

# Public Document Pack



## EXECUTIVE

**Date: Tuesday, 6 October 2020**  
**Time: 2.00pm**  
**Location: Virtual (via Zoom)**  
**Contact: Ian Gourlay (01438) 242703**  
**committees@stevenage.gov.uk**

Members: Councillors: S Taylor OBE CC (Chair), J Lloyd (Vice-Chair),  
L Briscoe, R Broom, J Gardner, R Henry, J Hollywell and J Thomas.

---

## AGENDA

### PART 1

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

**2. MINUTES - 16 SEPTEMBER 2020**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 September 2020 for signature by the Chair.  
Pages 3 – 14

**3. COVID-19 UPDATE**

To consider a verbal update / presentation on the Covid-19 pandemic.

**4. WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2020-2023**

To present to Executive and seek approval of the new Workforce Strategy for 2020-2023.  
Pages 15 – 42

**5. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER ONE 2020/21**

To consider the Quarter One 2020/21 Corporate Performance monitoring report.  
Pages 43 – 92

**6. HERTFORDSHIRE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY - 24 MONTH REVIEW**

To provide information on the Council's second year of participation in the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA), and to propose that the Council remains a member of the HHIA.  
Pages 93 – 104

**7. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2021/22**

To consider the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme for 2021/22.  
Pages 105 – 120

**8. URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

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

**9. 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.

**10. PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 16 SEPTEMBER 2020**

To approve as a correct record the Part II Minutes of the Executive held on 16 September 2020 for signature by the Chair.  
Pages 121 - 122

**11. 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 Tuesday, 6 October 2020 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>**

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE MINUTES

**Date: Wednesday, 16 September 2020**

**Time: 2.00pm**

**Place: Virtual (via Zoom)**

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

**Also Present:** Councillors Phil Bibby CC and Simon Speller (observers)

**Start / End** Start Time: 2.00pm  
**Time:** End Time: 5.05pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rob Broom and Robin Parker, CC (observer).

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **2 MINUTES - 12 AUGUST 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 12 August 2020 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

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

In response to a question regarding publicity regarding the Co-operative Neighbourhood Teams, the Corporate Communications Manager advised that some videos had been produced, an item was to be included in the next edition of the Council's Chronicle, and negotiations were ongoing with the Comet newspaper about a double page information spread.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 19 August 2020 be noted.

#### **4 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS)**

The Executive considered a report seeking approval to a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS).

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration advised that the Council has a statutory duty to maintain an up to date LDS, which outlined the production of Development Plan Documents. Due to a delay to the timeframes involved with

production of the Area Action Plan for the Railway Station, the Council was now required to update the May 2019 version of the LDS. The opportunity had been taken to include details regarding a number of Supplementary Planning Documents which the Planning Policy Team would be preparing in the coming year or so.

The Executive supported the Leader's additional recommendation that the Planning and Development Committee should be consulted prior to publication of the final LDS.

As a consequence, the recommendation in the report concerning the publication date of the LDS would be amended accordingly.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Local Development Scheme 2020 (attached as Appendix A to the report) be approved as the programme for the new Stevenage Local Development Documents, subject to any necessary minor editorial modifications agreed by the Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation), having consulted the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration.
2. That prior to the publication of the Local Development Scheme 2020, the Planning and Development Committee be consulted on its content at its next meeting, with any views and comments being fed back to the Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration.
3. That the Local Development Scheme 2020 be brought into effect on a suitable date following the consultation referred to in Resolution 2. above and published on the Council's planning web pages.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report; and 2. To allow the Planning and Development Committee to comment on the proposed LDS before its publication.*

*Other options considered: As contained in report.*

## **5 PARKING PROVISION AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: ADOPTION**

The Executive considered a report seeking the adoption of the Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration stated that a draft version of the new Parking SPD had been the subject of public consultation in February-March 2020. The SPD now before the Executive had been amended to take account of consultee comments. The main changes related to the recently amended Use Class Order, minor amendments to the Accessibility Zones where reduced levels of parking would be permitted, separate parking requirements for houses and flats, reduced visitor parking provision, and a stated preference for unallocated parking in communal areas. Upon its adoption, the SPD would be a material consideration in all future planning applications.

The following issues were raised during the debate:

- The Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation) explained that the reason for a reduced car parking requirement in the four accessibility zones was on sustainability grounds, due to the proximity of these zones to facilities and amenities, such as the Stevenage Railway Station;
- The Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation) undertook to respond to the Portfolio Holder for Resources regarding enforcement of disabled parking bays in the Borough;
- The Principal Planning Officer explained the formula used for the calculation of the number of disabled parking spaces required to be provided in new developments;
- Officers were requested to give further consideration to strengthening the document regarding the requirements of developers to contribute towards sustainable transport methods; including some specific reference in the document to the Old Town/High Street area; and referring to “Living” rather than “Liveable” streets throughout the text;
- The Leader made a specific request to officers to revise the wording of the “Park and Ride” section of the SPD, given the long held ambition of establishing a Park and Ride facility in the Borough aligned to the provision of an electric bus serving a circular route around the town.

The Executive supported the Leader’s additional recommendation that the Planning and Development Committee should be consulted prior to publication of the final SPD document.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the outcomes of the Draft Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD consultation be noted.
2. That the views and comments of the Planning and Development Committee on the SPD be sought at the next meeting of that Committee.
3. That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation), taking into account the views of the Planning and development Committee, and following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make minor amendments as necessary in the final preparation of the Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD prior to its adoption.
4. That, subject to Resolutions 2. and 3. above, the Parking Provision SPD (adopted 2012) be revoked.
5. That, subject to Resolutions 2. and 3. above, the Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD be approved for adoption as a material consideration for planning applications.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report; and 2. To allow the Planning and Development Committee to comment on the proposed SPD prior to its publication.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **6 STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY ADOPTION AND ENGAGEMENT CONSULTATION UPDATE**

The Executive considered a report providing an update on climate change work, achievements and engagement, and seeking adoption of a proposed Climate Change Strategy.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration advised that, since the climate change declaration, officers had been working internally and externally with all Council departments and relevant local interest groups and academics. There had also been a number of Portfolio Holder Briefing Group sessions, several Climate Change and Sustainability Member Working Group meetings and discussions with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration commented that the report before the Executive presented the Climate Change engagement work carried out so far, as well as seeking approval to a proposed Climate Change Strategy (CCS), which was the starting point for the Council to reach its carbon neutral targets.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment explained that the CCS began by outlining the known data on greenhouse gas emissions in Stevenage. This included emissions across the town, as well as for the Council's own activities, providing an important baseline. The CCS also presented what must change to support the aspiration of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. The CCS outlined the areas the Council needed to focus on in order to reduce its own carbon footprint and to engage residents and businesses in an active cross-town commitment to reduce Stevenage's contribution to climate change.

The following points were raised during the debate upon the Strategy:

- It was confirmed that the Citizens' Panel would not target groups covered by existing engagement processes, but would consist of a cross-section of residents not involved with those groups;
- Officers were requested to arrange specific presentations of the Strategy to the Stevenage Youth Council and Stevenage Youth Parliament in order to gather the views of young people; and
- Once published, comments on the Strategy should be sought on-line and on social media.

The Executive supported the following three additional recommendations (Nos. 4, 5 and 6) proposed by the Leader:

4. That it be noted that the process to recruit to the Citizens' Panel is now underway, and that feedback from this Panel will be provided in October 2020 to inform the final Strategy.
5. That an Action Plan be developed, to be approved by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, and that the intention of asking the

Environment and Economy Select Committee to review the delivery of the Strategy be noted.

6. That a progress report on the delivery of the Strategy and associated Action Plan be submitted to the Executive in 12 months' time.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration commented that it would be his intention to establish an Implementation Group to help drive and monitor progress made against the Climate Change Action Plan, comprising himself and the Portfolio Holders for Housing, Health & Older People and Economy, Enterprise & Transport. The Chair of the Environment and Economy Select Committee would be invited to all meetings of the Group, together with other Members as and when required.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the updates to the Climate Change work and achievements thus far be noted.
2. That the content of the draft Climate Change Strategy (set out in Appendix C to the report) and accompanying documents be approved for adoption.
3. That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft documents prior to adoption.
4. That it be noted that the process to recruit to the Citizens' Panel is now underway, and that feedback from this Panel will be provided in October 2020 to inform the final Strategy.
5. That an Action Plan be developed, to be approved by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, and that the intention of asking the Environment and Economy Select Committee to review the delivery of the Strategy be noted.
6. That a progress report on the delivery of the Strategy and associated Action Plan be submitted to the Executive in 12 months' time.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report; and 4., 5. & 6. To ensure feedback from the Citizens' Panel is taken into account and to put in place suitable monitoring mechanisms for the Strategy.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **7 COVID-19 UPDATE**

The Executive considered a verbal update/presentation from the Strategic Director (TP) on the Covid-19 pandemic.

The key highlights of the presentation included:

- The number of daily cases was rising, although the number of hospital admissions remained lower than at the peak;
- The Stevenage figure for cases per 100,000 of people was 27, compared to an average for England of 18;
- The Director of Public Health had produced a plan of key areas where focus was needed;
- There were significant pressures on national testing capacity;
- The NHS was preparing for a potential autumn and winter second spike;
- SBC and HCC's Public Health team were working on an action plan to help prevent further escalation;
- Watford/Three Rivers Councils had begun a pilot of local contact tracing, which would be rolled out to all Hertfordshire Councils in October 2020;
- The direction to mobilise local contact tracers would be via the HCC Director of Public Health or Public Health England;
- The County-wide Local Outbreak Plan was about to be approved, and an SBC District outbreak Plan had been developed;
- Communications work, in relation to staff, residents and businesses, had continued; and
- The Stevenage Together Partnership was continuing in its work to develop a joint recovery action plan for the town.

The Leader commented that the quality of the information provided to Borough/District Councils needed to improve in order that resources could be targeted appropriately; the testing regime needed a rapid improvement; and HCC should be proactively informing District/Borough Councils of school closures, rather than this information being picked up by chance through social media. She felt that the Government should undertake proper consultation with local authorities regarding the Covid Marshals initiative, rather than the less than 24 hour period they had just given councils to respond on the matter.

The Leader requested officers to ensure that the Covid-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) were kept regularly up to date.

The Leader requested the Strategic Director (TP) to arrange for his presentation to be made available in the Covid-19 area on the Council's website, and that a link to this be circulated via social media.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Covid-19 update be noted.

## **8 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF 2019/20 AND PRUDENTIAL CODE**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the annual review of the 2019/20 Treasury Management Strategy.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that during the year the average cash balance was £63.642M, earning interest of £625,000 and achieving an average interest rate of 0.98%. The comparable rate was 0.58% (average 7-day LIBID rate).



This compared favourably with an original budget assumption of £566,000 based on average investment rate of 0.7%.

The Executive noted that cash balances (£54.072M as at 31 March 2020) enabled the Council to use internal borrowing in line with its Capital Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy. This position was kept under review taking into account future cash balances and forecast borrowing rates.

It was further noted that, in 2019/20, the Council spent £43.527M on capital projects (General Fund and HRA). The capital programme was funded from a combination of existing capital resources and an increase in borrowing (General Fund £1.820M, HRA £7.056M). External loans of £4.010M were taken out for the HRA during 2019/20. As at 31 March 2020, the Council had total external borrowing of £209.229M.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources confirmed that there had been no breaches of the treasury operational boundary and authorised limit during 2019/20.

It was **RESOLVED** that the 2019/20 Annual Treasury Management Review be recommended to Council for approval.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **9 GENERAL FUND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE (2020/21 - 2024/25)**

The Executive considered a report providing an update to the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2020/21 – 2024/25.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that, since the June 2020 Covid MTFS recovery report, the Council had received £130,000 of new burdens money for managing the retail and hospitality grant scheme. The June report did not look at losses beyond 2020/21, and the updated report assumed that there were likely to be losses of income of circa £1Million in 2021/22 (probably car parking, commercial income and so on).

The Portfolio Holder for Resources commented that the level of losses estimated across the life of the MTFS for the General Fund is circa £8.6Million, based on approximately £1.5Million losses beyond 2020/21. This has meant that the MTFS assumed that all the on-hold spend agreed in the June Covid report would remain on hold due to the current financial situation and uncertainty.

The Executive was informed that the MTFS assumed no additional New Homes Bonus (NHB), as the Government may abandon the scheme. This presented challenges for the Co-operative Neighbourhood Management (CNM) FTFC programme in future years beyond 2021/22, which still needed to be addressed for capital and would require a growth bid for 2021/22.

Members were further informed that the MTFS modelled a 1.99% Council Tax

increase - there was no news on the level of Council Tax rise for 2021/22, as this would be part of the Government finance settlement. Regrettably, the Council would need to look at prioritisation of services because the savings from commercial and transformation (and currently planned savings) were not likely to be forthcoming in 2021/22 for budget setting.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources explained that, to support the resilience of the General Fund, the Strategic Director (CF) had assumed a £350,000 RCCO reduction per year as a result of sale of the Locality Review sites. The MTFS assumed that the Council needed a higher level of balances as a result of Covid (£3.4Million General Fund balances), in case the impact of Covid had a 'long tail'.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that the savings target had been increased for 2022/23 and 2023/24. The new savings target for 2022/23 was £550,000 and for 2023/24 was £600,000. Total savings required for 2021/22-2023/24 was £2.45Million for the General Fund.

The Executive supported two proposed additional recommendations (Nos. 21 and 22) as follows:

21. That the additional pay inflation from the 2020/21 pay award of 2.75%, as outlined in Paragraph 4.4.5 of the report, totalling £90,460, be approved; and
22. That the budgets totalling £865,860 as outlined in the June COVID MTFS recovery report be removed from the budgets. This includes £75,000 of 2020/21 CNM spend, £152,000 of vacant posts held, £50,000 of overtime budgets, £125,000 of capital related spend, and £463,860 of other underspends identified in 2020/21.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the change to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) principles, as outlined in Paragraph 4.1.6 of the report, be approved.
2. That, for modelling purposes, Council Tax increases be set at the threshold of 1.99%, subject to any change in Government rules to achieve a balanced budget (as referred to in Section 4.8.12 of the report).
3. That the update inflation assumptions used in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (as referred to in section 4.4 of the report) be approved.
4. That the approach to Financial Security, as set out in Section 4.7 of the report, be approved.
5. That an amount of £200,000 for 2020/21 and 2021/22 be approved for inclusion in the budget setting process as a Transformation Fund to help deliver the Financial Security Target (as referred to in Paragraph 4.6.3(v) of the report).
6. That a General Fund Financial Security Target of £2.45Million be approved for

- the period 2021/22 – 2023/24, including increases in fees and charges (as referred to in Paragraph 4.7.17 of the report).
7. That an amount of £100,000 for 2020/21 be included in the budget to cover associated costs of the Devolution and Recovery White Paper (as referred to in Paragraph 4.6.3(ii) of the report).
  8. That the 2020/21 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter changes to the General Fund, as outlined Paragraph 4.6.1 of the report, be approved.
  9. That the financial impact of Covid-19 in 2020/21 and future years, including the estimation of income guarantee scheme, as set out in section 4.5 of the report, be noted.
  10. That the budgets held as part of the June 2020 Covid-19 MTFs report be not released and be removed from the budget, as set out in Paragraph 4.7.17 of the report and based on the level of projected General Fund balances.
  11. That the assumptions set out in Paragraph 4.7.17 of the report that underpins the level of Financial Security savings required in the MTFs and which supported the General Fund balances be noted.
  12. That the unavoidable growth pressures, as outlined in Paragraph 4.6.2 of the report, be noted and included in the budget setting process.
  13. That General Fund growth be only approved for the Council's FTFC priorities and the growth allowance in the 2020/21 budget is £75,000, with growth above that level needing to be funded by further savings in addition to the £2.45Million target identified (as referred to in Paragraph 4.7.17 of the report).
  14. That the Leader's Financial Security Group oversees the development of the 2021/22 – 2023/24 savings package.
  15. That the New Homes Bonus balances available be noted, and that growth funding of Co-operative Neighbourhood Management be included as part of the budget setting process.
  16. That the revenue contribution to capital be reduced by £350,000 per year from 2020/21 as a result of the locality review sales in order to increase the resilience of General Fund balances.
  17. That a minimum level of balances for the General Fund of £3.41Million be approved for 2020/21 (as referred to in section 4.11 of the report).
  18. That the MTFs be regularly updated for any material financial pressures so forecasts are updated and be re-presented to the Executive for approval.
  19. That, if required, public consultation be commissioned in line with the requirements of the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy.

20. That the Trade Unions and staff be consulted on the key messages contained within the Medium Term Financial Strategies and more specifically when drawing up any plans where there is a risk of redundancy.
21. That the additional pay inflation from the 2020/21 pay award of 2.75%, as outlined in Paragraph 4.4.5 of the report, totalling £90,460, be approved.
22. That the budgets totalling £865,860 as outlined in the June COVID MTFS recovery report be removed from the budgets. This includes £75,000 of 2020/21 CNM spend, £152,000 of vacant posts held, £50,000 of overtime budgets, £125,000 of capital related spend, and £463,860 of other underspends identified in 2020/21

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report and 21. To reflect the agreed pay award; and 22. To reflect further savings required due to Covid-19.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **10 QUARTER 1 MONITORING REPORT 2020/21 (CAPITAL) - GENERAL FUND AND HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the First Quarter Capital Programme General Fund and Housing Revenue Account monitoring 2020/21.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that, in respect of the General Fund, there was a 2020/21 net decrease of capital expenditure of £1.4M and a 2021/22 net increase of capital expenditure of £1.6M. The updated projected spend for the 2020/21 General Fund capital programme was £35.3M, a net decrease of £1.4 M, which was mainly due to slippage to 2021/22.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources stated that two bids were in development from the funding package received by Herts LEP for Growth Deal 3 (GD3). The first was for £2.11M to speed up acquisitions, asbestos removal, remediation etc. The second proposal, for £1.10M was in relation to a new Multi-Storey Car Park, to allow and enable the development of other land parcels.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources further stated that a bid had also been submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Stevenage had been selected to submit proposals for a Town Deal from the Towns Fund. The Government was bringing forward funding to 2020/21 to support projects that would make an immediate impact in towns. Stevenage had been offered a grant of £1.0M to fund capital projects that could be delivered this financial year. The spending must be in line with the Towns Fund intervention framework and achieve good value for money. The Council had submitted proposals to utilise the funding for demolition works to key regeneration sites, expansion of the town square project realm works scope, and delivery of part of the north block co-work scheme which would deliver new jobs

In respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Portfolio Holder for Resources advised that there was a 2020/21 net decrease in capital expenditure of £750,000 and a 2021/22 net decrease in capital expenditure of £10.9M. The current

forecast was that there would be no need to return 1 for 1 receipts in 2020/21, but this was heavily reliant on the timing of capital spend and identifying suitable Registered Provider grants.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources reported that the Decent Homes Programme formed a large part of the ongoing investment programme of the HRA. The forecast for 2020/21 of the number of properties where works had been carried out to bring the property up to the decent homes standard was 2,392.

The Executive noted that Right to Buy (RTB) sales were now forecast to be 27 in 2020/21 based on current expressions of interest (the forecast was reduced from 35). 5 RTB sales had been completed to date (20 RTB sales in total had been completed up to the same time last year).

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the 2020/21 General Fund Capital Programme net decrease in expenditure of £1.4Million, as summarised in Table One, Paragraph 4.1.1 of the report, be approved.
2. That the General Fund net increase (arising from slippage) of capital expenditure of £1.6Million in 2021/22, also as summarised in Table One, Paragraph 4.1.1 of the report, be approved.
3. That the net decrease of £750,000 in the capital expenditure for the Housing Revenue Account, as summarised in Table Five, Paragraph 4.3.1 of the report, be noted.
4. That the net decrease (arising from slippage) of £10.9Million in the capital expenditure for the 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account, also as summarised in Table Five, Paragraph 4.3.1 of the report, be noted.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **11 URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

The Chair had accepted an urgent item of business in respect of the Council's request for a Stevenage Car Cruising Injunction.

The Chief Executive reported that the Court had granted an Interim Injunction preventing car cruising throughout the whole of the Borough. The Injunction had been granted on an interim basis to allow unnamed persons to attend a final hearing on the matter in due course. Legal advice would be drawn up, in association with Hertfordshire Constabulary, regarding enforcement of the Injunction, and the decision would be communicated to the public.

## **12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

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 the reasons for the following reports being in Part II were accepted, and that the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

### **13 PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 12 AUGUST 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 12 August 2020 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

### **14 LOCALITY REVIEW LAND AND SITE DISPOSAL REPORT**

The Executive considered a Part II report recommending a pipeline of site disposals identified as part of the Locality Ward asset and land reviews, in order to support the funding of the Capital Strategy and reduce the Revenue contribution to Capital from the General Fund.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations contained in the report be approved.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

### **15 URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

None.

### **CHAIR**

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Resources  
**Date** 6 October 2020



## WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2020-2023

### NON KEY DECISION

Author – Kirsten Frew Ext.No. 2321  
Clare Davies Ext.No. 2164

Lead Officer – Clare Fletcher Ext.No. 2933  
Contact Officer – Kirsten Frew Ext.No. 2321

## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To present to Executive and seek approval of the new Workforce Strategy for 2020-2023.

## 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Workforce Strategy for 2020-2023, attached at Appendix A to this report, be approved.

- 2.2 That it be noted that the implementation plan may be revised due to changing circumstances and workforce requirements, and that approval for such changes be delegated to the Senior Human Resources Manager, after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Workforce Strategy 2020 is a critical enabler for delivering the council's strategic ambitions over the next three years. It is through the Council's people that the Council will deliver the nine corporate priorities identified in the Future Town, Future Council plan.
- 3.2 As an enabling strategy, it is imperative that this strategy is aligned and supports other key council strategies and ambitions. This includes developing employee commercial skills and awareness, to support the Commercial and Insourcing Strategy and enabling staff to work out in the community aligned with the Co-operative Neighbourhood Management ambitions.
- 3.3 This Workforce Strategy identifies actions that will improve employees' work experience, support employee wellbeing and positions the Council as an "Employer of Choice". It has been developed as a working strategy with enough flexibility built in to allow the Council to adapt as new priorities emerge and/or the needs of the Stevenage community change. Actions will be regularly reviewed and implemented in line with the changing needs of the Council's residents and workforce.
- 3.4 The strategy recognises and is designed to support the diverse range of roles and services delivered by the Council and the importance of growing its own workforce through apprenticeship programmes.

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

#### **4.1 Reason for change**

- 4.1.1 The Council has several reasons to publish a Workforce Strategy, firstly to ensure its workforce are equipped and enabled to deliver the council's priorities and ambitions.
- 4.1.2 Secondly, to respond to the changing world of work and how the Council serve its customers, in response to the global pandemic, both now and in the longer term.
- 4.1.3 Thirdly, and more long term, to consider emerging new ways of working which prepare for, and align with, the new public sector hub. This is in addition, to supporting the Council's approved priorities and initiatives such as: Co-operative Neighbourhood Management, the Commercial and Insourcing Strategy, the Council's Climate Change Agenda and Digital Transformation ambitions. The Council will need to develop its approach on the type of services and how the Council deliver them to meet the needs of its residents.



4.1.4 The Council requires a strategy for the development of its workforce that allows it to respond to these priorities and meet the needs of its residents.

## 4.2 Key Element of the Strategy and outcomes

4.2.1 There are five key strategic themes to the strategy which are:

1. **New ways of working** – The Council will develop and embed a model of work being a thing we do, rather than a place we go. Utilising technology to enable work to be delivered in the most appropriate location for the task, be that working from home, an office, or in the community, whilst also recognising the value of bringing people together for that shared sense of purpose.
2. **Attracting and retaining the best people** – The Council will continue to attract the most capable people to build an exceptional, diverse and culturally safe workplace. The Council's employee experience will be aligned to core values, vision and future organisational needs, and aspirations to deliver services in house wherever possible.
3. **Inclusion and Wellbeing** – The Council will be known for nurturing a progressive, inclusive, safe and healthy working environment. With inclusion being a broader ambition of creating a culture that embraces and values everyone's contributions and enables an engaged, creative and innovative workforce.
4. **Communication and Engagement** - Effective internal communication is central to developing trust, engagement and productivity across the workforce.
5. **Organisational Development** - Developing a culture of personal accountability and pride in delivering innovative and excellent customer service to Stevenage residents.

