and entering into reciprocal arrangements with specialist providers to create additional move on accommodation in supported housing schemes.

#### **LONG TERM RESPONSE: MOVING FORWARD WITH A HOUSING FIRST APPROACH**

- 4.23 The need for flexible accommodation that helps to support an individual and allow professional practitioners to efficiently deliver their services, plays a huge part in ensuring successful housing and personal outcomes for clients. This kind of service is best built and delivered through a new purpose built hostel in Stevenage and would be similar to the service successfully operated by the Stevenage Haven. The Council's Housing teams will investigate if the demand and opportunity (in terms of land, multi-agency support and funding) is there to deliver such a service.
- 4.24 The Council's existing HRSS sets out an ambition to justify and resource a 'Housing First' model service. This would allow Stevenage Borough Council to grant a stable offer of accommodation to those who would otherwise

struggle to gain access to long term appropriate accommodation. The model sees housing as the first ‘stepping stone’ to recovery and long term sustainment and that, through support and engagement, it can be a powerful catalyst in changing clients’ lives and reducing rough sleeping substantially in the long term. Trialled in over 75 schemes in the UK, it is a model that has enjoyed huge success.

- 4.25 It is important to realise that the success of these schemes depend on the level of wrap around support that is provided to clients with highly complex needs. Therefore this will require a level of commitment from a range of agencies in the planning, delivery and continued operation of such a scheme.
- 4.26 In order to establish if there is sufficient partner commitment to a Housing First model, it is proposed that Executive recommend that officers engage and work with key partners including Hertfordshire County Council, the Clinical Commission Group and the Haven, to explore and develop a business case for the Executive’s future consideration.
- 4.27 Given that recent Government announcements have begun to indicate potential funding being made available, officers consider there will be scope to develop bids in support of a Housing First business case. The funding includes the £105 million announced to help local authorities implement a range of support interventions for people placed into emergency accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic and a further £16 million to assist those with substance dependence treatments announced by Luke Hall MP (24<sup>th</sup> June 2020).
- 4.28 The Government also announced, on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2020, that it would be providing funding of £433m to help deliver 6000 new homes for the homeless and rough sleepers. At the time of writing this report the Council was still seeking clarification on the funding criteria, with the intention to bid and secure capital resources that could potentially fund the development of a new hostel.

## **WORK PROGRAMME**

- 4.29 In order to transition the Council’s response from immediate relief to one that seeks a more sustainable and longer term, a range of actions will need to be undertaken during July and August. The table below summarises the actions and priorities officers will be taking forward over coming weeks:

<b>Work &amp; Decision Theme</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Indicative timescales</b>
Co-ordinated Work by the Rough Sleeper Workers & No More service to complete Support Plans and the assessment of Client capacity for independent living	To identify suitability of individuals ability to live independently or in supported accommodation and identify the correct move on pathway into more suitable accommodation	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2020

<p>To detail a planned programme of reducing the use of Hotel accommodation to minimal levels before 1st August.</p>	<p>To ensure effective use of resources and that the most suitable accommodation is made available to clients  Housing Operations Manager Providing homes supported by seconded resource</p>	<p>17<sup>th</sup> July 2020</p>
<p>To develop a Housing First Business Case and appraise development options for the provision of new emergency and temporary accommodation. To develop governance approval routes in line with Council &amp; Statutory requirements</p>	<p>To establish new schemes, or repurposed schemes with appropriate council authority. This may include new Executive and Council approvals for the development of temporary/emergency Accommodation.</p>	<p>November 2020</p>
<p>Work with partners to analyse hostel supported housing move on performance in Stevenage.</p>	<p>To ensure effective use of partner resources and to give partners reciprocal support in helping Stevenage residents.  The Council will be working with partners to see what more can be done to improve move on rates through hostels and supported housing and to assess whether there are more people currently within the hostel and supported housing system who would qualify to access private rented accommodation with tailored support packages.</p>	<p>Aug 2020</p>
<p>Submit grant applications for Government Funding as and when they are announced</p>	<p>To win capital and revenue funding for new supported schemes in Stevenage.</p>	<p>Within prescribed deadlines</p>
<p>Continue to lobby Government to be able to build new genuinely affordable council homes and for greater resources to support the vulnerable during this difficult period.</p>	<p>Council wide role.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

- 4.30 Following completion of the activities listed above a further report will be presented to the Executive in December 2020 (or sooner) that will set out the potential business case for a Housing First Model, including the feasibility and viability of a new hostel.

