

# Public Document Pack



## EXECUTIVE

**Date: Wednesday, 10 June 2020**

**Time: 2.00pm**

**Location: Virtual (via Zoom)**

**Contact: Ian Gourlay (01438) 242703**

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Members: Councillors: Sharon Taylor OBE CC (Chair), Mrs Joan Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, John Gardner, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell and Jeannette Thomas.

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## AGENDA

### PART 1

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**2. MINUTES - 13 MAY 2020**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 13 May 2020 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 3 – 8

**3. CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY PLAN - REVIEW OF THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE COUNCIL'S GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET**

To consider the General Fund's financial position and the impact of COVID-19 on the level of projected balances; and to consider any mitigating action required.

Pages 9 – 42

**4. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER FOUR 2019/20**

To highlight the Council's performance across key priorities and themes for Quarter Four 2019/20.

Pages 43 – 80

**5. URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

To consider any Part I business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

## **6. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

## **7. ON-SITE BUILDING MATERIAL MANAGEMENT CONTRACT 2020-2025**

To seek approval of a new contractual agreement for five years for the provision of building materials and a managed stores solution.  
Pages 81 - 86

## **8. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

**NOTE: Links to Part 1 Background Documents are shown on the last page of the individual report, where this is not the case they may be viewed by using the following link to agendas for Executive meetings and then opening the agenda for Wednesday, 10 June 2020 –**

<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE MINUTES

**Date: Wednesday, 13 May 2020**

**Time: 2.00pm**

**Place: Virtual (via Zoom)**

**Present:** Councillors: Sharon Taylor OBE CC (Chair), Mrs Joan Lloyd (Vice-Chair), Lloyd Briscoe, Rob Broom, John Gardner, Richard Henry, Jackie Hollywell and Jeannette Thomas.

**Also Present:** Councillors Phil Bibby CC and Robin Parker CC (observers).

**Start / End** Start Time: 2.00pm  
**Time:** End Time: 4.51pm

#### 1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Robin Parker (observer). He joined the meeting at 4.00pm.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2 **MINUTES - 11 MARCH 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 11 March 2020 be approved as correct record for signature by the Chair.

#### 3 **MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES**

In respect of the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 4 March 2020, which involved a public health discussion, the Leader asked that the Council's thanks be conveyed to the HCC Director of Public Health for his excellent work in heading up the County Local Resilience Forum throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

In relation to the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Economy Select Committee held on 10 March 2020, a Member thanked officers for progressing a number of the environmental projects in the St. Nicholas Ward. The Leader suggested that, once the lockdown restrictions were relaxed, Select Committee Members should visit the recently expanded Symonds Green Community Centre.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the following meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees be noted –

Community Select Committee – 4 March 2020

#### **4 CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATE REPORT**

The Executive considered a Coronavirus (Covid-19) update report.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report, including thanks to Key Workers and SBC staff working during the pandemic, and passed over to Portfolio Holders, the Chief Executive and Strategic Directors to go through the report section by section.

The Executive was advised that the report provided a brief introduction about COVID-19, referencing the first reports of this deadly virus in Wuhan at the end of last year. It then outlined the UK Government's response to the crisis in terms of measures it had taken to try to stop the spread of the virus and the financial assistance to help businesses, individuals and households affected as a result of COVID-19. The graphs in Sections 3.4 to 3.7 of the report reflected cases and, sadly, deaths due to COVID-19 nationally and more locally in Hertfordshire and Stevenage. The report then outlined the role and key priorities of the Hertfordshire Resilience Forum in dealing with the worst public health crisis in a century.

The report provided information on the Council's emergency response arrangements, how these fitted into the Local Resilience Forum's response structure, and then highlighted the main actions and achievements of the eight SBC response cells which had been set up to deal with the crisis.

The Leader invited the Executive Portfolio Holders to summarise the work forming part of their portfolio areas which had been carried out by the SBC response cells. As part of these summaries, Portfolio Holders acknowledged and thanked all staff involved in the work of the cells and on the frontline over the past two months.

Attention was drawn to Section 4.11 of the report, which provided a summary of the key decisions which had been taken to ensure the health and safety of staff, residents and those who visited the town and to comply with the new 'coronavirus' legislation which had been brought in by the Government to deal with the crisis. The Executive was asked to note and endorse these key decisions which, due to the necessary speed of decision taking at the time, could not be taken in accordance with normal approval processes.

The report included a proposed approach to preparing a recovery plan for Stevenage, and addressed both the recovery arrangements that would be needed to support the town and the actions needed to restore and recover Council operations.

The financial implications section of the report highlighted the significant financial impact on the Council's income, expenditure and cash flow, and recommended that officers carry out a review of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategies for consideration by the Executive at its June 2020 meeting.

The replies to questions/Member comments included:

- The Leader and fellow Local Government officials (through the LGA and DCN) were having unprecedented access to Government Ministers during the pandemic, enabling direct feedback of issues being encountered at County and District/Borough level;
- The impact had been severe on the leisure/arts/culture sector. The DCN were asking for the Secretary of State for DCMS (Oliver Dowden MP) or another senior figure to take part in future teleconferences to discuss support for the sector;
- The Leader would be giving evidence to an all-party Parliamentary Committee on District/Borough Councils;
- It was clarified that the number of Covid-19 related deaths shown in the ONS Ward breakdown table at Paragraph 3.7.4 of the report (16) referred to the number of deaths in hospital;
- The Strategic Director (RP) would clarify how the Wards stated in the report aligned with the actual boundaries of Stevenage Wards;
- Although it was important to receive accurate statistical information going forward, it was acknowledged that there was no guarantee that the ONS statistics would provide Ward level information;
- The East & North Hertfordshire (ENH) Health Trust had previously reported that 260 individuals admitted to their hospitals with Covid-19 symptoms had recovered and been discharged. This figure was likely to be higher now;
- The Leader commented that at no time during the pandemic had the Lister Hospital been overwhelmed. She asked that the Council's thanks be conveyed to the Chief Executive of the ENH Health Trust and his Team for their sterling work over the past two months;
- It was noted that the Government's Job Retention Scheme had been extended to October 2020, with businesses anticipated to be asked to provide a higher contribution to staff wages;
- There were DWP delays in processing Universal Credit applications, which had a knock-on effect of SBC rent arrears;
- The impact of Council Tax support payments from the Hardship Fund had yet to be fully realised;
- SBC had given business rate relief of over £20Million to local companies and over £10Million to businesses eligible for Government support grants;
- Operation Shield had been well-intentioned by the Government, but would have been more effective if food/essentials packages had been co-ordinated locally (as had happened at SBC with Stevenage Helps);
- The Leader was delighted with the public messages of thanks provided to the SBC's Refuse & Recycling Teams and other front line teams for continuing to operate throughout the pandemic;
- Work was continuing with the Youth Mayor and Youth Council to support young people with mental health issues during the lockdown;
- SBC had a net annual budget of £9Million. A worse-case scenario forecast had revealed that SBC income losses/increased costs for 2020/21 could be over £11Million. Work had commenced on a review of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategies. The Leader stated that the Council would do all it could to avoid having to make any cuts to

jobs and services, but noted that the Council was not lawfully allowed to run a deficit budget. In common with other local authorities across the UK, the Council would struggle to bridge this financial deficit unless an appropriate level of further Government support funding was forthcoming;

- Urgent Key Decision No. 11 – Suspension of highway verge maintenance etc. – the situation had moved on, and this service was now operational;
- The Chief Executive would work with colleagues and partners to start populating the draft Recovery Plans with a view to sharing first drafts of both the SBC and Town plans with Members at the June 2020 Executive meeting;
- Members considered that, following on from recent discussions concerning the Future Town Future Council objectives for 2020/21, key pieces of work (such as Climate Change work) would be continuing alongside the recovery work;
- The first Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP) meeting was due to take place on 14 May 2020 and would start to look at high level interventions, including energy companies and affordable public transport opportunities;
- The Leader implored any residents who were struggling to meet Council Tax/rent payments to contact the Council to discuss possible alternative payment arrangements;
- Once clarity was received over the recent national relaxation of the lockdown restrictions, the Leader further implored the Government to introduce a stable funding platform for Local Government going forward;
- Additional measures were being investigated regarding social distancing in the Town Centre, and the car parks associated with Parks/open spaces had been re-opened following the Government’s latest announcement regarding the easing of lockdown restrictions;
- The Strategic Director (TP) undertook to contact GTR to ascertain the expected increased demand for train usage at Stevenage Railway Station following the easing of lockdown restrictions; and
- Officers were asked to issue clear communications to residents regarding the easing of the lockdown restrictions, in particular the relaxation of the stay at home provisions, with clarification that they would continue for identified vulnerable/shielded groups.

The Executive supported the Leader’s proposed addition to Recommendation 2.4 of the report, in order to record the significant pressures on the Council’s budget if the Government did not meet its promise to fund the shortfall being predicted and set out in the report.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the current position and the Council’s emergency response to date be noted.
2. That the Officer Key Decisions which have been taken in response to the COVID-19 emergency, as set out in Paragraph 4.11.2 in the report, be noted and endorsed.
3. That the recovery phase approach, as set out in Section 4.13 of the report, be approved.

4. That the Executive records the significant pressures on the Council's budget if the Government does not meet its promise to fund the shortfall being predicted and set out in the report, and that officers be requested to undertake a review of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Strategies and report back to the June 2020 Executive meeting.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report; and 4. To highlight the significant pressures on the Council's budget.*

## **5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

### Pinelodge Care Home

The Chief Executive reported that the Council had learned, via the media, that between 11 April 2020 and 30 April 2020, there had been 20 Covid-19 related deaths in Pinelodge Care Home (a 120 bed home, located in Graveley Road, Stevenage).

The Executive was concerned that, notwithstanding that this Care Home was located just over the Borough boundary in North Hertfordshire, the Council had first learnt of the above situation via the local media. The Chief Executive would raise this matter with the HCC Director of Adult Care Services.

The Leader wished to record the Council's condolences to the families and friends of the deceased.

## **6 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Not required.

## **7 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

## **CHAIR**

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**Meeting** EXECUTIVE  
**Portfolio Area** RESOURCES  
**Date** 10 June 2020



## CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY PLAN

### REVIEW OF THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON THE COUNCIL'S GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET

#### KEY DECISION

#### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the General Fund's financial position and the impact of COVID19 on the level of projected balances and to seek Members approval for the recommended mitigating actions.

#### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members approve the:

- 2.1 Use of earmarked Regeneration capital receipts as outlined in paragraph 4.9.8 of £1.726Million
- 2.2 Changes to the Capital programme as summarised in paragraph 4.9.10 totalling £125,000.
- 2.3 Holding of vacant posts as set out in paragraph 4.9.12 totalling £152,110
- 2.4 Changes to the 2020/21 General fund budget as set out in paragraph 4.9.13 totalling £463,820

- 2.5 Changes to the approved growth budgets as set out in paragraph 4.9.13 totalling £49,940.
- 2.6 Holding of the Business Rates allocated reserve as set out in paragraph 4.9.16 totalling £455,000.
- 2.7 Measures set out in paragraph 4.10.3.
- 2.8 Measures set out section 4.11 of the report.
- 2.9 The development of a priority list of services as set out in paragraph 4.12.11.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 This report has been written to update Members on the financial impact on the Council of the COVID 19 pandemic and to assess the level of funding provided versus the impact on Council resources.
- 3.2 From March 2020 the Council identified some significant adverse COVID-19 impacts on in year finances for both the General Fund and HRA. This report sets out some of those impacts where known and identifies some mitigating action to protect the resources the Council has to continue to run its services.
- 3.3 The COVID-19 report to the May Executive set out the actions the Council has taken and its approach in supporting the Community and changing service provisions. The report set out how the Council would financially manage support to essential services, commence new services and support to the vulnerable.
- 3.4 The impact of the pandemic on Local Authorities across the Country, is difficult to gauge due to different demographics, resources and demands. But there has been lobbying on behalf of councils from the Local Government Association (LGA), the Districts Council Network (DCN), Society of District and Council Treasurers (SDCT) and the County Councils Network (CCN), to ensure adequate funding is given to Councils to cover their losses, which were estimated at £10Billion across the sector by the LGA.
- 3.5 The Government has asked for two data collection exercises to assess the losses projected by Councils. The last information was submitted on the 15 May 2020 and Stevenage and other Councils await the outcome of this. At the time of writing this report no further financial announcements had been made by the Government.
- 3.6 It is important that the Council ensures the General Fund balances are as resilient as possible to meet any financial challenges from COVID in the current year and any subsequent recessionary pressures as a consequence of the impact of the lockdown and recovery period.
- 3.7 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) updated as part of the 2020/21 budget, set out a plan to deliver savings to fund the identified General Fund budget gap, while drawing on General Fund balances until 2022/23. The impact of COVID-19 on the Council's finances as set out in this report has made those plans more difficult to implement based on the losses contained within this report and deliver that 2022/23 contribution to General Fund balances, (see also para.4.4.4).

## **4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS**

### **4.1 Government Financial Response to the COVID 19 pandemic for Councils**

4.1.1 The 2020 budget announced by the Chancellor on the 11 March included the creation of a COVID-19 response fund. This was to ensure the National Health Service (NHS) and other public services had the resources they needed to tackle the impacts of COVID-19. Initially set at £5billion, it was to be used to fund pressures in the NHS, support local authorities to manage pressures on social care supporting vulnerable people and help deal with pressures on other public services. At the time of setting the budget the chancellor said the size of the fund will be reviewed as the situation developed.

4.1.2 These measures also included help for businesses and residents as the increased threat of COVID19 became apparent on these groups and the budget included the following:

- Hardship Fund of £500 million (nationwide), to be paid by increasing council tax support (CTS) for those already receiving the benefit and in March the Council received £779K to fund the scheme for Stevenage residents.
- Support to businesses – including business rates relief measures which saw reliefs extended from 50% to 100% for smaller businesses and extensions to other leisure and hospitality businesses. These reliefs do not include rates paid by councils which are exempted from the reliefs.
- To support small businesses in meeting financial difficulties arising from COVID-19, the government announced £2.2billion of funding to provide £3,000 to around 700,000 businesses currently eligible for Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) or Rural Rate Relief, to help meet their ongoing business costs. This was to be administered by local authorities and the value per business was later increased, (see also para.4.1.4)
- The Chancellor also announced the start of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) process, to be concluded in July which would set out detailed spending plans for public services and investment, covering day-to-day budgets for three years from 2021/22 to 2023/24 and capital budgets up to 2024/25.

4.1.3 On the 17 March Robert Jenrick, the Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary announced £3.2Million to support rough sleepers or those that are of risk who need to self- isolate. Authorities were able to claim costs of based on the number of rough sleepers counted during the Autumn 2019 snapshot which for SBC was £11,500. However as shown in paragraph 4.7.1, the Council's costs have exceeded this to date.

4.1.4 On the 17 March, the Chancellor extended the range of financial support across the economy as the national COVID 19 impact worsened. These measures included grant and funding arrangements:

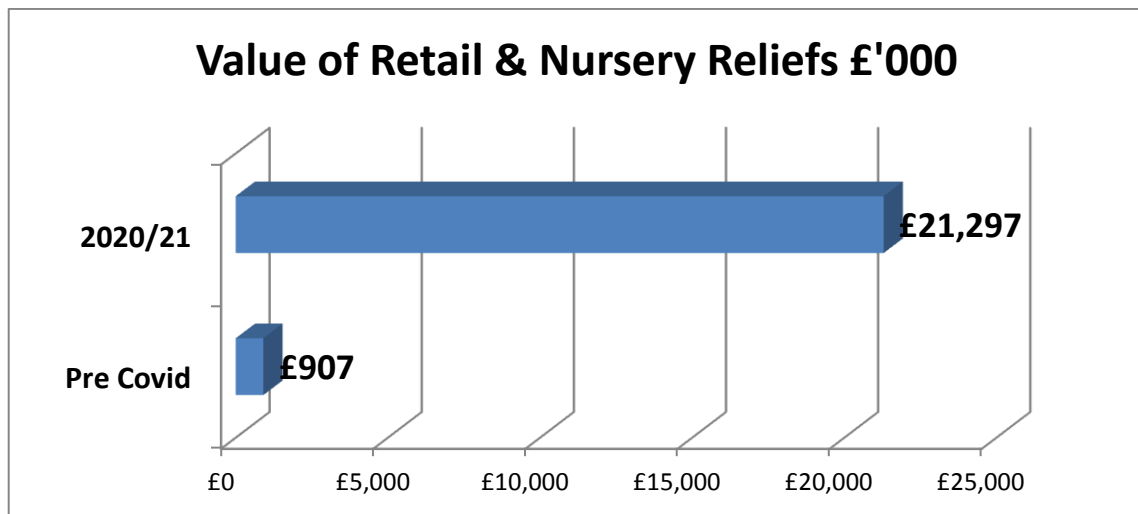
- The Chancellor stated that, if insurance policies cover pandemic situations, then the government's directions to date are sufficient for insurers to pay out, In response to views that only advising businesses to close is insufficient for a successful insurance claim and;

- 100% retail relief will be extended to all businesses in retail, hospitality and leisure, regardless of their business rateable value. These businesses to be offered a £25,000 cash grant.
  - The £3,000 cash grants announced in the Budget for businesses receiving SBRR to be increased to £10,000.
- 4.1.5 On the 23 March, the government issued a press release on extra protection for businesses, with a ban on evictions for commercial tenants who miss rent payments. The measures to facilitate this were included in the emergency Coronavirus Act 2020 and no business would be forced out of their premises, if they miss a payment in the next three months. A similar stance has been taken by the government on private and social tenants.
- 4.1.6 On 24 March, the Secretary of State held a conference call with Chief Executives across local government. Following that, MHCLG distributed a note which stated that the government would pay £3.4billion of grants to local authorities on Friday 27 March and that the grant would cover costs and improve cash flows for Councils;
- The £1.6billion of funding allocations (previously announced), as part of the COVID-19 support, to compensate local authorities for losses across all their services
  - The £1.8billion of Section 31 grants that would otherwise be paid based on January 2020 NNDR1 paid in full rather than across 12 instalments during 2020/21.
- 4.1.7 Also on the 24 March the Government announced the Hardship Fund details and allocations. The principle of the funding was that it should be used to reduce the council tax liability for individuals in an area; and Councils may also wish to use some funding to deliver increased financial assistance through other support mechanisms. The government indicated that the fund should be used to reduce the liability of those receiving working age council tax support by £150 in 2020/21. Where a local council taxpayer had an existing liability of £150 or less, this would reduce their council tax liability to nil. Where liability is already nil, there would not need to be any change.
- 4.1.8 The government also announced that Councils will be allowed to defer £2.6bn of business rates payments to central government. The announcement did not contain precise details, but the national total suggested that the first three months' payments of the business rates Central Share could be deferred. Nationally, the 9% due on each of 30 April, 19 May and 22 June in respect of the Central Share is £0.877billion, with three months' equivalent being £2.630bn.
- 4.1.9 The Government announced on the 2 May 2020, a further grant scheme to help those businesses which were not able to apply under the scheme set out in paragraph 4.2.2 of this report. The funding was set at 5% of the previous business grant allocation, which for Stevenage equated to £572K. The guidance was published on the 13 May and the CFO and Shared Revenue and Benefits Manager are developing the scheme based on the guidance and propose to get the grants paid as soon as is practically possible.

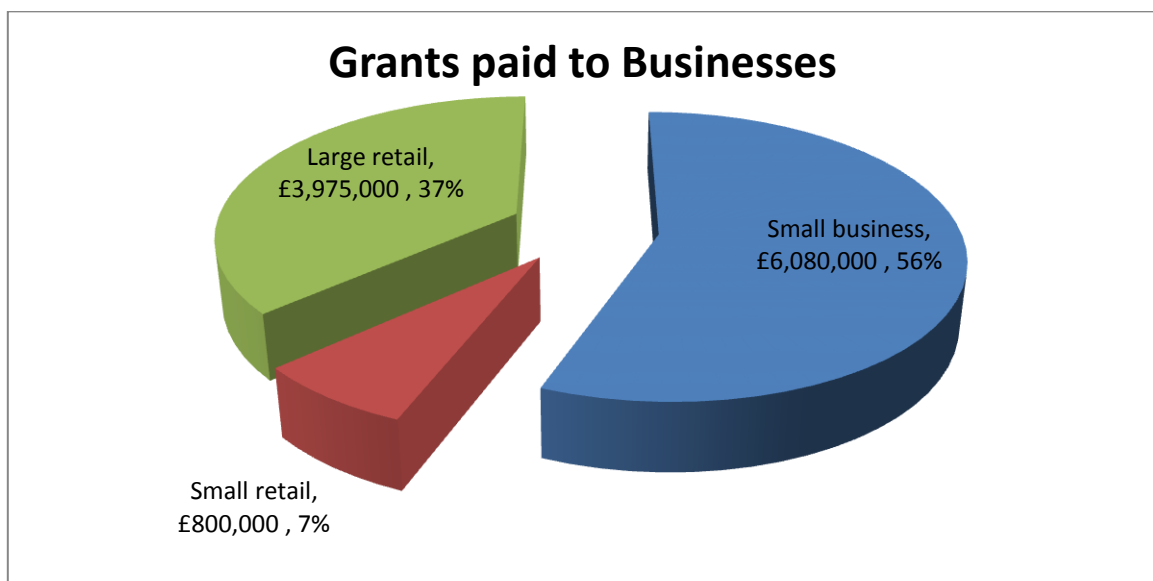
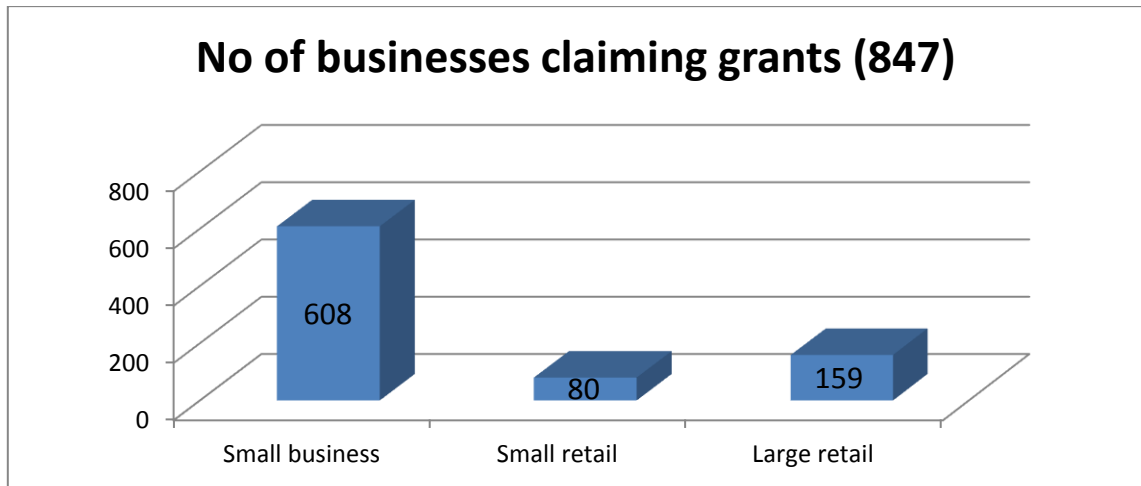
4.1.10 The government has also announced a number of initiatives to help businesses through the use of business loans administered by government or the banking institutions. These were set out in the May COVID 19 Executive report.