## 4.3 What changes for staff need to be put in place?

4.3.1 The Council needs to equip its workforce with both the technology and processes to enable them to work differently. The Council also need to redefine its service offer to harness the improved customer service offer that can be provided to residents as a result of greater flexibility in employee working arrangements.

## 4.4 Consultation on the Strategy

4.4.1 As part of the development of the Strategy consultation has taken place with members including via a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meeting, SLT, and Trade Unions. Additionally feedback has been received from staff via pulse surveys. The feedback from the consultation is attached in Appendix B and summarised in table one below.

<b>Table one Summary of Consultation Feedback</b>	
Stakeholder Group	Feedback
PHAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing employees that meet the needs of the Stevenage community is paramount.</li> <li>• Strategy needs to show benefits for the residents of Stevenage and the Council itself</li> </ul>
SLT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important that the strategy is the Strategic Leadership Team as a whole and not just the HR service.</li> <li>• The IT strategy will be a key enabling piece of work and it is important that these strategies work together.</li> </ul>
Trade Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy is well timed to aid our transition to the public sector hub.</li> </ul>

4.4.2. All of the groups consulted recognised the need for an emerging workforce strategy, to support the achievement of the Council’s strategic ambitions and ensure that the Council develop an appropriately skilled workforce to continue to deliver services to Stevenage residents now and in the future.

4.4.3 The key elements of the feedback are that generally there was a positive response to the strategy. It is recognised that as an emerging strategy not all potential costs and benefits are known at this stage. However, this will be kept under regular review to ensure there are benefits for employees and residents, and costs are kept under control. It is also recognised that technology is a key interdependency for this success of this strategy for both employees and residents, this feedback was consistent from all stakeholders.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

5.1.1 The new way the Council’s staff work will mean that the right ICT equipment and kit will need to be provided for staff, this may include laptops, mobile phones and tablets. Officers are currently assessing the level of cost, how this can be funded or phased. Officers are also assessing the likely savings from new ways of working that might offset any costs. Should a growth bid be required this will be included as part of the budget setting process.

### **5.2 Legal Implications**

5.2.1 Legal advice will be sought, where appropriate in respect of any new employment policies/work programmes, incorporated in the Workforce Strategy.

### **5.3 Climate Change Implications**

- 5.3.1 This strategy has been developed in line with the Council's climate change ambitions, recognising that developing the Council officer ways of working, supports this ambition. It is recognised that this may be a longer term aspiration, as the offset may be dependent upon us reducing the current office space occupied.

### **5.4 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.4.1 Creating a culture of Inclusion across the Council's workforce is one of the key themes within the Workforce Strategy. Through the implementation plan, the Council will aspire to establish a culture of inclusivity and a truly diverse workforce that reflects the diverse community that it serves.

### **5.5 Information Technology Implications**

- 5.5.1 New technology will be required to support the full implementation of some of the Council's strategic ambitions within the workforce strategy and other programmes of work. This will be reviewed and implemented in line with the IT strategy and existing governance structures and will complement the technology investments already made by the Council such as the Firmstep platform and Bartech (waste management system software).

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

BD1 LGA Workforce Outlook

## **APPENDICES**

- A Workforce Strategy 2020-23  
B Consultation Feedback Summary  
C Workforce Strategy plan on a page

This page is intentionally left blank



# Workforce Strategy 2020-2023

FUTURE TOWN,  
FUTURE PEOPLE



## Foreword by Portfolio Holder

The coming three years will bring some of the biggest challenges that the council has ever had to face. We are living in a time of profound change – both in terms of the local community we serve and how the council will operate.

Never before have our staff had a more important role to play in delivering the services our residents need. We're seeing greater demands than ever before for many of our services, with already disadvantaged families and individuals in Stevenage struggling ever harder against the global impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

Building upon the strong foundations we have laid down in our preceding People Strategy, and responding to the change around us, we need to continue to adapt and develop – both individually and organisationally. The sum of our parts is more powerful than our individual expertise – it is our collective efforts and collaboration that will enable us to deliver.

We must draw on and develop the expertise of our people, be open to new innovations and learning, and lead the way. Critically, we must stay true to our values and create a co-operative and collaborative workplace culture.

During the development of this strategy, informed by many of you, five key strategic themes have been identified. These themes will pave our approach, reaffirming our commitment to value, support and develop our people,

This strategy sets out a three year approach (2020-2023), however, it will need ongoing adaptation and development to respond to the changing world we live in.

The actions we have set will set us up as a great place to work. Supported and equipped, and working collaboratively with partners and others to deliver positive improvements for residents and the community.



**Councillor Mrs Joan Lloyd**  
**Executive Portfolio Holder (Resources)**



# Contents

1. Foreword by Portfolio Holder – Cllr Mrs Joan Lloyd
2. The Workforce Strategy
3. Strategic Context
4. Background
5. Our Values
6. Workforce Profile
7. The five core themes of the strategy
8. Reporting and governance



# The Workforce Strategy

The Workforce Strategy 2020 is a critical enabler for delivering the council's strategic ambitions over the next three years. It is through our people that we will deliver the nine corporate priorities identified in the Future Town, Future Council plan.

We are facing unprecedented levels of change globally and locally, both for ways of working and how we serve our community. This is an important time for us to lay out a clear plan for developing and supporting our dedicated and successful workforce.

This Workforce Strategy identifies actions that will improve employees' experiences and position us as an "Employer of Choice". It is a working strategy with enough flexibility built in to allow us to adapt as new priorities emerge and/or the needs of our community change. We will regularly review and change the actions within the strategy according to the challenges and opportunities we face.

This strategy is for everyone across the council. It reminds us that although we have a wide range of roles, and deliver a very diverse range of services to our residents and community, we are all committed to creating a great place to work.

The Workforce Strategy has identified five key strategic themes that underpin the strategy:

## 1. New Ways of Working

We will develop and embed a model of work being a thing we do, rather than a place we go. We will utilise technology to enable work to be delivered in the most appropriate location for the task, be that working from home, an office, or in the community. This will enable greater flexibility and thus support work-life balance opportunities and set out a new deal for our people. We will aspire for the office environment to be a place that brings our people together, to enable collaboration, innovation and developing that shared sense of purpose.

## 2. Attracting and retaining the best people

We will develop an employer brand that resonates with our core values, aims, and ways of working, giving current and prospective employees a realistic insight into our workforce deal. We will continue to attract the most capable people to build an exceptional, diverse and culturally safe workplace. Our employee experience will be aligned to our values, vision and future organisational needs.

## 3. Engagement and Communication

We will work to refocus what internal communication means to the Council ensuring our cascades use a range of channels and foster genuine dialogue. Effective internal communication is central to developing trust, engagement and productivity across the workforce.



#### 4. Inclusion and Wellbeing

We will be known for nurturing a progressive, inclusive, safe and healthy working environment. We will have a culture that fosters organisational agility and flexibility, helping us to respond to the change swiftly and successfully.

#### 5. Organisational Development

We will develop leaders who are empowering and equipped to lead and engage the workforce in the future ways of working. Developing a culture of personal accountability and pride in delivering innovative and excellent customer service to our residents.

### People vision

#### Our vision is to:

Build an empowered and engaged workforce to deliver exceptional services to our residents and community

- growing and developing future leaders
- enabling our people to live the councils values and convey the councils purpose and ambitions to the community we serve
- building flexibility and adaptability to respond to the changing world.

## Strategic Context

We have taken the opportunity to “pause” and reflect on our experience in the initial response to the global Coronavirus pandemic. We felt it was important that our first priority was to ensure the health and safety of our workforce and we are proud of how quickly our staff adapted to new ways of working. We recognise that the world of work is likely to change for everyone following the pandemic experience and we want to learn lessons from this experience of what worked well and we would like to see continue in our future workforce strategy.

The council is committed to delivering significant transformation to meet our strategic ambitions. It is important for us to consider key strategic influences on the strategy. These are wide ranging but have inter-dependences, and with our staff being a key enabler, it is imperative that these are carefully considered in developing our Workforce Strategy.

### **Financial Outlook**

The council's financial outlook remains challenging, both in terms of revenue and capital availability across both Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund accounts. The Council is expected to end the 2020/21 year in deficit, despite central government grants. Cost pressures and loss of income from COVID 19 are significantly impacting. There is a £1.5 million funding gap to be addressed over the three years due to the reducing government grants. We recognise that the only way to successfully address the financial challenge is through a combination of efficiencies, commercialisation and transformation.

### **Commercial Council**

We will operate the council in more of a business like way by equipping staff with the right skills and engendering commercial behaviour to support our Financial Security goals.

### **Climate Change**

We have a holistic vision which focuses on cutting our own emissions to net zero and supporting our businesses and residents to do the same by 2030. Our ways of working and workforce will embody this vision.

### **Connected to our Customers**

We will have a workforce who is connected to our customers, interacting with them at the right time and in the most appropriate way, streamlining our processes and utilising digital tools to their full potential. Recognising that customer experience is a shared responsibility across the entire workforce, we will design, develop and deliver our services to enhance and enable customer experiences.

### **Public Sector Hub**

As part of the town centre regeneration plans a new public sector hub is included in phase three. We know that the new hub will bring with it new ways of working, so this needs to be considered for designing our future ways of working.

### **Devolution**

We know there is going to be a government White Paper on Devolution in September 2020, but at this stage we do not know the detail of this. We are working collaboratively with other district councils and wider networks to keep in touch and prepare for this, because this is an important consideration.

# Background to the Workforce Strategy 2020

The Council has a clear direction set out in our Future Town, Future Council programme, an ambitious once in generation plan to invest in the town and the council.

The People Strategy 2014-2017 set the foundations for our workforces and the Senior Management Review in 2016 and subsequent Business Unit Reviews that have followed have prepared us well in terms of structure. The focus must now turn to enabling delivery and new ways of working.

To deliver on our ambitions, we must have the right skills and enablers in place, and stay true to our values by creating a cooperative and collaborative work culture based on respect and integrity.

The Workforce Strategy outlines our approach, over the next three years, to creating and maintaining the conditions that will enable us to deliver on our ambitions for the community, whilst also continuing to deliver excellent services to residents in a rapidly changing environment and also providing a stimulating and satisfying work experience and opportunities.

## Consultation

We have developed this strategy through consultation with key stakeholders, from different areas of the council and trade union representatives. Consultation activities included surveys, virtual focus groups and interviews during which issues were identified and potential solutions developed.

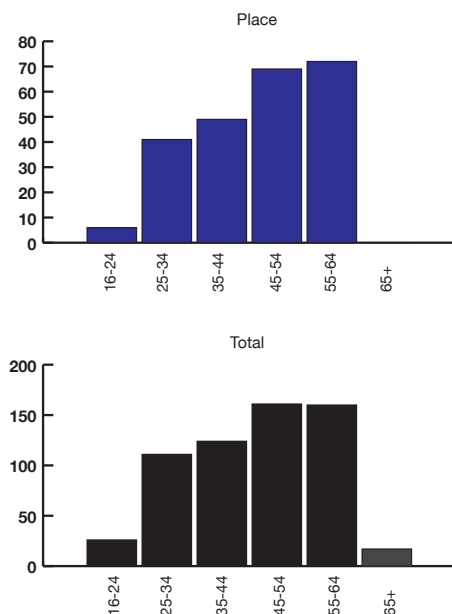
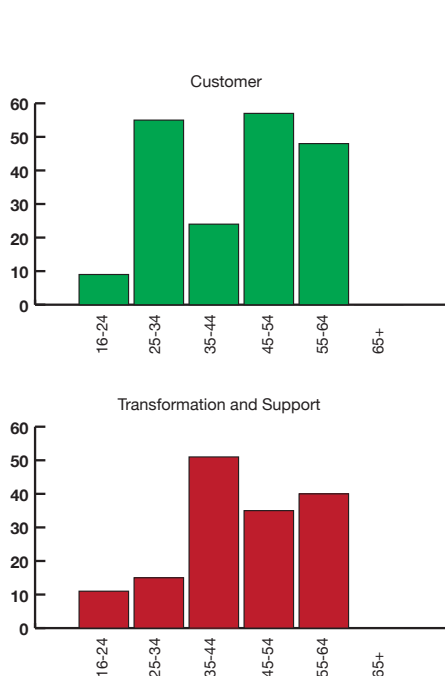
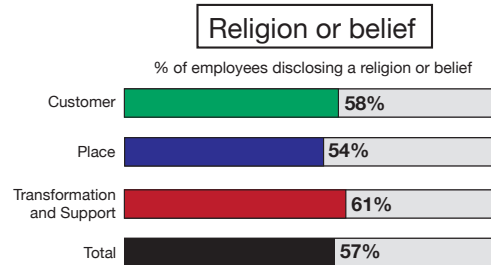
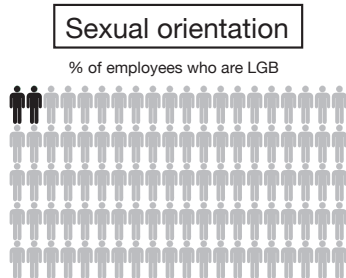
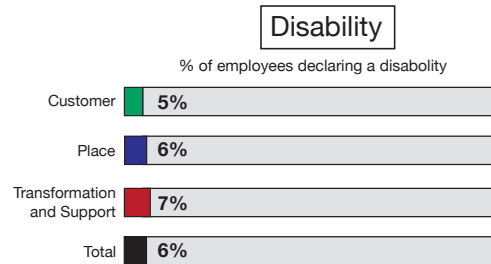
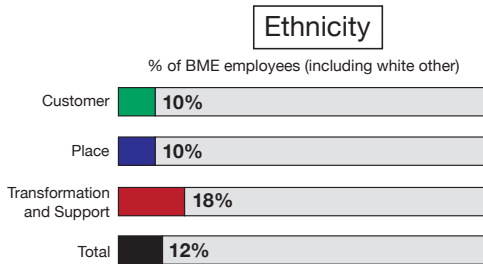
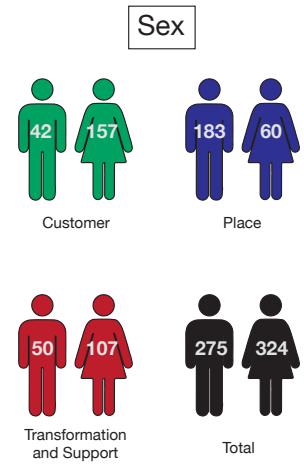
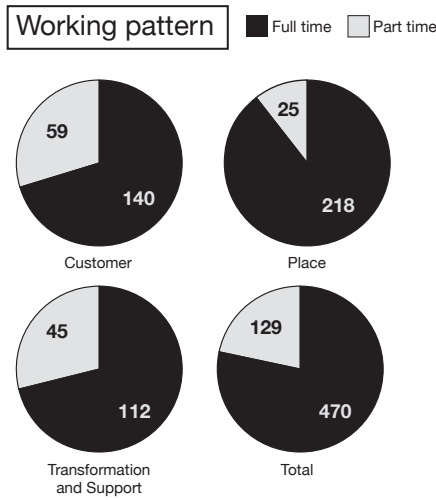
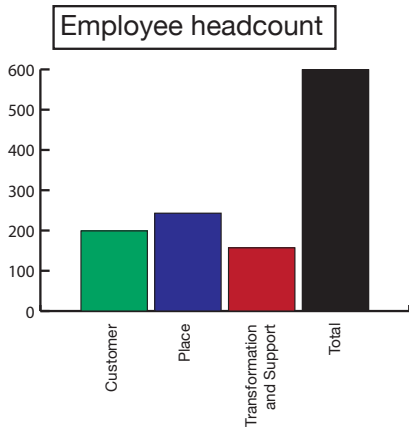
We also recognise the importance of continuing to engage with key stakeholders as other programmes of work develop to ensure any inter-dependencies are identified and aligned, for example commercial, IT and digital strategies and the regeneration proposals relating the future Public Sector Hub.

## Values

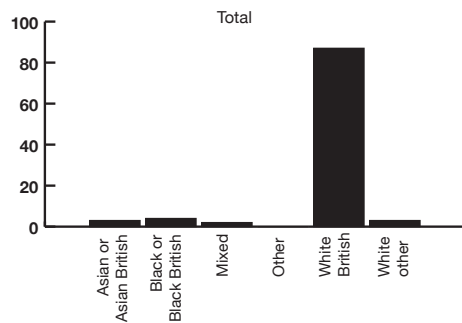
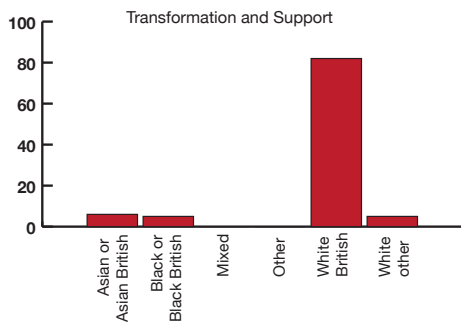
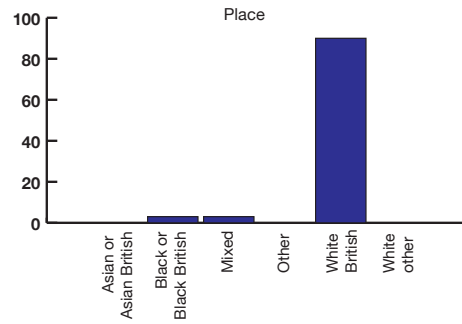
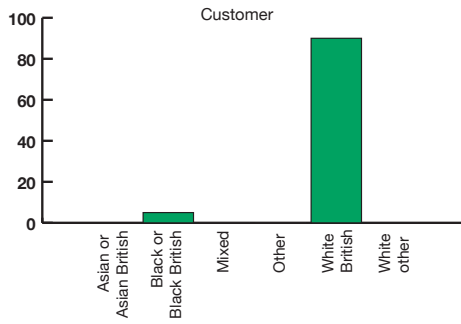


# Workforce Profile

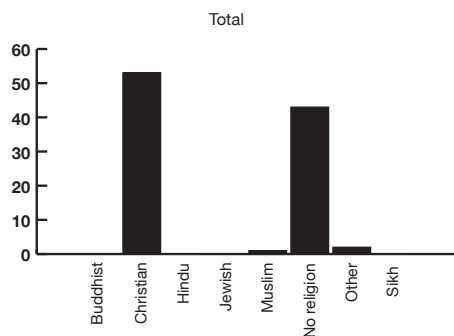
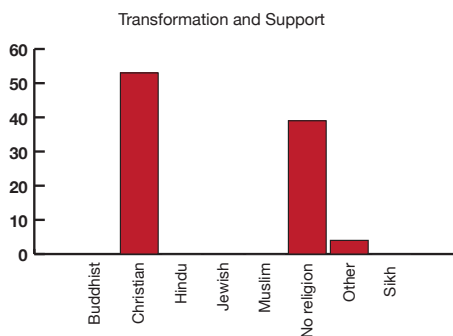
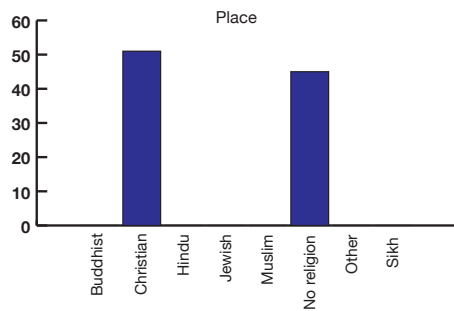
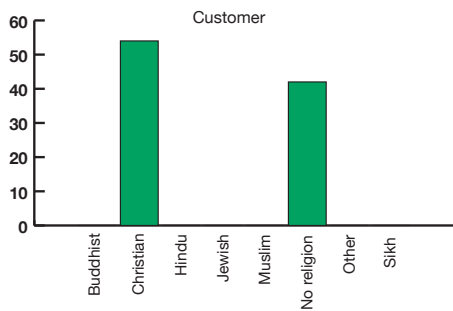
Data for calendar year 1 January 2019-31 December 2019.