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1 Financial Implications:

The required work detailed in the report at 4.27 and 4.30 and referred to in recommendation 2.3, will be met from existing resources. However, the service pressures highlighted in 2.2 may require additional resources and this will be monitored and reported back to Executive as part of the regular budget monitoring programme.

5.2 The table below gives a breakdown of the current projected cost of the temporary accommodation used to home rough sleepers up until the end of July. A further estimated £64,000 of net costs is currently included for the period after July, but this will be impacted by the work outlined in this report. These figures are under constant review, particularly the amount of benefit support that can be claimed, and are likely to change as more information becomes available. There is also the possibility that further Government grants could reduce the impact, but the details of this funding have not been published yet.

	<b>Initial Period 18/06/2020 £</b>	<b>Extension 31/07/2020 £</b>	<b>Total £</b>
Accommodation	176,111	72,700	248,811
Security	39,317	49,866	89,183
Food	31,667	10,527	42,194
Other	23,615	0	23,615
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>270,709</b>	<b>133,093</b>	<b>403,802</b>
HCC Grant	(31,667)	(10,527)	(42,194)
Benefit Claims	(69,727)	(82,305)	(152,033)
<b>Net Cost</b>	<b>169,316</b>	<b>40,260</b>	<b>209,576</b>

### 5.3 Legal Implications:

5.4 Sections 4.10 and 4.12 above set out the legal requirements in relation to the General Fund and the HRA.

Where the Council has reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless, or threatened with homelessness, it has a duty to make such inquiries as are necessary in order to satisfy itself:

- Whether the applicant is eligible for assistance (this will depend on their immigration status) and

- If so, whether the Council owes any duty (and if so, what duty) to the applicant under the Housing Act 1996 (“HA 1996”).

Under Section 189A of the HA 1996 where the Council is satisfied that an applicant is both homeless/threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance, it has a duty to carry out an assessment of their circumstances and then try to agree with them what steps they need to take to ensure they have and can retain suitable accommodation and what steps the Council needs to take under the HA 1996.

The Council owes the “full housing duty” to applicants who are:

- eligible for assistance and
- homeless, and not intentionally homeless and
- in priority need

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced a number of new duties for Local Housing Authorities which are designed to try to prevent or deal with homelessness at an early stage

## 5.5 **Equality Implications:**

- 5.6 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking.

Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the Council’s statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.

The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Officers do not consider that the recommendations above will have an adverse impact on those with protected characteristics but this will be kept under review as proposals are developed.

6. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Homelessness & Rough Sleepers Strategy 2019-2024. (Stevenage Borough Council). Available at:

<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/content/15953/21310/167267/224752/Homelessness-Rough-Sleeper-Strategy-2.pdf>

7. **APPENDICES: NONE**

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STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL **2019/20**  
**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT**



## Another successful year for Stevenage



### Message from Sharon Taylor - Leader, Stevenage Borough Council

Welcome to our 2019/20 Annual Report. In another successful year we are proud to have commenced work on the much needed multi-million pound regeneration of Stevenage town centre. We are committed to ensuring this ambitious programme of work continues to revitalise the town's infrastructure and assists in ensuring we have fit for purpose, flexible work and retail space, along with affordable living for all.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our residents, businesses, community organisations, partners, councillors, staff, and volunteers for everything you are doing to help make Stevenage a great place in which to live, work and do business. Listening to and working with you is fundamental to our ethos as a co-operative council and it ensures our plans meet your expectations and needs.

This short report showcases some of the past year's highlights, successes and celebrations and gives an outline of priorities for the coming year. In these difficult times, we are more committed than ever to build on these successes and to do everything we can to protect services and to support our community through the current crisis.

As I write this, we are in the throes of the Coronavirus pandemic and we are doing all we can to support those affected. Details of our co-operative work to address the impact on our local community will be outlined in our emerging recovery plans, in which our Future Town Future Council programme will play a pivotal role.



### Message from Matt Partridge, Chief Executive - Stevenage Borough Council

Over the past year, we have seen substantial progress across our cooperative 'Future Town Future Council' programme and despite the difficulties the current coronavirus outbreak has placed on residents, business and ourselves, the council is in a good position to continue our ambitious programme of work to ensure both the town and the council are reformed and revitalised for the 21st century.