#### 4.2 The Impact of funding on Stevenage Businesses, residents and Council

4.2.1 The extension to the Business Retail Relief scheme has meant a significant increase in the number of businesses not having to pay 2020/21 business rates. The original retail relief estimated pre-COVID was £907K, based on 50% retail relief for smaller businesses. This was extended to a 100% relief in the budget speech and announcements made on the 17 March lifted the cap on the rateable value of a premise. In total this meant a further £19.6Million of reductions could be given to Stevenage Businesses as shown below and 96% of reliefs were applied prior to the commencement of the 2020/21 financial year.



4.2.2 The government initiative to support for small, retail and hospitality businesses gave grants of £10,000 (for those in receipt of small business rate relief) and grants of £10,000 or £25,000 for retail businesses depending on their size. The Council received funding of £11.456Million on the 1 April to administer to a potential 927 businesses. The caveat to the scheme was that state aid rules\* applied and businesses had to meet the regulations as set out by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). These regulations were amended and clarified a number of times. As at the 15 May 2020, 847 businesses had received £10.9Million. The Council has been continuing to seek to contact businesses who have not yet claimed to encourage them to do so. The position is summarised in the two charts below.

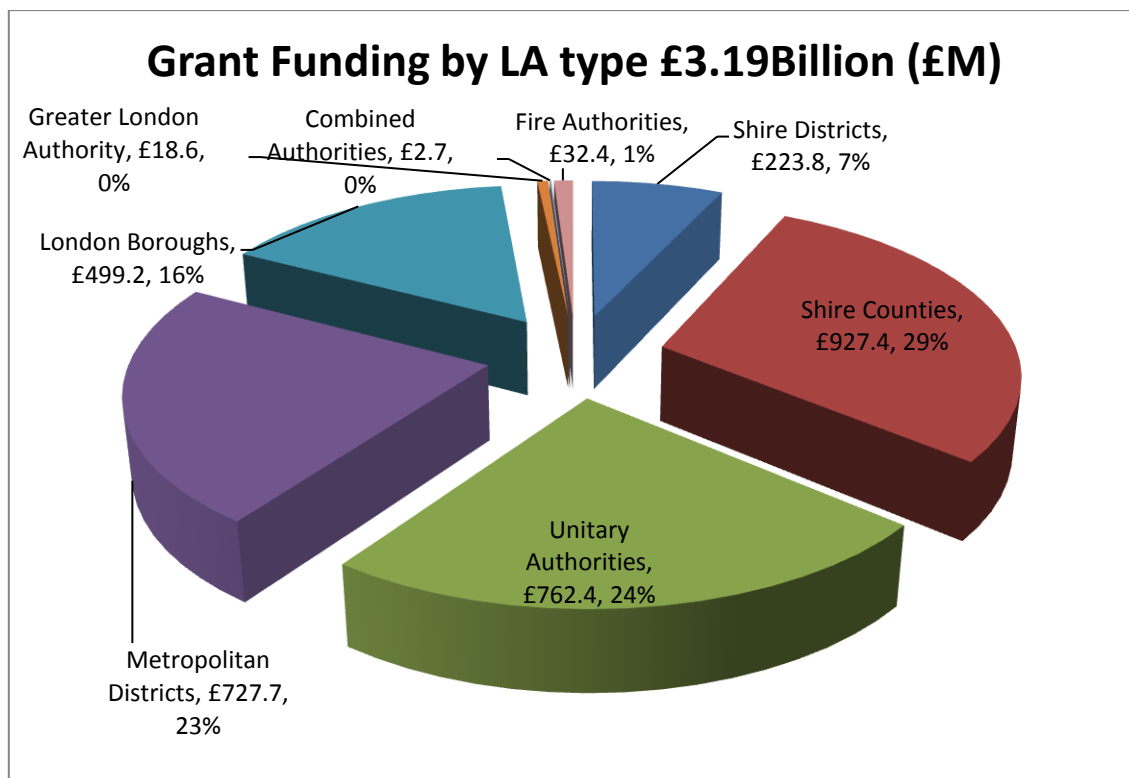


*\*state aid rules relating to European Law mean that no company can receive for the SBRR €200,000 or approx.£180,000/ or Retail & Leisure grant €800,000 or £720,000 in business grants if they have multiple units nationally.*

4.2.3 A letter sent to Councils on the 23 March setting out further details about these grant schemes indicated that in addition to covering the full cost of the grants, government recognised that administering local authorities would be eligible for New Burdens funding and that assessment and funding would be forthcoming at a later date. No separate funding has been received and it is not yet clear whether this was included in the two tranches of COVID funding distributed to date.

4.2.4 On the 24 March the government announced the Hardship Fund allocations, (£779K for Stevenage) to deliver the scheme. The SBC CTS scheme for working aged claimants is based on 91.5% of their council tax liability (so those on maximum benefit will only pay 8.5% of their council tax bill or £155.36 on a Band D property), pension aged claimants are assessed on a 100% of their council tax liability, so on maximum benefit will pay nothing.

- 4.2.5 There are currently about 3,570 working aged claimants (WAC) would receive £425K of the fund an average of £119 per claimant, which would leave just £354K for other hardship cases.
- 4.2.5 To administer the scheme a software update is required to amend the benefit rules on the Council's system. However despite discussions taking place between the Council's software provider and MHCLG this 'fix' still is not working and is not likely to be implemented until June. However those in receipt of CTS are not being sent arrears letters.
- 4.2.6 The government's measures to defer cash flow pressure (para 4.1.6) that might arise for Councils meant for Stevenage:
- The Council received £1.150Million on 27th March for pre COVID 19 S31 reliefs for businesses, instead of this being paid in 12 month instalments in lieu of raising business rates. But, the level of S31 reliefs increased by £19.6Million so this did not offset the cash flow pressure. The additional S31 reliefs are now due to be given to Councils in instalments starting on 15th May.
  - Deferral of just over £6Million for the government's central share of Business rates for the period April to June payments. These payments are due in the 'second half of the year', however the precise timing has not yet been advised by the government.
- 4.2.7 The government has announced two tranches of funding for the Council, the first tranche totalled £45,305 with District Councils receiving only 0.61% of the overall £1.6Billion national funding or 52pence for every resident in Stevenage. Following significant lobbying of central government, a second tranche was announced on the 28 April 2020.
- 4.2.8 The second funding allocation for Stevenage was £871,563 out of £1.59Billion nationally, with District Councils receiving a much larger share of the funding than previously, with the County Council share reducing. The share of funding for Districts increased from 0.61% to 13.43% between the first and second tranches of funding. However as discussed in section 4.3 to the report, this funding does not cover the losses recorded to date by the Council or any lag as a result of a potential prolonged recovery phase for the economy.



4.2.9 The announcement on the 28 April also confirmed that the Review of Relative Needs and Resources and 75% business rates retention will no longer be implemented in 2021/22. This was to enable Councils to focus on meeting the immediate public health challenge posed by the pandemic.

4.2.10 Auditing regulations for the Council's accounts have also been changed. The following amendments to the statutory audit deadlines for 2019/20 for all local public bodies apart from health service bodies have been made:

- The publication date for final, audited, accounts will move from 31 July for Category 1 authorities and 30 September for Category 2 authorities to 30 November 2020 for all local authority bodies.
- To give local authorities more flexibility, the requirement for the public inspection period to include the first 10 working days of June (for Category 1 authorities) and July (for Category 2 authorities) has been removed. Instead local authorities must commence the public inspection period on, or before, the first working day of September 2020.

4.2.11 A summary of COVID 19 funding is summarised in the table below, this is as at 15 May 2020.



<b>Funding</b>	<b>Council £'000</b>	<b>Businesses £'000</b>	<b>Council Tax Payers £'000</b>	<b>Total £'000</b>
Rough sleepers	£11.5			£11.5
Covid 19 tranche 1	£45.3			£45.3
Covid 19 tranche 2	£871.6			£871.6
Retail & Nursery Reliefs		£21,297.0		£21,297.0
Grants to Businesses		£11,456.0		£11,456.0
Hardship Fund			£779.0	£779.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>£928.4</b>	<b>£32,753.0</b>	<b>£779.0</b>	<b>£34,460.4</b>

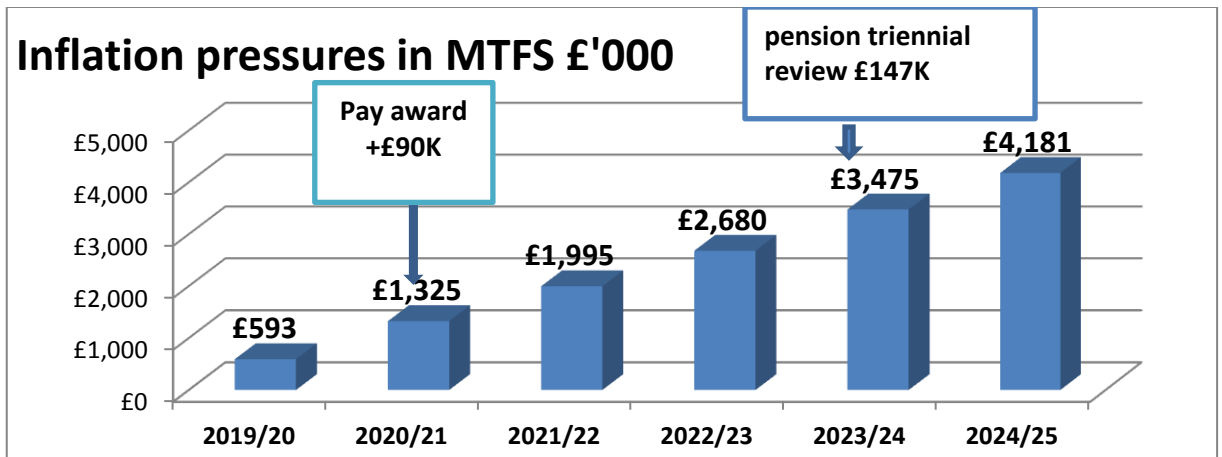
### **4.3 Impact on General Fund Financial Resources**

- 4.3.1 At the outset of the pandemic it was apparent to Stevenage and many other Councils that there was likely to be an immediate adverse impact on the Council's financial position, in particular relating to, reduced income from fees and charges and increased homeless costs. The losses have been modelled but it is not possible for officers to categorically determine the potential depth and lasting impact, at this stage in the year.
- 4.3.2 Economists have commentated that the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic will probably go beyond 2020/21. The Bank of England reported this could lead to the 'sharpest recession' on record, reporting that the coronavirus impact would see the economy shrink 14% this year, based on the lockdown being relaxed in June. Scenarios drawn up by the Bank of England to illustrate the economic impact, stated that Covid-19 was, "dramatically reducing jobs and incomes in the UK". Bank governor, Andrew Bailey, described the downturn as "unprecedented", and said consumers would remain cautious even when lockdown restrictions are lifted.

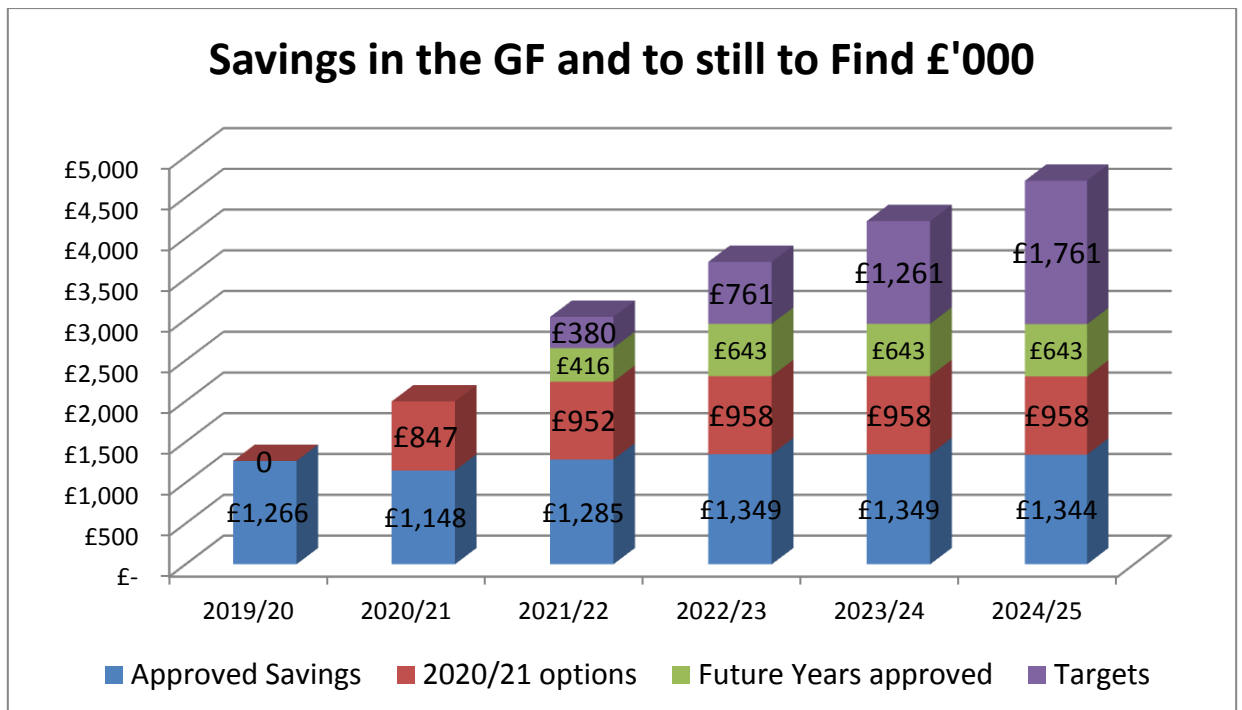
### **4.4 Fees and Charges**

- 4.4.1 Stevenage like many District Councils, relies on fees and charges from its neighbourhood shops, car parks and services such as recycling and parks and pavilions. A lot of the income is from assets that were transferred to SBC from the Development Corporation, back in the 1980's and not as a result of assets purchased purely for income return. To date the Council has only purchased one income generating asset, situated within Stevenage and that has brought (and continues to bring), an economic benefit to the town and General Fund.
- 4.4.2 Income from fees and charges play an increasingly important role in supporting front line services and delivering the Council's Future Town Future Council (FTFC) priorities particularly in the context of significant reduction in central government funding as a result of austerity, over the last 11 years. To date the Council has lost in excess of £5Million grant funding and there is considerable uncertainty over other Government funding streams such as New Homes Bonus (NHB), business rate gains and future retained business rates.

4.4.3 Due to the loss of government grant the Council has had to find on-going savings to fund not only the lost grant, but also the inflationary pressures during this period. The MTFs has now been updated to reflect the latest pay award and assumptions about the increased cost of the pension scheme at the next triennial review. However the impact of COVID 19 in addition to this pressure makes implementing the recovery plan more difficult.



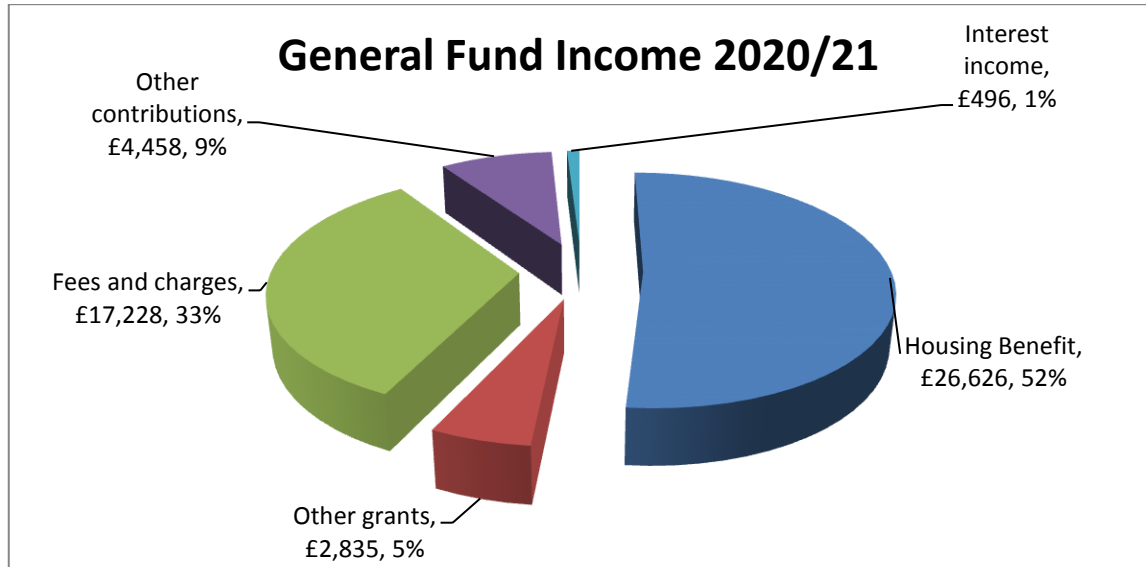
4.4.4 The savings targets have been revised based on the additional inflationary pay costs and are summarised in the chart below. This highlights that SBC must find an additional £1.76Million between 2021/22 to 2024/25 or an average of £440K per year in addition to the in principle savings approved at the November 2019 Executive.



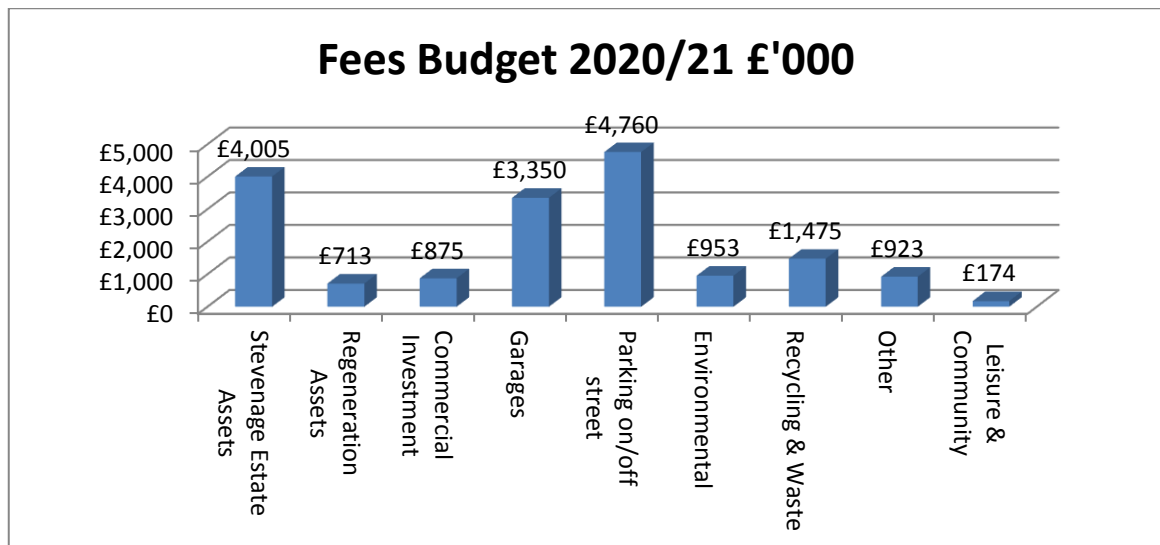
4.4.5 The 2020/21 General Fund budget of £9Million net expenditure includes income of £51.6Million which consists of grants such as housing benefit subsidy (52%)\*, New Homes Bonus (NHB), fees and charges (33%) and other contributions

(9%) and investment interest (1%). The 2020/21 Budget income is summarised below.

*\*The council administers housing benefit and claims back in subsidy the cost of this however not all of the benefit paid is claimable at 100%*



4.4.6 Fees and charges across a number of services and can be summarised below.

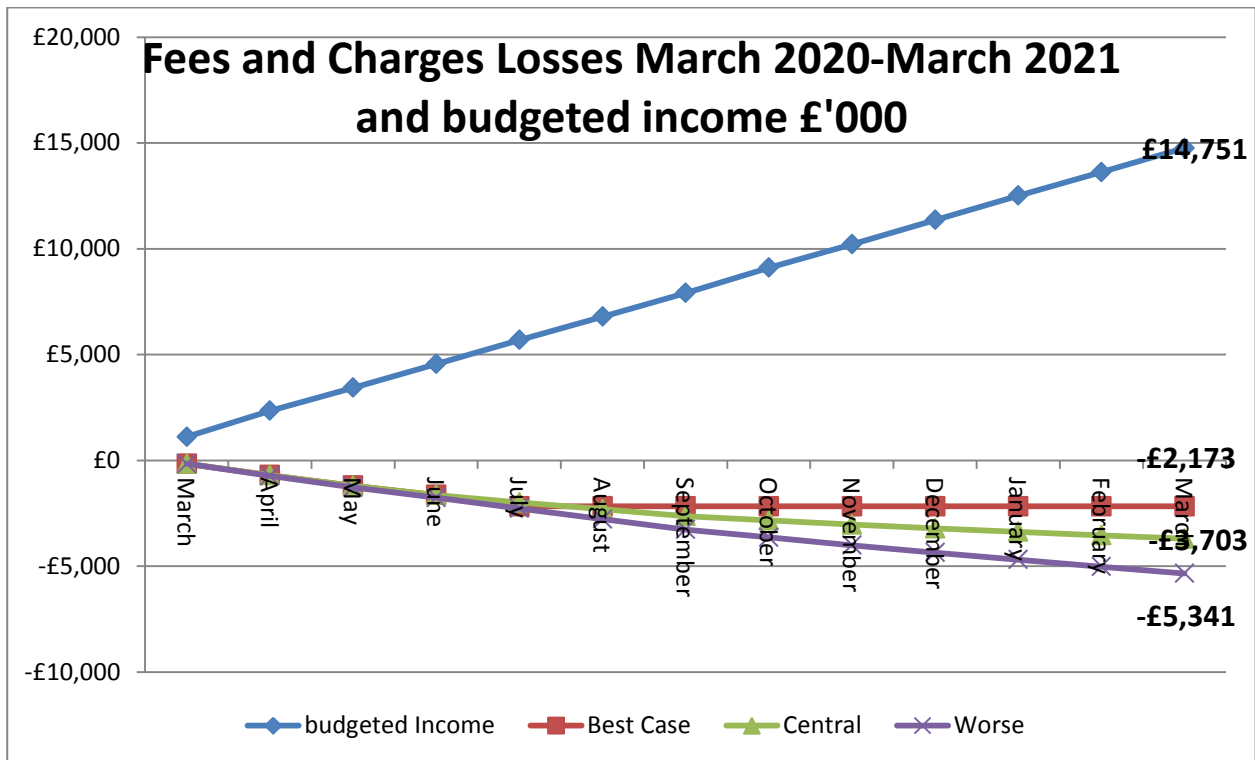


4.4.7 The impact of COVID 19 across all income streams has been significant as buildings have been required to close to meet Government requirements, tenants' income streams have stopped and some therefore are struggling to pay rents. Accordingly some businesses no longer require or cannot pay for other services provided by the Council.

4.4.8 A number of scenarios have been modelled regarding the impact of COVID on the Council's finances, based on best, central and worse cases. However the actual impact will not be known for a number of months, because it is not currently clear whether deferred rent or other charges will become

uncollectable. However the impact on income streams such as parking has been immediate with a 95% reduction recorded as residents self-isolate. The Council has also taken the decision to offer free parking for NHS and key workers to support those working on the front line of the pandemic.