Ethnicity %

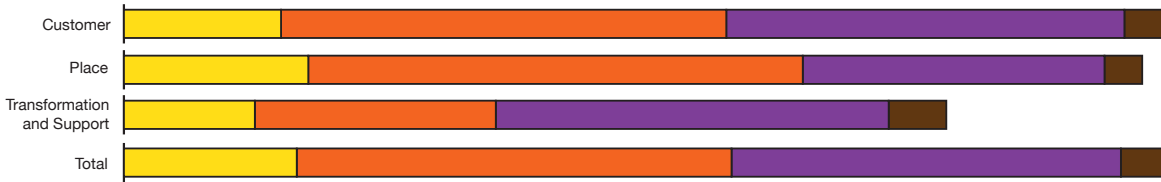


Religion %

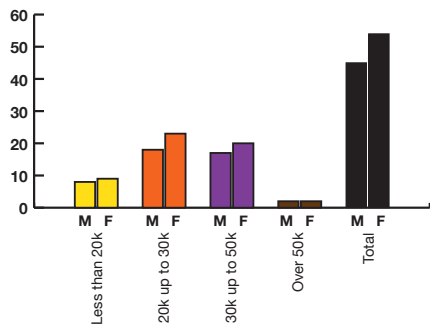


Base Pay - Head Count

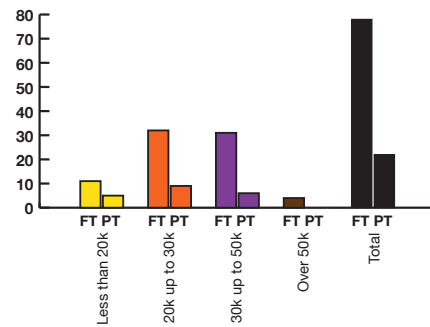
Key:  
 Less than 20k    20k up to 30k  
 30k up to 50k    Over 50k



Sex %



Working pattern %



Ethnicity

% of BME employees (including white other)



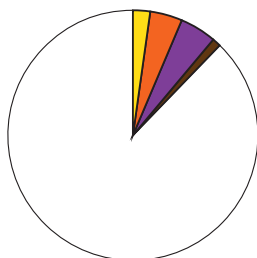
Disability

% of employees declaring disability

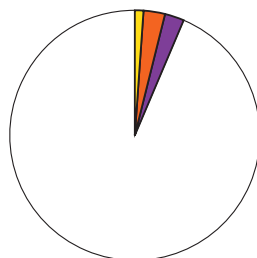


Religion or belief

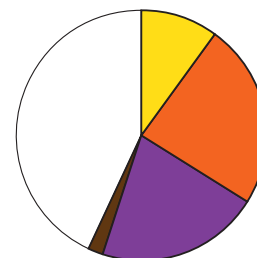
% of employees disclosing a religion or belief



Less than 20k **2.38%**  
 20k up to 30k **4.07%**  
 30k up to 50k **4.75%**  
 Over 50k **1.19%**



Less than 20k **1.37%**  
 20k up to 30k **2.74%**  
 30k up to 50k **2.39%**  
 Over 50k **0%**



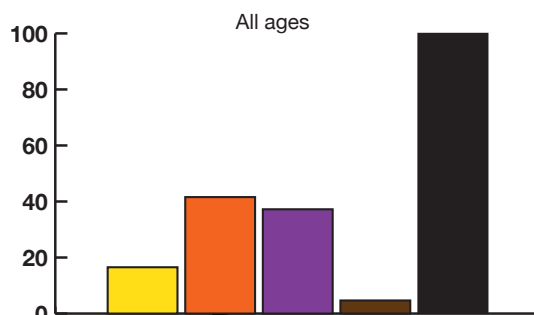
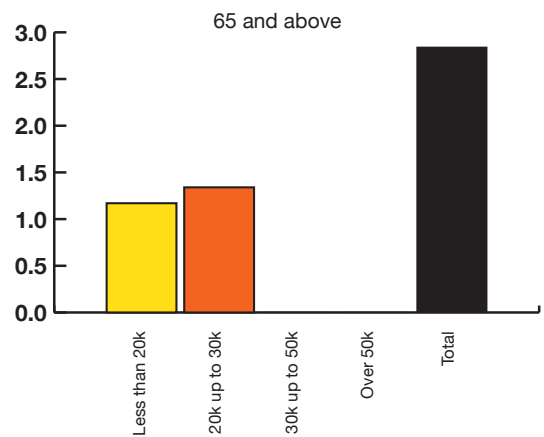
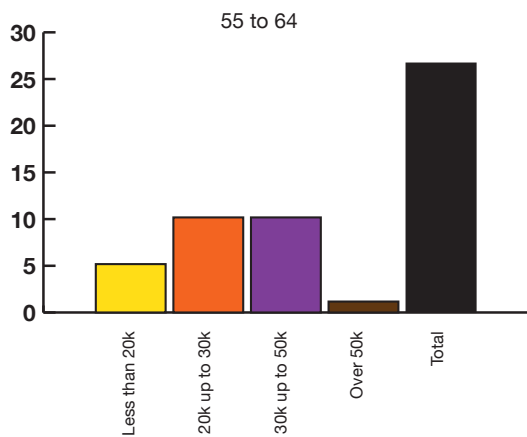
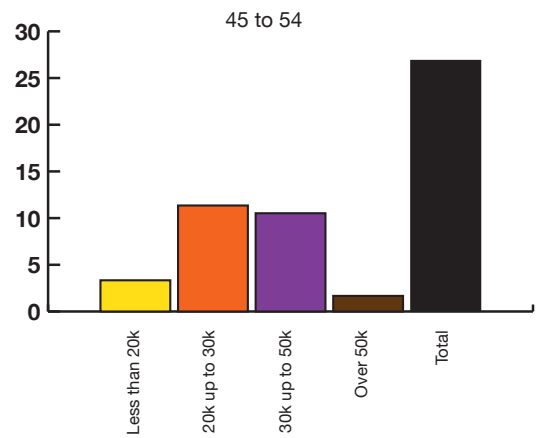
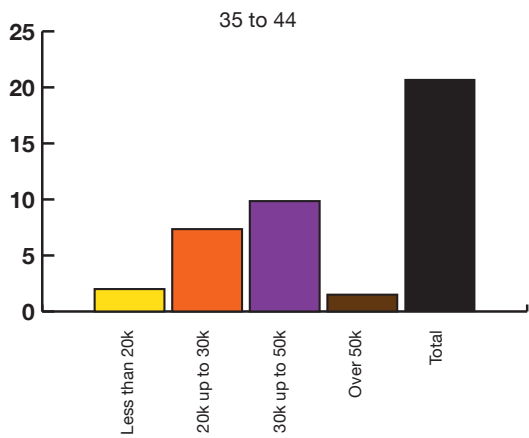
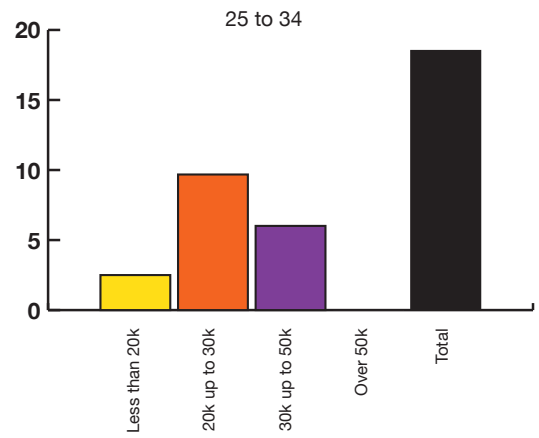
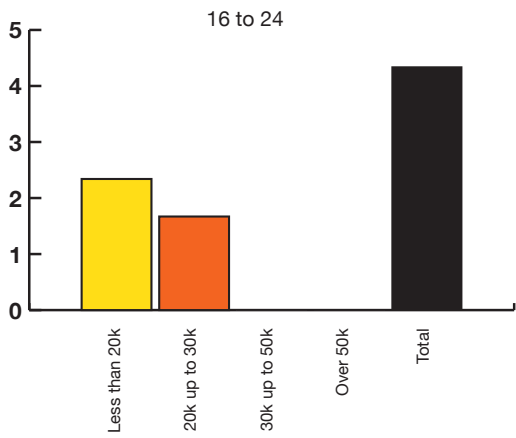
Less than 20k **9.76%**  
 20k up to 30k **24.58%**  
 30k up to 50k **20.83%**  
 Over 50k **2.06%**

Sexual orientation

% of employees who are LGB



Age %



# Our five core themes of the strategy

## 1. New Ways of Working

**Outcome:** We will develop and embed a model of work being a thing we do, rather than a place we go. We will utilise technology to enable work to be delivered in the most appropriate location for the task, be that working from home, an office, or in the community. This will enable greater flexibility which will support work-life balance opportunities and set out a new deal for our people. We will aspire for the office environment to be a place that brings our people together, to enable collaboration, innovation and developing that shared sense of purpose.

Changes in workforce profile mean that we need to redefine our workforce deal. Employees have expectation of provision from the Council. Within the Way of Working Survey (2020), 32% of staff said

a home office set up including equipment would help improve their current working arrangements and a further 24% noted that improved IT systems would also help. Likewise, remote and flexible working can provide many intangible benefits for our workforce and work needs to be undertaken to shape what our employee deal looks like in line with our aspirations.

Similar to the changes in where we work, expectations within the employment market are also changing about how and when people work.

We need to define our job roles and ways of working to support flexibility in service delivery and work life balance for our employees. We need to become more effective at managing by outcomes rather than presenteeism.





**Place of Work**

Ever more work is becoming something that we do, as opposed to being about the place that we go. Our future workforce needs to be based in the most appropriate workplace for them to do what they need to do to meet our customer’s needs.

**Cooperative Neighbourhood Management**

Working as neighbourhood teams, will help us work differently to deliver services more efficiently for our residents, with shared responsibility for how we resolve local issues.

**Challenging existing practices and processes**

Reflecting on our experience from the Covid 19 response, and taking account of the Ways of Working survey (2020) and business continuity information, have identified a list of process changes that will help modernise and future proof our ways of working across the Council.

**Utilisation of technology**

Our technology needs to enable a workplace that it mobile, and accessible. It also needs to support communication and collaboration, remotely and in person.

Looking forward, to ensure that we have the right person in the right place at the right time we are likely to have 3 distinct groups of staff:

STAFF GROUP	PROFILE
Community Based	<p>These roles will work primarily in the community with access to remote sites as required for their role such as Neighbourhood Warden, Repairs Operative, Refuse Loader and Housing Officer.</p> <p>A typical day for this person might entail checking emails at home in the morning first thing, attending a resident meeting in a community centre in the morning followed by ward visits in the afternoon, finishing with a team video call.</p>
Remote Working	<p>Primarily working remotely, accessing SBC sites as and when required, examples include Accountant, Human Resources Business Partners, and Administrative Officer.</p> <p>A typical day for these will involve working at home, using technology and digital tools to support the delivery of their services.</p> <p>Visiting the office for tasks involving collaboration, innovation on a shared sense of purpose</p>
Site Based	<p>A very small number of roles will be required to be based primarily at one site for the majority of their time for example Facilities Officer, or Independent Living Officer.</p> <p>A typical day will involve going to one site to deliver something that needs to be physically done from that place for example delivering specialist support to a resident in the independent living scheme.</p>

## 2. Attracting and retaining the best people

**Outcome:** We will develop an employer brand that resonates with our core values, aims, and ways of working, giving current and prospective employees a realistic insight into our workforce deal. We will continue to attract the most capable people to build an exceptional, diverse and culturally safe workplace. Our employee experience will be aligned to our values, vision and future organisational needs.

Linking our employer brand to the wider element of the Future Town Future Council programme will aid us to market Stevenage to potential recruits as a town where employees can live, work and enjoy.

The average salary of those working at Stevenage Borough Council is higher than the average salary of those living within the town, our brand narrative needs to develop to support our community wealth building ambitions, creating opportunities for and being attractive to local people.

## 3. Engagement and Communication

**Outcome:** We will work to refocus what internal communication means to the Council ensuring our cascades use a range of channels and foster genuine dialogue. Effective internal communication is central to developing trust, engagement and productivity across the workforce.

We need to continue to develop our cooperative and collaborative culture in the workplace. Stronger connectivity and collaboration will be important as we face change in the workplace and the world around us. We need to ensure we engage with, listen to and communicate with everyone.

We need to communicate more effectively to drive a transparent and responsive work environment. To enable this, we will need to embrace technology and other innovative communication channels and ways of working. We also need to ensure we adopt such approaches with partners and customers.

We also need to ensure we have a responsive, flexible and fair approach to reward and recognition, ensuring we can promptly recognise and value excellent performance, achievement and contributions.

We need to support our managers and leaders to communicate effectively with our workforce both face to face and remotely.

#### 4. Inclusion and Wellbeing

**Outcome:** We will be known for nurturing a progressive, inclusive, safe and healthy working environment. We will have a culture that fosters organisational agility and flexibility, helping us to respond to the change swiftly and successfully.

We all have a role to play in supporting and promoting employee wellbeing. We will embrace a culture which has safety as paramount importance and giving priority to mental health and creating a happy and resilient workforce. We will continue to respond robustly to any allegations of bullying or inappropriate behaviour.

We aspire for your values to support us in establishing cultures of inclusivity and a truly diverse workforce. There is work to do to aspire to be an Employer of Choice in this respect and have a workforce that reflects the diverse community that we serve.

#### 5. Organisational Development

**Outcome:** We will develop leaders who are empowering and equipped to lead and engage the workforce in the future ways of working. Developing a culture of personal accountability and pride in delivering innovative and excellent customer service to our residents.

Our leadership model needs to be able to support and enable a remote and community based workforce, with a focus on productivity, management of outcomes and quality interactions.

Employees will take accountability for their own personal development and we will support all our staff to achieve their desired learning outcomes, recognising the importance of on the job learning. We recognise we have considerable knowledge and technical expertise and greater emphasis will be placed on developing the behaviours set out in our competency framework in supporting us in “how” we deliver our services.

We will provide opportunities to work across teams and functions. These experiences will broaden our capabilities and knowledge, offer creative and fulfilling career opportunities help us connect better across the workplace and breakdown silo working.

We will also recognise the value in growing our own talent with apprentice and graduate opportunities and having a talent pipeline, particularly for hard to recruit posts.

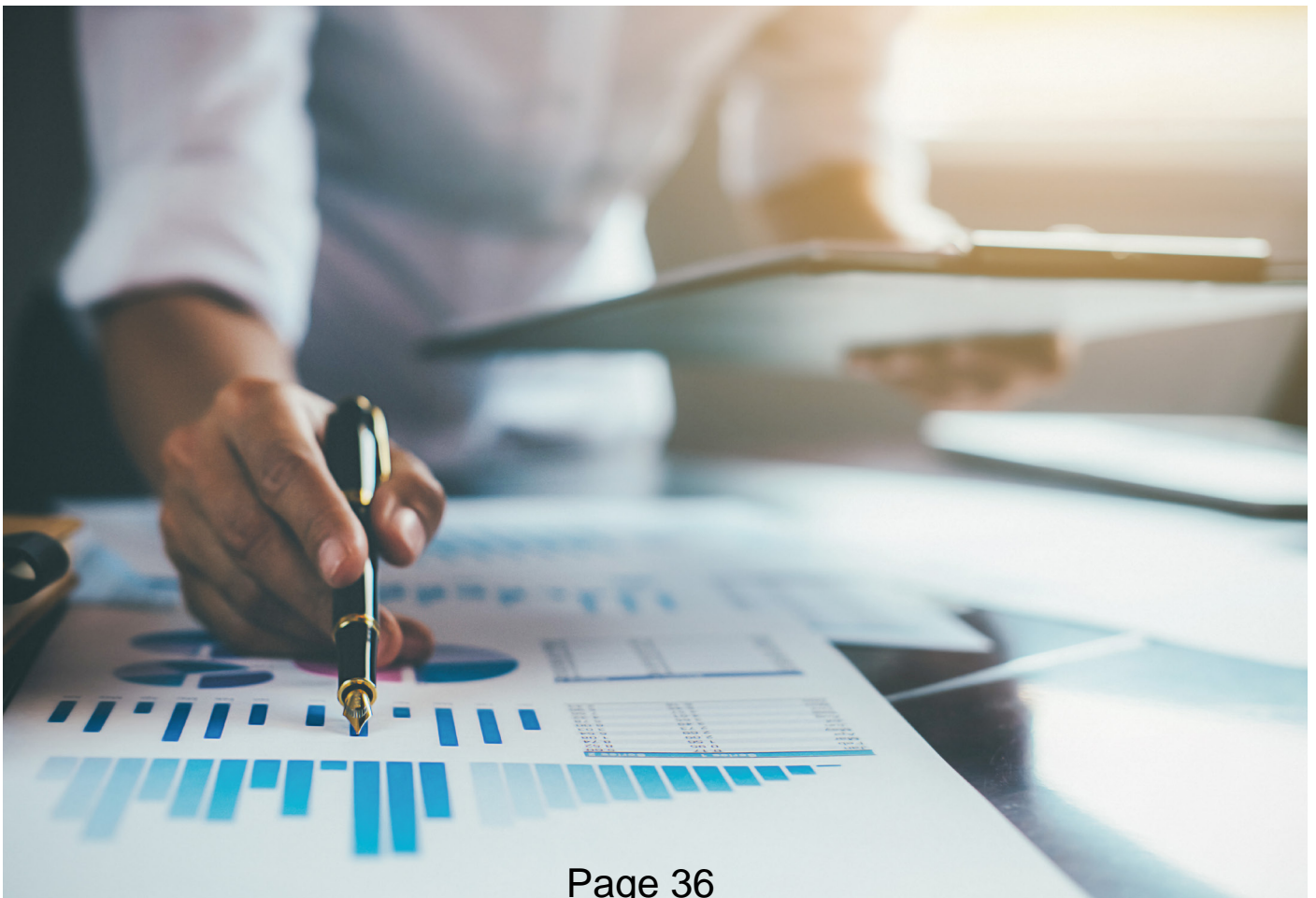
## Reporting and Governance

The Workforce Strategy is underpinned by a detailed action plan which sets out steps to be taken to achieve the desired outcomes, along with timescales, owners and measures of success, which will be monitored and reported on throughout the three year period of the strategy.

We will establish a People Board to review and monitor progress and also ensure this strategy is owned by the whole organisation and not just seen as a Human Resources strategy, with representatives from across all business units and other key stakeholders such as trade unions.

### The People Board will:

- Monitor progress against the actions detailed in the action plan
- Review measures of success on a quarterly basis
- Propose annual actions and targets to be agreed by Portfolio Holder (Resources)



Stakeholder	Feedback	Response
PHAG	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="869 236 1420 336">1. Strategy is missing cost benefit analysis of changing ways of working including the benefits to residents.</li> <li data-bbox="869 453 1420 553">2. Employees to be available to meet the needs of the community and service users they support</li> <li data-bbox="869 703 1420 804">3. It is important that the strategy recognises and support good mental health and wellbeing of our employees</li> <li data-bbox="869 1171 1420 1235">4. Provision of appropriate technology is paramount</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="1494 236 2047 411">1. Noted and included within the strategy This is an emerging strategy and some of the costs and benefits are not known at this stage, but this will be updated and reviewed regularly.</li> <li data-bbox="1494 453 2047 692">2. Noted. It is anticipated that changes in ways of working will facilitate service reviews lead by each individual Assistant Director to ensure that employees are working in the right place and at the right time to perform their role and meet the needs of residents and service users.</li> <li data-bbox="1494 703 2047 1155">3. Noted. Inclusion and wellbeing are at the heart of the strategy as one of the key themes. Looking after the mental health and wellbeing of our employees is as important as looking after physical health. In 2018, we signed up to the Time to Talk pledge for the first time and have continued to work to develop our mental health resources available to our employees. One example of this is during the lockdown period we provided tailored resilience session that were open to all staff.</li> <li data-bbox="1494 1171 2047 1378">4. Noted. Through the Ways of Working Group, appropriate IT kit provision will be identified for each of the staff groups identified within the strategy alongside an appropriate business case. This will be reviewed and implemented through the</li> </ol>

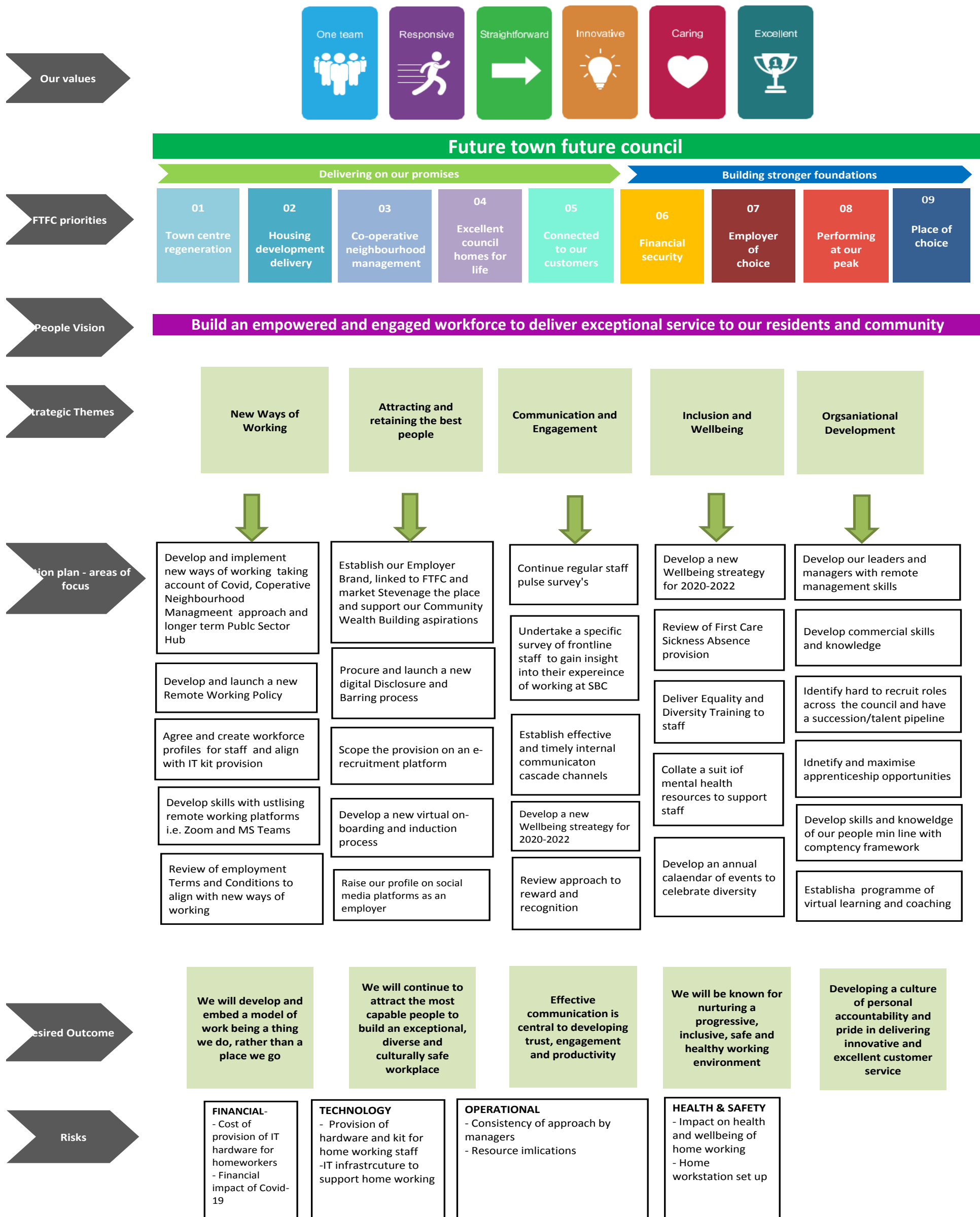
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. If managers are working more remotely from their teams, a change in performance management approach is required.</li>   <li>6. Development of opportunities for local people is important</li> </ol>	<p>existing IT Strategy and governance mechanisms.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Noted. AS part of the strategy we will work to develop a manager development programme that includes guidance for our managers on how to manage by outcomes and productivity as opposed to presentism.</li> <li>6. Noted. Within the Attracting and Retaining the Best People section fo the strategy a commitment to the development of apprenticeships and a “grow our own” approach to succession planning is made. By making full use of the apprentice levy this can be done in a cost effective manner.</li> </ol>
SLT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Welcomed the move towards Inclusion as the next step on our Equalities strategy.</li> <li>2. Requirement to properly equip staff for new ways work working if we are to achieve work is a thing we do not a place we go ambitions</li>   <li>3. We have a diverse workforce so there will be no one size fits all approach.</li>   <li>4. Talent management and the ability to grow our own will help us tackle some of our resourcing challenges.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Noted and inclusion included as a key theme.</li> <li>2. Noted. Through the Ways of Working Group, appropriate IT kit provision will be identified for each of the staff groups identified within the strategy alongside an appropriate business case. This will be reviewed and implemented through the existing IT Strategy and governance mechanisms.</li> <li>3. Noted. Staff group categories have been included within the strategy to aid development of a workforce deal.</li> <li>4. Noted. As part of the strategy we will seek to develop effective succession planning pathways and maximise the use of the apprentice levy.</li> </ol>

Trade Unions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Workforce Strategy needs to aid transition to the public sector hub</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Noted and reflected in the strategy.</li> </ol>
<p>Employee Pulse Survey (Short employee surveys have been conducted as since May 2020 to give real time feedback from the workforce about current ways of working and proposed future changes)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Over 50% of employees surveyed noted that they worked better remotely as there are no office based distractions.</li> <li>2. Over a third of those surveyed noted that improved IT kit would aid remote working</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Noted. We aim to move towards a model of working on the right place for what you are doing with the office space being there for collaboration and shared learning.</li> <li>2. Some quick wins were identified from the survey such as supplying laptop risers to those working at home and policy was implemented. A business case is now being build for future IT kit requirements in line with the workforce strategy and will be reviewed and implemented through existing IT governance arrangements.</li> </ol>

This page is intentionally left blank



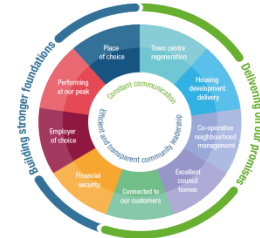
# WORKFORCE STRATEGY - PLAN ON A PAGE



Workforce Strategy approach - Continuous process of 'Plan', 'Do', 'Review'; taking input from the Councils Corporate Plan Priorities and changing and updating to meet service needs and the wider context of changes in the world of work. This enables an agile and dynamic approach to developing and equipping our workforce to deliver now and into the future.

This page is intentionally left blank

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** All  
**Date** 6 October 2020



## CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER ONE 2020/21

### KEY DECISION

**Authors** Chloe Norton | 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 one 2020/21.

### 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 one 2020/21, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
- 2.2 That impacts of the Government directive on housing rough sleepers during Covid-19 are noted and that future Housing First plans are endorsed (para 3.80 to 3.86).