With a renewed focus on Stevenage as a 'place of choice', we will use our co-operative approach to help us address the

economic and social recovery challenges in the year ahead. This will be coupled with our commitment to meet the climate change challenge head on through sustainable local growth via partnership and resident engagement across the town.

I warmly invite you to get involved with local initiatives in your neighbourhood, through our numerous engagement opportunities and look forward to hearing more of your aspirations and priorities for the town over the coming year.

### Future Town Future Council

Future Town Future Council is delivering key improvements that our residents told us they want to see.

Included in this five year programme are plans to regenerate the town centre, provide social and affordable housing that works for all online, make services

more accessible, and invest in our town's neighbourhoods.

For 2020 we are launching a "Place of Choice" strand to our programme which will incorporate some of our place-based strategies in areas such as health, culture and climate change and key work we carry out with our partners.



# Co-operative Council

## The Stevenage Cooperative Commitment

Stevenage Borough Council wishes to develop innovative solutions alongside our communities to enable us to improve the town and deliver effective services. This year the council has undertaken an extensive review of our co-operative working. This has included, among other things, an evaluation of our local working practices under our Co-

operative Neighbourhood initiative adopted by the council this year and to be rolled out across the town during 2020-21. In addition specific work has been undertaken to review the town's network of community centres, as well as to extend the council's engagement with minority communities in the town.

Below are just a few examples of how we have worked co-operatively this year:

Launched in late 2019, the Stevenage Neighbourhood Volunteers Association (SNVA) brings together residents keen to support neighbourhood improvements in their local areas with support from the council's Neighbourhood Wardens. One early SNVA-initiated activity was community litter picks across the town. The council has cooperatively supported these by providing equipment (litter pickers, gloves), risk assessment templates and organising clearance of rubbish accumulation.

We continue to work co-operatively with our 10 community centres, each overseen by voluntary community trustees. The community centre review undertaken this year consulted with 384 Stevenage residents through surveys and focus groups to gauge not only what currently brings people to Community Centres, but what residents would like to see in the future.



**Co-operative Councils**  
Innovation Network



Through the Stevenage Reimagined: Arts and Heritage Strategy, the council has been working cooperatively with local artists who have collaborated on local arts and heritage initiatives including the new town centre mural, 'meanwhile use' of retail space, and underpass and cycle way art. This has culminated in the formation of the cooperative Junction 7 Creatives community interest company of local artists and creatives.



## In 2020/21 we will:

- Launch our Co-operative Neighbourhoods working model which will enable all our services in one locality to work more closely together to engage with residents on what matters to them and ensure a coordinated, efficient and effective response to the needs in your area.
- Work cooperatively with the newly formed Junction 7 Creatives and others in the local creative community on areas such as the council cycleway and underpasses, Stevenage Day and the town centre.
- Launch an Inclusive Economy Charter as part of our commitment to Community Wealth Building – ensuring local people and businesses benefit from opportunities we create.
- Progress our work on Climate Change in co-operation with our local communities, businesses and other stakeholders.

# Regenerating Our Town



## Over 500 people

attended our public consultation with our town centre regeneration developer Mace, to hear the plans for the SG1 programme that they're delivering in the heart of Stevenage.



We have begun work on the Town Square and Town Square North Block where new paving, lighting and drainage are being introduced. The work on the North Block will upgrade the existing space, introducing mixed-use facilities, including conference and flexible working offices to previously unused retail space.

We opened our Visitors Centre – and have welcomed **nearly 5,000 visitors**

The centre contains information about all of our planned regeneration programmes, two scale models of the plans, exclusive video content including a 3-D fly through and a LEGO replica of Stevenage Town Centre.

## Work continued on the £50m

Queensway North scheme, along with our partner Reef, are introducing a range of new retail, flexible working, conference, and bar and restaurant space into one of our town's most iconic areas.

- **Free wi-fi** launched in the town centre.
- Events were held in the town centre including the Summer beach and Christmas market.
- Over **£100k** of external investment has been secured for the town since the launch of the Arts and Heritage Strategy.
- **72 new jobs** and **57 new business start-ups** at the Business and Technology Centre.