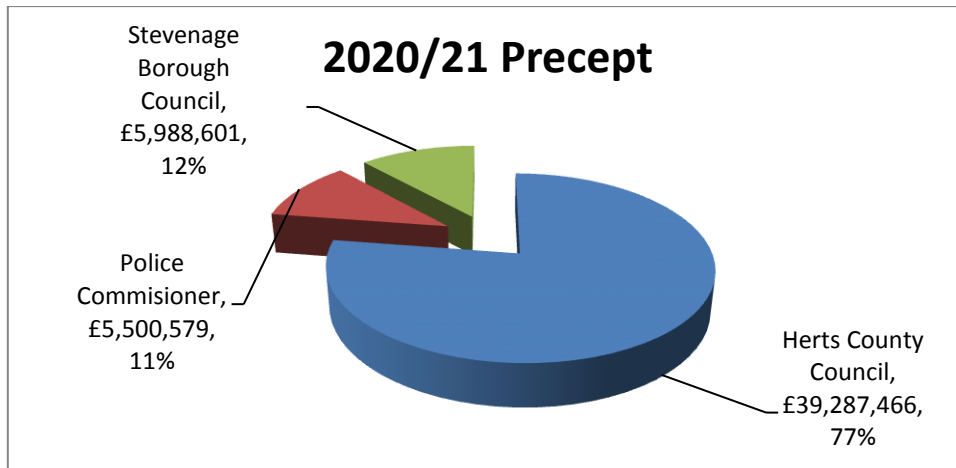
4.4.9 The scenarios of potential income losses summarised in the chart below range from £2.2Million if there is a good national recovery in July across all income streams through to £5.3Million to the end of March 2021 if the economy takes much longer to recover. It should be noted though that the impacts are likely to be experienced beyond March 2021.



## 4.5 Core Resources, Council Tax

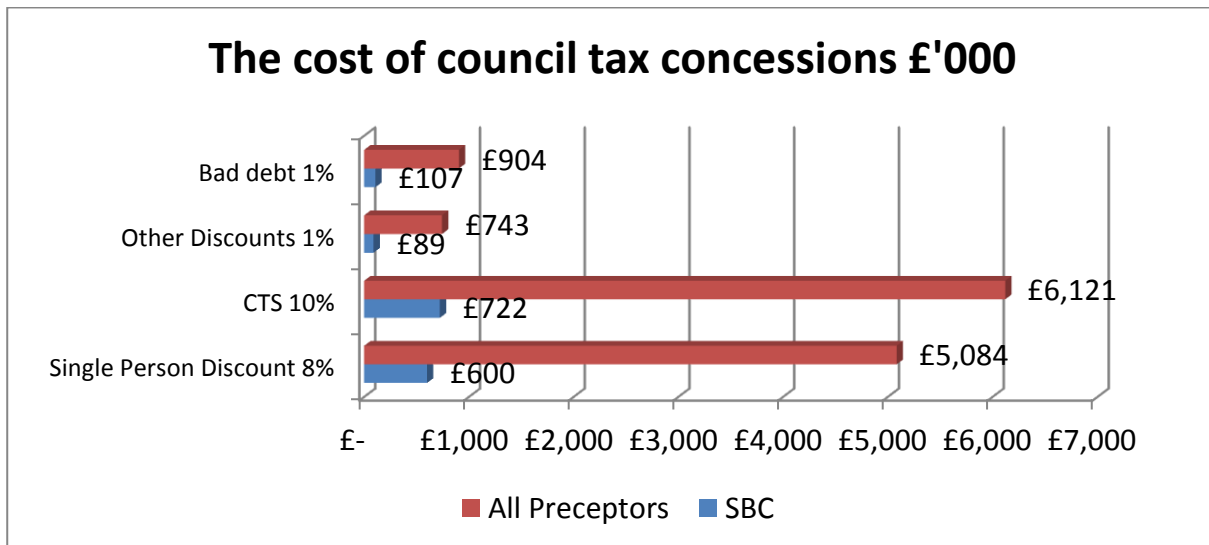
4.5.1 There are COVID 19 related cash flow pressures relating to core resources. SBC is the billing authority for business rates and council tax and as such raises the bills to residents and businesses, but only keeps a small proportion of those receipts.

4.5.2 For council tax SBC retains 12% or £5.9Million out of a total £50Million council tax bills for Stevenage. Payments to the other preceptors, Hertfordshire County Council and Police Commissioner, are set by regulation in February of the preceding financial year.



4.5.3 Even if the customers struggle to pay their council tax, SBC will still need to pay the scheduled Police and County Council precepts. During April 2020, an estimated 2,100 customers contacted the council to make new payment arrangements and 18% made no payment at all during April.

4.5.4 The assumed amount collectable versus the actual received will be impacted by residents' ability to pay. The increase in CTS support required by residents reduces the amount of council tax collected. The Stevenage CTS scheme only requires residents to pay 8.5% of their council tax bill, if on maximum benefit. The impact of this on the Council Tax yield is being kept under review. The discounts assumed within the current tax base for 2020/21 are summarised below.



4.5.5 Based on the current level of CTS and increase in caseload, the current projection could reduce council tax income by £977K for a full year, or 2020/21 reduction of £488K, which equates to a loss of council tax for SBC of £58K. The deeper the anticipated recession in the economy, the increased likelihood that more residents will require CTS support.

4.5.6 Included within the council tax base is an assumption around arrears levels and bad debts. As at the end of April there was approximately £102K unpaid council tax, which would equate to a £1.2Million for a full year and for SBC approximately £148K lost income and potential increase in bad debt cost. If assumed to be

uncollectable it will require a repayment to the Collection Fund in 2021/22 for this and the reduction as a result of higher CTS caseload.

- 4.5.7 The impact on council tax will be kept under review and the Council will continue to make payment arrangements in line with customers' ability to pay. Officers will also seek to support customers and signpost them to other organisations as appropriate that can provide debt advice including the Citizens Advice (CA). This information can be found on the Council's website.

#### **4.6 Core Resources – Business Rates**

- 4.6.1 As a result of COVID 19 relief measures taken by the government for businesses (in particular retail reliefs), the 2020/21 NDR yield of £45.6Million was reduced to £26Million, which councils are compensated for through S31 grants.

- 4.6.2 The Council is partly funded through business rates and retains an amount based on assessed need by the government. For 2020/21 this is £2.67Million (including the amount for historic under indexing of business rates by the government). This equates to just over 5% of total business rates collected from Stevenage businesses.

- 4.6.3 Each year the Council estimates the amount of business rates collectable and retained after any levy charges by the government. For 2020/21 this totalled £3.815Million, total gains above the base line of £1.139Million, including £455K of projected pooling gains. At budget setting for this year, Members agreed that the pooling gains would be set aside in an allocated reserve until they were realised or achieved. The remaining retained business rates were used to increase General Fund balances and to fund time limited growth bids.

- 4.6.4 There may be a level of business failure, as companies struggle to pay their rent and rates and with profitability linked, for example, to ongoing social distancing measures. Although over 800 businesses were eligible for government grants and access to a government loan, tax deferral and furlough schemes, the longer the lockdown remains in place in one form or another, the more challenging the business environment will be. The Council estimates that it is probable that the pooling gains identified in para. 4.6.2, will not be realised and that in the worst case scenario all gains above the baseline need totalling £1.139Million will also not materialise. This would result in a significant loss of balances to the General Fund.

- 4.6.5 **The CFO recommends that any gains from the current year (see also paragraph 4.10.2 (3)) should be ring fenced to offset any further 2020/21 losses above £455K.** The projected pilot gains across Hertfordshire are due to be finalised week commencing the 25 May 2020.

#### **4.7 Other Cost Pressures arising from COVID 19**

- 4.7.1 Other significant pressures have arisen from the **increased cost of supporting the homeless and rough sleepers**, who the government directed Councils to house during the COVID epidemic. The Council received a grant of £11,500 to fund this activity. However the estimated gross cost is £491K for the 12 week period. This cost can be mitigated in part by ensuring housing benefit is claimable and that the costs associated with support reclaimable from the HCC's COVID funding. That said the best case scenario would see the Council incur a minimum

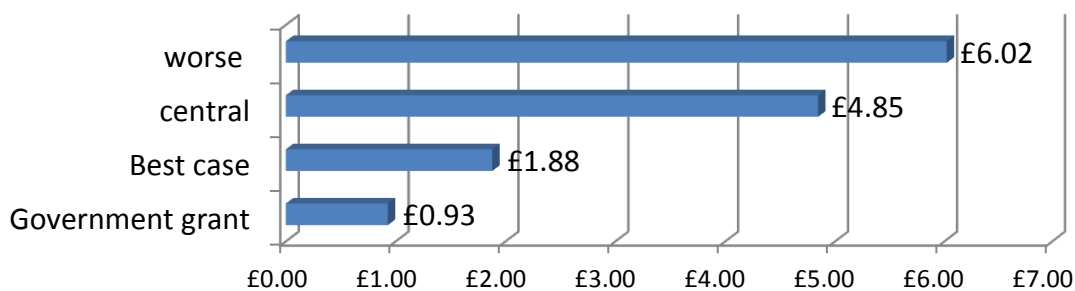
cost of £135K if no further housing need is identified beyond the middle of June. This however is highly unlikely and could be up to a further £10K per week.

- 4.7.2 The Council's revenue and benefits team has had to set up a process and **administer the grants and reliefs** as set out in section 4.2 of this report. In addition they have had to deal with high volumes of residents and businesses seeking to make new payment arrangements and an increasing CTS case load. This is currently estimated to cost an additional £7.7K per month in staff costs. The government has stated that Councils will be fully funded for the cost of administering these schemes.
- 4.7.3 The Council has ten **Community Associations** in the town which rely on room hire and café income to cover their staffing and building costs which are estimated in total to be circa £66K per month. The Council recognises the importance of these facilities and organisations to the community and has approved a Community Centre policy to help fund the associations during this difficult time. This is subject to the centres using their business grant funding, furloughing their staff and using reserves to help fund costs as set out in the policy. Despite the use of other funding and reserves this is estimated to cost the Council a minimum of £80K and upwards of £214K this year. This is dependent on the length of the closure period and the ability of the centres, once they reopen, to maintain social distancing rules and still earn income.
- 4.7.4 There are also additional cost pressures identified from **remote working of SBC staff**. Most of the Council's staff have traditionally been office based and the switch to home working for most has required ICT interventions including new equipment and software solutions to allow remote meetings to take place.
- 4.7.5 ICT solutions have also been required for Members, in order to allow the continuation of local government democracy and decision making to take place. The first virtual Executive was held on the 13 May and Annual Council took place on the 20 May.
- 4.7.6 In addition to the costs set above, there is expenditure associated with **PPE** for front line staff and additional staffing where council officers have had to self-isolate. Front line staff such as refuse and recycling, housing, independent living and other key workers have delivered their services throughout the pandemic and the council fully recognises the great work these staff have done and continue to do. Once buildings start to open, strict sanitation regimes will need to be in place which will increase the cost of operating and maintaining the sites. A total of £10.5K has been spent to date which for a full year could mean costs in excess of £60K.
- 4.7.7 The pandemic has impacted on a number of **savings options** which Members have already approved but have not been deliverable during the current period. The options affected total £56.7K for the General Fund and £3.3K for the HRA. They include the part year saving for charging for replacement waste bins (£15K), delays in restructure options £40.7K and charging for health & safety training £1K. These options will be reviewed regularly to determine when they can be introduced.

#### **4.8 Summary of losses for 2019/20 and 2020/21**

- 4.8.1 Based on the income and cost pressures identified above the chart below summarises the worst case, realistic and best case scenario modelling.

## 2019/20-2020/21 COVID 19 losses £M



*\*note with HRA rental losses and increased costs take a total SBC cost to an estimated £8Million on worse case scenario*

4.8.2 The government grant funding received thus far does not meet the expected losses under any of the scenarios modelled. The Council not only has to meet the shortfall if no other funding is received, but also meet savings targets built into the MTFs as a result of reducing NHB levels, inflationary pressures and the additional cost of the pay award offered by employers (not accepted by the unions), estimated to be £90K per year. These targets were summarised in paragraph 4.4.4.

4.8.3 The impact of COVID 19 on the Council's resources put more pressure on the targeted savings the Council has to find, as outlined in the General Fund MTFs and budget reports, compounding the Council's financial position, hence the need for further options to plug the gap.

### 4.9 Options for Consideration

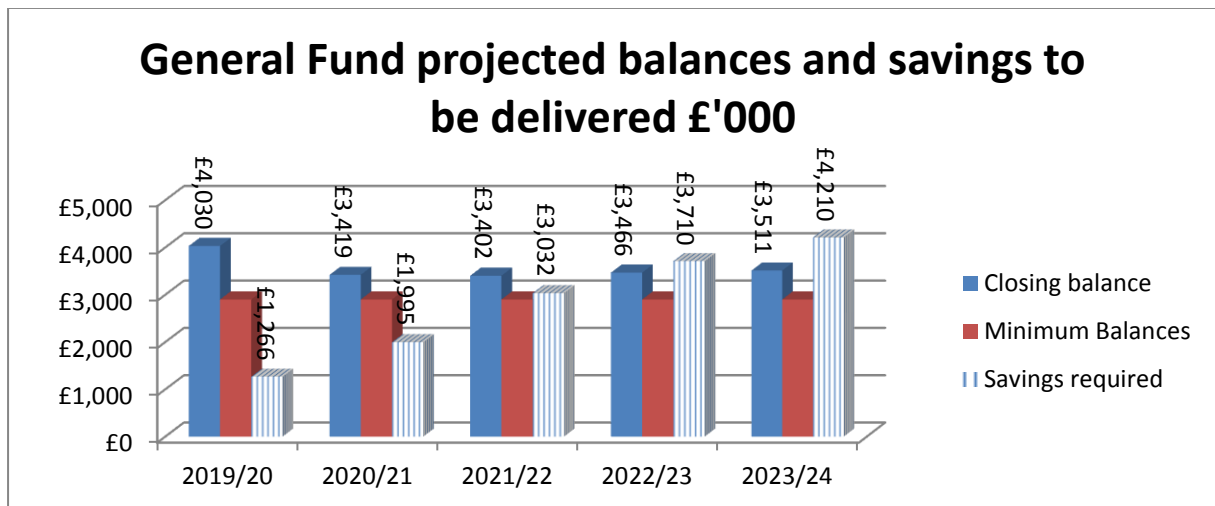
4.9.1 The Council's ability to meet the funding gap is very much dependent on the level of losses sustained and the length of the impact. Even with the best case scenario which would see the economy only impacted for the period April to June, the funding received from Government thus far only represents 49% of the total anticipated cost. **The options proposed within the report can be summarised as follows:**

- I. Reduce Revenue Contribution to Capital (RCCO) from General Fund - £1.726Million
- II. Stop part of Capital Programme (and reduce RCCO) £125K
- III. Hold a number of vacant posts £152K
- IV. Reduce the growth bids approved by utilising other resources £49K
- V. Hold expenditure budgets for some projects and utilise projected underspends on print and post £463.8K
- VI. Use allocated reserve for Business Rates - held for funding future regeneration and FTFC bids £455K
- VII. Use 2019/20 Underspends £812K
- VIII. Hold CNM 2020/21 budget £75K



## IX. Review other budgets

- 4.9.2 The General Fund cannot absorb the level of losses set out in the scenarios modelled without some interventions to reduce some areas of spend and the consideration of the use of balances held for other purposes. **The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) recommend the precautionary measures set out above. This is to allow the Council to be able to continue to deliver its much needed services in the recovery phase and have sufficient balances, should further government funding fall short of the losses sustained.** However the majority of measures set out in this report are one-off opportunities and more far reaching options will have to be considered if losses are realised at the higher end of the modelling.
- 4.9.3 The CFO makes a risk assessment of the minimum level of reserves which for 2020/21 is £2.9Million (pre-COVID). In determining whether General Fund reserve balances can be used to fund some of the losses, it is important to review the level of balances projected versus the risk assessed level of balances and level of savings to be delivered. The level of General Fund reserves versus minimum levels is shown below (pre-COVID 19).



*\*the savings required are the cumulative value compared to balances in reserves at year end*

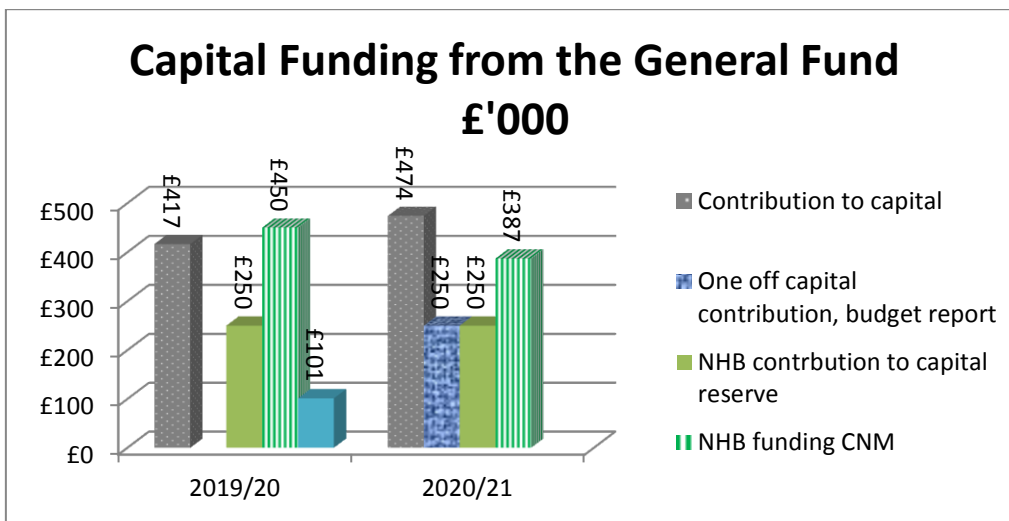
- 4.9.4 Paragraph 4.4.4 show the cumulative savings required to be realised for the General Fund 2019/20-2024/25. Some of these options are **agreed in principle however they still need to be implemented and maintained.** This shows there is very little scope for using balances to fund COVID 19 losses.
- 4.9.5 It is important that General Fund balances remain resilient during the pandemic because of the uncertainty around cost and income factors and projections, these being:
- I. Uncertainty around level of government funding
  - II. Level of in year impact best/central or worse case for 2020/21
  - III. Impact of recession in future years beyond 2020/21
  - IV. Ability to deliver savings during the pandemic
  - V. Impact on services from additional demand

VI. Ability to fund discretionary services that the community may rely on in recovery

4.9.6 The first action recommended by the CFO is to **switch revenue funding by the General Fund to support the capital programme by using capital receipts.** The General Fund revenue budget finances some capital expenditure by:

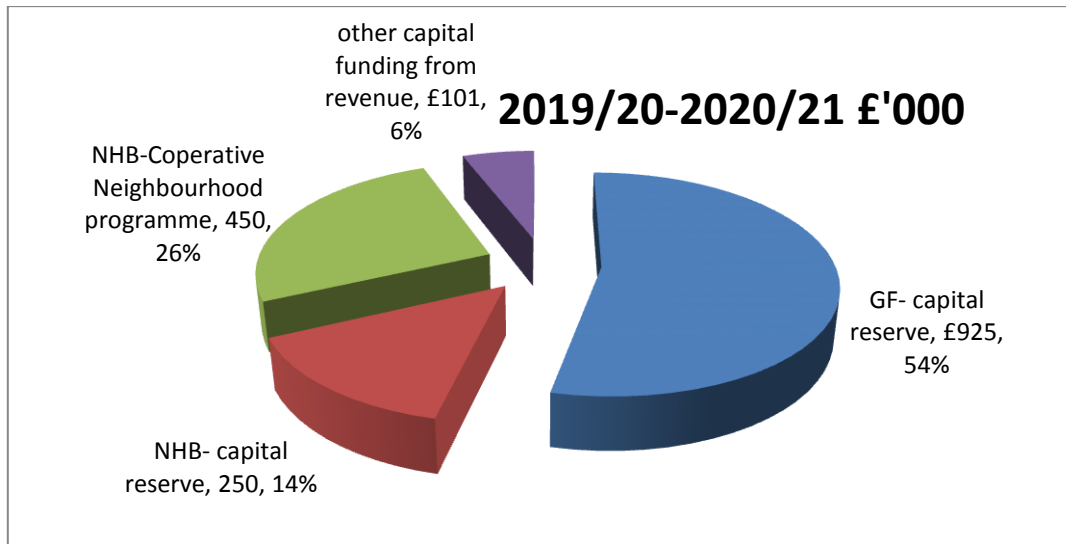
- Making a revenue contribution to the capital reserve or Revenue Contribution to Capital, (RCCO)
- Expenditure funded from New Homes Bonus which is a revenue grant is also classified as RCCO.

The total resources that flow from the General Fund to Capital are summarised in the chart below. Some are on-going, (circa £470K) and NHB funding for as long as the Council receives sufficient NHB.

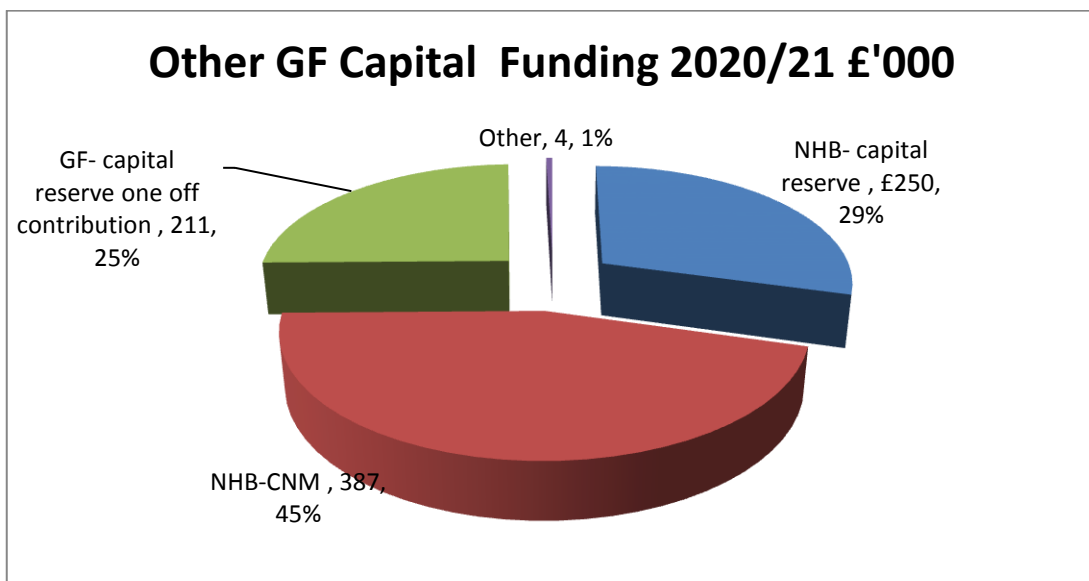


4.9.7 There are capital receipts, earmarked for the Council’s future regeneration phases beyond current schemes, totalling £1.726Million in reserves. This receipt could be ‘substituted’ for some of the contributions identified in paragraph 4.9.6 to increase General Fund balances. However, it is intended that this would be a temporary measure until more funding is received. Taking this action will boost General Fund balances by this amount in the short term.