- 2.3 That impacts on the Council’s Housing Options Service from the Government directive on evictions and the COVID-19 pandemic are noted and that future Housing First Plans are endorsed (para 3.74 to 3.79).
- 2.4 That the impacts of Universal Credit and COVID-19 on rent collection rate are noted and action plans endorsed (para 3.87 to 3.95).
- 2.5 That the impacts of COVID-19 on the following areas are noted and plans endorsed:
  - Community Safety issues (para 3.99 to 3.105)
  - Job Creation through the Business Technology Centre (para 3.107 to 3.111)
  - Ability to inspect food establishments (para 3.112 to 3.113)
  - Issues with the letting of council garages (para 3.114 to 3.120)
  - Collection of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates (para 3.152 to 3.154)
  - Ability to identify and remove HRA/GF savings (para 3.155 to 3.157)
- 2.6 That the level of void loss is noted and improvements are endorsed (para 3.95 to 3.98).
- 2.7 That the changes in the process to recruitment are endorsed (para 3.144 to 3.145)

**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. Partnership working is also crucial to the delivery of both the Place of Choice programme and COVID-19 recovery, (para 3.42 to 3.57).
- 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'. Progress against the agreed actions has begun reporting from Quarter 1 of 2020/21. The scope of this strand will develop further over time as new priorities emerge.
- 3.4 At the Executive meeting on 8 July 2020, the Executive agreed both the deliverables for each of the FTFC programmes and the town and Council's recovery plans which have very strong synergies. Progress against the agreed actions will be monitored and reported on through future reports.

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

- 3.5 Council services are organised into eight 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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 3.11 (FTFC focus) and paragraph 3.70 (Corporate Focus).
- 3.8 Towards the end of Quarter 4 2019/20, COVID-19 began to impact on both FTFC programme activities and on council services. Where COVID-19 impacts on performance can be evidenced these are highlighted throughout this report.

## COVID-19

3.9 Given the extensive measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020, the Council's Directors have provided an overview of current performance and look ahead for future quarters.

- **Adapting services:** With the support and strategic direction of Members, a range of Council teams have worked at pace, with flexibility and commitment to support the town and Council through the effects of the pandemic and the associated economic, social and health effects. Many services have been adapted to ensure they could continue to provide support for local people and in particular those who are the most vulnerable. This will remain the case during the year and may require the Council to scale up or adapt support for residents at short notice in order to respond to the effects of the pandemic, which has already impacted upon the performance of some services as outlined within this report.
- **Responding to the pandemic:** We have used an Incident Management structure and team to respond to the pandemic and have actively supported the county wide resilience efforts. This will continue throughout the financial year. Members will not be surprised to read that this has and continues to present a significant resourcing challenge for our senior team and a number of specialist colleagues including, for example, those in Environmental Health. We anticipate this will remain a key priority in the months ahead, with resourcing plans in place to manage the business continuity of vital services in a time of disruption. Officers will continue to prioritise resources to ensure team members can focus on work that may be required to support responses to any potential local outbreaks. The ongoing response along with the impacts of any local outbreak should one occur may result in further service disruption.
- **Delivery of priorities:** The Executive has approved the Future Town Future Council programme for the 2020/2021 financial year, and the Council's Coronavirus pandemic Recovery Plan. The Council is also working with partners through the Recovery Taskforce on the development of a broader recovery plan for the Town. The Business Units are striving to remain focussed and engaged on delivery of the agreed priorities, from creating new affordable housing, to driving forward the regeneration of the town centre and other key priorities including climate and sustainability, transport, cooperative neighbourhoods and wealth building.
- **Performance effects:** As set out in this report, the wider effects of the pandemic are and will continue to cause issues for residents, communities and businesses within the town. This is reflected in areas of current demand or increasing need or pressure for different services

such as homelessness support and advice, Council Tax and Housing Benefits, income and rents. These and other services areas will remain under focus by our Senior Leadership Team during the year.

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

- 3.10 The focus and scope of the FTFC programmes for 2020/21 is outlined in Appendix Two. Delivery of the agreed outcomes is monitored to ensure that the Programme remains on track.
- 3.11 In addition to the monitoring of programme milestones, thirteen measures aligned to FTFC delivery were monitored and reported on for April 2020 to June 2020. An overview of FTFC focused performance for April 2020 to June 2020 is outlined below:

<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>
13	9	0	4

- 3.12 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

- 3.13 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Developing the Town Fund investment plan which will be overseen by the Stevenage Development board
- Working with the LEP to ensure Growth Deal funding is secured for specific schemes
- Supporting and enabling the start of Phase 1 of the £350m+ SG1 project in conjunction with Mace, including Swingate House and the former police station site
- Completing a business case for bringing forward the Public Sector hub development, to enable acceleration of the broader SG1 scheme

- Completing works on the Town Square and Town Square North Block projects.
- The transformation of Queensway through the completion of the first phases of work as part of the Reef development
- Beginning construction of the new Bus Interchange, subject to permission being granted
- Developing long term plans to support development around the station area
- Developing the funded CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) on-site Training Hub as part of the Stevenage Works initiative in conjunction with Job Centre Plus and North Herts College
- Delivering the 2020/21 Marketing Strategy, focussing on inclusive engagement

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.14 Following the successful submission of the planning application for the SG1 scheme last year, the Council and it's developer Mace are continuing with discussions and queries regarding the application.
- 3.15 Further to the appointment of the contractor to undertake demolition works to progress the SG1 scheme, Mace are drafting revisions to the development agreement to facilitate the demolition works to the former Police station site. With the vacant possession of Swingate House complete, the next stage is preparing this site for demolition.
- 3.16 An initial meeting was held regarding the financial modelling for the hub and the information that will be required to progress to the next stage. The project group are producing a study which will look at desk capacity and floor usage to help inform the next stages of work.
- 3.17 Planning approval for the bus interchange was granted in quarter one, with a number of pre-commencement conditions. The Regeneration team are working closely with the contractors on design works and further preparations to progress the scheme.
- 3.18 Work is continuing with the developer Reef, to appraise options to develop the Marshgate site. An initial proposal has been produced and further work is underway to understand the implications of the scheme prior to a proposition coming forward to Members.
- 3.19 Physical works to the Town Square projects have continued this quarter, despite the impact of COVID-19. The lift shaft pre-construction works have been completed and the lift shaft installations works have begun on the North Block site as well as works to the façade and roof being progressed. The second phase of works to the Public Realm has been completed with festoon lights and bespoke lighting now fitted. These features pay homage to the New Town's heritage. A section of paving across the main town square has now been handed back and the next phase is underway.



- 3.20 The Town Fund project group are working at pace with the Stevenage Development Board to establish a potential long list of projects that best align with this funding opportunity. An initial kick off meeting with central government gave positive reception to the work undertaken to date. The Town Fund Investment Plan will be submitted in accordance with Government guidance.

## **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

- 3.21 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Completing work on 10 new homes at Ditchmore Lane and continuing to work on delivering a further 240 homes, including sites at Shephall Way, Kenilworth Close, North Road and Symonds Green
- Seeking planning permission on future schemes for approximately 300 more new homes
- Procuring the design team for the Oval scheme masterplan, undertaking consultation on the designs and setting out a timetable for the development
- 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 additional affordable homes
- Forming a Wholly Owned Company (WOC) to deliver homes outside the HRA

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.22 The Ditchmore Lane scheme has received building control sign off and handover is complete. A number of sale completions are to be made during quarter two and the remaining unit is continuing to be advertised.
- 3.23 Work is continuing on the North Road site, with foundation work completed and work scheduled to begin on the drainage and ground floor slab. Procurement of an estate agent has taken place which will allow further input into design and marketing from an early stage.
- 3.24 The schemes at Shephall Way (9 Homes) and Symonds Green (29 Homes) have continued to progress during quarter one. At Shephall Way the roof structure is now entirely complete and roof tiles have also been affixed, making the build wind and water tight. At Symonds Green brickwork has begun on site, with the final concrete pour scheduled.

- 3.25 The Project team are continuing their work on detailed designs for Kenilworth Close and will be submitting a revised (value driven scheme improvement) proposal for the Malvern Close element of the scheme. These proposals seek to increase the marketability of the finished homes, and achieve programming and construction costs savings for the Council's benefit. Further work on reviewing the design proposals for the main site, to achieve further programme and construction cost efficiencies are continuing. A newsletter has been drafted and will be distributed to local residents.
- 3.26 The Housing Development team is working to develop a design framework for The Oval. The intention is to develop designs that allow for a phased delivery of the scheme which will attract the necessary investment to deliver the regeneration of this area and add to the Council's sustainability aims for its public and community facing assets. It is anticipated the framework will be delivered in quarter three.
- 3.27 Work is progressing on developing a revised business case for the Wholly Owned Housing Development Company. A meeting between the Housing Development team and the Strategic Director (CF) has ensured all parties are in agreement with the direction of travel with the aim being for the new business plan to be approved. An Executive report will be brought forward in December 2020.

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

### **Programme Outcomes**

- Public spaces are more attractive, better cared for by the Council and residents, 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 town's community centres are efficiently run, well-managed and most importantly, meet local needs
  - Staff better understand the town's communities and through doing so are more able to deliver the change that is required
- 3.28 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Implementing the Co-operative Neighbourhood working model, to enhance co-operative working across council services in neighbourhoods
  - Beginning to roll out elements of the new sustainable model for the provision and management of community centres
  - Public realm investments in Bedwell and Longmeadow, which will be determined by the community and seek co-operation from local groups, businesses and partner agencies, subject to funding becoming available
  - Replacing and installing new litter bins across Roebuck and Old Town
  - Progressing the Garage Programme

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.29 Work on the Co-operative Neighbourhoods working model has been progressed during quarter one with development proposals being agreed with the Strategic Leadership Team. A progress report was presented to the Executive in July 2020 that outlined how the new model is to be rolled out during quarters 2 and 3 and the role of Ward Members and officers.
- 3.30 Further development of the Co-operative Compact Partnership, as well as the integration of elements of the Hub & Spoke model, have been incorporated into a forward plan in line with the agreed recommendations of the community centre review. Following the Government's announcement to re-open community centres to the general public as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown, the Communities and Neighbourhoods team continue to work with the Community Associations and SBC's Facility Management Team to ensure that the buildings are safe to occupy. Also ensuring that centres and groups are well prepared for the measures they will have to take, such as the completion of risk assessments and operational plans.
- 3.31 Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the neighbourhood improvements programme has been temporarily suspended as it became difficult to undertake effective community engagement. The capital programme is now on hold until April 2021.

### **Excellent Council Homes Programme**

#### **Programme Outcome**

- Transforming the Housing and Investment service to better meet the needs of its customers
  - Effective investment in council homes through planned programmes of work
- 3.32 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Finalising the Housing Older People's Strategy in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council
  - Delivering Phase 2 of the 5-year MRC programme
  - Refurbishing a further 4 lifts as part of the lift refurbishment programme
  - Consulting with residents about the sprinkler retro-fitting programme, mobilising the contract and commencing works
  - Continuing to improve services to the customer through the housing on-line application; a review of the end-to-end repairs process; building on the use of mobile working applications; and evaluating the outcome of the innovation labs
  - Supporting homeless people by delivering the Homeless and Rough Sleeper Action plan and responding to the Government's initiatives for rough sleepers in light of Covid-19

- Completing recruitment to vacant posts within the new Business Unit structure and evaluating how successful the new structure has been in terms of the service delivery/customer satisfaction and staff satisfaction
- Introducing a series of 'innovation labs' to involve staff in influencing further digitalisation of the housing offer
- Assessing and evaluating the Housing All Under One Roof Transformation programme to inform further service improvement opportunities

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.33 Significant progress has been made on Northgate Self-Serve (Housing Online) with phase 1 services live from May, excluding the 'Contact Us' functions for Repairs and Housing Options due to back office capacity. These are ready to go live but remain hidden until resource is available. "How To" videos have been created for customers and training has been provided for internal teams. The Rapid project has continued to progress steadily, with quarter one focusing on the building and testing of the Caretaking app.
- 3.34 The flatblock refurbishment programme has been impacted throughout quarter one by the pandemic, and contractors and Council staff have worked to ensure adherence to government guidance. This led to works being limited to external areas and the start dates for several blocks being postponed and rescheduled. Towards the end of the quarter as restrictions have begun to ease, and work has resumed.
- 3.35 The lift refurbishment programme has also been impacted by the pandemic. Contractors and staff reviewed risk assessments to ensure they reflected Government guidelines and maintained social distancing, whilst delivering the programme. Due to some sites not being suitable for socially distanced work to take place, the schedule of works was amended accordingly and work resumed on site in June.
- 3.36 Following the successful recruitment of a project manager for the sprinkler programme, the project has begun to pick up pace and project dates have been outlined by the contractors. The contract for these works will be signed and executed in due course.
- 3.37 The current draft of the Housing Older People's Strategy was shared with internal stakeholders in April. Feedback was received and has been reviewed and incorporated into the document. A team building/stakeholder event for SBC and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) colleagues was planned for Q4 19/20 but was delayed. The team are waiting for feedback from HCC concerning a similar, remote event that was held. It is anticipated that this report will be brought to the Executive in December 2020.
- 3.38 Following the government announcements that all rough sleepers were to be accommodated when the COVID-19 pandemic broke, the team negotiated a deal with a local hotel in Stevenage. This booking has now ended and those who were rough sleeping have been accommodated elsewhere. The pandemic has highlighted the need for there to be a longer term solution to

Homelessness, not just in Stevenage but countywide. Proposals to develop a Housing First model have been agreed by the Executive and the Housing Options team are now modelling what this might look like in Stevenage as it will need a partnership approach to ensure successful delivery.

## **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 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

3.39 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Improving the online offer for residents and businesses by delivering a simple, clearer website and straightforward online self-service options for key council services
- Developing and implementing the Council's channel management approach and enabling people to use digital services.
- Supporting the overall customer service offer and efficiency by improving back office processes and technology within the Council
- Developing the digital platform to support the Coronavirus response and those who are vulnerable
- Ensuring the new website is compliant with digital accessibility regulations
- Developing a new Digital Strategy that will set out how the Council will embrace digital change to support corporate priorities

### **Programme Delivery Update**

3.40 Development of the digital platform has been slower this quarter owing to additional time spent on some digital services that were developed urgently to help the Covid-19 response and disruptions to normal working patterns. However, progress was made and development and testing took place for the following functionality:

- Waste and recycling processes such as missed bin collections
- Environmental nuisance reporting such as fly-tipping
- Online car park season ticket processes

3.41 Single sign-on functionality for housing customers and 75 new web based forms were also in development ahead of the launch of the new Council website in September.

## **Place of Choice Programme**

### **Programme Outcomes**

- Working to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of Stevenage residents
- Building resilient communities, reducing crime and disorder and helping people feel safe
- Making Stevenage a 'destination and creative' town
- Unlocking opportunities for the local economy and our residents, ensuring that future regeneration and growth in Stevenage works for everyone
- Achieving net zero Council emissions by 2030 and leading work to achieve this aim for the town, its businesses and residents
- Establishing Stevenage as a leader in sustainable transport
- Enhancing Stevenage's biodiversity by conserving, restoring, recreating and reconnecting wildlife habitats, whilst increasing awareness and appreciation of Stevenage's wildlife

3.42 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:

### ***Healthy Stevenage***

- Launching a new Young People's Healthy Hub project to reduce physical inactivity, improve mental wellbeing, and provide advice and support for residents aged 11-16 years old.
- Improving the way we evidence and evaluate the impact of health and wellbeing projects and interventions working closely with the University of Hertfordshire.
- Communicating better with local residents and professionals to raise awareness of local health improvement projects and services via a wider variety of communication channels.
- Continuing to work with health and physical activity partners to deliver the Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2018-2022.
- Continuing to collaborate and integrate our work with other key health and wellbeing strategies across Hertfordshire.
- Improving the way we work with local communities in co-designing health and wellbeing projects and services.

### ***Community Safety***

- Working with partners to deliver initiatives to respond to the key Community Safety priorities of Violent Crime, Hate Crime and Community Reassurance.
- Cooperatively working to break the cycle of substance misuse and offending.
- Tackling perceptions of ASB through a media campaign highlighting how Stevenage is a safe place to live, visit and work in.
- Increased cooperative work in the community to tackle ASB.
- Improving awareness of safeguarding issues in our community.

### ***Stevenage Re-Imagined***

- Implementing arts and heritage installations in the planning phase.
- Implementing the Creative Use Scheme pilot in the town centre, giving local artists/artisans/creatives the opportunity to utilise underproductive/empty buildings in Stevenage town centre.
- Developing new cultural proposals and initiatives in the town centre and across neighbourhoods.
- Undertaking Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership needs analysis & early commissioned delivery.
- Piloting new heritage activities as we develop plans for a new museum for Stevenage.
- Working co-operatively with the newly formed Junction 7 Creatives and others in the local creative community on the above projects.
- Developing a series of options that could potentially form part of the Council's Town Deal Proposition to Government

### ***Community Wealth Building***

- Launching an Inclusive Economy Charter as part of the Council's commitment to Community Wealth Building, ensuring local people and businesses can benefit from opportunities created.
- Supporting Herts Growth Board to develop a policy statement and action plan for community wealth building across Hertfordshire.

### ***Climate Change***

- Adopting the new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, co-produced with the community, and supporting county-wide climate actions through the Herts Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership.
- Securing commitment from local businesses and residents through the Climate Change Business Charter and Community Pledge list.
- Developing and implementing the SBC Carbon Management Plan.

### ***Sustainable Transport***

- Refreshing the Future Town Future Transport Strategy.
- Working towards the designation of Stevenage as a 'Sustainable Transport town'.
- Delivery of sustainable transport projects included the Town Centre Regeneration Programme (permission for the bus interchange as referred to in paragraph 3.15; and scoping options for the multi-storey car park, cycle hub and cycleway improvements).
- Updating the Parking and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document and Strategy.
- Developing the options for the cycle hire scheme.

### ***Biodiversity***

- Developing Shackledell Grassland as a designated local nature reserve.
- Developing site specific hedgerow management plans.
- Protecting woodland sites through improved vertical structure in woodlands (subject to being able to work on-site in the autumn/winter months).
- Developing new orchard and grassland habitats (subject to being able to work on-site in the autumn/winter months).

### **Programme Delivery Update**

#### ***Healthy Stevenage***

- 3.43 The Healthy Stevenage Partnership has seen improved evidence and evaluation related to health research in Stevenage working in partnership with the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration (ARC), the University of Hertfordshire (UoH) and HCC Public Health. This has been integrated into action planning for the delivery of projects and services.
- 3.44 A new community response project, So Active, has been launched this quarter. This aims to revitalise the health and wellbeing of keyworkers, older people, children and adults through a variety of physical activity and digital literacy interventions online and outdoors. This is being delivered in partnership with local fitness coaches and instructors already working across the town prior to the pandemic.

#### ***Community Safety***

- 3.45 This quarter in particular has been challenging for the Community Safety team due to the national and international impact of Covid-19. Awareness



surrounding domestic abuse and homelessness has meant all services have been stretched. However the team continue to provide vital services to some of our most in need residents.

- 3.46 Stevenage (also known as Survivors) Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) service now has 16 safe spaces and move on accommodation, using a Housing First type model across Hertfordshire, to assist those fleeing domestic violence. Recruitment is currently underway for specialist support workers to provide clients with the bespoke support required for each individual case.
- 3.47 The No More Service which supports individuals whose lives are negatively affected by drugs, alcohol and/or offending has seen a 157% increase in referrals this quarter. The team have provided intensive support to those homeless individuals who had been accommodated as part of the Government's rough sleeper project in a bid to reduce the impact on substance use, health and general wellbeing.

### ***Stevenage Re-Imagined***

- 3.48 Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, many physical artistic and cultural events have had to be postponed or cancelled during quarter one. However the team were able to offer a Virtual Stevenage Day via collective effort across the Council and contributions from community partners, as well as a week of VE Day 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary activity via social media. Also incredible community spirit has been seen through the "Covid the Cobra" initiative by Stevenage residents. In recognising its importance, the Council has begun plans to ensure its legacy, as demonstrated by an online poll to ensure co-operative working.
- 3.49 The Core Group of the Arts and Heritage Forum has formalised into Junction 7 Creatives CIC, now serving as the council's community partner for the Arts & Heritage Strategy, with a memorandum of understanding being developed to solidify the co-operative relationship.

### ***Climate Change***

- 3.50 A substantial move forward with calculating the baseline carbon output of the Council has been made this quarter, including its building and vehicle fleet emissions. This is a key stage in recognising not only the amount of carbon the council is producing but from which sources.
- 3.51 This will enable the council to assess the best ways to reduce its output and feed into the future climate change action plan. This key piece of data will be the starting point to monitor and reduce carbon emissions and reach the target to be net carbon neutral by 2030.
- 3.52 Officers completed a successful consultation with a range of stakeholders from local businesses to the general public and school children. This consultation will feed into the next stages of the Strategy and Action Plan and

has given the Council a good understanding of what the public think and want in relation to climate change.

### ***Sustainable Transport***

- 3.53 Planning and Development Committee granted planning permission for the relocation of the town centre bus station in June. This is a crucial step for sustainable transport in the town as well as enabling progress with the town centre regeneration scheme. The new bus station will be located closer to the train station, forming a sustainable transport hub enabling more multi-part journeys to be taken entirely on sustainable modes of transport instead of partially by car. The new station will be future-proofed to enable electric busses to charge on-site, will have safe bicycle parking and will provide a more comfortable and modern waiting environment for passengers. The new facility will also include a café and shop mobility store.
- 3.54 The new Parking and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) recently underwent consultation and is now being prepared for adoption by the Executive. The SPD will provide a new set of guidelines for future developments with an up to date focus on sustainability to reduce the domination of cars being imbedded into designs. The SPD will also give policy support to many of the schemes included within Future Town, Future Transport.
- 3.55 Progress has been made with numerous schemes outside the control of the Council. New signalling related to the installation of the fifth platform at Stevenage train station was completed prior to Covid-19 lockdown which means the overall scheme has incurred only minor delays.
- 3.56 Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) colleagues have been engaged to consider the design and delivery of schemes to improve the cycle network. Officers jointly attended site visits to identify projects which are due to go through HCC's internal decision-making. In addition, housing developers have agreed to deliver significant extensions to the existing cycle network through S106 agreements. Subject to signing the legal agreements, this should see high quality cycling links to developments to the north and east of town.

### ***Biodiversity***

- 3.57 An application has been submitted along with supporting documents, for Local Nature Reserve designation for Shackledell Grassland. The Grassland already has Local Wildlife Site status, but being a Local Nature Reserve will offer the site a higher status and greater protection.

## **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.

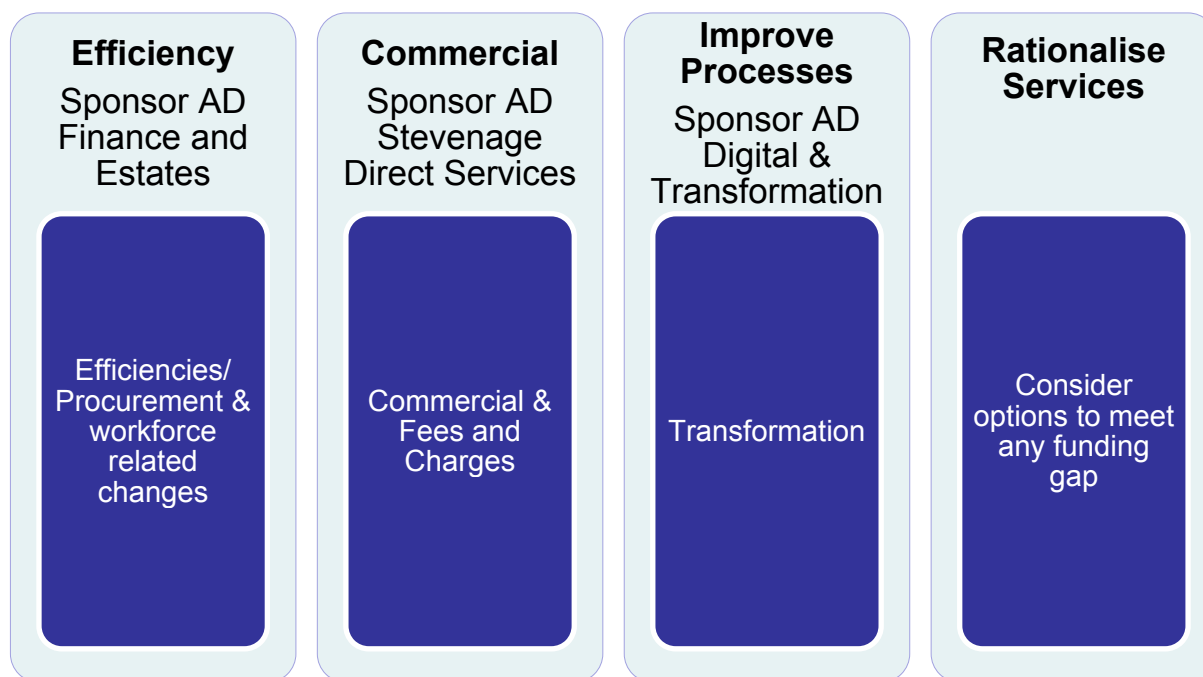


Figure 2: Financial Security Work streams.