New branded hoarding has been erected round the Town Square and other development sites. The designs outline our plans, some key points from the town's history as well as highlighting the support of our key development partners.

We launched our regeneration website – [www.Stevenage-Even-Better.com](http://www.Stevenage-Even-Better.com) and new Instagram and Twitter channels (@StevenageBetter) – the website has been visited by over

**40,000 unique visitors** since launching.

## In 2020/21 we will:

- Launch major construction work on Phase 1 of the £350m+ SG1 project in conjunction with Mace (subject to planning permission). The first sites marked for development are the former police station on Southgate and Swingate House.
- Finalise the retail stages of the £50m Queensway North programme with our development partner Reef. A range of new facilities are being introduced into the former M&S unit and the adjoining spaces.
- Introduce new hoarding and branding to our key development sites where work has not yet begun.
- Complete work on Town Square and Town Square North Block projects.
- Work with partners towards making Stevenage a sustainable travel town.
- Work with the Stevenage Development Board to create a Town Investment Fund bid to seek greater funding for a range of projects.

# Building New Homes

This year we have continued to focus on building new social, affordable and private homes, as part of our ambition to build 300 homes by 2020.

# 65

Affordable Homes were delivered, including schemes at Blackwell Close and Burwell Court providing much needed housing for local people.



This brings the total to **238** since 2014.

Developments at North Road, Shephall Way and Symonds Green are onsite and will deliver

# 59

more homes for the town.



# 10

private sale homes at Ditchmore Lane are due for completion this spring. The sale of these will help us to re-invest in other developments in the town.



The contractor for the **Kenilworth Close** scheme has been appointed, which will provide over **200 homes** including a state of the art independent living scheme.

## In 2020/21 we will:

- Complete work on 10 new homes at Ditchmore Lane, and continue working on a further 240+ homes.
- Seek planning permission on future schemes for approximately 300 more new homes.
- Commence work on site at Kenilworth Close including the flagship older persons housing scheme.
- Continue to work with partners to enable the delivery of more affordable homes.
- Explore other potential areas for council housing development across the town.

# Managing and Improving Our Homes

- We celebrated **100** years of social housing including burying a time capsule and visiting our long standing residents
- We launched our Homelessness and Rough Sleeper strategy
- We supported **525** households who were in danger of losing their homes
- We carried over **17,000** day to day repairs during the year
- **98%** of Repairs appointments were made and kept
- **98%** of our repairs were fixed first time
- **93%** of our customers were satisfied with our repairs service

## Through our Major Works contracts we delivered:



**40**  
new electrical re-wires



**99**  
Bathrooms



**200**  
Kitchens



**50**  
new windows

**121**  
new doors



Heating Installs -  
**127**  
(Including boilers)

**7 lifts**

have been completed this year as part of our lift refurbishment programme in our flat blocks.

We replaced or renewed communal heating systems at

**7 sheltered housing schemes,**

with works in a further 8 schemes planned.

Contractors Wates Living Space and Mulalley completed major refurbishment works at

**74 flat blocks**

Housing online launched to provide housing customers with access to housing services online.



## In 2020/21 we will:

- Launch our Housing Older People's Strategy.
- Support homeless people by delivering our Homeless and Rough Sleeper Action plan.
- Continue to refurbish the lifts in our flat blocks.
- Continue to deliver improvements to our flat blocks
- Begin works on fitting sprinklers to residential buildings over 18 metres in height as well as other associated fire safety works.
- Continue to improve services to our housing customers, with a focus on online services, repairs and caretaking.

# Improving Stevenage Neighbourhoods and the Environment

We are working to make public spaces more attractive and better cared for by both the Council and residents.

We have invested and made improvements in St Nicholas and Martinswood including renewing footpaths, upgrading road signs and repairing/replacing fences, bollards and brick walls.



We collected around **30,000 tonnes** of waste from Stevenage households

Hours given by Green Space Volunteers: **1,116 hours**



Shephalbury Park has been awarded a Green Flag Award! This now takes Stevenage's total to **four Green Flag Awards**, including: Fairlands Valley Park, Town Centre Gardens, Hampson Park and Shephalbury Park.

Works were completed to improve **3 play areas** across Roebuck and the Old Town, following consultation with around **450** children and young people.

We launched our water refill scheme in partnership with town centre businesses, providing free water refills to shoppers and residents, reducing plastic waste.

We delivered **12** community events including Wonders of Winter Woodlands, Teddy Bears Picnic and Big Butterfly Count.

We supported the creation of a new 'People's Orchard' on open space in Symonds Green.



Over **300** new style litter bins have been installed to replace the old concrete, plastic and dog bins throughout Longmeadow and Roebuck.

We implemented a new management system for Environmental Services to help with both in house and online requests.



Climate emergency declared – with consultation on the Draft Climate Change Strategy drawing over **1,500 responses.**

## In 2020/21 we will:

- Continue to invest and make improvements to neighbourhoods across the town, specifically Longmeadow and Bedwell.
- Continue our garage improvement programme.
- Continue to review the council's assets across our neighbourhoods.
- Recruit more Green Space volunteers and develop volunteering activities.
- Develop a new Waste Strategy that will set out future plans for waste and recycling.

# Community Safety

We continue to work closely with our partners to keep our residents safe. As a result, we have seen fantastic achievements through our Community Safety team...

**334**

cases of fly tipping investigated

**89**

new referrals to the No More service

Completed our **£million investment** in a new state of the art CCTV Control room and undertaken a governance review to ensure effective CCTV coverage for the town's public realm.



**497**

SADA referrals, assisted with 10 cases of homeless domestic abuse survivors and hosted weekly drop-ins

**60**

service providers and partners attended the SADA hosted "Through Emily's Eyes" domestic abuse conference.

SADA attended a number of secondary schools in Stevenage to provide healthy relationships talks to Year 7 and above with partners



Our community safety team hosted pop up hubs in the tower blocks to enable residents to report ASB and speak to different teams within the council

## Contactless Box Project

The Community Safety team launched a 'Contactless Box Project' in partnership with Stevenage Rotary Club. The contactless boxes allow members of the public to provide contactless donations to local homeless people, which in turn, are developed into resources for Stevenage Haven to support those accessing its services.



Our award-winning Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) service/ programme secured over £224,000 from the government to help survivor of domestic abuse Stevenage and North Hertfordshire.

## In 2020/21 we will:

- Tackle perceptions of ASB, by giving the public the facts and evidence.
- Improve awareness of safeguarding issues in our community.
- Deliver initiatives to respond to the key Community Safety priorities of Violent Crime, Hate Crime and Community Reassurance.

# Healthy Living, Leisure and Play

Across Stevenage we are working to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of all of its residents, younger and older.

Over

# 4,224

children registered with the play service with almost 50,000 play sessions taking place



# 3,200

walkers took part in Health walks



over **400** people attended the cycling festival



Healthy Hub had a total of **5,502** resident visits for sessions including smoking cessation, mental health, physical activity and carers support services

# over 1,000

Children and their families attended our national playday celebrations

# 600

families attended the annual walking festival. The event won the Modeshift National Sustainable Travel award for Best Partnership

Volunteers from Glaxo helped the play team with a number of projects around the Pin Green Playcentre. These included turning a decked path into a gravel path fixed the treehouse, painted a mural in the under-fives area and generally helped to tidy up the grounds.



We celebrated Stevenage Day's 60th Anniversary

## In 2020/21 we will:

- Work with local High Schools to launch a Young People's Healthy Hub.
- Launch a Creative Meanwhile Use scheme in the town centre.
- Pilot new heritage activities as we develop plans for a new museum for Stevenage in the town centre.

# Delivering Excellence For You

The Customer Service has

**160,837**  
calls handled

**8,238**  
emails handled

**90%**  
satisfaction  
with CSC

**205**  
social media  
enquires  
handled

A new Customer Relationship Management system was implemented to provide customers with a better experience when they contact us.

Social media

Over **6,800**  
page likes and  
7,300 followers on  
Facebook

Over **1,800**  
followers on  
Instagram

Over **9,000**  
followers on  
Twitter

**98%**  
Rent collection

**96%**  
Council tax  
collection

**99%**  
Business rates  
collection



Launched our joint IT Strategy with East Herts to improve our digital services for staff and customers

## In 2020/21 we will:

- Be changing the look and feel of our Customer Service Centre.
- Deliver a simple, clearer accessible website and straightforward online self-service options for key council services.
- Continue to protect services where possible to ensure the town's most vulnerable are supported and protected.

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