4.9.8 If sufficient government funding is not forthcoming or losses are greater than estimated, this receipt potentially will not be available to pump prime future regeneration phases. **Members are recommended to approve the use of this regeneration receipt for general capital expenditure in 2020/21.**



4.9.9 If Members approve the use of the regeneration receipt there is still a further £852K of capital funding from the General Fund in 2020/21 as summarised below.



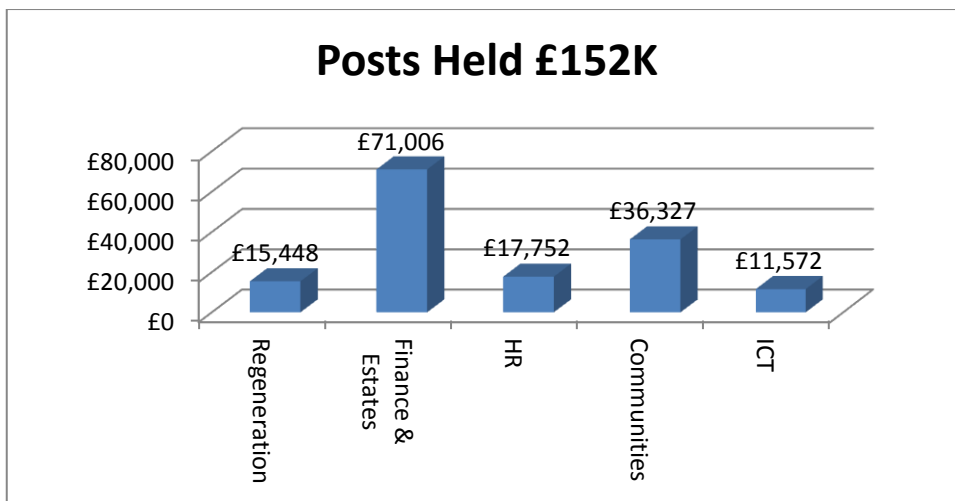
4.9.10 To further reduce the revenue contribution to capital from the General Fund consideration needs to be given as to whether any of the **Council's capital programme can be stopped for a year**, which would in turn increase revenue balances. Stopping rather than deferring means that resources are not subsequently used in any following period as this would only push the problem into future years. The Senior Leadership Team has reviewed the capital programme and has put a hold on the following projects totalling £125K, this further reduces the transfer from the General Fund in paragraph 4.9.9. **Members are recommended to approve the holding of the following capital spend in 2020/21.**

- CCTV £25K

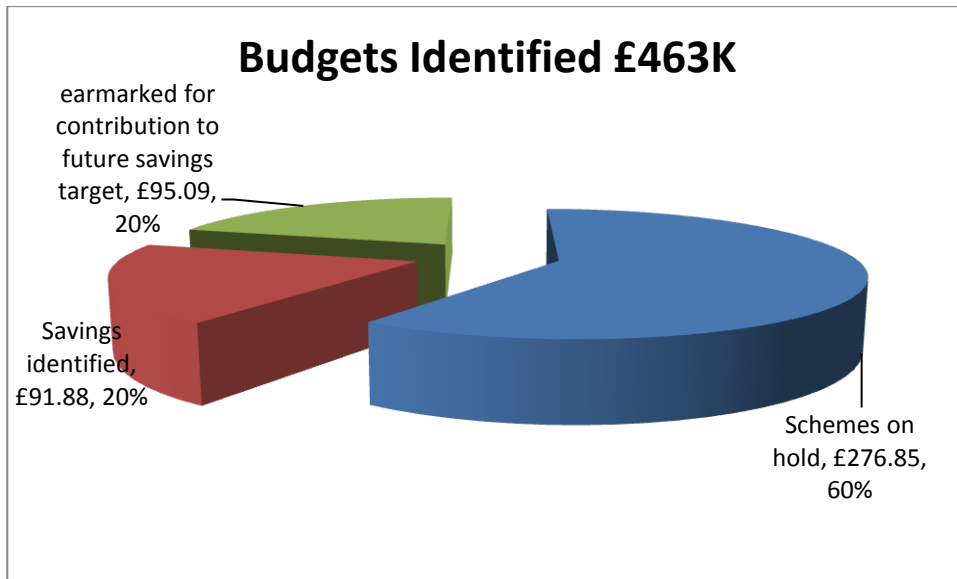
- Hard standings programme - miss a year £70K
- Workforce travel plan- miss a year £15K
- Parking Restrictions- £15K (part budget)

4.9.11 Looking at the modelling of the COVID impact scenarios, from £2Million to £6Million, the options around reducing capital funding is not sufficient to meet the central and worst case scenarios. Therefore a review of General Fund expenditure has been completed and **a number of options are being recommended for approval until the level of the losses can be better understood and/or government funding covers them.** The majority of these measures are not on-going and are proposed as temporary measures.

4.9.12 Employee costs represent 33% of General Fund costs. **A review of vacant posts** has been completed by Assistant Directors and a total of £152K of spend can be prevented by not recruiting to the establishment. This would not be recommended as a permanent reduction in the establishment because it could impact on the ability to deliver services. A number of the Communities posts can be held vacant until the current restrictions are eased. **Members are recommended to approve the holding of these posts.**

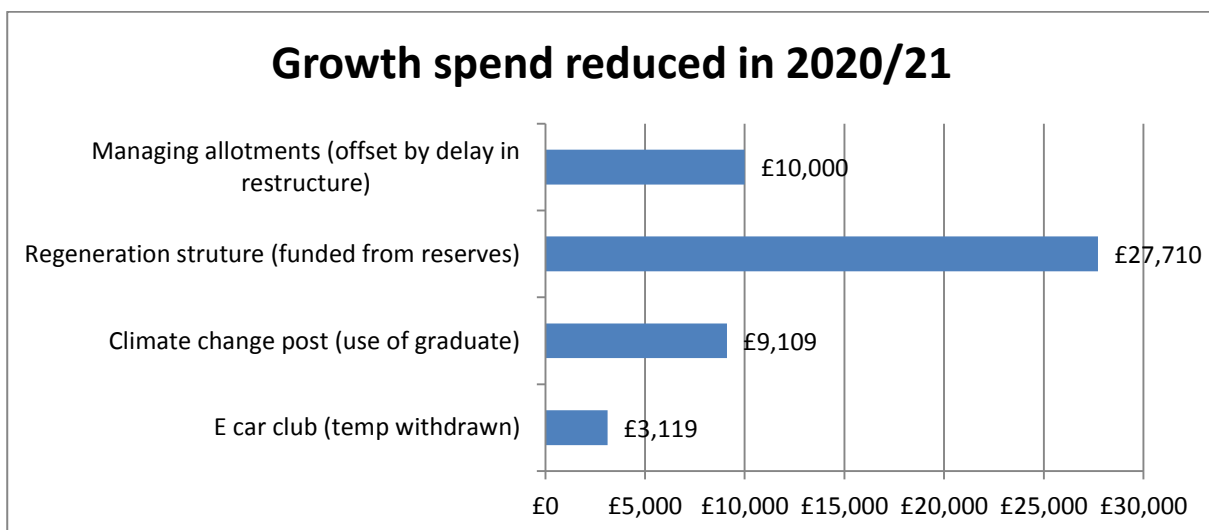


4.9.13 **A review of balances and spend budgets** has been undertaken and a total of **£463,820** relating to the General Fund and £35,000 related to the HRA can be removed from the General Fund 2020/21 revenue budget. This includes £95,090 in historic borrowing costs for external borrowing not yet taken and is recommended for removal from the General Fund as an on-going saving. This remained in the budget while there was uncertainty about the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) funding of the bus station.



4.9.14 The remaining identified budgets are one off underspends and relate to assumptions around reduced print, postage, fuel and overtime costs during the lockdown period with the remaining sums related to unspent prior year CNM balances. There is an overtime underspend assumption totalling £50,000, which will be monitored to ensure it is delivered but not guaranteed. The CFO considers it necessary to adjust the budgets to ensure that there are sufficient balances in the General Fund to cover the central scenario assumption. **Members are recommended to approve the temporary removal of budgets.**

4.9.15 Assistant Directors have also reviewed the growth bids for 2020/21 and £49K can be deferred through using supernumerary graduate posts and allocated reserve balances. The growth deferred is summarised below and **Members are recommended to approve the reduction in those budgets.**



4.9.16 The last completed review was for **allocated reserves** and the yearend General Fund balances. Included in allocated reserves is part of the 2020/21 NDR

business rate gains of £455K. The current assessment of losses on a central scenario assumes that this amount would not be realised due to the impact on the economy. If this is realised it would have been used to carry on the Council's transformation, digital work or regeneration pump priming. **Members are recommended to approve the holding of this allocated reserve and not commit its use at the current time.**

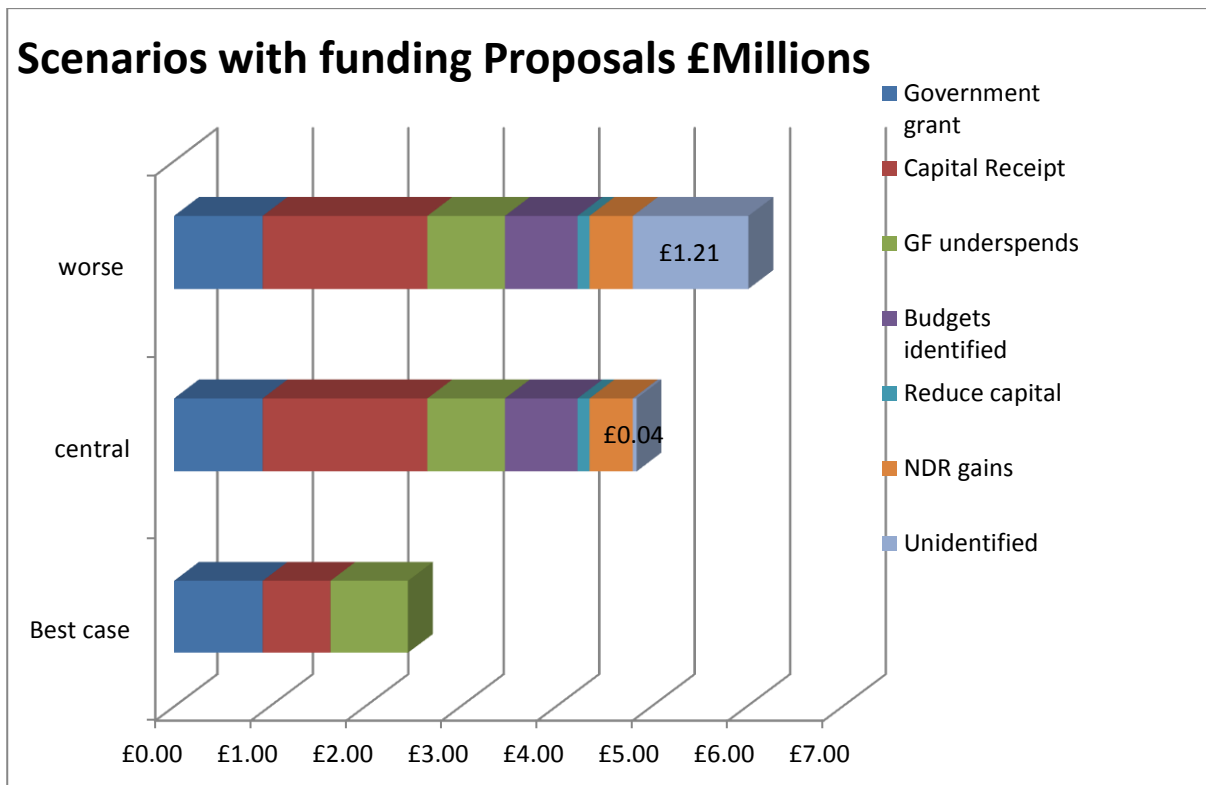
4.9.17 The 2019/20 budget outturn shows a projected under spend of £812K, offset by COVID 19 losses of £184K, **a net £628K underspend**. The final accounts have not been completed and this balance may change depending on completion of the Statement of Accounts and the ensuing External Audit in August 2020. **However the current 2019/20 projected underspend increases the General Fund balances and has been assumed to fund losses** not refunded by the government, rather than available to counter any short fall in future saving options to be delivered.

#### 4.10 Impact of Measures taken on the COVID 19 2020/21 loss Scenarios

4.10.1 A summary of the measures recommended to improve the resilience of the General Fund is summarised in the Table below.

Options £'000	2019/20 £	2020/21 £	2021/22 £	Total £
<b>COVID impact on General Fund:</b>				
Losses	£184	£3,999	£0	<b>£4,183</b>
Council Tax	£0	£0	£207	<b>£207</b>
Business Rates	£0	£0	£455	<b>£455</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£184</b>	<b>£3,999</b>	<b>£662</b>	<b>£4,845</b>
<b>Funding Options:</b>				
Government grant	£0	£928	£0	<b>£928</b>
Use of Regeneration receipt	£1,218	£508	£0	<b>£1,726</b>
Hold Capital Expenditure	£0	£125	£0	<b>£125</b>
Hold vacant posts	£0	£152	£0	<b>£152</b>
Hold spend budgets	£0	£464	£95	<b>£559</b>
Remove approved growth budgets (part)	£0	£50	£0	<b>£50</b>
Use allocated reserve (NDR 2020/21 gains)	£0	£455	£0	<b>£455</b>
Underspend 2019/20	£812	£0	£0	<b>£812</b>
Unidentified- under review	£0	£37	£0	<b>£37</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,030</b>	<b>£2,720</b>	<b>£95</b>	<b>£4,845</b>

4.10.2 Taking the measures outlined in section 4.9 above, each scenario is summarised with the remaining funding gap, which is labelled in the chart below.



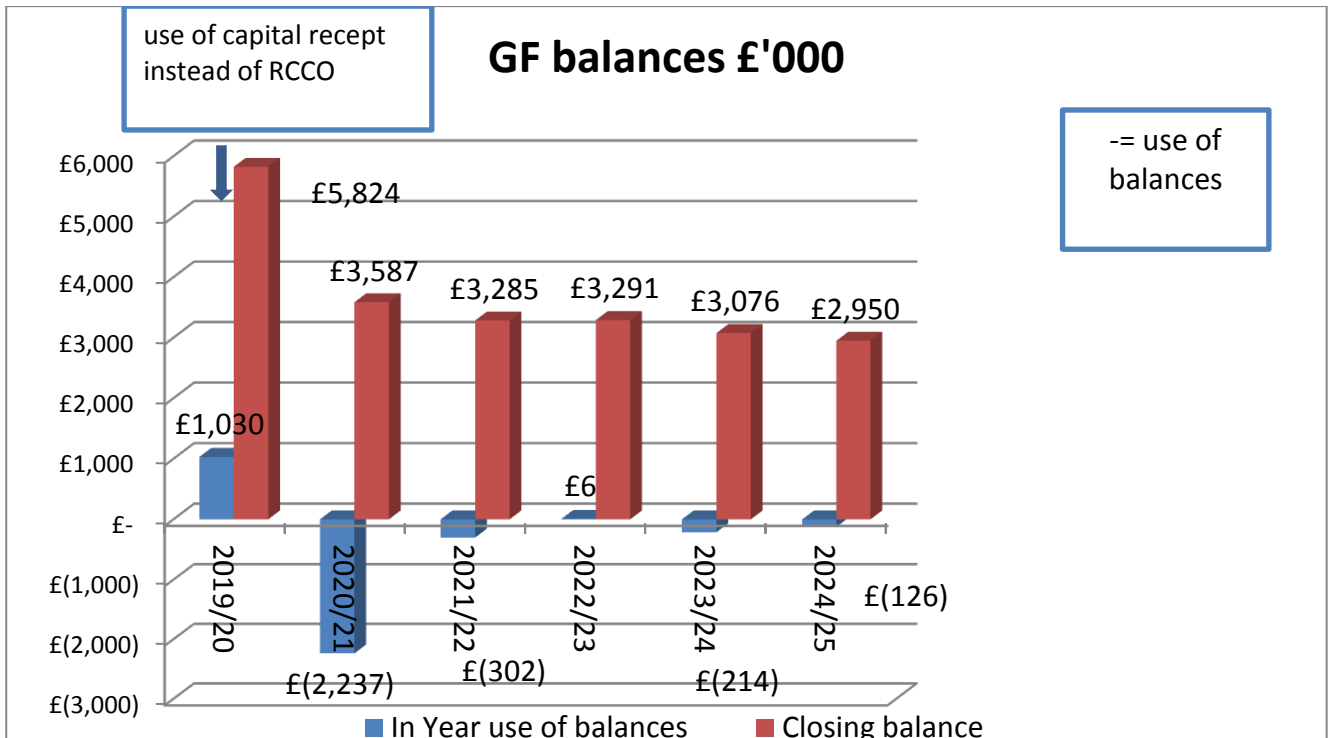
4.10.3 The funding options identified are £37K less than the central losses for 2020/21, but the yearend position is not finalised and it is not clear yet what the overall level of losses will be so the CFO recommends the following options:

1. **Hold expenditure of CNM programme for 2020/21 £75K**
2. **Review event and similar type budgets to determine whether they can be released.**
3. **Potential NDR additional gains for 2019/20 currently being reviewed of £477K (subject to Pilot gains of £275K being realised, not yet known) if this was achieved recommend ring fenced for 2020/21 NDR gains if the £1Million was not achieved.**

4.10.4 The ability to fund losses of £6Million plus and potentially future years losses would require a more fundamental review and the need to do this is being monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and Executive Team whilst the Council continues to lobby for more funding. This will require another review of the MTFS to be undertaken this year.

4.10.5 The projected level of balances for the General Fund if the central projections materialise with the level of losses and the measures taken in section 4.9 and 4.10 (1) being implemented would result in the General Fund balances being above minimum levels.

4.10.6 However there would still be a draw on balances contrary to the MTFS principles, partly as a result of the revised pay award projections and assumptions about increases in the triennial review for pensions. Forecast General Fund balances are summarised in the chart below.



\*doesn't include potential NDR gains outlined in para 4.10.2 (3)- not yet verified

4.10.7 **The projections above rely on there being no further losses other than the estimated £4.84Million and that all savings targets are achieved and the yearend balance on the General Fund is achieved.** The recovery phase is inevitably going to bring new pressures and will require a review of Financial Security targets for future years, once there is a better understanding of the level of on-going unfunded COVID 19 losses.

#### 4.11 Further Measures to maintain General Fund resilience

4.11.1 Alongside the measures identified in the report in sections 4.9 and 4.10, it is also critical that the Council pursues measures to increase General Fund resilience, as outlined in para. 4.9.5. This could be achieved by reducing the on-going £470K contribution from revenue to capital, (as identified in para. 4.9.6). This would maintain the resilience of revenue balances, (particularly as fees and charges may result in it taking a considerable time to return to 'normal levels'). **The CFO recommends that a pipeline of land disposals identified as part of the on-going Locality Reviews is brought forward to the July Executive for in principle support subject to due diligence and consultation with Ward Members and the Executive.**

4.11.2 The timing of land sales may need to reflect the prices that can be achieved but will help future proof the General Fund, giving more ability to absorb future losses and variations from approved savings plans.

4.11.3 The February 2020 General Fund budget report identified the need to seek more transformational ways of working through digital solutions and identified a budget of £75K to start this work. **The Senior Leadership Team recommends this work is started as soon as practically possible** to ensure that planned savings



targets can be achieved. Some new ways of operating have already commenced as part of the move to remote working.

#### **4.12 Risks to the General Fund of not identifying a Strategy for COVID losses**

4.12.1 The Council must set a budget that is balanced each year and cannot run a deficit General Fund. It is the duty of the statutory officers to ensure that this is the case.

4.12.2 The General Fund budget position has been improved by 'holding' expenditure and diverting receipts available to future phases of regeneration projects, in order to meet the losses if no further Government grant is forthcoming. **This position has not been achieved by just using General Fund reserves.**

4.12.3 If the projection of losses increases and cannot be contained within the reserves the statutory officer may bring a S114 report forward.

4.12.4 Within the Local Government Finance Act 1988, Section 114 (3) dictates that:

"The chief finance officer of a relevant authority shall make a report under this section if it appears to him that the expenditure of the authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources (including sums borrowed) available to it to meet that expenditure".

4.12.5 This means that for Local Government, it is the Chief Finance Officer or Section 151 officer who has the role under law of being the most senior financial advisor to the wider Council's leadership on its financial plans.

4.12.6 The CFO has the responsibility to legally suspend spending for a period of time if they judge the Council does not have a balanced budget or the imminent prospect of one.

4.12.7 Once a S114 Notice is issued it means that no new expenditure is permitted, with the exception of funding for statutory services, including safeguarding vulnerable people, however existing commitments and contracts will continue to be honoured. Council officers must therefore carry out their duties in line with contractual obligations and to acceptable standards, while being aware of the financial situation. Any spending that is not essential or which can be postponed should not take place and essential spend will be monitored.

4.12.8 The only allowable expenditure permitted under an emergency protocol would include the following categories:

- existing staff payroll and pension costs
- expenditure on goods and services which have already been received
- expenditure required to deliver the council's provision of statutory services at a minimum possible level
- urgent expenditure required to safeguard vulnerable citizens
- expenditure required through existing legal agreements and contracts
- expenditure funded through ring-fenced grants
- expenditure necessary to achieve value for money and / or mitigate additional in year costs.

4.12.9 Councillors have 21 days from the issue of a Section 114 notice to discussing the implications at a Full Council meeting.

4.12.10 There have been a number of Councils including Windsor and Maidenhead, Liverpool and Luton Council to name a few that have raised the possibility of issuing such a report as a result of losses they are experiencing.

4.12.11 To mitigate the risk of bringing a S114 forward it is preferable to have control over the services provided by the council. To that end it is recommended that the Executive approve the development over the summer of a priority list of services as a further precautionary measure, if losses and the impact of COVID 19 is financially greater than modelled . However this would include services to vulnerable residents .This will consider short term need to run services which would be impacted from social distancing measures and could be based on the following factors:

- Critical to the recovery and Stevenage businesses and residents economic and community welfare
- Number of residents/businesses served by the activity
- Consideration of whether the service is offered by other organisations

4.12.12 **It is recommended that the measures set out in the report are in force until 30 September 2020 and when/if a better financial position can be established** then the following budgets are **reinstated** in the following listed priority order:

1. CNM spend for 2020/21 £75K (para. 4.10.3)
2. Future Regeneration funding (para 4.9.7)
3. Unspent CNM funding (para. 4.9.14)
4. NDR allocated reserve (para 4.9.16)
5. Posts on hold (para. 4.9.12)
6. Capital budgets releases (para. 4.9.10)
7. Other budgets reduced (para 4.9.14, schemes on hold).

#### **4.13 Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

4.13.1 This report focuses on the General Fund, however there is likely to be an impact on the HRA in terms of rental income, issuing of leaseholder S20 notices (which were deferred during the pandemic) and return of right to buy pooling receipts (RTB). In addition to the cost of additional PPE for front line staff.

4.13.2 The Council will potentially have to return £197K and £1Million of pooling receipts to the government plus interest, as housing development schemes have been impacted by COVID19. The CFO has written to MHCLG too ask them to allow SBC to retain the receipts for five years rather than three years, giving supporting evidence to aid the case. The CFO has been in contact with the relevant civil servants but has not yet received an answer at the time of writing the report.