3.58 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Reviewing the Medium Term Financial Strategies, including assessments of the impact of Covid-19 on General Fund and HRA budgets and identification and implementation of mitigating actions.
- Identification of Financial Security options to meet the General Fund and HRA funding gap for the period 2021/22-2023/24 via the Financial Security workstreams
- Further developing and implementing the Council's Commercial and Insourcing Strategy
- Continuing to undertake an appraisal of the Council's assets across all Stevenage neighbourhoods, to meet the objectives of the General Fund Asset Management Strategy
- Undertaking a Transformation Opportunity Assessment as a key first stage in the transformational approach to addressing the funding challenge
- Identifying options to improve productivity via use of digital interventions

## **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.59 Monthly monitoring, analysis and reporting on the effect of Covid-19 on the Council's finances has continued to take place, both in terms of lost income (including car parking) but also the impact of additional costs (B&B etc) and the impact on how the Council delivers its services.
- 3.60 Members have been regularly kept informed of ongoing developments, and relevant returns have been sent to Government detailing the scale of the Council's losses. Lobbying has also taken place via SDCT, LGA, DCN to argue for appropriate grant funding to cover the additional costs and lost income that has been incurred. The Council has been allocated some funding however the estimated costs SBC has incurred are currently around three times this figure.
- 3.61 A new group (Finance & Resources Cell) has been meeting (remotely) fortnightly to discuss these impacts, and how they will impact on the MTFS and moving forward looking at the early discussions around setting next year's budget; any reports or analysis coming out of these meetings will ultimately be reported to the Leader's Financial Security Group later this year. The Financial Security Monthly meeting is proposed to become the Transformational and Finance Recovery Cell.
- 3.62 The recruitment and appointment of a new Commercial Manager was successfully completed this quarter and it is likely that the Financial Security programme will form part of their remit. Over time commercialisation should help the Council achieve its objectives for Financial Security objectives. An updated commercial strategy was prepared and presented to the Strategic Leadership Team in preparation for the August Executive 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
- 3.63 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:
- Developing a new Workforce strategy and supporting work programme to ensure that our workforce and workplace are developed and engaged to deliver our services now and in the future. The strategy will focus on ways of working, workforce communication, workforce inclusion and diversity and workforce development

- Working closely with the business to ensure that our workforce have the appropriate skills and knowledge to deliver now and in the future
- Preparing for new ways of working having learned from the experience of operating the services during the Covid-19 pandemic and also to prepare the council for its planned move to the public sector hub
- A renewed focus on branding of SBC as an employer through on-boarding and external recognition
- Continuing to support areas of the organisation as they go through business unit reviews
- Refresh of induction and introduction of on-boarding concepts
- Developing tools to enable staff self-service
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the Firstcare absence management system

### **Programme Delivery Update**

- 3.64 Activities throughout quarter one have been primarily focussed on supporting the Council's response to COVID 19 and COVID recovery planning, which has resulted in the temporary pausing of many of the elements of the Employer of Choice Programme as discussed with the Strategic Leadership Team.
- 3.65 Analysis has been undertaken through learning lessons about how the workforce is working differently during the COVID 19 response. This will support the team's work to ensure colleagues are ready to move into new ways of working in time for the move to the civic hub in due course. Additionally, the HR team have been successful in a bid to receive free workforce planning consultancy from the Local Government Association and be part of the national working group on workforce planning.
- 3.66 Work commenced during the quarter to consult with staff and start the development of a new Workforce Strategy to set out the vision for future ways of working, reflecting on the experience of rapidly adapting during the COVID 19 pandemic. This will also include other key strategic themes aligned to support other key strategic ambitions – i.e. commercialisation, transformation and the Connected to our Customers programme. The new strategy is the subject of another report to this Executive meeting and the HR team are working to have the new strategy agreed and ready for launch during quarter three.

### **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
- 3.67 During 2020/21 the programme is primarily focused on:

- Ongoing development of the use of the Inphase system
- Reviewing the scheme of officer delegations in respect of Executive powers

### **Programme Delivery Update**

3.68 The 2020/21 performance suite of measures and targets was finalised during the quarter and subsequently agreed at the July Executive meeting. The Inphase performance management system was re-procured in and work has commenced on scoping the re-design of the system to improve its usability.

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

3.69 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 2020 to June 2020 is outlined below:

3.70

<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>
41	29	3	8	1*

\*CSC13a: % of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC, is unable to report until Q2 due to COVID-19 delaying development of the new digital platform, Firmstep. Other developments have taken priority e.g. CSC online appointments system

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

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

3.72 The Customer Theme incorporates the following Business Units:

- Housing and Investment
- Communities and Neighbourhood

#### **Housing and Investment**

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

- 3.73 These measures have been removed from the corporate performance suite for 2020/21. The compliance team are working to create a suite of measures for compliance works.

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

- 3.74 Due to the impact of COVID-19 there are a number of clients residing in hotels. The team are working to move as many clients out of the hotels in order to reduce costs. This is being achieved by direct letting social housing to accepted households that are in the Council's temporary accommodation, therefore freeing up stock for the clients in hotels to move into. A number of clients have also been assisted by the team to move into the private rented sector.
- 3.75 Once the government restrictions on evictions have been lifted the team will be able to complete any necessary evictions from our emergency/temporary accommodation stock, thus reducing our numbers placed. For any evictions that take place, children's services are notified through the joint housing protocol and they are responsible for ensuring that there is suitable accommodation for any families as per their responsibilities under the Children's Act.
- 3.76 Key officers are meeting every 6 weeks to review B&B spend, monitor B&B usage and to agree what actions are being taken to reduce this. Having additional staff to assist with achieving preventions for a backlog of cases that built up during lockdown should also assist to ease the numbers in emergency/temporary accommodation.
- 3.77 The Housing Options team have seen 121 rough sleepers approach for assistance. Many are still being accommodated; however, some have left the accommodation provided to non-occupation, eviction or refusal.
- 3.78 The Housing Options team are continuing to source accommodation at pace which is evident by the Housing Supply team in July alone assisting 14 households into private rented sector accommodation.
- 3.79 Housing First proposals will be brought to the Executive during quarter 3. The team have submitted proposals for the MHCLG Next Steps revenue and capital funding which totals approximately £900,000 for accommodation, security and Severe Weather Emergency Provision. There is no guarantee the full amount will be received, the Council may only be allocated a proportion of what has been bid for.
- NI156: Number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation at end of quarter, June 2020 target 120, achieved 182

#### **Spotlight: Homelessness Preventions**

- 3.80 Due to the sheer demand on the Housing Options Service having to accommodate a significant number of rough sleepers since 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, the team have not been able to achieve the target for the quarter.

- 3.81 There has been less stock available in the private sector, due to a lack of turnaround from the ban on evictions. Despite the ban on evictions the team have however seen the same level of approaches for service as at the same quarter last year.
- 3.82 The current caseload is 689. This includes those who are seeking housing advice, but who may not currently be threatened with homelessness. The team have eight Housing Options Caseworkers with two of these funded from the Flexible Homeless Support Grant. This equates to each officer having circa 84 cases. This has resulted in the need for funding to be identified for two additional temporary members of staff to assist with the case volume.
- 3.83 Some senior Housing Options Caseworkers are funded through the grant, with one post leading on the day to day management of the Rough Sleeper outreach team and another working with the eight Housing Options Caseworkers.
- 3.84 The demand for the service has grown significantly since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act and has continued to show year on year growth. Approaches to the service are detailed below;
- Full year 2018 to 19 there were 1314 approaches to the service
  - Full year 2019 to 20 there were 1571 approaches to the service this is equivalent to a year on year increase of 20%
- 3.85 During January to April 2020 contact increased 36% in approaches, which was related to the high demand for single person accommodation following the COVID announcements regarding the placement of single non priority people. The re-opening of the courts now scheduled for 20 September and the granting of mandatory possession orders for those in private sector tenancies is likely to place a further significant demand on the service and our accommodation resources.
- 3.86 As mentioned in para 3.79 Housing First proposals will be brought forward to Executive in November.
- BV213: Homelessness Preventions, June 2020 target 90, achieved 67

#### **Spotlight: Rent Collection Rate**

- 3.87 Income collection for the end of June is below target due to unprecedented challenges from the impacts of COVID-19.
- 3.88 There has been an increase in Universal Credit cases since the end of March 2020 (329). The number of UC claimants stands at 1394 at the end of quarter 1, of these accounts 1065 are in arrears totalling £671,000. This number is expected to increase for at least the next 18 months, with a sharp spike expected when the government measures are lifted due to unemployment and redundancies.



- 3.89 There has been an increase in emergency and temporary accommodation arrears. The total number of cases is 154, of those 109 are in arrears totalling £64,755.84. This is due to the recent increase in homeless presentations.
- 3.90 There have been a number of cases where people have been furloughed and put on job retention schemes. The total number of recorded cases is 136, of those 130 are in arrears totalling £73,110.93. There have been 4 cases made redundant with arrears of £2,248.58 and it is expected that this number will increase.
- 3.91 The government suspension on most debt recovery has also had an impact on the level arrears. There are 156 cases on alternative payment arrangements, of those 117 are in arrears.
- 3.92 The government ban on evictions has had an impact on the level of arrears. There are 21 cases due for eviction when the ban is lifted with arrears totalling £45,946.23.
- 3.93 The current trend of increasing levels of arrears is expected to continue, work to mitigate the impact will continue. The income services collective effort is directed towards sustaining income collection and arrears recovery. The team will focus on tenancy sustainment moving forward, as a result of the current changes to welfare benefits and financial challenges faced by tenants.
- 3.94 There is a recovery action plan in place that will help to mitigate the long term impact of UC and the economic consequences of COVID-19. The recovery plan will ensure the following:
- A clear focus across Housing and Investment on challenges to income collection as a result of impact of UC and current pandemic; including the recent measures introduced by the Coronavirus Act 2020. The team will:
    - implement a plan for maximising arrears prevention across all income streams, focusing on arrears prevention and money advice
    - maximise efficient working practices and adopt mobile working solutions to maintain service delivery and reach out to all residents impacted by UC and COVID-19.
    - encourage and increase use of the digital self-service channels to ensure that they continue to deliver accessible income collection and recovery services in line with customer abilities and expectations.
- 3.95 It is expected that at the end of Quarter 2 and 3 income collection and recovery rates will still be below the expected targets as this will be the end of some of the government COVID-19 measures
- BV66a: Rent Collection Rate, June 2020 target 93.6%, achieved 90.2%

### **Spotlight: Void Loss**

- 3.96 The figure for void loss this quarter is slightly above target. Other repairs performance targets have been achieved, despite the impacts of COVID-19.
- 3.97 Sheltered standard lettings have been a challenge and have impacted the void loss figure. To help to mitigate this, a new Accommodation and Complex Needs Officer has been recruited. The officer has already identified many areas of improvement and it is hoped that this will reduce void loss over the remainder of the year.
- 3.98 As at 30 June 2020, there were 33 sheltered properties Ready-To-Let with a combined weekly void loss of £2,797.56.
- VoidLoss1: Void Loss in year (£), June 2020 target £82,767, achieved £87,350

## **Communities and Neighbourhoods**

### **Spotlight: Community Safety**

- 3.99 During lockdown Domestic Abuse and COVID breaches have increased across Hertfordshire and nationally.
- 3.100 In Quarter 1 there was a 100% increase in referrals for Domestic Abuse. The Community Safety team have increased the Safe Spaces to 16 to deal with the demand. The team have introduced an out of hours service to support the clients during lockdown for an initial three month period.
- CS10: Domestic Abuse per 1,000 population, June 2020 target 5.7, achieved 6.03
- 3.101 During Quarter 1 COVID-19 breaches were logged as ASB on police systems, meaning an increase in the ASB measure. Staff completed three closures orders, an injunction and an applied warrant to remove a caravan. Clients have been supported through the No More service. The team have also assisted with supporting the Homelessness team by attending the hotel and temporary accommodation, where clients were housed.
- CS8: Anti-social behaviour per 1,000 population, June 2020 target 8, achieved 10.4
  - NI15b: The rate of violence against the person (victim based crime) per 1,000 population, June 2020 target 10, achieved 15.3
- 3.102 The Community Safety team received seven high risk offender referrals for intensive support and housing, which have all been risk assessed and discussed at the Adult Offender Protocol Housing Panel.
- 3.103 The team have been supporting residents and cases until they can take legal action, arranging an increased amount of professionals meetings to help

resolve each case, using video doorbells to help vulnerable residents to feel safer in their homes. The delay in legal proceedings has resulted in a rise in complaints and queries through Yoursay.

- 3.104 The Community Safety team applied for funding to assist with the increase in demand, but was unfortunately not successful on this occasion with bids to the Police and Crime Commissioner. The team did however receive some additional funding through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- 3.105 The number of ASB cases is expected to remain high over the next quarter as the delay with court appearances will continue to affect measures such as Closure Orders. Further Covid-19 breaches may also affect crime reporting as Police activity continues around social distancing at events and through the nighttime economy. In regards to domestic abuse there are still delays with court orders leading to a delay of up to 7 months currently for court appearances.

### **B: Place Theme**

- 3.106 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 3.20 and 3.21 to 3.27 respectively)

### **Planning and Regulation**

#### **Jobs Created through the Business Technology Centre**

- 3.107 During Quarter 1 the jobs created through the Business Technology Centre (BTC) did not meet the target, however they still managed to create 7 jobs during a difficult economic time.
- 3.108 The target output for jobs created for the whole of this financial year is 60 and for new businesses is 24. These figures relate to a funding agreement between the council and EEDA for the second phase, to support an extension at the BTC. EEDA are no longer in existence and responsibility now lies with Homes England. The agreement ceases November 2022.
- 3.109 Wenta are undertaking a number of measures to support clients at the BTC, businesses across Stevenage and other centre areas, those considering self-employment, as well as those who are facing redundancy. This includes specialised business support and advice, webinars on a number of areas

including cash flow, book keeping, start-up support and redundancy support to name a few areas.

- 3.110 There are also a number of webinars supporting businesses to become more digital savvy, with support to improve sales, marketing, website development and an improved web presence.
- 3.111 Wenta have also launched a series of webinars to support those considering self-employment and for those that have been made redundant. This is promoted by Wenta through their distribution mailing lists and on social media.
- BTC1a: New jobs created through the BTC, June 2020 target 15, achieved 7

### **Spotlight: Food Establishments Compliance**

- 3.112 The food premises inspection programme was largely suspended in April on the direction of the Food Standards Agency (FSA); it was partially re-instated by the agency in mid-July. During the suspension period the only inspections carried out were of the highest risk premises where intelligence such as complaints indicated that issues of major concern existed. By definition such premises were not broadly compliant so that the proportion showing this inspection outcome has increased slightly.
- 3.113 As inspection activity assumes a more regular profile, probably during quarter 3, subject to FSA instruction, performance should stabilise at pre-pandemic levels.
- NI184: Food establishments in the area broadly compliant with food hygiene law, June 2020 target 95%, achieved 90.7%

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

#### **Spotlight: Garage Voids**

- 3.114 The Garages team resumed garage lettings from the end of April following the impacts of COVID-19.
- 3.115 Lettings continue to be delayed by the need to carry out an asbestos survey before letting the garage; these are being carried out by an external agent. The asbestos surveys continued in lockdown at a slower rate. The external agent out staff on furlough, so the team used the council's asbestos surveyor on a temporary basis for some inspections. The external agent resumed inspections from June.
- 3.116 From September the team can offer online appointments for tenants to collect their keys. Customer Services will issue keys and the delivery of keys will only be used as last resort.

- 3.117 The application update has been completed ensuring that the waiting list is up to date and we are reviewing the service as a whole in terms of processes and structure.
- 3.118 Investigation is underway into the functionality of Northgate; the team have conducted process mapping and have highlighted the process improvements that are needed to be made to provide a more efficient service. The team are waiting on costs from Northgate to be able to formulate a business case and plan to review the staffing structure to identify opportunities for improvement.
- 3.119 Once the blocks are completed under the Garages Improvement Programme they will come back into the Garages teams remit to let. A marketing campaign will be started prior to their completion.
- 3.120 There are 3 garages sites starting refurbishment in September, equating to 56 units newly available for rent. Working on a mean average of £11.60 per week, on the premise that we bring all 56 units back into management, which would equate to an additional £649.60 per week or £32,480 over the course of a 50 week year.
- CNM2g: Garage Voids as a percentage of stock, June 2020 target 10.79%, achieved 14.93%

### **Waste and Recycling**

- 3.121 The impact of the lockdown with residents being at home either through furlough or home working has increased our tonnages collected for waste and recycling.
- 3.122 In the period March to July the Waste and Recycling team supported the front line refuse and recycling crews with additional resource whilst observing measures introduced regarding social distancing, hygiene etc. This on the whole was done through redeployment of SDS operatives from other areas such as Street Scene. These services were impacted due to the measures in place and having the ability to deploy staff safely, and it was also recognised some of these areas were not essential services, hence the 'diversion' from non-essential to essential (one of the benefits of an in-house operation).
- 3.123 In the event of a future local lockdown the same principles will be applied, with redeployment of staff to support front line critical services.
- 3.124 In April the team measured a 23% increase in refuse and a 53% increase in recycling against a standard month. Recent tonnages show refuse levels starting to reduce, however recycling levels remain high.

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

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

- Corporate Services
- Digital and Transformation
- Finance and Estates

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

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

3.126 In response to the pandemic and government guidelines the operating model for customer services has changed significantly. In turn there has been a shift in customer behaviour with a 10% decrease in telephone contact and increased online transactions, particularly online payments.

3.127 Service delivery through the Customer Service Centre (CSC) is an ongoing focus area for improvement.

- CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre: target 7.2%, April 2020 to June 2020 achieved 2.6%
- CSC13a: Percentage of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors): target 65%, April 2019 to June 2020 unable to report due to reporting from the new systems being delayed due to the Covid-19 response. Calculations have been based on historical data
- EAA1: Customer satisfaction with CSC services, target 90%, April to June 2020 achieved 96%

3.128 Performance measures achieved targets in Quarter 1.

3.129 In Quarter 1 many advisers were set up to be able to work from home, adjusting from a site based contact centre. Face to face appointments were suspended and an appointments based service for face to face requirements was introduced at the beginning of Quarter 2.

3.130 The figures for CS13a are unable to be reported, this is due to the team focussing on other priorities e.g. the face to face appointments system.

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

3.132 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.

3.133 As at 30 June 2020 there were 27.5 FTE in post, this equates to 2 FTE over establishment. There are currently 3 advisers on maternity leave and 2 on secondment.

- 3.134 The number of agency advisers in post equates to 5.18FTE. This is 18.8% of our current establishment; the majority of these are single service advisers who are supporting the COVID-19 recovery while new members of the team are inducted and trained.
- 3.135 Forecasting performance for the next quarter is reliant on the path of recovery from the pandemic. There is no evidence available that suggests we will be unable to achieve our targets. This will be reviewed as guidance changes and recovery progresses.

Measure	Target	Q2 forecast
CSC 12 – Percentage of calls abandoned	<8%	8%
CSC 13a – Calls resolved at first point of contact	>65%	Forecast unavailable
EAA1 - Customer satisfaction with CSC services	> 90%	92%

- 3.136 The key focus for Quarter 2 is recovery, ensuring safety measures are in place for staff and ensuring those customers most in need of critical services are prioritised.
- 3.137 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:
  - Working with service areas to ensure the CSC is able to facilitate service delivery
  - Working through the recovery plan to increase access to services in all areas
  - Delivering self-service provision that is easy and convenient for customers
- 3.138 The focus on this service area will be retained until it is fely performance improvement can be sustained across the full set of CSC measures.

**Technology**

- 3.139 In Quarter 1 the IT team have been busy supporting all staff, who require it, in order for them to continue to work from home due to COVID-19, with the majority of staff using remote access in order to carry out their respective roles.

- 3.140 Laptops were provided to Members who needed them, and one to one Zoom training was provided to support Members in using the new technology.
- 3.141 Essential IT maintenance work has continued with a power-down weekend at the end of June, enabling us to carry out several important pieces of pre-requisite work for our major strategic projects that will be going live later in the financial year.
- 3.142 Project delivery schedules have been re-planned in order to maintain momentum during the current Pandemic. Several suppliers performing hands-on tasks were effectively stalled due to temporary closure of their businesses and social distancing rules. The restrictions meant it was impossible for contractors and staff to carry out non-critical works in confined spaces where more than one technician was required. IT managed the situation by bringing forward a number of other project tasks to make sure projects were able to progress whilst waiting for those restrictions to be relaxed.

### **Our staff**

- 3.143 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 begun the majority REAL conversations have taken place virtually. These sessions have included wellbeing checks.

### **Spotlight: Recruitment Time**

- 3.144 The average number of days taken from the date of the recruitment approval form was received to the date the contract offer was sent to the successful applicant was over target. This was based on the average days to recruit for 17 vacancies this quarter, all were external appointments.
- 3.145 The recruitment process has been adapted for remote working, including remote interviews. The change in process has resulted in an increased time to recruit this quarter; this time is expected to reduce as the new ways of working are embedded.
- EOCrec: Time to recruit, June 2020 target 42 days, achieved 51 days

### **Sickness Absence**

- 3.146 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.
- 3.147 The Sickness Absence measure is currently rated as green, this is the first time the number of sickness days per FTE has been within target for the past year.



- Sickness absence rate for the current workforce (per FTE): target 9.49 days, twelve months to June 2020 achieved 8.19 days

- 3.148 It is anticipated that we will see a small rise in sickness absence as we enter the winter months in line with normal trends and due to children returning to school.
- 3.149 Levels of sickness absence across Hertfordshire have also reduced during the pandemic. It should be noted that sickness absence levels do not include those self-isolating for infection control purposes, who otherwise would have been well enough to work.
- 3.150 The new workforce strategy is currently under consultation and feedback has been sought from a variety of stakeholders. The finalised strategy will be presented to Executive in October. One of the themes within the strategy is Inclusion and Wellbeing and will foster the development of a culture with wellness at its heart, support employees to maintain good mental and physical health.
- 3.151 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**

### **Spotlight: Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates**

- 3.152 Since the lockdown for COVID-19, no recovery action has been commenced. Customers contacting the council have been supported in making arrangements to reschedule payments, including end loading their payment (shifting and weighting instalments later in the year), moving a 10 month instalment profile to run from June – March instead of April – January etc. All have been encouraged where possible to make some payment on account to reduce their liability.
- BV9: % Council Tax collected (amber), June 2020 target 33%, achieved 32.6%
  - BV10: % Non Domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority, June 2020 target 36%, achieved 34.2%
- 3.153 With the reopening of shops and more businesses re-opening in some form, recovery action commenced in July. This excluded Council Tax support cases in the first instance as the Hardship scheme was not live until August which gives up to a maximum of £150 for those on CTS.
- 3.154 For both Council Tax & Business rates there is an expectation that there will be an increase in hardship cases seeking relief from liability. The Council does have some additional funding for working age Council Tax support (CTS) cases through the governments COVID-19 hardship scheme and can be made for new CTS cases presenting during the year, but any surplus can be

used to support other hardship schemes as determined by the head of the shared service in conjunction with the S151 officer.