- 4.13.3 The rent arrears for the first six weeks on 2020/21 had increased by £286K and the impact of this on the HRA is being monitored.
- 4.13.4 The impact on the HRA can be ameliorated in part by the lower borrowing costs in the HRA compared to the HRA business plan, this has been improved by the reduction in borrowing rates for HRA capital programmes. This is estimated to be £500K for 2020/21 and a £800K for 2021/22.

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The report is financial in nature and the financial impacts are contained within the body of the report.
- 5.1.2 There has been no further announcement on funding but it is anticipated that the funding model will change and will be based on different criteria based on soundings with the MHCLG. The Council awaits further information to be announced.

### 5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 The legal position in setting a legal budget is set out in section 4.12

### 5.3 Risk Implications

- 5.3.1 There is considerable uncertainty about the potential for the Council to receive further government funding. The position regarding COVID losses and the cost of recovery is also uncertain at this time. The Council must have a Strategy in place to address the financial impacts due the likely level of losses and the increased certainty that income levels are going to be challenging to achieve for some time to come.
- 5.3.2 The risks for the MTFs and General Fund budget have been updated.

Risk Area	Risk Mitigation	Likelihood	Impact
NEW: Government COVID funding does not cover losses	The measures included in this report would need to be implemented up to the level of losses realised	High	High
NEW: Government COVID funding does not cover losses and exceeds options identified	This would require some of the measures outlined in para. 4.12.8 to be considered, review of Financial Security Targets and depending on the gap, the need for a s114 notice to be reviewed	High	High
NEW: The 75% retention of receipts produces lower gains for SBC in 2021/22.	The Council does not budget spend on future gains only for those forecast for the coming year. However in the past this has increased Regeneration spending	Medium	Medium

Risk Area	Risk Mitigation	Likelihood	Impact
<p>Anticipated Financial Security options not achieved (Negative Risk)            –agreed options do not deliver expected level of savings either on a one-off basis or on-going.</p>	<p>Regular monitoring and reporting takes place, but the size of the net budget reductions increase the risk into the future. Non achievement of options would require other options to be brought forward. General Fund reserves should be held to ensure that decisions to reduce net costs are taken in a considered manner. This may become more of a risk as options around commercialisation are explored.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>UPDATED: Under-achievement of Commercial Property Investment (Potential Negative risk)</p>	<p>Properties being investigated are on hold during the current pandemic and the losses included the shortfall for 2020/21.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>REVISED: Council Tax Support (Negative Risk) – increased demand is under- estimated.</p>	<p>An increase in demand would impact on future years as the deficit in the collection fund would need to be repaid by the General Fund. This could equate to £58K in 2021/22 if the caseload continues to increase.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Localisation of Business Rates (Potential Negative) – A major employer leaves the town and impacts the business rate yield due to the Council</p>	<p>Negative: The safety net means a maximum loss in year of £180K which the council has included in an allocated reserve. On-going this would impact on the savings target and ultimately services.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Loss of Business Rates due to Companies going into administration</p>	<p>As above.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>The NDR Check Challenge Appeal process impacts on the council's baseline assessment and increases the level of successful appeals and reduces the yield (Negative risk)</p>	<p>Officers will be monitoring changes to the NDR system and will be talking to the Valuation office. However since the system has been introduced, little has been completed in Stevenage and a considerable amount of appeals from the 2010 list remain.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Impact of the Universal Credit (Negative Risk) – The grant given to the</p>	<p>A reduction in the amount of grant assumed within the MTFs would require compensating reductions in</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>High</p>

Risk Area	Risk Mitigation	Likelihood	Impact
Council is cut before the Revenue and Benefits Partnership is able to reduce costs. The Welfare reform bill may impact on residents' ability to pay council bills.	planned spending within services . However UC is being implemented at a very slow pace and the current case load is reducing.		
UPDATED:Inflation (Negative Risk) – The majority of contracts the Council holds include an annual price increase	General balances are risk assessed to ensure overall levels are maintained that can meet higher than expected inflation rates. The inflation projections have been increased for a 2.75% pay award (offered by the employers side) and an increase in pension costs at the next renewal assuming the pension fund will be less well funded due COVID impacts	Medium	Medium
Impact of Future Welfare Reforms (Negative Risk) – There could be an increase in the need for the council's services requiring additional resources to be put into those services	Regular monitoring and reporting and the council has a welfare reform group which monitors impacts.	Medium	Medium
All MTFS risks not adequately identified (Negative or Positive Risk) – Financial risks and their timing are not accurately judged leading to either a pressure or benefit to the MTFS.	Council's risk management framework ensures operational and strategic risks are identified as part of the annual service and MTFS planning process	Low	High
The impact of BREXIT (negative risk) the impact of Brexit leads to economic instability and further financial cuts to the council's budgets	A reduction in the resources available within the MTFS would require compensating reductions in planned spending within services . The council would use the Financial Security priority to help address this.	Medium	Medium

Risk Area	Risk Mitigation	Likelihood	Impact
Impact of future years capital programme (Negative) There could be increased pressure from the capital programme on the General Fund.	There is a robust challenge process for capital bids. Officers will be required to confirm that resources are in place to deliver any approved spend. The Locality reviews should identify capital receipt opportunities.	Medium	High
The Council's regeneration of SG1 increases the financial resources the Council must find.	The Council has already approved the use of ring fenced NDR gains for this purpose and the MTFS recommends this continues. However a full reset of business rate gains could see this reduce and put a pressure on the General Fund	High	High
AFM (Negative risk) HCC may review the amount paid to Councils,	HCC has already planned to remove £1.5Million from the scheme and could remove more. SBC received about £250K in 2018/19, further reductions would lead to an increase in the Financial Security Targets.	Medium	High
UPDATED Fees and Charges target may not be reached (negative risk)	Non achievement of the target would require other FS options to be brought forward. For future years. The in year losses have been addressed within the report from a central scenario modelling	High	High
UPDATED GD3 monies are not released and the cost of borrowing is a GF expense	The Council will have to fund the costs from borrowing circa £240K per year and increase savings targets or defer other capital spend or a combination of both. The indication is that the obligations have been satisfied	Low	Low

## 5.4 Climate Change Implications

- 5.4.1 The changes to the budget do not have a negative impact on any of the Council's climate change work. However the workforce travel plan spend of £15K is recommended for suspension in 2020/21.
- 5.4.2 The e-car club has been suspended due to the COVID 19 impact on sharing of vehicles and only consequential savings relating to the suspension have been assumed.

## **5.5 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.5.1 The report outlines the measures required to resource the losses identified from COVID19. The options recommended are done so as to minimise the impact on services.

## **6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

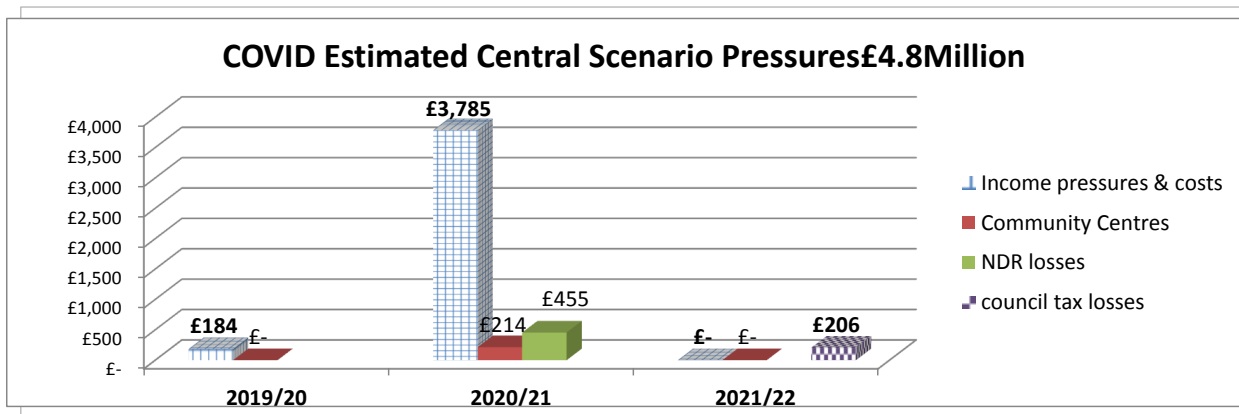
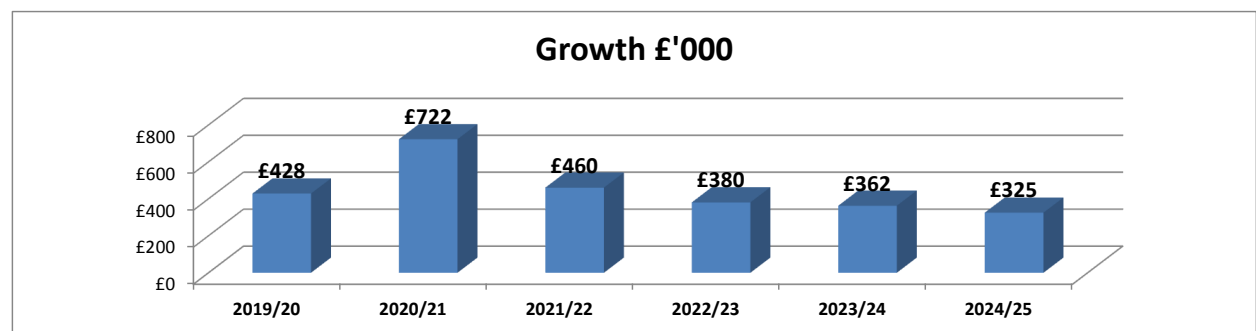
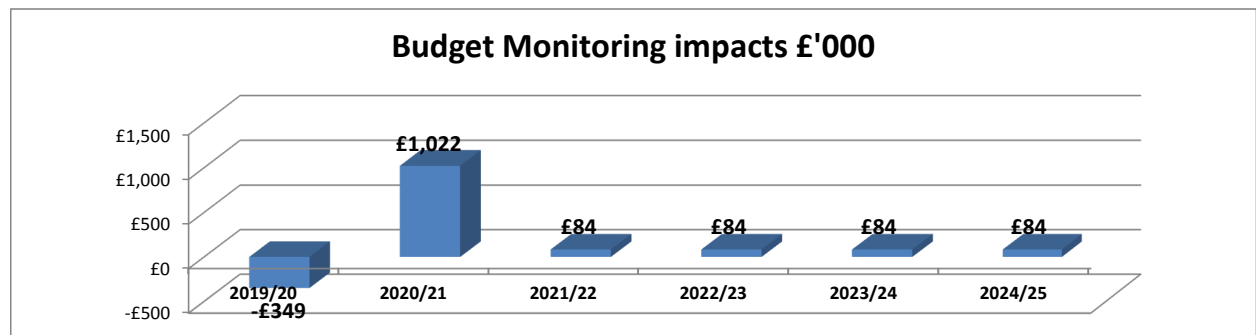
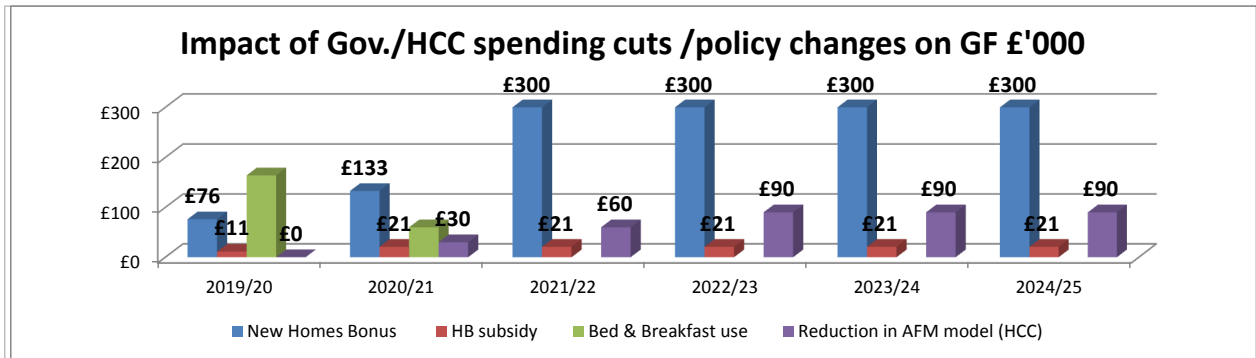
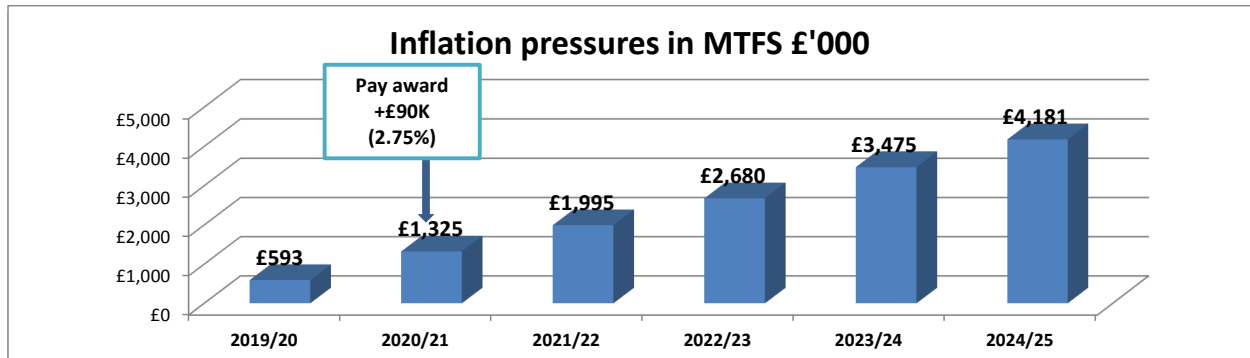
- BD1 FINAL GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2020/2021- (12 February Executive)
- BD2 GENERAL FUND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE (2019/20 – 2023/24) (11 September 2019)
- BD3 CORONAVIRUS (COVID19) UPDATE REPORT (13 MAY 2020)

## **APPENDICES**

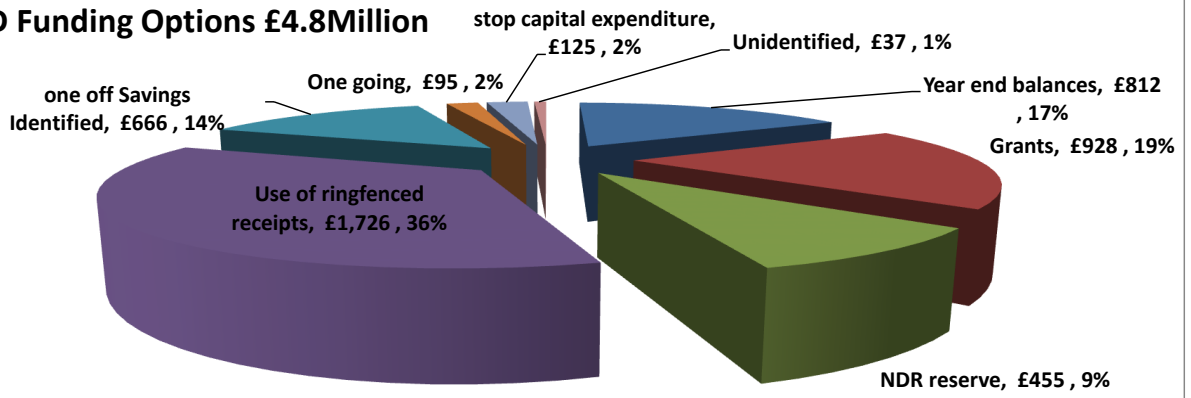
- A Updated MTFS Summary

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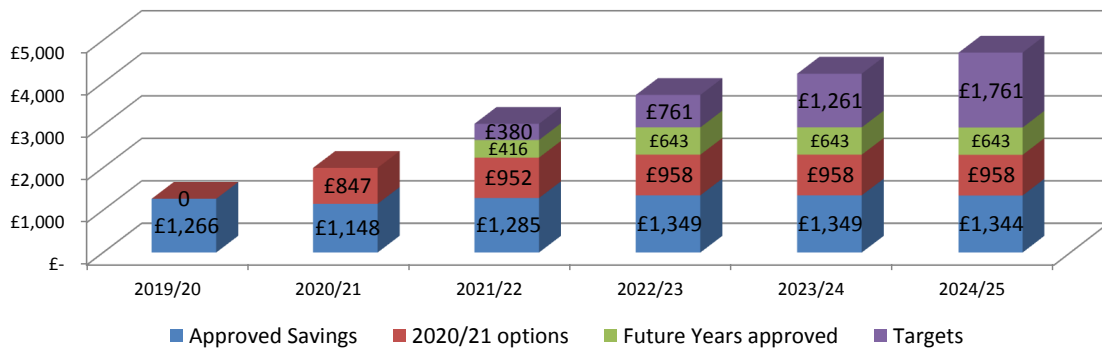




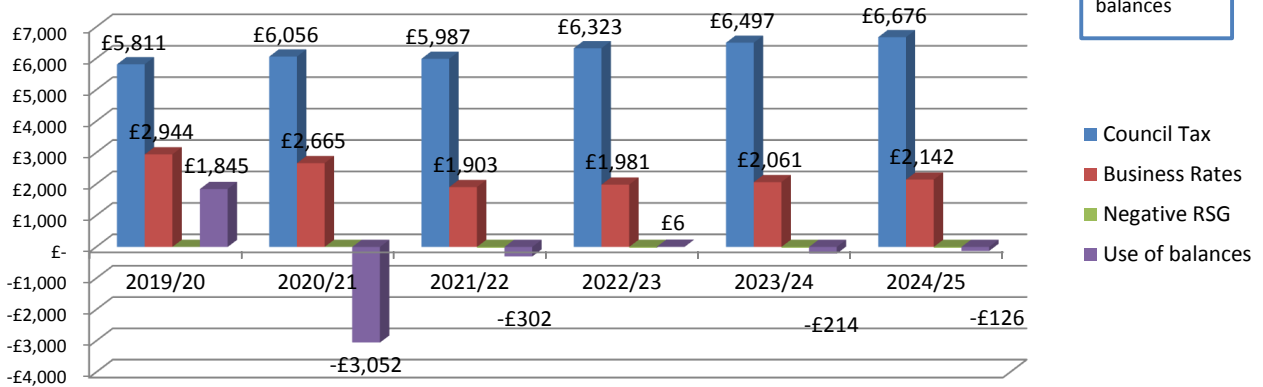
### COVID Funding Options £4.8Million



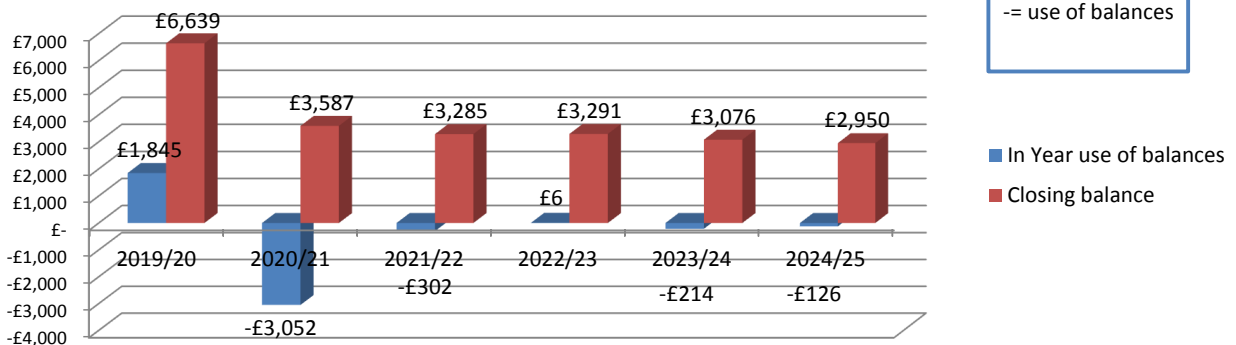
### Savings in the GF and to still to Find £'000



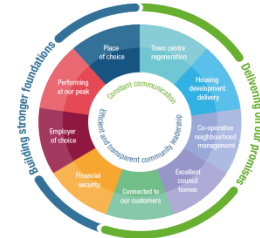
### The Core Resources £'000



### GF balances £'000



**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** All  
**Date** 10 June 2020



## CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER FOUR 2019/20

### NON KEY DECISION

**Authors** Chloe Norton | 2018/2501  
**Contributor** Charlie Smith/Katrina Shirley, Assistant Directors | 2457/2018  
**Lead Officer** Matt Partridge | 2456  
**Contact Officer** Richard Protheroe | 2938

### 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To highlight the Council's performance across key priorities and themes for quarter four 2019/20.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the delivery of priorities which form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across the key themes for quarter four 2019/20, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
- 2.2 That actions to commence implementation of the Corporate Landlord Review, and to ensure the new approach to certification of health and safety compliance of non-domestic/non-commercial council buildings in accordance with the compliance contract, are noted and endorsed (para 3.55 to 3.58).

- 2.3 That impacts of the Government directive on housing rough sleepers during Covid-19 are noted and that improvements with non-secure tenancies are noted and endorsed (para 3.62 to 3.67).
- 2.4 That further improvement plans for the Customer Service Centre are noted and endorsed (para 3.92 to 3.103).
- 2.5 That ongoing implementation of improved practices to support sickness absence management is endorsed (para 3.116 to 3.123).
- 2.6 That issues with the letting of council garages due to Covid-19 are recognised and plans to improve the process of garages lettings are noted (para 3.86 to 3.90).
- 2.7 That issues with the current relet process for sheltered voids are noted, and plans to improve are endorsed (para 3.83 to 3.85).

**3 BACKGROUND**

**Future Town Future Council Programme**

3.1 Members approved the FTFC Cooperative Corporate Plan in December 2016. It reflects the Council’s continuing focus on cooperative working and outlines the key outcomes and priorities for the town over the next five years through the Future Town, Future Council (FTFC) Programme as seen in Figure 1.

Future town future council



Figure 1: Future Town, Future Council Programme

3.2 The FTFC Programme was reviewed in March 2018 to ensure that it continued to reflect the Council’s priorities. As it was apparent that working in partnership is embedded in the culture of the Council and there is a strong framework for future collaboration with other public sector bodies, the Partner of Choice Programme was closed. Development of partnerships continues as part of day-to-day business and any new shared service proposals will be considered and implemented within the Financial Security Programme.

- 3.3 At the Executive meeting on 11 March 2020, the Executive agreed the suite of strategies to be included within the scope of a new FTFC programme, 'Place of Choice'. Associated actions for 2020/21 have been identified and progress against these will be reported from Quarter 1 of 2020/21. The scope of this strand will develop further over time as new priorities emerge.

### **Customer, Place and Transformation and Support**

- 3.4 Council services are organised into nine Business Units across three themes: Customer, Place and Transformation and Support. This structure is focused on delivering the right services, to the right standards, at the right time for the town's residents and businesses, using the most cost/resource effective delivery models.
- 3.5 In addition to monitoring progress on the delivery of the FTFC Programme, performance across these (Council Service) themes is monitored throughout the year to highlight achievements and identify any areas for improvement.
- 3.6 A complete set of performance measures across all themes (FTFC programme, and the customer, place, and transformation and support themes) is attached as Appendix One. Summaries of performance measure result status are outlined at paragraph 3.10 (FTFC focus) and paragraph 3.51 (Corporate Focus).
- 3.7 Towards the end of Quarter 4, Covid-19 began to impact on both FTFC programme activities and on council services and this is highlighted throughout this report. It should be noted however that as most performance results are cumulative and relate to the whole year (2019/20), the effect of Covid-19 is less evident at this stage than will be the case when results are reported at Quarter 1 of 2020/21.
- 3.8 In the context of Covid-19, a review of the Future Town Future Council programme has been undertaken for the year ahead, to help identify which planned projects can be delivered or where necessary adapted, noting that FTFC will be a key element of the Council's recovery programmes. Executive Members and the Opposition Group Leaders have supported this review. This work is being finalised and the focus and key deliverables for each FTFC programme will be reported to the Executive in July, alongside the Annual Report for 2019/20.

### **Future Town, Future Council Programme progress update**

- 3.9 The focus and scope of the FTFC programmes for 2019/20 is outlined in Appendix Two. Delivery of the agreed outcomes is monitored to ensure that the Programme remains on track.
- 3.10 In addition to the monitoring of programme milestones, thirteen measures aligned to FTFC delivery were monitored and reported on for April 2019 to

March 2020. The overview of FTFC focused results for April 2019 to March 2020 is outlined below:

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (urgent improvement action required)
13	11	0	2

- 3.11 Programme delivery updates for the FTFC Programmes together with an outline of any focused activity being implemented to keep the programmes on track are set out in the following paragraphs.

## **External Facing Future Town, Future Council Programmes**

### **Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration Programme**

#### **Programme Outcomes**

- A new vibrant town centre delivered through a phased regeneration programme
- Two major regeneration schemes to advance – one completed by 2021 and one to begin 2019/20

- 3.12 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Achieving vacant possession of Swingate House
- Advancing the SG1 scheme
- Progressing the bus interchange project in line with milestones
- Beginning works on the Town Square Public Realm and 'North Block' improvements
- Supporting the LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) to ensure there are robust governance arrangements in place for the regeneration of Stevenage
- Launching the fresh marketing brand, 'Stevenage Even Better' and opening the visitor centre to celebrate and promote the regeneration of the town

#### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.13 The contractor to undertake demolition works to progress the SG1 scheme has been appointed, via our development manager Mace. A decision was made to suspend the mobilisation of the demolitions due to contractual risk with the developing Covid-19 situation and issues with labour and supply chain; however the Regeneration team are in regular discussions to move this project forward when appropriate.

- 3.14 Presentations have been made at an Informal Executive meeting and SLT regarding the outline vision for the hub, as well as initial meetings with health partners. A draft specification has been written for the new Museum and the project team are seeking external advice to support the specification, to ensure that the Council's aspirations can be achieved. The specification will be shared with Members for comments when it is in good enough form.
- 3.15 Construction work has continued on both the Town Square and North Block. Paving for the first phase in the Town Square, including the access route next to Primark, has completed. The construction team have now moved on to the second phase which gives over half of the event space. Scaffolding has been erected on the North Block, significant progress has been made with the façade and an extensive amount of progress has been made on the former McDonald's frontage. Weekly project meetings are being held with the contractor on site to monitor the delivery of both projects.
- 3.16 The first official meeting of the Stevenage Development board was held at the end of March with the newly appointed Chair. The officer team have commissioned consultants to support the creation of the town investment plan. The first key stage is to create a holistic baseline context of Stevenage in terms of place and economic strengths and weaknesses. This will help to inform options for potential schemes for the investment plan.

## **Housing Development Programme**

### **Programme Outcomes**

- Increased number of affordable houses in Stevenage
  - Improved access to the housing market in Stevenage for a greater number of residents
- 3.17 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Completing and letting 54 new affordable homes across a number of schemes and 11 private sale homes
  - Starting work on a further 295 new/replacement homes across a range of planned schemes including sites at Shephall Way, North Road and Symonds Green
  - Exploring the viability of other potential areas of development across the town including opportunities to work in partnership with other providers
  - Continuing to work with partners to enable the delivery of affordable homes
  - Forming a Wholly Owned Company to support the delivery of new homes

## **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.18 The open market acquisitions programme was scaled up during the 2019/20 financial year. The ambition was to purchase properties to be converted for those with additional accessibility requirements as there is a lack of suitable stock. Other additional properties are now being used as temporary accommodation. During quarter 4, a further six affordable homes had been secured through the acquisitions programme, bringing the total for the financial year to thirty six. The Housing Development team are working with colleagues from Legal Services to achieve completion on the pipeline of additional properties during 2020/21.
- 3.19 The Burwell Court scheme handed over in February 2020 and homes were in the process of being occupied at the end of the quarter. This scheme delivered 15 units of affordable accommodation. Members of the Housing Development and Regeneration Executive visited the site on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 2020, followed by an open day for local residents to view the building on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 2020.
- 3.20 Work is currently ongoing at the Ditchmore Lane development, with internal and external finishing being carried out. All but one of the properties have received formal offers with total receipts being in the region of £2.2m
- 3.21 Demolition work at the Kenilworth Close scheme was nearly complete at the end of the quarter, with the contractor scheduled to finish in April. The developer Hill has been successfully appointed, and an initial meeting has been held with them regarding the future development.
- 3.22 The schemes at North Road (21 Homes), Shephall Way (9 Homes) and Symonds Green (29 Homes) have all continued to progress this quarter. The necessary pre-commencement planning conditions have been submitted for the North Road site and required tree works have taken place. Materials are onsite to continue the brickwork at the Shephall Way site and work is being undertaken to complete the ground works at the Symonds Green site.

## **Co-operative and Neighbourhood Management (CNM) Programme**

### **Programme Outcomes**

- Public spaces are more attractive, better cared for by the Council, residents and partners, and help to give people pride in the place they live
  - Residents feel that they can work with the Council and other organisations to help meet the needs of the local area
  - The Council's Community centres are efficiently run, well-managed and most importantly, meet local needs
  - Staff better understand the town's communities and so are more able to facilitate the change that is required
- 3.23 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:



- Developing the Council's approach to co-operative neighbourhood management, working initially with Stevenage Direct Services, Housing and Investment and Communities and Neighbourhoods
- Continuing the planned roll-out of neighbourhood improvements, with consultation and engagement work starting in Bedwell and Longmeadow
- Completing the Community Centre Review
- Progressing the Garage Programme
- Reviewing and reshaping resident involvement activity in response to the Community Engagement Framework

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.24 Neighbourhood improvements in St Nicholas and Martinswood continued this quarter. Projects delivered included renewal of street furnishings.
- 3.25 Initial consultation for the roll out of CNM in Bedwell and Longmeadow began this quarter. Community Development Officers have been engaging with local businesses, community organisations and schools to assess where partnership working can be utilised. Activities including regular ward patrols by Neighbourhood Wardens, attendance at residents groups and community events as well as bespoke engagement events are being planned by the team.
- 3.26 Following the review of the Council-owned community centres which was presented at December Executive, implementation of the agreed recommendations has begun. Further development of the Co-operative Compact Partnership as well as incorporation of elements of the Hub & Spoke model have begun with supporting work programme being developed by the Community Development team. Discussions surrounding the renewal of leases have begun with the Estates team. Officers have met with all the Community Associations to outline what this means for each individual centre.
- 3.27 In March four recommendations were approved by Executive in relation to community wealth building. These are summarised as:
- 1) Developing an Inclusive Economy Charter by end of June 2020,
  - 2) Piloting a Community Balance Sheet,
  - 3) Facilitating a cross departmental working group, and
  - 4) Sharing best practice at a regional and national level.
- 3.28 The Charter will include space for communities and other stakeholders to pledge their support, and the balance sheet will be developed as part of the Cooperative Neighbourhood Programme. The Charter will be presented to the Executive in July 2020.
- 3.29 To guide this work, two overarching diagrams have been developed showing the model of working and intended outcomes. These include an Inclusive Economy Wheel. Both will help to frame leadership work with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

- 3.30 In readiness for the roll-out of Cooperative Neighbourhoods, a strategic board has been formed and governance, strategic and operational documents necessary for the development of the Area Based Working Operating Model have been prepared. The majority of staff briefing sessions have been completed and the prototype neighbourhood team for St Nicholas and Martins Wood is mostly formed.

## **Excellent Council Homes Programme**

### **Programme Outcome**

- Transforming the Housing and Investment service to better meet the needs of its customers

- 3.31 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Delivery of a major refurbishment programme to our flat blocks (incorporating the MRC, lift replacements and retrofitting of sprinklers)
  - Implementation of a new area-based co-operative neighbourhood management approach in conjunction with staff from Stevenage Direct Services and Communities and Neighbourhoods
  - The launch of a new online account where customers will be able to access housing services 24/7
  - Providing staff with the right business tools and software to enable them to work more effectively out in the community
  - Completing the final phases of the Housing and Investment Future Council Business Unit Review
  - Delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Initiative Strategy and Housing Older Persons Strategy

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.32 The major refurbishment programme (MRC) is a £55 million 5 year programme which commenced in 2019. The majority of year one works have been completed with contractors undertaking remaining snagging items prior to handover. Consultation with affected leaseholders for the next phase is taking place to ensure meaningful engagement occurs prior to the commencement of works.
- 3.33 Progress continues on a new area-based working model with Communities & Neighbourhoods and Stevenage Direct Services.
- 3.34 Resident consultation for the sprinkler programme took place in February. The session was well attended and received positive feedback. Mobilisation meetings were held with the principal designer and a revised survey schedule will be agreed that takes into account resident feedback and the Covid-19 Emergency.
- 3.35 Three lifts were renewed through the lift refurbishment contract this quarter (Shephall Way flats and George Lighton Court). All are now in service and discussions are taking place to consider the delivery schedule for 2020/21.

- 3.36 The Online Housing Service was scheduled to go live during quarter 4 with a soft launch; however, there was an issue with the single sign on process. This has been quickly rectified and launched in early April 2020.

## **Connected to our Customers Programme**

### **Programme Outcomes**

- Use of self-service is encouraged, so more time can be spent with customers that need extra help
- Increased customer satisfaction for residents interacting with key services
- Online customer data will be protected, better used to provide useful insight, and the technology reliable
- The Council uses technology to meet its ambitions and make its workforce more modern, efficient and responsive to customer needs.
- A simple and clearer website with more self-service choices

- 3.37 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:

- New website testing and launch
- Finalising procurement of the digital platform and plans for implementation.
- Phased implementation of digital platform capabilities starting with replacement CRM and quick wins for self-serve options
- Customer and Business Account functionality placed into the new website, providing a single view of the customer and establishing a new centralised digital customer relationship
- Developing a service redesign approach that will optimise new technology and new ways of working
- Developing a Channel Shift Strategy which will clearly set out the Council's approach to optimising the take-up of the new digital services whilst ensuring access for everyone, so that no-one is left behind
- Implementation of the Environmental Services case management system; integration into the digital platform to enable self-serve
- Working with services to understand desired new ways of working and technology to support mobile, agile and area working.
- Planning for how the Council wants to work from the new Public Sector Hub

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.38 Progress with the new website has continued this quarter with more than 98% of new web pages completed. A discussion with the supplier took place to agree the remaining development works required to deliver the new website and they are applying time and cost estimates for undertaking the remaining works.

- 3.39 The new integrated digital solution, Firmstep, launched in the CSC in February, replacing the existing customer relationship management system.

The new software will enable integrations between systems, to join up council service delivery and provide better customer facing online service channels. This continues to be enhanced with more functionality being developed including; integration of web forms, a 'My Account' function for the website and missed bin and replacement container processes are being tested. This last piece of functionality will integrate with the new Bartec Environmental Services system that went live in Q4 for back office staff for the Waste and Recycling service.

## Internal Facing Future Town, Future Council Programmes

### Financial Security Programme

#### Programme Outcomes

- To meet the Financial Security three year savings target
- To ensure that the General Fund expenditure equals income without the use of balances from 2022/23 onwards
- To ensure the Housing Revenue Account has sufficient funding to meet the capital needs of the Housing Asset Management Strategy and identified revenue needs
- To identify Financial Security options using the three revised workstreams (efficiency, commercial and improved processes), before recommending any service rationalisation options, as summarised below.

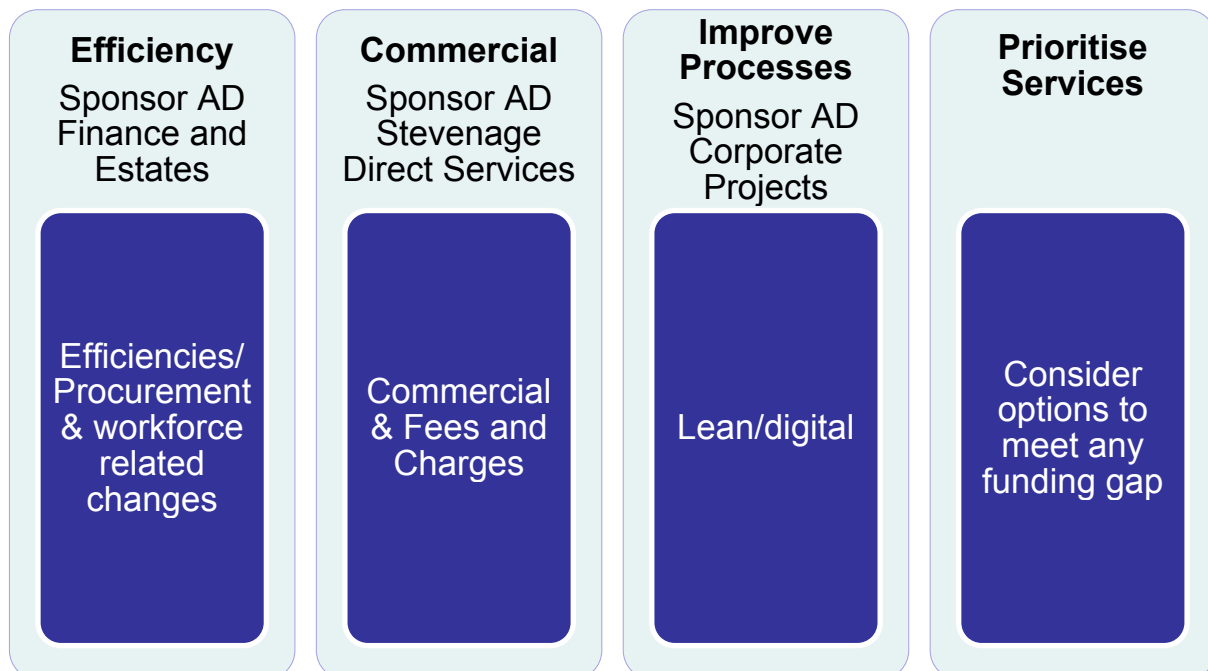


Figure 2: Financial Security Work streams.

3.40 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Identifying Financial Security options that meet the three year target (£2.2 million General Fund and £1 million Housing Revenue Account)

and as amended by the report to the September Executive for the General Fund MTFs and the November Executive for the HRA.

- Identification of Financial Security options to meet the General Fund and HRA funding gap for the period 2020/21-2022/23 via the Financial Security workstreams
- The financial security options should include the output from the review of leases for the Commercial Portfolio, to ensure they are reviewed in a timely manner to protect the Council's revenues
- Purchase of Investment Properties to meet the General Fund target of £200,000
- Completion of Local Asset Reviews to meet the objectives of the General Fund Asset Management Strategy
- Review of fee-earning services to determine fee versus cost
- Identify options to improve productivity via use of digital interventions
- Review of budgets for cross-cutting reviews
- Presentation of Financial Security options to the Leader's Financial Security Group before approval by the Executive in November 2019

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.41 The 2020/21 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund (GF) budgets were agreed in January and February. Also agreed were the Council Tax Setting, as well as the Capital Strategy and the Annual Treasury Management Strategy, including Prudential Indicators.
- 3.42 The recruitment processes for a new Assistant Director (Stevenage Direct Services) and Commercial Manager have been completed during this quarter. A timeline for delivery will be further progressed on the Council's commercial and insourcing strategy following the take up of these posts in due course.
- 3.43 Due to the impacts of Covid-19 in Quarter 4 it is now necessary for the Finance Team to undertake a review of the MTFs (Medium Term Financial Strategy). The related report is on the agenda for this meeting.

### **Employer of Choice Programme**

#### **Programme Outcomes**

- Improved employee engagement
  - Right person, right place, right time – recruiting/retaining staff to hard to fill posts
  - Improved managerial competency
  - Improved reputation as a place to work
  - Evidence of staff progressing to higher grades and new roles
- 3.44 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Establishing a compelling employer brand with a competitive pay and benefit offer, including development of the new e-recruitment module of the HR System

- Developing and implementing a competency framework for staff from Grade 1- 9 of the Council's pay structure
- Enabling new ways of working to equip staff for the future including policies, practices and culture
- Developing digital skills and tools to enable staff self-service.
- Creating a new Learning and Development Strategy

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.45 Work is underway on the Learning & Development (L&OD) Strategy based on identified learning needs analysis. A policy has been written and a map of L&OD is currently being developed. All Assistant Directors have committed to developing learning plans for their business units.
- 3.46 First Care (Third Party Sickness Reporting Facility) launched in October. Further functionality on this platform was rolled out during January 2020 through the First Care insight portal.

### **Performing at our Peak Programme**

#### **Programme Outcomes**

- The provision of high quality performance management tools
  - Streamlined governance structures that ensure effective and timely decision making
  - A strong performance culture is embedded across the organisation
- 3.47 During 2019/20 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Enhancing our business insight through data connectivity, and ensuring service managers have the right skills to use the tool robustly to analyse information and make informed decisions that result in improved services for our customers
  - Developing our insight culture through the effective engagement and use of our new tools and procedures, to enable lasting performance improvement
  - Delivering a new scheme of delegations to officers in respect of Executive powers

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.48 Work continues to improve the use of the performance management system, Inphase. Support has been given to the Housing and Investment team to streamline performance reporting and also to enhance the monitoring of areas such as temporary accommodation.
- 3.49 The annual review of performance measures and targets is underway and the suite of corporate measures for 2020/21 will be presented to Executive in July 2020 alongside the Annual Report. The process has also included consideration by Assistant Directors and their management teams of new

operational measures, with a view to implementing a programme to incorporate these into Inphase during 20/21. This will help to improve the use of the performance management tool at a business unit level, in line with the devolved governance model.

### **Corporate Performance highlights and areas for improvement**

3.50 Results for the full set of current corporate performance measures across all themes (FTFC programme and the Customer, Place and Transformation and Support themes) are attached as Appendix One. The overview of corporate focused results for April 2019 to March 2020 is outlined below:

3.51

<b>Number of Measures Reported</b>	<b>Meeting or exceeding target</b>	<b>Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)</b>	<b>Red Status (urgent improvement action required)</b>	<b>Missing Data</b>
44	33	3	7	1*

\* Data cannot be verified for Assets5b: Percentage of assets known to be health and safety compliant (as per SBC definition)

3.52 A summary of highlights and areas for improvement for April 2019 to March 2020 is set out in the following paragraphs across the three key delivery themes: Customer, Place, and Transformation and Support.

#### **A: Customer Theme**

3.53 The Customer Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

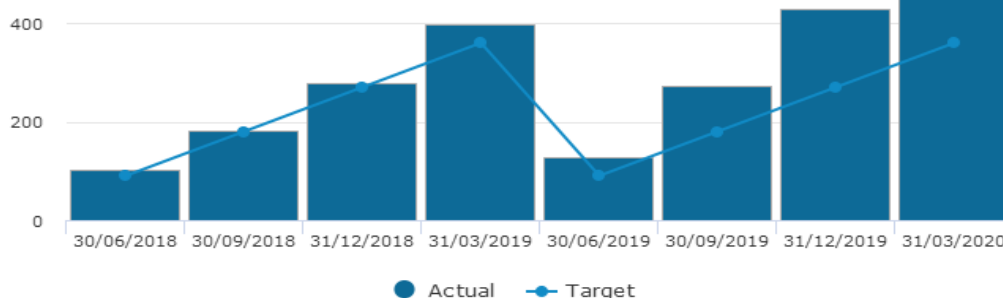
- Housing and Investment
- Communities and Neighbourhood

#### **Housing and Investment**

#### **Highlights and Achievements**

3.54 At the end of 2019/20 the target for homelessness preventions was 360, however the team achieved 525 preventions; this is in comparison to 399 in 2018/19. This is a significant achievement but highlights the increased pressure which is being placed on the service.

BV213: Homelessness preventions



**Spotlight: Health and Safety compliant non-domestic/non-commercial Council buildings (falling under the compliance contract)**

- 3.55 The percentage of health and safety compliant assets (statutory definition) has fallen this quarter. This is because many buildings have been closed as a result of Government Covid-19 guidance. The contractor has furloughed staff and reduced their service to emergency compliance works only.
- 3.56 Buildings that are not in use have been decommissioned by the Compliance team and the Facilities Management (FM) team are procuring a contractor to monitor and maintain closed buildings.
- 3.57 The Compliance team are unable to provide a result for 'Assets 5b: Percentage of (Council) assets known to be Health and Safety compliant (as per SBC enhanced definition)' for the third consecutive quarter. The Compliance team have audited the report provided by the contractor and not been able to verify the figures reported. In the absence of reliable information no data is able to be reported.
- 3.58 The contractor has now given notice to terminate the contract by the end of June 2020 and the service has been transferred to the FM team to be included within the Corporate Landlord review. Officers have recently completed a review of compliance across the Council's assets and will set the related standards going forward. A working group are pulling together the plan to provide an alternative service using other contractors and in-house staff. This is being drawn up by the Estates and FM team.
- 3.59 It should be noted that performance measures 'Assets 5a' (statutory) and 'Assets 5b' (non statutory) relate to council premises such as civic offices, community centres, play centres, pavilions, cemetery buildings, depots etc. and refer to Compliance Services via the ComplyFirst Framework. These services relate to the provision of regular compliance servicing and related maintenance of fire, water, electrical, gas, air conditioning and minor building works. Officers are currently working on a corporate landlord project to map the management of compliance across all council buildings and this could impact on the future definition of these measures.



### **Spotlight: Decent Homes**

- 3.60 The percentage of homes maintained as decent this quarter is below target this quarter. There has been a delay in the internal and external works programme due to Covid-19 and social distancing guidance e.g. not being able to work within homes.
- 3.61 The team are monitoring Government updates as they come through. The new Decent Homes contract will be mobilised when it is safe for the works to be undertaken.
- ECHFL1: Percentage of Homes maintained as decent, March 2020 target 76.1%, achieved 75.1%

### **Spotlight: Households in Emergency/Temporary Accommodation**

- 3.62 Due to Covid-19 the numbers have significantly increased following the Government directive on housing non-vulnerable rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping being accommodated, whom the council would not normally house. The council accommodated 12 rough sleepers and 29 who were considered to be at risk of rough sleeping.
- 3.63 8 Temporary Accommodation units that are being held for possible Covid-19 isolation cases and some General Need lettings were put on hold due to the Covid-19 Emergency, which have in turn led to an increased use of hotel and Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation.
- 3.64 As detailed in Quarter 2 there are a number of households in non-secure accommodation where a main homelessness duty is owed. Officers have continued to discharge the council's homelessness duty by offering permanent council tenancies or source private rented sector accommodation.
- 3.65 The team are looking into the introduction of a 'Housing First' approach within the Borough and will be bringing a report to the Executive for consideration later this year to set out what can be achieved.
- 3.66 The Government has pledged to provide long-term homes for those people taken off the streets during the Covid-19 pandemic. It has announced a £433m fund to provide 6,000 new housing units for vulnerable rough sleepers, with 3,300 delivered in the next 12 months. This includes bringing forward £381m previously announced at the Budget, with an extra £52m of new funding. While the funding for councils to support rough sleepers is positive, the council is still seeking clarity from the Government on what additional practical support will be available to local authorities to help them move people out of hotels and temporary accommodation and into housing.
- 3.67 Initial designs for a new hostel are being developed. If the project can proceed it may further reduce the need for B&B placements.
- NI156: Number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation at end of quarter, March 2020 target 75, achieved 175

## **Communities and Neighbourhoods**

### **Highlights and Achievements**

- 3.68 Officers have been working with Community Associations in response to Covid-19, and have been assisting with accessing Government grants and to benefit from the Government's Job Retention Scheme.
- 3.69 Officers launched the Stevenage Helps initiative to support vulnerable residents during the Covid-19 Emergency.
- 3.70 The Healthy Stevenage Partnership successfully developed a proposal to prepare for the launch of a young person's hub, working with a number of local secondary schools.
- 3.71 The play review was completed as part of the business unit review. This has created a more cost effective operating model and a more responsive approach to working with local children and their families across Stevenage.
- 3.72 The CCTV Governance Review concluded with refreshed governance documentation and terms of reference for the CCTV partnership, led by Stevenage and including North Herts, East Herts and Hertsmere councils.