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

- 3.155 Some savings for the General Fund have been shown not to be achievable in the current year (due to COVID-19) - the two biggest being the expected increases in car parking income from Fees & Charges (£113k) and the increase from Corey's Mill Lane on-street parking tariff increase (£21k). Overall, the current estimate is that only 77% of the savings target will be achievable.
- 3.156 Some savings for the HRA have been shown not to be achievable in the current year (due to COVID-19). Savings option (£101k) for reconfiguration of caretaking and maintenance team has been delayed.
- 3.157 Savings are being continually reviewed and brought forward where possible.
- FS1A: Percentage of GF approved savings removed from GF budget for current year, June 2020 target 98%, achieved 77%
  - FS2A: Percentage of HRA approved savings removed from HRA budget for current year, June 2020 target 91%, achieved 45%

### **Next Quarter Focus**

- 3.158 The Assistant Directors are responsible for improving the performance of measures that fall within their Business Units.
- 3.159 Following a number of assessments, and the new red and amber measures arising at June 2020, the following improvement plans have been identified for ongoing monitoring by the Senior Leadership Team:
- Continuing to embed the new service model in the Customer Service Centre (paragraphs 3.126 to 3.138)
  - Continuing to implement improved practices to support sickness absence (paragraphs 3.146 to 3.151)
  - Continuing to implement recovery plans for Temporary/Emergency accommodation use caused by Covid-19 (paragraphs 3.74 to 3.79)
  - Continuing to implement Housing First plans to assist with Homelessness Preventions (para 3.80 to 3.86)
  - Continuing to implement recovery plans for Rent Collection (para 3.87 to 3.95)
  - Continuing to implement plans and improve processes for Void loss (para 3.95 to 3.98)
  - Continuing to work in partnership to prevent Community Safety issues (para 3.99 to 3.105)
  - Continuing to work with/follow advice from WENTA about BTC job creation (para 3.107 to 3.111)

- Ensuring that compliance checks for food establishments resume (para 3.112 to 3.113)
- 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 3.114 to 3.120)
- Implementing changes to the recruitment process (para 3.144 to 3.145)
- Ensuring that improvement plans for collection of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates are in place (para 3.152 to 3.154)
- Ensuring that General Fund and HRA savings are closely monitored (para 3.155 to 3.157)

3.160 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.

3.161 The Senior Leadership Team will also closely monitor the impact of Covid-19 on performance across all service areas during 2020/21 and most performance results will be compared to actuals or targets 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.

3.162 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 or COVID-19 recovery 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 1: Compendium of Performance Results
- Appendix 2: Future Town, Future Council Programme Scope/Focus for 2020/21

**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 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	Actual to 30/06/20	Status at 30/06/20	Target to 30/09/20
CS8: Anti-social behaviour per 1,000 population	Customers	8.00	7.69	☆	20.00	8.45	☆	28.00	5.38	☆	33.00	6.80	☆	8.00	10.40	▲	12.00
CS10: Domestic Abuse per 1,000 population	Customers			»			»			»			»	5.70	6.03	●	-
NI15b: The rate of violence against the person (victim based crime) per 1,000	Customers	10.00	2.96	☆	17.00	9.00	☆	28.00	7.90	☆	35.00	8.24	☆	10.00	15.30	▲	7.00
BV213: Homelessness preventions	Customers	90.0	128.0	☆	180.0	272.0	☆	270.0	428.0	☆	360.0	525.0	☆	90.0	67.0	▲	180.0
BV66a: Rent collection rate	Customers	93.6%	93.8%	☆	96.3%	96.9%	☆	97.8%	97.3%	●	98.7%	98.5%	☆	93.6%	90.2%	▲	96.3%
ECHFL1: Percentage of Homes maintained as decent	Customers	76.9%	77.0%	☆	79.4%	79.5%	☆	81.5%	81.5%	☆	76.1%	75.1%	●	75.1%	75.2%	☆	76.5%
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%	☆	100.0%
ECHFL-IW1: Percentage of tenants satisfied with internal works completed (for the current quarter)	Customers	80.0%	100.0%	☆	80.0%	100.0%	☆	80.0%	100.0%	☆	80.0%	100.0%	☆	80.0%	100.0%	☆	80.0%
NI156: Number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation at end qtr	Customers	75.00	73.00	☆	75.00	81.00	▲	75.00	89.00	▲	75.00	175.00	▲	120.00	182.00	▲	120.00
Void loss 1: Void loss in year (£)	Customers	82,767	85,775	●	164,594	191,858	▲	239,856	271,198	▲	319,245	343,051	▲	82,767	87,350	▲	164,594
Voids Sheltered MW - The time taken to relet major works sheltered voids	Customers	70.00	0.00	☆	70.00	91.00	▲	70.00	70.00	☆	70.00	103.25	▲	70.00	0.00	☆	70.00
ECHFL-IW1: Percentage of tenants satisfied with external works completed (for the current quarter)	Customers	80.0%	98.9%	☆	80.0%	100.0%	☆	80.0%	100.0%	☆	80.0%	100.0%	☆	80.0%	100.0%	☆	80.0%
WebSat1: Customer satisfaction with Council website	Future Town, Future Council	0.11	0.26	☆	0.11	0.30	☆	0.15	0.26	☆	0.20	0.16	▲	0.22	0.22	☆	0.30
FS2a (LACC2): Percentage HRA approved savings removed from HRA for current year	Future Town, Future Council	91.00%	98.00%	☆	91.00%	94.00%	☆	91.00%	92.00%	☆	91.00%	91.00%	☆	91.00%	45.00%	▲	91.00%
CTOC1: Percentage of customer complaints responded to within deadline	Future Town, Future Council	95.00%	94.37%	☆	95.00%	94.19%	☆	95.00%	94.94%	☆	95.00%	93.90%	☆	95.00%	99.65%	☆	95.00%
EAA1: Customer satisfaction with CSC customer service	Future Town, Future Council	90.0%	88.7%	☆	90.0%	90.1%	☆	90.0%	89.7%	☆	90.0%	89.7%	☆	90.0%	96.0%	☆	90.0%
FS3 (Futsav1b): Percentage of GF savings identified to meet three year target	Future Town, Future Council	21.1%	45.9%	☆	39.8%	71.9%	☆	47.4%	69.6%	☆	69.9%	69.9%	☆	10.0%	10.0%	☆	30.0%
FS1a (LACC1): Percentage GF approved savings removed from GF budget for current year	Future Town, Future Council	98.00%	98.00%	☆	92.00%	94.00%	☆	92.00%	92.00%	☆	92.00%	92.00%	☆	98.00%	77.00%	▲	92.00%
EoC4a: Percentage of apprentices in post as percentage of workforce.	Future Town, Future Council	2.3%	2.1%	☆	2.3%	1.9%	☆	2.3%	2.1%	☆	2.3%	1.9%	☆	2.1%	2.2%	☆	1.9%
HDD1b (formerly NB1) - New Build Spend v Budget of development activity that is contracted	Future Town, Future Council	90.0%	99.8%	☆	90.0%	99.7%	☆	90.0%	98.2%	☆	90.0%	95.3%	☆	85.0%	87.6%	☆	85.0%

	Corporate Theme	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	Actual to 30/06/20	Status at 30/06/20	Target to 30/09/20	
	CNM2g: Garage Voids as a percentage of stock	Future Town, Future Council	12.00%	10.79%	★	12.00%	11.58%	★	12.00%	14.74%	▲	12.00%	15.38%	▲	10.79%	14.93%	▲	11.58%
+	Compl4: Percentage of stage 2 & 3 complaints upheld fully or partially (Housing)	Future Town, Future Council	40.00%	35.00%	★	40.00%	20.00%	☆	40.00%	24.71%	☆	40.00%	27.73%	☆	40.00%	27.27%	☆	40.00%
	FS4 (Futsav2b): Percentage of HRA savings identified to meet three year target	Future Town, Future Council	2.5%	36.0%	☆	29.3%	100.0%	☆	33.5%	79.3%	☆	46.3%	79.3%	☆	2.5%	2.5%	★	30.0%
	EoCrec: Time to recruit	Future Town, Future Council	45.00	42.00	★	45.00	47.00	★	45.00	46.00	★	45.00	46.00	★	42.00	51.00	▲	47.00
	HDD1d: Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) by the Council (since 2014)	Future Town, Future Council	179.00	176.00	★	183.00	192.00	★	212.00	216.00	★	225.00	238.00	★	240.00	239.00	★	242.00
+	Voids sheltered:The time taken to relet standard sheltered voids	Housing Management	70.00	103.94	▲	70.00	92.74	▲	70.00	88.81	▲	70.00	88.89	▲	70.00	70.67	★	70.00
+	Rep-Time2: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Urgent Repairs	Place	5.00	2.83	☆	5.00	2.80	☆	5.00	2.77	☆	5.00	3.14	☆	5.00	1.14	☆	5.00
	NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)	Place	135.00	122.00	☆	250.00	243.00	★	380.00	365.00	★	520.00	493.00	☆	150.00	150.00	★	275.00
	NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse,recycling and composting	Place	42.0%	43.0%	★	43.0%	42.0%	★	41.0%	37.0%	▲	40.0%	40.0%	★	55.0%	55.0%	★	42.0%
+	Rep Cost1: Average responsive repair cost per dwelling	Place	81.77	62.40	☆	163.54	162.78	★	245.30	218.46	☆	327.07	277.58	☆	81.77	56.86	☆	163.54
+	Rep-Time3: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Routine Repairs	Place	20.00	6.45	☆	20.00	7.16	☆	20.00	7.08	☆	20.00	7.85	☆	20.00	2.95	☆	20.00
+	VoidsGN: The time taken to relet standard general needs voids	Place	32.00	30.31	☆	32.00	30.27	☆	32.00	31.82	★	32.00	29.97	☆	32.00	25.20	☆	32.00
+	VoidsGNMW - The time taken to relet major works general needs voids	Place	65.00	51.92	☆	65.00	59.88	☆	65.00	59.00	☆	65.00	59.13	☆	65.00	60.86	☆	65.00
	BTC1a: New jobs created through Business Technology Centre	Place	15.00	?	?	30.00	34.00	☆	45.00	47.00	★	60.00	72.00	☆	15.00	7.00	▲	30.00
	BTC1b: New business start up in Business Technology Centre	Place	5.00	?	?	10.00	20.00	☆	15.00	34.00	☆	20.00	57.00	☆	6.00	6.00	★	12.00
+	NI157a: Percentage of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	Place	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%	83.3%	☆	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%	81.3%	☆	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%
+	NI157b: Percentage of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks	Place	65.0%	96.6%	☆	65.0%	96.0%	☆	65.0%	97.2%	☆	65.0%	90.3%	☆	65.0%	96.2%	☆	65.0%
+	NI157c: Percentage of other planning applications determined within 8 weeks	Place	80.0%	96.3%	☆	80.0%	97.5%	☆	80.0%	97.9%	☆	80.0%	96.7%	☆	80.0%	93.7%	★	80.0%
	NI184: Food establishments in the area broadly compliant with food hygiene law	Place	95.0%	96.1%	★	95.0%	96.1%	★	95.0%	97.0%	★	95.0%	96.0%	★	95.0%	90.7%	●	95.0%
+	ECHF3: Percentage of Repairs service customers satisfied (telephone survey)	Place	90.00%	93.08%	★	90.00%	93.36%	★	90.00%	93.01%	★	90.00%	92.72%	★	90.00%	94.01%	★	90.00%

	Corporate Theme	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	Actual to 30/06/20	Status at 30/06/20	Target to 30/09/20	
+	ECH-Rep3: Percentage repairs appointment made and kept	Place	95.00%	98.61%	★	95.00%	98.49%	★	95.00%	99.35%	★	95.00%	97.91%	★	95.00%	98.25%	★	95.00%
+	ECH-Rep4: Percentage repairs fixed first time	Place	87.50%	98.96%	☆	87.50%	99.14%	☆	87.50%	99.11%	☆	87.50%	96.76%	☆	87.50%	98.84%	☆	87.50%
+	Rep-Time1: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Emergency Repairs	Place	1.00	0.79	☆	1.00	0.85	☆	1.00	0.88	☆	1.00	0.94	☆	1.00	0.30	☆	1.00
+	ELL1a: Percentage of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) that are broadly compliant	Place	92.50	98.45	☆	92.50	95.83	☆	92.50	95.93	☆	92.50	96.88	☆	92.50	92.24	★	92.50
	CSC13a: Percentage of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors)	Transformation and Support	65.00%	62.90%	★	65.00%	61.80%	★	65.00%	62.10%	★	65.00%	61.40%	●	62.90%	?	?	61.80%
	Cust1: Percentage complaints progressing to stage 2 and 3 that are upheld or partially upheld	Transformation and Support	40.0%	31.8%	☆	40.0%	18.3%	☆	40.0%	23.1%	☆	40.0%	25.0%	☆	40.0%	28.6%	☆	40.0%
	BV10: Percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority	Transformation and Support	36.0%	36.9%	☆	61.0%	62.9%	☆	89.0%	89.8%	★	99.0%	98.9%	★	36.0%	34.2%	▲	61.0%
	Pe2: Agency Usage as a percentage of total workforce	Transformation and Support	12.0%	13.2%	●	12.0%	12.8%	●	12.0%	11.4%	★	11.0%	11.9%	●	13.2%	9.4%	☆	12.8%
	Pe4a: Sickness Absence Rate for the Current Workforce (FTE)	Transformation and Support	8.00	9.49	▲	8.00	9.80	▲	8.00	9.56	▲	8.00	9.87	▲	9.49	8.19	☆	9.80
	Pe6: Appraisal completion to meet corporate deadlines	Transformation and Support	100.0%	100.0%	★	100.0%	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	12.00	13.45	●	12.00	10.09	★	10.00	8.60	★	10.00	5.98	☆	12.00	9.42	☆	12.00
	BV9: Percentage of council tax collected	Transformation and Support	33.0%	33.3%	★	61.0%	60.4%	★	88.0%	87.5%	★	96.8%	96.0%	★	33.0%	32.6%	●	61.0%
	Pe1: Total Human Capital - measures Workforce Stability	Transformation and Support	85.0%	85.9%	★	85.0%	85.0%	★	85.0%	85.9%	★	85.0%	86.0%	★	85.9%	86.9%	★	85.0%
	CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre	Transformation and Support	10.0%	7.2%	★	10.0%	10.4%	★	8.0%	15.1%	▲	8.0%	15.9%	▲	7.2%	2.6%	☆	10.4%





## **Appendix 2.**

### **Future Town, Future Council Scope and Focus for 2020/21**

#### **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.

###### **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 2020/21 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Developing the Town Fund investment plan which will be overseen by the Stevenage Development board.
- Working with the LEP to ensure Growth Deal funding is secured for specific schemes.
- Supporting and enabling the start of Phase 1 of the £350m+ SG1 project in conjunction with Mace, including Swingate House and the former police station site.
- Completing a business case for bringing forward the Public Sector hub development, to enable acceleration of the broader SG1 scheme.
- Completing works on the Town Square and Town Square North Block projects.
- The transformation of Queensway through the completion of the first phases of work as part of the Reef development.

- Beginning construction of the new Bus Interchange, subject to permission being granted.
- Developing long term plans to support development around the station area.
- Developing the funded CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) on-site Training Hub as part of the Stevenage Works initiative in conjunction with Job Centre Plus and North Herts College.
- Delivering the 2020/21 Marketing Strategy, focussing on inclusive engagement.

## **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 2020/21 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Completing work on 10 new homes at Ditchmore Lane and continuing to work on delivering a further 240 homes, including sites at Shephall Way, Kenilworth Close, North Road and Symonds Green.
- Seeking planning permission on future schemes for approximately 300 more new homes.
- Procuring the design team for the Oval scheme masterplan, undertaking consultation on the designs and setting out a timetable for the development.

- 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 additional affordable homes.
- Forming a Wholly Owned Company (WOC) to deliver homes outside the HRA.

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

#### **3.1. Programme Outcomes**

- Transforming the Housing and Investment service to better meet the needs of its customers.
- Effective investment in council homes through planned programmes of work.

#### **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:

- Embedding corporate values and unified customer service: 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 2020/21 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Finalising the Housing Older People's Strategy in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council.
- Delivering Phase 2 of the 5-year MRC programme.
- Refurbishing a further 4 lifts as part of the lift refurbishment programme.

- Consulting with residents about the sprinkler retro-fitting programme, mobilising the contract and commencing works.
- Continuing to improve services to the customer through the housing on-line application; a review of the end-to-end repairs process; building on the use of mobile working applications; and evaluating the outcome of the innovation labs.
- Supporting homeless people by delivering the Homeless and Rough Sleeper Action plan and responding to the Government's initiatives for rough sleepers in light of Covid-19.
- Completing recruitment to vacant posts within the new Business Unit structure and evaluating how successful the new structure has been in terms of the service delivery/customer satisfaction and staff satisfaction.
- Introducing a series of 'innovation labs' to involve staff in influencing further digitalisation of the housing offer.
- Assessing and evaluating the Housing All Under One Roof Transformation programme to inform further service improvement opportunities.

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

##### **4.1. Programme Outcomes**

- Public spaces are more attractive, better cared for by the Council and residents, 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 town's community centres are efficiently run, well-managed and most importantly, meet local needs.
- Staff better understand the town's communities and through doing so are more able to deliver the change that is required.

##### **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 2020/21 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Implementing the Co-operative Neighbourhood working model, to enhance co-operative working across council services in neighbourhoods.
- Beginning to roll out elements of the new sustainable model for the provision and management of community centres.
- Public realm investments in Bedwell and Longmeadow, which will be determined by the community and seek co-operation from local groups, businesses and partner agencies, subject to funding becoming available.
- Replacing and installing new litter bins across Roebuck and Old Town.
- Progressing the Garage Programme.

## **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 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 2020/21 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Improving the online offer for residents and businesses by delivering a simple, clearer website and straightforward online self-service options for key council services.
- Developing and implementing the Council's channel management approach and enabling people to use digital services.

- Supporting the overall customer service offer and efficiency by improving back office processes and technology within the Council.
- Developing the digital platform to support the Coronavirus response and those who are vulnerable.
- Ensuring the new website is compliant with digital accessibility regulations.
- Developing a new Digital Strategy that will set out how the Council will embrace digital change to support corporate priorities.

## **6. Place of Choice Programme**

### **6.1. Programme Outcomes**

- Working to reduce health inequalities and improve the health and wellbeing of Stevenage residents.
- Building resilient communities, reducing crime and disorder and helping people feel safe.
- Making Stevenage a 'destination creative' town.
- Unlocking opportunities for the local economy and our residents, ensuring that future regeneration and growth in Stevenage works for everyone.
- Achieving net zero Council emissions by 2030 and leading work to achieve this aim for the town, its businesses and residents.
- Establishing Stevenage as a leader in sustainable transport.
- Enhancing Stevenage's biodiversity by conserving, restoring, recreating and reconnecting wildlife habitats, whilst increasing awareness and appreciation of Stevenage's wildlife.

### **6.2. Programme Overview**

**6.3.** At the Executive meeting on 11th September 2019, Members requested that officers scope the 'Place of Choice' FTFC strand to incorporate the place based strategies that the Council has developed with partners.

**6.4.** Key priorities are well-established for the existing strategies and are in development for the emerging strategies. The scope of this strand will develop further over time as new priorities emerge.

**6.5.** During 2020/21 the programme will primarily focus on:

#### ***Healthy Stevenage***

- Launching a new Young People's Healthy Hub project to reduce physical inactivity, improve mental wellbeing, and provide advice and support for residents aged 11-16 years old.

- Improving the way we evidence and evaluate the impact of health and wellbeing projects and interventions working closely with the University of Hertfordshire.
- Communicating better with local residents and professionals to raise awareness of local health improvement projects and services via a wider variety of communication channels.
- Continuing to work with health and physical activity partners to deliver the Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2018-2022.
- Continuing to collaborate and integrate our work with other key health and wellbeing strategies across Hertfordshire.
- Improving the way we work with local communities in co-designing health and wellbeing projects and services.

### ***Community Safety***

- Working with partners to deliver initiatives to respond to the key Community Safety priorities of Violent Crime, Hate Crime and Community Reassurance.
- Cooperatively working to break the cycle of substance misuse and offending.
- Tackling perceptions of ASB through a media campaign highlighting how Stevenage is a safe place to live, visit and work in.
- Increased cooperative work in the community to tackle ASB.
- Improving awareness of safeguarding issues in our community.

### ***Stevenage Re-Imagined***

- Implementing arts and heritage installations in the planning phase.
- Implementing the Creative Use Scheme pilot in the town centre, giving local artists/artisans/creatives the opportunity to utilise underproductive/ empty buildings in Stevenage town centre.
- Developing new cultural proposals and initiatives in the town centre and across neighbourhoods.
- Undertaking Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership needs analysis & early commissioned delivery.
- Piloting new heritage activities as we develop plans for a new museum for Stevenage.
- Working co-operatively with the newly formed Junction 7 Creatives and others in the local creative community on the above projects.
- Developing a series of options that could potentially form part of the Council's Town Deal Proposition to Government

### ***Community Wealth Building***

- Launching an Inclusive Economy Charter as part of the Council's commitment to Community Wealth Building, ensuring local people and businesses can benefit from opportunities created.
- Supporting Herts Growth Board to develop a policy statement and action plan for community wealth building across Hertfordshire.

### ***Climate Change***

- Adopting the new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, co-produced with the community, and supporting county-wide climate actions through the Herts Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership.
- Securing commitment from local businesses and residents through the Climate Change Business Charter and Community Pledge list.
- Developing and implementing the SBC Carbon Management Plan.

### ***Sustainable Transport***

- Refreshing the Future Town Future Transport Strategy.
- Working towards the designation of Stevenage as a 'Sustainable Transport town'.
- Delivery of sustainable transport projects included the Town Centre Regeneration Programme (permission for the bus interchange as referred to in paragraph 3.15; and scoping options for the multi-storey car park, cycle hub and cycleway improvements).
- Updating the Parking and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document and Strategy.
- Developing the options for the cycle hire scheme.

### ***Biodiversity***

- Developing Shackledell Grassland as a designated local nature reserve.
- Developing site specific hedgerow management plans.
- Protecting woodland sites through improved vertical structure in woodlands (subject to being able to work on-site in the autumn/winter months).
- Developing new orchard and grassland habitats (subject to being able to work on-site in the autumn/winter months).