### **B: Place Theme**

- 3.73 The Place Theme incorporates the following Business Units:
- Planning and Regulation
  - Stevenage Direct Services
  - Regeneration
  - Housing Development

(The Regeneration and Housing Development Business Units are primarily focused on delivery of the Stevenage Town Centre Regeneration and Housing Development Programmes of FTFC. Delivery updates for these programmes are summarised in paragraphs 3.13 to 3.16 and 3.18 to 3.22 respectively)

## **Planning and Regulation**

### **Highlights and Achievements**

- 3.74 Consultation has taken place for the Draft Climate Change Strategy and over 1500 responses were received. The strategy will be presented to Executive in September.
- 3.75 Planning applications continue to be determined within corporate and statutory targets.

## **Stevenage Direct Services (SDS)**

### **Highlights and Achievements**

- 3.76 Following consultation with children and young people, improvements to Shephalbury Park play area have been completed. Works are on order for

improvements to Whitesmead Rec, Burymead (The Avenue) and St Margaret's play areas, but are currently delayed due to Covid-19.

- 3.77 In quarter 2 Stevenage Direct Services launched a Recycling Bag Pilot, which continued into quarter 3. Around 270 households were invited to participate in a pilot for the use of recycling bags in place of the current plastic boxes provided. The new recycling bags are now being provided in place of the old boxes. Most residents appear happy to use the recycling bags. Constructive feedback has been received which will be used to inform future specifications.
- 3.78 In February the refuse and recycling module of the new Bartec digital system went live. The system will help the team move away from paper and manage the service electronically. Integration with corporate Firmstep platform will enable the sharing of real time information with the CSC and residents, such as missed bins and delays to the crew's schedule.
- 3.79 A community orchard in Mobbsbury Park has been restored and extended following works by the SDS Management team and Green Space Volunteers. A new 'People's Orchard' has been created on open space in Symonds Green. With supervision from SDS staff, SLT helped to clear scrub from Poplars Meadow (a local wildlife site). During Quarter 4, 40% of Green Space Volunteer hours supported the delivery of the Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 3.80 A new Waste Policy was approved by Executive in February. A Cemetery policy has also been drafted and an Amenity Tree Management policy is currently out for internal consultation.
- 3.81 Repairs are being fixed promptly and the time taken to complete them continues to be ahead of the target level. The team have placed major focus on a case management approach to each case dealt with. This, coupled with efforts to review and improve processes, has improved performance and productivity.
- RepTime1: Emergency Repairs - Average end to end repairs time (days), March 2020: target 1 day, achieved 0.94 days.
  - RepTime2: Urgent Repairs - Average end to end repairs time (days), March 2020: target 5 days, achieved 3.14 days.
  - RepTime3: Routine Repairs - Average end to end repairs time (days), March 2020: target 20 days, achieved 7.85 days.
- 3.82 The time taken to re-let Standard general needs voids has improved since last quarter (from 30.27 days to 29.97 days). Monthly performance in Quarter 4
- Voids General Needs: The time taken to re-let standard general needs voids (days) March 2020: target 32 days, achieved 29.97 days

### **Spotlight: Sheltered & Sheltered Major Works Voids**

- 3.83 Sheltered voids (turnaround time) and major works are red. The main reason for this is that the Choice based bidding system is not suitable for the independent living client group and that the majority of residents do not bid for themselves. For example between 1 April and 30 June 2019 the team let 13 properties (excluding flexi-care). Only 1 was let through the choice based bidding system by an applicant bidding for themselves.
- 3.84 The team are bound by the advertising and bidding cycles, so if a property has received low or no bids the team have to wait for the next cycle which can extend void times. Independent Living properties are not advertised on consecutive weeks. The plan is to remove these properties from the choice based bidding system and manage the process from the point of assessment through to the letting stage. This will be reviewed as part of the review of the allocation policy.
- 3.85 Until this is reviewed the independent Living team are and have been pro-actively trying to match people to properties, where possible with a personable approach. A good example of this was where they managed to turn a property around quickly because the current resident was willing to allow the successful applicant to view the property before she moved out. Within a 12 day period, they received the keys, completed the voids work and let the property again.
- Voids Sheltered: The time taken to relet standard sheltered voids, March 2020 target 70 days, achieved 88.89 days
  - Voids ShelteredMW: The time taken to relet major works sheltered voids, March 2020 target 70 days, achieved 103.25 days

#### **Spotlight: Garage Void Rate**

- 3.86 The void rate for garages has increased again this quarter (15.38% against a target of 12%).
- 3.87 Since 22 March 2020 no garage offers were made due to lockdown, however the team are working hard to identify void garages and match them to applicants, so once lockdown is lifted offers can resume straight away.
- 3.88 A project is also underway to modernise the current garage letting process and ensure that the available units are effectively marketed. In the medium term the intention is to allow customers to view the available garages, sign up and make payments on-line. As an interim measure, the waiting list is also be reviewed to ensure that time is not being spent making offers to customers who are no longer interested.
- 3.89 It is expected that garage arrears will increase during lockdown; the team are in contact with several tenants who are struggling financially and cannot pay until lockdown is lifted. The arrears are monitored on a weekly basis.
- 3.90 The Garages team will in future include the Awaiting Major Works garages in the void figure.

- CNM2g: Garage Voids as a percentage of stock March 2020: target 12%, achieved 15.38%

## **C: Transformation and Support Theme**

3.91 The Transformation and Support Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

- Corporate Services
- Digital and Transformation
- Finance and Estates

### **Corporate Services/Digital and Transformation**

#### **Highlights and Achievements**

##### **Spotlight: Customer Services**

3.92 Service delivery through the Customer Service Centre (CSC) is an ongoing focus area for improvement. As forecasted in December 2010, performance was on a downward trend during quarter 4.

- CSC4: Percentage of telephone calls to the Customer Service Centre answered within 20 seconds: target 55%, April 2019 to March 2020 achieved 46.7%
- CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre: target 8%, April 2019 to December 2020 achieved 15.9%
- CSC5: Percentage of walk-in customers to the Customer Service Centre served within 20 minutes: target 80%, April 2019 to March 2020 achieved 79.8%
- CSC13a: Percentage of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors): target 65%, April 2019 to March 2020 achieved 61.4% (Actual data provided until January 2020 with estimated data in February and March, due to reporting from the new systems being delayed due to the Covid-19 response. Calculations have been based on historical data).

3.93 Performance in January and February was below target because severe storms caused an influx of repair related issues, which were compounded by an existing backlog of fence, gutter, roof and other similar repairs.

3.94 Historical performance data demonstrates performance in the Customer Service Centre is closely related to the amount of skilled advisers available.

3.95 Resourcing challenges from Quarter 3 continued into early Quarter 4. Performance improved in March, primarily due to upskilling of advisers, additional agency resource and diversion of resource from the walk-in service to telephone.

3.96 As at 31 March 2020 there were 26.3 FTE in post. There were 5.6 FTE agency staff in place, which equates to 21.2% of all Customer Service

Advisers (CSAs) in post. The Covid-19 response delayed planned recruitment in March but remote interviews took place in the last week in April.

- 3.97 Absence triggered by COVID-19 increased during March. At the point of lockdown instruction on 23 March, a third of the team were self-isolating. Home working for the CSAs began on 26<sup>th</sup> March, enabling those self-isolating, but well enough to work, to continue in their role as CSAs. Homeworking has built significant resilience within the team and sickness/self-isolation absence has reduced.
- 3.98 In Quarter 4 the new Digital Platform was implemented, which includes the implementation of the new walk-in queuing system. An appointment system has been designed, implemented and communicated to customers.
- 3.99 Forecasting volume and performance for Quarter 1 is difficult in these uncertain times. The calculations are based on:
- Scenario one - reduced volume based on continued lockdown circumstances
  - Scenario two – reduced volume through April/May and a 30% increase for June
  - Scenarios three – reduced volume through April/May and a 50% increase for June

Measure	Target	Q4 forecast
CSC 12 – Percentage of calls abandoned	<8%	1) 5% 2) 7.3% 3) 15%
CSC 13a – Calls resolved at first point of contact	>65%	1) 65.3% 2) 60.4% 3) 59.9%
EAA1 - Customer satisfaction with CSC services	> 90%	1) 90% 2) 88.8% 3) 87%

- 3.100 The key focus for Quarter 1 is to plan for recovery, ensure safety measures are in place for staff and ensure those customers most in need of critical services are prioritised.
- 3.101 Recovery planning is heavily reliant on engagement with other back office services; therefore the CSC team will be working on a collaborative approach. Key areas of contribution include:
- Provision of a timetable for recovery plans. This will facilitate resourcing plans, more accurate forecasting and the development of customer communications.

- Areas/processes that can be directed to the web for those who are able.
- Identification of processes that can be resolved at first point of contact.

3.102 Additional staff through the re-deployment will be sought to support recovery. Training will take place during May with a view for readiness when lockdown measures are lifted and recovery plans are implemented.

3.103 The focus on this service area will be retained until initial performance improvement can be seen to be sustained across the full set of CSC measures.

### **Technology**

3.104 In Quarter 4 the IT team have enabled all staff, who require it, to be able to work from home due to Covid-19, majority of staff are now using remote access at any one time during the working day.

3.105 The team programmed and installed 100 additional home worker phones to allow teams like the CSC to work safely whilst following Covid-19 guidance.

3.106 Video conferencing methods have now been procured and implemented. These are available for staff day to day use, and also for public meetings such as the Executive meeting and Annual Council in May.

3.107 Extensive server upgrades that were planned have continued to take place, whilst in lockdown.

3.108 Laptops have been procured and are currently being deployed to Members which should enable them (once set up has taken place) to take advantage of the new video conferencing facilities.

### **Spotlight: Website Satisfaction**

3.109 Quarter 4 satisfaction with the Council website is rated as red; this is the lowest it has been in 2019/20.

3.110 In Quarter 4 there was a large increase in negative comments about the 'find feature' not returning certain results including waste and recycling service collection dates. This matter has now been resolved and collection dates are available up until the end of September 2020.

- WebSat1: Customer Satisfaction with Council website, March 2020 target 0.20 rating, achieved 0.16 rating

### **Our staff**

3.111 Employees are continuing to engage in regular and meaningful REAL conversations with their managers. These conversations typically include objectives, development, engagement and wellbeing, but they are also tailored to address individual matters. Since lockdown has begun all REAL conversations have taken place virtually, these have included wellbeing checks.

### **Spotlight: Agency Usage**

3.112 Agency usage is amber for Quarter 4 and is currently 0.9% above target at 11.9%. The profile of agency usage is:

- 3.68% are workers covering on an adhoc basis at Cavendish Road
  - 6.65% are agency workers covering established posts
  - 1.55% are covering key strategic projects
- Agency usage as a percentage of the total workforce: target 11%, April 2019 to March 2020 achieved 11.9%

3.113 Plans to reduce agency usage, in terms of key strategic and established posts, include successful recruitment campaigns for a number of key posts across the organisation.

3.114 Ad-hoc cover is planned to be reduced at Cavendish Road with the Stevenage Direct Services Business Unit Review. Consultation is planned to commence in July to develop a more flexible and resilient structure.

3.115 Highlights include the recruitment of three new Assistant Directors who will join during Quarter 1 and 2 of 2020/21.

### **Spotlight: Sickness Absence**

3.116 The management of sickness absence was initially identified as a 'spotlight' area at March 2018 Executive and has continued to be a focus for the Senior Leadership Team.

3.117 The Sickness Absence measure is currently rated as red. The number of sickness days per FTE has not been within target for the past year. It increased by 3.24% when compared to last quarter.

- Sickness absence rate for the current workforce (per FTE): target 8 days, twelve months to June 2019 achieved 9.49 days; twelve months to September 2019 achieved 9.8 days, twelve months to December 2019 achieved 9.56 days, twelve months to March 2020 achieved 9.87 days

3.118 The rise in sickness relates to an increase in the number of complex long term sickness absences (accounting for 65% of sickness, an increase of 6% compared to last quarter).

3.119 In the last 12 months 93 staff have been off long term sick with 70 having returned to work. The breakdown of length of long term sickness absence is: 75% of staff have been off for less than 3 months, 20% 3 to 6 months and 5% over 6 months. The breakdown of reasons for long term sickness absence is: 37.47% anxiety/stress/depression, 22.77% hospital surgery, 10.25% cancer related illnesses, 9.29% heart/respiratory, 12.2% muscular/skeletal and 7.75% other absence.



- 3.120 The Council has introduced a third party sickness reporting service, First Care, which went live in quarter three. This service provides advice and challenge on fitness for work to both individuals and managers, and ensures consistency of approach/advice on sickness absence. They will also follow up to ensure appropriate application of policy and return to work and provide regular and timely management information. Initially it is expected that the introduction of this sickness reporting service would result in an increase in sickness absence levels.
- 3.121 First Care advised that new clients often see a spike in absence within the first six months post implementing the service, before they then see a decline. It was originally planned that the team would undertake an evaluation of the First Care service in March 2020 with the support of the Shared Internal Audit Service. This audit has been delayed due to Covid-19 and is now scheduled to take place in six months' time.
- 3.122 There are some proactive interventions in place to try and reduce sickness absence levels. These include free flu jab provisions, physio and counselling services for staff and the introduction of the annual leave purchase scheme to support an employee work life balance.
- 3.123 The Senior Leadership Team continues to monitor the performance and management of sickness absence until revised policy and practice results in a sustained reduction in levels of sickness absence.

### **Finance and Estates**

- 3.124 The Revenues and Benefits service continues to exceed targets for Council Tax collection rates. However Covid-19 is impacting on customer's availability to pay, leading to increased arrears (18% of accounts had no payment in April 2020).
- 3.125 The percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority has exceeded target for the quarter. Despite the increased level of retail reliefs, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is predicted to impact on businesses ability to pay any remaining business rates.
- 3.126 The time taken to process housing benefit new claims and change events is 4.02 days below target. However the impact on the service from increased Council Tax Support claims and increased demand for information as a result of Covid-19 is likely to impact on this in 2020/21.

### **Spotlight: GF/HRA Savings Identified and Savings Removed from Budget**

- 3.127 Although the results for FS1a, FS2a, FS3 and FS4 (FTFC measures) are currently green, the figures entered as actuals do not include the impacts of Covid-19.
- 3.128 The Accountancy team completed an impact assessment in the last two weeks of March; therefore having a realistic figure for the measures at the year-end is very difficult. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the ongoing savings target are currently being reviewed. The June MTFS update

projects that a number of 2019/20 and 2020/21 savings options will not be fully realised in 2020/21.

### **Next Quarter Focus**

3.129 Good performance across all three key delivery themes (Customer, Place, Transformation and Support) has been achieved in quarter four, with the majority of corporate performance measures meeting or exceeding targets. Outcomes that significantly exceed expectations (measures achieving 'green plus' status) include the following:

- % of complaints progressing to stage 2 and 3 that are upheld or partially upheld
- % repairs fixed first time and average responsive repair end-to-end times
- % of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) that are broadly compliant
- % planning applications determined within national target timescales
- Number of Homelessness preventions

3.130 The Assistant Directors are responsible for improving the performance of measures that fall within their Business Units.

3.131 Following a number of assessments, and the new red and amber measures arising at March 2020, the following improvement plans have been identified for ongoing monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team:

- Continuing to implement the Corporate Landlord review in respect of asset maintenance and compliance and ensuring that the appropriate contractor is procured to enable compliance with Health and Safety regulations to be effectively monitored and recorded (paragraphs 3.55 to 3.58)
- Continuing to embed the new service model in the Customer Service Centre (paragraphs 3.92 to 3.103)
- Continuing to implement improved practices to support sickness absence (paragraphs 3.116 to 3.123)
- Continuing to resolve the issues with non-secure tenancies and implementing recovery plans for Temporary/Emergency accommodation caused by Covid-19 (paragraphs 3.62 to 3.67)
- Ensuring that issues with the letting of council garages due to Covid-19 are recognised and performance is monitored closely. Implement plans to improve the process of garages lettings (paragraphs 3.86 to 3.90)
- Implementing plans to improve the process to relet sheltered voids to reduce turnaround time (paragraphs 3.83 to 3.85)

3.132 In addition, the development and implementation of the IT strategy will continue to be monitored by the IT Shared Service Partnership Board to ensure that services are delivered that meet customer needs and are fit for the future.

3.133 The Senior Leadership Team will also closely monitor the impact of Covid-19 on performance across all service areas during Quarter 1 and most performance results will be compared to actuals in the equivalent period last year. This will help to establish the level of impact and inform where activity and resources need to be allocated.

3.134 The Council's approach to performance management and monitoring allows the organisation to proactively identify issues and challenges and ensure prompt management intervention. The fluid nature of the framework enables the Senior Leadership Team to amend targets to ensure that they continue to reflect revisions to service delivery models where necessary and to support and drive forward additional improvements in services for the benefit of internal and external customers.

#### **4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS**

4.1 The information presented in this report is collated from the information provided to monitor delivery of the Future Town, Future Council Programme and corporate performance for the quarter. It aims to give Executive an overview of the achievements the Council has made for the year to date, with a focus on the previous quarter and identifies plans for continued improvements in some areas to ensure the Council is fit for the future.

4.2 The Senior Leadership Team and Service Managers have been consulted to determine the appropriate content and to identify the key achievements.

4.3 A number of areas have been identified in section 3 of this report where a particular focus on improvement is required and outline plans have been set out. The Executive is recommended to note and endorse these improvement plans.

#### **5 IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 Financial Implications**

5.1.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for improvement activity identified will need to identify and consider any resulting financial implications.

##### **5.2 Legal Implications**

5.2.1 There are no direct legal implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for improvement activity identified will need to identify and consider any resulting legal implications.

##### **5.3 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

5.3.1 The report outlines performance against key priorities that form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across key

business unit themes. Where necessary, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for improvement activity identified.

#### **5.4 Risk Implications**

5.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s). Officers responsible for developing performance improvement plans will need to consider any risk implications from the improvement activity identified.

5.4.2 The Council has an embedded approach to risk management that mitigates any adverse effect on delivery of the Council's objectives and internal control processes and also provides good governance assurance.

#### **5.5 Other Corporate implications**

5.5.1 Improvement activity outlined may impact on the development of future policy or procedure.

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Executive Report 10 July 2019: 2018/19 Annual Report & Performance Overview








### **APPENDICES**
































- Appendix One: Compendium of Performance Results
- Appendix Two: Future Town, Future Council Programme Scope/Focus for 2019/20

**Executive Report Appendix One**

**Key to Performance Status**

**Symbols**

-  Red Status - Focus of improvement
-  Amber Status - Initial improvement activity identified
-  Green Status - Any variance from target manageable
-  Green Plus Status - Exceeding expectations
-  New measure - Performance results not required
-  No data results
-  Missing value

	Corporate Theme	Target to 31/03/19	Actual to 31/03/19	Status at 31/03/19	Target to 30/06/19	Actual to 30/06/19	Status at 30/06/19	Target to 30/09/19	Actual to 30/09/19	Status at 30/09/19	Target to 31/12/19	Actual to 31/12/19	Status at 31/12/19	Target to 31/03/20	Actual to 31/03/20	Status at 31/03/20	Target to 30/06/20	
+	Voids Sheltered MW - The time taken to relet major works sheltered voids	Business Unit	70.00	117.10		70.00	0.00		70.00	91.00		70.00	70.00		70.00	103.25		-
	BV213: Homelessness preventions	Customers	360.0	399.0		90.0	128.0		180.0	272.0		270.0	428.0		360.0	525.0		-
	CS8: Anti-social behaviour per 1,000 population	Customers	35.00	?		8.00	7.69		20.00	8.45		28.00	5.38		33.00	6.80		-
	CS9: Criminal damage per 1,000 population	Customers	12.00	?		2.50	2.39		5.70	2.36		8.80	2.47		10.00	2.01		-
	NI15b: The rate of violence against the person (victim based crime) per 1,000	Customers	33.07	?		10.00	2.96		17.00	9.00		28.00	7.90		35.00	8.24		-
+	VGC1: Percentage of dwellings with a valid gas certificate	Customers	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%		-
	Assets5b: Percentage of assets known to be health and safety compliant (as per SBC definition)	Customers	100.00%	91.00%		100.00%	91.00%		100.00%	?		100.00%	?		100.00%	?		-
	Assets5a: Percentage of assets known to be health and safety compliant (Statutory)	Customers	100.00%	91.00%		100.00%	99.60%		100.00%	100.00%		100.00%	100.00%		100.00%	97.50%		-
+	BV66a: Rent collection rate	Customers	98.7%	99.1%		93.6%	93.8%		96.3%	96.9%		97.8%	97.3%		98.7%	98.5%		-
+	ECHFL-EW1: Percentage of tenants satisfied with external works completed (for the current quarter)	Customers	80.0%	91.2%		80.0%	98.9%		80.0%	100.0%		80.0%	100.0%		80.0%	100.0%		-
+	ECHFL-IW1: Percentage of tenants satisfied with internal works completed (for the current quarter)	Customers	80.0%	96.0%		80.0%	100.0%		80.0%	100.0%		80.0%	100.0%		80.0%	100.0%		-
	NI15c: Number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation at end of quarter	Customers	100.00	73.00		75.00	73.00		75.00	81.00		75.00	89.00		75.00	175.00		-
+	ECHFL-6: Percentage of Homes maintained as decent	Customers	75.3%	75.4%		76.9%	77.0%		79.4%	79.5%		81.5%	81.5%		76.1%	75.1%		-
	FS3 (Futsav1b): Percentage of GF savings identified to meet three year target	Future Town, Future Council	69.9%	83.0%		21.1%	45.9%		39.8%	71.9%		47.4%	69.6%		69.9%	69.9%		-
	EAA1: Customer satisfaction with CSC customer service	Future Town, Future Council	90.0%	88.5%		90.0%	88.7%		90.0%	90.1%		90.0%	89.7%		90.0%	89.7%		-
	WebSat1: Customer satisfaction with Council website	Future Town, Future Council	0.20	0.28		0.11	0.26		0.11	0.30		0.15	0.26		0.20	0.16		-
	CTOC1: Percentage of customer complaints responded to within deadline	Future Town, Future Council	95.00%	90.45%		95.00%	94.37%		95.00%	94.19%		95.00%	94.94%		95.00%	93.90%		-
	FS2a (LACC2): Percentage HRA approved savings removed from HRA for current year	Future Town, Future Council	91.00%	86.70%		91.00%	98.00%		91.00%	94.00%		91.00%	92.00%		91.00%	91.00%		-
	FS1a (LACC1): Percentage GF approved savings removed from GF budget for current year	Future Town, Future Council	92.00%	89.90%		98.00%	98.00%		92.00%	94.00%		92.00%	92.00%		92.00%	92.00%		-
	FS4 (Futsav2b): Percentage of HRA savings identified to meet three year target	Future Town, Future Council	46.3%	56.0%		2.5%	36.0%		29.3%	100.0%		33.5%	79.3%		46.3%	79.3%		-

	Corporate Theme	Target to 31/03/19	Actual to 31/03/19	Status at 31/03/19	Target to 30/06/19	Actual to 30/06/19	Status at 30/06/19	Target to 30/09/19	Actual to 30/09/19	Status at 30/09/19	Target to 31/12/19	Actual to 31/12/19	Status at 31/12/19	Target to 31/03/20	Actual to 31/03/20	Status at 31/03/20	Target to 30/06/20
HDD1d: Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) by the Council (since 2014)	Future Town, Future Council	160.00	173.00	★	179.00	176.00	★	183.00	192.00	★	212.00	216.00	★	225.00	238.00	★	240.00
HDD1b (formerly NB1) - New Build Spend v Budget of development activity that is contracted	Future Town, Future Council	90.0%	98.2%	★	90.0%	99.8%	☆	90.0%	99.7%	☆	90.0%	98.2%	★	90.0%	95.3%	★	90.0%
CNM2g: Garage Voids as a percentage of stock	Future Town, Future Council	12.00%	10.70%	★	12.00%	10.79%	★	12.00%	11.58%	★	12.00%	14.74%	▲	12.00%	15.38%	▲	-
Compl4: Percentage of stage 2 & 3 complaints upheld fully or partially (Housing)	Future Town, Future Council	40.00%	39.51%	★	40.00%	35.00%	★	40.00%	20.00%	☆	40.00%	24.71%	☆	40.00%	27.73%	☆	-
EoC4a: Percentage of apprentices in post as percentage of workforce.	Future Town, Future Council	2.5%	2.4%	★	2.3%	2.1%	★	2.3%	1.9%	★	2.3%	2.1%	★	2.3%	1.9%	★	-
EoCrec: Time to recruit	Future Town, Future Council	45.00	40.00	☆	45.00	42.00	★	45.00	47.00	★	45.00	46.00	★	45.00	46.00	★	-
Voids sheltered: The time taken to relet standard sheltered voids	Housing Management	70.00	121.43	▲	70.00	103.94	▲	70.00	92.74	▲	70.00	88.81	▲	70.00	88.89	▲	-
NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)	Place	519.00	498.00	★	135.00	122.00	☆	250.00	243.00	★	380.00	365.00	★	520.00	500.00	★	150.00
NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	Place	40.0%	40.0%	★	42.0%	43.0%	★	43.0%	42.0%	★	41.0%	37.0%	▲	40.0%	40.0%	★	55.0%
Rep Cost1: Average responsive repair cost per dwelling	Place	321.00	316.42	★	81.77	62.40	☆	163.54	162.78	★	245.30	218.46	☆	327.07	277.58	☆	-
Rep-Time3: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Routine Repairs	Place	20.00	9.82	☆	20.00	6.45	☆	20.00	7.16	☆	20.00	7.08	☆	20.00	7.85	☆	-
Rep-Time1: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Emergency Repairs	Place	1.00	0.52	☆	1.00	0.79	☆	1.00	0.85	☆	1.00	0.88	☆	1.00	0.94	☆	-
VoidsGN: The time taken to relet standard general needs voids	Place	32.00	27.86	☆	32.00	30.31	☆	32.00	30.27	☆	32.00	31.82	★	32.00	29.97	☆	-
Rep-Time2: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Urgent Repairs	Place	5.00	3.87	☆	5.00	2.83	☆	5.00	2.80	☆	5.00	2.77	☆	5.00	3.14	☆	-
VoidsGNMW - The time taken to relet major works general needs voids	Place	65.00	80.67	▲	65.00	51.92	☆	65.00	59.88	☆	65.00	59.00	☆	65.00	59.13	☆	-
BTC1a: New jobs created through Business Technology Centre	Place	125.00	188.00	☆	15.00	?	?	30.00	34.00	☆	45.00	47.00	★	60.00	72.00	☆	-
ELL1a: Percentage of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) that are broadly compliant	Place	92.50	96.89	☆	92.50	98.45	☆	92.50	95.83	☆	92.50	95.93	☆	92.50	96.88	☆	-
NI157a: Percentage of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	Place	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%	83.3%	☆	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%	81.3%	☆	-
BTC1b: New business start up in Business Technology Centre	Place	52.00	86.00	☆	5.00	?	?	10.00	20.00	☆	15.00	34.00	☆	20.00	57.00	☆	-
NI156: Percentage of other planning applications determined within 8 weeks	Place	80.0%	96.8%	☆	80.0%	96.3%	☆	80.0%	97.5%	☆	80.0%	97.9%	☆	80.0%	96.7%	☆	-

	Corporate Theme	Target to 31/03/19	Actual to 31/03/19	Status at 31/03/19	Target to 30/06/19	Actual to 30/06/19	Status at 30/06/19	Target to 30/09/19	Actual to 30/09/19	Status at 30/09/19	Target to 31/12/19	Actual to 31/12/19	Status at 31/12/19	Target to 31/03/20	Actual to 31/03/20	Status at 31/03/20	Target to 30/06/20	
	NI184: Food establishments in the area broadly compliant with food hygiene law	Place	95.0%	95.1%	★	95.0%	96.1%	★	95.0%	96.1%	★	95.0%	97.0%	★	95.0%	96.0%	★	-
+	ECHFL5: Percentage of Repairs service customers satisfied (telephone survey)	Place	90.00%	96.13%	★	90.00%	93.08%	★	90.00%	93.36%	★	90.00%	93.01%	★	90.00%	92.72%	★	-
+	ECH-Rep3: Percentage repairs appointment made and kept	Place	95.00%	98.68%	★	95.00%	98.61%	★	95.00%	98.49%	★	95.00%	99.35%	★	95.00%	97.91%	★	-
+	ECH-Rep4: Percentage repairs fixed first time	Place	87.50%	97.47%	☆	87.50%	98.96%	☆	87.50%	99.14%	☆	87.50%	99.11%	☆	87.50%	96.76%	☆	-
+	NI157b: Percentage of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks	Place	65.0%	88.8%	☆	65.0%	96.6%	☆	65.0%	96.0%	☆	65.0%	97.2%	☆	65.0%	90.3%	☆	-
	Cust1: Percentage complaints progressing to stage 2 and 3 that are upheld or partially upheld	Transformation and Support	40.0%	34.6%	☆	40.0%	31.8%	☆	40.0%	18.3%	☆	40.0%	23.1%	☆	40.0%	25.0%	☆	40.0%
	CSC13a: Percentage of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors)	Transformation and Support	65.00%	64.30%	★	65.00%	62.90%	★	65.00%	61.80%	★	65.00%	62.10%	★	65.00%	61.40%	●	-
	CSC4: Percentage of telephone calls to the CSC answered within 20 secs	Transformation and Support	55.0%	49.6%	▲	50.0%	61.3%	☆	52.0%	56.9%	★	55.0%	49.6%	▲	55.0%	46.7%	▲	-
	CSC5: Percentage of walk-in customers to the CSC served within 20mins	Transformation and Support	80.0%	75.0%	●	75.0%	81.2%	☆	78.0%	80.2%	★	80.0%	79.8%	★	80.0%	79.8%	★	-
	Pe1: Total Human Capital - measures Workforce Stability	Transformation and Support	85.0%	84.9%	★	85.0%	85.9%	★	85.0%	85.0%	★	85.0%	85.9%	★	85.0%	86.0%	★	-
	BV10: Percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority	Transformation and Support	99.0%	98.9%	★	36.0%	36.9%	☆	61.0%	62.9%	☆	89.0%	89.8%	★	99.0%	98.9%	★	-
	Pe4a: Sickness Absence Rate for the Current Workforce (FTE)	Transformation and Support	8.00	8.86	●	8.00	9.49	▲	8.00	9.80	▲	8.00	9.56	▲	8.00	9.87	▲	-
	Pe6: Appraisal completion to meet corporate deadlines	Transformation and Support	100.0%	99.8%	★	100.0%	100.0%	★	100.0%	100.0%	★	100.0%	100.0%	★	100.0%	100.0%	★	-
	NI181: Time taken (days) to process housing benefit new claims and change events	Transformation and Support	9.00	5.96	☆	12.00	13.45	●	12.00	10.09	★	10.00	8.60	★	10.00	5.98	☆	-
	BV9: Percentage of council tax collected	Transformation and Support	96.8%	96.2%	★	33.0%	33.3%	★	61.0%	60.4%	★	88.0%	87.5%	★	96.8%	96.0%	★	-
	Pe2: Agency Usage as a percentage of total workforce	Transformation and Support	12.0%	11.9%	★	12.0%	13.2%	●	12.0%	12.8%	●	12.0%	11.4%	★	11.0%	11.9%	●	-
	CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre	Transformation and Support	6.0%	14.3%	▲	10.0%	7.2%	★	10.0%	10.4%	★	8.0%	15.1%	▲	8.0%	15.9%	▲	-





## **Appendix Two.**

### **Future Town, Future Council Scope and Focus for 2019/20**

#### **External Facing Programmes**

##### **1. Stevenage Centre Town Centre Regeneration Programme**

###### **1.1. Programme Outcomes**

- A new vibrant town centre delivered through a phased regeneration programme.
- Two major regeneration schemes to advance – one completed by 2020/21 and one to begin 2019/20.

###### **1.2. Programme Overview**

- 1.3. Regeneration of the town centre is the Council's number one priority and was the priority most often placed in residents' 'top three' in the town-wide survey undertaken in 2017. The Council wants to make Stevenage a destination of choice through delivering a new vibrant town centre, with quality shopping, office and leisure facilities.
- 1.4. The Council officially announced the appointment of Mace as the development partner for the first phase of town centre regeneration (SG1) in February 2018. This ambitious scheme will bring £350million of private investment into the town centre. It will see the area covering the Council (Daneshill House) offices, the Plaza, bus station and some of the adjacent car parks redeveloped with new shops, bars and restaurants, homes, new public spaces, and a central public sector hub accommodating the Council offices, a library, exhibition space, and health services
- 1.5. During 2019/20 the programme will primarily focus on:
- Achieving vacant possession of Swingate House
  - Advancing the SG1 scheme
  - Progressing the bus interchange project in line with milestones
  - Beginning works on the Town Square Public Realm and 'North Block' improvements
  - Supporting the LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) to ensure there are robust governance arrangements in place for the regeneration of Stevenage
  - Launching the fresh marketing brand, 'Stevenage Even Better' and opening the visitor centre to celebrate and promote the regeneration of the town

## **2. Housing Development Programme**

### **2.1. Programme Outcomes**

- Increased number of affordable houses in Stevenage.
- Improve access to the housing market in Stevenage for a greater number of residents.

### **2.2. Programme Overview**

2.3. Providing decent, affordable homes appropriate to the needs of residents is one of the Council's key priorities and again was high on the agenda for many respondents to the town-wide Resident Survey. The Council is meeting this priority by delivering its own new build programme. Overall the programme remains on track for delivery of 300 homes by 2020.

2.4. The Council continued to work proactively during 2018/19 to get the Secretary of State's Holding Direction on the adoption of the Local Plan lifted. This was achieved in March 2019 and the Council has subsequently adopted the Local Plan since the year-end. This will provide the certainty needed to encourage developers to bring forward their schemes to provide a range of housing, including a proportion of affordable homes.

2.5. During 2019/20 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Completing and letting 54 new affordable homes across a number of schemes and 11 private sale homes.
- Starting work on a further 298 new/replacement homes across a range of planned schemes including sites at Shephall Way, North Road and Symonds Green.
- Exploring the viability of other potential areas of development across the town including opportunities to work in partnership with other providers.
- Continuing to work with partners to enable the delivery of affordable homes.
- Forming a Wholly Owned Company to support the delivery of new homes.

## **3. Excellent Council Homes Programme**

### **3.1. Programme Outcomes**

- Transforming the Housing and Investment service to better meet the needs of its customers.

### **3.2. Programme Overview**

3.3. The Council's aim is to provide high quality, efficient and effective housing services. The Council has committed through the Excellent

Council Homes programme to transform its housing services to better meet the needs of its customers.

3.4. The programme comprises five main themes:

- Business Vision: focused on embedding corporate values and unified customer service to all members of staff. This is to ensure that customers will receive the same, excellent customer service from every member and area of business.
- Digital Housing: aimed at improving back office processes and enhancing internal systems in order to support digital development and access to information for our customers.
- Service and Personal Development: focused on delivery of a cohesive team provided with the right tools and skills to deliver excellent customer service.
- Knowing our Customers: aimed at understanding our customers' needs and prioritising them to provide bespoke services where possible. This is to improve contact with our customers and visibility and approachability of our staff.
- Major Investment in Flat Blocks: focused on delivery of the Major Refurbishment Contract (MRC), sprinkler systems and lift replacements in council-owned flat blocks

3.5. During 2019/20 the programme will primarily focus on:

- The launch of a new online account where customers will be able to access housing services 24/7.
- Delivery of a major refurbishment programme to our flat blocks (incorporating the MRC, lift replacements and retrofitting of sprinklers).
- Implementation of a new area-based co-operative neighbourhood management approach in conjunction with staff from Stevenage Direct Services and Communities and Neighbourhoods.
- Completing the final phases of the Housing and Investment Future Council Business Unit Review.
- Providing staff with the right business tools and software to enable them to work more effectively out in the community.
- Delivery of the Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Initiative Strategy and Housing Older Persons Strategy.

## **4. Co-operative and Neighbourhood Management Programme**

### **4.1. Programme Outcomes**

- Residents feel that they can work with the council and other organisations to help meet the needs of the local area.
- Staff better understand the town's communities and through doing so are more able to deliver the change that is required.
- Public spaces are more attractive, better cared for by the council and residents, and help to give people pride in the place they live.

- The Council's Community centres are efficiently run, well-managed and most importantly, meet local needs.

#### **4.2. Programme Overview**

4.3. The Co-operative Neighbourhood Management (CNM) programme sets out how the Council will work with communities to improve neighbourhoods. Through working together with residents and other partners the Council believes public spaces can be made more attractive and in turn help to give people pride in the place they live. The CNM programme was formally launched at Stevenage Day in June 2017 and is complemented by an 'Our Neighbourhood' area on the Council's website. Focused investment in neighbourhood improvements has continued to progress throughout the year. The programme has been further re-purposed to provide the FTFC oversight for the development of the Council's approach to area-based co-operative neighbourhood management.

4.4. During 2019/20 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Developing the Council's approach to co-operative neighbourhood management, working initially with Stevenage Direct Services, Housing and Investment and Communities and Neighbourhoods.
- Continuing the planned roll-out of neighbourhood improvements, with consultation and engagement work starting in Bedwell and Longmeadow.
- Completing the Community Centre Review.
- Progressing the Garage Programme.
- Reviewing and reshaping resident involvement activity in response to the Community Engagement Framework.

### **5. Connected to our Customers Programme**

#### **5.1. Programme Outcomes**

- Use of self-service is encouraged, so more time can be spent with customers that need extra help.
- Increased customer satisfaction for residents interacting with key services.
- Online customer data will be protected and better used to provide useful insight
- The Council uses technology to meet its ambitions and make its workforce more modern, efficient and responsive to customer needs.
- A simple and clearer website with more self-service choices.

#### **5.2. Programme Overview**

5.3. The 'Connected to our Customers' programme aims to improve the accessibility of Council services and the customer experience. It will

enhance the way residents can access Council services through increasing the use of digital options, whilst ensuring that officers continue to spend time with those customers who require additional assistance.

5.4. The Council's digital aspirations will evolve as we co-operatively redesign services with our workforce and customers. This modernisation of service delivery will allow the Council to be more responsive to customer needs and flexible in order to adapt more quickly to changing demands or priorities.

5.5. During 2019/20 the programme will primarily focus on:

- New website testing completion, with 'go-live' expected in late summer 2019.
- Finalising procurement of the digital platform and plans for implementation.
- Phased implementation of digital platform capabilities starting with replacement CRM and quick wins for self-serve options.
- Customer and Business Account functionality placed into the new website, providing a single view of the customer and establishing a new centralised digital customer relationship.
- Developing a service redesign approach that will optimise new technology and new ways of working.
- Developing a Channel Shift Strategy which will clearly set out our approach to optimising the take-up of the new digital services whilst ensuring access for everyone, so that no-one is left behind.
- Implementation of the Environmental Services case management system. Integration into the digital platform to enable self-serve.
- Working with services to understand desired new ways of working and technology to support mobile, agile and area working. Planning for how we want to work from the new Public Sector Hub

## **Internal Facing Programmes**

### **6. Financial Security Programme**

#### **6.1. Programme Outcomes**

- As meet the Financial Security three year savings target
- To ensure that the General Fund expenditure equals income without the use of balances from 2022/23 onwards
- To ensure the Housing Revenue Account has sufficient funding to meet the capital needs of the Housing Asset Management Strategy and identified revenue needs
- To identify Financial Security options using the three revised workstreams (efficiency, commercial and improved processes), before recommending any service rationalisation options, as summarised below.

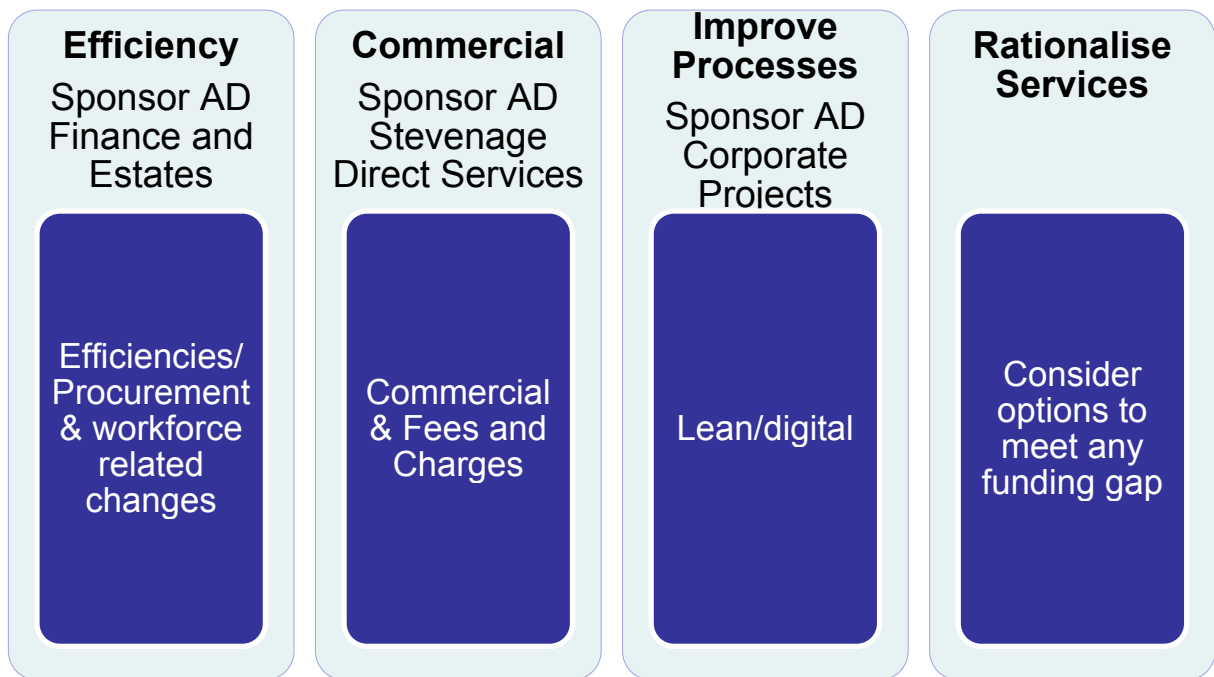


Figure 2: Financial Security workstreams

## 6.2. Programme Overview

6.3. This programme aims to ensure that the Council has sufficient funds available to deliver quality services that residents want and need. The Council aims to break away from the cycle of dependency on Government grant through becoming more efficient in its processes and developing new and innovative funding streams to ensure it has the resources it needs to be a Council fit for the future and build a vibrant town that residents deserve.

6.4. During 2019/20 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Identification of Financial Security options to meet the General Fund and HRA funding gap for the period 2020/21-2022/23 via the Financial Security workstreams.
- Review of leases for the Commercial Portfolio, to ensure they are reviewed in a timely manner to protect the Council's revenues.
- Purchase of Investment Properties to meet the General Fund target of £200,000.
- Completion of Local Asset Reviews to meet the objectives of the General Fund Asset Management Strategy.
- Review of fee-earning services to determine fee versus cost.
- Identifying options to improve productivity via use of digital interventions
- Review of budgets for cross-cutting reviews.
- Presentation of Financial Security options to the Leader's Financial Security Group before approval by the Executive.

## **7. Employer of Choice Programme**

### **7.1. Programme Outcomes**

- Improved employee engagement.
- Right person, right place, right time – recruiting/retaining staff to hard to fill posts.
- Improved managerial competency.
- Improved reputation as a place to work.
- Evidence of staff progressing to higher grades and new roles.

### **7.2. Programme Overview**

7.3. The Council aims to create a flexible, collaborative, creative and modern workforce to ensure it can deliver the priorities set out in the FTFC programme and give residents the standard of services they expect. This programme aims to transform the way the Council works, ensuring that staff have the skills, abilities and experience to deliver excellence. The Council must become an employer of choice so that it can compete in today's market place and attract and retain the best staff to build for the future.

7.4. Through Future Council Business Reviews, work has begun on shaping the next stage of the transformation programme to ensure the Council has the right structures, teams and people in place.

7.5. During 2018/19 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Establishing a compelling employer brand with a competitive pay and benefit offer, including development of the new e-recruitment module of the HR System
- Developing and implementing a competency framework for staff from Grade 1- 9 of the Council's pay structure.
- Enabling new ways of working to equip staff for the future including policies, practices and culture.
- Developing digital skills and tools to enable staff self-service.
- Creating a new Learning and Development Strategy.

## **8. Performing at our Peak Programme**

### **8.1. Programme Outcomes**

- The provision of high quality performance management software tools.
- Streamlined governance structures that ensure effective and timely decision making.
- A strong performance culture is embedded across the organisation.

## **8.2. Programme Overview**

8.3. The Council aims to become an insightful Council with improved service performance and slimmed down decision-making processes. The programme will improve the organisation's insight, analysis and intelligence to help us to make better informed business decisions. This is being achieved through more timely coordination of data and the adoption of tools to support ongoing strategic and operational analysis.

8.4. During 2019/20 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Enhancing business insight through data connectivity, and ensuring service managers have the right skills to use the tool robustly to analyse information and make informed decisions that result in improved services for our customers.
- Developing our insight culture through the effective engagement and use of our new tools and procedures, to enable lasting performance improvement.
- Delivering a new scheme of delegations to officers in respect of Executive powers



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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