## Internal Facing Programmes

### 7. Financial Security Programme

#### 7.1. 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.

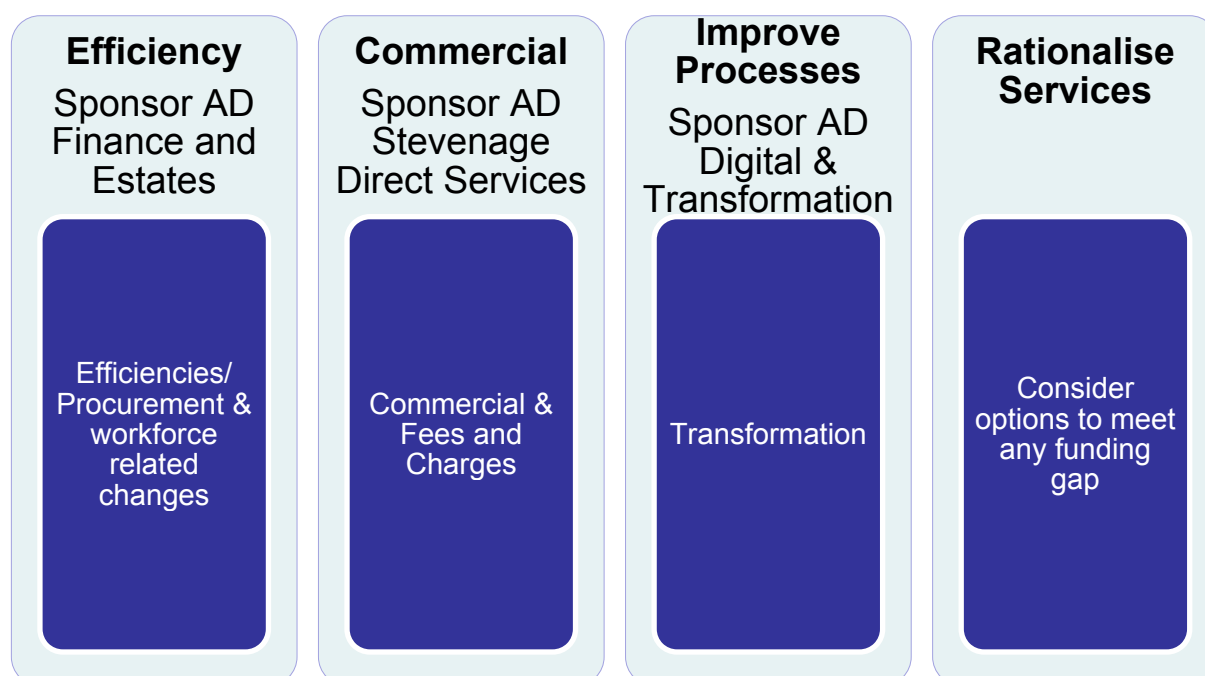


Figure 2: Financial Security workstreams

#### 7.2. Programme Overview

7.3. 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.

7.4. During 2020/21 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Reviewing the Medium Term Financial Strategies, including assessments of the impact of Covid-19 on General Fund and HRA budgets and identification and implementation of mitigating actions.
- Identification of Financial Security options to meet the General Fund and HRA funding gap for the period 2021/22-2023/24 via the Financial Security workstreams.
- Further developing and implementing the Council's Commercial and Insourcing Strategy.
- Continuing to undertake an appraisal of the Council's assets across all Stevenage neighbourhoods, to meet the objectives of the General Fund Asset Management Strategy.
- Undertaking a Transformation Opportunity Assessment as a key first stage in the transformational approach to addressing the funding challenge.
- Identifying options to improve productivity via use of digital interventions.

## **8. Employer of Choice Programme**

### **8.1. 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.

### **8.2. Programme Overview**

8.3. 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.

8.4. 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.

8.5. During 2020/21 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Developing a new Workforce strategy and supporting work programme to ensure that our workforce and workplace are developed and engaged to deliver our services now and in the future. The strategy will focus on ways of working, workforce

communication, workforce inclusion and diversity and workforce development.

- Working closely with the business to ensure that our workforce have the appropriate skills and knowledge to deliver now and in the future.
- Preparing for new ways of working having learned from the experience of operating the services during the Covid-19 pandemic and also to prepare the council for its planned move to the public sector hub.
- A renewed focus on branding of SBC as an employer through on-boarding and external recognition.
- Continuing to support areas of the organisation as they go through business unit reviews.
- Refresh of induction and introduction of on-boarding concepts
- Developing tools to enable staff self-service.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the Firstcare absence management system.

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

### **9.1. 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.

### **9.2. Programme Overview**

9.3. 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.

9.4. During 2020/21 the programme will primarily focus on:

- Ongoing development of the use of the Inphase system.
- Reviewing the scheme of officer delegations in respect of Executive powers.

This page is intentionally left blank

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Housing, Health and Older People  
**Date** 6 October 2020



## HERTFORDSHIRE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY – 24 MONTH REVIEW

### KEY DECISION

#### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide information on the Council's second year of participation in the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA).
- 1.2 To propose that the Council remains a member of the HHIA.

#### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the performance of the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA) over the last 12 months be noted.
- 2.2 That the Council's continued participation in the HHIA be endorsed.

#### 3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The HHIA is a joint agency of five Hertfordshire district councils and Hertfordshire County Council. The agency is governed through a formal Partnership Agreement that sets out the purpose of the partnership and the operating framework. Management oversight is provided by a board consisting of representatives of the member authorities; it is currently chaired

by Watford Borough Council and located within the County Council's offices; the County Council provides support services.

- 3.2 At its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018 the Council's Executive resolved that;
- Stevenage Borough Council should join the HHIA in April 2018.
  - The Council's functions under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, and any other functions relating to the delivery of the services provided by the HHIA, be delegated to Hertfordshire County Council.
  - The Strategic Director be authorised to execute all documents required for the Council to join the HHIA.
  - The Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation) be nominated, and in his absence his nominated deputy, as the Council's representative on the Board of the HHIA with authority to take appropriate decisions on behalf of the Council.
  - The Council reviews the performance of the HHIA twelve months post joining to determine whether it should remain a member of the authority and consider the potential for the Repairs and Voids team to bid for HHIA work.
- 3.3 In accordance with the final resolution of the Executive of 12th June 2019, this report sets-out to summarise the operation of the HHIA over the intervening year and seek the endorsement of Members for the Council's ongoing participation.

### **Purpose of the HHIA**

- 3.4 The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 requires Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) to provide financial assistance to residents with disabilities who require adaptations to their home to enable them to live independently. This assistance is generally provided by way of a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).
- 3.5 Upon receipt of a request from a resident, the County Council's occupational therapist carries out an assessment and recommends the adaptations that the client requires. The HHIA receives the referral, undertakes a means test to determine whether the client is required to make a financial contribution, approves the grant and makes payment on satisfactory completion of the works.
- 3.6 The agency provides an end-to-end service for provision of stair lifts, over bath showers and level access showers where there is no ongoing medical or social care need. This takes the client through the whole process from initial assessment through design, grant application and contractor procurement to delivery of the adaptation. For most applicants adaptations represent a cost-effective alternative to rehousing or placement in residential care.
- 3.7 The demand for adaptations is significant and rising in Hertfordshire and this trend is predicted to continue. Reflecting this, the level of grant distributed by

central government to support DFG activity has increased significantly in recent years.

- 3.8 DFG expenditure is fully met by capital grant from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) which is paid to the County Council as part of the Better Care Fund with a requirement to passport the grant to first tier authorities who administer their own DFGs. Those authorities which are members of the HHIA no longer receive the grant as they have formally delegated DFGs to the County Council to administer through the HHIA on their behalves.

### Performance

- 3.9 The table below gives a comparison of DFG activity in the first two years of delivery by HHIA for SBC:

	2017-18 – in-house service provision	2018-19 – HHIA service delivery	2019/20
<b>Number of DFG enquiries handled – that didn't lead to applications</b>	138	176	167
<b>Number of DFGs completed and paid</b>	34	20	47
<b>Total DFG spend on the year's completed applications</b>	£288,535	£148,143	£439,615
<b>Average spend per DFG</b>	£8,310	£7,407	£9,353

- 3.10 All of the key measures of outputs have improved since 2018/2019 and now represent an improvement over both that year and the last year it was provided in house by SBC.
- 3.11 The Output overview for 2019/2020 in Appendix A highlights the positive work the HHIA has achieved in 2019/2020, along with a case study. Obviously work has slowed during 2020 as the pandemic has restricted access and availability of start. We expect there to be pent up demand which will need to be caught up upon during the next few months.

### Present situation

- 3.12 In July 2019, the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) carried out an audit review of the HHIA and provided a limited assurance opinion. We made

eighteen recommendations, seven classified as high priority, eight medium priority and three low priority.

- 3.13 The high priority recommendations related to the areas of:
- Governance structures, work streams and resources
  - Financial reporting and monitoring
  - The cost recovery model
  - Management information systems
  - Recruitment and business continuity (succession planning)
  - Site Visits and Inspections and Post Works sign off
- 3.14 A further, follow-up audit was completed by SIAS in August 2020. The purpose of this audit was to provide assurance to management that appropriate action had been taken to implement the recommendations made as part of the original audit, and to report on the status and direction of travel of those recommendations still outstanding.
- 3.15 SIAS were satisfied that systems have been amended to improve the quality and accuracy of information recorded on the internal management information systems. The evidence from their testing demonstrated significant improvements since the last audit, as well as improved checks by management to review such progress.
- 3.16 It was recommended that reviewing the robustness of financial projection, monitoring approaches and systems should be the main focus going forward; this is now possible as more accurate information is available to support outturn projections. It was noted that the HHIA has continued to work on a refreshed business case and business plan to assess and organise for the longer-term financial sustainability of the service.
- 3.17 During the review SIAS noted that the HHIA have put in place robust systems to track and report on the progress of all recommendations from the initial audit, with progress periodically reported to the Board. They also noted that whilst addressing recommendations, the HHIA have sought to identify other improvements that can be made to further improve the service, demonstrating a focus on continuous improvement.
- 3.18 Overall, SIAS have been able to provide good assurance over the direction of travel for the HHIA, and satisfactory assurance over the completion of recommendations. Thirteen of the original eighteen have been fully completed (including five high priority) while five recommendations are still in progress (including two high priority) with revised target dates.



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

- 4.1 All HHIA Board members remain committed to the shared service model of the agency which offers the potential for economies of scale with the added benefit of a single end-to-end customer service and one team handling all aspects of a case following referral. The improvements that have been implemented as a result of the initial audit, and have led to increased government grant spend. Further, the new management arrangements and the active participation of the Board have resulted in a quantifiable improvement in performance in 2019-20 as demonstrated in the following paragraphs.
- 4.2 Since last year's change of management, HHIA has been working more closely with local adult and children's Occupational Therapy Teams. HHIA and the OT's now have regular meetings in the community to ensure a smoother pathway is in place. This has already begun to have benefits with a more focus on what the Disabled facilitates Grant (DFG) can do to change a person's living experience with a home adaptation.
- 4.3 After every home adaptation is completed the HHIA sends out a customer satisfaction questionnaire. Under new leadership, the customer satisfaction questionnaire was updated to ensure that the views of clients were accounted for at every stage of the DFG process for example to introduction stage, financial assessment, technical stage, contractor, pre-start and sign-off inspection, to overall service. For the first time this has allowed the HHIA to get a real understanding of the client's views at each stage of the process; this knowledge is contributing to the continuous improvement ethos of the agency.
- 4.4 The HHIA team has been refreshed with new staff joining in all roles across the service. All caseworkers now have special access to the Department of Work and Pensions benefits records to support DFG applications. This has resulted in cutting down on paperwork and the accelerated progression of passported clients through the system. As part of a new learning and development programme all caseworkers have undertaken functional assessment and advanced benefits training and are working toward trusted assessor level 4.
- 4.5 An alternative course of action would be for the Council to revert to the administration and delivery of DFGs through in-house arrangements. The previous service operated successfully and was able to maintain close control over delivery and quality of service. However a significant element of staffing resource was relinquished when the Council joined the HHIA, and this, as well as related procedures and systems, would need to be re-instated.
- 4.6 Returning to in-house provision would result in residents missing out on the expedient and efficient service that the agency is starting to provide. Furthermore, the ongoing opportunities to improve resilience, reduce costs and provide additional services would also be lost.
- 4.7 Withdrawal from the agency would require twelve months' notice, and would be subject to consultation with remaining partners. SBC leaving within the

first 3 years of the Agreement would trigger a consultation between the other parties to ensure that the HHIA is put in no better or worse a position by SBC withdrawing than if it had not done so within the first 3 years. If the HHIA was shown to be in a worse position then SBC would be liable to pay the amount required to remedy that position and the termination would not take effect until such payment had been made. The 3 year period end next year and we are in dialog with all partners.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 Until this year, the Government has continued to significantly increase funding to LHAs year-on-year, via the Better Care Fund, to assist home adaptations and other services to support independent living. The allocation for Stevenage specifically has increased from £691,843 in 2018-19 and £746,540 in 2019-20 and being maintained at £746,540 for 2020-21.
- 5.2 The grant is ring-fenced for non-Council owned private owners. Historically when provided by SBC or by others across Herts, most authorities struggle to spend more than 65% of their allocation.
- 5.3 In 2019-20 the HHIA spent nearly £440,000 on Stevenage residents, helping over 47 applicants to stay in their homes for longer.
- 5.4 The cost of the HHIA Service was envisaged to be cost neutral, through the recuperation of the administration fee, which is grant funded. HCC agreed to underwrite the first 3 years of the service. This will run until next year at which point all the partners will need to agree how to ensure the service is fully financially sustainable.
- 5.5 The business case requires clients to be charged an administration fee of 15% of the cost of the works. This fee remains unchanged; it is eligible for grant assistance.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.6 The Council has statutory functions under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 ("the 1996 Act") to provide financial assistance by way of Disabled Facilities Grants to people with disabilities who require adaptations to their home to enable them to live independently.
- 5.7 Under the Partnership Agreement establishing the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency, Hertfordshire County Council is responsible for the delivery of the Shared Service. This requires it to exercise the functions under the 1996 Act and any other functions relating to the delivery of the services provided by the HHIA.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.8 Should the overall performance of the HHIA weaken, resulting in adaptation referrals not being progressed in a timely manner, there is an increased risk that an individual applicant's health condition will deteriorate, requiring more expensive longer-term care or housing provision.

### **Climate Change Implications**

- 5.9 In providing grants to people to be able to stay in their own homes for longer, it prevents the unnecessary build-up of more able residents in supported living and other extra care facilities. It is more humane and more sustainable in terms of the resources used; particularly given most adaptations are relatively small in scale. As such the work supports the Council's Climate Change work and social wellbeing.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.10 The HHIA will provide an improved and extended service to disabled, vulnerable and elderly residents of the borough with a view to enhancing their capacity to live independently.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- BD1 Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/53/contents>
- BD2 The Care Act 2014  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>
- BD3 Integration & Better Care Fund Policy Framework 2017-19 (DoH, DCLG)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integration-and-better-care-fund-policyframework-2017-to-2019>

## **APPENDICES**

- A HHIA 2019/2020 Outputs.

This page is intentionally left blank

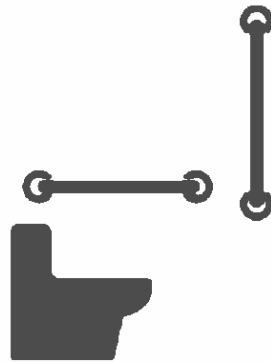
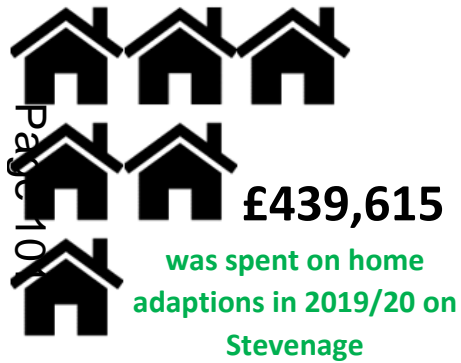
In 2019/20, this is what Stevenage did to support those with disabilities or additional needs – through Home Adaptions



82% of clients stated the home adaptations improved their daily life In Stevenage



£126,527 Was spent on Level Access Showers in



67%

More people were helped by home adaptation In Stevenage in comparison to 2018/19



47 sign off inspection were completed in 2019/20



92% of Stevenage clients would use the HHIA again



350 calls provided advice to residents on DFG or benefit information



19% drop in waiting time to be allocated in comparison to 2018/19



£ 307,610 on major adaptations



Page 102



£41,066 on extensions in 2019/20



90% of stairlifts and hoist were completed by Hertfordshire based Contractors



£54,861 was spent on Hoists in 2019/20



New agreements and protocols with contractors

## Customer Testimonials in 2019/20

“It’s changed our lives and the bathroom feels so much bigger. My husband and I are delighted “

Mr and Mrs Y



Hey HIA

Many thanks once again for all your efforts and support. Jamie is loving his new bathroom and it has made such a difference to his life 🥰.

You were also amazing with him and knew exactly what to say, I also loved the fact you spoke to him directly whilst I was there (making him feel important). Thank you for all your help, best wishes  
Emma



Page 103

Project of works completed by the HHIA in 2019/20



# We are now “Satisfactory”



In July 2019 the Shared Internal Audit Service (SISA) inspected the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA). Findings from the audited concluded there was an overall limited assurance that there are effective controls in operations for those elements of the risk management processes covered by the review.

The audit made 18 recommendations and 36 actions.

The Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA) was re-audited by SISA in August 2020. The findings were “Satisfactory.” Overall, the HHIA have been able to provide good assurance over the direction of travel.

The following was noted in the final re-audit report:

- substantial amount of work has been completed by the HHIA in order to address the recommendations
- testing demonstrates significant improvements since the last audit, as well as improved checks by management to review such progress.
- significant improvements in operational systems
- HHIA have looked to identify other improvements that can be made to further improve the service, this providing evidence of a focus on continuous improvement





**Meeting:** EXECUTIVE

Portfolio Area: RESOURCES

**Date:** 6 October 2020

## **TITLE OF REPORT: COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2021/22**

Authors – Su Tarran Ext. 01279 502076

Contributor – Clare Fletcher Ext. 2933

Lead /Contact Officers – as above

### **1 PURPOSE**

1.1 To propose a Council Tax Support scheme for 2021/22.

### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That Council be recommended to approve the 2021/22 CTS Scheme proposed within this report.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Government made provision within the Local Government Finance Bill to replace the former national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme from 1st April 2013 with localised schemes for Council Tax Reduction Schemes (CTS) devised by individual local authorities (LA's). The schemes are valid for one year and must be approved by Council before the 11<sup>th</sup> March immediately preceding the financial year in which it is to take effect.

3.2 The Government require that major preceptors (County and Police) are consulted each year, and if there is any change to the scheme a full consultation open to all tax payers in the district is required. There is no specific timescale prescribed but the period must allow for meaningful consultation.

3.3 Additionally, consideration must be given to providing transitional protection where the support is to be reduced or removed. The financial impact of any decision on Council Tax Support also needs to be included when setting the budget and Council tax levels at the same time.

3.4 Since the introduction of CTS in April 2013 a number of changes to the scheme have been considered, but the scheme has remained the same. This means that CTS scheme for all working age claimants (WAC) will be

based on 91.5% of their council tax liability and that a WAC on maximum benefit will only have to pay 8.5% of their council tax bill.

3.5 The cost of the scheme is reflected in the tax base, in the same way as other discounts which reduce the collectable debit.

3.6 The history of Council Tax support scheme at Stevenage is detailed in Appendix A.

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

4.1 This report details the current position on Council Tax Support, and seeks support to continue the current scheme for 2021/22.

4.2 The CTS scheme for 2020/21 can be summarised as follows:

- That the CTS scheme for all working age claimants will be based on 91.5% of their council tax liability.;
- All local discretions currently in place continue e.g. war pension disregards;
- All other aspects of the Council Tax Support scheme mirror the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme.

4.3. The current CTS scheme works and protects the most vulnerable customers by the use of applicable amounts and income disregards. However the challenges and opportunities introduced by Universal Credit (UC) prompted a review of the structure of the scheme, but conclude that until the majority of claimants are in receipt of UC, any alternative would add further complexity.

4.4 **The impact, challenges and opportunities of Universal Credit.**  
Universal credit full service roll out took effect in this area in October 2018. This means that customers who would previously have applied for Housing Benefit (HB) and CTS are now applying for UC and CTS. The DWP's pilot of moving existing HB claimants on to UC from only achieved a small change in caseload and the DWP are reviewing and potentially re piloting a transition, before seeking government approval for further managed migration.

4.4.1 There are certain groups of HB claimant that will not, in the foreseeable future migrate to UC, as they are deemed too complex. This means that in addition to the pensioner case load there will be a residual working age caseload to manage.

4.4.2 There is therefore no information available currently to determine when this councils existing working age HB caseload will move to UC.

- 4.4.3 Customers claiming UC who apply for Council Tax Support do not require the Council to carry out means testing on their circumstances. They need only provide their UC entitlement letters (details of which can be confirmed through LA's access to the DWP systems). These claims are already means tested and have differential applicable amounts applied by the DWP, and the only income element that is needed for an award of CTS is earnings. Consideration has to be taken of any deductions being made for overpayments or recovery of advances, but these lend themselves to a simplified assessment and processing system, and could be incorporated into a discount scheme.
- 4.4.4 The reduction in new claims for HB might seem to reduce the services workload, however as the current scheme requires the same preparation and processing to award a CTS claim as an HB one, there is no saving. Currently claims or changes in circumstances are prepared and input and both awards (HB & CTS) are processed simultaneously. Claims not requiring an HB assessment simply produce one output (CTS award) rather than two.
- 4.4.5 UC claimants have to apply to the council for CTS entitlement. There is a common misunderstanding among claimants, who have not previously claimed benefit from the council, that it is all covered by their claim for UC. The council therefore often only gets to engage with these new customers when their council tax account is in arrears, and additional recovery action has to be taken. Clearly this is an additional administrative burden for the council, and costly for the customer.
- 4.4.6 Universal Credit is reassessed monthly, and those customers who are working (nationally this is estimated at more than 40%) are likely to experience variations in the UC entitlement each month. This is attributed to salary and wages frequencies affecting the 'monthly' assessments. Each time there is a change in the UC award, their entitlement to CTS has to be reassessed. Every time the CTS is reassessed, it produces a new Council Tax Bill. These constant changes in bills and amounts due are not only confusing to the customer trying to budget, but it also resets any recovery action being taken for non-payment.
- 4.4.7 The service has experienced a significant increase in workload from these monthly changes. They are received electronically from the DWP using an existing process called ATLAS.
- 4.5 Identifying and acknowledging these challenges from UC requires, any potential change to the CTS scheme to consider;
- 4.5.1 **The potential for automation of UC notices** on live CTS claims, thus reducing the new increased workflow. Progress has been made in the last year to automate increasing numbers of these changes, and work continues to include more types of changes into the automatic updates.
- 4.5.2 **Mitigations for changes in UC entitlements to revise council tax liability**, and thus avoid resetting recovery action. This could be achieved

if the CTS scheme set bands of entitlement, or fixed periods in which changes in income would not result in a change in entitlement, within the scope of a set range.

- 4.5.3 These options have the potential to be very expensive. The software supplier is estimating a cost in the region of £25k for each Council moving towards a banded CTS scheme. Herts County Council have previously declined to contribute to any costs associated with changing the scheme, despite being the biggest preceptor for Council Tax. Any changes to the scheme require full and meaningful consultation with all taxpayers in the district and there are significant costs associated with this level of consultation.

#### **4.6 Response to the challenges and opportunities of UC.**

Work has previously been carried out to develop a banded scheme for all working age claimants. This included modelling of current claimants into a banded scheme, to assess the impact and identify any unintended consequences.

- 4.6.1 As it is not currently possible to have a separate scheme for just UC cases, all current working age claimants would have to be included. After testing the data it was clear that the intended simplicity of a banded scheme would be compromised as the need to differentiate between all the many and varied disability premiums and incomes would require too many bands for each category of household, to ensure sufficient protection for these non UC groups.

- 4.6.2 In addition there would be all the costs of changing the scheme but no savings in administration, or increased simplicity for the customer.

#### **4.7 Conclusion in relation to Universal Credit.**

- 4.7.1 Whilst the number of monthly changes is increasing, the improvement in automation of these changes is balancing the demand for resources. It is still recommended therefore that a two stage approach be followed as we move forward. Firstly, instead of looking to change the current scheme in the short term, we continue to introduce more automation of UC change notices. Secondly, once actual caseload migration is timetabled, consideration of a banded scheme or a discount scheme is revisited.

#### **4.8 Other options that could be considered in redesigning a scheme**

- 4.8.1 There are a number of options that could be considered when redesigning the current scheme, although all revisions would affect working age customers only, given that pensioners have to be fully protected by our scheme.

- 4.8.2 The Government continues to make changes to the Housing Benefit regulations which are not currently mirrored in the CTS regulations. This means the schemes are no longer aligned. The frequency of changes to Housing Benefit and Universal Credit schemes, make it almost impossible to mirror these in the CTS scheme, not least of which because of the difference in timing. The Housing Benefit and Universal Credit schemes are changed when needed during the year, and the CTS scheme can only be revised annually.
- 4.8.3 Consideration was been given previously to align some of the more significant differences between Housing Benefit and Council Tax support but the financial implications across the caseload have been assessed as small, and the changes would have required a full consultation exercise, to achieve only a temporary alignment, and therefore these were not recommended by members.
- 4.8.4 In previous years, consideration was given to an income-band scheme which appeared to offer an opportunity to simplify entitlement criteria and the treatment of income and capital. This was driven by the imminent roll out of 'full service' Universal Credit, (impacting in Stevenage from October 2018) so there was a need to look to reduce the impact of monthly changes in universal credit on entitlement to CTS and Council tax collection.
- 4.8.5 Consideration has also previously been given to each of the following changes, but each relies on the basic scheme construction remaining the same and members did not recommend any of these.

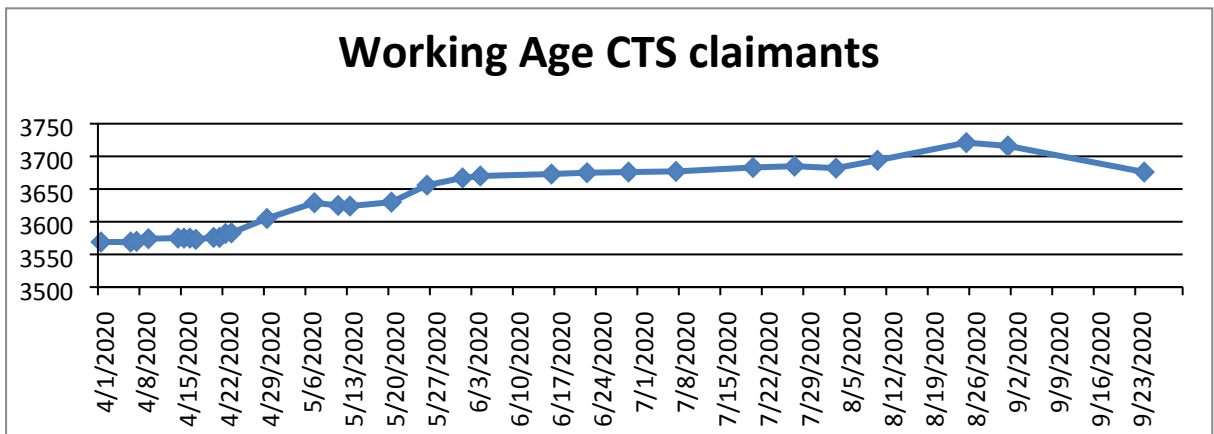
a) Changing the level of "minimum payment" for all working age customers

- I. The current scheme assumes that all working age customers are asked to pay at least something towards their Council Tax, and as described earlier the minimum payment is 8.5% of liability. The Council could consider making a change to that amount but in doing so, the full impact of that decision needs to be considered.
- II. If the Council chose to increase this minimum payment to say 10%, this does not mean a straight line reduction in the amount that the Council will spend out. For individuals already finding it difficult to pay at the current level, it can be seen that increasing this amount could increase their hardship levels further, especially as these customers are likely to be receiving other benefits, which have been affected by the on-going Welfare reforms.
- III. Given our latest information shows that the collection rate for those working age customers in receipt of CTS is already significantly lower than the overall rate, officers would need to consider adding further amounts to our bad debt provision in respect of potential non-collection of our debts. Having done some indicative modelling, we estimate that increasing the

minimum payment to 10% could result in a decrease in Council Tax spend of approximately £80k. This would be virtually wiped out by the need to increase bad debt provision. In addition with the potential increasing caseload as result of COVID-19 due to the end of the job retention scheme and business failures, they may exacerbate losses further and cause further hardship.

IV. Conversely, if we were to consider removing the 8.5% to be paid by the claimant, this would increase the cost of the scheme, particularly at a time when CTS caseload is increasing. SBC only pays 12% of the overall scheme with the County paying the largest share, but if COVID-19 significantly increases the caseload then this could have a significant impact on the taxbase and collectable council tax. The current scheme is one of the lowest in the Country. On current estimates, we believe the additional burden on the taxbase could be between £300k to £400k for all preceptors, as customers currently not entitled would also be eligible to apply.

V. The CTS caseload trend is summarised below.



b) Introducing a band cap (so limiting the amount that we would pay to a value of a lower property band, for example Band D)

In some Local Authorities, they have introduced a band cap where the scheme will only pay up to the equivalent of say a Band D property, even if you are in a higher banded property.

This could disproportionately affect those with a requirement for a larger property as they have children, other dependents due to caring responsibilities or a disability. These groups could already have been hit by other areas of Welfare reform including the Benefit Cap and the Spare Room subsidy limitation.

c) Introducing a minimum amount that would be paid out

Some Councils have introduced a minimum level at which they will support residents. An example is that you have to be entitled to at least

£5 a week to be supported. This means someone who is currently entitled to a lower amount, would not receive it, despite the fact that we have assessed them as currently requiring support. There are no real savings in terms of administrative costs because we would still have to undertake an assessment to find out that we wouldn't award. In addition, the fact that they are currently entitled to support indicates that they are financially vulnerable and the likelihood of being able to collect that additional amount from those residents is low. Therefore the potential reduction in costs overall is minimal and outweighed by an increase in bad debt provision and recovery costs.

d) Changes around discretions for Disability, Children and other Dependents

- I. This would change the nature of the scheme overall. Stevenage, when setting its original scheme were clear that all would contribute equally as the core scheme already differentiates preferentially to those with disabilities, children etc.
- II. Any complexity that is added to the way in which we calculate entitlement, will make the administration of the scheme both more complex for our officers to manage both in terms of calculation but more importantly, to explain to our residents.
- III. This would also mean that the general working age population may need to pick up an even greater share of the cost if the scheme is to remain affordable and equitable.

e) Other adjustments

There include; income tapers, non-dependent deductions, income disregards etc. but all carry the same risk to bad debt provisions, potential recovery costs and costs of administration. The more complex the scheme, the more difficult it is to comply with and customers' levels of understanding could be compromised.

4.9 What others are doing

- Some councils have moved to a banded scheme, but they still require substantial means testing of each claim.
- St Albans are with a different software supplier and have introducing a banded scheme for UC claimants only from April 2019, which will run alongside a scheme similar to our existing scheme for all other claimants. This is an interesting option which rather than dealing in % entitlements, specifies how much the customer will pay towards their Council Tax. This means customers on the same income pay the same towards their council tax,

regardless of the size of the property they occupy. This also provides a scheme for customers to transition into when migrated from HB.

- Unfortunately SBC cannot replicate a scheme like this currently as the Council are unable to have two different live working age CTS schemes at the same time.
- Other councils are considering various options but anecdotally are awaiting more information around migration before changing current schemes.

#### 4.10 Other considerations in addition to the impact of universal credit.

4.10.1 The impact of Covid -19 on the economy in the short, medium or long term is as yet unknown. However in previous years the cost of CTS on the taxbase has been reducing in real terms. This is demonstrated below, and has supported previous recommendations to retain the current scheme.

	Actual cost	Change
<b>2013/14</b>	£ 6,605,773	
<b>2014/15</b>	£ 6,137,922	-7.08%
<b>2015/16</b>	£ 5,755,876	-6.22%
<b>2016/17</b>	£ 5,683,162	-1.26%
<b>2017/18</b>	£ 5,828,125	2.55%*
<b>2018/19</b>	£ 5,935,167	1.84%**
<b>2019/20</b>	£ 5,779,820	-2.6%

\* The Band D value of the 2017/18 taxbase increased by 4.5% on 2016/17,

\*\*The Band D value of the 2018/19 taxbase increased by 5.8% on 2017/18

4.10.2 This reduction has been achieved as a result of a reducing caseload. However for the first time since 2009, the case load for working age claimants has begun to rise (see 4.8.5 (v) above). This started during April 2020 as the lockdown impacted and has continued since. This may be symptomatic of the beginning of a recession as seen in 2008/09, where caseloads rose continuously for 5 years before reducing, or it may be a short term response to the lockdown and furlough arrangements.

4.10.3 The impact of this growth, although small at present needs to be considered for its impact on the taxbase and the proportion of the cost borne by Stevenage Council.

4.10.4 The taxbase for 2020/21 was calculated in October 2019, and assumed at that time a band D value of 3349.12. At 1 September 2020 the actual band D cost of Council Tax support was 3330, which is less than budgeted for.



- 4.10.5 Whilst the working age caseload has seen a modest rise in recent months, the elderly caseload continues to fall and is thus mitigating the impacts of this change.
- 4.10.6 The working age caseload levels are fluctuating, but have recently from the peak in August. In addition this impact has also partially been mitigated by the reducing elderly caseload. As at 24/9/2020 the combined caseload is 5806, compared to 5729 at 1 April 2020. If the net rate of growth of CTS continues at the same lower increase rate during the year, the outturn cost could be equivalent to 3,428 band d's. This equates to an additional c£144,000, of which SBC would contribute c£17,000 being 11.79%, in accordance with the precept share. If this modest increase occurs it outweighs the impact of revising the scheme.
- 4.10.7 It is perhaps not unreasonable to expect a spike when the furlough scheme becomes less generous and again when it is withdrawn, although the impact or duration of these potential outcomes is unknown. Changes in caseload are monitored monthly or more frequently so any trend would be promptly identified.
- 4.10.8 The taxbase is also impacted by other variables, and changes in anyone of them can impact on its ability to generate the expected income levels on which the budget is set. The Covid-19 pandemic may also have a dampening effect on new builds coming into the taxbase which will further reduce its income raising capacity.
- 4.11 The impact of other factors on the ability to pay.
- 4.11.1 Many customers now claiming CTS have been affected by other factors. Not only do they find themselves with debts to their council and landlord that were previously paid for them, but their ability to pay the debts is diminished. This is demonstrated in the Council Tax collection rates. The overall in-year collection rate for all working age CTS customers was 74.04% 2019/20. In contrast to the all tax payers in-year collection rate of 96%.
- 4.11.2 The actual cost per week of Council Tax for those customers required to pay the minimum 8.5% contribution is demonstrated below.

2020/21	BEFORE OTHER DISCOUNTS ( e.g single person)			
	BAND	Annual full charge	8.5% Weekly charge	8.5% Per annum
	A	£ 1,218.51	£1.99	£103.57
	B	£ 1,421.60	£2.32	£120.84
	C	£ 1,624.69	£2.65	£138.10

2020/21	BEFORE OTHER DISCOUNTS ( e.g single person)		
D	£ 1,827.77	£2.98	£155.36
E	£ 2,233.94	£3.64	£189.88
F	£ 2,640.11	£4.30	£224.41
G	£ 3,046.28	£4.97	£258.93
H	£ 3,655.54	£5.96	£310.72

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

5.1.1 As detailed in the report.

### **5.2 Legal Implications**

5.2.1 As detailed in the report

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

5.3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken if there are proposals to amend the Council Tax support scheme.

### **5.4 Risk Implications**

5.4.1 As detailed in the report

### **5.5 Policy Implications**

5.5.1 As detailed in the report

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

## **APPENDICES**

A The history of Council Tax Support (CTS)

## **GLOSSARY**

IS	Income support
JSA (IB)	Job seekers allowance (Income based)
UC	Universal Credit
PC	Pension credit
GC	Guaranteed credit
SC	Savings credit
ESA (IR)	Employment support allowance (Income related)

## **Appendix A The history of Council Tax Support (CTS)**

### **1. The history of Council Tax Support (CTS)**

- 1.1 Before April 2013, local authorities (LA) administered Council Tax Benefit on behalf of the Government. This national scheme was specified in legislation and LA's were reimbursed by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) through a subsidy claim submitted annually and subject to audit.
- 1.2 The level of subsidy reimbursement varied dependant on whether benefit had been awarded, backdated or overpaid, but the point to note is that entitlement and subsidy were based on assessing entitlement on 100% of somebodies council tax liability, net of discounts (like a single person discount).
- 1.3 The scheme was means tested and whilst the scheme differentiated between different client groups (providing extra support for disabled groups for example) there was little differential between Elderly and Working Age clients.
- 1.4 Clients fell into one of two groups, "passport" and "standard claims." A passported claim was one in which the DWP had already carried out a means test and then notified the council that the customers income was at or below the minimum income level for their household composition. They would be automatically entitled to 100% of their Council Tax to be paid by Council Tax Benefit. A deduction would however be made from this entitlement where there were non dependants living in the home.
- 1.5 The second group were called 'standard claims'. These customers had their means testing done by the council and awarded Council Tax benefit in accordance with the national scheme criteria. These customers had income above the minimum requirements and would be required to pay something towards their council tax liability. A deduction would also be made from this entitlement where there were non dependants living in the home.
- 1.6 In very simple terms entitlement was determined by comparing eligible incomes against relevant applicable amounts. When income equalled or fell below applicable amounts, the maximum entitlement is achieved. If income exceeded applicable amounts, entitlement was reduced by 20% of the excess. The applicable amounts were determined by the DWP in respect of Housing Benefit claims.
- 1.7 In more complex terms, every income and capital source had to be assessed in accordance with its type, and then determined if it was included in the assessment. Child benefit, maintenance paid to a child, PiP and DLA, war pensions etc were fully disregarded, whilst earned income was calculated after tax & NI, and 50% of pension contributions, averaged over the relevant period. Payments to certain child care

providers were disregarded, whilst capital (excluding the property occupied) included savings, shares etc and if the total exceeded £16k, the customer was excluded from entitlement.

1.8 In very general terms the full expenditure on the scheme was reimbursed by the DWP.

## **2 The impact of changes from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013**

2.1 The national scheme for Council Tax Benefit ceased, and Councils had to devise their own Council Tax Reduction Schemes for working age claimants. The Government continues to specify the scheme for Elderly customers through prescribed regulations.

2.2 Instead of the scheme being funded through a subsidy claim based on actual expenditure, the Government moved the funding into the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) settlement, fixing it at only 90% of the subsidy paid in a previous year. RSG was the amount of grant that Government gave to Councils to support their wider service delivery, and made up one part of the income of the Council in addition to Council Tax receipts, fees and charges and an element of Business rate collection. However the move away from RSG makes this funding element less obvious.

2.3 Each Council had to consider how to fund 100% of the cost of the Elderly 'national' scheme and provide a Working age scheme, whilst receiving 10% less funding.

2.4 Elderly (Pensioner) claimants are protected from changes through the provision of a statutory scheme.

2.5 Schemes must support work incentives.

2.6 The DCLG Policy Statement of Intent did not give a recommended approach to be taken, but indicated the scheme should not contain features which create dis-incentives to find employment. The current Stevenage scheme complies with this statement.

2.7 Local authorities must ensure that appropriate consideration has been given to support for other vulnerable groups, including those which may require protection under other statutory provisions including the Child Poverty Act 2010, the Disabled Persons Act 1986 and the Equality Act 2010, amongst others.

2.8 The DCLG issued Policy Statements that addressed a range of issues including the following:

- Vulnerable People and Key Local Authority Duties;
- Taking work incentives into account;

- Information Sharing and Powers to Tackle Fraud.

2.9 The Local Government Finance Bill stated that a Billing Authority must have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The current scheme has sought to address these requirements.

### 3 Stevenage’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTS)

3.1 The Council initially devised a scheme which replicated the previous national scheme but limited the Council Tax liability that was used to assess entitlement to 90% for working age customers. The Government offered a one off transitional grant to Councils who would restrict the reduction to 91.5%, and accordingly the Council amended the proposal and took the one off transitional grant. The Council has maintained this position for the first 8 years of the scheme.

3.2 From 2014/15 the 90% grant that was included in the RSG was no longer individually identifiable. Therefore calculating the total cost of the scheme i.e. the cost of the CTS scheme versus the CTS grant given by Government is now impossible.

3.3 The caseload for CTS indicates that the proportion of working age customers compared to pensioners is changing over time very slightly. At 1.4.19 the proportion of Working Age customers has reduced slightly against the proportion of Elderly customers for the first time. This may be attributed to new working age claimants claiming UC. The number of Elderly claimants has however also fallen since 1.4.2018.

Table 1: Proportion of Working Age and Elderly claimants

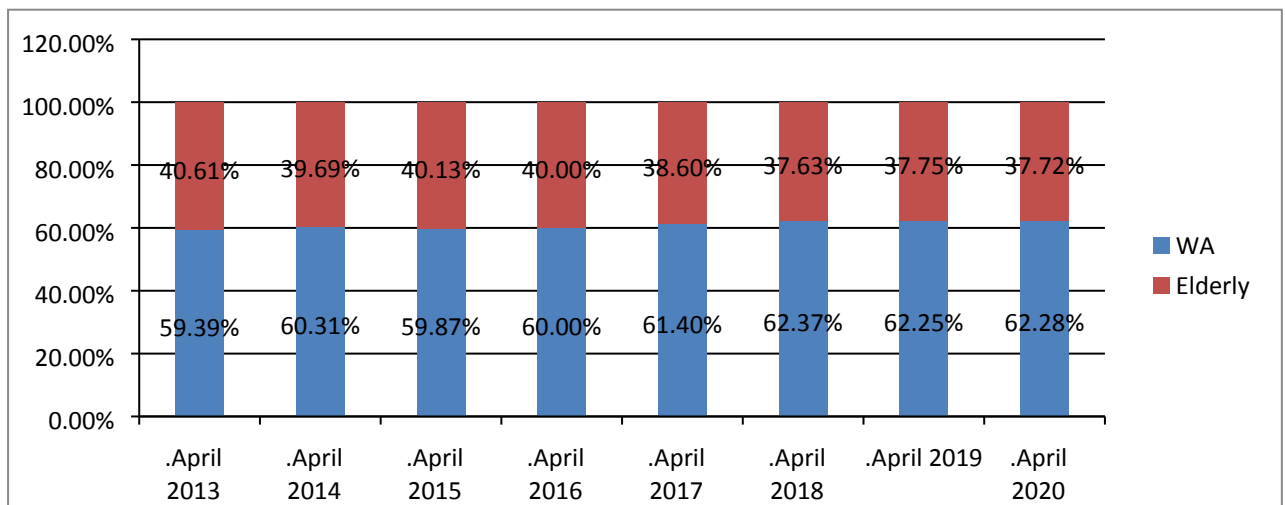
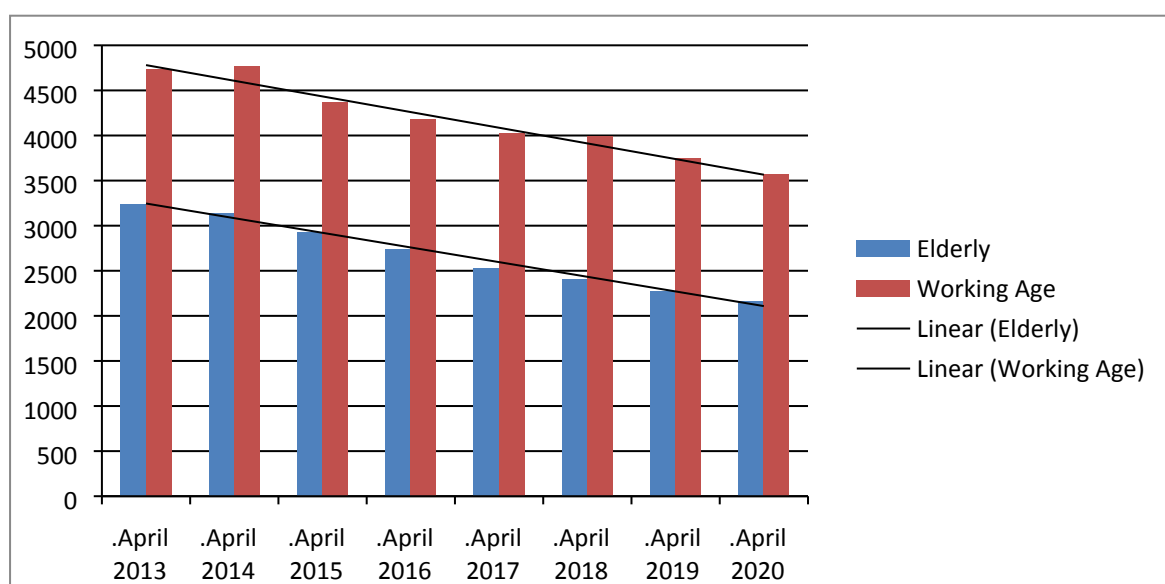


Table 2: Caseload Working Age and Elderly claims



3.4 Before the introduction of CTS there had been a number of years of constant case load increases, the caseload has since stabilised and reduced, alongside a growing taxbase due to new developments in the area. The impact on the cost of the scheme is demonstrated below.

	Actual cost	Change
<b>2013/14</b>	£6,605,773	
<b>2014/15</b>	£6,137,922	-7.08%
<b>2015/16</b>	£5,755,876	-6.22%
<b>2016/17</b>	£5,683,162	-1.26%
<b>2017/18</b>	£5,828,125	2.55%*
<b>2018/19</b>	£5,935,167	1.84%**
<b>2019/20</b>	£5,779,820	-2.60%

\* The Band D value of the 2017/18 taxbase increased by 4.5% on 2016/17,

\*\*The Band D value of the 2018/19 taxbase increased by 5.8% on 2017/18

3.5 What is certain however is that the level of spend on CTS has continued to reduce in real terms, mitigating in part the impact of overall reductions in income to the Council.

3.6 A large proportion of customers affected by the introduction of the CTS scheme had not previously had to pay anything towards their Council Tax bill. If they had been 'passportted' under the Council Tax Benefit scheme their liability would have been discharged in full by a credit transfer onto their Council Tax account. Under the new arrangements all working age customer have to pay at least 8.5% towards their bill.

- 3.7 A publication (*Public Finance March 2019*) commented that in 2013-14 CTS schemes nationally provided 14% less support to working age households than the old national scheme, and that by 2018-19 it provided 24% less. Stevenage has maintained its scheme at 8.5% during this period.
- 3.8 It continues to be a challenge to support and educate these customers into a regular payment arrangement. We have;
- Offered flexible repayment options,
  - Given more time to pay,
  - Worked on a project with the Citizens advice Bureau to support customers with repeated arrears,
  - Promoted other debt and advice agencies.
- 3.9 The in-year collection rate for working age claimants who had only the minimum 8.5% liability to pay was 62.9% in 2014/15 and 69.67% for 2019/20.
- 3.10 The overall in-year collection rate for all working age CTS customers was 70.7% in 2014/15, and 74.04% in 2019/20. In contrast to the all tax payers in-year collection rate, which for 2014/15 was 96%, and 96% in 2019/20.
- 3.11 Many of these same customers have been affected by other welfare reforms introduced ;
- the spare room subsidy scheme
  - the new Benefit CAP,
  - Reviews of disability benefits etc.
- Many families find that they have increasing debts with their councils and landlords for bills that were previously paid for them.
- 3.12 We make assumptions in respect of the level of non-payment of Council Tax when determining the tax base, alongside assumptions over each of the variable elements of its composition. The in-year collection for all Council Tax payers was 96% in 2019/20, but this was dampened by only 74.04% collected from those working age customers in receipt of CTS. Those customers who under the old scheme would have not paid anything towards their council tax (passported customers) paid only 74.04%
- 3.13 The liability not paid in-year becomes arrears on which a bad debt provision has to be established, which is a further cost to the council. Where the outturn taxbase exceeds the estimated performance it generates a surplus on the collection fund, and conversely when the taxbase does not achieve its expected performance because of negative variations in the component elements, the collection fund would be in deficit. The Council is required to make precept payments during the year regardless of any in-year variations.
- 3.14 In recognition of the fact that the additional Council Tax liability is more difficult to collect, a collection rate of 98.25% has been assumed.

- 3.15 Currently (2020/21) 77.37% of the tax base income is precepted by County and Council and 10.84% by the Police, and accordingly they have a vested interest in the value of the CTS scheme as it directly impacts on their ability to raise funds. The lower the cost of the scheme, the higher the tax base on which they can precept.



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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank