

# Public Document Pack



## EXECUTIVE

**Date: Wednesday, 9 December 2020**

**Time: 1.00pm**

**Location: Virtual (via Zoom)**

**Contact: Ian Gourlay (01438) 242703  
committees@stevenage.gov.uk**

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

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## AGENDA

### PART I

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

**2. MINUTES - 18 NOVEMBER 2020**

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 18 November 2020 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 5 – 16

**3. MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND SELECT COMMITTEES**

To note the following Minutes of meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees –

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 10 November 2020

Pages 17 – 24

**4. COVID-19 UPDATE**

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

**5. HOUSING FIRST APPROACH - STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

To consider a Housing First approach for Stevenage, outlining the Council's initial proposals for the medium and long term response to engaging and housing the Council's rough sleeper clients, together with identifying the additional resources required.

Pages 25 – 66

**6. STEVENAGE PARKING STRATEGY 2021 - 2031: PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

To consider the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy and to approve its publication for consultation purposes.

Pages 67 – 110

**7. HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE STRATEGY 2020 - 2030**

To consider the adoption of the proposed Housing for Older People Strategy (HOPS) 2020 – 2030.

Pages 111 – 218

**8. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE 2020/21 - QUARTER TWO**

To consider Corporate Performance information and statistics relating to Quarter 2 of 2020/21.

Pages 219 – 270

**9. DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT RENT SETTING AND BUDGET REPORT 2021/22**

To consider the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Rent Setting and Budget Report 2021/22.

Pages 271 – 288

**10. URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

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

**11. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100A 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.

**12. PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 18 NOVEMBER 2020**

To approve as a correct record the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 18 November 2020 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 289 - 292

**13. FINANCIAL SECURITY OPTIONS 2021/22**

To consider a range of Financial Security Options in respect of the 2021/22 General Fund and Housing Revenue Accounts Budgets.  
Pages 293 - 466

**14. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

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

**NOTE: Links to Part I Background Documents are shown on the last page of the individual report, where this is not the case they may be viewed by using the following link to agendas for Executive meetings and then opening the agenda for Wednesday, 9 December 2020 – <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/council-meetings/161153/>**

Agenda Published 1 December 2020

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## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE MINUTES

**Date: Wednesday, 18 November 2020**

**Time: 2.00pm**

**Place: Virtual (via Zoom)**

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

**Also Present:** Councillors Robin Parker CC and Simon Speller (observers).

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

**Time:** End Time: 5.49pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Joan Lloyd (Vice-Chair) and Phil Bibby CC (observer).

There were no declarations of interest.

The Leader took the opportunity to congratulate Lewis Hamilton on his record-equalling 7<sup>th</sup> Formula One World Championship success.

#### **2 MINUTES - 6 OCTOBER 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 6 October 2020 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

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

In relation to the Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23 September 2020, and in the light of the Government announcement regarding the cessation of the production of petrol and diesel driven vehicles by 2030, the Leader advised that increased Government funding would be required for the creation of a sufficient number of additional of charging points for electric vehicles both nationally and throughout the Borough.

In respect of the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 21 October 2020, the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Leisure & Culture commented that a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group meeting would be arranged in the New Year to consider the Leisure Management Contract procurement process. It was intended that other sports, leisure and voluntary sector stakeholders would be invited to attend this Group. In addition, the Portfolio Holder would be obtaining feedback and views from community groups involved in sports and leisure activities.

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

Environment & Economy Select Committee – 22 September 2020

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 23 September 2020

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 13 October 2020

Community Select Committee – 21 October 2020

#### **4 COVID-19 UPDATE**

The Executive considered a verbal update/presentation led by the Strategic Director (RP) on the Covid-19 pandemic.

The presentation covered updates on the national position; epidemiology statistics; Hertfordshire position; self-isolation rules; mass vaccination; outbreak management and contact tracing; community and housing; business support; SBC business continuity and workforce; and communications.

The following issues were raised by Members during the presentation:

- The Strategic Director (RP) was requested to ascertain from the Local Resilience Forum whether or not there was a targeted Covid suppression plan for Stevenage, and to share the answer with Executive Members;
- The Strategic Director (RP) was asked if there was an answer to why the actual number of daily Covid-19 tests being administered nationally was significantly below the daily testing capacity;
- The Leader undertook to raise the matter of statistics regarding cases of long Covid amongst children at the next Local Outbreak Management Board meeting;
- It was noted that, on or around 1 December 2020, a site in Stevenage may be one of the first Covid mass vaccination centres;
- In relation to the issue of those without transport being unable to attend mass vaccination centres, the Commercial & Licensing Manager undertook to raise this matter with the county-wide Vaccination Cell;
- A number of mechanisms for Local Enterprise Partnership funding support for businesses were outlined, although these were reliant on the businesses contributing some funding themselves;
- In reply to the question as to whether a business had to occupy premises in order to qualify for support funding, the Strategic Director (CF) stated that this was the case for Local Restriction Grants, but that officers were looking at how businesses excluded from previous financial support packages could be included in SBC's discretionary support scheme; and
- The Communications Team was requested to arrange for a message to be conveyed to the public with regard to the possibility that, due to officer time being focussed on issues relating to the pandemic, responses to some complaints may not be dealt with as speedily as in the past.

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

## **5 BIODIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD): PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

The Executive considered a report seeking the approval of the draft Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for public consultation.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration advised that the purpose of the new Biodiversity SPD was to give more detail to the current Strategic Policy 12: Green Infrastructure and the Natural environment, in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan. The overarching aim of the new SPD was to ensure that development in Stevenage resulted in a net biodiversity gain. It would require developments to adopt the mitigation hierarchy and demonstrate that impacts to biodiversity had been avoided, where possible, and minimised before compensation was considered.

In response to Members' questions, officers replied as follows:

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) – if a development had a direct impact on a SSSI then the Council could request a biodiversity financial contribution from the developer. If the required biodiversity improvements could not be provided on-site, then the financial contribution would be added to the biodiversity funding “bank” in order to provide improvements off-site (which could include the maintenance and enhancement of SSSIs); and
- Biodiversity SPD exemptions – the exemption relating to nationally significant infrastructure included projects such as HS2 or major motorway expansion schemes.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the content of the draft Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be noted.
2. That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft SPD prior to its consultation.
3. That the draft Biodiversity SPD be published for consultation from 30 November 2020 to 25 January 2021.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **6 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD): PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

The Executive considered a report seeking the approval of the draft Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for public consultation.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration explained that the SPD followed the adoption of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) earlier in 2020 and

would be used by developers and case officers to identify when Section 106 legal agreements would be used in addition to the payment of a CIL charge. It would ensure there was a consistent approach used in all applications to maximise the provision of Affordable Housing and developer contributions in Stevenage.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration stated that the SPD covered Affordable Housing (including the requirement for Viability Assessment reviews); payments in-lieu of non-compliance with Local Plan policies; payments for site-specific mitigation which must be mitigated through the planning application rather than using the borough-wide CIL receipts; and monitoring fees. It also introduced a requirement for the provision of apprenticeships/jobs for local residents/students for major schemes and a subsequent in-lieu payment if targets were not met – this money would be controlled by the Council to put towards training opportunities or short term employment opportunities for local residents and/or local small businesses and would be linked to the Stevenage Works Partnership.

In reply to a Member's question regarding the balance between developer and community interests in the operation of the SPD, the Principal Planning Officer stated that the Council invariably collected developer contributions on behalf of other infrastructure providers (such as the County Council). It would therefore be imperative that these providers robustly evidenced/justified their requirements to developers in seeking financial contributions.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the content of the draft Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) be noted.
2. That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Regeneration, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft SPD prior to its consultation.
3. That the draft Developer Contributions SPD be published for consultation from 30 November 2020 to 25 January 2021.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **7 HERTFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD - PROPOSED FUTURE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

The Executive considered a report seeking approval to proposed future governance arrangements for the Hertfordshire Growth Board, including the establishment of a Growth Board Joint Committee and Growth Board Scrutiny Committee as formal joint committees under the Local Government Act 1972 and Local Government Act 2000.

The Leader advised that the formation of a formal committee was required to ensure that the Council and the county more widely was able to secure central government



funding for strategic growth and infrastructure projects.

The Borough Solicitor took Members through the report in more detail, explaining how the governance framework for the new arrangements would work.

It was noted that the intention was for the new joint committee to hold its inaugural meeting in January 2021.

In response to a number of Members' questions, the Borough Solicitor replied as follows:

- The fact that the Growth Board Joint Committee would be a county-wide body considering large infrastructure projects may lessen the likelihood of schemes being called-in by the Government or being subject to holding directions, subject to the usual check and balances in planning processes; and
- No details had been provided as to the operation of the Advisory Sub-Groups mentioned in the report, although there was the possibility that these could include the existing North-East & Central and South-West Area Growth Corridor Boards.

The Executive supported an addition to Recommendation 2.2.4 in the report, requiring that the nomination of a Councillor and substitute to the Growth Board Scrutiny Committee should be delegated to the Leader, in consultation with the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the establishment of the Hertfordshire Growth Board Joint Committee as a Joint Committee (inaugural meeting being planned to take place in January 2021) be agreed.
2. That the Leader of the Council be nominated as the Council's representative on the Hertfordshire Growth Board Joint Committee with delegated authority to appoint a substitute representative as required.
3. That Council be recommended to agree to the establishment of the Hertfordshire Growth Board Joint Committee as a Joint Committee (inaugural meeting being planned to take place in January 2021).
4. That Council be recommended to adopt the Hertfordshire Growth Board Integrated Governance Framework into the Council's Constitution.
5. That Council be recommended to note that Leader of the Council is nominated as the Council's representative on the Hertfordshire Growth Board Joint Committee with delegated authority to appoint a substitute representative as required.
6. That the Council be recommended to delegate authority to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, to nominate a Councillor and a substitute as its representative on the

Hertfordshire Growth Board Scrutiny Committee (nominees must not be a Member of the Executive).

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **8 MID YEAR REVIEW OF 2020/21 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Executive considered a report with regard to the Mid Year Review of the 2020/21 Treasury Management Strategy.

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Resources, the Leader announced that she would be introducing this report, together with the next three items of business on the agenda.

The Leader advised that cash balances were projected to be £68.6Million by 31 March 2021, however all of these sums had been committed to be spent, were planned to be used/drawn down or were being held on behalf of others. Unless it was determined that allocated reserves were no longer needed in the future, there were currently no cash resources available for new projects. In addition, the capital programme approved by Executive on 16 September 2020 required external borrowing of £40.791Million in 2020/21.

The Leader stated that no updates had been identified to the Investment Criteria (Appendix C to the report) or to the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (Appendix E) since the review undertaken a year ago. There had been one change to available investment options. Although the advice from the Council's treasury advisors had been that there should be no issues with the placing of investments domiciled within the EU after the Brexit transition period ended, the Amundi Money Market Fund based in Luxembourg closed in October 2020. An application was in progress to the UK-domiciled CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund to retain an available pool of investment options.

The Executive was informed that, as at 30 September 2020, total borrowing was £209.098Million, and was forecast to rise to £249.758Million if all approved borrowing was taken as per the revised capital programme approved by Executive on 16 September 2020.

The Leader commented that the average yield on investments was 0.98%, no change to the rate earned in 2018/19. However, the average yield was expected to reduce to 0.69% by the end of the year, as current fixed term investments matured and were replaced with new investments at current lower market rates. There had been no breaches of the Treasury Management Strategy in 2020/21 to date.

The Strategic Director (CF) advised that the Audit Committee, at its meeting held on 17 November 2020, had considered the report. The Committee had asked questions regarding why the Amundi Money Market Fund had closed, and about the level of self-financing borrowing costs for the Housing Revenue Account. The £200M of borrowing referred to in the latter question took place in 2012 and had cost SBC in the region of £6.5M a year to finance.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That Council be recommended to approve the 2020/21 Treasury Management Mid Year review.
2. That Council be recommended to approve the latest Countries for investment list (Appendix D to the report).
3. That the updated authorised and operational borrowing limits be approved (as set out in Paragraph 4.4.7 of the report).
4. That comments from the Audit Committee and Executive be incorporated into the report to Council on 16 December 2020.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **9 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE (2020/21 -2024/25)**

The Executive considered a report in respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Medium Term Financial Strategy update 2020/21 – 2024/25.

The Leader stated that the report updated Members on the next five years of the HRA Business Plan (BP), including inflation, rents for 2021/22, HRA BP growth, pressures and a comparison to the 2019 HRA BP revenue balances.

The Leader referred to Covid-19 in year pressures of £327,000, as set out in in Section 4.3 of the report, which included a number of posts required in Housing Management. There were also in-year non-Covid underspends of £693,000, of which £528,000 related to lower borrowing costs as a result of the Government reversing the 1% increase in borrowing for housing related borrowing.

Members noted that the estimated number of new housing in the HRA was now 54 homes lower by 2024/25, because the delivery of schemes had been re-profiled.

The Leader advised that the 2019 HRA BP update had assumed a CPI+1% rent increase of CPI 2.20%+1% (3.2%) from 2021/22 onwards, compared to the CPI of 0.5% for September 2020. This meant that the 2021/22 rental increase would be 1.5%, much lower than that assumed in the 2019 BP. If all things in the BP remained the same e.g. stock numbers, a 1.5% rent increase versus a 3.2% increase for 2021/22 reduced rental income in the BP by £20Million over the 30 year period. Average rents for 2021/22 were estimated at £100.76 compared to £102.41 in the HRA BP.

Members were informed that the combined impact of the change to property numbers and the level of annual rents, compared to the BP (partly due to re-profile of properties and lower CPI) meant that rental income was a total of £5.17Million lower by 2024/25.

It was noted that the Financial Security target for 2021/22 was £366,000, and the Chief Finance Officer was recommending that a £100,000 transformation target was included in the HRA for 2021/22.

The Leader stated that Borrowing Rates were estimated to be 2.17% lower for 2021/22 as a result of the 1% borrowing rate reduction and the lower base rate. Based on the current anticipated borrowing levels, interest on loans taken out over the next four years could be £1.7Million per year less than in the BP.

The Leader explained that HRA MTFs balances were projected to be £1.3Million lower than the HRA BP by 2024/25. This was as a result of the changes explained in the report, especially regarding the fall in anticipated rent levels, which had been mainly offset by lower borrowing costs. She pointed out that, in the table for HRA balances versus BP set out in Paragraph 4.12.4 of the report, the signs in the variance line were incorrect, in that the £1.294Million figure should not be in brackets as it was a deficit not a surplus.

Given the national economic fallout from the current crisis and the unknown potential impact from Brexit and the reduction in HRA balances in the medium term, the Leader advised that a full refresh of the HRA 30 year BP was recommended to ensure that the current investment strategy was sustainable and the account remained balanced. The minimum level of balances was estimated to be £2.985Million for 2021/22.

The Leader advised that she would be continuing to raise at national level the imbalance that there was no Covid-related Government financial support for Housing Revenue Accounts (ie. for those Councils with their own housing stock).

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the change in the Medium Term Financial Strategy principles, as outlined in Paragraph 4.1.5 of the report, be approved.
2. That, for modelling purposes, the HRA 2021/22 rents will increase by 1.5% (based on the formula of CPI+1%, with September 2020 CPI at 0.5%).
3. That the updated inflation assumptions used in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (as set out in Section 4.2 of the report) be approved.
4. That a HRA Financial Security Target of £878,000 be approved for the period 2021/22 – 2023/24 (as set out in Paragraph 4.9.8 of the report).
5. That the approach to Financial Security, as set out in Section 4.9 of the report, be approved.
6. That an amount of £100,000 for 2021/22 and 2022/23 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 4.9.10 of the report).

7. That the HRA Covid impacts and 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter changes to the HRA, as outlined in Sections 4.3 and 4.4 of the report, be approved.
8. That the financial impact of Covid in 2020/21 and future years be noted.
9. That the Leader's Financial Security Group oversee the development of the 2021/22 – 2023/24 savings package.
10. That the Medium Term Financial Strategy be regularly updated to for any material financial pressures so forecasts are updated and be re-presented to the Executive for approval.
11. That public consultation be commissioned in line with the requirements of the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy.
12. 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 proposals where there is a risk of redundancy.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **10 SECOND QUARTER REVENUE MONITORING REPORT 2020/21 - GENERAL FUND**

The Executive considered a report with regard to Second Quarter General Fund Revenue Monitoring 2020/21.

The Leader advised that the General Fund net decrease to the working budget for the Second Quarter 2020/21 was £30,000. The three most significant variances, as set out in the report, were a pressure of £174,000 from Housing Benefit overpayments; a pressure of £70,000 from the Council's external auditors (Ernst & Young) advising of a fee increase; and a business rates refund of £100,000 following the revaluation by the Valuation Office Agency of the Forum Car Park.

The Leader stated that gross Covid-19 losses were reported as £5.7Million, with £3.6Million of grants both received and projected. The gap in funding was £2.1Million. The highest loss was from Car Parking income at £2.5Million. Regular returns were being submitted to Government and the Income Guarantee Scheme had the first submission in September 2020, with two further submissions due in December 2020 and April 2021.

It was noted that the impact on the 2021/22 budget was a £25,000 ongoing pressure for the General Fund budget.

The Leader updated Members on Allocated Reserves, estimated to be £3.17Million by year end, of which £1.4Million related to NNDR and £1Million to regeneration projects funded over more than one year.

The Strategic Director (CF) drew attention to the fact that the losses outlined in the report related to Quarter 2 of 2020/21 (July to September 2020) and therefore did not include any amounts related to the current second Covid-19 lockdown.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the 2020/21 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter net decrease in General Fund expenditure of £30,000 be approved.
2. That the net Covid budget pressures of £2,132,360 be noted, and the amount ring-fenced in the General Fund to ensure resources are available for 2020/21 if no further funding is forthcoming from the Government (other than that set out in Paragraph 4.1.20 of the report).
3. That it be noted that cumulative changes made to the General Fund net budget remains within the £400,000 increase variation limit delegated to the Executive, as set out in Paragraph 4.1.21 of the report.
4. That it be noted that the 2021/22 ongoing net pressure of £205,000 will be incorporated into the Budget setting process, and that further ongoing pressures identified as risks within the report will be determined and incorporated within the General Fund budget setting process.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## **11 SECOND QUARTER GENERAL FUND CAPITAL MONITORING REPORT 2020/21**

The Executive considered a report in respect of Second Quarter General Fund Capital Monitoring 2020/21.

The Leader advised that the key changes to capital expenditure budgets included:

- An increase to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) financing for the Bus Interchange to replace the lower “contingency scenario” budget if funding had to be financed by borrowing;
- The building into the budget of £1.1M of LEP funding for a new Station North Multi-Story Car Park; LEP funding of £2.11M for Town Centre improvements; and MHCLG funding of £1M from the Towns Fund. It was noted that the latter two increases would exceed the Executive delegated limit, and hence the budget increase would be recommended to Council for approval;
- Along with the Towns Fund grant outlined above, an additional £120,000 was required for the North Block fit-out, to be financed from the Town Square Reserve;
- The Garages Programme delivery pipeline had been reviewed and a need had been identified to slip an additional £1.1M from 2021/22 to 2022/23;
- A report on the Public Sector Hub was expected to be submitted to the Executive in February or March 2022. As there was currently no approval to commence the development, only the £200,000 OPE grant was planned to be spent in 2020/21 on feasibility and design works, with the remaining £900,000 to

- be slipped to 2021/22;
- Budget reallocation had been requested to move £140,000 from the Stevenage Swim Centre to the Arts & Leisure Centre pipework;
- £125,000 of the Deferred Works budget for 2021/22 had been identified to fund Core ICT Equipment for remote workers. A further £7,000 was requested to fund an urgent requirement to replace an expansion joint in the Multi-Storey Car Park; and
- Net budget reductions totalling £26,000 had been identified across a number of Housing Investment schemes, the largest being a reduction of £60,000 from the replacement boiler at Bedwell Community Centre, as parts replacement was more optimal than system replacement due to estimated useful life of building; and an increase of £37,000 for unforeseen electrical works required for Daneshill House to ensure safety and compliance.

Members were informed of a net increase in capital expenditure of £5.5M in 2021/22, and £1.9M in 2022/23. The key changes were as follows:

- An adjustment of Capital Receipt forecasts to reflect a reduction of £900,000 in 2020/21 due to the re-phasing of the Public Sector Hub, and also for the £2.15M 'Kenilworth Malvern Close Executive House' receipt, which was 100% in 2021/22, but was now split 50/50 between 2021/22 and 2022/23;
- Locality Review Receipts would be funding the RCCO gap in financing, to reduce the pressure on Revenue, replacing the former New Homes Bonus contribution to the Capital Reserve; and
- The Section 106 contribution of £25,000 for the arboretum had now been allocated.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That Council be recommended to approve the budget increase to the 2020/21 General Fund Capital Programme arising from the additional funding of £7.4Million received from the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), as identified in Paragraph 4.1.4 of the report, as these exceed the Executive's delegated limit, with the net increase in 2020/21 expenditure being £6.4Million, as summarised in Table One, Paragraph 4.1.1 of the report.
2. That the General Fund net increase (arising from slippage) of capital expenditure of £1.0Million in 2021/22, also as summarised in Table One, Paragraph 4.1.1 of the report, be approved.

*Reason for Decision: As contained in report.*

*Other Options considered: As contained in report.*

## 12 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

The Chair had accepted an urgent item of business in respect of an update regarding the SG1 planning application, upon which the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government had placed a holding direction following a representation from the Stevenage MP.

The Strategic Director (TP) advised that the application had been granted permission by the Planning & Development Committee at its meeting held on 20 October 2020. That decision had been made following a recommendation from Planning Officers and with the benefit of the opinions of a considerable number of expert advisors. In terms of the policy context, the Stevenage Local Plan had a strong focus on Town Centre regeneration, which had been recognised at the Examination in Public, when the Planning Inspector stated “the policies and visions for the Town Centre were well thought out and had the potential to improve the town significantly in a number of ways”.

The Strategic Director (TP) informed Members that, since the imposition of the holding direction, SBC Planning Officers and Mace (the applicant) had responded to the MHCLG addressing the points made in the holding direction. He understood that holding directions on specific planning applications were, on average, concluded within 3 to 6 weeks. Planning Officers would continue to maintain the pressure on the MHCLG for a prompt decision.

### **13 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That under Section 100A 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.

### **14 NEW STATION NORTH MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK**

The Executive considered a Part II report in respect of proposals to progress the provision of a new Multi-Storey Car Park and sustainable transport facilities to be built on the existing surface car park to the north of Stevenage Station.

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**



## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 10 November 2020

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

**Present:** Councillors: Michael Downing (Chair) (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair) (Vice Chair), Doug Bainbridge, Sandra Barr, Stephen Booth, Adrian Brown, Maureen McKay, Loraine Rossati and Simon Speller

Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise & Transport, Cllr Lloyd Briscoe was in attendance at the meeting.

**Start / End** Start Time: 6.00pm

**Time:** End Time: 8.00pm

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Cullen and Jody Hanafin.

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2 **MINUTES - 22 SEPTEMBER 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment & Economy Select Committee meeting held on 22 September 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### 3 **SCOPING DOCUMENT - ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON STEVENAGE AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY AND THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE**

The Committee agreed the draft scope of the review as presented to them with the following changes and additions:

The Chair indicated that he proposed an additional issue be added to the focus of the review, namely that the review should assess the impact of the work that the Council and its partners are doing in response to the pandemic to enhance the wellbeing of the local workforce, the business community and the people of Stevenage.

The Committee agreed to look at the question of what has been the economic impact of the pandemic on women.

The Committee agreed to include addressing the issue of matching the skills and aspirations of young people who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic to the businesses that might thrive and grow post the pandemic.

Cllr Simon Speller offered to head up a sub group with Cllrs Adam Mitchell and Maureen McKay to look at the initiatives to address young people, specifically those who may not get picked up by the more traditional outreaches of schools and the County Council and to look at engaging with outreach teams from local employers to promote STEM subjects and opportunities in secondary schools in Stevenage.

Cllr Loraine Rossati agreed to look into the effect of the pandemic on women assisted by an appropriate officer and Cllr Sandra Barr agreed to look into the work that North Herts College are doing with non-vocational studies and students that do not have clear employment pathways, and it was suggested that a relevant representative of North Herts College be invited as a witness.

The Chair indicated that he wanted 2 witness interview sessions, the first on 13 January with a focus internally with Executive Members and Council officers and then the second on a further date (yet to be determined) with external witnesses from local businesses and citizens affected by the pandemic.

The 13 January session should be with the Leader of the Council, the Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport, Cllr Lloyd Briscoe, the Strategic Director Finance, Strategic Director Environment, Assistant Director Planning and Regulatory and the Business Relationship Manager. The Strategic Director, Tom Pike agreed to meet up with the Chair and the Scrutiny Officer to map out which officers are dealing with the specific responses to the Economic response to the pandemic and therefore who it would be best to speak to.

For external witnesses the Committee were recommended by the Vice-Chair to speak to a charity called Setpoint Hertfordshire who are based in Stevenage and they visit schools to promote STEM subjects, Helen Spencer was suggested as a contact to interview. Youth Connexions would also be invited for their work with hard to reach young people, Judith Sutton was suggested as a good contact. It was suggested that a representative of a trade union should be included in the list of witnesses.

Regarding equalities and diversity issues it was recognised that many of the characteristic groups have been affected economically and psychologically by the pandemic including the disabled, BAME, younger people, older people etc. and the review would need to address this.

Regarding constraints the issues of resources and staff time is one who may be diverted by urgent work to directly respond to the pandemic as well as time to complete the review, access to the appropriate and available data and access to third party partners such as sixth form and FE colleges to provide insight.

It was **RESOLVED**:

That the scoping document be agreed with the following additions and amendments:

- (1) That an additional issue be listed in the bullet points for the focus of the review to encapsulate the desire to see what impact the Council and its partners are making to enhance the wellbeing of the local workforce,

- businesses and its citizens throughout the pandemic;
- (2) That the review assess the economic impact of the pandemic on women, to which Cllr Loraine Rossati agreed to lead on with the assistance from officers;
  - (3) That the review assess specifically the impact on young people, with a focus on outreach work to schools on STEM subjects which would be led by a sub group headed up by Cllr Simon Speller and to include the Vice-Chair Cllr Adam Mitchell, Cllr Maureen McKay and with Cllr Sandra Barr who agreed to look into those young people who are left behind and would link up with North Herts College;
  - (4) That there would be two main witness interview sessions, the first on 13 January 2021 focusing on internal Member and officer interviews and a second session (date yet to be determined) to interview external witnesses from businesses and the local workforce;
  - (5) That the Strategic Director, Tom Pike, the Assistant Director, Steve Dupoy and the Scrutiny Officer agreed to meet with the Chair to map out the interview process, and further evidence required; and
  - (6) That the amended scoping document be represented to the Committee at its next meeting of the Committee.

#### 4 **HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (LEP) HERTS RECOVERY PLAN**

The Committee received a presentation from Adam Wood, Head of Infrastructure & Regeneration Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) regarding the Hertfordshire Recovery Plan, rebuilding the Hertfordshire and Stevenage Economy.

The presentation covered a range of issues including the extent of the economic impact so far on the County and Stevenage; unemployment figures; furlough take up; remote working; what actions the LEP has taken; the economic recovery plans principles and framework and finally the economic recovery activities.

The potential job losses in Hertfordshire are between 80,000 to 100,000 but could change as the situation is constantly changing; the unemployment figures for the County and Stevenage which were historically low pre the pandemic but had seen a rise of over 200% in the County from 1.9% to 5.2% with Stevenage being slightly lower than UK average but slightly higher than the County average with 2.6 to 6.4% from March to May 2020.

Stevenage had 9,800 furloughed workers which was 18.9% of the workforce.

The number of workers who are able to work from home was directly affected by the type of employment sector they came from with 70% of professionals being able to work from home down to sectors such as hospitality, retail, construction and utilities, who needed to carry on their role in a physical place. By district Stevenage had a similar percentage of workers who could work from home as North and East Herts and Broxbourne at 38%, while areas like Watford, Welwyn Hatfield and St Albans were above the Hertfordshire average of 42%.

The LEP were focusing on four strands of response to the economic impact of the pandemic, the primary one being supporting the Hertfordshire Economic Recovery

Plan as well as continuing the Hertfordshire Growth Board, supporting local initiatives already in train such as Stevenage Town Investment Plan (TIP)/Town Deal and the creation of Catalyst South as joint lobbying group with nine other southern LEPs outside of London representing some 13 million people to lobby government and get the scale of the Midlands, North West and North East to lobby for the region.

The LEP had responded by organising the County wide Economic Recovery Group, Getting Building Fund for shovel ready projects which Stevenage has several, and ministerial roundtable discussions.

The LEP has also unlocked a £3.28M Business Support Package and has an overarching Recovery Plan Framework, which is an action plan not a strategy. The Framework covers:

- Growing our assets to add high value jobs
- Accelerating inward investment
- Focus on skills and flexibility of workforce
- Exploring digital opportunities
- Promote clean growth
- Level up and connect places

The LEP has a Recovery Plan Activities; these include 3 recovery packages and 2 transformational programmes:

- Recovery Package 1 – Enterprise & Innovation
- Recovery Package 2 – Skills & Creativity – with an emphasis on young people through the Herts Opportunities Portal and linking with HMG’s Kickstart programme
- Recovery Package 3 – International Trade & Investment – prioritising potential high growth sectors such as life sciences/cell & gene, film & TV, smart & sustainable construction
- 2 Transformational Programmes – longer-term aspirations/interventions
- Transformational Programme 1: Equipping Hertfordshire’s places for mid-21<sup>st</sup> Century living – Stevenage is a great example with its regeneration of the Town Centre
- Transformational Programme 2: Connecting Hertfordshire for mid-21<sup>st</sup> Century living and working through building digital infrastructure and redefining orbital connectivity

The LEP would be supporting the event co-sponsored by the Council and the Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal on 1<sup>st</sup> December – Generation Stevenage which is targeting 1,000 young people to meet on line with local employers, with a view to finding out what job opportunities these employers are currently offering.

For the first time in a generation the focus would have to shift from just looking at the quality of jobs created in an area to now focus on the number of jobs available. However, the fundamentals for a Herts wide and Stevenage recover and growth remain good because of the areas geographical position to London and the presence of existing high quality industries.

There will be a need for short term action to cover the potential 80,000 to 100,000 job losses in Hertfordshire but there was still a need for long term structural change for better growth to focus on jobs in emerging low carbon green industries to address the climate emergency as well as fairer growth to provide jobs that local people can access addressing the skills gap with a large portion of the local workforce.

Following Adam's presentation Members asked Adam a series of questions these included the following issues:

- What ratio of public and private money has been invested into the regeneration projects supported by the LEP? The ration is approximately 1 to 10 so every £1 of public money levers in £10 of private investment. If the LEP and Council are successful with the Town Investment Plan then the total public spend would be circa £100 Million pounds
- In addition to setting up Catalyst South as a larger regional body to lobby Government what is the LEP doing about attracting international inward investment, does it attend international trade fair events? The LEP through the Herts Growth Board also lobbies government on issues such as the holding direction on the SG1 Planning Application. Regarding inward investment the LEP has direct contact with the Department for International Trade and receive inquiries via the department and they also uses its existing business to cultivate new inward investment as generating inward investment "cold" is difficult but bringing in a "warmer" investor who knows the existing businesses and industries is more successful.
- Volunteer Business Support Scheme, who should interested businesses contact and how would they become a volunteer? Initially they should make contact with the Herts Growth Hub and they will direct them
- Members endorsed the LEPs focus on the structural changes that are required and strongly endorse the LEPs focus on young people who have been the most badly affected economically by the pandemic and wished to reiterate their support for bilateral partnership working across the County to tackle the economic challenges in the recovery from the pandemic
- The Executive Portfolio holder for Economy, Enterprise & Transport, Cllr Lloyd Briscoe commented that he supported the analysis of the LEP and quoted its CEO in sighting that Hertfordshire should be very well placed to bounce back quicker than other areas due to its fundamental economic factors such as skilled workforce and its geography. Also the repurposing of town centres to bring in residential living and associated business are the future for town centre developments as traditional retail focused high streets struggle, which Stevenage was a prime example of and was well ahead of other towns both new towns and older traditional towns in this regard.

It was **RESOLVED:**

That the presentation be noted and that a copy of the slides be circulated to the Committee following the meeting.

## STEVENAGE AND THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

The Committee received a presentation from the Council's Business Relationship Manager, Mena Caldbeck, on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on economic development in Stevenage and on the Council's response.

The presentation covered a wide range of data this included:

- A snapshot of national economic data regarding the effect of the pandemic
- Government Support Measures including small business grant; discretionary grant; retail, hospitality & leisure business rate relief; job retention scheme; self-employment income support scheme; bounce back loan scheme; business interruption loan scheme; time to pay scheme; VAT deferral; deferral of self-assessment payment; Kickstart Scheme (work placement for 16-24 year olds); flexibility to pay back loans; support to stop evictions
- Analysis of a local business survey that was undertaken in August 2020 with 145 businesses completing the survey, including micro, SME's & large businesses from all sectors
- The Survey provided information on the following areas: what were businesses current concerns; numbers furloughed; self-employed; agency workers; businesses returning to full staff numbers; how local businesses were accessing government support measures; what adaptations businesses had made to their business during the pandemic
- Part of the survey had been to ask businesses what they thought should be the key priorities for the Council with regard to supporting the business community, these included:
  - **Improving and maintaining the wider infrastructure** such as safeguarding employment land better broadband
  - **skills support** including apprenticeships and upskilling and retraining for those made redundant
  - funding for schools with IT to support home working
  - procurement access to the Council's tendering process
  - **wellbeing** – supporting residents to get fit
  - **Business Support** including
    - sector development to support growth
    - networking opportunities
    - funding to improve premises, purchase equipment, support cash flow
  - **Regeneration of the town centre**
    - Proactively targeting quality retailers to attract customers in to the town
  - **Old Town** – promotion and support of businesses
- **Challenges that face the Council in responding:**
  - To a large part the Council is able to influence, lobby government and work with partners
  - **Areas supported** – skills/jobs a priority of Stevenage Economic Taskforce
  - Procurement
  - Business support
  - Regeneration of the town centre
  - the Old Town

Members raised the following questions and comments:

- What particular skills, upskilling and retraining can the Borough Council do to help the local workforce? The Council has organised the Stevenage Generation event to target opportunities for young people to meet prospective employers, 5 large sized employers based locally, as well as funding sourced locally to help upskill their workforce which is promoted by the Council, the LEP and the Economic Taskforce
- What can the Council and its partners like the Council for Voluntary Service & the Citizens Advice Bureau do to help deliver practical solutions to change people's lives if that person has been made redundant or can't find employment? The Council does engage with a large range of partners who can provide direct support for those who need it. The Business Relationship Manager works with the Herts Growth Hub supporting businesses with advice and the LEP supporting people with skills and with Herts Opportunities Portal which helps people identify businesses and sectors who are recruiting. Also Stevenage Economic Task Force are looking to engage and work with a number of different agencies to help offer support to local people. Also the Council is working with the Department for International Trade to provide leads to Stevenage based companies to provide inward investment.
- How many of the Government support measures that were referred to in the presentation are administered by the Council? The Council administers the small business grant; the hospitality and leisure grant; and supported businesses with the discretionary grant funding; the retail, hospitality, leisure and business rates relief; the shared Revenues and Benefits team are administering the Local Restriction Grant to support those businesses who have to close as a result of the second lockdown and are preparing the application form; the additional restrictive grant for businesses who have been severely impacted by the pandemic and the lockdown; the shared revenues and benefits service has administered hardship schemes and rates schemes and had provided funding up to £30 million pounds in government grants since the start of the pandemic. The Strategic Director Finance offered to circulate to the Committee the latest Member dashboard that details all of the schemes that the Council is involved in administering.
- What mechanisms are there for smaller businesses to take on traineeships for young people and apprenticeships? Under the government's Kick Start Scheme employers can support young people through 6 month work placements but need to take on 30 new employees. Businesses offering traineeships can receive between £1.5K to £2K payments? Many small or medium sized businesses could not afford to support the Kick Start Scheme and therefore would go through the Intermediary scheme. Currently Wenta and Herts Chambers of Commerce and the Herts Growth Hub can support businesses access the scheme. Information has been placed on the website.
- It was **RESOLVED:**
  - (1) That the presentation be noted; and
  - (2) That the Strategic Director Finance would circulate to the Committee the latest Member dashboard that details all of the schemes that the Council is

involved in administering to help businesses and individuals during the pandemic.

6 **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS TO ASSIST THE REVIEW**

The background documents to support the review were noted.

7 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

The Chair accepted a Part 1 urgent business to update the Committee on the Committee's work programme.

Regarding the Neighbourhood Centres Review the Scrutiny Officer agreed to contact Committee Members to invite them to send any updates they have for the review resulting from their particular ward Neighbourhood engagement meetings.

8 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

9 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

Not required.

**CHAIR**



Part I



Agenda item: ###

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Housing, Health & Older People / Resources  
**Date** 9 December 2020



## HOUSING FIRST APPROACH - STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### KEY DECISION

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**LEAD/CONTACT OFFICERS:** JAINE CRESSER X2028

### PURPOSE

- 1.1 The Housing First approach in response to the COVID rough sleeper crisis was brought before Executive in July 2020 (see Appendix 1). The report was brought in response to the increased demand for services and the evolving resource challenges facing the Council's Homelessness Services to provide support and suitable accommodation to those clients who have slept rough or been in imminent risk of rough sleeping in an attempt to stop the spread of the COVID 19 pandemic. Following the directive from Dame Louise Casey on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to have "Everyone In" (see Appendix

2) there has been a significant increase in the variety and level of work completed by the Council's Providing Homes teams to provide an urgent and short term response.

- 1.2 This Executive report is focused on the current spend to date for Temporary Accommodation since the implementation of National restrictions from March 2020 and confirms the approach for the council's provision over the coming winter months. A further report will be brought to the Executive before the end of the financial year to provide a business case overview for the Council's medium to long term provision.
- 1.3 This report outlines the Council's initial proposals for the medium and long term response to engaging and housing the Council's rough sleeper clients together with identifying the additional resources required.
- 1.4 Recommendations are set out in this report to explore accommodation, resources, monitor budgets and investigate opportunities (both funding and land led) linked to improving the housing related offer, including support and the supply of accommodation for tackling the current homelessness crisis in Stevenage.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Executive notes the support provided to homeless households during the Covid-19 restrictions, March – July 2020 and then November to December 2020.
- 2.2 That the Council's operational plan over the coming winter months, as detailed in the report, be approved, and that delegated authority is granted for the Strategic Director (RP), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People, to agree any minor amendments subject to financial control.
- 2.3 That the Executive notes the current service pressures in Housing and Investment within the General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA), which will be monitored by the Council's Finance department in line with the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) planning which will be reported to Executive as and when required.
- 2.4 That it be noted that funding has been obtained through Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MCHLG) for short term spends and it is requested that the Executive agree the approach detailed at Paragraph 4.32 of the report.

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

- 3.1 In December 2019 the Executive approved the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2024 (H&RSS 2019-2024). This strategy outlined the key trends locally and nationally showing that homelessness was on the increase. In Stevenage, the total number of homeless decisions being made had increased by 46% over a 4 year period from 105 in 2014/15

to 193 in 2018/19. Nationally, the Government's own figures showed that there were 25,130 families with children identified as homeless and that the overall number of children living in temporary accommodation hit a 13-year high at 126,020, up 83% since its lowest point in June 2011. Whilst other research (Campaign to Protect Rural England reported in H&RSS) pointed to an even worsening picture of the housing crisis, with growing waiting lists and not enough long term housing being built. As such, the current housing difficulties being faced by Stevenage and the country are not a result of Covid-19, but are a problem that has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

- 3.2 The Council's approach to tackling homelessness in the H&RSS, identified four key priorities:
1. Prevention and relief of homelessness and rough sleeping
  2. Provision of temporary accommodation
  3. Long term increase in housing development
  4. Support for homeless households
- 3.3 Both Members and Officers recognised that these priorities would be challenging to meet and a partnership approach along the basis of the 'Housing First' approach- see Appendix 3 (a model that provides housing with a wrapped support package from the outset to street homeless vulnerable clients) would be necessary to protect the most vulnerable in Stevenage's communities, given their deep rooted and sometimes multi-dimensional housing, support and clinical needs. The strategy sets out the Council's vision to "work co-operatively to prevent and reduce homelessness and end the need for anyone to sleep rough in Stevenage".
- 3.4 The situation in Stevenage reflects the national picture; despite the co-ordinated and co-operative efforts by the Council and partners (including the Stevenage Health & Wellbeing Partnership, the Police, the Haven and other Voluntary and Community Sector organisations) in helping residents to stay in their homes, more and more households are finding themselves homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless.
- 3.5 In the week prior to the Covid-19 National restrictions (16th March 2020), there were 121 households in Council owned Emergency and Temporary Accommodation, (EA/TA) including 19 in bed and breakfast accommodation. During June 2020 (after first National restrictions period) this figure had risen by 66% to 181 cases in Council owned Emergency and Temporary Accommodation and an 27% placement increase to 69 cases in bed and breakfast accommodation. This level of demand placed a significant strain on already stretched resources to cater for this vulnerable client group. At the start of September 2020 the Council had 153 households accommodated in temporary accommodation and 47 cases in bed and breakfast which was at an all-time high. The teams have been working at pace to bring forward the actions detailed in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to achieve the 4 priorities which are vital in addressing the additional demands placed on the Council due to COVID.
- 3.6 Since the "Everyone In" directive was put in place on 26 March 2020 the Council has had 126 cases that were rough sleeping or an imminent risk of

rough sleeping that have been placed in accommodation that had been sleeping rough or at imminent risk of rough sleeping. There are 26 cases currently accommodated and of these there are 16 clients in nightly let accommodation and 10 of these cases within the Council's own Temporary Accommodation stock.

- 3.7 For every case the Council placed, this information was captured in the Hertfordshire case tracker which was introduced through the Hertfordshire Accommodation Cell. The tracker captures where cases have moved onto, whether they were evicted owing to serious crime and/or anti-social behaviour or successfully rehoused into alternative accommodation. This data has been used to inform what support services are needed to support this cohort.
- 3.8 The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have been working with Local Authorities throughout this period and have been attending the Hertfordshire Accommodation cell that was created and lead by Stevenage, Dacorum and Welwyn/Hatfield authorities to deal with pressures faced by all Local Authorities during this unprecedented time.
- 3.9 Following the second national restrictions introduced in early November 2020 Local Authorities have been directed to follow the "Protect programme" (Appendix 4) to ensure rough sleepers have the opportunity to isolate in the same way they did during the first national restrictions. In the two weeks following these restrictions the Council had 26 rough sleepers accommodated with 8 out of the 14 cases known to the teams to be rough sleeping after the first national restrictions who are not currently engaging and accommodated. The Council must therefore be prepared for at least these 8 cases to make a further approach.

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

##### **POST COVID-19 OUTBREAK, NATIONAL RESTRICTIONS AND STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL'S IMMEDIATE RESPONSE**

- 4.1 As detailed in the July Executive report the global scale and national impact of Covid-19 has been widely documented. Its impact on rough sleepers is all the more acute, as this client group is notably more likely to be suffering from issues relating to addiction and support needs for their mental and physical health.
- 4.2 The Council has engaged three rough sleeper workers through the Rough Sleeper Initiative funding, who have worked with the Temporary Accommodation team to provide support to this client group in addition to those cases otherwise owed a statutory duty for accommodation. The Council's No More service also offered support to all cases placed and worked with a number of the clients under the COVID initiative. Both the Rough Sleeping team and the No More service continue to work with the clients placed under COVID provision.

- 4.3 The Council's Housing Supply team have continued to source accommodation at pace in the privately rented sector (PRS) with 59 new tenancies sourced for cases open to the Council's Housing Options team since the start of this financial year despite a substantial period of resistance to non-essential moves within the sector for a number of months. In comparison there were 106 new PRS tenancies secured for the 2019/2020 financial year, which evidences we have achieved 55% of those secured the previous year by the end of Q2 of this financial year. This evidences that despite the restrictions in place to avoid any non-essential moves during a national pandemic the Housing Supply team have performed above target. It also reflects the positive relationship the Council's Housing Supply team have with private landlords in the Borough.
- 4.4 The Temporary Accommodation Team, with support from the Council's No More Service, have administered essential support to these homeless clients. The provision for these clients is not just limited to accommodation, but has also included food, transport and providing mobile phones and signposting to other services.
- 4.5 Security arrangements were put in place at the Holiday Inn Express "HIEX" during the initial block booking provision and the Team continue to have this in place to monitor the high risk placements to ensure safety for clients, members of the public and council staff. The Council continues to instruct security at the sites where high risk cases have been accommodated.
- 4.6 The Temporary Accommodation Team have worked hard to ensure that all of the rough sleeper cases placed at the HIEX were moved into alternative accommodation by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020 when the HIEX provision ended. This was a mixture of permanent accommodation and more sustainable temporary accommodation.
- 4.7 The Homelessness Code of Guidance was updated in July 2020 to clarify priority need in relation to rough sleeper cases. Following this update the service continued to assess cases in line with this guidance, with legislation and by taking into account supply and resources in providing accommodation. Support is provided to each and every approach even if accommodation had not been provided once the national restrictions had eased. The considerations made in providing accommodation were to ensure the Council stopped continuous placements being made for any new cases that approach stating they are at risk of, or that are currently rough sleeping. The number of rough sleeper cases placed when the report was brought before Executive in July 2020 stood at 48 cases. The number and cases reported at this time is not static and the placement numbers have fluctuated throughout this period.
- 4.8 Following the introduction of a second national restriction on 3 November 2020 the Council now have 26 rough sleepers placed in accommodation and in order to meet additional demands the Council is utilising accommodation at two Stevenage Bed and Breakfast providers and additional accommodation at a provider outside Stevenage and based in Stansted which was a hotel utilised during the first national restrictions. The hotel

based outside of Stevenage had proved to be a proactive provider during this first period and the Council have continued to use them during the second national restrictions where they have arranged a shuttle service for residents to access the local pharmacy to collect their prescriptions, and the hotel have provided food. The Council have Rough Sleeper outreach workers working with Emerging Futures, and the Council's No More Service providing a physical presence at the hotel to engage with those placed. Prior to the 3 November 2020 there were only 6 rough sleepers in nightly let accommodation as the Council been able to accommodate the remaining cases in Council owned emergency accommodation or house into the private rented sector.

- 4.9 As detailed at 3.9, out of the 26 rough sleeper cases currently accommodated there are 9 cases previously identified to be sleeping rough and returned to rough sleeping at the end of July 2020, along with 5 cases that have been re-accommodated from 3 November 2020 and these cases are identified for intensive outreach work through Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) revenue funds. The Council has utilised the support worker funds to enter into arrangements with Emerging Futures and the No More Service who will focus on the drug and alcohol, mental health and offending behaviour support needs for the rough sleeper cases identified.
- 4.10 In order to move on the Council's rough sleeper cohort, the Housing First project identified in the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy (HRSS) has been brought forward and the Council was successful in its funding bids for the next steps revenue and capital grants with MHCLG. Some of the initiatives put in place using the NSAP revenue funding is for deposits and incentives for those low to medium risk rough sleeper cases that can be housed through a Housing First approach within the private rented sector, with ongoing floating support. The Council's proposals through the Next Steps funding will assist these single homeless cases and any future cases. There are 1692 households on the waiting list and there are 941 of these cases needing single accommodation evidencing that 55% of cases on the waiting list are waiting for 1 bedroom properties. Single homelessness is not an isolated one off issue which is evident by the ongoing placements that have been required during both national restrictions with new applicants being identified since 3 November.
- 4.11 It is important to recognise the legal context at 6.0 of this report and financial implications at 5.0 of this report in relation to the Council's interventions in this area, as they have important implications for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. The Council has various statutory housing duties and the resources for remedying these have to be accounted for in accordance with the relevant legislation that is detailed below.
- 4.12 Where the Council has a duty to house an individual under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), then that cost is to the HRA. It is also possible to use section 9 of the Housing Act 1985 to provide housing accommodation, by building or acquiring properties and then letting those properties through the HRA. If the powers under Part 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (section 9) were used for the provision of temporary accommodation,

i.e. where a duty to house an individual had not been established, the role of the HRA would be limited to solely being a landlord function and all other costs and additional services would have to be funded from the General Fund and this accommodation is under Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).

- 4.13 The single rough sleepers that have been accommodated by the Council are unlikely to fall within any specific housing duty, such as under section 188 or 193 of the Housing Act 1996 and therefore are being supported through the Council's general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. Therefore these costs will also have to be resourced through the General Fund.
- 4.14 Since 3 November the Council have been offering accommodation to all who were rough sleeping or imminently threatened with rough sleeping in line with the "Protect" directive. This has been provided in local hotels and the Council are currently working to convert suitable properties for rough sleeper use. These 15 rooms expected in December 2020 will be utilised for cold weather emergency placements. By utilising these units as they become available the Council hope not to have to make use of bed and breakfast accommodation of cold weather provision. In the Medium term the Council are moving forward with more secure housing options and developing client support networks
- 4.15 During the period 23 March to end of July 2020 the Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators had been able to visit and communicate with the clients on a daily basis. They have begun to develop personalised support plans and establish referrals to other professional services. These personalised support plans cover the clients' housing, health and specific clinical wellbeing needs. The plans seek to identify pathways into new housing options for individuals, based on their capacity to sustain particular housing, the risks associated with independent or shared living, as well as the availability of housing opportunities.
- 4.16 In summary, Pathway One is intended for individuals who can manage or have managed to live independently before, but have recently been forced to sleep rough. They will be assisted to secure private sector accommodation and either establish or sustain support networks.
- 4.17 Pathway Two is for those that display a higher level of need, as a result of more frequent or sustained levels of rough sleeping that has caused them to lose support networks and become isolated. These individuals will need a greater level of support.
- 4.18 Pathway Three is for clients who display acute levels of need and require intensive, crisis intervention measures, usually in a managed supported housing, or hostel schemes, in order to manage complex challenges.
- 4.19

<b>SUPPORT NEED</b>	<b>Housing Options</b>	<b>Estimation of Numbers</b>
<p><b>Pathway one:</b> Low support needs with established professional and clinical support networks</p>	<p>Secure accommodation directly into Private rented sector or via temporary stay in Council Emergency Accommodation /Temporary Accommodation (EA/TA) if time does not permit</p> <p>Consider shared accommodation with Floating Support.</p>	<p>There are currently 8 clients which have been assessed as suitable for 'pathway one'</p> <p>This will be the persons are now in PRS or pending PRS lets</p>
<p><b>Pathway Two:</b> Medium level support needs with greater connections and referrals to professional support needed</p>	<p>This is for those that experienced a sustained level of rough sleeping and require far more support.</p> <p>Consider shared TA/EA via staffed Council premises or independent accommodation with higher frequency of multi-agency support before finding alternative private sector or Council/Registered Social Landlord accommodation subject to eligibility</p>	<p>There are currently 8 clients whose needs are classed as suitable for 'pathway two'</p>
<p><b>Pathway Three:</b> High level client needs that require the most intensive support due to addiction or underlying clinical issues</p>	<p>Seek specialist partner agency accommodation such as that offered by the Haven hostel for a sustained period before move on accommodation is sought.</p>	<p>Current estimation is that approximately 10 clients in this category</p>
<p><b>Reconnected (No longer in TA)</b></p>	<p>Through support, and professional agency referrals it is possible on occasions to secure reconciliation between family networks.</p>	<p>2 reconnected with their children due to being accommodated in Stevenage</p>
<p><b>Unsuccessful and showing signs of disengaging (No longer in TA)</b></p>	<p>Sadly, due to violent anti-social behaviour and other criminal activity some clients disengaged, have been evicted or were taken</p>	<p>2 evicted</p>



<b>SUPPORT NEED</b>	<b>Housing Options</b>	<b>Estimation of Numbers</b>
	into custody by the Police	

- 4.20 Whilst the analysis provided above hugely under-represents the time required to develop personalised interventions that support staff have been delivering, with huge effort and skill, it does help to highlight that the Council will need to secure more accommodation and support resources to help cater for the increased needs of the clients involved.
- 4.21 Increased accommodation resources will be needed to cope with providing the interim pathway accommodation to the group of rough sleepers that are not eligible for long term secure housing support from the Council. The demands from accommodating rough sleeper cases has caused a knock on impact for the overall EA/TA placement figures with numbers in bed and breakfast being the highest in the Council's history.
- 4.22 The Providing Homes teams and Development team continue to work together to increase the temporary and emergency accommodation available to the Housing Options team to accommodate individuals on a temporary and interim basis. This includes the proposal to build a 21 bed local authority hostel with a 12 bed move on Housing First project on site. This accommodation will however not be available for 2-3years.
- 4.23 In the short term, the Housing Options team had granted additional direct offers of accommodation to people owed a prevention, relief or main duty in order to free up emergency accommodation for rough sleeper cases to move into.
- 4.24 Clients that can manage their own tenancy with minimal support have been assisted with funds from the Next Steps Accommodation Programme grant, to help secure private sector accommodation. The Housing Supply team have assisted 26 cases of rough sleepers during the first national restrictions into PRS accommodation. The Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators initially support cases and then the Housing Supply Co-ordinators will continue offering support to these clients once housed into the PRS to support them to help sustain their tenancy.
- 4.25 In the event that further accommodation resources are needed for rough sleepers, they will be requested for a time limited and defined purpose, in connection with this current crisis. They will be further subject to the accounting and appropriation regulations governing any transfer of resource from the General Fund and HRA and officers will seek approval in accordance with constitutional and statutory processes.
- 4.26 Other options under consideration for increasing the supply of accommodation include; repurposing existing Council general needs stock and retail buildings, further open market acquisitions or repurposing some existing HRA new build schemes, and entering into reciprocal arrangements with specialist providers to create additional move on accommodation in

supported housing schemes. These proposals were detailed in the next steps funding bid which is set out in the Council's long term response below.

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

- 4.27 The need for flexible accommodation that helps to support an individual and allow professional practitioners to efficiently deliver their services plays a huge part in ensuring successful housing and personal outcomes for clients. This kind of service is best built and delivered through a new purpose built hostel in Stevenage and would be similar to the service successfully operated by the Stevenage Haven. The Council's Housing teams will investigate if the demand and opportunity (in terms of land, multi-agency support and funding) is there to deliver such a service.
- 4.28 The Council's existing HRSS sets out an ambition to justify and resource a 'Housing First' model service. This would allow the Council to grant a stable offer of accommodation to those who would otherwise struggle to gain access to long term appropriate accommodation. The model sees housing as the first 'stepping stone' to recovery and long term sustainment and that, through support and engagement, it can be a powerful catalyst in changing clients' lives and reducing rough sleeping substantially in the long term. Trialled in over 75 schemes in the UK, it is a model that has huge success.
- 4.29 It is important to realise that the success of these schemes depend on the level of wrap around support that is provided to clients with highly complex needs. Therefore this will require a level of commitment from a range of agencies in the planning, delivery and continued operation of such a scheme.
- 4.30 Investigations have been made into the commitment to a Housing First model by engaging with key partners including Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and their commissioned support providers and the Haven.
- 4.31 The funding opportunities included the £105 million short term revenue grant to help local authorities implement a range of support interventions for people placed into emergency accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic and until the end of financial year 2020/2021. Further the £433m long term capital funding grant was brought forward to help Local Authorities deliver 6000 new homes over a 4 year period.
- 4.32 The Council submitted proposals for the MHCLG Next Steps revenue and capital funding bids and were successful in these bids and have been issued with funds from the revenue and capital grant as follows;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial profile for short-term &amp; intermediate projects (Revenue funding)</li> </ul>	
<p>Total <b>revenue</b> funding issued from Next Steps Accommodation Fund 2020/21 (9.1 - 9.5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£80,115 For Emergency Provision</li> <li>£96,325 Security and CCTV</li> <li>£35,000 Support workers funded in full</li> </ul>	<p>£333,740.00</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£122,300 for PRS deposits and incentives</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Financial profile for capital-funded supported move-on accommodation</b></li> </ul>					
Total <b>net capital</b> funding issued for capital-funded supported move-on accommodation (premises) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conversion works at 1 property offering 5 units</li> <li>Modular units offering a max of 16 units</li> <li>3x support workers</li> </ul>	£1,038,910				
Support costs	<table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>2020/21</b></td> <td><i>Annual net cost 2021/22 – 2023/24</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>£51,392</b></td> <td>£182,000</td> </tr> </table>	<b>2020/21</b>	<i>Annual net cost 2021/22 – 2023/24</i>	<b>£51,392</b>	£182,000
<b>2020/21</b>	<i>Annual net cost 2021/22 – 2023/24</i>				
<b>£51,392</b>	£182,000				
Total <b>net revenue</b> funding requested for capital-funded supported move-on accommodation (support linked to premises)					

4.33 Oversight and delegated approval to progress the design for the capital schemes will be sought through the Housing Development Executive Committee.

#### WORK PROGRAMME-

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

Work & Decision Theme	Purpose	Indicative timescales	Update
Co-ordinated Work by the Rough Sleeper Workers & No More service to complete Support Plans and the assessment of Client capacity for	To identify suitability of individuals ability to live independently or in supported accommodation and identify the correct move on pathway into more	10 July 2020	Support plans have been completed on all clients which are currently housed and are completed within 24 hours of a

<b>Work &amp; Decision Theme</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Indicative timescales</b>	<b>Update</b>
independent living	suitable accommodation		presentation.
To detail a planned programme of reducing the use of Hotel accommodation to minimal levels before 1st August.	To ensure effective use of resources and that the most suitable accommodation is made available to clients  Housing Operations Manager Providing homes supported by seconded resource	17 July 2020	Work has been carried out to free up existing EA/TA and repurpose unused housing stock for temporary use as EA/TA/
To develop a Housing First Business Case and appraise development options for the provision of new emergency and temporary accommodation. To develop governance approval routes in line with Council and statutory requirements	To establish new schemes, or repurposed schemes with appropriate council authority. This may include new Executive and Council approvals for the development of temporary/emergency Accommodation.	November 2020	Work is underway on 4 properties to create more temporary/emergency accommodation:  These properties will create an estimated 25 new units to ease current pressures on EA/TA and reduce the reliance on B&B and hotel usage.  Further to this, land has been allocated for the creation of 8-16 modular units to provide further EA/TA accommodation. Work is underway to ensure these units are delivered as quickly as possible.
Work with partners to analyse hostel supported housing move on performance in Stevenage.	To ensure effective use of partner resources and to give partners reciprocal support in helping Stevenage residents.  The Council will be working with partners to see what more can be done to improve move on rates through hostels and supported housing and to assess whether there are more people currently within	Aug 2020	Work is on-gong to enhance working partnerships with supported housing and support. Work has been done to understand the areas which clients need the most support to target support providers in these areas. NSAP revenue project in place with

<b>Work &amp; Decision Theme</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Indicative timescales</b>	<b>Update</b>
	the hostel and supported housing system who would qualify to access private rented accommodation with tailored support packages.		Emerging Futures an No More Service for work until end of financial year 2020/2021. Arrangement to be put in place for successful capital revenue support over a 3 year period
Submit grant applications for Government Funding as and when they are announced (outlined above)	To secure capital and revenue funding for new supported schemes in Stevenage.	September 2020	Funding bid competed by Providing Homes and the Housing Development Team was successful for revenue and capital grant funding. Additional grant funding to be applied for, for rough sleeper provision until Housing First units are available.
Bring Business Case for long term provision of Housing First schemes back to Exec	To agree a long term provision for tackling rough sleeping	April 2021	Conversations are taking place with HCC relating to support, review of current spends and Development
Continue to lobby Government to be able to build new genuinely affordable council homes and for greater resources to support the vulnerable during this difficult period.	Council wide role.	Ongoing	Money available through the next steps funding bid for capital funding over a 4 year period and can apply each year. Application to be made for 2021/2022 when window opens. HCC are reimbursing for support costs.

4.35 In reviewing progress of the above work plan there are some successful outcomes detailed below;

## CASE STUDY 1

- 4.36 The Council's Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinators were aware of client A prior to 23 March 2020, but police contacted the team regarding this client during the first national restrictions as he was found sleeping rough at Fairlands Valley. He was difficult to find and engage for a short while but once engaged was accommodated at the Holiday Inn Express. The client struggles with reading and writing so the Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinator (LS) worked closely with him in order to complete his housing register application, help him obtain relevant documents & identification, apply for jobs and also helped in re-connecting him with his daughter. This helped the client maintain engagement and a positive attitude. The rapport built up meant when things became difficult or stressful for the client he could speak to the Council's Officer about these. The Housing Supply team sourced a home in the private rented sector with him and then were able to assist him to move in successfully. The client was then able to have his daughter stay with him and he also managed to obtain employment.

## CASE STUDY 2

- 4.37 Client B was an entrenched rough sleeper for around 8 years. Around 4-5 years ago he was staying at The Haven with his now ex-partner when they were offered a tenancy in the private rented sector. The relationship subsequently broke down and the client was back to sleeping on the streets. He was accommodated through during March - July 2020 in the Holiday Inn Express however consistently broke the curfew and was evicted for this. The Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators and Police began to see him regularly begging and rough sleeping resulting in him being moved on. The team continued to engage with this client and completed a referral to The Haven, where he was then offered a bed space but missed the interview to secure this due to his difficulty with time keeping. The team arranged for another interview which they attended with the client and he was successful and moved into the Haven the next day.
- 4.38 The work that has been completed by the Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinators during this year has been invaluable and has really made a difference to the lives of those who had been sleeping rough in Stevenage.

## ACCOMMODATION OPPORTUNITIES

- 4.39 There have been a range of development opportunities identified through the close working between Development and Providing Homes which will provide the proposed Temporary Accommodation and Housing First units some of which has been funded through the capital grant and some of which has been funded through the council's Open Market Acquisitions programme;
- 4.40

Project	Purpose	Indicative timescales	Funding
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<p>Site 1– 8/9 units.</p>	<p>This will be managed by the Temporary Accommodation team. Property completed and schedule of works have been completed. dedicated office space and staff and security provision. 2 Additional TA Officers will manage these units.</p>	<p>Works due for completion in December 2020/ January 2021</p>	<p>Property funded through open market Acquisition. HRA Cost of 2x 18 month fixed term TA Officers agreed in key decision of 30/9/2020</p>
<p>Site 2 – 5 rooms in property and 16 modular units proposed in the grounds of the property.</p>	<p>Garden has been portioned off for development land and for the placement of modular units- discussions with the Haven to manage the site once available.</p>	<p>Works underway on the main property, with an expected handover December 2020.</p>	<p>Funding through NSAP capital grant</p>
<p>Site 3 – 6 rooms in property.</p>	<p>Shared facility accommodation to be managed by the Temporary Accommodation team- 2 additional TA Officers will manage these units</p>	<p>Works underway and expected handover date end of November 2020.</p>	<p>Funded through open market Acquisition. HRA Cost of 2x 18 month fixed term TA Officers agreed in key decision of 30/9/2020</p>
<p>Site 4 – 5 rooms in property</p>	<p>Shared facility accommodation to be managed by the Temporary Accommodation team- 2 additional TA Officers will manage these units</p>	<p>Being worked on and scheduled for handover from the end of November 2020.</p>	<p>Funded through open market Acquisition. HRA Cost of 2x 18 month fixed term TA Officers agreed in key decision of 30/9/2020</p>

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- 4.41 These projects will provide 24/25 additional units with the proposal to have an additional 8-16 modular units that it is proposed will be managed by the local provider Haven First.
- 4.42 As detailed at 4.21 the Housing Development team have also identified a site for the potential of a new hostel providing 21 bed spaces with a supported move on housing provision on the same site giving 12 self-contained bed spaces. These plans are being reviewed and will be brought to the Executive in due course.

## IMPLICATIONS

### 5.0 IMPLICATIONS

#### 5.1 Financial Implications during 3 November to 2 December and the coming winter months:

- 5.2 This Executive report shows the current and projected expenditure for bed and breakfast accommodation and confirms the proposals for our provision over the coming winter months. A further report will be brought before the Executive to provide a Business Case overview for our medium to long term provision.
- 5.3 On 27 March 2020 the 'Everyone In Directive' came into force and across the country, rough sleepers were provided with temporary accommodation in order to offer the opportunity to self-isolate. Once the national restrictions began to ease, Local Authorities were advised to follow the guidance, taking into account the supply and resources available to each Council. For accommodation costs until 31 July 2020 the Council spent £398,025. The total eligible amount that could be claimed from Housing Benefit, assuming a 100% recovery rate, would be £338,742. However this required all rough sleepers with the help of the housing service to complete claims, which proved challenging in some cases, leading to less than 100% of the projected recovery to be reclaimed
- 5.4 Grants were issued to Local Authorities to support the cost of accommodation, with a separate grant to upper tier authorities to cover the cost of support required. The Housing service have completed claims for support costs; food, transport, floating support from the 'No More Service' and other associated expenditure until July 2020, which totalled £78,853. A further grant claim of £47,360 has been submitted to cover further outstanding support costs between July and October 2020 and there is an estimated £22,000 still to claim up to December 2020.
- 5.5 From the original calculations the projected net cost to the Council for accommodating rough sleepers and the support costs associated with this between 27 March 2020 and 31 July 2020 was **£150,502 (expenditure net of housing benefit and grant)**.



- 5.6 What is important to note is that during the period of national restrictions not only has there been an increase in placements for rough sleepers, but also an increase in the number of cases required to be accommodated under s188/s193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).
- 5.7 The Housing Benefit reclaim rate has not been at a 100% and this is mainly due to the nature of some short stays by applicants and the lack of engagement, from some clients, in providing the required information. The current recovery rate is estimated at 57%, but this could change as the majority of claims for the year are still to be processed.
- 5.8 As at 13 November there were 47 households placed into bed and breakfast accommodation with 16 of these cases being rough sleepers. The table below shows current ledger expenditure of £529,899 on rough sleeper and B&B costs and this has been offset by grant funding and housing benefit payments of £259,509, leaving a net cost of £270,390.

	Actual Apr-Oct	Projected Nov-Mar	Total 2020/21
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Accommodation and Food Costs	437,086	381,832	818,918
Security Costs	86,477	100,000	186,477
Transport and Other	6,336	15,108	21,444
	<b>529,899</b>	<b>496,940</b>	<b>1,026,839</b>
<b>Income</b>			
HCC Grant for Food and Support Costs	(42,648)	(69,820)	(112,468)
Initial Government Grant	(11,250)	0	(11,250)
Housing Benefits	(69,611)	(347,551)	(417,161)
Use of Homeless Support Grant	(136,000)	0	(136,000)
	<b>(259,509)</b>	<b>(417,371)</b>	<b>(676,879)</b>
<b>Net Cost</b>	<b>270,390</b>	<b>79,570</b>	<b>349,960</b>
<b>Current Projections 2020/21</b>			
Original Budget			80,000
COVID Impact Assessment Projection			312,530
			<b>392,530</b>

- 5.9 A projection has been made for the rest of the year and this allows for outstanding invoices and an estimate of housing benefit claim payments. It also estimates future demand and the impact of increased Council owned capacity over the coming months. The current projected net cost for the year is **£349,960** and this compares to the costs including the Council's COVID loss projections of **£392,530**. Key to meeting this projection is the ability to recover 57% of accommodation costs from housing benefits. The majority of benefit claims have yet to be processed and this continues to be a risk going forward. However, there are two further income sources that would help to mitigate lower housing benefit payments. Firstly, the Government have said that they would consider the use of severe weather payments to be applied to the second period of national restrictions costs and this will be calculated after

2 December 2020. Secondly, it is possible to add a charge for security that could be supported by benefit payments and this is currently being reviewed.

- 5.10 On 3 November 2020 the second national restrictions came into force for a period of 31 days. In order to ensure that the Council was able to offer accommodation to rough sleepers and to those cases rough sleeping the Council block booked accommodation with 3 hotels and this is reflected in the projections in the table above.

### **Costs associated with arrangements during the SWEP period “Severe Weather Emergency Provision” for rough sleepers and s188/s193 placements**

- 5.11 The MHCLG guidance for providing SWEP has been to avoid shared facility/ night shelter style provision in order to stop the spread of COVID. The previous SWEP provision has included shared sleeping spaces at the Haven First accommodation site and using local churches. As these will not be viable options during this pandemic the Council’s proposals for rough sleeper provision from 3 November and during SWEP is as follows;

- Out of area B+B provider: 10 single room block booked at £49 per night for 31 nights from 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020 totalling £15,190, and evening meal for all –total £3,100 ( food cost will be covered by HCC as agreed with the County)

The total eligible maximum amount claimable from housing benefit for this 31 days period is £13,990, however it is unlikely this will all be recouped due to the issues identified above This will leave a minimum net cost of **£1,200**

The provision of the service will be as follows:

- HCC to fund food costs and costs for transport.
- Hotel is offering a shuttle service to the local pharmacy to collect prescriptions, but CGL will also provide support for this.
- No More Service and Rough Sleeper Co-ordinators will be visiting the accommodation every day to engage with those placed.

- 5.12 Officers are expecting accommodation sites 3 and 4 (offering 10 rooms) to be ready for use in December 2020 and plan to utilise these future Housing First provision schemes to provide SWEP accommodation. The 5 rooms, at site 2 will be ready for use in December 2020, which can be utilised for SWEP pending the works for modular units to begin. These additional 15 bed spaces will reduce the need to use B&B accommodation.

- 5.13 For the 188/193 cases the proposal is as follows;
- Stevenage B+B provider 1: £40 per night for 15 cases; £600 per night-( 12 weeks ) total £50,400
  - Stevenage B+B provider 2; £60per night for 12 cases; £720 per night-(12 weeks) total£60,480

Total **£110,880** for 27 placements for 12 weeks.

Where the applicant qualifies for full HB room costs the total housing benefit would be **£102,102.84**. However, it is worth noting that it may not be possible to recover 100% of the eligible costs These figures are under constant review,

particularly the amount of benefit support that can be claimed, and are likely to change as more detailed case information becomes available.

- 5.14 HCC have reimbursed the Council for support costs claimed for up to July 2020 and officers are due to submit support cost claims for the period July-November 2020 shortly. HCC have also confirmed that they will continue to reimburse SBC for support costs until the end of the financial year.
- 5.15 Following the first lock down the robust action plan was due to supply 24 Housing First units by the end of the financial year. However the second national restrictions meant further B&B has had to be put in place before the additional units are available. This means there is a requirement to place rough sleepers into bed and breakfast accommodation initially for a four week period in order to ensure that every person has the opportunity to self-isolate during the lock down. 6.15.
- 5.16 It is important to note that at 27 November 2020 the Council had 55 cases placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation, which is the highest number of placements to date. There are 17 rough sleeper cases placed with 36 placements accommodated under section 188/s193 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This shows the impact of COVID 19 on all homelessness groups and just rough sleeping. Therefore the general pressure on temporary accommodation places looks likely to remain

## **6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

- 6.1 The legal requirements in relation to the General Fund and the HRA are detailed within this report and were included in the report brought to Executive in June 2020.
- 6.2 Where the Council has reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless, or threatened with homelessness, it has a duty to make such inquiries as are necessary in order to satisfy itself:
- Whether the applicant is eligible for assistance (this will depend on their immigration status) and
  - If so, whether the Council owes any duty (and if so, what duty) to the applicant under the Housing Act 1996 (“HA 1996”).
- 6.3 Under Section 189A of the HA 1996 where the Council is satisfied that an applicant is both homeless/threatened with homelessness and eligible for assistance, it has a duty to carry out an assessment of their circumstances and then try to agree with them what steps they need to take to ensure they have and can retain suitable accommodation and what steps the Council needs to take under the HA 1996.
- 6.4 The Council owes the “full housing duty” under S193 to applicants who are:
- eligible for assistance and
  - homeless, and not intentionally homeless and
  - in priority need

6.5 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced a number of new duties for Local Housing Authorities which are designed to try to prevent or deal with homelessness at an early stage meaning that the total time that applicants are open to the Housing Options team is over a much more substantial period of time and a decision relating to the s193 duty cannot be reached until the 56 day prevention and 56 day relief duties have expired.

6.6 The Housing Options service has a current caseload of 689, which averages 86 cases per full time member of staff. This includes those who are seeking housing advice. 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;

- During 2018 /19 there were 1314 approaches to the service (equates to 25 approaches per week)
- During 2019/20 there were 1571 approaches to the service (equates to 30 cases per week) which is a year on year increase of 20%
- 

6.7 Our records show that there has also been an increase in approaches during this financial year compared to last;

<b>Approaches to Housing Options</b>		
<b>Period</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage Increase from last financial year</b>
Jan-March 2020 (pre COVID-19 restrictions)	471	36% increase on same quarter last year
April- June 2020 (during Lockdown 1.0)	381	Static on last year
July-Sep 2020	369	Static on last year
Oct 2020	149	81% increase on same quarter last year
November 2020 (during Lockdown 2.0)	116	68% increase on same quarter last year

6.8 It is important to note that despite many restrictions being in place to ban evictions, to stop all non-essential moves taking place and for the country being under national restrictions from March until July 2020 the service still received the same number of approaches compared to the same quarter last financial year.

6.9 In March 2020 the average caseload per full time Housing Options Officer stood at 60 case per officer. At today's date the average case load stands at 86 cases per full time officer showing a 69% increase.

6.10 The eviction ban was lifted in October 2020 and the expectation is that this will have a substantial impact on the numbers of cases approaching the service for assistance. In order to prepare for this consideration is being given to how

the Flexible Homeless Support Grant “FHSG” can be used to support this increased demand.

- 6.11 For the last financial year 525 preventions were achieved which is approx. 10 preventions per week which would not have been possible without the funding from the FHSG for these posts managing the sheer volume of cases approaching the service. The FHSG funds a substantial amount of staff within the service and we await the announcement from Government for the next financial year’s allocations.

## **7 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:**

- 7.1 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the Council’s statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.
- 7.2 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 Officers do not consider that the recommendations above will have an adverse impact on those with protected characteristics but this will be kept under review as proposals are developed.

## **8 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

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

COVID 19- Provision of Night Shelters

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-provision-of-night-shelters>

## **9 APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 - Executive report July 2020
- Appendix 2 - Everyone In directive by Dame Louise Casey 26/3/20
- Appendix 3 - Housing First Overview
- Appendix 4 - MHCLG Protect Programme (electronic appendix – link below)  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jenrick-launches-protect-programme-the-next-step-in-winter-rough-sleeping-plan>

**Meeting** Executive Committee

**Portfolio Area** Housing, Older People & Health / Resources

**Date** July 2020



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

### KEY DECISION

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### PURPOSE

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

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

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Support Need	Housing Options	Estimation of Numbers
<p><b>Pathway one:</b> Low support needs with established professional and clinical support networks</p>	<p>Secure accommodation directly into Private rented sector or via temporary stay in Council Emergency Accommodation /Temporary Accommodation (EA/TA) if time does not permit</p> <p>Consider shared accommodation with Floating Support.</p>	<p>Current estimation is that approximately 10 existing clients will fall into this category</p>
<p><b>Pathway Two:</b> Medium level support needs with greater</p>	<p>This is for those that experienced a sustained level of rough sleeping and require far more</p>	<p>Current estimation is that approximately 18 existing clients</p>

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

- 4.17 Whilst the analysis provided above hugely under-represents the personalised interventions that support staff have been delivering, with huge effort and skill, it does help to highlight that the Council will need to secure more accommodation and support resources to help cater for the increased needs of the clients involved.
- 4.18 It is possible that increased accommodation resources will be needed to cope with providing the interim pathway accommodation to the group of rough sleepers that are not eligible for long term secure housing support from the Council.

- 4.19 As such Officers are considering increasing the stock of temporary and emergency accommodation, available to the Housing Options teams, should these be needed to accommodate individuals on a temporary and interim basis. Alternatively, the Housing Options team may also grant additional direct offers of accommodation to people who would be eligible for such housing offers, to free up supported accommodation for other homeless clients with complex needs.
- 4.20 At this stage officers are unable to predict precisely how many of the former rough sleepers will be able to be accommodated into the private sector, or how this group will engage with support and therefore it is difficult to determine the level of the accommodation resource required at this stage.
- 4.21 Clients that could manage their own tenancy with minimal support will be assisted through the Council Rent Deposit Scheme, to help secure private sector accommodation. It is envisaged that the Council will assist up to an additional 20 households through this scheme, depending on the availability of private rented accommodation.
- 4.22 In the event that further accommodation resources are needed, they will be requested for a time limited and defined purpose, in connection with this current crisis. They will be further subject to the accounting and appropriation regulations governing any transfer of resource from the General Fund and HRA and officers will seek approval in accordance with constitutional and statutory processes.
- 4.23 Other options under consideration for increasing the supply of accommodation include; repurposing existing Council general needs stock and retail buildings, further open market acquisitions or repurposing some existing HRA new build schemes, and entering into reciprocal arrangements with specialist providers to create additional move on accommodation in supported housing schemes.

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

- 4.24 The need for flexible accommodation that helps to support an individual and allow professional practitioners to efficiently deliver their services, plays a huge part in ensuring successful housing and personal outcomes for clients. This kind of service is best built and delivered through a new purpose built hostel in Stevenage and would be similar to the service successfully operated by the Stevenage Haven. The Council's Housing teams will investigate if the demand and opportunity (in terms of land, multi-agency support and funding) is there to deliver such a service.
- 4.25 The Council's existing HRSS sets out an ambition to justify and resource a 'Housing First' model service. This would allow Stevenage Borough Council to grant a stable offer of accommodation to those who would otherwise struggle to gain access to long term appropriate accommodation. The model sees housing as the first 'stepping stone' to recovery and long term sustainment and that, through support and engagement, it can be a powerful catalyst in changing clients' lives and reducing rough sleeping substantially in

the long term. Trialled in over 75 schemes in the UK, it is a model that has enjoyed huge success.

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

## WORK PROGRAMME

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

<b>Work &amp; Decision Theme</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Indicative timescales</b>
Co-ordinated Work by the Rough Sleeper Workers & No More service to complete Support Plans and the assessment of Client capacity for independent living	To identify suitability of individuals ability to live independently or in supported accommodation and identify the correct move on pathway into more suitable accommodation	10 <sup>th</sup> July 2020
To detail a planned programme of reducing the use of Hotel accommodation to minimal levels before 1st August.	To ensure effective use of resources and that the most suitable accommodation is made available to clients Housing Operations Manager Providing	17 <sup>th</sup> July 2020

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

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

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1 Financial Implications:



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

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

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

### 5.3 Legal Implications:

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

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

- Whether the applicant is eligible for assistance (this will depend on their immigration status) and
- If so, whether the Council owes any duty (and if so, what duty) to the applicant under the Housing Act 1996 (“HA 1996”).

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

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

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

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

#### 5.5 **Equality Implications:**

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

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

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

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

## 6. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

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

**7. APPENDICES: NONE**

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Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

**Luke Hall MP**

*Minister for Local Government and  
Homelessness*

**Ministry of Housing, Communities  
& Local Government**

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London  
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[www.gov.uk/mhclg](http://www.gov.uk/mhclg)

26 March 2020

Dear Chief Executives,

Thank you for your continuing work in response to the COVID-19 crisis. This scale of the challenge we all face is unprecedented. I know this is a particularly challenging time and that you and your staff are going above and beyond to help support your communities at this time.

Last week, the Government asked Dame Louise Casey to lead the Government's response to COVID-19 and rough sleeping to help make sure that we bring everyone in. It is our joint responsibility to safeguard as many homeless people as we can from COVID-19. Our strategy must be to bring in those on the streets to protect their health and stop wider transmission, particularly in hot spot areas, and those in assessment centres and shelters that are unable to comply with social distancing advice.

This approach aims to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on people facing homelessness and ultimately on preventing deaths during this public health emergency. Given the nature of the emergency, the priority is to ensure that the NHS and medical services are able to cope and we have built this strategy based on NHS medical guidance and support.

The basic principles are to:

- focus on people who are, or are at risk of, sleeping rough, and those who are in accommodation where it is difficult to self-isolate, such as shelters and assessment centres
- make sure that these people have access to the facilities that enable them to adhere to public health guidance on hygiene or isolation, ideally single room facilities
- utilise alternative powers and funding to assist those with no recourse to public funds who require shelter and other forms of support due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- mitigate their own risk of infection, and transmission to others, by ensuring they are able to self-isolate as appropriate in line with public health guidance

This should be done by taking the following programme of actions:

1. Convening a local coordination cell to plan and manage your response to COVID and rough sleeping involving the local authority (housing, social care and public health) and local NHS partners together. This would then report in to wider local COVID structures.

2. Seeking to stop homeless people from congregating in facilities such as day centres and street encampments where there is a higher risk of transmission
3. Urgently procuring accommodation for people on the streets if you have not already done so – MHCLG will support you to do so if you are struggling to procure sufficient units
4. Triaging people where possible into three cohorts driven by medical advice:
  - those with symptoms of COVID19;
  - those with pre-existing conditions but without symptoms; and
  - those without any of the above.

Attached to this letter is additional guidance on the approach that agencies should be taking to triaging agreed with NHS England and Public Health England.

5. Getting the social care basics such as food, and clinician care to people who need it in the self-contained accommodation. It is likely that you will need to utilise your commissioned homeless services to provide support to people in this accommodation and we urge you to work with the commissioned and non-commissioned sector to make sure there are adequate levels of support provided.
6. If possible, separating people who have significant drug and alcohol needs from those who do not.

In the longer term it will of course be necessary to identifying step-down arrangements for the future, including the re-opening of shelter-type accommodation.

Given the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday night that the public should be staying in their homes wherever possible, it is now imperative that rough sleepers and other vulnerable homeless are supported into appropriate accommodation by the end of the week. Dame Louise is spearheading all of our efforts to get everyone in. As she has said 'it won't be perfect but all of us together will do our best'.

We know that this requires funding. Last week, the Government announced £1.6bn for local authorities to respond to other COVID-19 pressures including for services helping the most vulnerable, including homeless people. This grant will cover all costs incurred in the first phase of the response, but we will keep future funding need under review. To support our understanding of what authorities or additional funding is likely to be required we will be working with local authorities to develop an ongoing assessment of costs.

Thank you very much for everything you are doing to save lives and provide care for some of the most vulnerable in our society.



**Luke Hall MP**

**BACKGROUND**

'Housing First' is a novel, recovery oriented approach to ending homelessness which focuses on the importance of access to safe, secure accommodation and the role it can play in allowing people to move forward in their lives with the security of housing. It differs from the current traditional model of tackling homelessness which take a more linear approach with people working through a series of accommodation until deemed suitable to be discharged into permanent accommodation and normally the ending of support. Housing first differs in that housing is offered first with support then offered to help sustain the tenancy and tackle mental and physical health, drug and alcohol abuse and other complex issues which need specialist support and intervention.

The housing first approach is underpinned by a series of key principles:

- *Immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements.*
- *Client Choice and self determination*
- *Recovery orientation*
- *Client driven support*
- *Social and community integration*
- *Active engagement approach*

**Application outside of the UK**

Though a relatively novel approach in England, it was popularised in the 1990's in New York who sought a radical solution to tackling the cities growing homelessness problem. It has since been trialled in Europe with the largest '*Un Chez-soi d'abord*' in France being the largest in Europe. Of the 353 people housed through this programme, 85% were still housed after two years and many reported improvements in their general well-being. Further to this, Spain ran a programme in 2014 which targeted chronically homeless people with mental health problems and drug and alcohol abuse problems with floating support offered to the clients. After 6 months of the trial it had a 100% retention rate and again clients noted an increase in other areas of their lives.

In 2008 Finland took the Housing First approach at a National level and incorporated the different models which had been trialled prior. The strategy (*Paavo*) has been widely acclaimed for its success and has been credited for a reduction in long-term homelessness by 28% in 2011.

**Different models for Housing First:****Pathways Housing first (PHF)**

PHF is intended to support those clients who are characterised by severe mental health issues, problematic drug and alcohol abuse and nuisance behaviour. Frequently, the clients which are offered this accommodation sustained unemployment and extensive periods of living in homeless shelters and on the streets. PHF offers independent housing with security of tenure as soon as possible and provides on going low-level support which will aim to promote housing stability and ensure successful sustainment of tenancy.

**Communal Housing First (CHF)**

CHF services aim to house chronically homeless people by offering communal and shared accommodation with security of tenure in a building which is solely occupied by service users. On-going support services are offered to clients throughout and are run frequently either within the building or nearby.

**Housing First Light (HFL)**

HFL can support chronically homeless people but also those with lower support needs and those at greatest risk of becoming homeless. This approach works by re-housing in both the private rented and social housing and offers independent housing with security of tenure. However, the support level offered is lower and is aimed at ensuring sustainment of tenancy and promoting housing stability.

**Application in the UK**

There are currently 75 Housing First services across England but it is difficult to gauge the total capacity. It is noted that services are unevenly distributed and the majority of the services are in London and the South East. The East Midlands and the East of England have a total of 6 combined services. The vast majority of the services support between 4-12 clients at one time, notably smaller than the 48 clients we currently are supporting in temporary accommodation indicating that numerous services will need to be operational to successfully support the individuals.

Momentum and appetite for the Housing First approach is growing and most recently a government backed housing first pilot helped 200 rough sleepers as of December 2019 further supporting the adoption of the approach in Stevenage.

Source:

*National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS)*



**MCHLG PROTECT PROGRAMME**

This appendix can be found by clicking on the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jenrick-launches-protect-programme-the-next-step-in-winter-rough-sleeping-plan>

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**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Economy and Transport  
**Date** 9 December 2020



## STEVENAGE PARKING STRATEGY 2021-2031: PUBLIC CONSULTATION

### KEY DECISION

**Author** Philip Howard | 2296  
**Lead Officer** Zayd Al-Jawad | 2257  
**Contact Officer** Philip Howard | 2296

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an explanation of the reasons for reviewing the adopted Stevenage Parking Strategy (adopted in 2004)
- 1.2 To provide Members with an overview of the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 (Appendix A).
- 1.3 To seek Members' approval to carry out public consultation on the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the content of the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy, as attached at Appendix A to the report, 2021-2031 be noted.
- 2.2 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director( Planning and Regulation), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft Strategy prior to its consultation.

- 2.3 That the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 be published for consultation in early 2021.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

#### *Stevenage Parking Strategy (2004)*

- 3.1 Councils that operate Civil Parking Enforcement, such as SBC, are expected to have a Parking Strategy. This is a document that sets out how they will work to manage parking in line with local objectives and circumstances, taking into account planning policies and transport powers and considering the needs of different road users. It guides the creation, amendment and enforcement of parking controls and should be consistent with the area's Transport Strategy.
- 3.2 The Council's current Parking Strategy dates back to 2004. Since it was adopted many of the problems it set out to deal with have been resolved, whilst the Agency Agreement powers delegated from HCC that SBC uses to pursue it have changed with many functions returning to the County Council.
- 3.3 The 2004 Strategy sets out at length the parking issues that were faced when it was adopted and the approaches then required to deal with them. Given the changes that have taken place since its relevance has decreased, it is out of step with relevant policy developments and many new considerations such as provision for electric vehicles are not included at all.

#### *Policy Background*

- 3.4 There have been significant changes since 2004, including the adoption in 2019 of both the Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 4 and Future Town, Future Transport, SBC's new Transport Strategy. Future Town, Future Transport set out that a new Parking Strategy should be produced (see box overleaf).
- 3.5 In addition, the Council declared a Climate Change Emergency in 2019 and approved the new Climate Change Strategy in September 2020. These policy documents all support more sustainable forms of transport and aim to achieve a modal shift in transportation away from privately-owned vehicles.
- 3.6 During the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031's preparation, the Covid-19 pandemic has underlined the benefits of non-car modes of transport for public health in terms of both physical fitness and air quality. This seen widespread public support, with YouGov reporting that four out of five people they surveyed in the UK support action "to curb air pollution by reserving more public space for walking, cycling and public transport" .
- 3.7 Stevenage aspires to be a Sustainable Travel Town, and to embrace the principles championed by Living Streets to create spaces for people. A Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan has been developed to help guide and drive improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, and a Parking Strategy that is more supportive of non-car modes will positively contribute to this aspiration.
- 3.8 With all these in mind, the Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 proposes approaches that would support modal shift away from the private motor car to

more active and sustainable modes of transport, while recognising that for some users/trips it will still be the most logical/appropriate way to travel and seeking to provide for this too (in particular for blue badge holders). It also seeks to ensure that Co-operative Council approaches will help to shape SBC's management of parking.

#### Parking Strategy, SBC

9.60 An update to the 2004 Parking Strategy will be produced, setting out how public parking will be managed across Stevenage. This will be a key tool in managing overall demand for the private car in Stevenage and should tie in with the other projects set out in this strategy to seek a modal shift in transportation habits. This could involve reducing the dominance of on-street car parking in Stevenage, thereby creating space for 'Liveable Streets' (*sic*), or setting reduced levels and increased charges for public car parking to promote alternative forms of travel. It should also consider the implementation of EV charging points and whether there are other ways to future proof the infrastructure.

9.61 Car sharing, car-pooling, and car clubs are methods which promote the use of the car as a communal vehicle rather than a private vehicle. Incentives to encourage this should be considered, for example, designated car parking spaces at places of work for those who are car sharing.

*Future Town, Future Transport: A Transport Strategy for Stevenage*

pp.51-52

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

**Recommendation 2.1: That the content of the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 be noted.**

4.1 The draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 is included in Appendix A. A broad overview of the key amendments and additions from the adopted version are presented below.

#### *Objectives*

4.2 Four broad objectives are set for managing parking in Stevenage, based on existing policy positions and known concerns. These are:

- To prevent unsafe or obstructive parking;
- To restrain unnecessary or undesirable parking and encourage modal shift;
- To manage necessary or desirable parking; and
- To support the town's Zero Carbon ambitions.

4.3 Approaches to pursuing these objectives are set out, in that:

- Work will be managed through a planned programme of projects;
- A “user hierarchy” will be adopted, guiding priority in managing parking in different contexts – consistently putting more sustainable modes and parking for disabled car users ahead of others, who are prioritised based on the character of the location (e.g. residents in a street; short stay for customers at shops);
- Will make decisions based on quantitative data and taking into account the views of residents and community stakeholders;
- Will use “soft approaches” such as publicity/educational campaigns alongside or instead of regulatory options;
- While pursuing transport objectives and not seeking to make money as a revenue raising exercise, the parking account should continue to be self-funding; and
- Some measures will be subject to funding bids for capital budgets within SBC, from the County Council, or from national funds.

4.4 A number of specific issues are then covered:

- Parking for disabled car users – that they will be prioritised and SBC will seek to ensure they can park where they need to;
- Support for sustainable transport – that parking may be prevented where needed to support other modes e.g. dealing with known obstructive parking blocking footways/cycleways, providing cycle parking at destinations, prohibiting parking at a previously unenforceable bus stop, providing for electric cars and car clubs, deterring excess car ownership;
- Parking in residential areas – clear criteria that must be exceeded for parking permits to be put in place, alternative ways to deal with commuter parking, approaches to managing parking of “white vans” to be kept under review, parking construction in existing streets to be based on the Parking Standards SPD for new developments, parking construction to contribute to funding tree planting and sustainable travel;
- Destination parking – “hospital parking” to normally prioritise outpatients & visitors (caveated for flexibility e.g. repurposing to support NHS workers as now during a pandemic), impact of parking proposals on school travel to be considered, short stay parking to support customers, servicing activity to be provided for, options for local workers to be considered especially where there isn’t an off-street option, low priority for railway commuters and football match parking;
- Placemaking and living streets – to be supported, led by Co-operative Neighbourhoods placemaking/living street projects;
- Regeneration – to be supported as required;

- New developments – aspiration to ensure Parking Standards SPD is effective by limiting parking to that intended by the application; and
- Discretionary services – such as bar markings at driveways will be kept under review to ensure they offer value the resident and SBC, and may be added to e.g. private contributions accepted to providing cycle parking or electric car charging.

**Recommendation 2.2: That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft Strategy prior to its consultation.**

- 4.5 The draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 is appended to this report. However, it may be necessary to make minor changes prior to the consultation start date. This might include cosmetic adjustments, the correction of typographical errors and any minor factual changes.
- 4.6 It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.

**Recommendation 2.3: That the Executive approve publishing the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy for consultation in early 2021.**

- 4.7 The draft Parking Strategy was circulated electronically to the Portfolio Holders' Advisory Group, which includes the Environment and Economy Select Committee, to ensure it met their expectations.
- 4.8 Whilst there are no clear external requirements for the adoption of a new Parking Strategy, it has similarities with planning policy documents such as the Parking Standards SPD setting parking expectations for new developments, which are introduced following The Town & Country Planning Regulations 2012. The proposed approach is based on this, as supplemented by the requirements of the Council's Constitution and Statement of Community Involvement (May 2019).
- 4.9 In line with these principles, the Council should undertake a consultation for a minimum four week period. Following this, the Council should consider the consultation responses, produce a document stating the main issues raised by respondents, and summarise how the issues have been addressed by the Council.
- 4.10 Consultation will be promoted through a number of channels, including:
- direct engagement with known interest groups such as the Stevenage branch of Cycling UK;
  - online approaches including social media and the SBC website;
  - the local press.

4.11 The timetable for consultation and adoptions is currently as follows:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Date</b>
Public Consultation	January-February 2021
Consider and address responses	Spring 2021
Adopt Strategy through Executive	Summer 2021

4.12 As with any consultation exercise, it is not known how many responses will be received so the post-consultation stages will not be known for definite until a later date.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

5.1 The costs associated with producing and consulting on the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 will be met from the agreed departmental budget.

5.2 If adopted, the Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 sets out that operational management of on-street parking should seek to continue to be self-funding, and any surplus will be prioritised for spending on transport and parking measures as required by the Traffic Management Act 2004.

5.3 Larger projects and ongoing measures arising from the Strategy will require funding. In the main third party external funding will be sought to further the Strategy's aims, however some external funding does requires an element of match funding for example the government's electric car point grants cover a maximum of 75% of the project costs. Any SBC funding will need to be subject to the availability of limited capital resources and subject to capital bids on a case-by-case basis.

### **Legal Implications**

5.4 Consultation on the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy will be undertaken in accordance with best practice as set out in paragraphs 4.7-4.12. Responses to the consultation will be considered and where appropriate taken into account in preparing a final draft for adoption.

5.5 There are no direct legal implications associated with consulting on the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031.

### **Risk Implications**

5.6 There are no significant risks associated with producing the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031.



### **Policy Implications**

- 5.7 The draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 accords with, and has been produced to supplement policies in Future Town, Future Transport the adopted Stevenage Transport Strategy (2019). It also accords with the policy aims of the SBC Mobility Strategy and the Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan 4.
- 5.8 The document is also aligned with other corporate Council documents such as the Healthy Stevenage Strategy, the SBC Parking Standards SPD, the recently-declared Climate Emergency and the Climate Change Strategy, Action Plan and Charter.

### **Planning Implications**

- 5.9 There are no direct planning implications associated with the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031.

### **Climate Change Implications**

- 5.10 The draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 has the potential to have a positive impact on climate change through the multiple benefits that prioritising sustainable and active modes of transport, and minimising car use, can bring. Active forms of transport, walking and cycling, can replace the need to use private cars, cutting the emissions associated with journeys within the town. The support provided by the Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 for promotion of public transport services and active modes of transport will help to reduce reliance on private car journeys, replacing them with more energy-efficient options. The Strategy will also have benefits in terms of air quality more generally.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.11 The draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 prioritises the parking needs of those with mobility disabilities. Otherwise, Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 itself does not have any direct equality or diversity implications. When undertaking any work under the direction of the Stevenage Parking Strategy the delivery body will need to consider the potential impacts on different community groups, in particular those who are less mobile or disabled.

### **Community Safety Implications**

- 5.12 Whilst the draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031 does not have any direct community safety implications itself, when undertaking any work under the direction of the Stevenage Parking Strategy the delivery body will need to consider the potential impacts on community safety.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- BD1 [Stevenage Parking Strategy 2004, SBC](#)
- BD2 [Future Town, Future Transport, SBC](#)
- BD3 [Local Transport Plan 4, HCC](#)

## **APPENDICES**

- A [Draft Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031](#)

## APPENDIX A

# The Stevenage Parking Strategy 2021-2031

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*Living and Sustainable Streets for Stevenage*



# 1 Foreword

When I attended The Barclay School back in the 1960s, my father used to park his Triumph Herald outside our house in Green Street. We were a “one-car” family in those days. The railway station was a ten minute walk away in Julians Road and the small station car park which could accommodate 50 cars was located opposite the old ESA furniture factory in Fairview Road.

I reminisce about those days with great affection. The population of Stevenage was about 60,000 and the pace of life seemed much slower and less frenetic.

Fifty-five years later and the population of Stevenage has increased by almost half. The current railway station has car parking capacity for over 450 vehicles, whilst within a five minute walk from the station another ten car parks can hold an incredible 2,850 vehicles. Bumper to bumper, that’s the equivalent of almost four football pitches of car parking – all within the confines of the Stevenage town centre.

However, car parking is a serious, emotive issue.

7.6 million homes in the UK have at least two cars. In the East of England (including Stevenage), the average is 1.38 cars for every household.

The New Towns Act of 1946 failed to anticipate the rise of private car popularity. Consequently, when the Stevenage Development Corporation built our town, it neglected to reflect the extent of present-day car ownership and how or where people prefer to park their car (i.e. within sight and easy reach of their front door).

As a Co-operative Council, Stevenage strongly believes that communities must be at the heart of the decisions we make. We want to hear from our residents how they feel parking problems and street management could change to better meet their needs. How do our residents feel about neighbourhood parking spaces or controlled parking zones? Are they worried about where to leave their works van, or because their neighbour’s van takes up a lot of space? Do parked cars affect their morning walk, or their decision on whether to cycle to the local shops?

This Strategy, and the actions that it sets out, seeks to empower and inspire communities to make behavioural changes and to lead the implementation of projects in their neighbourhoods, that will encourage them to make better use of our streets – our living streets.



Lloyd Briscoe  
Executive Member, Economy, Enterprise & Transport

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## 2 Introduction

Stevenage was largely built during a period when planners predicted that in future there would be “a great flood of vehicles”<sup>1</sup> and sought to prepare accordingly with an efficient and capacious road network. However, only limited parking was provided for in residential areas and modern levels of car ownership and use put great pressure on the town’s streets.

Since 2004, when it applied for Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) powers, Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) has had a Parking Strategy to guide how those powers are used, but in that time its capabilities have changed. Although SBC no longer has the range of highway powers devolved from Hertfordshire County under its Highways Agency Agreement it did in 2004, it retains limited powers to undertake highway improvements such as parking bay construction. These powers are likely to be extended in the future to enable SBC to help provide for new technologies such as Electric Vehicles (EVs) to support their wider adoption.

Following the previous Parking Strategy’s adoption a rolling series of reviews was undertaken looking at different parts of the town and introducing parking restrictions to address hazardous or obstructive parking, and to prevent parking on the verge or footway. These were very large projects and could take years to complete, with the last of them not yet complete when work was begun on this new strategy. This final review is being undertaken in a more piecemeal fashion, to allow more rapid results where concerns are greatest.

The town is also actively regenerating and growing. As well as redevelopment of the New Town Centre, local centres are being renewed, and new housing developments are coming forward as proposed in the *Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031*.

In this context, SBC’s transport strategy, *Future Town, Future Transport* identified the need for a new Parking Strategy to be prepared.

This Parking Strategy must address how parking is managed to support local residents, businesses and employers, whilst also considering the need to transition away from private petrol or diesel fuelled vehicles to more sustainable modes.

Parking is a derived demand resulting from vehicle travel, which is in turn a derived demand arising from spatially separated activities. Management of parking must therefore consider what alternative ways of travelling are available.

The existing transport system strongly favours motor vehicles, which thanks to their convenience are the mode of choice for a great many people. Cars, vans and taxis accounted for 83% of passenger kilometres in 2018. However, reducing reliance on motor vehicles is seen as desirable, as transport contributes more to national greenhouse gas emissions than any other sector with 55% of this coming from cars and a further 15% from vans. Making different transport choices can also have a significant impact on an individual’s health and wellbeing.

At the same time, Stevenage is growing, with its population passing 88,000 in 2017 compared to 76,000 at the time of the 2004 Strategy. Simultaneously the typical number of cars per household in the East of England had risen, going from 1.30 per household in 2011/12 to 1.38 by 2016/17, or about 1% a year. With neither the financial resources nor the physical space available to build significant additional

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<sup>1</sup> Crowther et al., 1963, p.2

parking, encouraging a modal shift away from the car becomes not only a desirable objective but a practical necessity.

This strategy will therefore also include parking-related options to help individuals to choose appropriately from a variety of modes of transport rather than defaulting to the car, which will then have to be parked, whilst recognising that for some journeys it will be the most appropriate choice.

By doing so it will help to develop streets that are comfortable and social spaces where people feel at home and communities come together. This is concept commonly known as “Liveable Streets” but which SBC calls “Living Streets” reflecting the aspiration for streets to be not just liveable but positively alive.

DRAFT

## 3 Policy context

### 3.1 National Policies

National policy directions and concerns affecting parking have been considered in preparing this Strategy, in particular those summarised below.

#### 3.1.1 The Department for Transport

The Department for Transport (DfT) is primarily responsible for setting national transport policy, which includes parking, and sees its objectives as being to: “

1. support the creation of a stronger, cleaner, more productive economy
2. help to connect people and places, balancing investment across the country
3. make journeys easier, modern and reliable
4. make sure transport is safe, secure and sustainable
5. prepare the transport system for technological progress and a prosperous future outside the EU
6. promote a culture of efficiency and productivity in everything we do”<sup>2</sup>

The national policy document dealing directly with on-street parking issued by DfT is *The Secretary of State's Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities on the Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions* (“The Statutory Guidance”). This does not guide Councils as to what their policies should be, but makes it clear that Councils that are Parking Authorities are required to “design their parking policies with particular regard to:

- managing the traffic network to ensure expeditious movement of traffic, (including pedestrians and cyclists), as required under the Traffic Management Act 2004 Network Management Duty;
- improving road safety;
- improving the local environment;
- improving the quality and accessibility of public transport;
- meeting the needs of people with disabilities, some of whom will be unable to use public transport and depend entirely on the use of a car; and
- managing and reconciling the competing demands for kerb space”<sup>3</sup>

and cautions that they “should not undermine the vitality of town centres”<sup>4</sup> or seek to achieve financial targets.

*The Road to Zero* sets out DfT’s ambition of at least 50% of new cars and 40% of new vans being ultra low emission by 2030, while the government has announced an aim of ending the sale of conventional cars by 2035. This transition may create significant demand for EV charging facilities on-street or in public car parks that would have to be managed through controls on parking, particularly in areas where residents have little or no private parking.

Whilst The Statutory Guidance does not suggest what approaches Councils should take in managing parking, DfT’s stated policy positions firmly support measures to encourage other modes.

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<sup>2</sup> DfT, 2019 (A)

<sup>3</sup> DfT, 2016, p.7

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



The *Cycling and walking investment strategy* states an objective of doubling cycling by 2025, and also increasing walking. It emphasises the health benefits of active travel and recognises that parking can have an effect on individuals' choice of transport mode. This was also identified by the House of Commons Transport Committee in *Active travel: increasing levels of walking and cycling in England*. Factors influencing the decision to drive, walk or cycle may include not only the availability of parking for motor vehicles, but the presence of inconsiderate motor vehicle parking and the availability and suitability of cycle parking.

### 3.1.2 Other Government Departments

As well as following the direction set by DfT, parking policy should also support wider national policy objectives. In recent years successive governments have made strong commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including a requirement of the Climate Change Act 2008 to reduce emissions to 50% of 1990 levels by 2025, the declaration of a Climate Emergency in June 2019, and a commitment to zero net emissions by 2050 in the Queens Speech of December 2019. Given the vehicle emissions noted in the introduction above, parking management clearly has a role to play in achieving this.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has an interest in the management of parking by Councils as the government body responsible for overseeing local government, and issues the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) which sets out planning policies for England and how these should be applied. This states that "Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that: ... the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains; and ... patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places."<sup>5</sup> These impacts of transport and parking are evidently as significant in existing streets as in new developments.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has also been concerned to ensure that parking policies support the local economy, commissioning *The Portas Review: An independent review into the future of our highstreets*. This suggested that unrestrained parking can negatively impact local businesses, and that parking needs to be managed in order for them to thrive.

Health is another key governmental concern, and is affected by transport emissions as highlighted in the *Clean Air Strategy* produced by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra). At the same time Public Health England has set out in *Everybody Active, Every Day* that "one in two women and a third of all men in England are damaging their health through a lack of physical activity. It is an unsustainable situation, and one that is costing an estimated £7.4 billion a year. If current trends continue, the burden of health and social care will destabilise public services, and take a real toll on quality of life for individuals and communities"<sup>6</sup>. This inactivity is attributed in part to "Over-reliance on cars and other motorised

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.30

<sup>6</sup> PHE, 2014, p.4

transport... Traffic, not pedestrians, dominates most public spaces”<sup>7</sup>, underlining the need for this strategy to support and encourage active travel.

## 3.2 Local Policies

Local policies and concerns relevant to this strategy originate both from Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), in its role as the local Highway Authority and Traffic Authority, and from within Stevenage Borough Council. These have been considered in preparing this Strategy, in particular those summarised below.

### 3.2.1 Hertfordshire County Council

HCC’s fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4) covering 2018-2031 highlights the scale of population growth expected throughout the county, and considers that the “response to growth cannot be to just build more roads and encourage more and more car use... A combination of policies and improvements will be required to tip the balance in favour of non-car modes, and it will be to everyone’s benefit that by 2031 we have evolved our transport system to be less dependent on the car.”<sup>8</sup>

As part of this, LTP4 highlights the need to “constrain car use through parking charges and supply”<sup>9</sup> and that “Other areas have successfully encouraged higher levels of walking, cycling and passenger transport use by restrictive car parking policies... Local evidence exists from analysis conducted... on the difficulties of achieving travel behaviour change in the absence of car parking constraints.”<sup>10</sup>

Specific policies in LTP4 are also relevant to this Strategy and will inform its approaches.

Policy 1: Transport User Hierarchy (TUH) sets out in what order the needs of different modes should be considered and employed in considering the Network Management Duty. It forms the basis of the Parking User Hierarchy (PUH) that is to be used in preparing any new on-street parking management proposals.

Policy 2: Influencing land use planning and Policy 3: Travel Plans and Behaviour Change have the potential to significantly contribute to parking management, and will be referred to and promoted to relevant stakeholders when appropriate.

Policy 4: Demand Management is of particular relevance, setting out that:

The county council considers greater traffic demand management to be essential in the county’s urban areas in the next five years to achieve modal shift and improve sustainable travel provision. This can only currently be achieved efficiently and effectively through parking restrictions and charging applied to on-street, off-street and potentially at workplace parking. The county council will work with the district and borough councils and other key stakeholders to develop locally appropriate strategies.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.8

<sup>8</sup> HCC, 2018, p.4

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.7

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.29

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

This emphasises the role of parking management in restraining demand to achieve the modal shift aspired to in both local and national policies, which must shape the Council's approaches going forward.

Policy 5: Development Management sets out principles around new developments, including levels of parking provision and allowing for EV charging, car clubs and autonomous vehicles, as factors affecting rates and types of car use. This strategy will seek to provide where possible for consistent approaches in existing streets to those in new developments in order to allow residents to be treated fairly and to benefit from similar opportunities.

Policy 6: Accessibility emphasises the need to ensure key destinations are easily accessible, particularly for disadvantage groups and by sustainable modes. This strategy will include approaches to support access to key destinations, both to facilitate access by sustainable modes and to ensure that those who are unable to choose such modes are able to park to access services.

Policy 7 Active Travel – Walking, and Policy 8: Active Travel: Cycling call for measures to specifically support those modes. At times parking is likely to be relevant to this, whether by physically obstructing them or by creating a more hostile environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Approaches in this strategy will seek to address these impacts to support active and sustainable travel. Policy 8 also calls for provision of secure cycle parking, which SBC will pursue within this strategy.

The *North Central Hertfordshire Growth and Transport Plan* (not yet adopted) does not engage directly with parking, but does again emphasise that in future although “targeted improvements to some roads will continue to be required, this approach is no longer sustainable as it can have long lasting, negative impacts on the environment and local communities. Instead, there needs to be a focus towards making journeys by sustainable modes of travel like walking, cycling and public transport, easier and more attractive to people.”<sup>12</sup>

### 3.2.2 Stevenage Borough Council

Stevenage's transport strategy, *Future Town, Future Transport (FT,FT)* was adopted in 2019 and sets out “SBC's approach to delivering sustainable transport and better living conditions locally”<sup>13</sup>. As part of this *FT,FT* identified the need for a new parking strategy to be prepared.

*FT,FT* identifies four key themes, all of which are relevant to this strategy:

- Connectivity – loss or management of parking may be needed to improve connections for non-car modes;
- Living Streets – reducing car-domination of the streetscape often forms part of “approaches that enhance... street[s] as places to live”<sup>14</sup> and loss or management of parking may be needed to “[r]eallocate road space to promote multi-modal transportation uses”<sup>15</sup>.
- Active and Healthy Travel – parking can form an important part of the attractiveness of the car as a convenient mode of transport, and changes to

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<sup>12</sup> HCC, 2019, p.3

<sup>13</sup> SBC, 2019 (A), p.2

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.2

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

car parking may be needed to encourage travel by active modes, together with other measures such as provision of cycle parking.

- Green Travel – supporting and increasing the use of EVs may require interventions by SBC to provide for them, for instance by installing EV charge points.

*FT,FT* specifies that this new Parking Strategy will “promote demand management and the reduction of parking in residential streets”<sup>16</sup> and notes that “increase in car use in Stevenage has led to a reduction in use of the pedestrian and cycle network, and an increase in parking problems on residential streets... When the new town was developed, in some areas it was envisaged residents would be happy to park their cars to the rear of their properties or in garage courts, but, ease of access and visibility benefits, means that parking in front of homes is the preferred choice. This has resulted in congestion on local streets and an uninviting environment for residents.”<sup>17</sup> *FT,FT* also notes that “There is, at present, a lack of good quality and secure cycle parking in the town centre. Additionally, there are not always secure cycle parking spaces in people’s homes and places of work. Without these facilities there is a fear that bikes will be damaged or stolen when parked, and this discourages cycle journeys.”<sup>18</sup> In looking more widely than at motor vehicle parking only, this new parking strategy will seek to ameliorate this situation as it is seen that “Smaller scale improvements such as... increasing and securing cycle parking, and promotional campaigns can be sufficient to have a real effect on the use of the network.”<sup>19</sup> The *Stevenage Cycle Strategy* also notes the importance of cycle parking to enabling cycling.

Although seeking to promote other modes *FT,FT* recognises that “for particular trips the private vehicle will continue to be the most logical mode”<sup>20</sup> while suggesting that novel approaches such as car clubs, and new technologies, may change car ownership and parking expectations in future. This strategy will seek to provide for such future developments. One such development is increasing interest in and demand for EVs and the need for supporting infrastructure, and as anticipated by *FT,FT* the parking strategy will seek to support this.

These changes would support the SBC’s efforts to reduce carbon and other emissions across the town in line with the Council’s declaration of a Climate Emergency at its extraordinary meeting on 12 June 2019.

During the preparation of this Strategy, the process of adopting the Parking Standards SPD also allowed councillors to raise comments and concerns about on-street parking management. These included:

- From the Executive Committee:
  - Ensuring external funding is sought where possible, for instance to support the installation of EV charge points; and
  - Ensuring appropriate management of parking places for disabled car users.
- From the Scrutiny Committee:

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p.9

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24

- The need for on-street parking to be effectively controlled/managed in new developments for the Parking Standards SPD to be meaningful, ideally prior to first occupation;
- The need to coordinate the provision of disabled parking and EV charging infrastructure;
- Suggesting the possibility of varying parking charges for different vehicle types;
- Suggesting that commercial vehicle parking in residential areas should be prevented;
- The need to ensure that any surplus parking income contributes to measures to promote modal shift; and
- Noting that parking constraint is key to encouraging modal shift, and that parking control is vital to addressing climate change.

### 3.3 Covid-19 Recovery

This strategy was largely drafted during the first half of 2020, under the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has underlined the need for changes to how we travel and for greater support for alternatives to the private car, but has at least in the short term made some of those alternatives less attractive. Public transport capacity fell dramatically to allow passengers to distance from one another, whilst car clubs are reported to have suffered a huge decline in demand.

This has led to much greater recognition of the role walking and cycling can play as modes of transport, and to reduce obesity and inactivity offering significant health benefits.

The *Grimsey Review: Build Back Better Covid-19 Supplement for town centres* calls for a recognition “that towns and cities must no longer be designed around the car”<sup>21</sup> and for making “the 20-minute neighbourhood a central principle... to encourage people to travel less, buy locally and be able to get all the services they need within a short walk”<sup>22</sup>.

Steps in this direction have been made rapidly in recent months, reflecting in practice what has been known in theory for many years. Millions of pounds have been offered in government funding to support local authorities in improving walking and cycling infrastructure, and HCC and SBC have actively partnered to apply for funding and make changes.

The DfT has issued long awaited new guidance on providing protected infrastructure for cycling (LTN1/20), and stated that government funding for schemes will be conditional upon their meeting these high standards that will make cycling a real option for a much wider variety of people. DfT is also consulting on updates to the Highway Code giving more protection to pedestrians and cyclists and placing duties on road users based on the risk they pose to others.

Stevenage’s existing network of cycleways and footpaths already provide better facilities than are found in most towns. However, levels of walking and cycling are no

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<sup>21</sup> Grimsey et al. (2020) p.8

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

higher than the national average. This may be attributed to the deterrent effect of parking-dominated residential streets in the town, and the mentality fostered by an historic car-centred approach to transport nationally. Yet according to a Yougov poll, 81.2% of those they surveyed in the UK agreed that action should be taken “to curb air pollution by reserving more public space for walking, cycling and public transport”<sup>23</sup>.

This strategy’s aims and approaches are aligned with the emerging policy directions to deal with the fallout from Covid-19 and support the development of the less car-dependent new normal that most of the public want.

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<sup>23</sup> Posaner et al. (2020)

## 4 Objectives

Having considered the relevant existing policy positions and known concerns, four broad objectives have been determined for managing parking in Stevenage.

These are:

- To prevent unsafe or obstructive parking;
- To restrain unnecessary or undesirable parking and encourage modal shift;
- To manage necessary or desirable parking; and
- To support the town's Zero Carbon ambitions.

In setting these objectives SBC seeks to combine traditional approaches to parking with recognition that modern parking management is about more than where cars are stored. Parking affects everyone who uses a street, not only drivers. Poor parking management can mean pedestrians are prevented from walking safely along the street where they live, that public green space is spoiled, or that ordinary people don't feel safe to cycle to their local shops.

As a Council, SBC wants to create Living Streets that don't only support car parking and movement but provide "places that our community can enjoy and be proud of"<sup>24</sup> and at the same time "[r]educe the carbon footprint of Stevenage's travel movement and improve air quality"<sup>25</sup>. This Strategy through its objectives and the approaches to pursuing them, particularly the adoption of a Parking User Hierarchy to help prioritise different modes of transport and reasons for parking (see section 5.2 below), will shape how parking management helps to achieve those aims.

### 4.1 To prevent unsafe or obstructive parking

It is an essential part of the Traffic Management Act 2004 Network Management Duty that due regard is had to both improving safety and securing the expeditious flow of traffic. Where parking is unambiguously unsafe or obstructive, SBC may have no choice but to act on this duty and put controls in place to prevent parking.

This does not mean that SBC will always seek to remove parking that creates a perception of danger or delay for drivers.

Sometimes it will be appropriate to allow apparently "hazardous" or "obstructive" parking to continue. The perception of danger may improve safety through increased caution more effectively than would be achieved by removing the parked vehicle, whilst mild "obstruction" caused by parked cars helps to moderate traffic speeds and can improve safety overall.

It must also be understood that "traffic" means not only motor vehicles but people travelling by any mode of transport. So for example while a motorist might favour being allowed to park on a footway, and even request the creation of parking spaces partially or entirely on the footway, as this would secure the flow of traffic for motor vehicles on the carriageway, it would have the opposite effect for pedestrian traffic

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<sup>24</sup> SBC, 2019 (A), p.2

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.3

as well as placing pedestrians at risk as cars were driven onto the footway or if they were forced to walk in the carriageway. It is therefore unlikely that this is something that SBC would take forward.

## **4.2 To restrain unnecessary or undesirable parking and encourage modal shift**

It is a clear expectation of this strategy's parent policies that we must restrain the supply of parking to improve the quality of the public environment, support the shift to other modes of transport and discourage further growth in car use.

This may be achieved through active measures such as placing time limits or charges on parking, or passively by declining to build additional parking in areas where there is a desire or perceived need for more to be provided.

This is not to say that SBC's approach will be "anti-parking" or "anti-car", but that the need for and appropriateness of parking, and the benefits and costs of alternatives, will be considered when managing and reconciling the competing demands for kerbside space whether through parking controls or when considering parking bay construction requests or other measures.

## **4.3 To manage necessary or desirable parking**

Recognising that there are trips for which the car will continue to be the most logical mode, SBC will seek to effectively manage necessary or desirable parking.

For some individuals with physical disabilities there may be no viable choice other than using a car, and SBC will endeavour to ensure suitable parking is provided to ensure that they can access destinations, services and their homes.

Customers or workers travelling by car can be vital to many local businesses and residents unable to commute by other modes may depend on being able to park a car at home.

A Parking User Hierarchy will be adopted as part of this strategy to help prioritise the use of kerbside space for parking where there is a genuine need for it, depending on both user and vehicle type. Alongside this the viability of alternative modes will be promoted to reduce this need in future.

## **4.4 To support the town's Zero Carbon ambitions**

Innovations such as new fuels and autonomous vehicles, and new forms of mobility such as electric scooters, have the potential to change the face of transport during the period of this strategy. Achieving modal shift to healthier modes of transport and away from the private motor car is expected to go hand in hand with changes to the highway network to prioritise other modes rather than being centred on the car.

SBC's approach to parking management will support this, as reducing car dependency has an important role to play not only in public health but in combatting climate change. Controls on parking will form a helpful part of SBC's response to



climate change, together with parking provision for more sustainable modes of transport.

Although what will be needed is not predictable with certainty, and there are likely to be legislative changes, SBC will seek to take a dynamic stance and to update its approaches, controls and practices to place itself at the cutting edge of new developments so as to continue to manage parking effectively and to achieve its other objectives.

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## 5 Approaches

### 5.1 Planned programme of projects

Requests for changes to parking arrangements are received by SBC daily, but making changes is subject to a lengthy and onerous process whether making a new Traffic Order subject to extensive consultations and approvals or building more parking spaces subject to planning consents and safety audits. At the same time only limited resources are available to carry out the necessary work.

In order that work can be carried out effectively, there will be a planned Programme of parking projects. These will vary in scale, and the general makeup of the Programme will depend on the nature and scale of projects undertaken. The Programme will seek to strike a balance between helping residents, businesses, and others, and to give all parts of the town fair opportunity in having their problems or concerns addressed. Projects included may be the result of requests from the public or from stakeholders, or on SBC's initiative.

The content of the Programme will be set before the start of the financial year by officers subject to the approval of the Portfolio Holder, who shall also approve any updates, alterations or additions in the course of the year. Guidance as to likely inclusions, possible strands of work and the achievable scale of the Programme can be found in Appendix I.

Records of requests from the public and from stakeholders will be kept, so that they can be considered for inclusion in the programme when resources allow.

### 5.2 Transport and Parking User Hierarchies

LTP4 sets out the hierarchy of road users as follows:

#### ***Policy 1: Transport User Hierarchy***

*To support the creation of built environments that encourage greater and safer use of sustainable transport modes, the county council will in the design of any scheme and development of any transport strategy consider in the following order:*

- *Opportunities to reduce travel demand and the need to travel*
- *Vulnerable road user needs (such as pedestrians and cyclists)*
- *Passenger transport user needs*
- *Powered two wheeler (mopeds and motorbikes) user needs*
- *Other motor vehicle user needs<sup>26</sup>*

In considering how to prioritise space for parking SBC will have regard to this hierarchy, giving due consideration to different types of "other motor vehicle user" and that how space should be prioritised will vary depending on its setting. To assist with this consideration, a more detailed Parking User Hierarchy (PUH) will be employed when considering those other motor vehicle user needs as set out in Table 1 below. This follows on from LTP4's TUH and in the PUH, as in LTP4, the wants and needs of other users will be considered before those of motorists.

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<sup>26</sup> HCC, 2018, p.45

The PUH recognises the need to consider different settings, and provides for three broad types of location: residential areas, “short stay” destinations such as local shops and “long stay” destinations such as employment areas. It is recognised that some locations will not fall neatly into one category, and in those cases a balance must be struck considering the makeup of the area to support a mixture of uses.


Within the PUH greater priority is also given among motor vehicle users to parking for disabled car users, who may be unable to choose alternative modes of transport, and for less polluting vehicles such Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs).

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**Table 1: Parking User Hierarchy**

Order of Consideration	LTP4 Policy 1	In residential areas	At short stay destinations (e.g. local shops)	At long stay destinations (e.g. employment areas)	Priority
1	Reduce the need to travel	Can parking demand be reduced?	Can demand be restricted using limited waiting and/or parking charges?	Workplace Parking Levy?	HIGH
2	Pedestrians	Do parked vehicles discourage walking or interfere with pedestrian facilities? Are pedestrians' needs adequately met? Continuous wide footways, dropped kerbs etc.	Do parked vehicles discourage walking or interfere with pedestrian facilities? Are pedestrians' needs adequately met? Continuous wide footways, dropped kerbs etc.	Do parked vehicles discourage walking or interfere with pedestrian facilities? Are pedestrians' needs adequately met? Continuous wide footways, dropped kerbs etc.	
3	Cyclists	Do parked vehicles discourage cycling or interfere with cycling facilities? Are cyclists' needs adequately met? Is communal secure cycle parking needed (e.g. Bikehangers or lockers)?	Do parked vehicles discourage cycling or interfere with cycling facilities? Are cyclists' needs adequately met? Is cycle parking needed (e.g. Sheffield stand cycle hoops)?	Do parked vehicles discourage cycling or interfere with cycling facilities? Are cyclists' needs adequately met? Sheffield stands provided? Is communal secure cycle parking needed (e.g. a bike shed)?	
4	Bus users	Can buses pass freely and stop at stops? Are junctions and bends clear of parked cars?	Can buses pass freely and stop at stops? Are junctions and bends clear of parked cars?	Can buses pass freely and stop at stops? Are junctions and bends clear of parked cars?	
5	Motorcyclists	Is there good junction visibility? Are junctions and bends clear of parked cars?	Is there good junction visibility? Are junctions and bends clear of parked cars? Has dedicated motorcycle parking been provided?	Is there good junction visibility? Are junctions and bends clear of parked cars? Has dedicated motorcycle parking been provided?	
6a	Other Motor Vehicle (OMV): Cars	Is parking needed for disabled car users? Provision based on local demand.	Provision for disabled car users based on local demand and national guidance.	Provision for disabled car users based on local demand and national guidance.	

**Table 1: Parking User Hierarchy**

Order of Consideration	LTP4 Policy 1	In residential areas	At short stay destinations (e.g. local shops)	At long stay destinations (e.g. employment areas)	Priority
6b	OMV: Cars	Is parking needed for ULEVs? Provision based on supporting local demand and transition.	Is parking needed for ULEVs? What ULEV provision would help businesses and the local community? Limited provision suited to short stay for EVs.	Is parking needed for ULEVs? Provision based on national proportion of registered ULEVs.	
6c	OMV: Cars	Is parking provision for residents substantially less than SPD levels? Are junctions and bends clear of parked cars?	Is there sufficient short stay parking for non-residents? (e.g. shoppers)	Is there sufficient long stay parking for non-residents? (e.g. workers)	
6d	OMV: Cars	Can parking for residents' visitors be accommodated?	Should long stay parking for non-residents be accommodated? (e.g. workers)	Should short stay parking for non-residents be accommodated?	
6e	OMV: Cars	Is there a need to provide for short stay parking for non-residents?	Is parking for residents needed?	Is parking for residents needed?	
6f	OMV: Cars	Is there a need to provide for long stay parking for non-residents?	Parking for residents' visitors is low priority	Parking for residents' visitors is low priority	
7	OMV: Light Commercial Vehicles	No special provision to be made	Loading provision only	Car Parks and loading only	
8	OMV: Coaches and Heavy Commercial Vehicles	Banned during night time and weekends	Loading provision only	Loading provision only; designated parking on Argyle Way.	LOW

## 5.3 Integration of on and off street parking management

Management of on-street parking will be coordinated with the management of off-street parking taking account of the availability of both. When considering the best use of on-street parking supply, off-street and private parking availability to relevant road users will be taken into consideration.

This will particularly be the case in town centre areas where it is anticipated that, given its convenience, on-street parking will be at a premium and lower-priority parking users should be encouraged to use off-street parking instead.

This approach has been broadly successful in the past, and it is expected that the relationship between on and off street parking management shall be developed more closely in future.

## 5.4 Measurement

Parking is an emotive subject for many people and it is easy to make purely qualitative judgements.

In order to manage parking SBC will seek to take measured approaches. The first stage in any project will be to investigate the problem or request, and seek to quantify the situation. This may mean conducting surveys of parking pressure or turnover, and/or of residents' and others' views on parking problems or solutions, in order to decide if changes should indeed be proposed and if so what.

Data-led approaches will also be used to monitor and improve ongoing parking management, including the effectiveness of parking enforcement and how parking charges shape demand for paid-for parking.

## 5.5 Consultation and engagement

Changes to parking are subject to legal processes, which will necessarily shape how SBC consults on changes to parking and managing parking. However, as a Co-operative Council, SBC will encourage feedback and contributions from the general public when investigating possible alterations as well as seeking comments once proposals have been prepared. This will help SBC to ensure that parking projects are completed openly and taking into account as many different needs and preferences as possible.

At the same time, it must be recognised that there are limitations on what is possible and practical. Fulfilling public desires will not always be achievable, whether due to legal or financial constraints, available resources or the physical space itself. SBC's management of parking will take into account the public's views but must balance this with these considerations and with local and national policy objectives.

When consultations are undertaken, this will normally be by direct written communication which allows everyone a fair and equal opportunity to respond and enables the measured consideration of their comments and any necessary investigations to be conducted. Key consultation documents will be posted on the Council's website and social media may be used to encourage people to view and comment on uploaded material. Public meetings, which disenfranchise those who are unable to attend, will not normally be held.

## 5.6 Publicity and soft approaches

Active management of on-street parking is largely limited to the creation and enforcement of formal controls on parking, such as placing yellow lines at a junction, or the physical creation of more parking spaces.

These are costly and onerous undertakings, and are not always the most appropriate response, while members of the public may see them as disproportionate or a poor use of resources.

At a national level, behaviour change in relation to seatbelt wearing and drink driving has been successfully promoted through publicity campaigns. SBC will consider similarly using publicity to deter inappropriate parking and encourage modal shift to avoid the need for parking.

SBC has had some success in deterring unsociable parking through informal/unenforceable painted markings such as “KEEP CLEAR”, and will continue to use such measures where appropriate.

## 5.7 Budgets, fees and charges

In line with The Statutory Guidance SBC does not regard raising revenue as an objective of CPE, and while attempting to forecast revenue for the purpose of responsible financial management does not set any targets.

Pay-and-display parking fees are set to encourage turnover of parking, which improves parking availability. This benefits drivers looking for a space to park in and supports local businesses and services by facilitating access. It also encourages motorists to think about their decision to drive and consider using other modes of transport. The elasticity of parking demand in response to price changes will be monitored to help predict the effect of parking prices and enable them to be set at an effective level to achieve these traffic management purposes.

Charges for parking permits and visitor vouchers similarly encourage motorists to consider their decision to keep a car. Permit fees are set on a sliding scale imposing higher costs for parking permits where a household keeps multiple vehicles, reflecting the disproportionate amount of street space used by those households and serving to discourage excess vehicle ownership.

While many residents feel that they should be provided with parking permits for free and that they should not be charged to park in their street, the Council has to consider fairness to all residents. Where permit parking schemes exist or are introduced, if there were no charges for parking permits and visitor vouchers then the costs of operating the scheme would effectively fall on every resident in Stevenage regardless of whether they benefit from it or even own a car. It is considered fairer that the costs of excluding other drivers from parking should be borne by the motorists who benefit from this exclusion and gain the opportunity to park through charging for the permits or visitor vouchers they use. Requiring that parking permits and visitor vouchers are charged for also serves to restrain demand for “residents’ only” permit parking controls in residential streets.

Permit/voucher fees are therefore set at a level that seems likely to allow permit parking to be self-funding. However, for the avoidance of doubt or confusion there is no target income level for permit fees.

Charges are also applied for supplying discretionary services relating to parking to private individuals, such as placing advisory “H-bar” Driveway Access Markings to diagram 1026.1 of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 (TSRGD) highlighting the presence of a dropped kerb, in accordance with SBC’s powers under Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003.

Income from these sources and from Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) is first spent on parking management, including the costs of employing staff and maintaining parking facilities and the necessary signs and lines to allow enforcement. It is also spent on undertaking CPE which (contrary to popular misconception) does not cover its own costs and is not “profitable”, and on undertaking the Programme of Parking Projects. Together the incomes and expenditures from managing on-street parking form the Special Parking Account (SPA). Should there be any surplus funds once these costs have been accounted for, this can only be spent in line with the requirements of Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended).

This sets out that any surplus in the SPA can be used only to make good any deficit when the SPA made a loss during the preceding four years, meet the cost of providing or maintaining off-street parking; or:

*if it appears to the local authority that the provision in their area of further off-street parking accommodation is unnecessary or undesirable, the following purposes—*

- (i) meeting costs incurred, whether by the local authority or by some other person, in the provision or operation of, or of facilities for, public passenger transport services,*
- (ii) the purposes of a highway or road improvement project in the local authority's area,*
- (iii) in the case of a London authority, meeting costs incurred by the authority in respect of the maintenance of roads maintained at the public expense by them,*
- (iv) the purposes of environmental improvement in the local authority's area,*
- (v) in the case of such local authorities as may be prescribed, any other purposes for which the authority may lawfully incur expenditure*

Any surplus on the SPA will accordingly be used, once any recent deficit has been made good, to pay for:

- highway and environmental improvements to encourage modal shift and sustainable travel;
- supporting passenger transport services;
- maintaining off-street parking; and
- where the criteria set out in this strategy are met, providing off street parking.

It is intended that the everyday actions arising from this Strategy would be funded from existing budgets, a portion of which will be ring fenced for introducing measures to promote modal shift and sustainable transport. Larger individual projects or



service growth would be subject to ad-hoc capital funding bids or future requests to agree additional revenue expenditure. Such spending will be the priority for expenditure of any surplus on the SPA.

Where interventions require capital bids to be made, funding will be sought from external sources where the opportunity exists, including from the County Council, central Government, or other bodies, for example through the OLEV On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme to fund the installation of electric vehicle charging facilities.

## 5.8 Enforcement

Experience shows that, in the absence of effective enforcement measures, unfortunately a selfish minority of motorists will disregard both the law's general expectation that they will park safely and any specific controls such as yellow lines that have been introduced to guide them in doing so.

Since being granted the necessary powers in 2005, SBC has successfully delivered CPE to manage parking on the highway. While The Statutory Guidance states that "The objective of civil parking enforcement should be for 100 per cent compliance, with no penalty charges"<sup>27</sup> the reality is that growing vehicle numbers over time have necessitated more parking restrictions being introduced and required increasing enforcement leading to more PCNs being issued.

There have also been changes in the times at which enforcement is needed. Complaints about insufficient enforcement on Sundays and in the evenings have resulted in changes to patrol patterns to supply an effective service throughout the week. Throughout the period of this Strategy the numbers and timing of patrols will be kept under review to ensure they are appropriate. This could mean retiming or adding patrols as new parking controls are introduced or removing them as compliance improves and they are no longer needed.

The format of patrols will also be reviewed and improvements be sought over time to ensure that they are carried out where possible by the more sustainable modes of transport.

In enforcing parking restrictions, SBC will aim to even-handedly uphold the law while treating all motorists with fairness and respect. SBC will fairly and reasonably consider any challenges to PCNs where the motorist believes they should not be paid.

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<sup>27</sup> DfT, 2016, p.8

## 6 Specific issues

### 6.1 Parking for disabled car users

As highlighted by the Statutory Guidance, some people with disabilities “will be unable to use public transport and depend entirely on the use of a car”<sup>28</sup> and for these motorists parking is less of a choice and more of a necessity than for others.

It is for this reason that parking for disabled car users is ranked most highly among motor vehicles in the Parking User Hierarchy, and national legislation requires that exemptions are made from many parking restrictions for drivers who have a Blue Badge.

To further assist disabled car users, SBC will seek to ensure there is sufficient parking for them at known destinations such as the town centres and neighbourhood centres at least at a level in line with the latest government guidance and higher where there is sufficient demand. This parking will be suitably located offering greater ease and convenience than general parking, and if needed may be protected from abuse by other drivers. Consideration will also be given to the accessibility of disabled parking bays, including the provision where appropriate of dropped kerbs.

SBC will assist with the provision of disabled bays for residents where needed within permit parking areas or on SBC land, whilst the provision and management of disabled bays on the public highway outside permit parking areas will be a matter for the highway authority (HCC). Where SBC provides disabled bays to assist residents this provision will normally be subject to a similar expectation regarding the proportion of local parking provision to be used for disabled bays to that specified by HCC.

### 6.2 Supporting sustainable transport

#### 6.2.1 Parking and pedestrians

Parking on the verge or footway causes environmental and infrastructure damage and damage to vehicles. It frequently inconveniences pedestrians, in particular those who use wheelchairs, prams and pushchairs and can place them in real danger by forcing them into the carriageway. This makes walking less attractive as a choice contrary to the objectives of LTP4.

Verge and footway parking has been illegal in London for more than 40 years and successive governments have indicated an intention to roll the ban out nationwide. However this has not happened to date and as a result Stevenage has been amongst the first local authorities to implement local traffic regulation orders to prohibit it. These have been rolled out throughout most of Stevenage with the exception of Old Town, Symonds Green and Woodfield wards. There is little evidence of demand for it to be rolled out on an area-wide basis to the three remaining wards but there are some locations where it is seen to present an issue and others may arise in future.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.7

Where residents request it, SBC will be willing to investigate the introduction of verge and footway parking bans in specific locations to address this.

Parking also impacts pedestrians when vehicles are left across lowered kerbs, making it more difficult to cross the road – particularly for those who use wheelchairs, prams and pushchairs. SBC is able to enforce against such parking under Section 86 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, and will continue to do so to help prevent cars causing difficulty for others.

### 6.2.2 Parking on cycle routes

Protected routes for cycling play an important role in helping people to feel cycling is safe and successfully encouraging people to cycle. Stevenage has an excellent cycleway network which is largely segregated from motor traffic. Cars are generally prevented from parking on the cycleways by posts at the entrances for which the highway authority (HCC) is responsible. Driving on the cycleways is illegal and can only be enforced against by the Police.

Entrances to the cycleway network are generally served by a lowered kerb, and parking across them can make routes less attractive and the network harder to access. SBC is able to enforce against such parking under Section 86 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, and will continue to do so to help prevent cars causing difficulty for others.

The creation of new or improved cycle routes is a transport priority for the council, and may require the loss of on-street parking. This could be to allow for an on-carriageway cycle lane to be put in place, or due to narrowing of the carriageway to create a separate cycleway. Although these are likely to be HCC projects, SBC shall not oppose the loss of parking in such circumstances.

Should other measures to create and support cycle routes and deprioritise motor vehicles, such as “filtering” a street by placing bollards or similar to prevent through traffic except for pedestrians and cyclists, be put forward then SBC shall not oppose the loss of parking in such circumstances.

### 6.2.3 Cycle parking

The ability to securely park a bicycle at home or at the destination can be an important consideration in deciding whether cycling is a viable mode. In order to support the viability of cycling as a mode, SBC will:

- consider measures to facilitate home cycle parking for residents who would otherwise struggle to keep a cycle at home, such as secure outdoor cycle lockers;
- seek to ensure there is suitable cycle parking at known destinations such as the town centres, neighbourhood centres, and railway station, including where possible “long stay” sheltered cycle stands;
- take into account the diversity of cycles when installing cycle stands, to ensure there is suitable provision for non-standard cycles;
- seek to ensure that cycle parking is prominently placed in suitable locations offering greater ease and convenience than general car parking;

- consider signs or other measures to improve public awareness of cycle parking and ensure cycle parking is easy to find;
- consider the provision of shelter from the weather to improve the attractiveness of cycle parking; and
- support local businesses and employers to provide suitable, secure cycle parking at their private premises.

#### 6.2.4 Support for public transport

Parking on bus routes can cause delays or diversions to, and reduce the attractiveness of, passenger transport services.

To address this, where parking causing obstruction to buses is reported to SBC as an issue by a local bus operator, by HCC or by the Intalink Enhanced Partnership, or if they confirm that they consider it an issue when it has been reported to SBC by a member of the public, SBC will, as appropriate:

- put in place a Bus Stop Clearway to prevent parking at a bus stop; and/or
- consider for inclusion in the Programme of Parking Projects investigating further parking restrictions that may be needed.

Demand for parking can be reduced by making other modes more attractive to the public. For public transport this could mean new services being offered, or offering increased frequency or longer hours on existing routes; it could also mean faster journey times, better on-board passenger accommodation, or improved waiting facilities such as bus shelters. SBC shall be supportive of improvements such as these and others, and shall not oppose the loss of parking where needed to provide them.

#### 6.2.5 Electric vehicle and other Ultra Low Emission Vehicle parking

EVs and other ULEVs offer a more sustainable alternative to Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles.

SBC shall investigate options to support the uptake of ULEVs, including seeking to provide EV charging at known destinations such as the town centres and neighbourhood centres, and once provision is in place to expand it in line with demand. This provision may be placed to offer greater ease and convenience than general parking (though at a lower level of ease and convenience than parking for disabled car users), and if needed may be protected from abuse by other drivers.

The greatest utility is afforded to EV drivers by providing charging infrastructure at the locations where they would normally park long term. Drivers who are unable to charge their vehicle at home are more likely to want to charge whilst parked when they are at work. Priority will therefore be given to providing EV charging where it can support long-stay parking as well as or instead of short-stay parking.

SBC will aim to encourage provision of private workplace charging through the Planning system for new commercial applications and by advising employers on the availability of government grants.

SBC will aspire to help to provide affordable options to residents who would otherwise be reluctant to own an EV because they lack off-street parking, in

coordination with HCC and with national funding schemes. This may include provision of EV charging on SBC land and/or the public highway.

SBC may aspire to offer similar solutions or support for other ULEVs using novel fuel types with similar characteristics should they emerge during the period of this strategy and dependent on the legislative framework.

### **6.2.6 Car clubs**

SBC has operated a car club in the town centre since 2016, which as well as helping to provide a pool of low emission vehicles for SBC staff use during the hours of operation enables town centre residents who only occasionally use a car to avoid needing to own and park one. SBC has committed in its Workplace Travel Plan to support the existing town centre car club using electric cars until at least 2024-25, with an aspiration to expand in 2022-23 (subject to funding).

Should a car club operator wish to offer its service in other parts of the town to facilitate reduced residential car ownership, SBC will be willing to discuss any requests they wish to make and will consider putting in place measures such as reserved parking places to enable them to operate. The introduction of further car club facilities could help residents across the town to benefit from reduced car ownership, lessening demand for parking and allowing the use of street-space for other purposes. If there should be competing requests, all else being equal preference will be given to car clubs using ULEVs over ICE vehicles.

### **6.2.7 Restricting car ownership**

The Council's Parking Standards SPD indicates the level of car ownership that is considered appropriate and acceptable for different property types, but has no effect on extant properties.

Consideration will be given to using permit parking controls to restrict levels of car ownership at each residential property in the town to those set out in the Parking Standards SPD. This would of necessity include limits on the number of permits allowed at each address depending on the amount of off-street parking available to it, and planning controls on the ability to create additional off-street parking. It would be necessary to extend some form of charging to non-residents who parked in the town to prevent the controls being abused.

It would also be desirable to include pollution-related incentives such as differential pricing to encourage the uptake of less-polluting vehicles in general and ULEVs in particular.

## **6.3 Parking in residential areas**

### **6.3.1 Requests for “residents only” permit parking**

Residents frequently take issue with parking perceived to be by non-residents, normally attributed to commuters. They often feel that such parking affects their quality of life, and ask that measures are put in place to limit parking to residents only.

The only legal mechanism available to enable residents to park without interruption by non-residents is to put in place permit parking controls.

Such controls place costs and limitations on all residents and their visitors, and will only be introduced where it is shown that there is both:

- a genuine lack of parking for residents as a result of an external source of parking demand; and
- that there is strong support from residents.

### Requests

Permit parking schemes will only be considered where, within a geographic area that could viably and practicably operate as a permit area, 20% of residents have independently requested it.

### Survey

Where this criterion is met and a project to investigate permit parking is added to the Programme of Parking Projects, the investigations will include a survey of all residents' views on whether they support permit parking's introduction, if they would be content to pay the permit fees, and what days/times they would wish any permit scheme to operate. Formal proposals would only be prepared if at least 65% of responses, including 50% of actual addresses, favoured permit parking and were willing to pay the necessary costs. Any proposals arising from this would take into consideration residents' preferred days and times of operation and stated concerns.

### Consultation

If proposals are prepared and public consultation undertaken on specific proposals, these would only be implemented if the consultation responses demonstrate the same level of support as the survey or greater (it being assumed that the views of those who do not respond to the public consultation remain unchanged from when they were surveyed). Even if the same level of support is met, this does not guarantee that the proposals would be implemented as the final decision must depend on full consideration of any objections received.

### Effects of restricting car ownership

If measures are brought in to restrict car ownership throughout the town as set out in 6.2.7 above, the need for pre-existing "residents only" permit parking areas will be reviewed and they may be withdrawn or modified. The existence of town-wide restrictions would not exclude the possibility of additional controls to limit parking to residents of a particular locality only.

## **6.3.2 Alternatives to permit parking**

Where residents have concerns about non-resident parking pressure in a residential area, alternative measures may be considered such as "commuter ban" single yellow lines preventing parking during a short period in the middle of the day.

It must be recognised that such controls also apply to, and would prevent parking by, residents and will not be suitable in some locations such as where residents lack off-street parking and have no alternative to parking on the street. Such controls would only be introduced with support from residents.

The viability of such controls will also depend on the number and timing of similar restrictions, as a large number of concurrent but brief periods of restriction would not be practical to enforce. Timings should therefore vary from location to location and not be standardised.

### **6.3.3 Commercial vehicles in residential areas**

The parking of commercial vehicles in residential areas is a source of annoyance to some residents, whether due to the greater space taken up by a large van compared to a car in areas that experience high levels of parking pressure, or because they find them unsightly.

For other residents, being able to park their works vehicle is necessary for them to earn a living either as an independent tradesperson or as the firm employing them requires them to take a works vehicle home.

At present there is a town wide ban on parking commercial vehicles with a maximum authorised mass of 5 tonnes or more and vehicles able to carry 12 or more passengers between 8pm and 7am Monday to Friday and throughout the weekend. Following the adoption of the 2004 Parking Strategy, options for further limiting commercial vehicle parking were explored but no viable alternatives were found.

Given the concern that this continues to cause for some residents, the provision of secure off-street parking for vans will be investigated and possibilities for management of commercial vehicle parking will be kept under review should opportunities present themselves or the legislative framework change. Any measures to manage commercial vehicle parking will consider not only the views of those residents who are aggrieved by commercial vehicle parking, but the effect on residents who are dependent on it.

### **6.3.4 Requests for parking construction**

Residents are often concerned about not having enough parking near to their homes. Although SBC has no responsibility or obligation to improve the highway to resolve parking problems or provide additional parking facilities (and doing so is liable to encourage car ownership and use) it will receive requests for parking construction from residents.

There may be locations where parking pressure, due to lack of capacity, causes severe difficulties for residents, and is a contributory factor in causing hazardous, obstructive or inconsiderate parking, making parking construction a valid choice.

The Parking Standards SPD indicates the level of parking provision that is considered appropriate by SBC, and is periodically updated. Where the amount of parking provision in a location (including both on and off street parking) meets or exceeds the level set out in the most recent adopted Parking Standards SPD, it has to be considered adequate for motorists needs and will not be added to.

Where the Council considers that this is not the case, and that there is an overriding argument for providing more parking, it may investigate the construction of new parking spaces. Such construction shall be subject to identifying and securing funding and if on the highway to approval by the highway authority (HCC). If such spaces are provided at SBC's instigation, the council will also seek to introduce

commensurate spend an equal amount to introduce measures to support uptake of other modes of transport.

If following investigation SBC considers it necessary to build parking facilities in a location it will commit to budgeting an equivalent value of spending on introducing measures to promote the uptake of sustainable transport. If SBC carries out parking construction on behalf of HCC or another third party a contribution to fund measures to promote the uptake of sustainable transport will similarly be sought.

The Council will plant one tree for every parking space built. Should any trees have to be removed to build parking spaces three new trees will be planted for each tree that is lost (or such higher number as may be set in SBC's Tree Planting Policies in future). Parking spaces will not be built if it would result in unacceptable tree loss, for example of an ancient oak or of a mature historic hedgerow in good condition, or other high value trees.

### **6.3.5 Land sales and easements**

SBC will not sell land or allow new easements across its land for the purpose of allowing residents to create parking, except in cases where the existing parking provision (including both on and off street parking) falls below the level set out in the most recent adopted Parking Standards SPD.

Land sales and easements will not generally be permitted where they would result in a loss of communal parking. Where a land sale or an easement is otherwise granted for the purpose of constructing private parking a sustainable transport contribution will be required equivalent to the value of all construction works involved.

## **6.4 Destination parking**

### **6.4.1 Hospital parking**

Parking at the Lister Hospital site is owned and managed by the NHS Trust. However due to an excess of demand over supply hospital-related parking also has an impact on the surrounding streets. This may be by visitors to the hospital or by hospital staff.

In order to facilitate short stay parking by outpatients and by visitors to patients, SBC has provided limited waiting bays along Coreys Mill Lane and in North Road, and with rising demand may add to this in future subject to the environmental commitments made in section 6.3.4 above. These parking spaces are subject to pay and display controls to encourage drivers not to park for longer than they need to and thereby maximise the parking capacity, while fees are set at a low level to encourage short-stay drivers to prefer them to parking on the hospital site so that on-site parking is available for those needing to stay for longer periods.

These controls may be varied or suspended, or exceptions made, during times of crisis where extraordinary circumstances create a need to do so in support of essential services such as enabling NHS staff to get to work during a pandemic.

On residential streets in the area, hospital related parking contributes to parking pressure from non-residents, which can cause distress and annoyance for residents.



This shall be dealt with in the same manner as non-resident parking in other residential areas and from other sources as detailed in sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2.

### **6.4.2 School Parking**

School parking gives rise to brief periods of high demand at the start and end of the school day as children are dropped off and picked up. This can lead to obstructive parking and safety concerns, as well as inconvenience for residents.

HCC has spent and continues to spend considerable resources in seeking to ensure safety at these times, including both promotion of other forms of transport and the introduction of parking controls. SBC supports this with special attention to parking enforcement outside all of the over thirty schools in the town including attendance outside at least one school every day during term time. Every school in the town is patrolled at least once each month, depending on the severity of its issues and the availability of patrolling staff.

SBC will take into consideration the impact of any new parking proposals on schools in the vicinity and will be supportive of future projects by HCC to manage school travel to improve its safety and sustainability.

### **6.4.3 Customer parking**

The ability of customers to visit businesses is important to the success of the local economy. Where this appears to be hindered at customer destinations, such as the neighbourhood centres, SBC will consider measures to facilitate customer parking such as time limited waiting to prevent spaces being occupied all day by commuter parking.

Customers should have the option to travel by a variety of modes, and SBC will take into consideration the impact of any new parking proposals on them, and seek to support their transition to other modes of transport including both public transport and cycling as indicated in sections 6.2.1 to 6.2.4 above rather than providing for car parking only.

### **6.4.4 Servicing activity**

Servicing activity, from the delivery of goods to visits by tradespeople, is essential to both businesses and residents and is often reliant on motor vehicles due to the weight and bulk of goods or supplies.

There are however growing trends in urban areas towards delivery of some of these services by other modes, such as micro-consolidation and the use of cargo-cycles (which could be well supported by Stevenage's cycleway network).

SBC will take into consideration the servicing needs of businesses and residents when making new parking proposals. SBC will be supportive of parking changes to support more sustainable methods of servicing, for example assisting demand for cycle deliveries by providing for cargo-cycle parking at key locations.

#### **6.4.5 Local workers**

Many people working in Stevenage rely on their car to be able to get to work, and while they should be encouraged towards using other modes of transport this may not be viable for them for compelling personal reasons such as caring responsibilities, or because of the absence of suitable services or infrastructure. Where workers must commute by car off-street parking in employers' car parks or public car parks is expected to be the norm.

SBC will take into consideration the impact of any new parking proposals on local workers, particularly where the expectation of their parking off-street cannot be fulfilled, and will seek to support their transition to other modes of transport including both public transport and cycling as indicated in sections 6.2.1 to 6.2.4 above.

SBC may, working with HCC, consider the implementation of a Workplace Parking Levy to support transition away from car dependency by local workers.

#### **6.4.6 Longer distance railway commuters**

Parking pressure in some locations in the town is attributed to longer distance railway commuters, apparently seeking to avoid parking charges at the railway station. This not only causes annoyance for residents, but can limit opportunities for local workers to be able to park. Provision of parking for such commuters shall be considered the lowest priority, and should be discouraged from taking place on street. The railway station is well served by connecting bus services and the walking and cycling network, and is well supplied with parking for both cars and cycles, and its users should be encouraged to make use of these facilities.

#### **6.4.7 Match day parking**

On days when Stevenage Football Club plays home matches this can attract large numbers of vehicles to park in the area. Although motorists are encouraged to use the Fairlands Valley Car Park, whether due to excess demand or because drivers are unwilling to queue for parking/to leave the car park, or due to delinquency, parking frequently overflows into surrounding residential streets. This can lead to nuisance, obstructive and potentially hazardous parking.

Measures to address this non-resident parking in residential streets may be pursued as set out in sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 above.

Should the Football Club seek planning consent for new stands or an increased crowd capacity, developer contributions may be sought to mitigate any increase in impact of match day parking on the area. This could include funding for the creation, implementation and operation of match day parking restrictions, sustainable transport improvements to encourage and support the use of alternative modes of transport, or other measures.

### **6.5 Placemaking and Living Streets**

SBC aspires to bring forward specific "placemaking" and Living Street projects, through its Co-Operative Neighbourhoods programme, in addition to this Strategy's overall approach to create more Living Streets when making changes to parking. These would be expected to work collaboratively with residents to improve their local

environment and reduce the domination of the streetscape by cars, making them into nicer places to live. At the same time this would encourage more sustainable travel to both improve people's health and combat climate change.

Such schemes can include reducing or preventing through traffic, creating shared spaces, and changing how parking is managed to ensure it does not dominate entire streets. This does not necessarily mean simply taking parking away, but could involve other measures such as provision of alternative parking for larger vehicles such as vans that have a bigger visual impact so as to create a greater sense of space.

Changes to parking controls are anticipated to be needed to support achieving this and support for CMN projects shall where needed form part of the Programme of Parking Projects.

## 6.6 Regeneration

Regeneration will help to reshape Stevenage during the life of this Strategy, including both the redevelopment of the New Town Centre and renewal of some neighbourhood centres. This gives the opportunity for reduced car dependency, and the parking provision in redeveloped areas will be determined and managed as part of the development process.

Changes to parking controls are likely to be needed to support redevelopment as streetscapes change and this shall form part of the Programme of Parking Projects.

## 6.7 New developments

For the Parking Standards SPD to be meaningful it is essential in new developments that informal parking is prevented from happening in locations on the street that are not intended for parking. Otherwise the SPD would not limit the volume of parking, only cause it to take place in unsuitable locations. While design measures may help to deter some inappropriate parking, they can also serve to increase the severity of inappropriateness when it does occur. Pursuing parking controls to prevent this imposes a cost on the Council as a direct result of the development taking place. Developer contributions will therefore be required when planning applications are made, to fund the pursuit of formal Restricted Parking Zone (RPZ) controls on parking to prevent problems from occurring and ensure that the Parking Standards SPD is effective.

S106 funding for parking controls must be payable in full prior to first occupation to allow for RPZ controls to be implemented at the outset to prevent the gradual spread of on-street parking. Developers will also be required to commit to cooperate with the Council to enable the timely installation of necessary traffic signs to give restrictions effect should the road in question remain in their ownership when those restrictions come into force. Such early implementation of parking controls will help to ensure that Living Street designs are effectively upheld from the start.

Where it appears necessary and appropriate planning conditions, covenants or other measures may also be sought to deter or prevent the creation of additional off-street parking after the initial development has been completed.

## 6.8 Discretionary services

Discretionary services may be offered through the SBC's capabilities under Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003, in support of its transport objectives.

In relation to parking, this currently comprises placing advisory "H-bar" Driveway Access Markings to diagram 1026.1 of the TSRGD highlighting the presence of a dropped kerb. This service will be kept under consideration to ensure that it continues to offer fair value for both residents and the Council.

Additional services may be brought forward in future, where there is evidence of demand or the potential to assist residents or businesses.

This could include for example allowing private contributions to be made to fund the installation of EV charge points by SBC for public use, or installation of cycle parking through SBC contracts to help businesses provide facilities for their employees and visitors.

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**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Housing and Investment  
**Date** 9 December 2020



## HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE STRATEGY 2020-2030

### KEY DECISION

#### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek the adoption of the Housing for Older People Strategy (HOPS) 2020 – 2030 (Appendix A). The strategy will ensure joined up working between Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), aid decision making and focus on providing suitable long term housing for older people in Stevenage.
- 1.2 The strategy contributes to the Excellent Council Homes priority by reviewing how and what SBC delivers to support older people in Stevenage. It links in with the Housing Development priority by increasing the number of social and affordable homes for older people. This strategy has incorporated feedback from residents in Stevenage to ensure the Council meets the corporate priority of Connecting to our Customers to improve accessibility to older persons housing and support and improve the customer experience.
- 1.3 The strategy is set around four key themes:
  - Housing Development, standards and design

- Information, advice and technology
  - Support and assistance to help people move
  - Inter-organisational working
- 1.4 Each theme has a number of commitments that will be met through the actions detailed in the action plan of the draft strategy. There will be a front facing document that will be produced after the strategy has been approved by the Executive Committee. The 'Strategy on a page' also details the themes, commitments and actions.
- 1.5 It is recognised that this is an ambitious strategy and although there are minimal new resources required to support the commitments, expectation is, through collaborative working, we can pull on resources more widely to produce the outcomes needed. There are a few actions that would only be deliverable if funding is secured and will require a commitment from HCC. There may be a need to have a further discussion with key partners on resourcing the strategy at a future date.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the draft Housing for Older People Strategy 2020-2030, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be adopted.
- 2.2 That the Older Persons Strategy delivery post to implement the strategy be agreed (this is included in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) draft budget report and Medium Term Financial Security (MTFS) report presented to the December 2020 Executive).
- 2.3 That an interim report be submitted to the Executive in 1 year's time and a progress report in 2 years' time with any resource request or review that may be required.
- 2.4 That a growth bid of £17,000 will be recommended for 2022/23 and included in the General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy for modelling purposes for the initiatives as set out in section 5 of the report.
- 2.5 The proposed performance and monitoring indicator details, as set out on page 38 of the draft strategy, be agreed.
- 2.6 That, subject to approval of the draft Strategy, the front facing document be shared with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health & Older People and Leader of the Council for approval.
- 2.7 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director (Housing and Investment), following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Health and Older People, to make any minor amendments as are necessary to the Strategy prior to its publication.



### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Housing for Older People Strategy (set out at Appendix A to the report) is a joint endeavour with SBC and HCC to improve housing options for older people in Stevenage. This is set within the context of large-scale redevelopment programmes currently being undertaken by SBC; HCC's new Extra Care Programme and Residential / Nursing Care requirement and pressure on the (HRA). The strategy also reflects the increased pressure on services for older people across all statutory services due to the demographic changes; and central government requirements to plan for services that meet older peoples' changing needs and aspirations.
- 3.2 Grant money received through Hertfordshire County Council has steadily reduced since 2013 and has now ceased with the exception of a small amount of grant towards flexicare support. There has been no uplift on the amount received for a number of years and the amount has never covered the cost of the support service provided. SBC have been continuing to subsidise the service to those in receipt of housing benefit, fairer charging or who were 2003 protected (when supporting people started) as it recognised the value for older residents. SBC have not been in a position to continue to fully subsidise the service and in 2017/18 introduced a small weekly support charge, as a contribution. SBC currently still subsidise the support service for these residents although this has decreased over the past 3 years as the charge has increased. The aspiration is to move to a cost neutral position and have a strategy on how to do this through a fair and equitable charging system.

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

- 4.1 It was decided at the Stevenage Strategic Supported Housing Accommodation Board (SSAB) to produce a joint Housing for Older People strategy to enable both Council's to achieve more for older people in Stevenage by working collaboratively towards the same objective.
- 4.2 This has enabled both Council's to focus on what needs to happen within Stevenage to support older people to remain as independent as they can in their own home and maximising limited resources available to both Councils.
- 4.3 A resident's survey has been conducted in Stevenage for those over the age of 45 including a separate professionals' survey and 2 stakeholder events. The organisations that were consulted with are listed on page 52 of the strategy. It had been planned to do further consultation but due to prioritising work around the coronavirus pandemic, this has not been possible.
- 4.4 The draft strategy has been to the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group, and the Housing Management Advisory Board has had the opportunity to comment on two occasions to get their direction and feedback. Some members also took part in the stakeholder events.

- 4.5 The consultation and research has led to the recommended key deliverables under each theme, some are listed below:

**Housing Development, standards and design**

- Remodel the existing independent living/flexicare schemes to ensure they are fit for purpose through the asset management strategy
- Increase the provision and deliver on the new independent living scheme at Kenilworth and develop further new schemes with a mix of housing types.
- Develop design standards on housing for older people

**Information, advice and technology**

- Update SBC website pages with new information on this strategy, development and advice for older people wishing to move and/or their families and carers
- Work with private landlords to develop better understanding of needs of older people living in the private rented sector
- Ensure that integral or retrofitted technology is reflected in the Asset Management strategy
- Ensure new build properties are connected to good quality broadband services
- Develop marketing materials and possible show homes to help older people understand what benefits specialist housing can have.

**Support and assistance to help people move**

- Develop a business case and plan for expanding Community Support Services across the town.
- Recruit a dedicated resource to act as a single point of contact for older people including those with complex needs and needing specific assistance to manage a move
- Review our Allocations Policy to make it easier for older people to move into suitable housing
- Undertake joint awareness campaigns across services linking older people's benefit take up and housing options advice
- Investigate ways of funding a handyperson service to help older people with practical aspects of moving to a more suitable home.

**Inter-organisational working**

- Review Stevenage's Older Person's Network to create a HOPS Partnership comprising a range of statutory and voluntary services and older person representatives including those with disabilities.
- Undertake joint professionals' workshops to improve operational understanding between organisations and remove barriers to collaborative working
- Identify and exploit land opportunities in both public and private ownership that can help increase housing options across all tenures for older people

- Review information and data sources and recording mechanisms (cross authority) to capture strategic information on older people's housing needs and aspirations.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

- 5.1.1 To manage the implementation of the strategy there will need to be an Older Persons Strategy Delivery Post that links in with both Councils to ensure that the programme is on track and will also manage the projects within the action plan. It is estimated that this post be a grade 5, approximately £35,000 (subject to job evaluation). This is in the HRA draft budget report and Financial Security report going to the December Executive.
- 5.1.2 The costs of remodelling existing schemes and making the stock fit for purpose is within the Asset Management Strategy and has an allocated budget already identified in the HRA business plan.
- 5.1.3 Future older people housing development programmes have been included in the 30 year HRA business plan. Housing development will maximise any opportunities for funding bids to support these developments.
- 5.1.4 To inform reviews of strategic housing market assessments (SHMA), local housing need assessments and Local Plan / Planning Policy updates a one off sum of £5,000 would be required to commission any data needed. This is likely to be needed in year 2022/23.
- 5.1.5 To review the Private Stock Condition, a new survey would need to be commissioned (from 2022/23 onwards) which would be a one off cost of approximately £12,000.
- 5.1.6 To support the Aids and Adaptations Policy a growth of £30,000 has been requested for an Aids and Adaptations Co-ordinator and is in the HRA draft budget report and MTFS report going to the December 2020 Executive.
- 5.1.7 Currently 20 hours at grade 6 is incorporated in the Housing and Investment base establishment as part of the Business Unit Review for the post of Health and Wellbeing Programme Officer. SBC has been successful in getting funding from Hertfordshire County Council to cover the remaining 17 hours until end March 2022. SBC will be receiving £12,500 for 20/21 and £25,000 for 21/22. Recruitment is underway.
- 5.1.8 Future provision of Housing related support funding from HCC is still unknown.
- 5.1.9 There may be resources needed to meet the standards as set out in the Supported housing: national statement of expectations guidance which came out on 20th October 2020 but this work needs to be scoped out.

### **5.2 Legal Implications**

5.2.1 In the implementation of the Housing for Older People Strategy, Stevenage Borough Council must have regard to:

- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985;
- Housing Act 2004
- Care Act 2014
- Tenancy strategy
- Resident engagement strategy

5.2.2 The Decent Homes Standard sets out that social housing must: meet the current statutory minimum standard of housing, be in a reasonable state of repair, have reasonably modern facilities and services, and provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. The white paper published on 17 November has no detailed comment on Decent Homes standards.

### **5.3 Risk Implications**

5.3.1 There is limited land availability in the town which is a risk to developing significant numbers of new housing specifically for older people within wider housing market demands.

5.3.2 There is a risk that if the resources are unable to be provided for the action plan then delivery will not be possible.

5.3.3 There is a risk that partners will not engage with the strategy action plan, especially if resources are reduced and they face other pressures

5.3.4 There is a risk that Covid 19 and lock down restrictions could delay or prevent some of the action plan progressing.

5.3.5 There is a risk that the Council will not get enough residents involved in some of the project work.

5.3.6 Some of the actions within the strategy are dependent on HCC's continuing support and if this changed SBC would need to review the strategy.

### **5.4 Policy Implications**

5.4.1 Many of the policy implications for the Strategy will build on existing strategies and policies, but there will be some new processes that may be required. Because the Strategy is a joint one, it is important that understanding of what it means is understood and new ways of working are developed between the two authorities, within the context of Adult Care Services' work across the whole county.

- 5.4.2 The HOPS Partnership is suggested to further the Council's co-production ambitions, and to also allow residents to help shape, deliver and assess activities in the town. It is important that, while statutory organisations will have a place at the table, ideally the Partnership will have residents involved, and will produce well designed and cost-effective solutions to meeting community issues for older people. It is expected that this will also build on existing networks, rather than setting up duplicate or competing activities, and ideally will also link with HCC's Older Person's Co-production Board.
- 8.3 Proposals that may be suggested relating to adaptations through Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) or of using DFG grant in innovative ways in the Borough, will need to be considered by the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency Board, and may require sign off from the other authorities who belong to this consortium before being able to be actioned.
- 8.4 It is hoped that actions and policy changes that arise from this Strategy will be able to be replicated in other districts where appropriate, and that learning will be shared as the Strategy is reviewed and refined over its lifetime.

## **8 Planning Implications**

- 9.1 The government has strengthened the revised National Planning Policy Framework so that local planning authorities are expected to have planning policies which identify the size, type and tenure of homes required for different groups in the community, including older people and people with disabilities. Further information is included in the Planning practice guidance on housing for older and disabled people.

## **9 Staffing and Accommodation Implications**

- 10.1 It is likely that some processes may need to be developed or realigned as a result of this Strategy. The action plan needs to be incorporated into department service plans to ensure staff are aware of what they need to do to support the strategy including working with partners.

## **10 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 11.1 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of, and have themselves rigorously considered, the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking.
- 11.2 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the County Council's statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.
- 11.3 The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic

and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

11.4 An EqlA has been completed and is in Appendix B.

## **12 Other Implications**

12.1 Specific considerations relating to data management and sharing may be required for specific projects. These will be scoped as part of the project initiation process, and a DPIA should be completed in these cases. GDPR guidelines will be adhered to.

## **13 Strategy development**

13.1 The work has been guided by a series of surveys, workshops and events, and feedback from both residents and people who work with older people to shape the main themes of the strategy, and to guide the recommendations within it. This work has been supported by national and local research and data sources, and best practice from other areas and national organisations.

13.2 The Strategy has one Strategic Objective: to enable healthy ageing for older people in Stevenage through the provision of a new housing and support offer. It was felt that this met both housing objectives and social care but was sufficiently flexible to allow interagency and collaborative working.

13.3 The four themes that were identified as important to service users and workers were:

- Development, standards and design:
- Information, advice and technology:
- Assistance and support to help people move:
- Inter-organisational working

13.4 An Action Plan has been added to the strategy document which brings together the commitments shown in green at the end of each section. Each action has been given a short/medium- or long-term timeframe, lists the themes it relates to, states who is responsible for the action being achieved, and major stakeholders. Detailed timelines have not at this point been included but there is another version of the action plan (Appendix C) that

contains approximate costs to commission pieces of work and confirmation of resources available.

- 13.5 A number of performance and monitoring indicators have been proposed on page 38 of the Strategy. These have been suggested as suitable ways of monitoring whether the Strategy is meeting its stated aims but should not be too onerous or burdensome to gather. Where possible, these are statistics that should already be in existence, but have not been brought together in a single dashboard. It is proposed that the HOPS Partnership Board is allowed a role in evaluating and monitoring the success of the Strategy, and in the review process, with reports back to the Executive at agreed intervals.
- 13.6 Throughout the process of developing the Strategy, the timeline has changed several times. This has been due to a number of factors, including the scope of the Strategy being reassessed following feedback and new research becoming available, difficulties in staff time and capacity to complete the work (both from HCC and SBC), pre-Election period considerations, and most recently the Covid 19 pandemic response.
- 13.7 In the current climate around how local authorities and county councils are funded through the proposed devolution there is no certainty of funding from Hertfordshire County Council or Government therefore SBC is aiming to achieve as near to a cost neutral support service that is flexible to the demand needed in the town for older people.
- 13.8 The draft Strategy has been sent to a number of stakeholders for their feedback and agreement to the actions, and has also been reviewed by Public Health.
- 13.9 The Strategy was reviewed by Stevenage's Strategic Supported Housing Accommodation Board on 5 June 2020. It was noted that the current situation has highlighted the need for a different housing offer for older people, and that more self-contained housing where people can isolate more safely should be encouraged. It was also noted that this strategy would need cross-organisational support, and that a resource mapping exercise will need to be done if the actions are approved.
- 13.10 This strategy is also going through HCC's governance process for approval.
- 13.11 SBC are leading the way with this exemplar joint Housing for Older People Strategy with HCC, and County are keen to reproduce this in other districts once approved.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

**1.1 All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, i.e. they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:**

BD1 Supported housing: national statement of expectations guidance

BD2 Draft Housing for Older People Strategy 2020-2030

## **APPENDICES**

A Draft Housing for Older People Strategy 2020-2030 with appendices

B Equality Impact Assessment

C Action Plan with resources

D Strategy Plan on a Page



**DRAFT**

# **Housing for Older People in Stevenage 2020-2030**

Stevenage Borough Council, Housing Services

Hertfordshire County Council, Adult Care Services

## **Homes for Healthy Ageing in Stevenage**

December 2020

## Foreword

Welcome to Stevenage's Housing for Older People Strategy 2020-2030. This is a joint strategy that has been developed by Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council to improve housing options for older people in the town.

Within the existing financial climate, it is important that we take a long-term and strategic approach to providing different housing options for older people. Our strategic objective is to enable healthy ageing for older people in Stevenage through the provision of a new housing and support offer.

Both councils know the provision of good quality, affordable and appropriate housing is key to meeting the needs of our older people across Stevenage. The same is also true of vital services that enable people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible and prevent a crisis from occurring. All older people deserve to have a home which meets their long term wishes and enables them to maintain their independence, whatever their changing health or support needs.

Our priority is to support our older people to live independently for as long as possible and we must ensure that our recommendations reflect older people's future needs and aspirations. We know a range of housing is required in different settings.

We recognise that some older people may be living in accommodation that is too big and is difficult to maintain and heat. From our research we understand that many do not want to leave their homes where they have raised their families and they enjoy living in their local area that they know well; feeling forced to move can negatively impact their health and wellbeing.

It is important therefore, that there is suitable, alternative local housing to help older people to make the move to downsize, should they wish to do so. Housing that is more adaptable and accessible, and flexicare housing, where there are additional care and support needs will also help to meet the needs of our older population. We want to make sure that older people are aware of options to downsize and can be supported in what can be a difficult transition in moving from a home that has been lived in for many years and holds special memories, to starting a new life in a home that is more suitable to their current and future needs. This strategy recognises the many challenges we have and we can meet these through excellent partnership working across the statutory and voluntary sectors. We aim to develop our data and information, encourage the further expansion of partnership working and improve the quality and increase the supply of housing across all tenures. We look forward to working with all of our local partners to ensure its success.

We would like to thank all residents, support agencies and professionals who have contributed their thoughts, time and information to help us bring this work together and have been instrumental in shaping the commitments within it.

Cllr Jeannette Thomas  
Portfolio holder for Housing, Health and  
Older People, Stevenage Borough Council

Councillor Richard Roberts  
Portfolio holder for Adult Care and  
Health, Hertfordshire County Council

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Senior Leadership Team – SBC			25/8/20 17/11/20
Adult Care Services Management Board, HCC			18/6/20
Executive Member Briefing, HCC			
Executive Committee, SBC			9/12/20

## Introduction

In line with the rest of the country, Stevenage has an ageing population which exacerbates a continuing challenge for housing, health and social care. This strategy sets out Hertfordshire County Council and Stevenage Borough Councils' approach to ensuring that we have suitable housing on offer for older people in Stevenage, now and in the future.

Stevenage has a well-established and productive Strategic Supported Housing Accommodation Board, where the County Council and Borough Council meet regularly to discuss and agree initiatives to bring forward new supported housing and housing related innovation in the town. The Board is chaired jointly by the Chief Executive of Stevenage Borough Council and the Director of Hertfordshire Adult Social Care, and has attendance from property, development, planning and housing officers from both organisations. This strategy is a product of that Board's activities, and its effectiveness and action plan will be scrutinised as part of the Board's work.

## Scope

This strategy recognises that housing for older people comes in many types and tenures, and that people's aspirations vary in relation to their health and care needs, socio-economic status, community and family circumstances and personal goals. This strategy will therefore look at specialist housing for older people, such as independent living and flexicare (also known as extra care), and residential and nursing care homes, and also general needs housing that is suitable for older people across private rent, social and home ownership tenures.

## Outcomes

The strategy seeks to achieve the following:

- A robust, evidence-based understanding of current and future needs of older people and their aspirations for specialist mixed tenure housing in Stevenage, including affordability and locality;
- An understanding of future services and capacity of specialist housing as well as support services required in the town;
- An understanding of the future demand for new specialist housing across different tenures;
- An understanding of how specialist older person's housing can influence the wider housing market;
- Identify likely gaps in service provision, and potential routes for addressing those gaps, through early discussion with key partners and stakeholders such as Hertfordshire County Council, East and North Herts Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and third sector partners;
- An understanding of future support services needed for older people delivered by Stevenage Borough Council.

This strategy should highlight gaps in service provision and allow us to make fitting recommendations that will positively impact older people living in Stevenage, both now and in the future. This strategy also seeks to shape the way Stevenage Borough Council provides support services to residents.

In addition, this strategy will look beyond the needs of our current older person population by considering the future demand for specialist housing required by the ageing population – aged 55+. This approach will enable us to future-proof, where possible, any recommended provisions.

This strategy recognises that older people in Stevenage occupy accommodation across all types of tenure, and as such our approach is tenure blind, enabling a wide offer of choice.

## Methodology

To develop this strategy, we have undertaken a structured research programme, using a variety of methods to gather evidence and information from those aged 45+, older people, their families and carers, and professionals who work with them, about their housing needs and aspirations, and have drawn on a number of local and national sources of information:

These have included:

- ✓ Surveys and conversations with current and future older residents, service user forums and community groups, and professionals who work with older people in Stevenage;
- ✓ Local policy drivers and initiatives;
- ✓ National policy and legislation;
- ✓ National and local statistics from public sources such as the Office for National Statistics, Public Health England District Profiles, and the Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment;
- ✓ Local statistics and research, such as Stevenage Housing Register and allocations data, and Strategic Housing Market Assessment;
- ✓ Sector research and best practice from across the UK.

A list of reference documents can be found at [page 52](#).

A town wide survey of residents over the age of 45 generated 271 responses, of which 214 completed all 38 questions. We chose to survey this age range to capture the views of those turning 55 years old within the strategy's lifespan. Furthermore, Census 2011 information shows us that over 20% of the Stevenage population fall within the age structure 45-59 and we must ensure that our recommendations reflect this population's future needs and aspirations. The survey was predominantly web-based, though some paper questionnaires were also circulated to specific community groups.

We also asked the same questions, with some nuancing, to professionals working with older people in Stevenage. This survey was also web based and was advertised by directly emailing the link to care and other providers working in Stevenage, and via the HCC Adult Care Services intranet and local networks. There were 62 respondents (though not all fully completed the survey) with 18 at management level or above.

The questionnaire and analysis can be found at Appendices 1 and 2.

We consulted our key stakeholders working with older people in Stevenage. This included, for example, Elected Members, registered social landlords, voluntary agencies, groups representing those from minority groups and health and social care professionals. Summaries of the discussions can be found at appendix 3.

Two stakeholder events were held that highlighted four key areas for investigation:

- Development, standards and design

- Information, advice and technology
- Support and assistance to help people move
- Inter-organisational working

We explored these themes further through face to face discussions and focus groups.

In addition to this, we completed a desktop literature review of local and national research to fully understand the challenges that older people face in securing good accommodation and retaining their independence, comparing Stevenage Borough Council's performance against best practice and the performance of other Local Authorities. It is acknowledged that the results are only a snapshot of the opinions of a small percentage of the residents in Stevenage who will potentially require more suitable housing in the future, however, we feel that it is important to acknowledge Stevenage's unique relationship with its residents and have related the national and local data and best practice to the views expressed by them within their responses.

We would like to thank all residents, support agencies and professionals who have contributed their thoughts, time and information to help us bring this work together and have been instrumental in shaping the commitments within it.

## Strategic Objective

This strategy has one Strategic Objective:

**To enable healthy ageing for older people in Stevenage through the provision of a new housing and support offer.**

It is important that we take a long-term and strategic approach to tackling and managing the complex challenges associated with an ageing population, spending wisely and using assets well. We believe that keeping our residents healthy and independent gives them a better quality of life and helps reduce pressure on stretched public services, and that good, accessible housing is a key part of this. This is reflected in national and local policy and is one of the Healthy Stevenage priorities. The Housing for Older People Strategy (HOPS) will focus on working collaboratively with partner agencies to develop housing options that support independence and reduce demand for more intensive and costly services. We will build on primary and secondary research to support this. While both councils have good working relationships with our partners, we recognise that we must work more closely with them and target our resources more effectively to meet the challenges to providing appropriate housing options, support and advice for older people.

In this strategy, the term 'older people' refers to those aged over 55: the industry standard extra care age trigger, and the point at which private pension or early retirement settlements can start to be considered. We do, however, recognise that for most people age is not the number of years a person has lived, but is a state of mind and physical health: many people do not consider themselves old even when well into their later years, while others need higher levels of care and support earlier in their life. Housing for an ageing population cannot therefore be a generic housing type or just scheme-based solutions but needs to be flexible and appropriate to people's ages and stages of life and form part of a wider mixed community. This strategy also relates to the housing needs for all older people in Stevenage, regardless of whether they receive formal services from the Borough or County Councils, whether they own their property or rent, and regardless of their employment status (working, unemployed or retired).

New guidance for local planning authorities requires them to consider the needs of those approaching retirement age as well as those already in need, and we have taken the same approach: we want and need to understand how people plan and act in order to meet their current and future housing needs. We recognise that this is broad, however the housing and support needs of individuals, along with their aspirations, will vary greatly and flexible solutions to enable healthy ageing will need to be available. This housing strategy for older people in Stevenage aims to address this issue. We have designed it show to a clear direction of travel, but also to be aspirational and flexible, with solutions emerging over time so that we can adapt to new technology, best practice and the changing needs of the Stevenage communities.

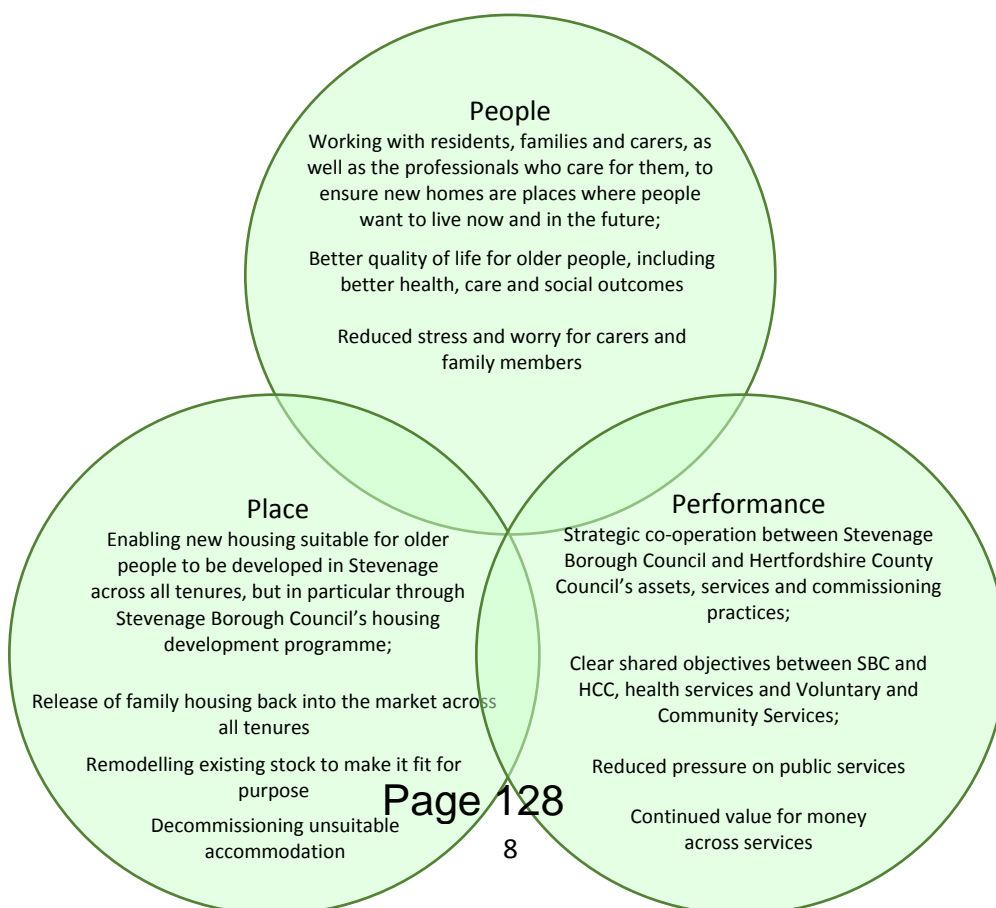
A key element of the collaborative approach to meeting older people’s needs in the borough, is the effective use of assets and land holdings of both the Borough and County Councils to ensure that new development is viable, fit for purpose and able to be used by its intended occupants well into the future. Some of this will mean reconfiguring and reconstructing existing stock, making strategic decisions about best use of sites including the potential for sale and reinvestment elsewhere, and ensuring, wherever possible, cost neutrality in the development process.

We recognise that good, affordable and accessible housing has a beneficial effect on older people’s health and wellbeing, helps keep communities together and provides wider societal benefits, as well as helping to reduce pressure on the health, social care and housing systems. High quality accessible, adaptable and well-designed housing will need to be provided in conjunction with good care and support services. New housing should be well placed, be connected to amenities, and linked to communities to help people live well and independently, preventing isolation wherever possible. We accept that there is a need to think innovatively when increasing the supply of homes that can support positive ageing.

We therefore considered general needs as well as specialist housing for older people, reflecting their housing ‘journey’ through the different stages of later life, and recognising that many older people are able to manage on their own and wish to take responsibility for themselves. We are using the three principles of People, Place and Performance to guide our thinking (figure 1).

Four key themes have come out of the consultation and research for this strategy, and we have focussed our future thinking on these:

Figure 1





**Development, standards and design:** ensuring mixed communities, flexible spaces, good design and high standards that older people will want to move to, close to amenities and providing good design and layouts that matter to them. Balanced communities work better and keep people more active and engaged, and recognise that one size doesn't fit all: whilst people's needs change, they often do not want to leave their friends and community;

**Information, advice and technology:** finding ways of working collaboratively to provide timely advice to people who need or wish to move in later life, or for those who need help in maintaining or living in their current home. Using technology to provide access to information and services to change perceptions and encourage people to think about their housing choices earlier to sustain or improve their quality of life;

**Support and assistance to help people move:** linked to the information and advice theme, people asked for practical help in accessing suitable housing and for support both during and after a move. Forms, managing utilities and legal matters, packing and unpacking, handyperson jobs and support to help people emotionally adjust to moving to a smaller property were all areas of concern;

**Inter-organisational working:** joining up existing services in different statutory and voluntary organisations to better identify and support people to move earlier and more quickly, or to get adaptations or support where they wish to stay. At present there is no single point of contact, and people do not want and should not need to explain their circumstances more than once, even when talking to different agencies. A better collective understanding of the individual as a whole, what support is needed and who is involved: using a place-based approach, people asked for a sharing of ideas, learning from the way other organisations deliver their older persons offer, working together and keeping momentum going.



*"At present I am capable of continuing my life in my own home. I would wish to stay here as long as possible. As I get older and need support, I would hope that would be forthcoming in my own home. I would only want to move as a last resort."*

*(resident's survey response)*

## Part 1: Why do we need this strategy?

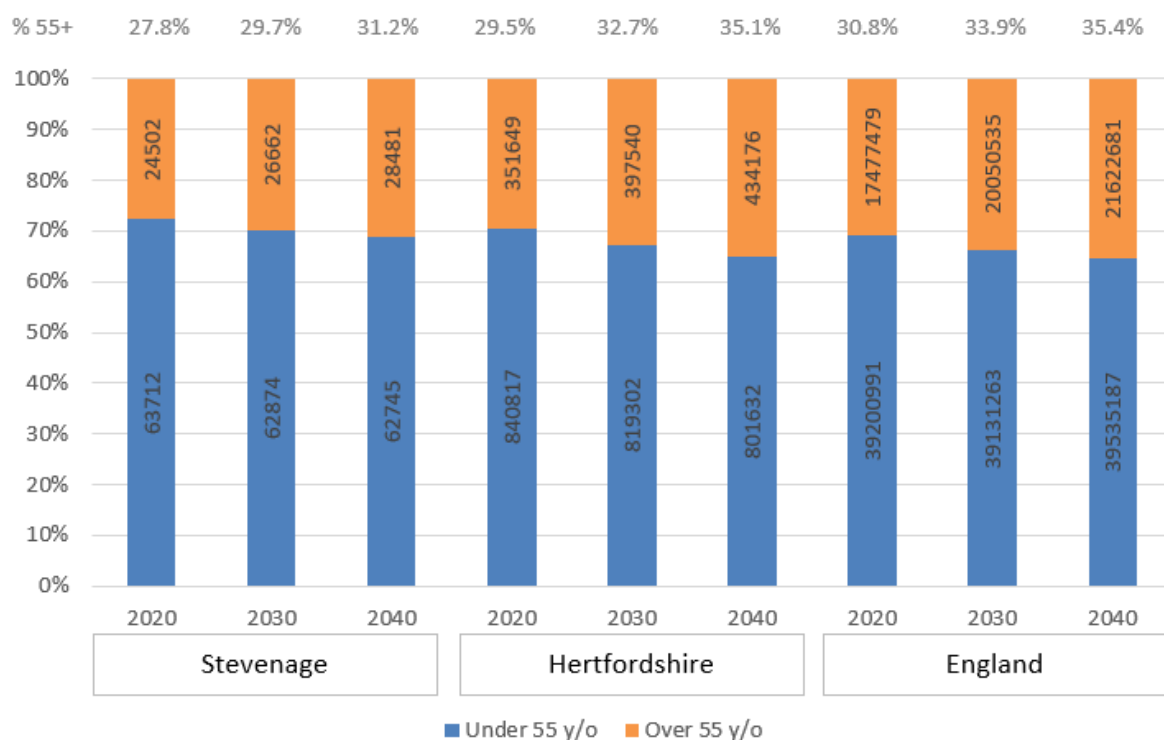
The UK has an ageing population, yet most new housing development is aimed at younger people, families and newly forming households. Government incentives, such as Help to Buy and shared ownership, are generally aimed at young adult first time buyers, and shortages of available suitable land results in high density living that is not always suitable for people with mobility problems or who need additional space for medical equipment. As a consequence, as people live longer, are more active in later life but also live with complex health needs for longer, the housing market does not service their needs well. Only 9% of new housing<sup>i</sup> in the UK is appropriate for older people or those with mobility concerns, despite ONS population projections showing that by 2066, over a quarter of adults in the UK will be over 65, and 7% will be over 85<sup>ii</sup>. More older people are now living in the private rented sector, and recent reports also point to an increase in homelessness applications by people over 60<sup>iii</sup>. Well-designed homes whether general needs or specialist schemes such as independent living or flexi care, can help maximise the independence and well-being of older people, keep communities together, reduce pressure on public services and help balance the wider housing market.

Stevenage is one of the ten district and borough councils in Hertfordshire, is situated 28 miles north of London and is bounded by North Hertfordshire and East Hertfordshire. It was the first New Town to be built under the New Towns Act 1946 and was built around the concept of self-contained neighbourhoods. Residents still very much feel part of these communities and wish to stay living in their specific local areas where possible (appendix 4). Housing provision for older residents in Stevenage reflects the national picture and the town's neighbourhoods lacks the types of housing suitable for potential older residents to live safely and independently in their homes without adaptations, care or moving to another property.

While the total number of people under 55 in Stevenage is estimated to reduce between 2020 and 2040, the number of people over 55 will increase by almost 4,000 equating to around to 31.2% of the population. Figure 2, below, shows how the population changes in Stevenage compare to Hertfordshire and the rest of England. Stevenage still has a slightly younger overall population than the rest of the County, but not only will there be more older people who will need care and support in the future, but also that the percentage of working age people in the population will be reducing here as elsewhere. This will affect the workforce and communities who can provide this care, and, nationally, the tax-base that will pay for it.

*Figure 2: Population projections*

## Percentage of people over 55 years old as a proportion of total population 2020-2040



Responses from residents tell us that people value the role that Councils have in their housing and wellbeing, but that advice and support is not always tailored to their needs as they would like it to be. Their feedback suggests organisations, including the voluntary and community services, should be better joined up to deliver a single system, which provides information and assistance that helps older people make informed decisions about their own lives when it is needed.

### Housing, Health and Social Care

There are a number of national studies that show the benefits of appropriate housing on improving health, wellbeing and quality of life<sup>iv</sup>. With an ageing population, age related disability is more prevalent, and as people live longer with more complex conditions, services must respond accordingly. It is anticipated that the number of people with disability and care needs will increase significantly over the next 20 years, but people’s aspirations for their later life have also changed. People do not feel themselves to be ‘old’ at age 65, and are expecting to be working and contributing to society well into later life. Yet services do not necessarily reflect these aspirations, and people’s perceptions of their housing options remain restrictively fixed as residential or nursing care homes when they are no longer able to care from themselves.

Age related health issues are also on the rise and conditions such as diabetes, dementia and heart disease in older people are expected to increase with the rise in population reaching older age<sup>v</sup>. Good lifestyle choices, including choosing suitable housing and healthy living spaces, help reduce the likelihood of such conditions and also impact positively on wider issues in public health and society.

The costs of an ageing society to health services and social care authorities is placing unsustainable pressure on already stretched budgets, not only in terms of rising cost of providing interventions and formal care packages, but also in relation to a smaller workforce able to undertake such care activities: whilst the older people we spoke to understandably did not want to become dependent or be treated with anything other than dignity and respect, some care will be needed. Healthy ageing achieves positive outcomes for all three of these dimensions: older people retain control and independence over their lives; health issues reduce or are less acute, including age related frailty and mental health concerns; and formal care packages are reduced as people live in enabling environments that encourage and support healthy ageing and continued connection to friends and family<sup>vi</sup>. This links to the [Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2018-2022](#) that has a strategic priority to support people to remain independent as long as possible through the work of the [Healthy Stevenage Partnership](#). [Connected Lives](#)<sup>vii</sup> is Hertfordshire Adult Care Service’s approach to community practice, personalised enablement and new models of commissioning. The Provider Outcome Framework is underpinned by the nine definitions of wellbeing from the Care Act 2014: personal dignity, physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing, protection from abuse and neglect, control by the individual over day-to-day life (including over care and support provided and the way it is provided), participation in work, education, training or recreation, social and economic wellbeing, domestic, family and personal, suitability of living accommodation and the individual’s contribution to society. The five outcomes summarise our shared vision with what we want to achieve for the people we support. The key to the model is the concept of connecting: to people, to support, to opportunity, to knowledge and to positive daily occupation.

**Connected Lives model**



**Current housing options for older people**

Older people live in a variety of housing types, including mainstream (general needs), retirement and ‘age restricted’ housing, or specialist accommodation such as independent living or flexi care schemes. Many older people wish to remain in their own home as they age, especially where there are emotional ties to the family home, or equity to be passed on to future generations. Adaptations, a home care package and other support, including telecare alarms and community services, can help people stay where they are for as long as they are able, but sometimes property costs, layout and maintenance become too much, and other, more suitable, housing needs to be considered. Stevenage Borough Council own 16 schemes with 810 properties in Stevenage that are specifically designed for older people, with a mixture of studios, 1 bedroom and some 2 bedroomed properties housing individuals and couples: two of the schemes are Flexicare (with a care agency on site 24 hours 7 days a week).

There are also 13 residential and care homes in the town, some of which are privately owned and some that provide services to people who receive social care funded packages.

Some of the current stock in Stevenage is no longer fit for purpose or sustainable in the long term, and there is a need for more specifically age-friendly and technically advanced properties to meet the need in the town. There are around 180 flats available for private sale for older people managed by organisations such as McCarthy & Stone, Millstream Management Services, Anchor Hanover, Aldwyck and First Port. It is recognised that for some home owners, the cost of moving to these schemes are unaffordable. It is estimated there are approximately 300 social rented homes owned by housing associations.

Stevenage Borough Council manages 7,808 properties in the Borough, of which 814 are within independent living or flexicare schemes. Stevenage Borough Council's Asset Management Strategies of 2014 and 2019 have included key objectives for the review of its existing independent living stock to ensure that it is fit for purpose, through investment and remodelling. This includes:

- Planned works to improve and remodel the independent living stock where necessary (inclusive of communal areas);
- The conversions of low demand independent living studio accommodation to self-contained one-bedroom flats, using communal areas where appropriate;
- The creation of additional homes in existing schemes, providing additional accommodation and improving their viability; and
- The disposal and redevelopment of independent living accommodation identified as being unsustainable in the long term.

Stevenage Borough Council commissioned a detailed review of its independent living scheme assets in 2016, which categorised all schemes into one of the following categories:

**Green** – Sustainable in the long term, continue to invest and retain as independent living.

**Amber** – Sustainable in the medium term but will require investment and/or remodelling to remain viable in the long term

**Red** - Unsustainable and investment levels make the schemes unviable to retain as independent living schemes

Those independent living schemes falling into the amber category are considered to be at risk of experiencing longer term demand and/or physical problems which require investment to upgrade the schemes and, in some cases, remodel accommodation. Following the review, Stevenage Borough Council has implemented a £3 million improvement programme that, over the next 5 years, will deliver the investment required to remodel and enhance these schemes to the required standard. This is alongside a programme of planned maintenance being delivered as part of the asset management strategy.

Two of the schemes deemed to be unsustainable (red) have been decommissioned and the sites are being re-developed. The remaining two schemes are part of a further options appraisal to determine their future viability.

Many older people will live in ordinary general needs properties too, but older housing stock in both the social and private sector may cause difficulties for older people in terms of size, maintenance or adaptability as needs change. Significant development is underway in Stevenage through its housing development programme, and so we are in a perfect position to use this strategy to influence the design and accessibility of new housing which allows older people to 'right-size', move to more age-friendly housing in the community, or to develop new schemes such as extra care which also provides an on-site care provision where it is needed. People age at different rates, regardless of the number of years they have lived, and some people need more services than others at different stages of their lives. We need,

therefore, to recognise that a range of housing is required in different settings to meet the aspirations and needs of our population.

## Current support services, information and advice

Under the Care Act 2014, the local care authority (Hertfordshire County Council) must make provision to prevent, reduce or delay care needs. This can be managed through a combination of ways to assess and commission care to maximise a person's independence. Reducing social isolation and enabling social connection, facilitating mobility and mental and physical well-being, and providing an enabling home environment allows people to live well and have a better quality of life. The principle of the promotion of an individual's [wellbeing](#), enshrined in section 1 of the Act, and within section 1 of the Care and Support Statutory Guidance, includes the suitability of living accommodation as underpinning the authority's functions in addressing a person's care and support needs. In 2019-20 Hertfordshire Adult Care Services (ACS) provided 1,059 packages of care for people over 55 living in Stevenage across all services.

In carrying out these functions, Hertfordshire County Council provides a range of support services, including the Hertfordshire Equipment Service (HES), organises respite and day care services, provides Occupational Therapy services, and carries out carer's assessments for people looking after a loved one. All of these services are affected by and can impact on a person's home and living environment. When Social Workers undertake an assessment of a person's needs, their living circumstances should be taken into account. Stevenage Borough Council is also part of the shared Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA) which is hosted by the County Council.

Stevenage Borough Council's Housing Options team offer a range of impartial information and advice across all tenures and types of housing. Stevenage Borough Council also have their own Aids and Adaptations Policy and has a small budget to fund adaptations to council properties.

The SBC Specialist Support Services Team provides support to all those living in Independent Living and flexicare accommodation owned by SBC. All residents receive a 24/7 emergency response service either through a hardwired alarm or a pendant alarm unit depending on the scheme that they live in. For more details of the support service see 1.2.

## Stevenage Borough Council's Business Unit Review (April 2020):

Stevenage Borough Council's Housing and Investment department (H&I) has been through a business unit review in April 2020. It was an opportunity to review all the services and was the catalyst for the transformation of the Independent Living team to Specialist Support Services (appendix 5). The research from this strategy has also fed into the review.

Some of the key changes to staffing, roles and service provision include:

- Introduction of Specialist Accommodation & Complex Needs Officer – this role will be the single point of contact for potential applicants moving into our schemes. They will manage the transition from a property on notice of termination through to the letting, co-ordinating viewings, lettings and removals for residents enhancing the journey for the customer.

They will link closely with colleagues across the council and in particular linking in with the Aids and Adaptation Team ensuring best use of council stock.

- Introduction of Health & Wellbeing Programme Officer – this post will enhance the health and wellbeing of our Specialist Support Services customers by supporting and empowering residents

to organise some activities in their schemes. They will co-ordinate a health and wellbeing programme of activities and information sessions within schemes, linking in with the work of the Healthy Stevenage Partnership and networking with other agencies and health partners to tackle loneliness and improve health and wellbeing.

The post holder will be actively seeking funding opportunities or initiating projects for residents and will be a Dementia Friends Trainer to train colleagues across the organisation and other organisations.

- Some of the smaller schemes have been merged together and have two named Specialist Support Officers working across three schemes; this enables the team to provide additional support to larger schemes or those with higher demands. This is a flexible structure and the team will adjust presence at schemes in line with demands as they change. Residents continue to receive 24/7 emergency response service through their alarm.
- Introduction of Rapid (a mobile technology solution) to complete forms, collect data and complete assessments; this has enabled the staff to work more flexibly on the go and has reduced duplication.

## Covid-19 Response

In March 2020 with the outbreak of Covid-19, both Stevenage Borough and Hertfordshire County Council responded to the needs of our residents.

The Specialist Support Services team at Stevenage adjusted the way services were delivered to ensure the safety of residents and staff. The team continued to respond to emergency calls 24/7 and continued to carry out essential visits. Regular contact was made to all residents through the alarm system and telephone for those not requiring a physical visit.

The team were able to make contact with all Stevenage Careline customers and any council tenants over the age of 70 years old to check on their wellbeing and to ensure they could self-isolate safely. The team provided weekly welfare calls to over 140 households, providing reassurance and ensuring the service users and residents received the support they needed. The Football Foundation, through the Healthy Stevenage Partnership, worked collaboratively to support older people with providing meals and support during the pandemic and have been working with the Specialist Support Services Team to look at who would need continuous support going forward.

At the same time, Hertfordshire County Council adapted their support services, by sending a 'Your Connected life' resource leaflet to everyone who receives support and running associated social media campaigns over the winter period. These encouraged people to stay active and engage with their communities, plan ahead, and to contact us if they are anxious about their care and support arrangements. Arrangements were put in place to make Direct Payments easier to organise and use, supporting people to use these flexibly to ensure they had the care and support they need, in addition to making sure that the council responded accordingly where people's care and support plans needed to change as a result of Covid-19.

Understanding and sharing best practice in care homes in relation to supporting residents and their loved ones to keep in touch is very important, and resourcing the Council's monitoring teams to deliver 'Health and Wellbeing' themed visits, to support all providers in sustaining a focus on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of people with care and support needs was a key activity in supporting care homes to remain open to visits where they can do this safely.

Both Hertfordshire and Stevenage councils were active participants in 'Operation Sustain' and 'Operation Shield' reaching out pro-actively to people during the first phase of the pandemic and reminding them how to get help. Working with voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors and health partners we give ongoing support to anyone who needs assistance. We have also been supporting people who are struggling with their mental health, who are experiencing economic hardship, and those who are finding it difficult to access services in an increasingly on-line world. This extends to bereavement support and supporting those who care for others by working with Carers in Herts to check in with family carers pro-actively, ensuring they have the support needed and a back-up plan to see them through the winter, and that they know what to do if they are struggling. This has involved keeping in touch with and supporting carers who are unable to visit loved ones, giving access to sitting, respite and short breaks services, and supporting providers to continue to provide and to re-open closed day services where we can do this safely. This has included supporting voluntary and community organisations as they look to re-open community centres.

We have also been proactive in ensuring no-one is excluded from accessing the support they need. We have done this by ensuring alternatives to digital communication are used, ensuring that all of our communication is in a suitable and accessible format for the diverse communities across Hertfordshire. Recognising that there is a higher vulnerability to the virus for specific communities, we have been developing improved links with Black, Asian and other ethnic groups, and continuing our targeted approach to provide information, advice and direct support to people with a learning disability and Autism and those that care for them.

## **Cost of Services**

Funding has been challenging for all public authorities in recent years, and changes in central government support has made it necessary to make some difficult choices across organisations, including the reduction, realignment or commercialisation of (i.e. charging for) some services. In order to continue to provide the support service to older people in the town, in 2017/18 Stevenage Borough Council introduced a small weekly support charge for those who received the service for free so they were making a contribution. SBC still currently subsidises towards this service for these residents. Local authorities have responsibilities to make best use of public money and aspire to reduce costs to the public purse by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the services they provide. The actions contained within this Strategy will assist with this agenda.



## Part 2: Future Focus

Stevenage is a town which has ambitious aspirations for growth. It has a very strong community focus, a population that values its uniqueness and history, and a new Local Plan setting out aspirations for new housing and the regeneration of the town centre. Older people clearly have a role to play in the reshaping of the town and ensuring that there is suitable housing for them is important, not only for their wellbeing and community coherence, but also to help release existing family homes back into the wider housing market.

This part of the strategy follows the four themes identified earlier:

- **Development, standards and design**
- **Information, advice and technology**
- **Support and assistance to help people move**
- **Inter-organisational working**

**All four of the themes are intrinsically linked, and so many of the recommendations identified will be cross cutting, will work across organisational systems, and will support each other and existing workstreams within the housing and social care realms.**

### Theme 1: Development, standards and design

#### New housing development

As the biggest landlord in Stevenage, the Borough Council has a significant role to play in both the shaping of new and existing communities, leading the way with applying design standards and technology which help people age well in their homes and driving sustainable development. A significant housing development programme is underway across the town to reinvigorate and modernise the offer to Stevenage residents, and new housing is included within its scope.

New developments, such as the Borough Council's flagship scheme being developed at Kenilworth Close, are leading the way in the Borough's aspirations for older people. The scheme will provide over 200 new dwellings, of which 88 will make up a new Independent Living Scheme. The remaining properties will be made up of general needs flats and houses as well as some for private sale. New community facilities and new public realm, and a number of retail units are also included within the scheme design.

### Kenilworth Close Regeneration:

A total of 236 New Homes  
88 affordable & social  
rented homes for  
independent living by the  
over 60 age group  
Modern, thermally  
efficient homes  
incorporating HAPPI  
features

A mixed tenure blind  
community  
Provision for 5 local shops  
to support local economy  
and sustainability  
Start on site: Jan 2021  
Completion in 2023/24



Kenilworth Close in Bragbury End is a new development that will have an Independent Living Scheme of 1 and 2 bedroomed apartments. As part of SBC's Regeneration Project, the apartments have been specifically designed for older people, recognising that they have different aspirations and requirements when it comes to their housing and care needs.

Each apartment will have a useable balcony or personal outdoor space, enhanced security features, and plenty of communal areas, both inside and outside the scheme. The development itself is positioned close to local shops, green space and transport links to the town centre.

In October 2019, Hertfordshire County Council also adopted a new strategy and capital fund to enable new extra care housing across the county, including Stevenage, and proposals for a new residential care home for the borough are also being discussed.

Using the Housing Older People Supply Recommendations [HOPSR<sup>viii</sup>](#) demand modelling tool, developed by Sheffield Hallam University, it is estimated that demand for specialist housing for older people over 75 will increase in Stevenage by some 68% in age exclusive, sheltered, enhanced sheltered and extra care by 2030 (current supply – 1,349; 2030 recommended future supply – 2,262), with an additional increase in residential care home beds for the same age group of 90% (current supply - 511; 2030 recommended future supply – 972). Table [1] below shows how this is split across rented and owned tenures, although it should be noted that these figures are only indicative, and will not be completely consistent with locally calculated figures, which take other factors into account. The final mix of properties are likely to be different to meet local needs.

Table 1: Housing for Older People supply Recommendations (HOPSR) by tenure for Stevenage

	Recommended tenure supply			
	current	2025	2030	2035
<b>Age exclusive (units)</b>				
Rented	397	397	440	518
Owner	34	34	37	44
<b>Sheltered (units)</b>				
Rented	820	1,071	1,215	1,430
Owned	157	206	233	275
<b>Enhanced sheltered (units)</b>				
Rented	14	18	21	25
Owned	12	15	17	20
<b>Extra Care (units)</b>				
Rented	81	106	121	142
Owned	12	16	18	21

Following revisions to the National Planning Policy Guidance in June 2019, strategic policy-making authorities “will need to determine the needs of people who will be approaching or reaching retirement over the plan period, as well as the existing population of older people”<sup>ix</sup> so these numbers can be seen to be an underestimation of need when late middle age and younger older people – i.e. those between 55 and 74 years of age – are taken into account. This does not mean that targets have to be set for specialist housing, but does give extra impetus to ensuring that age appropriate housing across all types and tenures is factored into Local Planning Policy. Stevenage’s Local Plan was adopted in May 2019<sup>x</sup>, and will stand until 2031, with a review within five to ten years. In order to allow flexibility, there isn’t a target set for older people’s housing, although there is a recognition that age appropriate housing needs to be considered in all new developments. The Local Plan does include a specific policy, HO10 (sheltered and supported housing) dedicated to shaping the developments of older persons housing schemes. HO11 also relates to accessible housing development, although this is not older person specific.

Over 40% of respondents to our professionals’ survey, felt that the lack of availability and quality of specialist housing on offer to older people was a barrier when considering a move to more appropriate housing. The current offer requires some service users to move away from familiar environments, leaving behind friends and family, at a time in their life when they may already be feeling vulnerable: those otherwise reluctant to move may be attracted if the opportunity is on their doorstep. It was felt that the issue of relocating was compounded by a lack of public transport.

**We will ensure that new housing developments brought forward by the Councils have a percentage of housing that is suitable for older people in line with population trends, including general needs as well**

as specialist housing wherever possible. This will be reviewed periodically to ensure it is in line with population projections and demand.

We will work with our planning department to ensure that future Housing Market Assessments, Land Allocations and Planning Policy reflects the needs of an ageing population, that preparatory work for the Local Plan reviews and renewal have sufficiently robust evidence from both authorities to underpin policy direction.

We will do this by:

- Ensuring suitable and robust data about older people's housing requirements is gathered from national, borough and county sources, is shared and analysed jointly to underpin planning policy decisions that meet residents' current and future needs and feed this into any future council house building
- Working with our neighbouring districts to ensure that cross boundary planning requirements and housing mobility are recognised and reflected in relation to older people's care needs.

Stevenage Borough Council is currently undertaking an ambitious and large-scale regeneration programme, which will result in 2,000 new homes within and around the town centre. The Council aspires to use its assets wisely, by offsetting development costs wherever possible through assessing land value and existing buildings potential for resale or redevelopment and reinvesting any capital proceeds into the new developments to arrive at a neutral cost position to the Council overall. Our aspiration is to work with partners to increase provision of housing for older people as part of the later phases of the town centre regeneration.

At the same time, Hertfordshire County Council's property company, Herts Living, has embarked on a new housing development joint venture company - Chalkdene Developments - which is looking to utilise identified County Council owned sites to bring forward much needed housing across Hertfordshire including Stevenage. In both these cases, some of these will be occupied by older people and those approaching retirement, and so master-planning should reflect this need by viability and design assessments that include features that are age appropriate.

Additionally, a new programme of [Delivering Extra Care in Hertfordshire](#) is being established by the County Council to help give older people more choice about where and when they move, preventing health and care needs escalating for those who need support. These new developments are expected to be mixed tenure to appeal to a range of people, and to reflect the communities in which they are set<sup>xi</sup>. Demographic modelling done by the County Council based on population projections, current care requirements and national modelling tools, have shown to have an estimated demand in Stevenage of 301 extra care homes in total (including existing provision), with around half of those (154) available for people with fully funded care packages from Adult Social Care. It is intended that the majority of these new developments will be met through strategic working between the county and Stevenage Borough Council, particularly in terms of land use, funding (for both the development and housing support) and design, and officers from both will be included on the project teams. We will use landholdings from both councils effectively to ensure that flexicare schemes are built in the right locations that meet local communities' needs and will leverage grant from Homes England and other sources to facilitate development. Additionally, professional expertise from occupational therapy, housing teams and social work teams will be utilised to inform the design and facilities provision, ensuring that people receive excellent support, care, that social interaction is maximised, and health benefits are realised.

Local housing and planning authorities are required to ensure that planning policies adhere to the economic, social and environmental principles of sustainable development that support strong, vibrant and healthy communities<sup>xii</sup>, improvements in the conditions in which people live, and widening their housing choices<sup>xiii</sup>. Today's older people have different aspirations from previous generations, and new developments must acknowledge that traditional ideas of housing for later life may not still be appropriate. Conversations with older residents in Stevenage show that people expect more space for hobbies and visitors, want at least two bedrooms, and require easily maintained and sustainable homes in smaller developments sited within their local communities.

Both councils are currently undertaking significant reviews of their land and property holdings and are identifying potential sites for redevelopment: Stevenage will be conducting options appraisals as part of the Asset Management Strategy 2019-2023, and Hertfordshire County Council has already identified a number of potential redevelopment opportunities which are being assessed for suitability. However, it is also recognised that land is a scarce resource and limited land availability in the Borough is a risk to developing significant numbers of new housing specifically for older people, within wider housing market demands.

**We will work collaboratively between the two authorities to identify and exploit land opportunities in both public and private ownership that can help increase housing options across all tenures for older people for whom their existing housing is no longer a safe or suitable option, or people with care needs, or for those wishing to proactively plan for their later years before significant care needs arise.**

**We will do this by:**

- **Undertaking land and asset reviews and jointly identify suitable development opportunities in the town to bring forward viable, cost neutral development for older people where it is needed most.**
- **Developing flexible, age-appropriate housing, exemplar flexicare and residential care in Stevenage through SBC and County's housing development programmes.**
- **Developing good marketing strategies**

## **Housing Types and Tenures**

Residential care and independent living homes are still necessary in today's and future housing landscape, but more people are now thinking earlier about their housing options and considering 'rightsizing' or 'future proofing' before they become unable to manage without formal care. Consequently, a range of housing types and tenures should be considered, that meet the aspirations of older people, and which include home ownership, shared ownership and rented options. The Housing for Older People survey results show that while half (53.3%) of the respondents felt they would like to maintain their current tenure, a quarter 25.0% (26/104) of current homeowners felt they would move to a rented property, with the remaining 22.1% stating that they were unsure about the best tenure option for them (*table 2*).

Table 2: Service User Survey – current tenure and where people would move to

Existing	Would move to	Buy outright or with a mortgage	Rent from SBC	Rent from a housing association	Shared Ownership	Not sure
A home you own with a mortgage		13	12	1	1	8
A home you own without a mortgage		41	11	2		15
Rented from the Council (SBC)		1	40	3		
Rented from a Housing Association		1	6	3		2
Extra Care or sheltered / independent living scheme			6	1		1
Rented from a private landlord			8	2		

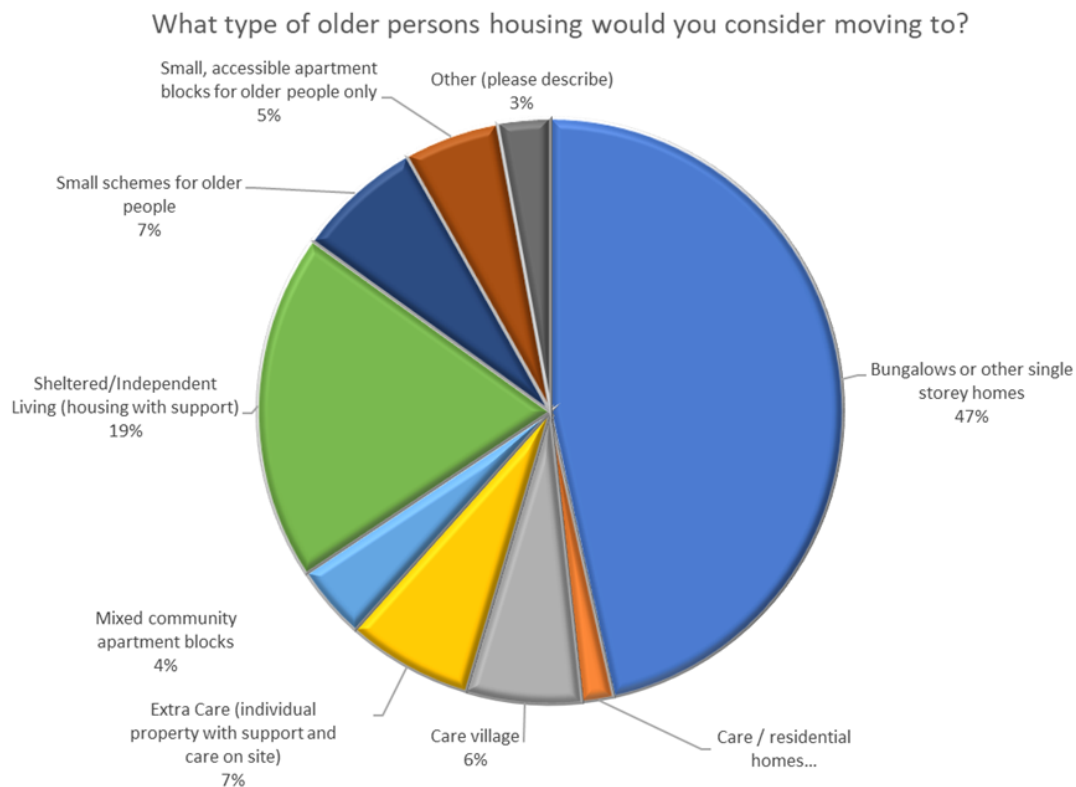
In June 2019, nearly a quarter of applicants on the Stevenage housing register were over 55 (23.8%) indicating that the need for affordable housing for older people is still a major issue. Recent national data<sup>xiv</sup> also shows that homelessness applications for older people are also on the rise, often from the private rented sector, and are generally poverty driven. Although Stevenage does not appear to be suffering similar issues currently, it is a trend we wish to prevent.

In our survey, only one respondent said that they would be interested in a shared ownership model of housing, however we are not sure if this low number is due to a lack of interest or a lack of information. Currently shared ownership is not a product often promoted to older people in Hertfordshire. Other areas of the country, however, successfully include shared ownership within older persons housing schemes: one study showed that many older people in Manchester were trapped in a home they could not afford to move out of, but neither could they afford to maintain it<sup>xv</sup>. The 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation<sup>xvi</sup> include a new measure of Income Deprivation Affecting Older People (IDAOPI) (60+). The IMD measures factors of social inequality across small geographical areas, known as Lower Spatial Output Areas or Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) [1]. This new measure, specifically related to older people, shows that over 80% (42/52) of the LSOA in Stevenage are in the lowest five deciles in Hertfordshire, meaning that they are in the most deprived areas in the County for this indicator. Shared ownership may be a way of addressing this issue and is something we wish to explore further.

We also asked people what sort of housing they would like to move to, if they were considering a move, and what sort of design features and facilities they would want to see in those new homes. The majority of people wished to move to a single storey dwelling (with one respondent specifically requesting a bungalow, not a flat), and 45% of respondents (77) suggesting that schemes specifically for older people

*My current home meets my needs now, but if I become unwell or have a disability in old age, my concern is the lack of properties to choose to live safely. I would require a ground floor flat or bungalow that is close to amenities and has a social centre. I believe we need more of this housing both now and in the future. Stevenage has a high aging population and there are older*

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**We will continue to monitor and assess tenure requirements for older people, and work with developers to create the right mix of housing types to meet the needs for existing and future older populations.**

**We will do this by:**

- **Undertaking research into people’s understanding of different tenure types and, using co-production techniques and improved data gathering processes, gauge the appetite for different types of housing tenure in different groups of people in the town**

- **Use this research to influence the market through increased choice awareness and managing demand**
- **Ensure tenure choice for older people is included in future Strategic Housing Market Assessments and Local Housing Need Assessments where they are carried out. Carry out a specific older person needs assessments if the new methodology isn't sufficient.**
- **Build these findings into future council housing developments.**

## **Design standards**

In the residents' survey, only 21% of respondents said they had no disability or major health condition, with mobility issues being the most prevalent condition cited. As people get older, it is more likely that they will develop health complications which can be impacted positively or negatively by housing design. Mental health can also suffer, and as recent months have shown with the Covid pandemic, while aiming to reduce social isolation and bring communities together, housing design must also ensure that people are safe from infection in times of high risk. Open space, well planned walking routes, and secure areas in housing developments should be considered to minimise potential risk factors, but still maintain a sense of community. Hertfordshire Public Health have recently introduced [Health Impact Assessments](#) for new developments to ensure that health and wellbeing concerns are factored into design and place shaping considerations. For older people, who may be more vulnerable to environmental factors that impact on health, undertaking such an assessment is recommended.

We will aim to ensure that all new housing for older people of any tenure is built to accessible and sustainable standards, conforming to HAPPI<sup>xvii</sup> design standards, are digitally enabled for assistive and other technology, and will encourage developers to build to energy efficient and carbon neutral specifications. This will be achieved through well managed early conversations with developers, and clear expectations of what we require. Hertfordshire County Council has recently approved a set of extra care design standards as part of their new strategic Extra Care development programme.

Environmental sustainability is a major consideration in all new development, with both Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council announcing a Climate Emergency in June and July 2019 respectively. HCC and SBC are both committed to being net carbon zero by 2030, most new buildings will hit that target before 2030 and Stevenage Borough Council has also done considerable work on their own housing design standards to drive sustainable development in the town. This commits both Councils to work with partners to deliver a [Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy](#) to help reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, promote energy efficiency, reduce waste, and to promote more environmentally friendly land use, including that used for housing. Housing design must be energy efficient, both in construction and use, making best use of natural light and passive warmth, and link well to sustainable transport routes to minimise parking and car use. PassivHaus, BREEAM, and higher Building Regulation standards are encouraged where possible, to provide a high level of sustainability in build and use (whole life costing). Older people will often be fuel poor and yet feel extremes of temperature more acutely than younger people. These can lead to significant health complications, so both new and existing homes must be affordable to heat in winter and be cool in summer. Stevenage Borough Council currently has a programme of work to upgrade the communal heating at the existing independent living and flexicare schemes to improve energy efficiency and reduce cost.

**We will continue to ensure that sustainability and energy efficiency are factored into all design and construction methods, using modern methods of construction, best practice and new technologies wherever possible.**



### **We will do this by:**

- **Developing a set of co-produced design standards, based on best practice and involving service users, for general needs and specialist housing for older people in Stevenage (built by SBC), and promoting accessible, adaptable, and dementia friendly design;**
- **Investigating options such as PassivHaus and other eco-build designs for specialist older persons housing, to reduce thermal variances and the associated costs, and assist in preventing poor health outcomes in older people.**
- **Ensuring that tenders, design competitions and contracts clearly reflect and contain scoring criteria relating to sustainability and whole life costing.**
- **Developing a protocol for capturing ‘lessons learned’ from each new development, to improve future design and development projects;**
- **Using developer forums and communications to ensure that contractors are aware of our sustainability and environmental commitments.**

Social interaction is a major factor in health and wellbeing, and it is important that new development for older people reflects the need to keep people connecting to each other, their communities and the wider world. This can be done through sensitive design, including transport and shared spaces, building accessible housing which allows people to get out and remain active, and by using assistive, integral technology to help people feel safe and connected when at home. Working with planning colleagues, occupational therapists, community-based services and housing providers early in design and master-planning activities can bring professional expertise to place shaping, making new development suitable for all generations to use and enjoy.

Where required, and under certain conditions, grant may be available to housing providers to help bring forward a higher standard of housing suitable for older people. This could, for example, be put towards innovative design, higher space standards to allow for mobility aids and medical storage, assistive technology and connectivity, and additional adaptability. When asked (in the Housing for Older People survey), residents had a clear preference for larger properties, including two or three bedrooms; guest rooms; raised beds in gardens; building close to amenities and shops and close to public transport routes, and within existing communities where possible. These results are similar to other research projects, such as the DWELL project carried out by Sheffield University in 2016<sup>xviii</sup>, which showed that people were comfortable with apartment living, but still with a preference for bungalows (though two storey dwellings were also acceptable if they were accessible), but were also keen to see flexible and adaptable homes which can cater for changes in care needs, and to allow room for visitors and family members including grandchildren. Technology was seen as being an integral part of the home, for example Wi-Fi as standard, and scooter storage and charging points were also considered essential. All housing developed with older people in mind should enable these connections to thrive, and an avoidance of long corridors or an institutional feel would be welcomed. Analysis of the features most favoured by older residents and professionals can be found in Appendices 3 and 4.

Extra care, or other age friendly housing development, also allows for the provision of community hubs, where health and related services can serve both the people living in the scheme and their families and neighbours living in the wider community. In our professionals’ survey, 30% of respondents favoured having a GP surgery or clinic in close proximity which could help administer community-based health services that older people need, more effectively. Research carried out by the Social Care Institute for Excellence into community based integration services found that health and wellbeing outcomes tend to

fare better when healthcare, mental health and social care needs are met in the community, allowing for services to be designed around the needs of the local population and tailored to local context and priorities. The transformation of community based services has been found to be integral to the delivery of person centred coordinated health and social care and empowers people to take control of their own health and care needs.<sup>xix</sup>

**We will continue to work with professionals across health, housing and social care to sensitively plan for older person's housing in mixed developments to encourage healthy communities that include housing suitable for an ageing population.**

**We will do this by:**

- **Continuing to build on the work of the Stevenage Supported Accommodation Board and engaging with East and North Herts Clinical Care Group (CCG) and Hertfordshire and West Essex Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP), to plan strategically across all services.**
- **Work with our planning departments to engage public health colleagues to shape healthy places suitable for people of all ages to enjoy.**

In our increasingly tech-enabled world, building suitable digitally enabled infrastructure into any new development is crucial. Technology, both in terms of individual applications and generalised environmental controls (such as smart metering and automatic systems), are evolving and developing at a pace, and so understanding what to build into new properties, or what can be retrofitted into existing homes, is difficult to determine and will need to be determined on a case-by-case basis taking into account available technologies at the time. High quality, reliable and robust digital infrastructure is essential as systems must be able to run wirelessly without interruption and be secure. Fibre optic broadband should be available at a minimum. Assistive technology can then be personalised, and could, for example, include video entry systems, medication reminders and automated lighting, in addition to assisting with caring responsibilities such as movement monitoring, so unusual activity can be picked up swiftly, 'checking in' and telecare. Each resident will have their own individual care needs and desired outcomes to be achieved, but as a guiding principle the following drivers will need to be uppermost: supporting people's independence; sustaining people's ability to remain in their home; identifying people's changing needs at an earlier stage; keeping people safe; better support for carers; reducing social isolation; and better engagement with communities.

Residents must be comfortable with and in their homes, so assistive technology should be unobtrusive but of benefit to them, be secure enough to protect their privacy, and be easy to operate; practitioners should be able to use the information wisely to inform care assessments and respond to crisis swiftly; and families need to be sure that the technology is helping their loved one appropriately. We will of course always be mindful of potential safeguarding issues, data protection and personal privacy, and data gathering will be GDPR compliant.

**We will work with occupational therapists, social workers, care organisations and assistive technology providers to ensure new technologies are considered as an integral part of scheme development, and that high-quality digital infrastructure is included in all new build specialist older persons' housing schemes as standard to support new technology.**

**We will do this by:**

- **Jointly investigating new assistive technology and incorporating appropriate systems into new housing development and refurbishment as standard where it is viable to do so.**
- **Ensuring that design standards are reviewed and updated as infrastructure is upgraded, and new technologies emerge.**
- **Ensure the integral or retrofitted technology is reflected in the Asset Management, maintenance and renewal policies and reviews.**

Many older people use mobility scooters or other electric vehicles which will require charging points. Some will still drive and will need transport of their own, especially if dealing with disability, still working or who have caring responsibilities. Balancing the needs of sustainability and accessibility can be difficult, and much will depend on the location and facilities close to where new housing is sited.

In a recent study<sup>xx</sup>the better use of electric bicycles and scooters was cited as a technology to enhance physical mobility. Stevenage’s segregated pedestrian and cycle network that links all parts of the town is underused, however this reflects the national picture: a 2013 study found that cycling accounted for only 1% of all journeys amongst people aged 65 and over in the UK, compared to 23% in the Netherlands, 15% in Denmark and 9% in Germany<sup>xxi</sup>. The promotion of this model of travel amongst older people and the provision of cycle parking/hire at sites of specialist housing for older people, can help to encourage the use of cleaner and greener modes of transport, as well as delivering wider benefits in terms of health and wellbeing.

The National Planning Policy Framework encourages positive planning for cycling and walking, giving people a real choice about how they travel. Moreover, this approach is aligned with the County Council’s Local Transport Plan, and Stevenage Borough Council’s Local Plan and Future Transport Strategy.

**We will encourage the use of safe and sustainable transport by older people.**

**We will do this by:**

- **ensuring that electric vehicles are able to be charged and stored safely and that schemes link to the existing cycle network wherever possible.**
- **developing schemes in places with good public transport links.**
- **encouraging safe, well-lit walking and cycling routes to be incorporated into development plans.**

## **Long Stay Residential Care and Nursing Homes**

The number of frail older adults within the Stevenage area is expected to increase, driving increasing demand for residential and nursing care. [Hertfordshire's Ten Year Supported Accommodation Strategy 2017-2027](#) outlines the expected requirement for older adults’ residential and nursing provision and approach that will be taken to ensure adequate supply of affordable, quality care in Stevenage. It is also expected that there will be further demand for short term residential nursing services to support people needing short breaks or care immediately on being discharged from Lister Hospital or other health care settings.

**We will work together to ensure that Stevenage residents can access the right care when they need it.**

**To do this, we will:**

- Increase flexicare provision and reduce funded placements to long stay residential care as a proportion of care commissioned with a net reduction in the total beds.
- Increase in the availability of good quality residential nursing care to meet challenging increases in demand linked to demographic change.
- Evaluate the case for the partnership to lead the development of a new residential nursing home in Stevenage to support people requiring publicly funded care, including supported discharge from hospital.

## Existing Homes

In 2013, Stevenage Borough Council commissioned a complete review of housing and household conditions across the private housing sector, to update the previous survey completed in 2007. The survey, which used a stratified sampling methodology of 1,000 homes representing 4% of the total private housing stock, showed that 42% of households were headed by someone over 55.

Stevenage currently has an excellent track record of keeping people safe and warm in their homes in recent years: in 2019/20 excess winter deaths in the over 85s were nearly half that of the England average (17.6 per 10,000 population, compared with 30.8 in England) and fuel poverty in Stevenage is lower by almost a third (Stevenage 7.4%: England 10.3%)\*<sup>xii</sup>. However, fuel poverty is more prevalent in older households, with the highest levels occurring in the wards of St Nicholas, Chells and Bedwell.

An asset management review of Stevenage's independent living housing stock was undertaken in 2016 to assess viability and fitness for purpose, with two schemes being decommissioned and reinvested into a new Kenilworth Court scheme. Further opportunities to remodel or develop new schemes are being assessed. We know that many general needs homes, across all tenures, are occupied by older people and may not be suitable for them. Providing aspirational homes, that are well located and built for older people will also free up larger family housing, helping to stimulate the market and unlock housing chains. Furthermore, upgrading or refurbishing smaller properties in the private or social sector to more accessible standards could help older people downsize to more manageable and efficient homes.

Many older people, however, live in their own homes and have no wish or need to move. Homes are uniquely personal spaces, and so where it is possible and safe to do so, we will support people to remain in their current accommodation. People who live in homes they own, or who live in privately rented or housing association accommodation can apply to the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA) for help in adapting their homes to make them more suitable for their needs, and Stevenage Borough Council is responsible for adapting the homes of its tenants (see appendix 6 for the SBC Aids and Adaptations policy). At the time of writing, since its inception in January 2018 the HHIA has had 150 enquiries for adaptations funded through Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) in Stevenage, of which 97% were for over 50-year olds, and in the same period Stevenage have 400 requests for aids and adaptations for its tenants. The average age of applicants to the HHIA is 67 years old. The County Council currently supports the work of both adaptations teams through their Occupational Therapy service who work with residents to identify disabling factors within the home, and make professional recommendations on what is required to remedy or mitigate them. Although the responsibilities are similar, the Borough Council does not have the same funding availability as the HHIA and has to work within different parameters, which means that the two services are not completely aligned.

We also recognise, however, that sometimes people will need to consider whether their existing home is the most appropriate place for them to be, and so as part of the assessment process for adaptations

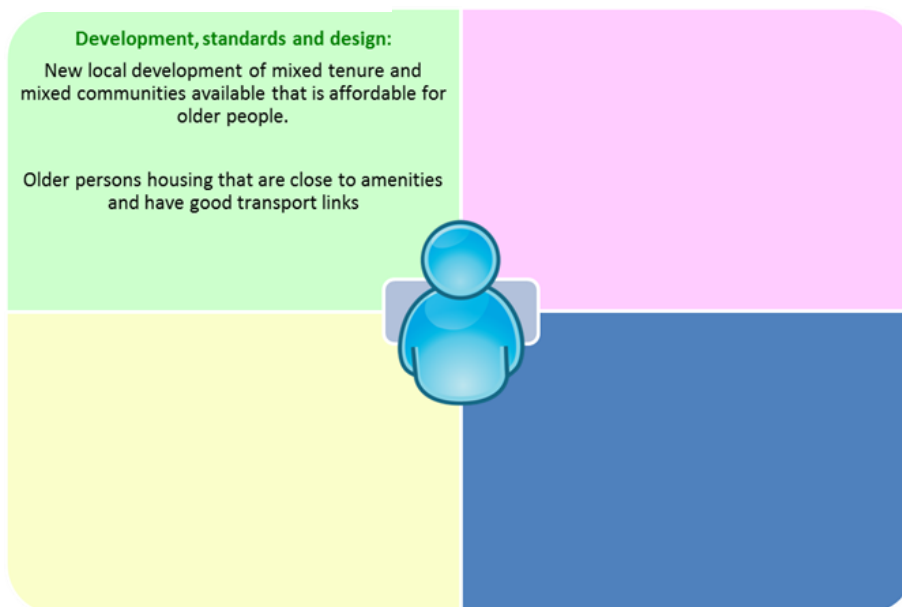
Careful appraisal should be undertaken to see if more suitable housing may be more appropriate before committing to major works in the home. The HHIA discretionary policy provides a means tested Moving House grant currently capped at £5,000. This is not enough however, to assist with the true cost of moving house and take up is low. It's usually applied to fees such as mortgage arrangement fees, valuations and stamp duty, although it can also be used for adapting the new property.

**We will continue to support older people living in their own homes by providing care and support services and using adaptations and equipment to enable them to live well, regardless of tenure, where it is safe and appropriate for them to do so. We will continue to remodel and develop new older person's housing to ensure they are fit for purpose and meet the needs of older people.**

**We will do this by:**

- Working to align and improve HHIA and SBC's aid and adaptations policies to ensure that people receive the same service wherever possible.
- Investigate ways of using DFG and HRA<sup>1</sup> funding in innovative ways to keep people healthy at home.
- Investigate ways of upgrading smaller existing homes to higher accessible standards, so they are available for older people to downsize into.
- Review and develop existing appraisal methods, funding and criteria for recommending alternative housing options, and strengthen links with housing options teams to help people make decisions earlier, and access support.
- Investigate remodelling opportunities for existing schemes.

### Outcomes for Older People



<sup>1</sup> Housing Revenue Account

## Theme 2: Information, advice and technology

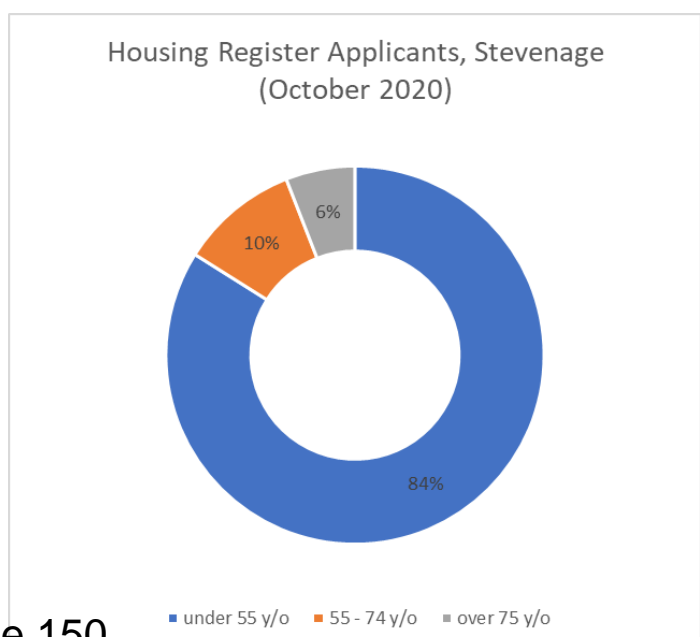
When asked about what information, advice and support for moving was available, both residents and professional's surveyed mentioned that downsizing for homeowners was specifically problematic, and understanding what services were available to help with this was sometimes difficult. Joined up working between the voluntary sector and the councils were mentioned as a gap, and removals and house clearing were cited as problem areas.

Questions of tenure were also raised: home owners, for example, may still want to own their property, and while nationally housing organisations provide shared ownership as a viable choice for some older people who have not enough equity to buy on the open market but who still wish to hold an ownership stake in their home, responses from residents and professionals in our survey, indicated that there was a limited understanding of what it involves and how it works. Understanding what potential residents might be giving up, in terms of space and gardens for example, and their pets and communities, and how that will influence their decision should be considered, and more education about what is available would be useful.

The Housing Options team at Stevenage Borough Council offers a range of housing related services to residents but does not offer specific advice about housing for older people. The 2014 Housing Allocations Scheme (reviewed 2018), which describes the criteria and process for people to apply for council or social housing in Stevenage, contains provisions for assessing financial circumstances (including capital released from selling an existing property), joining the housing register, and priority allocations and banding criteria for the Choice Based Lettings scheme. Independent living and flexi-care homes are let, via a panel process, through this Scheme, but otherwise older people are not specifically mentioned (except in relation to disability, medical need or overcrowding where an older person has moved in with family to receive care). The Annual Lettings Plan is agreed each year to ensure that allocations are appropriately distributed between bandings and priority groups. Additionally, SBC can produce a Local Lettings Plan specifically to address a local issue or concern, which could be used to help residents access suitable property in the locality. Older people did not wish to feel 'infantilised' or to lose control of their own financial and housing affairs, but feedback from residents and stakeholders is that a single point of contact dedicated to older people's housing needs would help relieve some of the confusion around what they can do and what is available to them. The Housing Allocations Policy is due to be reviewed again, with the process starting in September 2020 and this strategy will feed into that review.

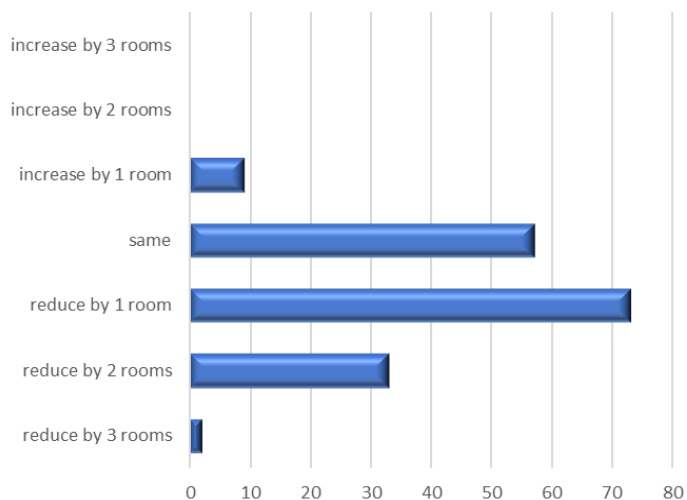
### Under-occupation

Sometimes housing providers will work with their older tenants to help facilitate a move, in particular where residents are under-occupying family sized housing. In September 2020, there were approximately 11% of council owned homes where people over the age of 55 were under-occupying by at least one bedroom, this is around 910 properties. While it is appropriate to help people stay where they are safe and feel happiest, sometimes this



is not the most suitable place for them in terms of keeping them healthy and connected, and also means that a larger home that might be used by a family in need is not available for them. This is a difficult question to answer, and care and sensitivity must be used to ensure that older people don't feel pushed out of their homes whilst also helping people fully explore their options.

Stevenage Older Persons Survey - willingness to move to a smaller property



When asked, respondents to our survey suggested that while 33% of people would want to retain the same size property, 61% would be willing to reduce their property size by one or two rooms. One answer to this is to ensure that suitable advice and support is available to older people living in all tenures so that they are aware of their housing options early enough to make informed decisions, and to make sure that suitable and attractive housing is available for them to move into. In September 2020, a snapshot was taken of the applicants on the Stevenage Housing register of people over 55 who are waiting for housing, and showed that there were 16% of applicants compared

to 28% in the population. There is a high proportionate of people over 55 who are owner occupiers in Stevenage. Better data gathering about why these people are looking to move home and what type of property they would accept needs to be undertaken, as well as further research into people who may need rehousing but are not eligible for the housing register. This data can then be used to further refine housing demand for older people, informing new development proposals.

**We will support our residents to consider their housing options earlier and assist with practical advice and help when they wish to move to enable their continued wellbeing.**

**We will do this by:**

- **Appointing dedicated services to work with older people and those with complex needs to help them navigate the different options open to them, and be the single point of contact for people wishing to move into specialist accommodation;**
- **Reviewing assessment processes for older people to ensure that housing and care assessments reflect and capture needs, concerns and barriers to people moving to suitable housing, and that these findings are considered across teams to improve services;**
- **Considering the specific needs of older people when reviewing the Allocations Scheme and Annual Lettings Plan to ensure older people have access to smaller properties that are suitable for them to downsize into.**
- **Develop local lettings plans for new schemes (in consultation)**

## **Connectivity and technology**

Connectivity becomes more important as people age: flexibility around work, caring, social networks and financial transactions are increasingly digital and new technologies emerge to change the way we interact with business, services and each other. As well as the design elements discussed earlier, older people can

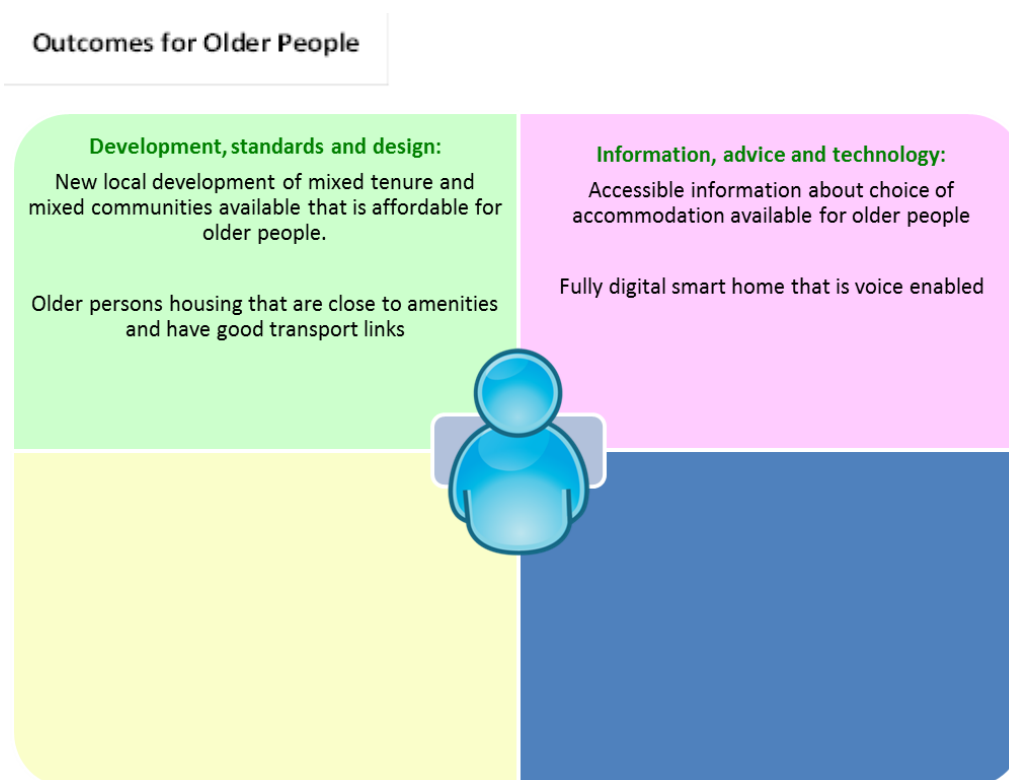
use the internet to assist with health and care challenges, connect with loved ones living too far away to travel to, keep track of spending and expenses, access advice and services, and a multitude of other uses, but there are perceived barriers in terms of a lack of skills, distrust of technology (and fear of being scammed) and assumptions about technologies usefulness or affordability. High speed broadband is already available in Stevenage, opening up services such as telecare and telehealth to our residents, both of which require reliable internet connection.

Technology also has the potential to facilitate social connectivity and tackle some of the loneliness that many older people report, particularly as families are becoming more geographically dispersed. People with a high degree of loneliness are twice at risk of developing Alzheimer's as people with a low degree of loneliness<sup>xxiii</sup>.

**We will support connectivity in our new and existing developments for older people, to reduce isolation, reduce fear or misunderstandings around new technology, and improve access to services, telecare and assistive technology opportunities.**

**We will do this by:**

- **Ensuring new build properties are connected to good quality broadband services, with fibre optic broadband provided as a minimum standard.**
- **Enabling courses for older people with low skills or trust in new technology, to help them understand and use technology better.**
- **Develop protocols for assistive technology prescribers, to ensure that personal privacy and GDPR requirements are met.**





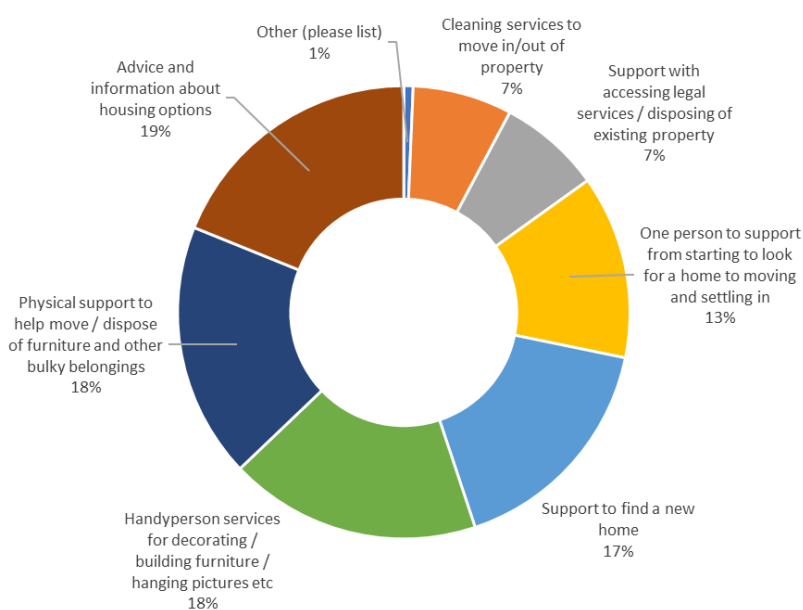
### Theme 3: Assistance to move and support

One often cited reason for people not moving, is that moving home is a physically and emotionally stressful experience. Identifying, securing and arranging a move is time-consuming and can cause distress, and clearing and selling owner-occupied properties, plus the transfer of utilities and other services can be daunting. Leaving communities where one has lived for many years can also be upsetting and disorientating.

Unfortunately, these difficulties can leave people in unsuitable housing, which is larger than they can manage, or which cannot support their needs. While disabled facilities grant and adaptations can help relieve some of this difficulty, for some people the best option could be to move to specialist housing such as flexi care or independent housing, or to downsize to an accessible, more age-friendly property. Housing Related Support funding is being redesigned to be more focussed on the housing needs of tenants, including the proposition to fund the promotion of flexi care or other specialist housing when people are struggling to manage in their current homes. While no-one would be forced to move, the role will help people to understand their options better, and to make links with other organisations who can help facilitate a move.

Stevenage Borough Council's Community Support Service offers council tenants over the age of 55 regular weekly contact of up to two visits a week from fully trained Specialist Support Officers currently at no charge. Support and guidance are offered on care and health services, benefit assessments, aids and adaptations, access to groups specialising in supporting older people, support with emergencies that may arise, and encouragement and support to participate in social activities in the local community and at local independent living schemes.

Stevenage Older Persons Survey -  
What support would you like?



Research for this strategy, however, has identified that there is a demand for such support services across all tenures (currently it is only provided to council tenants only), and that people would be prepared to pay for such services if the costs were reasonable, and were tailored to people's means and needs. Of 170 responders who answered the question, 5% felt that support service should be offered by voluntary and charity organisations; 28% felt this was the responsibility of the Councils; and 69% thought that it should be a mixture of the two. When asked, however, only 6% of professionals thought it was the sole responsibility of the Councils, and that friends and families should support more: 84% felt that a mix of voluntary and community and council services was the best way to provide support.

Pensioner poverty is an area of growing concern, with an estimate of 1,500 older households in Stevenage currently not receiving the benefits they are entitled to, a sum of around £4m annually<sup>xxiv</sup>. Some of this is

related to a lack of awareness of entitlement including a misunderstanding, particularly among owner occupiers, of eligibility. Changes in government policy relating to entitlements for couples of different ages (i.e. one pensioner and one working age) will also reduce incomes, as exemptions to the benefit cap and under occupation charges (known as the 'bedroom tax') may be removed. Support services therefore need to understand how housing costs and benefit take up contribute to people's ability to manage, as well as the physical aspects of their home, and we need to ensure that the group of people affected by the changes in entitlement conditions for mixed age couples have access to the full range of housing options on offer.

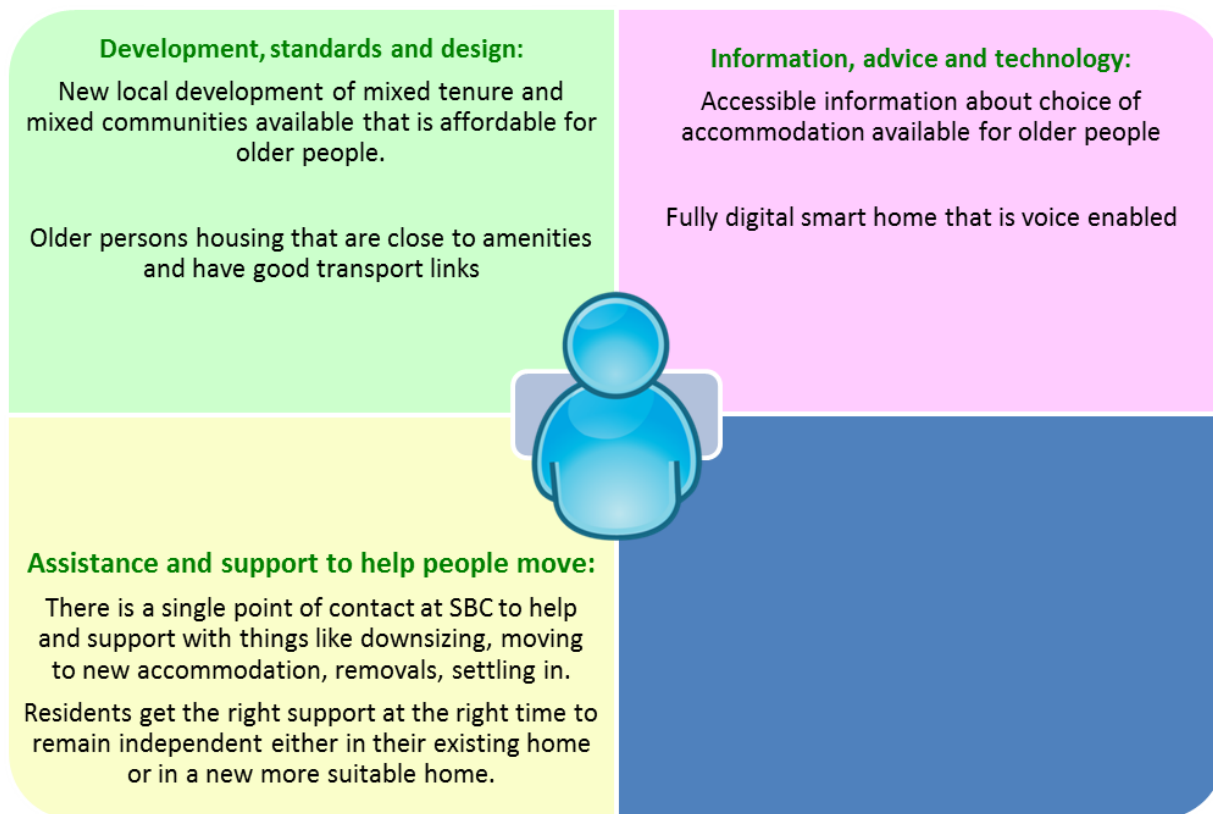
We will review the current support offer and seek to expand services across all housing tenures, working with our voluntary and charity sector partners and other statutory services, and exploring ways to fund activities via a sustainable and affordable business model across organisations. These activities will include:

- Working with Finance colleagues to understand the full cost of the support services across the two organisations, and identifying where savings can be made;
- Explore commercialisation opportunities to help offset some of the service costs, for example:
  - Expanding the Stevenage Careline alarm 24/7 response service to other providers within Stevenage and to neighbouring authorities;
  - Providing the community support service to private customers across the town. Covid-19 response demonstrated there are private residents that also needed the regular contact.
  - Offering the support and alarm response service to Housing Association tenants who no longer receive these services from their landlord.
- Review the level of service provided at Independent Living or extra care schemes and consider a range of support levels and services to meet changing needs.

**We will do this by:**

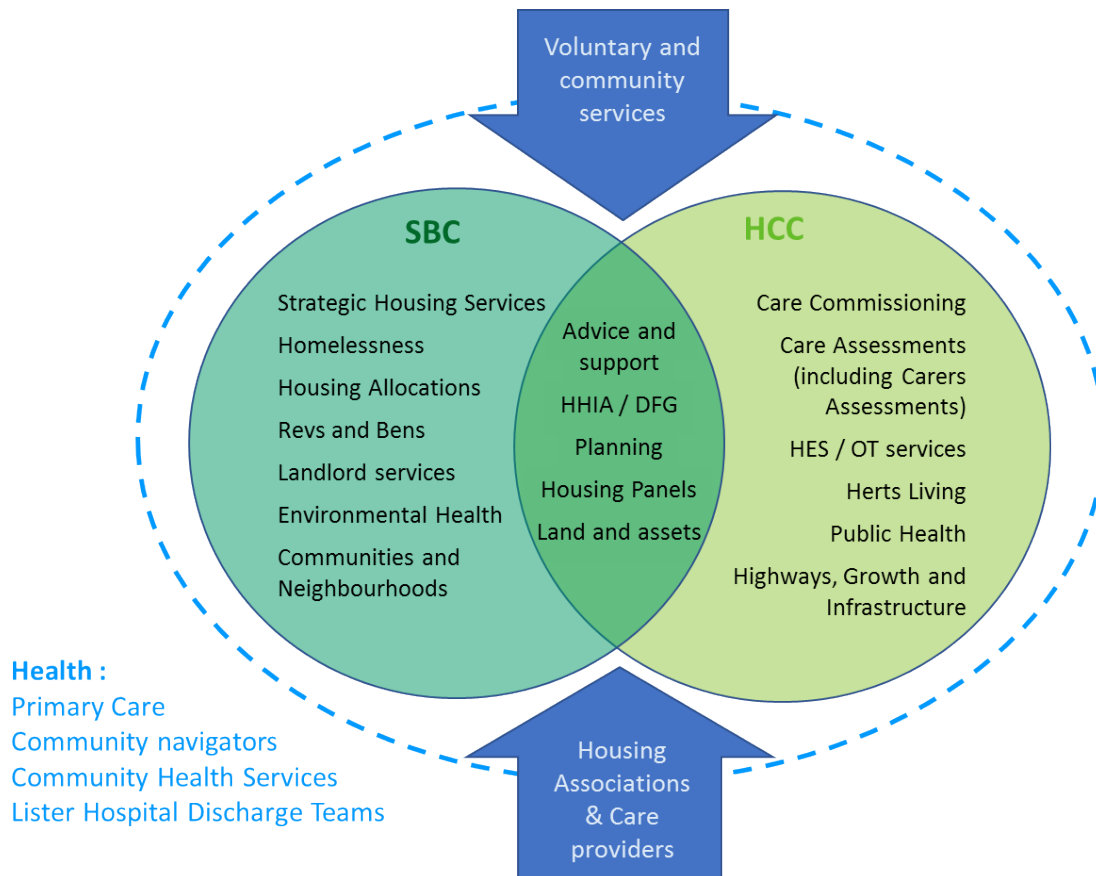
- **Creating a Stevenage HOPS Partnership comprising of a range of statutory and voluntary services and older person representatives with the aim of improving the supply and quality of older persons housing in Stevenage;**
- **Working with the HOPS Partnership, co-produce and cost services that meet older persons aspirations and needs, develop a business case and plan for expanding Community Support services across the Borough, incorporating some paid-for services and accessing external funding where it is available;**
- **Undertake a joint awareness campaign across services linking older people's benefit take up and housing options advice, to reduce instances of pensioner poverty and potential homelessness in Stevenage;**
- **Work with the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency to improve take-up of home mover's grants and investigate ways of funding handyperson services to help older people with practical aspects of moving to a more suitable home;**
- **Appointments of a health and wellbeing officer to provide on-going support activities to promote wellbeing of residents and an Accommodation and Complex Needs officer to provide a single point of contact for residents and supports people moving into specialist accommodation.**

## Outcomes for Older People



### Theme 4: Inter-organisational working

Older people, along with their carers and families, have input from and contact with a number of agencies and organisations, and it has long been an aspiration to have a fully joined up system where people only have to give their story once; while considerable work has been done toward achieving this, feedback from residents and professionals suggests we still have a way to go. Data protection has become increasingly regulated in order to protect people's privacy and personal details and organisations must legally have a better understanding of what data is able to be shared and how to improve communication with residents in relation to giving informed consent. By gathering meaningful data, and continuing to monitor trends and population growth, better strategic decision making across boundaries can be achieved leading to improved shared outcomes for everyone.



Loneliness is often associated with older people who live on their own. It is a growing problem which not only reduces the quality of life of individuals, but has far reaching implications for families, the wider community and public services. Loneliness can increase the risk of coronary heart disease, strokes, depression and cognitive decline such as anxiety, Alzheimer’s and dementia, ramping up pressure on public services through increased referrals to adult social care and triggering multiple attendances at GP surgeries. There is a need for us to support the building of a national conversation on loneliness, raising awareness of its impacts and helping to tackle stigma, supporting the development of ways of combatting it in our communities.

Social prescribing has a developing role in supporting older people to source and act on housing advice and connect to other people. In Hertfordshire this is provided through HertsHelp, the Hospital Discharge and Community Navigator Service and the new Link Workers in primary care. Independent living and flexi care schemes are increasingly opening up their communal areas to voluntary sector groups and lunch clubs, increasing awareness of these housing options in the wider community, and maintaining links back to the neighbourhood for residents.

Both Hertfordshire and Stevenage Borough Councils provide funding for a range of voluntary sector support that can help people to maintain a tenancy: citizens advice, crisis intervention, and the money advice units help people of all ages, and there is also support for individuals living with dementia and their families, and a hoarding resolution service. As part of the initial development of this strategy, we worked with a number of professionals from different organisations (see list of [consultees/contributors](#)) who work with and support older people in Stevenage.

**We will work with a range of organisations in Hertfordshire who deliver services to older people in Stevenage, including statutory, voluntary, social or community enterprises and private companies, to**

ensure that there is a clear understanding of what strategic information can and should be shared, and how best to use that information to drive strategic decision making.

We will do this by:

- Working with HCC Public Health to produce a Stevenage Housing Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA);
- Strengthening existing links between housing and hospital discharge teams, HHIA / Adaptations policies and social prescribing to further improve older people's swift and safe return to home;
- Continuing to work towards the Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2018-2022
- Co-producing a range of informational and promotional materials across print, digital and social media channels aimed specifically at older people to raise awareness of housing options and benefits of proactively managing their housing needs in later life;
- Undertake annual joint professionals' workshops to improve operational understanding between authorities, catch up on new best practice and policy changes, and remove barriers to collaborative working;
- Undertake wellbeing surveys with people who have recently moved, to gauge their experience of moving, what prompted them to move, and how they feel their wellbeing has changed by doing so. This will continue to feed into future work.

#### Outcomes for Older People



## Part 3: Delivering the Strategy

### Resourcing the Strategy

Both Councils will have responsibility for ensuring that the actions and aspirations contained within the strategy are carried out, resourced as appropriate and reviewed for effectiveness during its lifetime. Much of the work will be a continuation of current programmed work, but with a higher awareness of the commitments here and changes in process and procedure to ensure older people's housing needs are adequately and proportionately considered in future policy making.

It is recognised that some of the actions and commitments recommended here will require specific project resource and co-ordination. To manage the implementation of the strategy there will need to be a job role that links in with both Councils to ensure that the programme is on track and manage some of the projects within the action plan. This post would sit within the Managing Homes section of Housing and Investment at Stevenage Borough Council and their objectives will be clearly linked to the action plan.

There are some projects that will need extra resource and will form part of the annual budget setting and service planning process for the relevant year as required.

### Monitoring and Review

This strategy will be monitored through the Stevenage Strategic Supported Housing Accommodation Board, and revisions, risks and strategic decisions will be discussed there, with resolutions or recommendations recorded in the minutes.

It will also be subject to scrutiny through Stevenage's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Services Management Board (ACSMB).

The strategy as a whole will be refreshed periodically, but not less than every two years to ensure that changes in demography, technology, funding and resources (including officer time) are appropriately assessed and distributed across the two councils.

Performance indicators will include

Success factor	Success indicator
<b>Critical success factors for individual projects outlined in the Action Plan</b>	Completed within project parameters
<b>Numbers of completions<sup>2</sup> of new-build age-friendly or specialist housing available to older people, shown by tenure and type</b>	% Increase over all Ratio of total properties
<b>Numbers of completions<sup>3</sup> of refurbished age-friendly or specialist housing available to older people, shown by tenure and type</b>	% Increase over all Ratio of total properties
<b>Numbers of older people accessing advice and support relating to their housing needs through SBC's Customer Service Centre, HCC's Hertshelp and Adult Care Services</b>	% Increase

<sup>2</sup> Including those currently in construction

<sup>3</sup> Including those currently in process

Success factor	Success indicator
Numbers of older people assisted into a more suitable home	% Increase
Numbers of older people in unsuitable housing (on housing register)	% Decrease
Numbers of older people under-occupying family homes (social and council properties only)	% Decrease
Number of people accessing HHIA Moving Homes grant to enable a move to a more suitable property for their needs	% Increase Average grant Average age of applicant
Number, size and type of care packages for older people in Stevenage	% Decrease numbers % Decrease total costs % Decrease total size (average hrs per band/type)
Overall satisfaction of moving to suitable housing for older people	
Number of residential care bed-spaces available to Social Care service users, rated excellent / good	% Increase
Number of Flexicare homes, shown by tenure	% Increase
Results of longitudinal wellbeing survey for older people who have moved to more suitable housing – linear study	% Increase

## HOPS Action Plan

Short Term: 1-3 years

Medium Term: 4-6 years

Long term: 7-10 years

## Themes

1. Development, standards and design
2. Information, advice and technology
3. Support and assistance to help people move
4. Inter-organisational working

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria
Short Term and Ongoing	Establish and programme joint professionals' workshops across sectors	<p>To improve operational understanding, best practice and facilitate joint training opportunities, and to remove barriers to collaborative working.</p> <p>To engage with professionals across services to gather information and data about older persons housing needs and aspirations, and how services can evolve to meet needs more effectively.</p>	2, 3, 4	SBC/HCC ACS	<p>SBC Housing and Investment</p> <p>HCC ACS</p> <p>ENHCCG</p> <p>Community Navigators</p>	<p>Programme of workshops including speakers / themes / discussion topics where possible.</p> <p>Clear understanding of outcomes arising from the workshops to encourage attendance</p> <p>Commitment from organisations to support and attend.</p>
Short Term	Create HOPS Partnership (revamp existing older persons network)	<p>To provide co-production, consultation and critical friend role for strategic planning and project development.</p> <p>To generate ideas and offer feedback to support strategy review and new projects.</p>	1, 2, 3, 4	SBC	<p>SBC Communities and Neighbourhoods</p> <p>Service users</p> <p>HCC</p> <p>PH</p> <p>E&amp;NHCCG</p> <p>VCS</p>	Active and diverse forum with clear work plan and objectives.



Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria
					<i>Elected member(s)</i>	
Short Term	Develop design standards for older persons housing	<p>To standardise development criteria so developers understand the design needs of older people.</p> <p>To ensure sustainability and energy efficiency measures are considered in designs.</p> <p>To ensure new developments are built to reflect healthy place shaping and sustainable transport elements wherever possible.</p> <p>To ensure technology and connectivity requirements are factored into design to allow future assistive technology to be easily enabled.</p>	1, 4	SBC	<p>SBC Planning</p> <p>SBC Housing Development</p> <p>HCC ACS</p> <p>HCC OT Service</p> <p>HOPS Partnership</p> <p>HCC PH</p>	Clear, co-produced development standards for all housing developers in Stevenage to ensure that older people have suitable, efficient and attractive housing that enables them to live well in the community.
Short Term	Review of tender documents and commissioning requirements	To ensure new design and sustainability criteria are clearly articulated and embedded in tender documents	1, 4	SBC/HCC	<p>SBC Housing Development</p> <p>HCC ACS</p>	All new developments containing age friendly or accessible housing are built to high environmental and accessible standards.
Short Term	Appoint and train new health and wellbeing, accommodation support and specialist support officer roles	<p>To increase dedicated support to older people in independent living or community housing</p> <p>To be a 'one stop' shop for older people to support them to move</p> <p>To help arrange 'settling in' activities</p>	2, 3	SBC	<p>SBC Housing and Investment</p> <p>SBC Communities and Neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Appointments made</p> <p>Older people have access to health and wellbeing activities</p> <p>Older people have more access to digital technology</p> <p>Older people have a better customer</p>

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria
		and support for people new to their homes  To improve health and well-being of older residents, including technology orientation working collaboratively with Healthy Stevenage Strategic Partnership group				service to support them to move to a more suitable property for their needs.
Short Term	Create dashboard for reporting	To have a standard reporting mechanism for reporting progress to SSAB, ACSMB and SSLT.	1, 2, 3, 4	SSAB	HCC ACS  SBC Housing and Investment	Agreed template and recording schedule.  Commitment from action leads to provide information regularly as requested
Short / Medium Term	Joint data mapping project	To provide robust information on housing need, tenure requirements and numbers required specifically for older people who have accessibility or care needs to support planning and development decisions.  To provide a methodology that can be replicated across the County to inform wider growth scenarios.  To inform reviews of strategic housing market assessments, local housing need assessments and Local Plan / Planning Policy updates.	1	HCC	HCC ACS  HCC GIU  HCC CI  SBC planning  SBC Corporate Policy and Business Support  SBC H&I	Robust data set and growth methodology for future planning  Percentage target for new-build age appropriate housing across all tenures
Short /	Develop protocol for	To embed continuous improvement	1, 4	SBC	SBC Planning	Clear process embedded into PMO

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria
Medium Term	recording lessons learned from new development	into design and development for older persons housing			SBC Housing Development HCC ACS HCC OT Service HOPS Partnership	documents for all new schemes /projects and reviewed
Short / Medium Term	Implement Asset Management Strategy and review Private Sector Stock Condition Survey	To scope, cost and enable a programme of refurbishment of smaller general needs homes that may be suitable for older people to downsize into.  Ensure the integral or retrofitted technology is reflected in the Asset Management, maintenance and renewal policies and reviews.	1, 2, 3, 4	SBC	SBC Housing and Investment SBC Planning HCC ACS / OT service HCC Assistive Tech team HOPS Partnership Private Sector Landlords	To increase the supply of private sector and social housing suitable for older people to downsize into  To access external funding to help achieve accessible and technology enabled housing for older people.
Short / Medium Term	Review and align HHIA and SBC Adaptations policies and investigate joint funded projects across tenures where possible	To ensure older people across all tenures have equal access to adaptations and specific housing related practical support to move.	1, 3, 4	HHIA	SBC Housing and Investment HCC OT HOPS Partnership HHIA Partnership Board	
Short / Medium Term	Older persons communications and marketing plan	To ensure that older people have a range of up to date and relevant information about the benefits of suitable housing choices in older age, and advice on housing options available	2, 3, 4	SBC	HOPS Partnership SBC Housing Options SBC Housing development SBC Housing and	Clear co-produced plan using a range of communication methods to improve uptake of older persons housing, adaptations, grants and benefits.

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria
		<p>to them.</p> <p>To engage with older people to gather information and data about their housing needs and aspirations</p> <p>To generate interest in new developments of older people's housing across all tenures</p>			<p>Investment</p> <p>SBC Comms</p> <p>Members</p> <p>HCC ACS OP commissioning</p> <p>HCC ACS OP Capital Programme</p> <p>HCC Comms</p> <p>HCC Behaviour Unit</p>	
Short / Medium Term	<p>Review information and data sources, and recording mechanisms (cross authority) to capture strategic information on older people's housing needs and aspirations</p>	<p>To provide a database of key data to underpin decision and policy making, identify trends, and map service improvements.</p> <p>Re-run service user survey at regular intervals (to be determined) to see trends in changing attitudes, and to realign service user aspirations and strategic objectives where necessary.</p>	1, 2, 3, 4	HCC/SBC	<p>HCC CI</p> <p>HOPS Partnership</p> <p>SBC Corporate Policy and Business Support</p> <p>SBC Housing and Investment</p> <p>Residents</p> <p>VCS</p> <p>HHIA</p>	<p>A clear set of cross organisational indicators and data sets to help inform research, decision making and service improvement.</p>
Short / Medium Term	<p>Business case, to include cost-of-service analysis, for expanding community support services for older people across tenures including handyperson</p>	<p>To enable support for older people living across the community in all tenures but who need support to help them move to more suitable accommodation</p>	2, 3, 4	SBC	<p>SBC Housing and Investment</p> <p>HCC ACS</p> <p>VCS</p>	<p>An agreed business case with costed services, timelines, and clear objectives / outcomes</p> <p>Programme of service projects to take forward</p>

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria
	services to facilitate moves	To access funding and resources from various sources to enable and pilot paid for and subsidised services			External funding streams HHIA	External and other sources of funding identified
Short / Medium / Long Term	Develop joint land register of suitable development land available for older persons housing, or as part of other development proposals	To enable strategic joint assessments of land availability and possible uses, including other land parcels not in ownership of the councils, and existing buildings that could be repurposed or redeveloped, achieving appropriate financial and social outcomes for all relevant parties.	1, 4	SBC Planning	SBC Housing Development HCC ACS HCC Property Herts Living Ltd H&WE STP? Private developers	Regularly updated register, leading to more collaborative working and understanding of older persons housing supply across all tenures
Medium term?	Review allocations policy and lettings plan to include older people's housing  Develop local lettings policy for older people's housing	To ensure that age friendly housing is available to older people, to allow family or other housing to be released for families or younger people in housing need		SBC Housing and Investment	SBC Housing and Investment Residents VCS RSLs	A clear policy in place with targets for letting age friendly / specialist housing to older people
Medium Term	Produce Stevenage Older Persons Housing Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	To underpin planning policy, design and service decisions  To help provide robust evidence to support project work and housing development.	1, 4	HCC PH	HCC SBC Planning SBC Housing and Investment SBC Corporate Policy and Business Support SBC Communities and Neighbourhoods	Completed JSNA

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria
Medium / Long term	Enable the development of mixed tenure Extra Care homes across several schemes in partnership with SBC and in line with HCC's Extra Care Strategy.	To help improve housing options for older people who have care needs but wish to and are able to remain independent in their own homes.  To ensure that there is a commissioning strategy that includes housing related support grant (THIS HAS NOT BEEN CONFIRMED YET BY HCC)	1, 2, 4	HCC ACS	HCC Property SBC Planning SBC Housing Development SBC Housing and Investment Housing provider Care provider	Completed exemplar extra care scheme(s) fully occupied and staffed on time and within budget
Medium Long term	Develop new Residential Care Home	To enable excellent care and accommodation to Stevenage residents who need higher levels of care and are funded by HCC.	1	HCC ACS	SBC Housing Development ENHCCG	Completed exemplar residential care scheme fully occupied and staffed on time and within budget
Medium Long term	To meet the standards as set out in the Supported housing: national statement of expectations guidance	To provide a set of guidelines on what should reasonably be expected from the accommodation element of supported housing.  To ensure good quality and value for money	1	SBC/HCC	SBC Housing Development SBC Housing and Investment SBC Planning HCC ECH and Care Home Capital Programmes HCC ACS Commissioning	

## Glossary

### Affordable Housing

*Social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing that is provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market*

### Age Designated Social Housing

*This relates to flats and bungalows that are separate to local independent living housing schemes and restricted to those aged over 55. As this accommodation is not part of a scheme there is no on-site staff availability, however in Stevenage, residents do benefit from the support of a visiting Supported Housing Officer and the 24-hour emergency help service via an alarm.*

### Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

*A statutory means-tested grant managed locally by the Hertfordshire Home improvement Agency to assist in covering the cost of home adaptations for those with disabilities.*

### Flexi-Care Housing (also Extra Care)

*Flexi-Care schemes (also known as Extra-Care) offers older people who might otherwise consider residential care the chance to stay independent but with greater access to domestic and personal care support and eliminate the need to move from their home should care needs increase. The schemes comprise of self-contained homes usually with communal and community facilities that differ between schemes. This accommodation type is designed with the needs of people who need care and support, and as such, most services have eligibility criteria. Schemes may be offered across all tenures inclusive of owned, rented, or shared ownership, however in Stevenage, at the time of writing, they are only offered for rent.*

### Future proofing

*Anticipating, adapting and remodelling homes so that they continue to be safe and comfortable as our needs change, as we age.*

### Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency

*A shared service between Hertfordshire County Council, Stevenage Borough Council, Broxbourne Borough Council, North Herts District Council, East Herts Council, and Watford Borough Council to deliver adaptations to older and disabled people's homes in the private sector (i.e. not council owned homes) to enable them to live more independently. Works are paid for primarily through disabled facilities grants, which is means tested for adults.*

### Indices of Multiple Deprivation

*The Indices of Multiple Deprivation are measures of deprivation for every Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOAs); a small geographic area in England. These LSOAs are then ranked according to how deprived they are relative to each other, and this information is brought together into one overall Index of Multiple Deprivation, where they are ranked from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived)*

area). The Index is then divided into 10 equal deprivation deciles ranging from the most deprived 10% of LSOAs nationally to the least deprived 10% of LSOAs nationally.

#### Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)

JSNAs steer the commissioning of services to meet the identified health and well-being needs of a local area.

#### Local Plan

A plan for future development of a local area, drawn up by the Local Planning Authority.

#### Mainstream or General Needs Housing

Whilst this is generally not a specialist housing type, it is important to capture it as the accommodation type most commonly occupied by all people, including older people. This accommodation comes in all designs and is available to people of all ages. Furthermore, it can be adapted to meet the specialist needs of older people or developed with an understanding of future needs in mind. This accommodation type is available across all tenures from social landlords, private landlords and developers and via community-led models e.g. co-housing.

#### Private Sector Retirement Housing

This type of accommodation is typically built by private developers and the management responsibility transferred to a separate management group once all properties have been sold. A Scheme Manager would then be responsible for organising maintenance and other services.

#### Residential Care Home

A residential setting whereby 24-hour care and accommodation is offered, usually in single rooms, to a number of people. The accommodation type has access to on-site care services and provides personal care, or personal care together with nursing care if needed.

#### Right-sizing

A move into a home that better meets a person's needs, both now and in into the future, as a means of improving their quality of life.

#### Independent living (also known as Sheltered Housing)

Independent living accommodation is typically self-contained accommodation available for rent. They are often designed to include communal areas with some schemes offering activities. Residents are usually supported by a part time/visiting Specialist Support Officer and for added safety and security, benefit from a 24-hour emergency help service via an alarm.

In Stevenage, this type of accommodation is allocated based on need by Stevenage Borough Council and Registered Social Landlords.

#### Social Prescribing

Social prescribing is a means of enabling local agencies to refer people to a link worker, who will take a holistic approach to people health and wellbeing, recognising the benefit of non-clinical services. Link workers will connect people to community groups and statutory services for practical and emotional support.



### Supported Housing

*This type of housing is combined with support services and is allocated based on scheme specific criteria. This accommodation is usually offered in a shared setting although it can extend to self-contained accommodation.*

### Tenure

*Housing tenure describes the arrangements under which people occupy their accommodation. The most common forms of tenure are:*

*Home Ownership: this includes homes owned outright and mortgaged*

*Renting: this includes both social and private rented housing.*

### Whole Life Costing

*An investment appraisal and management tool which assesses the cost of an asset over its whole life, including running costs and maintenance. The value of adopting a whole life costing approach, where applicable, is recognised by the HM Treasury and the Department*

### Healthy Stevenage Partnership

*A group of public, private and voluntary sector organisations who work together with the purpose of improving health and wellbeing, and reducing the health inequalities, of Stevenage residents.*

### Packages of care

*A care package is a combination of services put together to meet a person's assessed needs, as identified following a social care assessment or review.*

## Authors

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## Contributors/ Consultees

Stevenage Borough Council

- Specialist Support Services
- Environmental Policy and Development
- Housing Allocations and Advice
- Housing Development
- Community Services
- Adaptations
- Planning
- Investment

Hertfordshire County Council

- Adult Care Services, Integrated Accommodation Commissioning Team
- Adult Care Services, Older People's Commissioning
- Adult Care Services, Stevenage Older People's Team
- Adult Care Services, Integrated Care Team (BCF)
- Growth and Infrastructure Unit
- Property
- Community Intelligence
- Fire and Rescue
- Public Health
- Herts Living Ltd
- Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency

*Age UK*

*Alzheimer's Society*

*Small Acts of Kindness*

*Hertfordshire Police*  
*Aldwyck Housing Association*  
*Hanover Housing Association*  
*Guinness Partnership*  
*Hightown Housing Association*  
*Network Homes*  
*Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service*  
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*Great Ashby Friendship Group*  
*St Peters Community Faith Group*  
*Hampson Park Community Lunch Group*  
*Bedwell Good Companions Club*  
*Renaissance Group*  
*The Oval Friendship Group*  
*Stevenage Muslim Community Centre*

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Stevenage Borough Council

Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit

## What is the legal background of equality and diversity?

### The Equality Act 2010

Everyone's right to be treated fairly is covered in law by the Equality Act 2010, which came into force in October 2010. The Act protects nine characteristics and they are:

Age	Disability	Gender reassignment
Marriage or civil partnership	Pregnancy and maternity	Race
Religion or belief	Sex	Sexual orientation

When a person feels that they have not been treated fairly because of any of these characteristics it is called unlawful discrimination.

### The Public Sector Equality Duty

Section 149 of The Equality Act 2010 is called the Public Sector Equality Duty. Stevenage Borough Council has a statutory obligation to comply with the requirements of the Duty which are to carry out our functions in a way that gives due regard to the need to:

- **Remove discrimination, harassment, victimisation** and any other conduct that is unlawful under this Act
- **Promote equal opportunities** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't
- **Encourage good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

## What is an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)?

A process that helps us to evidence and understand the impacts that our decisions might have on different types of people, and improve them where we can. These decisions can relate to existing services, policies and functions, procurement exercises, plans for future changes and new projects.

It is designed to help us think about both positive and negative impacts on people and look at how to avoid disadvantage or further improve our services.

The aim is to make sure that we plan, develop and deliver fair and inclusive services and that we promote equality and positive relationships between the different communities that we serve.

Although the assessment of any socio-economic impact has been removed from the Act, officers at Stevenage are encouraged to use their discretion in assessing impact on people who are less fortunate because of their social and / or economic background.



## Why do we do them?

EqlAs have been used at Stevenage for a number of years and are a really useful way of showing how we consider the needs of our diverse communities and staff. And by using them effectively, we'll be able to mitigate any potential legal challenge of discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. EqlAs help us to:

- Consider the differing needs of people in our community and workforce
- Demonstrate to all of our stakeholders that we place great importance on meeting and understanding the needs of different residents and employees
- Ensure that decisions are made in a fair, transparent and accountable way
- Focus our activity on delivering positive outcomes for our communities instead of being process-driven
- Meet our legislative requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

## Who should complete EqlAs?

Anyone who has to develop and deliver policy, strategy, projects, and services, or make decisions that could impact on people. There should be more than one officer involved in developing the EqlA so that a range of views can be considered. For example a:

- Project manager and lead officers involved in the project
- Service manager and staff involved in delivering the service
- Policy / strategy developer and representatives from other SDUs who will be delivering the function.

## How do I complete it?

This toolkit should provide you with most of the information you need to get started, including a few pointers to help you to decide which level of EqlA will be most useful. The two options are a Brief EqlA and a Full EqlA.

You'll see as you go through the toolkit that in addition to using your expertise, the decisions and potential impacts identified should be evidenced as far as possible. A great way of evidencing is by way of consulting with people who are likely to be affected by the outcome, and by analysing local data.

You may find that you complete a Brief EqlA and identify a need to further analyse the impact in a Full EqlA. This is a great example of how it can help to inform and guide decision-making, and demonstrates to our customers, staff and stakeholders that we take equality and inclusion seriously.

## When should an EqlA be started?

In the early stages of your activity and certainly before any decision is made. It's very unlikely that it will be completed in one go – you'll find it useful to keep coming back to it, updating as new evidence comes to light, or as different viewpoints are taken into account.

It's a good idea to keep copies of previous versions – not just to help you to keep track, but it can also demonstrate where we have changed a decision or planned direction in light of a potential impact on particular groups.

### **Your EqlA should not be completed at the end of the process as:**

- Your decision could cause discrimination, or benefit certain equality groups more than others
- Time and resource could be used inefficiently if the decision has to be reviewed
- You could miss an opportunity to further promote equality and inclusion
- Your decision could fail to meet the council's statutory requirements and create a risk of legal challenge.

## What kinds of things should I consider?

When completing an EqlA it's helpful to think about the following:

### **Negative / Positive / Unequal impact**

It's unlikely that a decision will impact on people in light of every characteristic. Where there is no impact or actions identified, feel free to add N/A (not applicable).

Please be aware that where there is a negative impact, you will not necessarily be expected to mitigate this. The aim of the EqlA is to demonstrate that we have given due regard to the potential impact on people and have taken action as far as is practical and reasonable.

- How will different groups of people be affected if the decision is implemented as planned?
- Does the data and evidence collected highlight problems that need to be addressed, such as disadvantage, discrimination and harassment?
- Does the evidence suggest increased or lower than expected (unequal) uptake, access or participation by different groups?
- Are there any rules, requirements or regulations around it that might affect accessibility?
- Is there evidence of better outcomes for different groups?
- Are current measures in place and having a positive impact on particular groups?

## Evidence of potential impact

Collect, analyse and record information and data relating to the protected characteristics or any other groups that may be affected. Examples could include:

- Service user data
- Results of consultation, involvement activities or surveys
- Feedback from service users on their outcomes and experiences
- Information about the town, its wards and local communities such as Census data
- Comparisons made with similar policies / services in other departments or authorities
- Recommendations from inspections, audit reports and reviews
- National, regional and local research findings
- Information from partners, trade unions and local groups from the voluntary and community sector.

## Opportunities to promote equality and inclusion

- What more can we do to positively impact on these groups?
- Is there an opportunity to improve access and outcomes for different groups?
- How can communications be used more effectively?
- Is there an opportunity to promote positive attitudes and good relations between different groups?

## What do we still need to find out?

- What gaps in evidence and information have been found?
- How can these be filled?
- When will this information be captured and reviewed in completing this EqIA?

You should collate and assess all the information you need **before a decision** on your activity is made. If you don't there is an increased risk of exposing the council to legal challenge, if a wrong, inappropriate or ineffective decision is made.

## Consultation

As a co-operative council, we aim to involve our staff, communities and stakeholders in decision-making as much as possible. This should always be proportionate to the scale of the decision being made, how many people might be affected or interested and the level of impact it will have.

- How have the views and knowledge of staff who will be delivering the service been considered? Have staff more generally been able to contribute?
- What have your customers fed back?
- Have you consulted the voluntary and community sector in making your decision? How will they be engaged in future?
- Have you drawn on the knowledge of partnering organisations?
- How have other stakeholder been able to contribute and what have they said?



## Conclusion and actions

- Have inequalities, inclusions issues or opportunities to further improve equality and inclusion been identified?
- What adjustments have been made to your initial plan as a result of this EqIA?
- If you are continuing as planned or are stopping altogether, what are the reasons?
- What can be done to prevent, minimise or mitigate any negative or unequal impacts identified?
- How can you help people who are vulnerable, stereotyped or marginalised?
- What opportunities are there to remove discrimination and harassment, promote equal opportunities and encourage better relations amongst our communities?
- How could your function be more accessible to people who are underrepresented or don't currently use your service?

## Where can I find more information?

Our intranet has lots of useful information, or you can email [equalities@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@stevenage.gov.uk) for help and guidance.

We also have a network of Equality Champions across the council – please ask your Head of Service for information on who your representative is.

## How do I get started?

By turning over the page!



# First things first: does this activity need an EqlA?

<b>Subject of the assessment:</b>	<b>Housing for Older People In Stevenage (HOPS) survey and strategy</b>	
<b>Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:</b>		
Does it affect staff, service users or the wider community?		Yes
Has it been identified as being important to particular groups of people?		Yes
Does it or could it potentially affect different groups of people differently (unequal)?		Yes
Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities or exclusion issues?		Yes
Will it have an impact on how other organisations operate?		Yes
Is there potential for it to cause controversy or affect the council's reputation as a public service provider?		Yes

<b>Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:</b>	<b>Please tick all that apply (✓)</b>
Remove discrimination and harassment?	✓
Promote equal opportunities?	✓
Encourage good relations?	✓

If you ticked or answered Yes to one or more of these questions you should carry out an EqlA. There are two levels of analysis (Brief and Full) and in deciding which to go for, you should think about not just the number of people affected but the significance of the effect on them – both positive and negative.

.....

If you answered No to all of the questions and decide that your activity doesn't need an EqlA you must explain below why it has no relevance to equality and diversity. You should reference the information you used to support your decision and seek approval from your Head of Service or Strategic Director before sending this to [equalities@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@stevenage.gov.uk).

I determine that no EqlA is needed to inform the decision on the (insert name of subject being assessed).

Name of assessor:  
 Role:  
 Date:

Decision approved by:  
 Role:  
 Date:



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## Brief Equality Impact Assessment

### For a minor operational change / review / simple analysis

What is being assessed?		What are the key aims of it?			
Who may be affected by it?					
Date of full EqlA on service area (planned or completed)					
Form completed by:		Start date		End date	
		Review date			

What data / information are you using to inform your assessment?		Have any information gaps been identified along the way? If so, please specify	
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Explain the <b>potential positive, negative or unequal impact</b> on the following characteristics and <b>how likely</b> this is:			
Age		Race	
Disability		Religion or belief	
Gender reassignment		Sex	
Marriage or civil partnership		Sexual orientation	
Pregnancy & maternity		Socio-economic <sup>1</sup>	
Other			

Where there is a likely <b>positive impact</b> , please explain how it will help to <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment		Promote equal opportunities		Encourage good relations	

<sup>1</sup>Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

**What further work / activity is needed as a result of this assessment?**

Action	Responsible officer	How will this be delivered and monitored?	Deadline
If a negative or unequal (high or low) impact has been identified, you should assess this further in a Full EqIA			

**Approved by Assistant Director/ Strategic Director:**

**Date:**

Please send this EqIA to [equalities@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@stevenage.gov.uk)



# Full Equality Impact Assessment

For a policy, project, service or other decision that is new, changing or under review

<b>What is being assessed?</b>		<b>Project – Housing for Older People in Stevenage (HOPS)</b>	
Lead Assessor	Kate Ford, Research Officer, Stevenage Borough Council		Assessment team  Alison Spalding, Business and development Programme Manager, Adult Care Services, Hertfordshire County Council  Karen Long, Operations Manager (Managing Homes), Stevenage Borough Council  Kelly Potts, Specialist Support Services and Contracts Manager, Stevenage Borough Council
Start date	14-Feb-2019	End date November 2020	
When will the EqIA be reviewed?	December 2021		

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Who may be affected by it?	<p>Older people over the age of 55 including those who will reach 55 during the strategy's lifespan</p> <p>Adults with disabilities, including learning disabilities</p> <p>People with caring responsibilities</p> <p>Older people who are married, co-habiting or in civil partnerships</p> <p>Families waiting for social housing</p> <p>Our Staff</p> <p>Our Internal and external partners</p>
What are the	To assess the current provision of housing for older people living in Stevenage, the aspirations of future residents needing specialist housing for older people, and to bring forward recommendations to improve

key aims of it?	<p>the housing offer to older people, including potential incentives and approaches to support to enable them to move to more suitable accommodation in the Borough thereby releasing family housing back into the general needs stock.</p> <p>This is a tenure neutral project, so will relate to all sections of society, although it is expected that the greatest benefit will be felt by those on low incomes.</p>
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What <b>positive measures</b> are in place (if any) to help <b>fulfil our legislative duties</b> to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	Well-designed specialist older persons housing, such as extra care, allows older people to live in safe environments while still maintaining social and community links. This reduces vulnerability to criminal, discriminatory or anti-social behaviour.	Promote equal opportunities	This Strategy will be tenure blind and will assess the needs of all older people in Stevenage regardless of differences in social, economic, or physical characteristics.	Encourage good relations	Well-designed older persons' housing promotes community relationships and reduces social isolation and maintains existing relationships as well as promoting new friendships.

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What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	<p>To develop this EqlA, we have undertaken a structured research programme, using a variety of methods to gather evidence and information from older people, their families and carers, and professionals who work with them. We have used data available both locally and nationally and our assessment has been underpinned by up to date and reliable information about the different groups this strategy is likely to affect. Our research programme consisted of;</p> <p>2011 Census information on population structures, household composition, tenure and ethnicity</p>
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	<p>a review of general health profiles</p> <p>a Borough wide service user survey of those aged 45 and over ( to determine needs of people who will be approaching 55 over the plan period, and as recommend by planning policy guidance)</p> <p>a professionals survey for those working with older people in the Borough</p> <p>stakeholder events inclusive of groups representing those from minority groups</p> <p>the review of other Strategies for Older People</p> <p>benchmarking against other authorities recognised for delivering best practice</p> <p>desktop review of data held by SBC inclusive of waiting lists and voids, under occupation in council homes and stock condition</p> <p>desktop review of data held by HCC inclusive of DFGs, falls and frailty data and health and care packages</p> <p>analysis of Central Government guidance</p>
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<p>In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?</p>	<p>It is important that, as a Local Authority, we monitor and assess the impact this strategy may have on older people that fall within the protected groups. We need to ensure that there is no indirect discrimination contrary to our public sector equality duty. An action of the Strategy is to improve our monitoring and statistical recording of this group.</p>
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## Evidence and impact assessment

**Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:**

Age					
Positive impact	✓	Negative impact	✓	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					<p>There is expected to be a positive impact on older people who need access to more suitable housing. Appropriate housing is seen as an integral part of keeping people safe, well and independent which leads to better health and wellbeing outcomes.</p> <p>Specialist housing is generally perceived to be safer for vulnerable people, who might otherwise fall victim to targeted crime (such as doorstep distraction burglary) or abuse, or dangers in the home such as falls and fire.</p> <p>Specialist housing for older people should reduce social isolation but allowing people to make new friends with other residents in the scheme, while also being able to keep links to their existing communities and friendships. Social isolation has a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing and can shorten mortality by some 26% (<a href="https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/">https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/</a>)</p> <p>For younger people, providing a good alternative to family-sized housing for older residents may encourage more general needs housing to be available. This will positively impact on younger adults and children in homeless or insecurely housed families. Currently, evidence does not show a great movement of people downsizing in this way, but this could be to a lack of suitably attractive homes, and a poor perception of specialist housing in the wider community.</p> <p>Specialist housing for older people can reduce pressure on working-age people who may be supporting older relatives to the detriment of their own families or careers.</p> <p>There is a potential negative aspect of providing housing specifically for older people, in that they may feel pressured to move from their existing homes into smaller specialist homes which move them away from their existing communities and require them to dispose of their possessions and pets to do so.</p> <p>Also loss of amenity, such as gardens, full-sized kitchens and rooms for visitors and family to stay (especially grandchildren) could lead to sadness or in some cases depression or anxiety.</p> <p>Older people may not wish to live in a single age group community (although this could still be over a range of 40+ years) and may prefer to live in communities where there are mixed ages and families with</p>

	<p>children. For some people, 'staying put' may be the right option.</p> <p>The HOPS stakeholder event feedback shows that older people do not want to be treated as being incapable, and that housing has to reflect their aspirations and continued participation in the community.</p> <p>The ONS population pyramids of 2016 estimate that there are significantly more women in higher ages than men – as high as 2/3s of the 90+ population, and a higher proportion than England as a whole. With this, the ONS report a higher social care dependency from older women, with 42% of women compared with 34% of men have at least some problems with washing or dressing, at the age of 85+.</p> <p><a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/dvc411/pyramids/pyramids/pyramids.html?initialWidth=944&amp;childId=67d-411e-8d75-7cbb68ac2b44%20-%2015/389/131/null/null/false/false/na/1#15/389/352/null/null/false/false/na/1">https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/dvc411/pyramids/pyramids/pyramids.html?initialWidth=944&amp;childId=67d-411e-8d75-7cbb68ac2b44%20-%2015/389/131/null/null/false/false/na/1#15/389/352/null/null/false/false/na/1</a></p> <p>The ExtraCare Charitable Trust (2019) <u>Integrated Homes Care and Support: measurable outcomes for a Healthy Ageing</u> <a href="https://www.extracare.org.uk/media/1169231/full-report-final.pdf">https://www.extracare.org.uk/media/1169231/full-report-final.pdf</a></p> <p>House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, <u>Housing for Older People, Second Report of the Session 2017-19</u> (2018) available at: <a href="https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomloc/370/370.pdf">https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomloc/370/370.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/loneliness-research/">https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/loneliness-research/</a></p>		
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>A good older person's scheme should provide a good link between community and residents. This could be through including commercial or community facilities within the scheme, for example shops, cafes, meeting rooms etc, and by encouraging activities that brings the outside in. examples could include charities bringing in cats, rabbits and dogs for residents to groom or walk, schools bringing in children for intergenerational learning – helping</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	

	<p>older people use modern technology for example, or older people telling students about their lives and experiences from recent history (war years, the 60s etc.)</p> <p>Well planned intergenerational communities are seen as one way of tackling loneliness across all age ranges, and social groups:  <a href="https://www.housinglin.org.uk/blogs/Intergenerational-Living-a-new-way-of-living-the-old-way/">https://www.housinglin.org.uk/blogs/Intergenerational-Living-a-new-way-of-living-the-old-way/</a></p>		
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<b>Disability</b> e.g. physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact	✓	Negative impact	✓	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>Providing specialist housing for older people, including increasing the ability for them to access adaptation services to make their home environment more suitable for their needs, should have a positive effect on those with disabilities.</p> <p>Age related disability, such as mobility, sight and other sensory loss, and frailty can have significant impacts on people’s ability to use their homes as they are designed to be used (for example not being able to get to the bathroom or bedroom if upstairs), which in turn can lead to poor health outcomes, loss of independence and confidence, and isolation. Specifically designed older persons housing, which will be accessible, often wheelchair compliant, and usually on a single storey, helps people navigate more easily and can allow them more dignity in their own homes.</p> <p>General needs housing that is built specifically with the needs of people with disabilities is general good practice, as anyone with a physical, mental or age-related condition will still be able to live there. Not all people with disabilities will be eligible for or want to live in supported housing schemes.</p>				

	<p>An ageing population will see the numbers of disabled people continuing to increase. This strategy will help us to plan to meet the needs of Stevenage residents by influencing an increase in the supply of accessible and adaptable housing, reducing the risk of people with disabilities facing discrimination and disadvantage in housing.</p> <p>Older persons housing, such as extra care, helps reduce social isolation and anxiety, as such schemes encourage socialisation and community activities. As care provision is often on site 24/7, anxiety over falls or other issues is significantly reduced which helps with mental health and depression.</p> <p>Extra Care also is flexible enough to accommodate older people with cognitive impairments and early signs of dementia.</p> <p>It is not unusual for extra care schemes to also allow middle aged adults with learning disabilities to be residents, although they will usually be allocated homes in a separate block from the older residents, due to differences in care requirements and behaviour (on both sides).</p> <p>As with age, specialist housing is generally perceived to be safer for vulnerable people who have disabilities, who might otherwise fall victim to targeted crime (such as doorstep distraction burglary) or abuse, or dangers in the home such as falls and fire.</p> <p>A potential negative impact may be that people with disabilities may feel that schemes such as extra care – which can be quite large – mean that they should not be living in their own homes in the community. Specialist housing for older people with or without disabilities may be delivered in different ways however, and this includes accessible general needs housing.</p>		
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>	<p>Creating a housing market which encourages and supports affordable, accessible housing suitable for all people who have disabilities in all age ranges will encourage communities to remain together, and not to consider people with disabilities as any different to anyone else living in the community.</p>	<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	

Gender reassignment					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>We recognise the profile of gender reassignment and how this intersects with issues of equality. Our data shows that this group is too small to offer any meaningful trend analysis at this time and it is felt that the project does not have any impacts on the specific requirements of people who are experiencing gender reassignment.</p> <p>However, staff are aware of this particular group and are committed to ensuring that no group is disadvantaged and that no-one falls through the safety net.</p>				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Marriage or civil partnership					
Positive impact	✓	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>Specialist housing for older people can help couples stay together when one of them develops a care need, and this should be for couples of the same sex as well as those of different sexes.</p> <p>When developing new housing for older people, consideration must be given to size and layout to enable couples to live together. This includes providing some homes with two bedrooms for where spouses or partners cannot, or do not choose to, sleep in the same room. Health considerations or care needs for example, may make sharing a room difficult for some, and some older people may be married for companionship reasons where sleeping in the same room is not preferred.</p> <p>The ONS suggests that, as people are living longer, more older people are getting married or entering</p>				



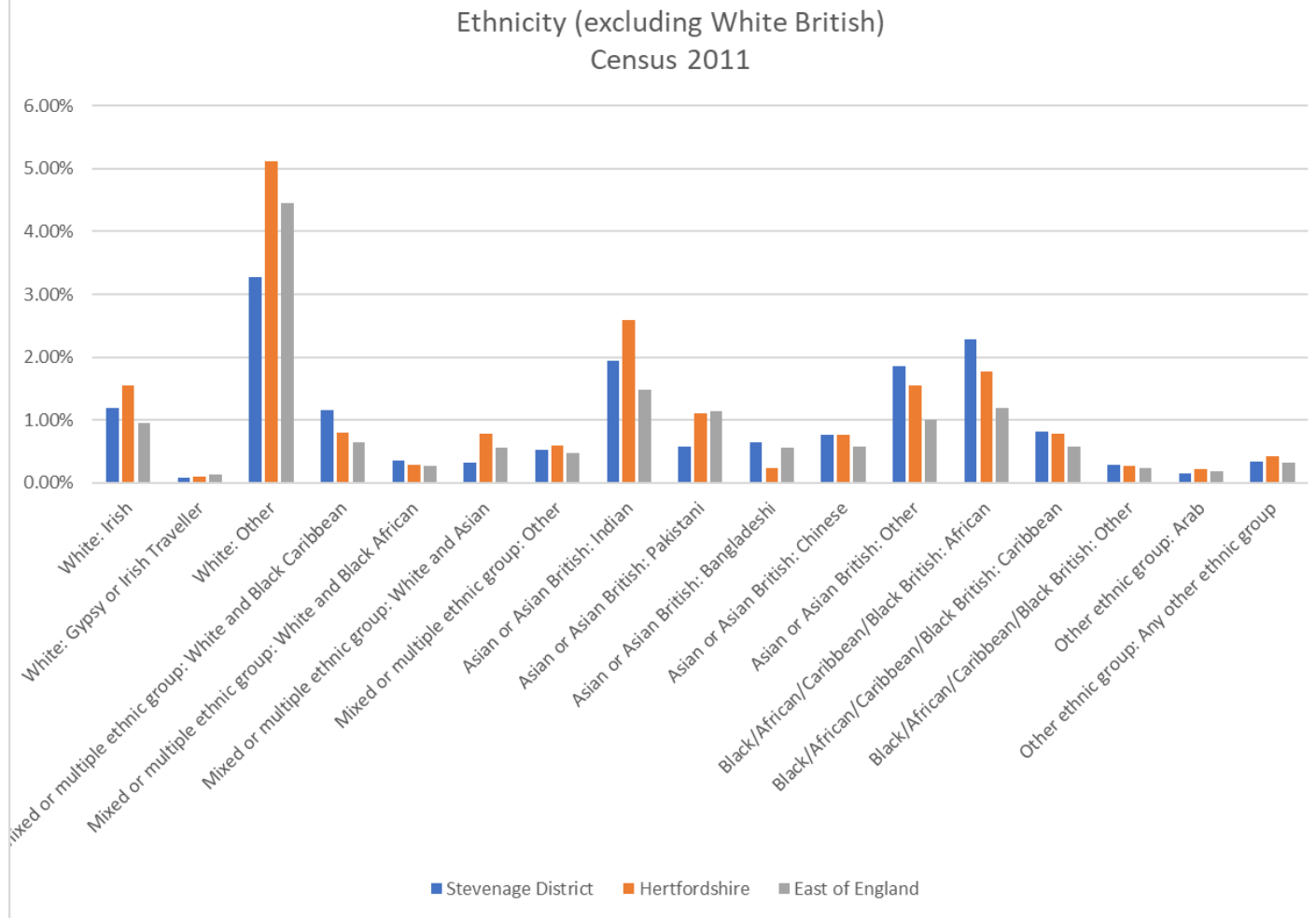
	<p>civil partnerships. The number of marriages or civil partnerships of people over 65 has increased by some 46% between 2004 and 2014, against a backdrop of the number of people aged 65 and over increasing by over 20%. <a href="#">ONS marriage and divorce 2017-07-18</a> This could indicate that the need for homes suitable for older couples will also increase.</p> <p>This should be balanced, however, against the opposing statistic that divorce rates among the over 65s is also on the increase: Between 2005 and 2015 the number of men over 65 divorcing increased by 23%, while the number of women over 65 divorcing rose by 38%, although this trend seems to be now on the decline again. Feedback from a local housing association indicates that a number of applications for extra care or other older peoples housing is from people (most notably men) who are coming out of relationships (HOPS Stakeholder Event feedback, 2019).</p> <p>Almost all of the new couples forming within the over 65 age group during this period were divorced or widowed (92%), so it can be reasonably expected that there would be some overlap between these two sets of data.</p>
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What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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<b>Pregnancy &amp; maternity</b>					
Positive impact	✓	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Increasing the supply of good quality housing suitable for older people to move to when their needs of larger family homes are no longer a factor, may help towards balancing the housing market for younger families. Under-occupation particularly in limited social housing, impacts on the ability for the Council to allocate suitable properties to families in need, including pregnant and nursing women.				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Race					
Positive impact	✓	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>The ONS Census (2011) shows that when compared with Hertfordshire and the East of England, Stevenage has a higher than average population of Asian or Asian British (other), and Black African, Caribbean or Black British, and mixed white and Caribbean. It also has high populations of people from Irish, Indian, and white other communities. In total, the population of people who are not white British is comparatively low at only 16.53% (Hertfordshire 18.91%; east of England 14.72%).</p>				



National research shows that older people from BME communities may find it difficult to access affordable housing, and research from the Housing LIN and the Race Equality Foundation suggests that there is an increasing proportion of BME groups living in the private rented sector together with higher levels of housing deprivation. [HLIN Briefing BME Housing.pdf](#) This was supported further in a local SBC study of 2013 into the condition of private sector housing where it was found that the private rented sector exhibits a higher concentration of BME households at 17.6% compared to 4.6% in the owner

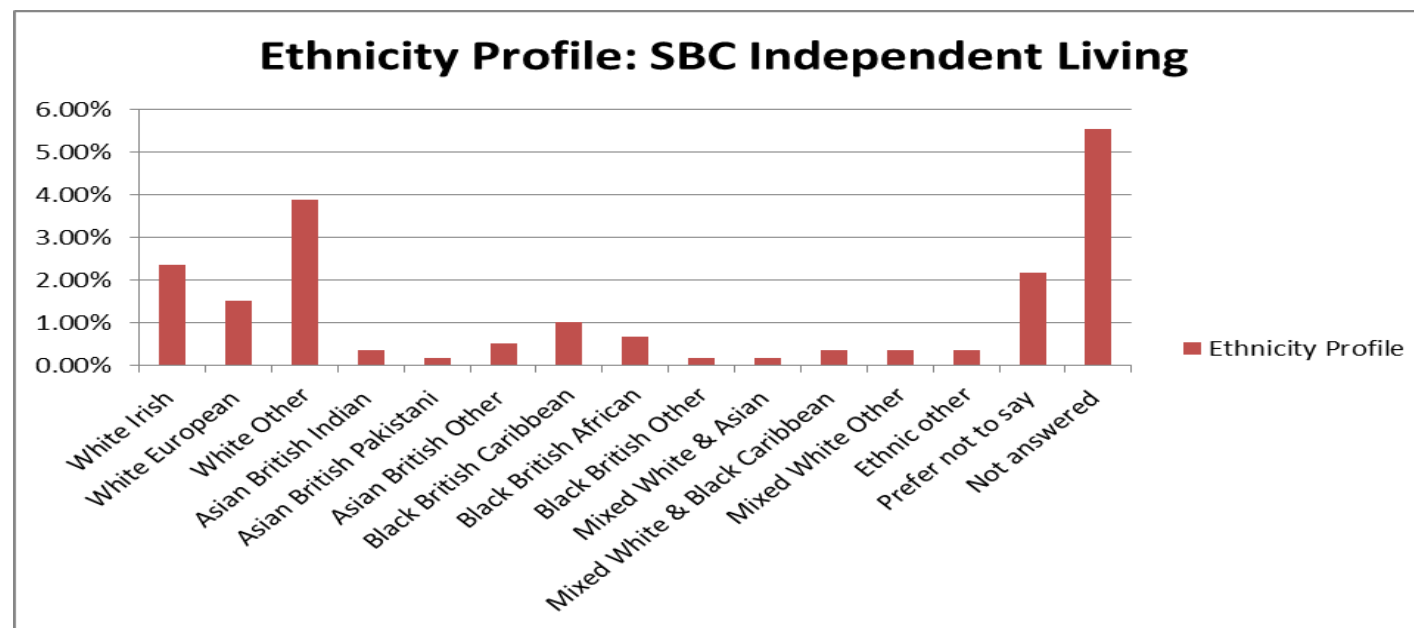
occupied sector. Also, BME households were five times more likely to live in over-crowded circumstances than white households, with black households particularly adversely affected.

Overcrowding, caused by the choice of some families to live within extended families, possibly exacerbated by high housing costs as well as cultural norms, is higher in BME families, and any new housing development must be sensitive to this. The development of older persons housing generally can help alleviate some of this overcrowding by allowing movement within the wider housing market.

Furthermore, it is important to note that Black/African/Caribbean/Black British ethnic groups had the highest levels of living alone in 2011 Census (17%) while Asian/Asian British ethnic groups were the least likely to live alone at 7%.

At the time of the 2011 Census, the White ethnic group made up 97.7% of households with a pensioner couple and 96.7% of the single pensioner households - by comparison, the same ethnic group made up 86.0% of the general population of England and Wales.

<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/demographics/families-and-households/latest#ethnic-groups-by-household-type>



	<p>A review of the ethnicity data held in respect of tenants of specialist accommodation for older people, across SBC's 16 Independent Living Schemes established that White Irish may be overrepresented in comparison to the Stevenage population as a whole. Whereas Mixed White and Black Caribbean, Asian British Indian, Asian British Other and Black British African may be underrepresented.</p> <p>It is important to note that this question was unanswered by nearly 6% of those tenants that were asked, with an additional 2% of tenants selecting 'prefer not to say'. As such, any comparisons drawn to the Census 2011 using this data, could vary significantly from the true ethnicity mix within our schemes.</p> <p>This is an area that should be explored further so as to gain a more detailed understanding of the ethnicity mix of all our tenants of Independent Living Schemes and why some tenants may prefer not to disclose their ethnicity, thus ensuring that an opportunity to promote equality has not been lost.</p> <p>We will also work to align our data relating to ethnicity groupings with that of the Census 2021, if appropriate. This will make it easier to identify under/over representations to explore further.</p>		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Religion or belief																			
Positive impact	Negative impact			Unequal impact			✓												
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>The majority of people in Stevenage identify as Christian (54%) with the next largest group being those who hold no religious belief (34%)</p> <p><b>Stevenage – Census 2011</b></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Christian</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Buddhist</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Hindu</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Jewish</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Muslim</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Sikh</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Other religion</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">No religion</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;">Religion not stated</td> <td style="background-color: #ffffcc;"></td> </tr> </table>									Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Other religion	No religion	Religion not stated	
Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Other religion	No religion	Religion not stated											

	count	45694	442	996	147	1654	303	460	28606	5644	
	%	54.43%	0.53%	1.19%	0.18%	1.97%	0.36%	0.55%	34.08%	6.72%	
<p>In the HOPS User Survey, one respondent suggested that new schemes should be sited close to a church, and one suggested that a chapel should be incorporated into the design. This could be interpreted as a contemplation space to accommodate a range of faiths. A conversation with the Imram from a local mosque suggested access to Sharia compliant mortgage options may be helpful to support home ownership and promote equal opportunities.</p>											
Page 198	What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote Sharia-compliant mortgage products to support access to property purchases (based on comment made by Imran of the Mosque located in St Nicolas) and in turn promote equal opportunities.			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)						

Sex					
Positive impact	✓	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>The life expectancy of women is on average 4 years longer than that of men living in Stevenage, with women over the age of 65 living an additional 20 years, and men living an additional 17.6 years (2015-17 average: <a href="#">Public health profiles</a>)</p> <p>There is a bank of evidence and research around gender and loneliness, although much of the results are ambiguous or even contradictory. A 2014 report by Bristol City Council suggests that while women's tendency to outlive men and other family members, coupled with their traditional caring roles, makes</p>				

	<p>women more vulnerable to isolation in later life, other studies point to men declining more sharply after the loss of a spouse than women (including through divorce). Men were also found to score more highly on global, social and emotional loneliness than women (Wittenburg,1987). Studies have also found, however, that men are less likely to admit to being lonely than women. The Bristol study also cites ONS data which suggests a quarter of all suicides in Britain in 2012 were by men aged between 44-59. Social isolation is cited as a major contributor for this.</p> <p>Thoughtfully designed and marketed older persons housing which allows men to be part of a new community can potentially help to reduce this hidden isolation, as new friendships of both sexes can be encouraged with other residents and people can look out for each other. Ensuring that facilities offered are able to attract both men and women, for example access to gardening, sports and activities, and possibly even a bar, which reflect traditional male roles, may encourage men to move before they hit crisis.</p>		
<p>What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?</p>		<p>What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)</p>	

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<b>Sexual orientation</b> e.g. straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	✓
<p>Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment</p>	<p>A 2010 YouGov survey commissioned by the LGBT campaigning organisation Stonewall compared the experiences of just over a thousand heterosexual and a similar number of lesbian, gay and bisexual people over the age of 55 across Britain. It found that lesbian, gay and bi people are more likely to be single and to live alone and less likely to have children or see family members. Lack of support from conventional family can lead to greater dependence on statutory or voluntary health and care services. Yet 61% of LGBT people in the Stonewall survey were concerned about whether those services are properly able to meet their needs. And one in six lesbian or bi women and one in nine gay or bi men reported discrimination, hostility or poor treatment because of their sexual orientation when using GP services.</p>				

	<p>Some studies suggest that LGBT people living with dementia may worry that they will experience discrimination or abuse from other residents and staff when living in ‘care homes’, and that their privacy will be breached when their dementia develops to a greater extent. Recognition of this group of people’s additional and personal needs is important and person-centred approach is paramount - <a href="http://www.ageuklondonblog.org.uk/2017/05/19/dementia-care-lgbt-community/">http://www.ageuklondonblog.org.uk/2017/05/19/dementia-care-lgbt-community/</a></p> <p>‘Safety’ and ‘security’ are often interpreted as meaning physical safety or security. However, psychological safety is equally important for a person who has experienced prejudice in the past and may automatically anticipate negative reactions in new situations. This can be especially true of an LGBT person living with dementia or who is very dependent on others for aspects of their care.</p> <p>By showing that we are committed to LGBT inclusion, by actively communicating our commitment to inclusion, we will help service users feel confident and comfortable accessing our service, without fear of discrimination and with reassurance that their needs will be considered. Such communication, in the form of clear statements on our commitment to LGBT inclusion and the celebration of the diversity of our communities, should be aimed at reaching all services users.</p> <p>Frontline staff must be equipped with the knowledge and confidence to deliver an LGBT-inclusive service.</p>		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	As above.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

<b>Socio-economic<sup>2</sup></b>					
<b>e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement</b>					
Positive impact	✓	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you	<p>The Public Health profiles show that in 2015, income deprivation score for older people in Stevenage was 16.1 which is the lowest quintile in the east of England. <a href="#">Public Health Profiles, Productive Healthy Ageing</a></p>				

<sup>2</sup>Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.



used to support this assessment

Specialist housing for older people has a number of benefits in terms of being easier to manage and maintain, and cheaper to run and keep warm. Also, specialist housing for older people is exempt from LHA housing caps, and therefore less likely to incur additional rent requirements.

Social housing is a tenure of choice for many people in Stevenage, partly due to its status as a New Town and its retention of its extensive housing stock. However, a range of tenures that encourages home ownership or other forms of renting might be suitable for older people. More research needs to be done on this, however results of the HOPS Service User survey appear to support the idea that people would consider moving to different tenures if a suitable option were available to them.

Would move to	Buy outright or with a mortgage	Rent from SBC	Rent from a housing association	Shared Ownership	Not sure
<b>Existing</b>					
A home you own with a mortgage	13	12	1	1	8
A home you own without a mortgage	41	11	2		15
Rented from the Council (SBC)	1	40	3		
Rented from a Housing Association	1	6	3		2
Extra Care or sheltered / independent living scheme		6	1		1
Rented from a private landlord		8	2		
Living with Friends and Family	2				2
Granny Annex					1

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What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?

What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)

<b>Other</b>				
please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts				
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

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**What are the findings of any consultation with:**

Staff?	Staff recognise the lack in the supply of housing and how a more attractive accommodation offer for older people could promote active ageing and make available family accommodation.	Residents?	Our consultation with residents highlighted a consensus amongst many that they aspire to remain located in the area in which they are currently living and familiar with, amongst friends and family. This was a finding mirrored in informal staff consultation.
Voluntary & community sector?	Our consultation with the voluntary and community sector, by way of both surveys and inclusion at stakeholder events, highlighted issues as a result of the lack of decent and accessible homes.	Partners?	Our consultation with partners at our stakeholder event highlighted the need to consider the caring responsibilities of our client group with a direct reference to adult children with learning disabilities.

	<p>The preferred feature of specialist accommodation was confirmed amongst professionals as storage for mobility equipment.</p>		
<p>Other stakeholders?</p>	<p>We have consulted with our stakeholders at scheduled events associated with this project. Our stakeholders shared our concerns in respect of the ageing population and the current housing offer. There is a consensus on the need for a more collaborative approach with protocols for information sharing.</p>		

## Overall conclusion & future activity

Explain the <b>overall findings</b> of the assessment and <b>reasons for outcome (please choose one)</b> :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	<p>The project is to continue as planned as in the main it will have positive impacts on residents of Stevenage. However, in areas where there is a risk of a negative impact, steps will be taken to eliminate/reduce such risk wherever it is possible and economical to do so:</p> <p>Age: whilst this project will promote specialist housing and the active ageing environment it brings, we aim to ensure that older people do not feel pressured to move from their existing homes and this project recognises that 'staying put' may be the right option for some people. Additionally, we seek to support older people in overcoming the barriers they may associate with a move to specialist housing, to ensure they are not excluded from accessing the housing options on offer.</p> <p>Disability: this project identifies that there is a need for a varied accommodation offer that includes a range of different accommodation types and tenures. This offer should include accessible general needs accommodation to meet the needs of those with disabilities and in turn should eliminate any sense of obligation felt by customers to move into specialist schemes if they would prefer to remain in their homes in the community.</p>
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the **actions that are needed** as a result of this assessment and how they will help to **remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities** and / or **encourage good relations**:

Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?
The adoption of the principles of coproduction when planning/designing the actions to be undertaken to achieve the strategic aim.	By involving our service users, ensuring the inclusion of representatives related to the protected characteristics, in service design, we can remove discrimination, promote equal opportunities and/or encourage good relations.		End of strategy lifespan	Strategy Action Plan
Confirm ethnic mix of SBC's current older people's housing and evaluate how it compares with the population.	It may bring to our attention unparalleled ethnic mixes within our stock and highlight the need for review of current practices with the promotion of equal opportunities and the encouragement of good relations in mind.	Kate Ford – Policy and Research Officer	December 2020	It will form part of normal monitoring systems and the strategy review.
Ensure the range of housing options on offer does not exclude options for those service users who chose to 'stay put'.	It will help to remove any discrimination experienced by older people and people with disabilities who make the decision to remain in their existing homes.	HOPS Project Team	October 2020	It will form part of the strategy and action plan  This action is recognised in the strategy and captured in one of its key themes – support, and assistance to help people move. Consideration of the future needs of residents will be factored into new developments, so homes

				are future-proofed should resident's wish to remain in place as they age. Furthermore, the expansion of current community support services and its offer, accounts for this aspiration and will be reviewed in line with this strategy to ensure it promotes the independence and support of those who take the decision to age in place.
Review the way in which we capture and store data relating to ethnicity groups, to ensure it aligns with ONS/Census 2021 ethnicity groupings.	It will make it easier to compare the ethnic mix of our service users and tenants and to recognise unparalleled ethnic mixes.	Charlotte Smith – Business Support Officer	Dec 2021	It will form part of normal monitoring systems and the strategy review.

**Approved by Assistant Director / Strategic Director:  
Date:**

Please send this EqIA to [equalities@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@stevenage.gov.uk)

<p><b>HOPS Action Plan</b></p> <p>Short Term: 1-3 years</p> <p>Medium Term: 4-6 years</p> <p>Long term: 7-10 years</p>	<p><b>Themes</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Development, standards and design</li> <li>2. Information, advice and technology</li> <li>3. Support and assistance to help people move</li> <li>4. Inter-organisational working</li> </ol>
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Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria	Resource required for the action (approx. figures)
Short Term Page 207 and on-going	Establish and programme joint professionals' workshops across sectors	To improve operational understanding, best practice and facilitate joint training opportunities, and to remove barriers to collaborative working.  To engage with professionals across services to gather information and data about older persons housing needs and aspirations, and how services can evolve to meet needs more effectively.	2, 3, 4	SBC/HCC ACS	SBC Housing and Investment  HCC ACS  ENHCCG  Community Navigators	Programme of workshops including speakers / themes / discussion topics where possible.  Clear understanding of outcomes arising from the workshops to encourage attendance  Commitment from organisations to support and attend.	Within existing resources.
Short Term	Create HOPS Partnership (revamp existing older persons network)	To provide co-production, consultation and critical friend role for strategic planning and project development.  To generate ideas and offer feedback to support strategy review and new	1, 2, 3, 4	SBC	SBC Communities and Neighbourhoods  Service users	Active and diverse forum with clear workplan and objectives.	Within existing resources

## APPENDIX C

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria	Resource required for the action (approx. figures)
		projects.			HCC PH E&NHCG VCS <i>Elected member(s)</i>		
Short Term Page 208	Develop design standards for older persons housing	<p>To standardise development criteria so developers understand the design needs of older people.</p> <p>To ensure sustainability and energy efficiency measures are considered in designs.</p> <p>To ensure new developments are built to reflect healthy place shaping and sustainable transport elements wherever possible.</p> <p>To ensure technology and connectivity requirements are factored into design to allow future assistive technology to be easily enabled.</p>	1, 4	SBC	SBC Planning SBC Housing Development HCC ACS HCC OT Service HOPS Partnership HCC PH	Clear, co-produced development standards for all housing developers in Stevenage to ensure that older people have suitable, efficient and attractive housing that enables them to live well in the community.	Within existing resources
Short Term	Review of tender documents and commissioning	To ensure new design and sustainability criteria are clearly articulated and embedded in tender	1, 4	SBC/HCC	SBC Housing Development	All new developments containing age friendly or accessible housing are	Within existing resources



## APPENDIX C

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria	Resource required for the action (approx. figures)
	requirements	documents			HCC ACS	built to high environmental and accessible standards.	
Short Term	Appoint and train new health and wellbeing, accommodation support and specialist support officer roles	<p>To increase dedicated support to older people in independent living or community housing</p> <p>To be a 'one stop' shop for older people to support them to move</p> <p>To help arrange 'settling in' activities and support for people new to their homes</p> <p>To improve health and well-being of older residents, including technology orientation working collaboratively with Healthy Stevenage Strategic Partnership group</p>	2, 3	SBC	SBC Housing and Investment  SBC Communities and Neighbourhoods	<p>Appointments made</p> <p>Older people have access to health and wellbeing activities</p> <p>Older people have more access to digital technology</p> <p>Older people have a better customer service to support them to move to a more suitable property for their needs.</p>	<p>Within existing resources. Grant received from HCC to part fund Health and Wellbeing role until end March 2022.</p> <p>Funding required for any IT needed – bid for external funding</p>
Short Term	Create dashboard for reporting	To have a standard reporting mechanism for reporting progress to SSAB, ACSMB and SSLT.	1, 2, 3, 4	SSAB	HCC ACS  SBC Housing and Investment	<p>Agreed template and recording schedule.</p> <p>Commitment from action leads to provide information regularly as requested</p>	Within existing resources
Short / Medium	Joint data mapping	To provide robust information on housing need, tenure requirements	1	HCC	HCC ACS	Robust data set and growth methodology for	£5k for any commissioning of

## APPENDIX C

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria	Resource required for the action (approx. figures)
Long Term	project	<p>and numbers required specifically for older people who have accessibility or care needs to support planning and development decisions.</p> <p>To provide a methodology that can be replicated across the County to inform wider growth scenarios.</p> <p>To inform reviews of strategic housing market assessments, local housing need assessments and Local Plan / Planning Policy updates.</p>			<p>HCC GIU</p> <p>HCC CI</p> <p>SBC planning</p> <p>SBC Corporate Policy and Business Support</p> <p>SBC H&amp;I</p>	<p>future planning</p> <p>Percentage target for new-build age appropriate housing across all tenures</p>	data needed.
Short / Medium Term	Develop protocol for recording lessons learned from new development	To embed continuous improvement into design and development for older persons housing	1, 4	SBC	<p>SBC Planning</p> <p>SBC Housing Development</p> <p>HCC ACS</p> <p>HCC OT Service</p> <p>HOPS Partnership</p>	Clear process embedded into PMO documents for all new schemes /projects and reviewed	Within existing resources
Short / Medium Term	Implement Asset Management Strategy and review Private Sector Stock Condition Survey	<p>To scope, cost and enable a programme of refurbishment of smaller general needs homes that may be suitable for older people to downsize into.</p> <p>Ensure the integral or retrofitted technology is reflected in the Asset</p>	1, 2, 3, 4	SBC	<p>SBC Housing and Investment</p> <p>SBC Planning</p> <p>HCC ACS / OT service</p> <p>HCC Assistive</p>	<p>To increase the supply of private sector and social housing suitable for older people to downsize into</p> <p>To access external funding to help achieve accessible and technology</p>	Commission Private Sector Stock Condition Survey – approx. £12k

## APPENDIX C

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria	Resource required for the action (approx. figures)
		Management, maintenance and renewal policies and reviews.			Tech team HOPS Partnership Private Sector Landlords	enabled housing for older people.	
Short / Medium Term	Review and align HHIA and SBC Adaptations policies and investigate joint funded projects across tenures where possible	To ensure older people across all tenures have equal access to adaptations and specific housing related practical support to move.	1, 3, 4	HHIA	SBC Housing and Investment HCC OT HOPS Partnership HHIA Partnership Board		Additional Aids and Adaptations post required – approx. £30k (in MTFS)
Short / Medium Term	Older persons communications and marketing plan	To ensure that older people have a range of up to date and relevant information about the benefits of suitable housing choices in older age, and advice on housing options available to them.  To engage with older people to gather information and data about their housing needs and aspirations  To generate interest in new developments of older people's housing across all tenures	2, 3, 4	SBC	HOPS Partnership SBC Housing Options SBC Housing development SBC Housing and Investment SBC Comms Members	Clear co-produced plan using a range of communication methods to improve uptake of older persons housing, adaptations, grants and benefits.	Within existing resources

## APPENDIX C

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria	Resource required for the action (approx. figures)
					HCC ACS OP commissioning HCC ACS OP Capital Programme HCC Comms HCC Behaviour Unit		
Short / Medium Term Page 212	Review information and data sources, and recording mechanisms (cross authority) to capture strategic information on older people's housing needs and aspirations	To provide a database of key data to underpin decision and policy making, identify trends, and map service improvements.  Re-run service user survey at regular intervals (to be determined) to see trends in changing attitudes, and to realign service user aspirations and strategic objectives where necessary.	1, 2, 3, 4	HCC/SBC	HCC CI HOPS Partnership SBC Corporate Policy and Business Support SBC Housing and Investment Residents VCS HHIA	A clear set of cross organisational indicators and data sets to help inform research, decision making and service improvement.	HCC's Insight Service has a wealth of data we can use
Short / Medium Term	Business case, to include cost-of-service analysis, for expanding community support services for older	To enable support for older people living across the community in all tenures but who need support to help them move to more suitable accommodation	2, 3, 4	SBC	SBC Housing and Investment HCC ACS VCS	An agreed Business Case with costed services, timelines, and clear objectives / outcomes  Programme of service	Business case will determine any future costs.

## APPENDIX C

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria	Resource required for the action (approx. figures)
	people across tenures including handy person services to facilitate moves	To access funding and resources from various sources to enable and pilot paid for and subsidised services			External funding streams HHIA	projects to take forward External and other sources of funding identified	
Short / Medium / Long Term	Develop joint land register of suitable development land available for older persons housing, or as part of other development proposals	To enable strategic joint assessments of land availability and possible uses, including other land parcels not in ownership of the councils, and existing buildings that could be repurposed or redeveloped, achieving appropriate financial and social outcomes for all relevant parties.	1, 4	SBC Planning	SBC Housing Development HCC ACS HCC Property Herts Living Ltd H&WE STP? Private developers	Regularly updated register, leading to more collaborative working and understanding of older persons housing supply across all tenures	Within existing resources
Medium term?	Review allocations policy and lettings plan to include older people's housing Develop local lettings policy for older people's housing	To ensure that age friendly housing is available to older people, to allow family or other housing to be released for families or younger people in housing need		SBC Housing and Investment	SBC Housing and Investment Residents VCS RSLs	A clear policy in place with targets for letting age friendly / specialist housing to older people	Within existing resources
Medium Term	Produce Stevenage Older Persons Housing JSNA	To underpin planning policy, design and service decisions To help provide robust evidence to support project work and housing	1, 4	HCC PH	HCC SBC Planning SBC Housing and Investment	Completed JSNA	Resource may be required depends on how much of the data is already available to HCC

## APPENDIX C

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria	Resource required for the action (approx. figures)
		development.			SBC Corporate Policy and Business Support SBC Communities and Neighbourhoods		Public Health. SBC/HCC would need to commission work.
Medium / Long Term	Enable the development of mixed tenure Extra Care homes across several schemes in partnership with SBC and in line with HCC's Extra Care Strategy.	To help improve housing options for older people who have care needs but wish to and are able to remain independent in their own homes.  To ensure that there is a commissioning strategy that includes housing related support grant.	1, 2, 4	HCC ACS	HCC Property SBC Planning SBC Housing Development SBC Housing and Investment Housing provider Care provider	Completed exemplar extra care scheme(s) fully occupied and staffed on time and within budget	Future HRS grant funding still to be determined by HCC
Medium / Long Term	Develop new Residential Care Home	To enable excellent care and accommodation to Stevenage residents who need higher levels of care and are funded by HCC.	1	HCC ACS	SBC Housing Development ENHCCG	Completed exemplar residential care scheme fully occupied and staffed on time and within budget	Within existing resources

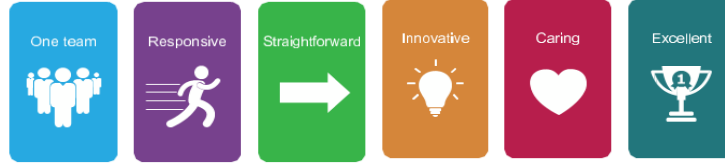
**APPENDIX C**

Time frame	ACTION	Purpose	Theme (s)	Action Owner	Stakeholders	Success criteria	Resource required for the action (approx. figures)
	To meet the standards as set out in the Supported housing: national statement of expectations guidance	<p>To provide a set of guidelines on what should reasonably be expected from the accommodation element of supported housing.</p> <p>To ensure good quality and value for money</p>	1	SBC/HCC	<p>SBC Housing Development</p> <p>SBC Housing and Investment</p> <p>SBC Planning</p> <p>HCC ECH and Care Home Capital Programmes</p> <p>HCC ACS Commissioning</p>		This has only just come in so will need to be scoped out. Likely to be within existing resources.

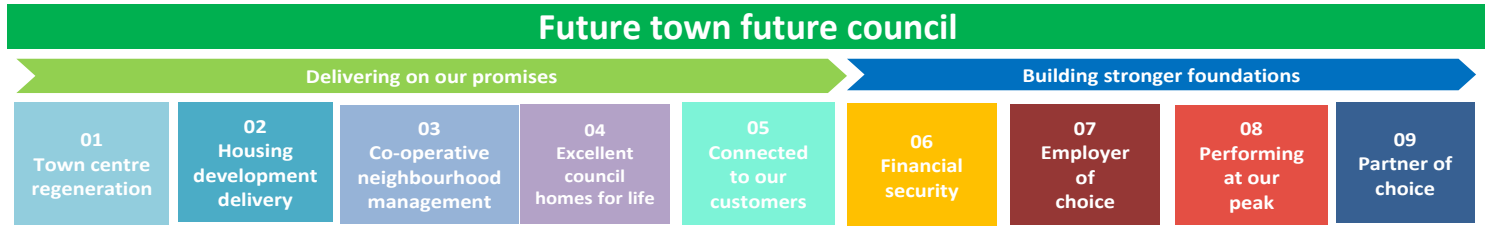
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# Draft Housing for Older People Strategy 2020-2030 on a Page



Our values

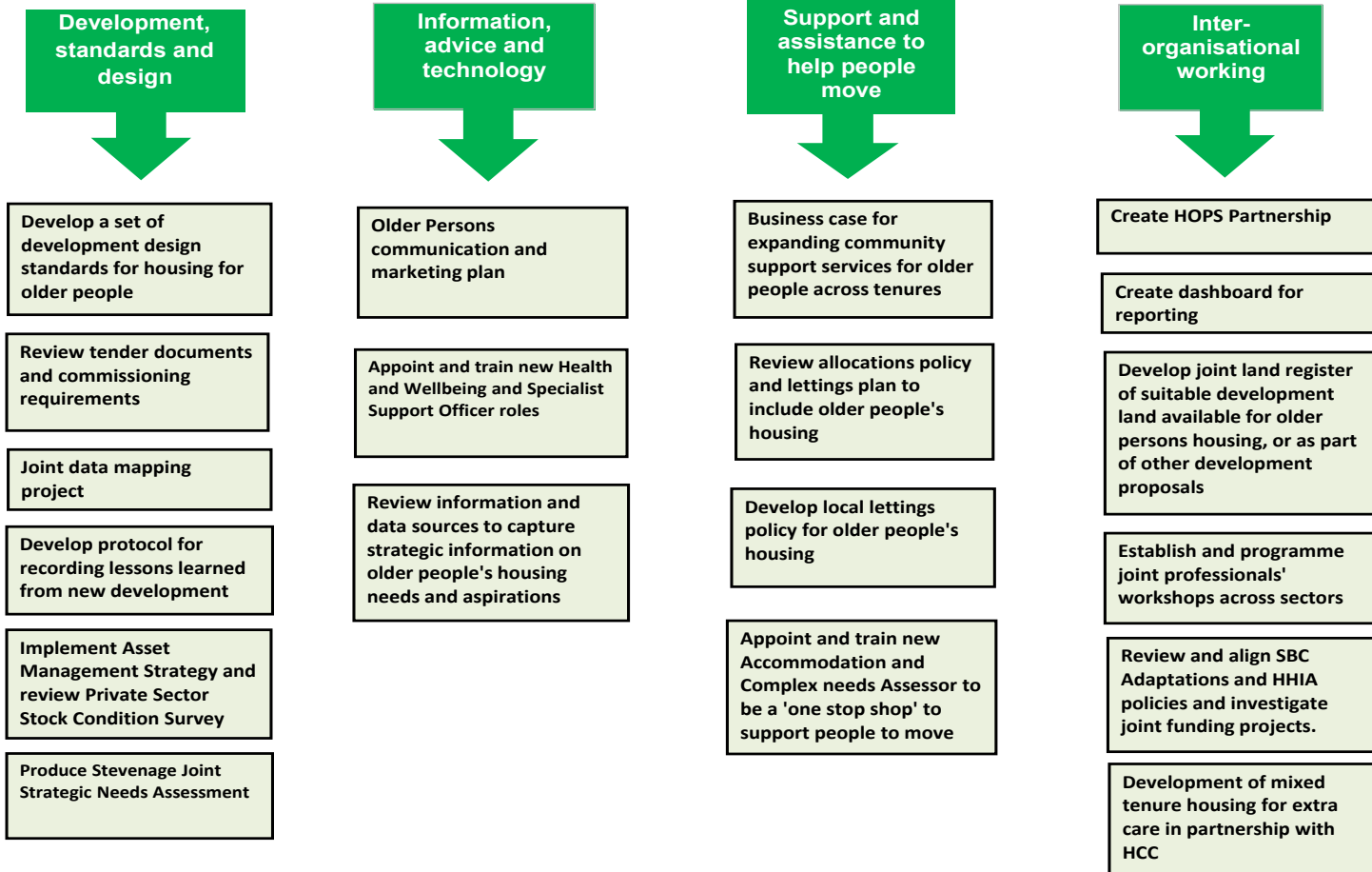


FTFC priorities

Strategic Objective

To enable healthy ageing for older people in Stevenage through the provision of a new housing and support offer.

Focus Themes



Key Actions

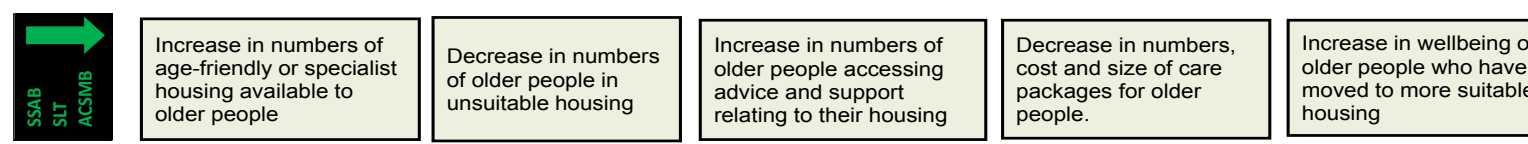
Strategic Key Outcomes

- Enabling different types of new housing suitable for older people to be developed in Stevenage across all tenures, but in particular through the Housing Development programme
- Strategic co-operation between Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council's assets, services and commissioning practices;
- Working with residents, families and carers, as well as the professionals who care for them, to ensure new homes are places where people want to live now and in the future;
- Clearer shared objectives between SBC and HCC, health services and the Voluntary and Community Sector, including an increased understanding of roles and responsibilities, and how services can be shaped to maximise efficiency and effectiveness to residents;
- Reduced pressure on public services
- Better quality of life for older people, including better health, care and social outcomes
- Release of family housing back into the market across all tenures

Risks

- Reduced Government funding
- Scarce land availability
- Delayed Social Care Green Paper
- Lack of certainty over social care funding
- Significant changes to key data due to Covid 19 pandemic
- Partners may not engage due to other priorities and reduced resources

Performance management & governance



Finance

HRA: GENERAL FUND: BUSINESS PLAN FORECASTS (HOUSING DEVELOPMENT/HOUSING & INVESTMENT): RTB RECEIPTS: GRANT FUNDING: S106: HCC FINANCE TBC

Informed by



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**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** All  
**Date** 9 December 2020



## CORPORATE PERFORMANCE - QUARTER TWO 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 two 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 two 2020/21, together with the latest achievements, be noted.
- 2.2 That the Executive considers, in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules and if agreed, to recommend to Council that it continues to adopt the current Co-operative Corporate Plan, subject to further review in Autumn 2022.

- 2.3 That impacts of the Government directive on housing rough sleepers during Covid-19 are noted and that future Housing First plans are endorsed (para 3.97 to 3.102).
- 2.4 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 3.92 to 3.96).
- 2.5 That the impacts of Universal Credit and COVID-19 on rent collection rate are noted and action plans endorsed (para 3.103 to 3.113).
- 2.6 That the impacts of COVID-19 on the following areas are noted and plans endorsed:
  - Job Creation/New Business Start Up through the Business Technology Centre (para 3.125 to 3.128)
  - Ability to inspect food establishments (para 3.129 to 3.131)
  - Issues with the letting of council garages (para 3.132 to 3.138)
  - Collection of Council Tax (para 3.165)
  - Ability to identify and remove HRA/GF savings (para 3.166 to 3.168)
- 2.7 That the level of void loss and how voids sheltered and major works impacts this measure is noted, and improvements are endorsed (para 3.114 to 3.122).
- 2.8 That the plans to improve website satisfaction are endorsed (para 3.155 to 3.157)

**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 3.44 to 3.75).
- 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 been reported since Quarter 1 of 2020/21. The scope of this strand will develop further over time.
- 3.4 At its 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 is being monitored and will be 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 3.87 (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. COVID-19 impacts on performance are highlighted throughout this report.

#### **COVID-19**

- 3.9 Given the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council’s Directors have provided an overview of current performance. Many services have been adapted to provide support for local people. The effects of the pandemic have required the Council to scale up or adapt support for residents at short notice, for example to scale up the Stevenage Helps and the Local Outbreak teams during the second lockdown. Officers have and continue to strive to put resourcing plans in place to manage the business continuity of vital services in a time of disruption, thereby diverting colleagues into priority areas. This will result in some temporary capacity reduction within lower priority areas. The pandemic is having significant impacts on residents and businesses in the town, which is reflected in areas of increasing demand or pressures in different service areas such as homelessness support and advice, Council Tax and Housing Benefits, income and rents.
- 3.10 The Business Units are striving to remain focussed and engaged on delivery of the agreed priorities, from creating new social and affordable housing, to driving forward the regeneration of the town centre, cooperative neighbourhoods and wealth building.

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

- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 In addition to the monitoring of programme milestones, thirteen measures aligned to FTFC delivery were monitored and reported on for April 2020 to September 2020. An overview of FTFC focused performance for April 2020 to September 2020 is outlined below:

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (urgent improvement action required)	Missing Data
13	5	1	5	2*

\*Missing data: EOC4a: % of apprentices in post, EOCrec: Time to recruit

- 3.13 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

3.14 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**

- 3.15 The planning application submitted by Mace was prepared for October planning committee.
- 3.16 Work is underway to prepare options to accelerate the second phase of the SG1 scheme which includes the Civic Hub.
- 3.17 The design works have concluded for the bus interchange and the Council has entered into and signed the enabling works delivery agreement with contractors Willmott Dixon. This package of works is currently on site.
- 3.18 Both Marshgate and the Enterprise centre (Phase 1A) have been listed as a potential projects for to be part funded from the Town Investment Plan (TIP) allocation should the submission successfully result in secured funding.
- 3.19 Physical works to the Town Square projects have continued this quarter, despite the impact of Covid-19. The lift shaft installation work has completed on the North Block site as well as works progressing externally and internally to the building. Additional paving sections in the public realm have been

opened out for public use and works are underway to install bespoke granite cladding on the benches.

- 3.20 The Town Fund project group have progressed the development of a comprehensive Town Investment Plan, with significant stakeholder engagement, advice from the Town Deal team appointed by the Government, and the Stevenage Development Board ahead of submission on at the end of October.
- 3.21 Two Full Business cases were submitted to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for GD3 funding and both have now been approved by the LEP board. These two bids cover the sustainable transport hub and enabling works for the SG1 scheme.

## **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

- 3.22 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**

- 3.23 Work is progressing on the North Road site. The brick and block work is continuing at the site and good progress being made. An initial marketing meeting with Putterills has taken place and the marketing approach to the properties has been confirmed. A grant funding agreement has been signed with Homes England which will secure an element of funding for North Road.



- 3.24 The schemes at Shephall Way (9 Homes) and Symonds Green (29 Homes) have continued to progress this quarter. At Shephall Way the work to the roof is now complete, and the scaffolding has now been mostly removed from the site. At Symonds Green, the basement is now fully cast with brick and blockwork up to the ground floor. Slab work is progressing, including work to the lift and stairwells.
- 3.25 The Project team have completed detailed working drawings for Kenilworth Close with some minor amendments requiring Planning consideration. These will be submitted to the Planning section in the coming weeks. The contractor is now on site for the Malvern Close element of the scheme with initial site preparation underway.
- 3.26 Work is underway with an architect to begin pulling together the material palettes in order to provide a coherent design methodology to masterplan the Oval scheme. Ongoing meetings between the Estates and Housing Development team will ensure a continued monitoring of the retail element of the site.
- 3.27 The report for the Wholly Owned Company (WOC) has been worked on in readiness for presentation to the Executive in Quarter 4.

## **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 The neighbourhood improvements programme has delivered some projects this quarter, but community engagement continues to be more challenging due to the pandemic. As agreed with Members the capital programme is on hold until April 2021.
- 3.30 Work on the Co-operative Neighbourhoods working model has been progressed this quarter. Six Co-operative Neighbourhoods Teams have now been set up and the Strategic and Operational Leads have now held their first team meetings. Three teams have held their first meetings with Ward Cllrs and the remainder of the meetings will have been held by the end of October. An analysis has been undertaken of the existing and planned activity of all services in the six areas. A key element of this work will be the development of the Community Plans in conjunction with local residents and businesses.
- 3.31 The Community Development team have been providing support to the community centres. The team are also finalising plans to use the centres as regular working hubs where Covid-19 regulations permit, in order to further help build and maintain relationships with centre staff.
- 3.32 The Council led the development of the COVID-19 Action Learning set for the Co-operative Council Innovation Network (CCIN) which was launched on 6th October at the CCIN Annual Conference. This included 2 Stevenage Case Studies focused on the Inclusive Economy Charter and the Healthy Stevenage Partnership.

## **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
- 3.33 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**

- 3.34 The flatblock refurbishment programme continues to be impacted by the pandemic, but contractors and Council staff have worked to ensure adherence to Government guidance. Throughout quarter two, work remained limited to external areas but towards the end of the quarter it has begun to commence internally.
- 3.35 The lift refurbishment programme has continued at good pace throughout quarter two. Grosvenor Court lifts have been completed and work began and continues at Truro Court.
- 3.36 Throughout quarter two the Sprinkler contract documents were assembled and enabling works commenced on site. Contractors are surveying buildings for asbestos, completing electrical safety checks in every flat, fitting smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and measuring up to produce detailed drawings for design and insulation. The Compliance team, consultants and the contractor are working with Herts Fire and Rescue on enhancements to ensure that the works, when completed, will meet the requirements of the forthcoming Building Safety Act.
- 3.37 Significant progress has been made with regards to the 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. The functions are ready to go but will 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 the Caretaking app now live following testing this quarter.
- 3.38 Following amendments being made to the Housing Older People Strategy (HOPS) to incorporate stakeholder feedback, the strategy has been updated. Further work has been identified to determine how development related commitments could be applied in practice and, discussions have begun to address this. Further information was needed regarding Herts County Council's commitment which is also being addressed. It is anticipated that this report will be brought to the Executive in December 2020.
- 3.39 At the end of Quarter 2 bidding applications had been made to Government for funding to support the Council's aspirations to deliver a Housing First

Project. Potential sites have been identified and feasibility work is underway including rent modelling to ensure the long term viability of any scheme.

## **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

3.40 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**

3.41 The Council's new look website was successfully launched on 22 September 2020. It provides an improved, modern website for customers that meets accessibility requirements, is mobile responsive and links with My Account (Digital Platform) and Northgate Housing Online, providing a more efficient customer experience. Ongoing feedback is being gathered using GovMetric's simple, visual tool on each page of the website. This is being monitored and responded to through Customer Services.

3.42 Development to the digital platform has continued this quarter which will act as enablers for future projects. Progress is being made and several features have gone live:

- My Account customer account

- Dash – a back office portal for staff to manage cases raised by customers
- ReportIt – environmental nuisance reporting tool for customers tool for customers to book their own appointments, linked to Customer Services Outlook calendar to show available slots
- Service – a CSC advisor platform
- Waste and recycling processes including missed bin collections
- Pavement license – enabling local businesses to accommodate customers with outdoor seating, a short notice requirement from Government in response to Covid-19.

3.43 During quarter three we will continue to develop the digital platform to provide further self-service options for customers, and build on the success of the new website by continuing to add content, build more community information and improve visual appeal.

## 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

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

3.45	<b>Healthy Stevenage – 2020/21 Programme Focus</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Improving the way we evidence and evaluate the impact of health and wellbeing projects and interventions working closely with the University of Hertfordshire.</li> <li>• Communicating better with local residents and professionals to raise awareness of local health improvement projects and services via a wider variety of communication channels.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing to work with health and physical activity partners to deliver the Healthy Stevenage Strategy 2018-2022.</li> <li>Continuing to collaborate and integrate our work with other key health and wellbeing strategies across Hertfordshire.</li> <li>Improving the way we work with local communities in co-designing health and wellbeing projects and services.</li> </ul>
3.46	<b>Healthy Stevenage – Programme Delivery Update</b>
	<p>3.47 The Healthy Stevenage Partnership has reviewed its key outcomes from 2019/2020 after collating outstanding evidence and data from all partners. This has led the production of a new annual report which will be shared with partners at the end of October 2020 and the development of a refreshed action plan for 2020/2021 that seeks to take COVID-19 related factors including those related to our partners and local communities into account.</p> <p>3.48 Officers from Sport and Leisure and Community Development worked collaboratively with Healthy Stevenage partners to support Bedwell organisations in applying for Active Local emergency funding. This enabled residents to benefit from the delivery of physical activities as part of Covid-19 recovery.</p> <p>3.49 The community response project, So Active, has continued to gather pace this quarter. Revitalising the health and wellbeing of keyworkers, older people, children and adults through a variety of physical activity and digital literacy interventions online and outdoors continues to be its key aim. Between July and September 2020, 32 sessions were delivered with a total of 336 residents participating during this period.</p>
3.50	<b>Community Safety – 2020/21 Programme Focus</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with partners to deliver initiatives to respond to the key Community Safety priorities of Violent Crime, Hate Crime and Community Reassurance.</li> <li>Cooperatively working to break the cycle of substance misuse and offending.</li> <li>Tackling perceptions of ASB through a media campaign highlighting how Stevenage is a safe place to live, visit and work in.</li> <li>Increased cooperative work in the community to tackle ASB.</li> <li>Improving awareness of safeguarding issues in our community.</li> </ul>

3.51	<b>Community Safety – Programme Delivery Update</b>
	<p>3.52 This quarter the Community Safety team have been working together with partners to review the partnership action plan Further to this residents and businesses have been asked for their comments too. The plan has been updated to include recovery activities relating to the pandemic. Surveys are being completed with clients that have used the services or support provided by the Community Safety team and a survey will take place using social media to gather public feedback on the services provided by the team. This will be fed in to the work to update the Community Safety strategy.</p> <p>3.53 An Action Plan has been completed for the No More Service and joint funding bids have been made with Stevenage (also known as Survivors) Against Domestic Abuse (SADA), the Council’s Housing team and Citizens Advice Stevenage to continue with the service after 2021. Collaboration work continues with other districts around the County, to work on projects and collaborate on funding bids. Given the current financial situation there is some uncertainty from other funding sources.</p>
3.54	<b>Stevenage Re-Imagined – 2020/21 Programme Focus</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing arts and heritage installations in the planning phase.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Developing new cultural proposals and initiatives in the town centre and across neighbourhoods.</li> <li>• Undertaking Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership needs analysis &amp; early commissioned delivery.</li> <li>• Piloting new heritage activities as we develop plans for a new museum for Stevenage.</li> <li>• Working co-operatively with the newly formed Junction 7 Creatives and others in the local creative community on the above projects.</li> <li>• Developing a series of options that could potentially form part of the Council’s Town Deal Proposition to Government</li> </ul>

3.55	<b>Stevenage Re-Imagined – Programme Delivery Update</b>
	<p>3.56 Planned cultural engagement and installation programme projects resumed throughout quarter two, after a delay due to the pandemic. This included work on a town centre heritage timeline in collaboration with the Council’s Regeneration team and discussions on a community arts project specifically focussing on Stevenage’s communities from ethnic minority backgrounds.</p> <p>3.57 The Stevenage in 100 Objects online exhibition was delivered through the Stevenage Museum and contributions were made by the Mayor and the Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People, Leisure &amp; Culture. An exhibition showcasing New Towns across the country is currently in progress with research and delivery set to begin in Stevenage in quarter three.</p>
3.58	<b>Community Wealth Building – 2020/21 Programme Focus</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Supporting Herts Growth Board to develop a policy statement and action plan for community wealth building across Hertfordshire.</li> </ul>
3.59	<b>Community Wealth Building – Programme Delivery Update</b>
	<p>3.60 A Cooperative Inclusive Economy Charter was signed off by the Executive at its July meeting. The Charter will be formally launched in November. It will include guidance on how local residents, organisations and businesses can pledge their support.</p> <p>3.61 An updated business case with key milestones has been provided to the Herts Growth Board team aimed at securing Community Wealth Building resources. Related to this, work is now underway with the Communities &amp; Neighbourhoods team to identify pilots for Community Balance Sheets.</p>
3.62	<b>Climate Change – 2020/21 Programme Focus</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> </ul>



	<p>Sustainability Partnership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Securing commitment from local businesses and residents through the Climate Change Business Charter and Community Pledge list.</li> <li>• Developing and implementing the SBC Carbon Management Plan.</li> </ul>
3.63	<b>Climate Change – Programme Delivery Update</b>
	<p>3.64 The Climate Change strategy was approved by the Executive during Quarter 2. The report has been amended to reflect the impacts of the pandemic and also includes reference to extensive consultation which took place in the first half of 2020.</p> <p>3.65 An external organisation has been appointed to support the establishment of the citizens panel. Officers consulted with “Involve”, who ran the parliamentary climate emergency citizens assembly, and academics to advise on how best to use outcomes and design sessions. A virtual event is due to be held in quarter three following the recruitment of a random sample.</p>
3.66	<b>Sustainable Transport – 2020/21 Programme Focus</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refreshing the Future Town Future Transport Strategy.</li> <li>• Working towards the designation of Stevenage as a ‘Sustainable Transport town’.</li> <li>• 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).</li> <li>• Updating the Parking and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document and Strategy.</li> <li>• Developing the options for the cycle hire scheme.</li> </ul>
3.67	<b>Sustainable Transport – Programme Delivery Update</b>
	<p>3.68 The new Parking and Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted after the September meeting of the Executive and a subsequent presentation to</p>

	<p>Planning and Development Committee. The document sets the new parking requirements expected of proposals for new retail and non-retail development. The SPD is a key project stated within Future Town, Future Transport and will help to reduce the level of car-use by residents and users of new developments by reducing the provision of parking spaces where appropriate. The SPD will be a material consideration for all planning applications from now on.</p> <p>3.69 The results of a feasibility study into the potential for a cycle hire scheme in Stevenage have been received. The study uses industry best practice and experience of other schemes nationwide to give an indication of the size, scale and phasing for a potential scheme in Stevenage. The next stages are for officers to engage the bike supplier market before determining whether to initiate market procurement for suppliers to show how they would provide a hire scheme to meet the findings of the feasibility study.</p> <p>3.70 A submission was made to Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Sustainable Travel Towns (STT) programme. Stevenage Borough Council has been very keen for Stevenage to be accepted onto the programme and has submitted all information requested during the application process. It is hoped that the STT programme will help to deliver a range of projects to help initiate a modal shift in transportation use in the borough. It is anticipated that HCC will make an announcement on this in December 2020. A progress report on the strategy is due at Executive in January 2021.</p>
3.71	<b>Biodiversity – 2020/21 Programme Focus</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing Shackledell Grassland as a designated local nature reserve.</li> <li>• Developing site specific hedgerow management plans.</li> <li>• Protecting woodland sites through improved vertical structure in woodlands (subject to being able to work on-site in the autumn/winter months).</li> <li>• Developing new orchard and grassland habitats (subject to being able to work on-site in the autumn/winter months).</li> </ul>
3.72	<b>Biodiversity – Programme Delivery Update</b>
	<p>3.73 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.</p>

### ***Further Recovery Actions (outside of FTFC)***

- 3.74 Discussions have been held with partners to re-galvanise the Social Inclusion Partnership. The focus of the partnership will be on emerging needs around skills and pathways to work and will work to identify opportunities to tackle these. The partnership will also be exploring ways of attracting inward investment for Stevenage based Community, Voluntary and Social Enterprise organisations and the Council. This work will be in collaboration with the newly formed Stevenage Economic Taskforce and feed into the recovery plans for the town. This will be monitored by the Stevenage Co-operative Economic Recovery Taskforce.
- 3.75 An advert has been placed for the recruitment of an independent chair for the Council's equalities commission. Black History Month has in part been used to undertake a listening exercise with black communities across Stevenage. This will continue into November and December to provide the Equalities Commission with feedback directly from local people.

## **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.

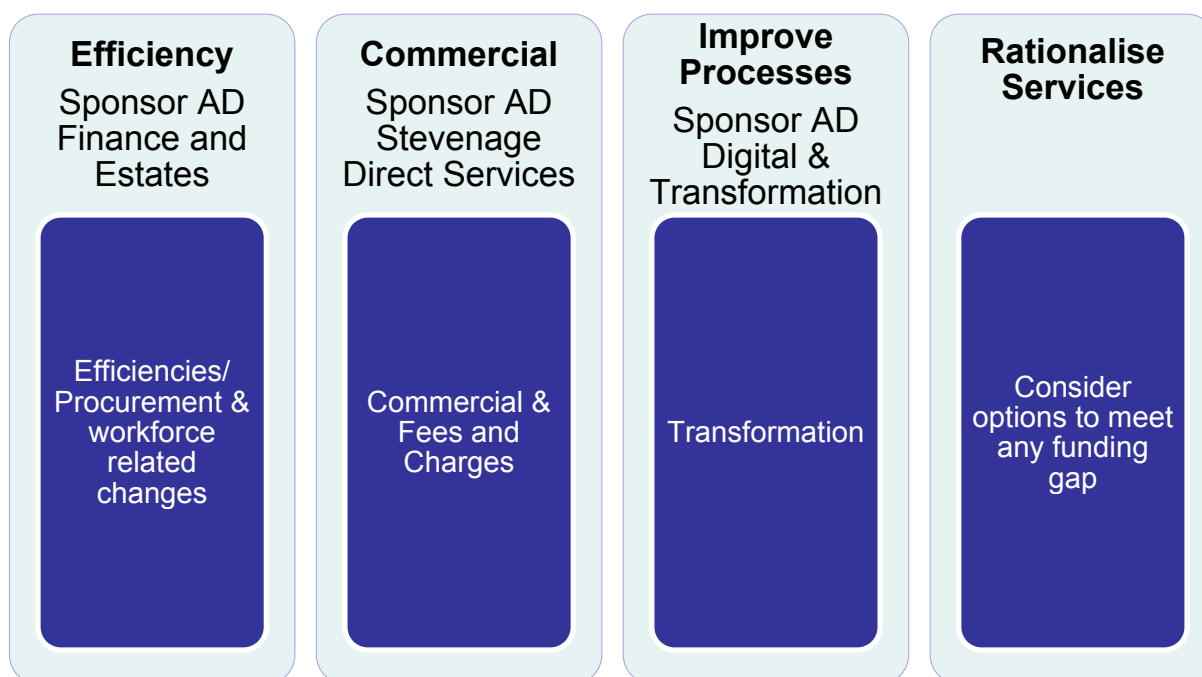


Figure 2: Financial Security Work streams.

- 3.76 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**

- 3.77 A meeting was held with Executive members to identify the shortfall in the ongoing budget and the savings options identified to meet the anticipated gap. A decision was made to focus on a one year saving package (as opposed to the usual three years) due to the exceptional circumstances and uncertainty surrounding the medium to longer pandemic.
- 3.78 Fees & Charges preparation began in September with relevant managers/ADs engaged to discuss options for next year's fees. Meetings were held in early October to discuss options in more detail.

- 3.79 The Council's Commercialisation & Insourcing strategy is being taken forward post it being signed off by the Executive in August 2020. An update will be provided to the newly formed Commercial and Investment Executive Committee in October. This strategy is focussing on ideas to find savings to contribute to the one year budget package. A consultant has been engaged with the Strategic Leadership Team to focus on ideas to find savings/generate income, and the outcome from this work will be fed into the subsequent work of the strategy.
- 3.80 Work is underway to consider options and concepts for the future Transformation of the organisation to help deliver the Council's Financial Security programme and also assessing opportunities to enhance customer experience.

## **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

- 3.81 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**

- 3.82 Activities throughout quarter two continue to focus on supporting the Council's response to COVID-19 and the associated recovery planning, which has

resulted in the temporary pausing of some elements of the Employer of Choice Programme.

- 3.83 Extensive work has been undertaken on the Workforce and OD strategy during quarter 2, including SLT, staff, trade union and Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) engagement. The strategy will be presented to the Executive for approval in quarter three.
- 3.84 Work recommenced on the development of a leadership programme under the apprentice levy framework late in quarter two and proposals will come forward during quarter three. During quarter two the first online virtual officer leadership forum was hosted with generally positive feedback.

## **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

3.85 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**

3.86 All reporting targets have been met in respect of performance, governance and risk management this quarter. However, there has been insufficient capacity to undertake development work in relation to this programme due to resource being diverted to Resilience activities associated with the response to Covid-19. Improvements will be made to the Inphase system during quarter 3, but it is anticipated that the main focus of the corporate performance/governance function will be on 'business as usual' activity for the remainder of the year.

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

3.87 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 September 2020 is outlined below:

3.88

Number of Measures Reported	Meeting or exceeding target	Amber Status (within a manageable tolerance)	Red Status (urgent improvement action required)	Missing Data
41	22	2	8	9*

\*CSC13a: % of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC, is unable to report due to COVID-19 delaying development of the new digital platform, Firmstep. Other developments have taken priority e.g. CSC online appointments system, All 4 HR measures missing data, 3 x Community Safety measures missing data (awaiting police data), ECHFL5: Repairs satisfaction missing

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

### **A: Customer Theme**

3.90 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)**

3.91 These measures were removed from the corporate performance suite for 2020/21 due to issues with the quality of data from the contractor. The compliance team are working to develop a suite of measures for compliance works.

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

3.92 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.

3.93 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.

- 3.94 The Housing Options team have seen 121 rough sleepers approach for assistance since the 'Everyone In' directive was put in place on 26 March 2020. Many are still being accommodated; however, some have left the accommodation provided due to non-occupation, eviction or refusal.
- 3.95 The team are continuing to source accommodation at pace. This is evident by the Housing Supply team having rehoused 22 rough sleepers into the private rented sector in Quarter 2 and also continuing to source additional accommodation.
- 3.96 More details concerning the new Housing First model will be brought to Executive in Quarter 3. The team put forward successful proposals for the MHCLG Next Steps revenue and capital funding which totals approximately £1.3million for accommodation, security and Severe Weather Emergency Provision.
- NI156: Number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation at end of quarter, September 2020 target 120, achieved 150

### **Spotlight: Homelessness Preventions**

- 3.97 Due to the service 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.
- 3.98 There has been less stock available in the private sector, due to a lack of turnaround despite the ban on evictions. The team have however seen a similar level of approaches for service as at the same quarter last year.
- 3.99 The current number of cases being managed is 689. This includes those who are seeking housing advice, but who may not currently be threatened with homelessness.
- 3.100 During Quarter 2 additional resource has been allocated to increase capacity to deal with the increasing caseload. The team has 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.
- 3.101 Analysis has been undertaken which shows a significant increase in demand for the service since the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act. This continues 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%
- 3.102 As mentioned in para 3.96 the Housing First proposals will be brought forward to Executive in Quarter 3.



- BV213: Homelessness Preventions, September 2020 target 180, achieved 151

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

- 3.103 Income collection for the end of September is below target due to unprecedented challenges from the impacts of COVID-19.
- 3.104 There has been an increase in Universal Credit cases since the end of March 2020 (329). The number of UC claimants stood at 1465 at the end of Quarter 2, of these accounts 1078 are in arrears totalling £765,753.39, which equated to over 64.85% of the overall gross arrears. This number is expected to increase for at least the next 18 months, with a sharp spike expected when the Government support measures end due to unemployment and redundancies.
- 3.105 The number of tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit has continued to decrease since March 2020, at the end of Quarter 2 this stood at 38.28% of total number of current tenants. This reduction is a direct result of the increase in tenants in receipt of UC.
- 3.106 It is projected that more tenants are likely to migrate to full service UC over the next 12 months; however this projection could be increased further dependent on the impacts of furlough. Work to mitigate the impact will continue to focus on sustaining income collection, arrears recovery and tenancy sustainment.
- 3.107 According to the Government website, 'Stat Xplore', in North and East Hertfordshire as at 24 September there were 40,462 UC claims, of those 49.43% are households in Stevenage.
- 3.108 There are 259 cases on alternative payment arrangements (APA) with total arrears of £368,283.37 and 39 cases on direct payments still in receipt of legacy benefits with total arrears of £49,575.
- 3.109 There has been an increase in emergency and temporary accommodation arrears. The total number of cases is 150, of those 126 are in arrears totalling £66,048.05. This is due to the recent increase in homeless presentations.
- 3.110 The Government suspension of legal proceedings in court was lifted at the end of August 2020 and the Income team have resumed taking cases to court. However there are still some restrictions on eviction action and this impacts the level of arrears.
- 3.111 Arrears levels continue to rise during the pandemic, is underway to mitigate the impacts. This includes providing targeted support to tenants facing financial difficulties.
- 3.112 Following the approval of the income recovery action plan in Quarter 1, key progress this quarter includes:
- Mobyssoft undertook an analysis exercise of the council's arrears data in September 2020 and benchmarked against data for other

social landlords. The outcome was that Average Non-UC Arrears per tenant (£196.20) are lower than most organisations that the council was benchmarked with. Average UC Arrears per tenant were £726.61

- From October 2020, the Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) to the council will be aligned to when the tenant received their UC, removing the delays in most payments. The council will be receiving UC payments daily. It is expected that within 8 weeks most skipped payments will be caught up.
- The income team have now got access to view expected payments on the DWP portal. This will inform case management and the true arrears for UC cases.
- The income team have gained approval for additional resources and have started the recruitment process. The resources will continue work to target and support UC cases to maximise income collection and minimise the level of arrears for this group of tenants.

3.113 It is expected that at the end of Quarter 3 and 4 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, September 2020 target 96.3%, achieved 93.4%

### **Spotlight: Void Loss, Voids Sheltered & Voids Sheltered Major Works**

3.114 The figure for void loss this quarter is above target. The sheltered housing stock is having a high impact on this measure.

3.115 A new working group has been established with an aim to reduce void loss and improve turnaround times for both standard sheltered voids and major sheltered voids.

3.116 The Repairs Team are hitting their target for turnaround time, but the overall KPI is being heavily impacted by voids that have historically been hard to let. General needs voids are achieving target.

3.117 For voids sheltered, 8 out of the 26 properties let took over 100 days from key to key, two of which took over 300 days against a target of 70 days.

3.118 For major works sheltered voids, one property in July took over 200 days to let, this impact is likely to continue while the older and long term voids are let. There have only been 3 sheltered major works voids, which means the long term properties have a more significant impact on the performance measure.

3.119 Sheltered properties make up 33% of all properties let in Quarter 2, however account for almost 50% of all void loss attributed to properties let in the same period. One property (long standing void considered for development/demolition/sale) has now been let, after accumulating £24,171.62 of void loss.

- 3.120 The list of historic properties not yet let (mostly sheltered) is accumulating approximately £17,000 per month in rent loss, this equates to approximately 62% of the overall monthly void loss figure.
- 3.121 It should be noted that although the void loss target hasn't been met, the figure for Quarter 2 is £7,308 better than the last financial year.
- 3.122 Once the longer term voids are cleared, the longer term benefits for these KPI's will be seen.
- VoidLoss1: Void Loss in year (£), September 2020 target £164,594, achieved £224,901
  - VoidsSheltered: The time taken to relet standard sheltered voids, September 2020 target 70 days, achieved 108.88 days
  - VoidsShelteredMW: The time taken to relet major works sheltered voids, September 2020 target 70 days, achieved 127 days

## **Communities and Neighbourhoods**

### **Spotlight: Community Safety**

- 3.123 Due to Police data not being available the Community Safety team have been unable to provide data for Quarter 2. This is due to capacity issues within the police team.

### **B: Place Theme**

- 3.124 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 3.21 and 3.23 to 3.27 respectively)

## **Planning and Regulation**

### **Jobs Created and New Business start-ups through the Business Technology Centre**

- 3.125 During Quarter 2 the jobs created and new business start-up through the Business Technology Centre (BTC) did not meet the target, however they still managed to create 5 jobs and supported 4 new businesses starting up during a difficult economic time.

- 3.126 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.
- 3.127 There is more evidence that more self-employed people are taking on paid employment currently, as certain types of businesses have not been supported by Government measures. The BTC has seen the number of enquiries for start-up decreases quite dramatically for these reasons.
- 3.128 Businesses are currently concerned with safeguarding the jobs they currently provide, rather than recruitment. This can be evidenced by national data on the number of job vacancies since the pandemic began.
- BTC1a: New jobs created through the BTC, September 2020 target 30, achieved 12
  - BTC1b: New business start-up in BTC, September 2020 target 12, achieved 10

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

- 3.129 Food safety inspections were largely paused at the instruction of the Food Standards Agency (FSA), in all but the highest risk cases, at the start of the pandemic. This, coupled with a surge in new businesses registering with the Council, has diluted the overall number of food businesses that are broadly compliant.
- 3.130 During quarter 3, the Commercial Team will be prioritising inspections in premises that are new and at existing non-broadly compliant premises, in accordance with the priorities outlined by FSA.
- 3.131 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, September 2020 target 95%, achieved 92.9%

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

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

- 3.132 Since December 2019 the garages performance measure has been red.
- 3.133 Repossessions were paused between June and September meaning it was not possible to get the related garages back online for rental. The Customer Service Centre was also closed for key collection until the start of September, slowing down the process for dropping keys off and therefore getting garages rented.

- 3.134 Although the Garage Improvement Programme was operational from July to September 2020, no new garages came back online during this period. However as of November 2020 Valley Way will be on line for rental (29 garages).
- 3.135 An application review of all garage applications was completed in September and will allow greater matching of garages with tenants. This will be complimented by Choice Based Lettings, due to be implemented in April 2021. During Quarter 2 the uptake of garages was low (acceptance was averaging about 30% of offers), however the team have changed the way that offers are made and have reverted back to postal offers – this has seen an increase in conversion rates from 30% to 80% over 2 weeks.
- 3.136 A list of high demand garages that are void has been produced, individual targets have been set for reducing these until choice based lettings is implemented.
- 3.137 The Garages team have forecasted a void rate of 14.46% for the end of the financial year. The forecast has been based on the following:
- There are currently 857 voids and 19 weeks until the end of March 2021
  - 59 voids will be returned following refurbishment works (Valley Way – 29 voids, Spring Drive – 13 voids, Ridlins End – 17 voids)
  - Factoring in all current challenges e.g. moving the asbestos identified garages to alternatives and the pending rent increase letter that will be issued in February 2021 to announce a 52 week year and increase, the team believe it is sensible to forecast a reduction in the voids by 4 per week allowing for a reduction of 76 voids overall
  - This reduction will come from the voids shown above in the completed sites and working on old high demand garages that are believed to be 'easily let' and shift the focus of trying to turn around the weekly terminations that come in which is how the team currently operate. The introduction of a temporary staff member for a 16 week period will enable the team to aim for this target
  - To note there are 212 voids in the Bedwell area which the team have been advised not to let until further notice due to an Asbestos issue
- 3.138 This approach will allow the team to reduce the current voids from 857 to 781 whilst maintain a steady number of offers per week, factoring in the unknown number of terminations that maybe received.
- CNM2g: Garage Voids as a percentage of stock, September 2020 target 11.58%, achieved 15.38%

### **Waste and Recycling**

- 3.139 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. Recycling tonnages remained high through July however overall tonnages have reduced to normal levels as the quarter progressed.

3.140 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).

3.141 In the event of any future local lockdowns the same principles will be applied, with redeployment of staff to support front line critical services either because the tonnages dictate and resource is required to complete workloads or due to staffing levels reduce due to COVID-19/sickness absence.

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

3.142 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**

3.143 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.

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

- CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre: target 10.4%, April 2020 to September 2020 achieved 5.8%
- CSC13a: Percentage of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors): target 61.8%, April 2019 to September 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 September 2020 achieved 96%

3.145 Performance measures achieved targets in Quarter 2.

- 3.146 In Quarter 2 many advisers continued to work from home. The CSC team continue to deliver front-line services using a blended delivery model. The team are predominantly working from home with a small office presence to deliver; reception services, customer appointments, scanning of documents and administering post. Those working in the office are doing so using a bubble approach.
- 3.147 The figures for CS13a are unable to be reported. The team are currently reviewing how performance is measured within the CSC, alongside the existing reported measures of calls answered and customer satisfaction. The measure for resolution needs updating to take account of new process and system changes. The aim is to report on resolution within the CSC by the end of Quarter 4. The team will also be tracking take up of online services in order to help to improve our offer, and so we can continue to sustain performance levels with reduced staffing levels.
- 3.148 Historical performance data demonstrates performance in the Customer Service Centre is closely related to the amount of skilled advisers available.
- 3.149 As at 30 September 2020 there were 27.6 FTE's in post, with available resource of 24.1 FTE's, the difference being related to maternity leave and secondments.
- 3.150 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	<15.1%	11.2%
CSC 13a – Calls resolved at first point of contact	>65%	Forecast unavailable
EAA1 - Customer satisfaction with CSC services	> 90%	92%

- 3.151 At present the team are on a track for a broadly similar volume to Quarter 3.
- 3.152 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.

3.153 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

3.154 The focus on this service area will be retained until it is performance improvement can be sustained across the full set of CSC measures.

### **Spotlight: Website Satisfaction**

3.155 Govmetrics is a benchmarking tool used across approximately 10 local authorities to measure customer satisfaction. The measure is the average rating users give (1 being a smiley face, 0 being neutral face, -1 being a negative face). So a score of above 0 means that the website received more positive than negative ratings. For example:

- 1 green and 1 amber response would total 1, so the average score we use as a performance measure would be 0.5
- 3 green, 1 amber and 1 red score a total of 2, so the measure would be 0.25.

Govmetric performance scores close to 1 mean that nearly all feedback is positive. Close to 0 means that it's neutral and/or a balance of good and bad. While a score close to -1 would mean that nearly all feedback is negative. The response rate on the website is much lower than for telephony (or face to face in normal times). Consequently it tends to be biased by negative comments as people are typically more likely to put effort in to complain rather than compliment. This results in website Govmetric scores that are consistently lower than for telephone or face to face. National data shows this is the case for all local authorities.

3.156 Performance was on target in July and August but dipped in September due to issues with the payments system (a separate system to the web platform itself) as well as some teething issues with the new site which meant the "Find" feature used for residents to find their waste collection day was not available.

3.157 The new website launched on 23rd September. The issues that caused the dip in performance are now resolved and we will closely monitor performance over the next quarter and will continue to use insight from Gov Metrics to identify and fix issues.

- WebSat1: % Customer satisfaction with the Council website, September 2020 target 0.3, achieved 0.15

### **Technology**



- 3.158 In Quarter 2 IT have been busy continuing to support all staff in line with the continuation of high levels of homeworking due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation.
- 3.159 Zoom training continued throughout the quarter for Members who needed support to attend virtual meetings.
- 3.160 Progress has continued with the Microwave link hardware now successfully installed following the delays in the previous quarter due to Covid-19 Lock-down.
- 3.161 Work has progressed on the Microsoft 365 Pilot with planning and preparations complete for the pilot to roll out during Quarter 3. The network replacement project is on track for completion in Quarter 4.
- 3.162 During August, the ICT team were impacted by a major incident as a result of exceptionally heavy rainfall leading to a significant water ingress at Cavendish Road. The water was centred around the Cavendish data centre, the power to the air conditioning units needed to be powered down for safety reasons. This meant that the servers were at risk of overheating and would imminently shut-off. If the risk materialised, it would have meant the loss of several critical IT services. Steps were quickly taken to move critical systems over to Daneshill in order to protect the service. The ICT team worked around the clock to manage and monitor the situation, which was successfully resolved with no impact to services.

### **Our staff**

- 3.163 The HR KPI's were not produced for this quarter's report, due to staff resources being required to cover the vacant Payroll Manager duties. The Lead HR Manager recognises the importance of these indicators to Members particularly at the current time, but commits to giving an update on in particular the level of sickness absence before the next quarters report.
- 3.164 Members should be aware that all Assistant Directors can access the sickness KPI's for their own business unit online through the HR system, so they can monitor trends in their own Business Units.

### **Finance and Estates**

#### **Spotlight: Council Tax**

- 3.165 As a result of COVID-19 the Shared Revenues service has agreed a number of changes to instalment arrangements for residents to reflect their financial circumstances; this is estimated to be on 4,856 accounts to 5 November 2020. This has had a knock on impact on the collection rate to date for 2020/21.
- BV9: % Council Tax collected (amber), September 2020 target 61%, achieved 59.9%

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

- 3.166 As a result of the financial impact of COVID-19 on the Council in this and future years, ( as reported in the June and September General Fund MTFS, the Chief Financial Officer has recommended that the General Fund and HRA three year target will be a "one year savings target" ; for the GF and HRA.
- 3.167 A Financial Security report will be presented to the December Executive, setting out options for 2021/22. The 2021/22 target for the General Fund (as set out in the September MTFS) is £1Million and the HRA 2021/22 target (as set out in the HRA MTFS) of £366K.
- 3.168 Savings are being continually reviewed and brought forward where possible.
- FS1A: Percentage of GF approved savings removed from GF budget for current year, September 2020 target 92%, achieved 77%
  - FS2A: Percentage of HRA approved savings removed from HRA budget for current year, September 2020 target 91%, achieved 30%
  - FS3: Percentage of GF savings identified to meet three year target, September 2020 target 30%, achieved 0%
  - FS4: Percentage of HRA savings identified to meet three year target, September 2020 target 30%, achieved 0%

### **Next Quarter Focus**

- 3.169 The Assistant Directors are responsible for improving the performance of measures that fall within their Business Units.
- 3.170 Following a number of assessments, and the new red and amber measures arising at September 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 (para 3.143 to 3.154)
  - Continue to monitor satisfaction with the new Council website after introduction of the new site (para 3.155 to 3.157)
  - Continuing to implement recovery plans for Temporary/Emergency accommodation use caused by Covid-19 (paragraphs 3.92 to 3.96)
  - Continuing to implement Housing First plans to assist with Homelessness Preventions (para 3.97 to 3.102)
  - Continuing to implement recovery plans for Rent Collection (para 3.103 to 3.113)
  - Continuing to implement plans and improve processes for Void loss, Sheltered Voids and Sheltered Major Works Voids (para 3.114 to 3.122)
  - Continuing to work with/follow advice from WENTA about BTC job creation and new business start-up (para 3.125 to 3.128)
  - Ensuring that compliance checks for food establishments resume (para 3.129 to 3.131)

- 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 3.132 to 3.138)
- Ensuring that improvement plans for collection of Council Tax are in place (para 3.165)
- Ensuring that General Fund and HRA savings are closely monitored (para 3.166 to 3.168)

3.171 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.

3.172 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.

3.173 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.

4.4 The FTFC Co-operative Corporate Plan was approved as a 5 year plan from 2016 to 2021 and is therefore due for revision. At the present time Member and officer focus continues to be on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and EU transition. The aforementioned recovery plans agreed in July 2020 will help shape the Council's priorities and programmes for the coming financial year. In this context, officers propose that the current plan and existing FTFC

programmes are extended into 2022/23. This will provide officers and Members with the opportunity to thoroughly review the plan. The review process could be supported by a further LGA peer challenge and completion of the Resident Survey, both of which would inform future priorities and programmes. The FTFC Co-operative Corporate Plan is a Budget & Policy Framework item, and it is proposed that the recommendation to extend the current plan is incorporated into the budget setting reports to full Council.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

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

### **5.2 Legal Implications**

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

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

5.3.1 The report outlines performance against key priorities that form the Future Town, Future Council Programme and performance of the Council across key business unit themes. Where necessary, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for improvement activity identified.

### **5.4 Risk Implications**

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

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

### **5.5 Other Corporate implications**

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

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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

## **APPENDICES**








- Appendix One: Compendium of Performance Results
- Appendix Two: Future Town, Future Council Programme Scope/Focus for 2020/21

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# 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 30/09/19	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	Actual to 30/09/20	Status at 30/09/20	Target to 31/12/20
CS10: Domestic Abuse per 1,000 population	Customers			»			»			»	5.70	6.03		?	?		-
+ Voids Sheltered MW - The time taken to relet major works sheltered voids	Customers	70.00	91.00		70.00	70.00		70.00	103.25		70.00	0.00		70.00	127.00		70.00
Void loss 1: Void loss in year (£)	Customers	164,594	191,858		239,856	271,198		319,245	343,051		82,767	87,350		164,594	224,901		239,856
NI156: Number of households in temporary/emergency accommodation at end qtr	Customers	75.00	81.00		75.00	89.00		75.00	175.00		120.00	182.00		120.00	150.00		120.00
+ 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%
+ ECHFL-EW1: Percentage of tenants satisfied with external 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%
+ ECHFL1: Percentage of Homes maintained as decent	Customers	79.4%	79.5%		81.5%	81.5%		76.1%	75.1%		75.1%	75.2%		76.5%	76.7%		78.8%
+ BV66a: Rent collection rate	Customers	96.3%	96.9%		97.8%	97.3%		98.7%	98.5%		93.6%	90.2%		96.3%	93.4%		97.8%
BV213: Homelessness preventions	Customers	180.0	272.0		270.0	428.0		360.0	525.0		90.0	67.0		180.0	151.0		270.0
NI15b: The rate of violence against the person (victim based crime) per 1,000	Customers	17.00	9.00		28.00	7.90		35.00	8.24		10.00	15.30		7.00	?		11.00
CS8: Anti-social behaviour per 1,000 population	Customers	20.00	8.45		28.00	5.38		33.00	6.80		8.00	10.40		12.00	?		8.00
+ Complete: Percentage of stage 2 & 3 complaints upheld fully or partially (Housing)	Future Town, Future Council	40.00%	20.00%		40.00%	24.71%		40.00%	27.73%		40.00%	27.27%		40.00%	36.11%		40.00%
CTOC: Percentage of customer complaints responded to within deadline	Future Town, Future Council	95.00%	94.19%		95.00%	94.94%		95.00%	93.90%		95.00%	99.65%		95.00%	99.86%		95.00%
EAA1: Customer satisfaction with CSC customer service	Future Town, Future Council	90.0%	90.1%		90.0%	89.7%		90.0%	89.7%		90.0%	96.0%		90.0%	96.0%		90.0%
WebSat1: Customer satisfaction with Council website	Future Town, Future Council	0.11	0.30		0.15	0.26		0.20	0.16		0.22	0.22		0.30	0.15		0.26
FS3 (Futsav1b): Percentage of GF savings identified to meet three year target	Future Town, Future Council	39.8%	71.9%		47.4%	69.6%		69.9%	69.9%		10.0%	10.0%		30.0%	0.0%		50.0%
FS2a (LACC2): Percentage HRA approved savings removed from HRA for current year	Future Town, Future Council	91.00%	94.00%		91.00%	92.00%		91.00%	91.00%		91.00%	45.00%		91.00%	30.00%		91.00%
EoC4a: Percentage of apprentices in post as percentage of workforce.	Future Town, Future Council	2.3%	1.9%		2.3%	2.1%		2.3%	1.9%		2.1%	2.2%		1.9%	?		2.1%
HDD1b (formerly NB1) - New Build Spend v Budget of development activity that is contracted	Future Town, Future Council	90.0%	99.7%		90.0%	98.2%		90.0%	95.3%		85.0%	87.6%		85.0%	85.2%		85.0%
CNM2g: Garage Voids as a percentage of stock	Future Town, Future Council	12.00%	11.58%		12.00%	14.74%		12.00%	15.38%		10.79%	14.93%		11.58%	15.38%		14.74%

	Corporate Theme	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	Actual to 30/09/20	Status at 30/09/20	Target to 31/12/20
FS1a (LACC1): Percentage GF approved savings removed from GF budget for current year	Future Town, Future Council	92.00%	94.00%	★	92.00%	92.00%	★	92.00%	92.00%	★	98.00%	77.00%	▲	92.00%	77.00%	●	92.00%
FS4 (Futsav2b): Percentage of HRA savings identified to meet three year target	Future Town, Future Council	29.3%	100.0%	☆	33.5%	79.3%	☆	46.3%	79.3%	☆	2.5%	2.5%	★	30.0%	0.0%	▲	50.0%
EoCrec: Time to recruit	Future Town, Future Council	45.00	47.00	★	45.00	46.00	★	45.00	46.00	★	42.00	51.00	▲	47.00	?	?	46.00
HDD1d: Number of affordable homes delivered (gross) by the Council (since 2014)	Future Town, Future Council	183.00	192.00	★	212.00	216.00	★	225.00	238.00	★	240.00	239.00	★	242.00	243.00	★	242.00
⊕ Voids sheltered:The time taken to relet standard sheltered voids	Housing Management	70.00	92.74	▲	70.00	88.81	▲	70.00	88.89	▲	70.00	70.67	★	70.00	108.88	▲	70.00
⊕ Rep-Time2: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Urgent Repairs	Place	5.00	2.80	☆	5.00	2.77	☆	5.00	3.14	☆	5.00	1.14	☆	5.00	1.74	☆	5.00
NI191: Residual household waste per household (kgs)	Place	250.00	243.00	★	380.00	365.00	★	520.00	493.00	☆	150.00	130.00	☆	275.00	255.00	☆	395.00
NI192: Percentage of household waste sent for reuse,recycling and composting	Place	43.0%	42.0%	★	41.0%	37.0%	▲	40.0%	40.0%	★	55.0%	44.0%	▲	42.0%	42.0%	★	40.0%
⊕ Rep Cost1: Average responsive repair cost per dwelling	Place	163.54	162.78	★	245.30	218.46	☆	327.07	277.58	☆	81.77	56.86	☆	163.54	110.45	☆	245.30
⊕ Rep-Time3: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Routine Repairs	Place	20.00	7.16	☆	20.00	7.08	☆	20.00	7.85	☆	20.00	2.95	☆	20.00	6.03	☆	20.00
⊕ VoidsGN: The time taken to relet standard general needs voids	Place	32.00	30.27	☆	32.00	31.82	★	32.00	29.97	☆	32.00	25.20	☆	32.00	27.49	☆	32.00
⊕ VoidsGNMW - The time taken to relet major works general needs voids	Place	65.00	59.88	☆	65.00	59.00	☆	65.00	59.13	☆	65.00	60.86	☆	65.00	54.06	☆	65.00
BTC1a: New jobs created through Business Technology Centre	Place	30.00	34.00	☆	45.00	47.00	★	60.00	72.00	☆	15.00	7.00	▲	30.00	12.00	▲	45.00
BTC1b: New business start up in Business Technology Centre	Place	10.00	20.00	☆	15.00	34.00	☆	20.00	57.00	☆	6.00	6.00	★	12.00	10.00	▲	18.00
⊕ NI157a: Percentage of major planning applications determined in 13 weeks	Place	60.0%	83.3%	☆	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%	81.3%	☆	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%	100.0%	☆	60.0%
⊕ NI157b: Percentage of minor planning applications determined within 8 weeks	Place	65.0%	96.0%	☆	65.0%	97.2%	☆	65.0%	90.3%	☆	65.0%	96.2%	☆	65.0%	94.4%	☆	65.0%
⊕ NI157c: Percentage of other planning applications determined within 8 weeks	Place	80.0%	97.5%	☆	80.0%	97.9%	☆	80.0%	96.7%	☆	80.0%	93.7%	★	80.0%	90.1%	★	80.0%
NI184: Food establishments in the area broadly compliant with food hygiene law	Place	95.0%	96.1%	★	95.0%	97.0%	★	95.0%	96.0%	★	95.0%	90.7%	●	95.0%	92.9%	●	95.0%
⊕ ECHFP3: Percentage of Repairs service customers satisfied (telephone survey)	Place	90.00%	93.36%	★	90.00%	93.01%	★	90.00%	92.72%	★	90.00%	94.01%	★	90.00%	?	?	90.00%
⊕ ECHFP3: Percentage repairs appointment made and kept	Place	95.00%	98.49%	★	95.00%	99.35%	★	95.00%	97.91%	★	95.00%	98.25%	★	95.00%	95.63%	★	95.00%



	Corporate Theme	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	Actual to 30/09/20	Status at 30/09/20	Target to 31/12/20	
+	ECH-Rep4: Percentage repairs fixed first time	Place	87.50%	99.14%	☆	87.50%	99.11%	☆	87.50%	96.76%	☆	87.50%	98.84%	☆	87.50%	98.83%	☆	87.50%
+	Rep-Time1: Average end to end repairs time (days) - Emergency Repairs	Place	1.00	0.85	☆	1.00	0.88	☆	1.00	0.94	☆	1.00	0.30	☆	1.00	0.31	☆	1.00
+	ELL1a: Percentage of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) that are broadly compliant	Place	92.50	95.83	☆	92.50	95.93	☆	92.50	96.88	☆	92.50	92.24	★	92.50	100.00	☆	92.50
	CSC13a: Percentage of calls to the CSC resolved within the CSC (by CSC advisors)	Transformation and Support	65.00%	61.80%	★	65.00%	62.10%	★	65.00%	61.40%	●	62.90%	?	?	61.80%	?	?	62.10%
	Cust1: Percentage complaints progressing to stage 2 and 3 that are upheld or partially upheld	Transformation and Support	40.0%	18.3%	☆	40.0%	23.1%	☆	40.0%	25.0%	☆	40.0%	28.6%	☆	40.0%	33.3%	☆	40.0%
	BV10: Percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year received by the authority	Transformation and Support	61.0%	62.9%	☆	89.0%	89.8%	★	99.0%	98.9%	★	36.0%	34.2%	▲	61.0%	66.0%	☆	89.0%
	Pe2: Agency Usage as a percentage of total workforce	Transformation and Support	12.0%	12.8%	●	12.0%	11.4%	★	11.0%	11.9%	●	13.2%	9.4%	☆	12.8%	?	?	11.4%
	Pe4a: Sickness Absence Rate for the Current Workforce (FTE)	Transformation and Support	8.00	9.80	▲	8.00	9.56	▲	8.00	9.87	▲	9.49	8.19	☆	9.80	?	?	9.56
	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%
	NI181: Time taken (days) to process housing benefit new claims and change events	Transformation and Support	12.00	10.09	★	10.00	8.60	★	10.00	5.98	☆	12.00	9.42	☆	12.00	7.44	☆	10.00
	BV9: Percentage of council tax collected	Transformation and Support	61.0%	60.4%	★	88.0%	87.5%	★	96.8%	96.0%	★	33.0%	32.6%	●	61.0%	59.9%	●	88.0%
	Pe1: Total Human Capital - measures Workforce Stability	Transformation and Support	85.0%	85.0%	★	85.0%	85.9%	★	85.0%	86.0%	★	85.9%	86.9%	★	85.0%	?	?	85.9%
	CSC12: Percentage of calls abandoned in the Customer Service Centre	Transformation and Support	10.0%	10.4%	★	8.0%	15.1%	▲	8.0%	15.9%	▲	7.2%	2.6%	☆	10.4%	5.8%	★	15.1%



## **Appendix Two.**

### **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.

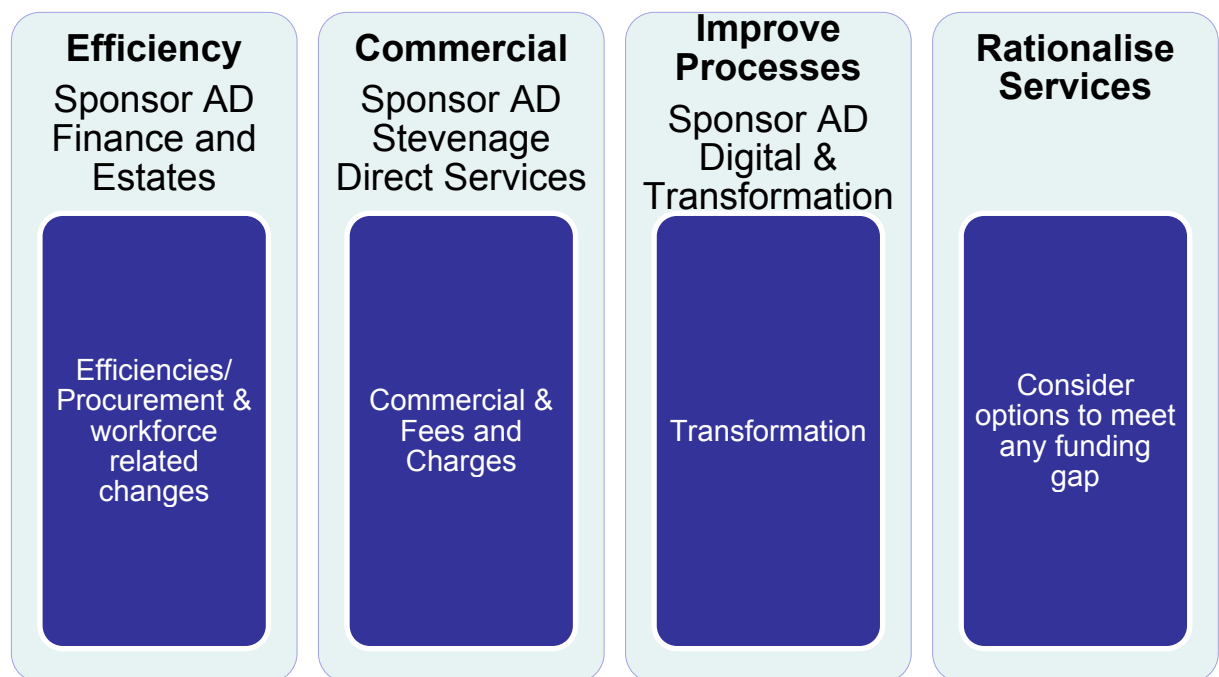


Figure 2: Financial Security workstreams

### 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.

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**Meeting** EXECUTIVE  
**Portfolio Area** Resources/Housing  
**Date** 09 DECEMBER 2020



## DRAFT HRA RENT SETTING AND BUDGET REPORT

### KEY DECISION

**Authors** Clare Fletcher | 2933  
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### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To update Members on the draft proposals on the HRA budgets and rent setting for 2021/22, to be considered by Council on 28 January 2021.
- 1.2 To update Members on the formula for setting rents for 2021/22.
- 1.3 To propose the HRA rents for 2021/22.
- 1.4 To propose the HRA service charges for 2021/22.
- 1.5 To update Members on the 2020/21 and 2021/22 HRA budget, incorporating the Financial Security options and fees and charges included in the December Financial Security report, together with any revised income and expenditure assumptions identified since the HRA MTFS update to the November Executive.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That HRA rent on dwellings be increased, week commencing 5 April 2021 by 1.5% which is an average increase of £1.46 for social rents, £2.38 for affordable rents and £1.80 for Low Start Shared Ownership homes per

week (based on a 52 week year). This has been calculated using the rent formula, CPI +1% in line with the governments rent policy as set out in paragraph 4.1.1.

- 2.2 That the draft 2021/22 HRA budget be approved, as set out in Appendix A. This may be subject to change as a result of any consultation and the finalisation of recharges from the General Fund.
- 2.3 That Members note that the final HRA rent setting budget for 2021/22 be presented to the Executive on the 20 January 2021 and Council on 28 January 2021.
- 2.4 That key partners and other stakeholders be consulted and views fed back into the 2021/22 budget setting process.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The HRA BP was revised (30 years) in November 2019, this revision included the lifting of the HRA borrowing cap, increasing investment in current and new housing stock. In November 2020 the Executive approved the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The latter included an update on lower borrowing costs, (as a result of the governments reversal of the 1% increase in PWLB rates for housing). However the MTFS did show lower HRA balances by 2024/25 of £1.294Million.
- 3.2 For 2021/22 rent setting there has been no change to the government rent policy issued in 2020, that allows for social housing providers to increase rents by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) +1% for a five year period. Guidance released in November 2020 does allow local authorities to breach this cap in circumstances of exceptional financial hardship. However, this would not currently apply to Stevenage Borough Council's HRA.
- 3.3 There are still developing policy issues in the HRA regarding the decent homes standard, environmental improvements and building safety regulations. Estimates for the potential impact of changes in these areas have been included in the budget plans, but these will need to be refined as the impact becomes clearer.
- 3.4 For the second year, the outcome of the Government's consultation on 'Use of Right to Buy (RTB) Receipts' and increased flexibilities has still not been concluded. However, local authorities have been allowed to retain their receipts between April and December 2020, without penalties, due to the impact of the COVID pandemic on development schemes. The Government has also issued a consultation, in November, asking for authorities' current position on the use of receipts. This may lead to a further extension of the repayment timetable, but this is not known at this time. As there has not been any formal conclusion to the last Government consultation process, future policy regarding the RTB system is not known and this continues to impede the use of the receipts.
- 3.5 The HRA has been financially impacted by the COVID pandemic. Rent arrears have risen sharply and this is exacerbated by no enforcement, in line with national policy. There have also been additional costs in some parts of the service, most notably in Independent Living, due to increased COVID safety measures. The known impacts have been reflected in the budget



proposals, but this is still a developing situation that will continue to be monitored carefully over the coming months.

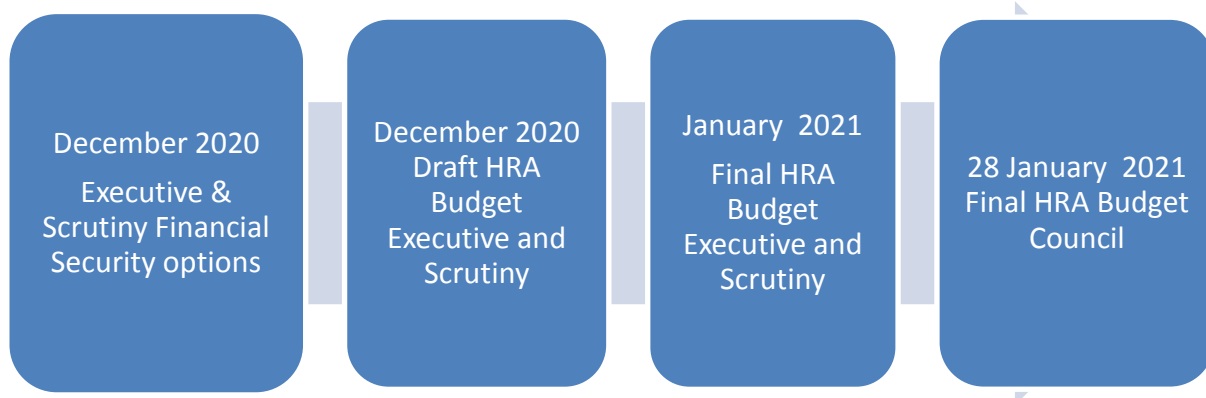
- 3.6 The total number of HRA homes in management at 6 November 2020 is summarised in the table below. The average rents for 2021/22 are based on current housing stock, any right to buys or new schemes subsequent to this date may change the average rent per property type.

Stock Numbers at 06/11/2020	Social	Affordable	Sheltered	LSSO	Homeless	Total
Number of Properties	6,799	36	840	85	164	7,924

- 3.7 The assumptions in the HRA MTFS presented to the November Executive are shown in the table below.

Financial Assumptions included in the HRA MTFS and December FS report	2020/21	2021/22
<b>Rent &amp; Service Charge Increases</b>	CPI+1% or 2.7%	CPI+1% or 1.5%
<b>New Build policy</b>	50% Affordable 50% Social	
<b>Right-to-Buys</b>	27	35
<b>Financial Security options</b>	£205,909	£366,440
<b>Growth bids</b>	£53,110	£224,444
<b>Growth bids Business Plan</b>	£950,000	£950,000
<b>New Build - Number of Units (HRA BP)</b>	9	29
<b>Repayment of Debt</b>	0	0
<b>New loans</b>	23,802,670	26,602,339
<b>Capital Deficit in the Business Plan</b>	0	0

- 3.8 The Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Constitution prescribe the Budget setting process, which includes a minimum consultation period of three weeks. Under Article 4 of the Constitution, the Budget also includes: the allocation of financial resources to different services and projects; proposed contingency funds; setting the rents; decisions relating to the control of the Council's borrowing requirement; the control of its capital expenditure; and the setting of virement limits. The timescale required to implement this process is outlined below.



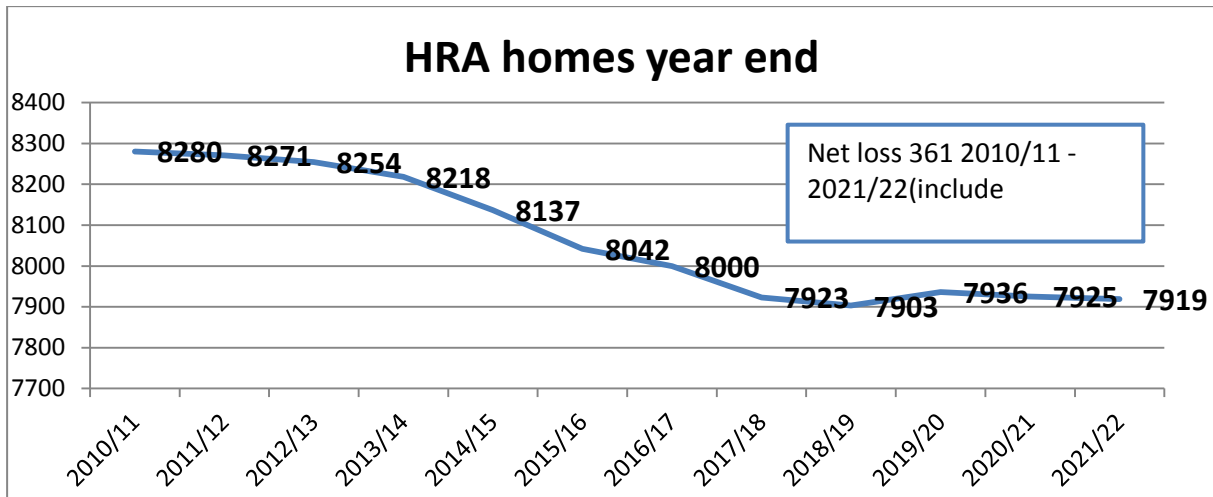
#### 4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

##### 4.1 Rents

- 4.1.1 Rents are calculated on a formula of CPI+1% increase for 2021/22. The CPI inflation increase is based on the September index which was 0.5%, this means the increase for 2021/22 for the council's housing stock is 1.5%.
- 4.1.2 The proposed average rents for 2021/22 are set out in the table below, there are currently 35 affordable rented properties (ranging from four bedroom-two bedroom houses and flats).

Average Rents 2021/22	LSSO	Incr. %	social	Incr. %	Affordable	Incr. %
Average Rent 2020/21	£120.07		£97.58		£159.08	
Add rent impact 2021/22	£1.80	1.50%	£1.46	1.50%	£2.38	1.50%
<b>Total 52 week Rent 2021/22</b>	<b>£121.87</b>		<b>£99.04</b>		<b>£161.46</b>	

- 4.1.3 The net rental income increase for 2021/22 is estimated to be £609,570, which includes the impacts of estimated right to buys, estimated new properties and properties taken out of management (awaiting redevelopment).
- 4.1.4 The total number of properties available is estimated to have reduced by 361 homes between 2010/11 and 2021/22, (based on net impact of RTB's, new homes, homes awaiting development). The forecast numbers for 2021/22 reflect the latest development timetables for schemes like Kenilworth and Symonds Green and an expected lower level of open market purchases, while they are being built.



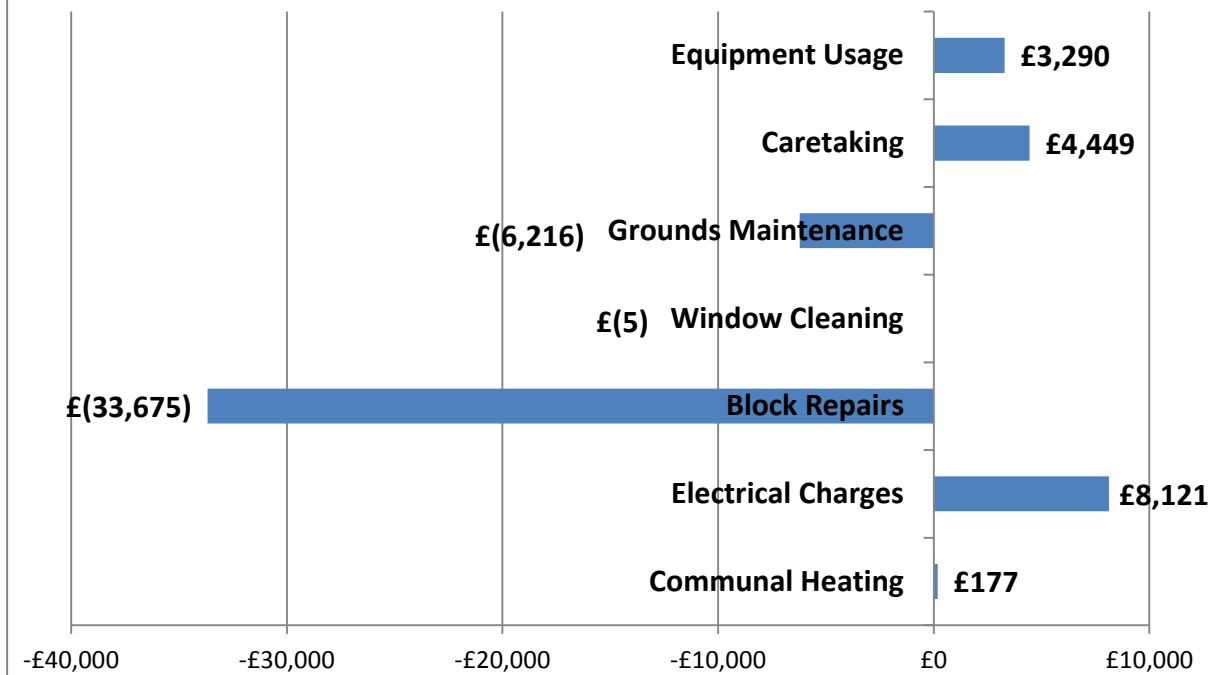
## 4.2 Service Charges

4.2.1 Service charges are calculated for each block individually for the 2,956 properties, (2020/21, 2,940) or 37% of current SBC tenanted properties. A review of service charges has not been concluded in time for 2021/22 rent setting and requires tenant and Member consultation. Service charges currently provided, (eligible for housing benefit) are shown below.

Service Charges:
Caretaking
Grounds maintenance
Window cleaning
Block repairs (including pest control)
Electrical charges
Communal heating

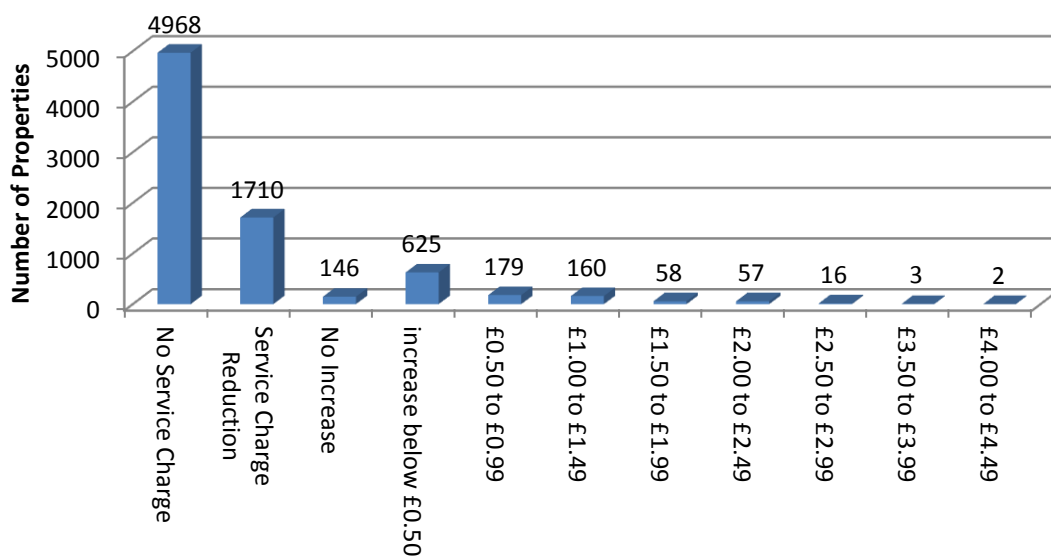
4.2.2 Service charges are not subject to the rental increase of 1.5%, but are based on cost recovery. For 2021/22, service charge costs will increase with inflationary pressures and changes in usage. The chart below identifies the changes between 2020/21 and 2021/22 for service charges. The estimates are based on the projected budgeted costs for 2021/22, with the exception of block repairs, which is 'smoothed' over a five year period to eliminate individual in year spikes in repairs spend.

## Changes to Service Charges 2021/22 recharged to Tenants



4.2.3 The spread of service charge increases for all tenants in 2021/22 is shown in the chart below. The impact of the changes in service charges, means 1,710 or 58% of homes (who get a service charge) will receive a service charge reduction, even though service charges have fluctuated between individual services as shown above. There are only two properties with a service charge increase above £4.00.

## Service Charge increases for 2021/22

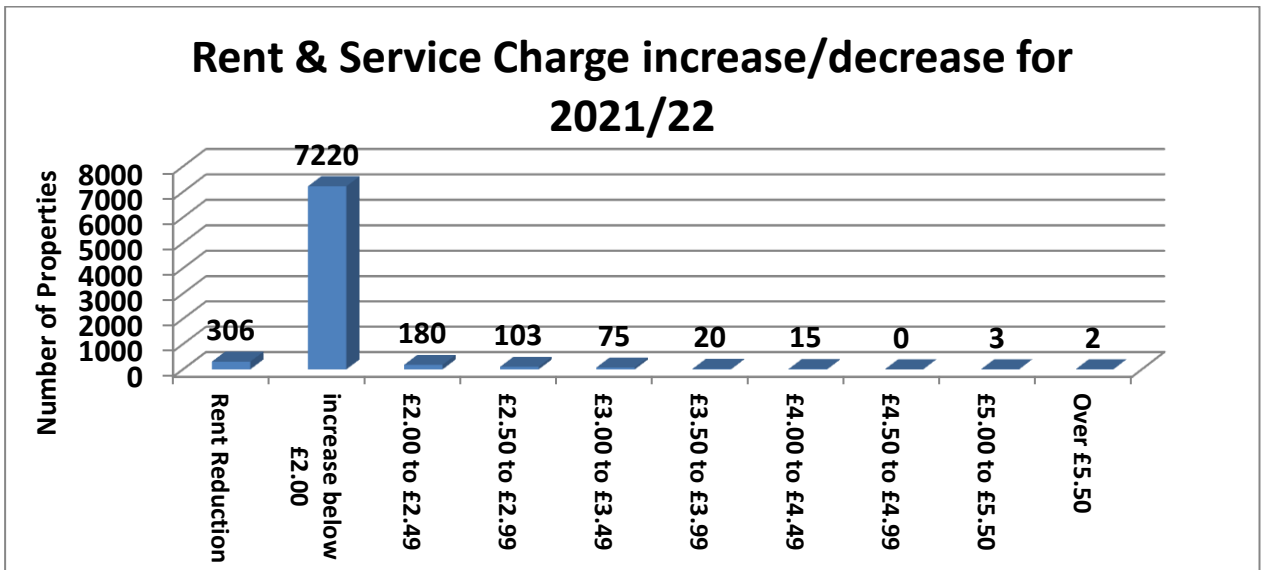


### 4.3 Rents and Service Charges

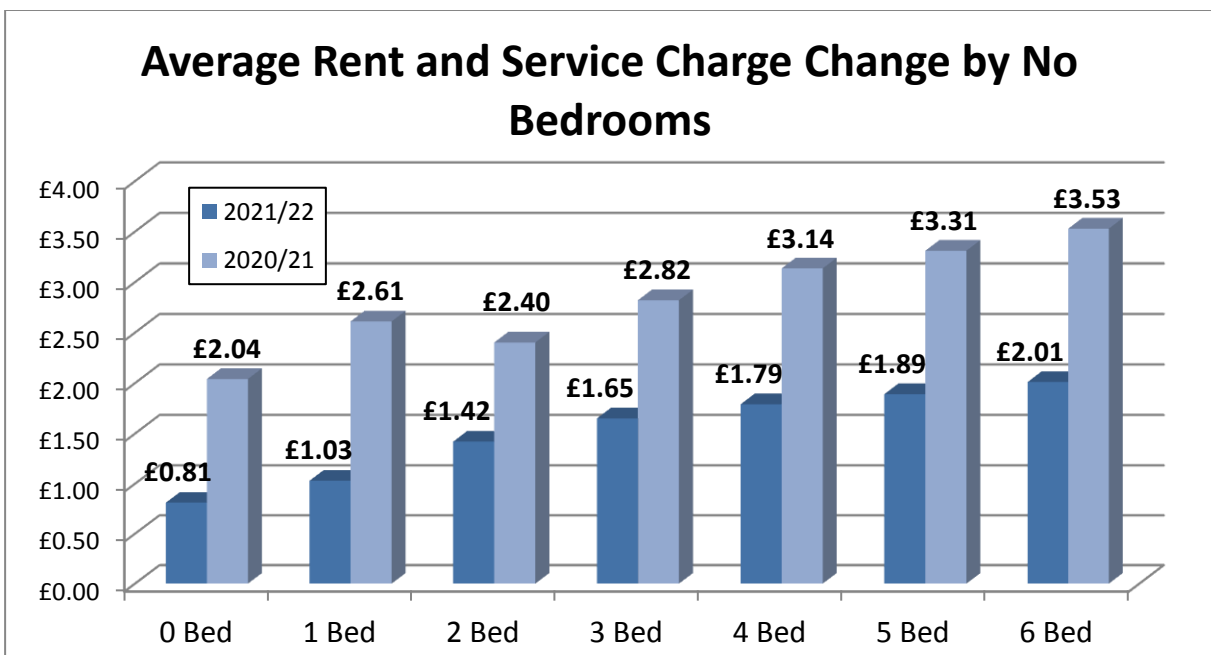
4.3.1 The impact of the 2021/22 rent increase and service charges is

- 306 homes or 4% receive a rent and service charge reduction;
- 7,578 homes or 96% of households will receive a weekly rent and service charge increase of less than £3.50 (based on 52 weeks).
- There are only 5 properties with an increase of more than £5.00.

4.3.2 The spread of the 2021/22 rent and service charge changes are summarised in the chart below.



4.3.3 The average rent and service charge increase/(decrease) by bedroom size has also been calculated and summarised in the chart below.



4.3.4 The comparison between HRA property rents per week and private sector rents per week, for one to four bedroom properties, is shown in the table below. A three bedroom private sector rental property costs an additional 133%, (2020/21,137%) more per week than a SBC council home and 32% more than the affordable let properties,(2020/21 34%).

	SBC Social Rent	SBC Affordable Rent	Median Private Rent	Local Housing Allowance 2020/21	Median % v SBC Social	Median % v SBC Affordable
1 Bed Property	£84.99	£132.45	£168.89	£155.34	99%	28%
2 Bed Property	£99.23	£168.55	£221.30	£195.62	123%	31%
3 Bed Property	£109.96	£194.37	£256.24	£241.64	133%	32%
4 Bed Property	£121.40	£233.04	£314.48	£299.18	159%	35%

*Private rent Data from ONS as at March 2020 updated by ONS rental inflation for East of England to September 2020. Please note the SBC rents are 2021/22 prices and the private rents 2020/21 prices.*

4.3.5 **The Local Housing Allowance (LHA)** shown in the table above is the maximum amount of housing benefit payable by property size for private rented properties.

#### 4.4 Borrowing

4.4.1 Last year the HRA Business Plan was recalculated to take advantage of the lifting of the HRA debt cap that had restricted HRA borrowing to £217Million. The HRA MTFS reported that loan rates are estimated at 1.47% and 1.56% respectively. New loans totalling £23.8Million and £26.6Million are expected to be taken in the current and next financial years. However, the decision when to take the new borrowing will be reviewed, weighing up the cost of carry and the prevailing PWLB rates. The interest payable in 2020/21 and 2021/22 is estimated to be £7,328,770 and £7,800,270 respectively.

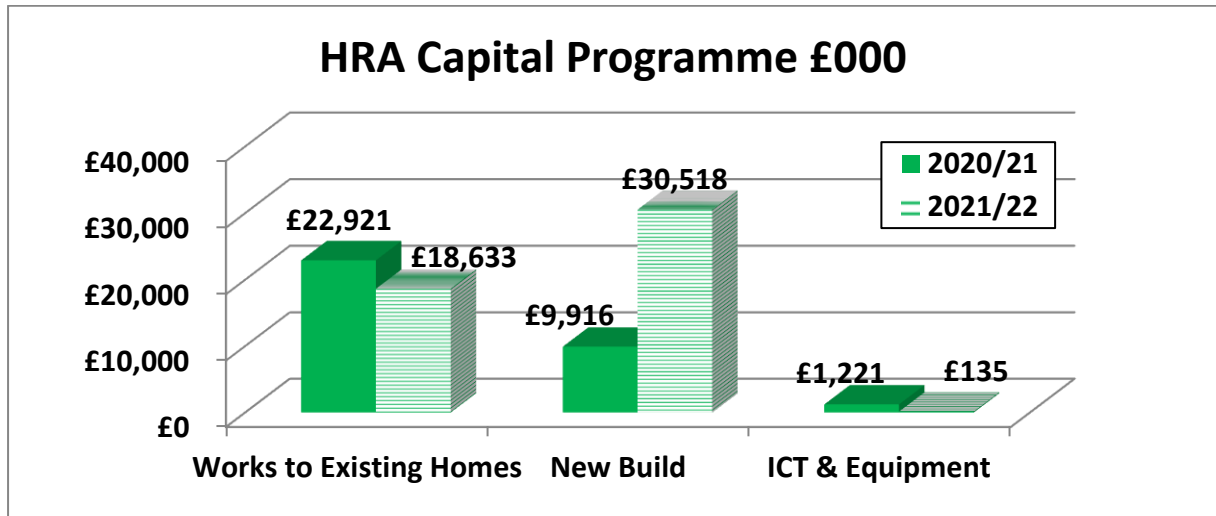
4.4.2 The 2019 HRA Business Plan set out an ambitious programme of investment in current and new housing stock, taking advantage of the new financial freedoms offered by the debt cap removal. These plans were updated in the HRA MTFS and have not been significantly changed in these budget proposals and similar levels of investment are budgeted.

#### 4.5 Contributions to Capital Expenditure

4.5.1 There is no requirement for a revenue contribution to capital (RCCO ) as result of the borrowing set out in section 4.4 above.

4.5.2 The 2021/22 budgeted depreciation allowance required by legislation to be transferred to the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) to fund the capital programme is £12,843,260, an increase of £356,840 on the 2020/21 amount.

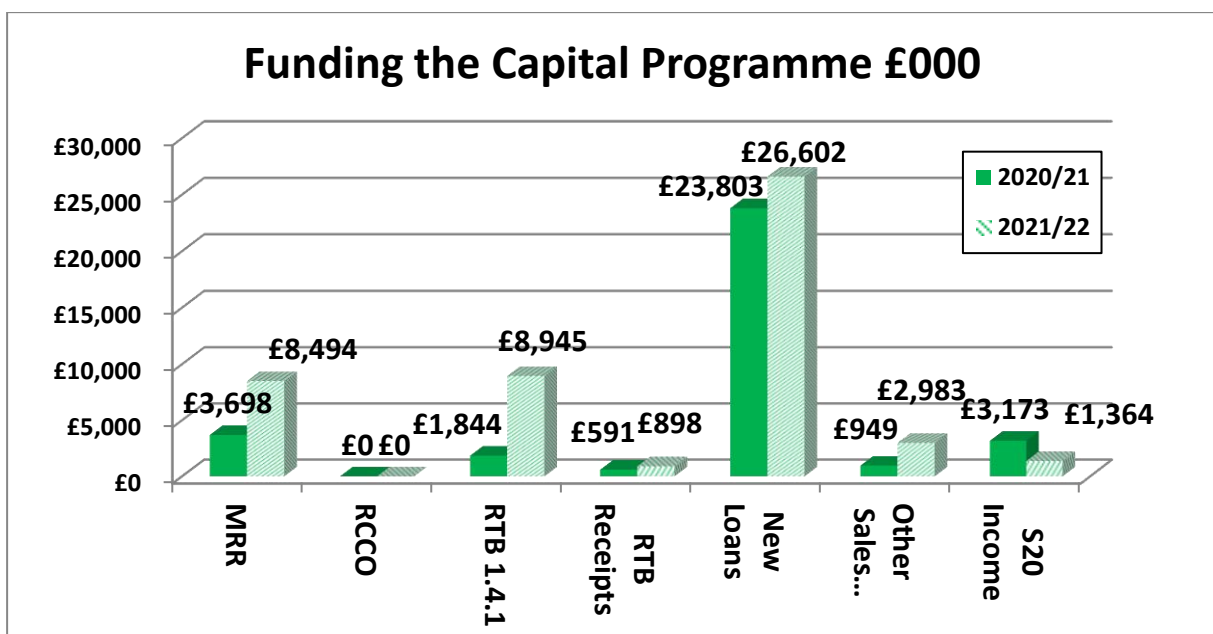
A summary of the 2020/21-2021/22 capital programme is shown in the chart below.



4.5.3 The increase in the value of the 2021/22 capital programme compared to the current 2020/21 programme, is mainly due to rescheduling of new build schemes and the impact of the Kenilworth scheme expenditure on the programme. Expenditure on the existing stock is expected to be lower and this is mainly due to the scheduling of the Major Repairs Contract (MRC) works.

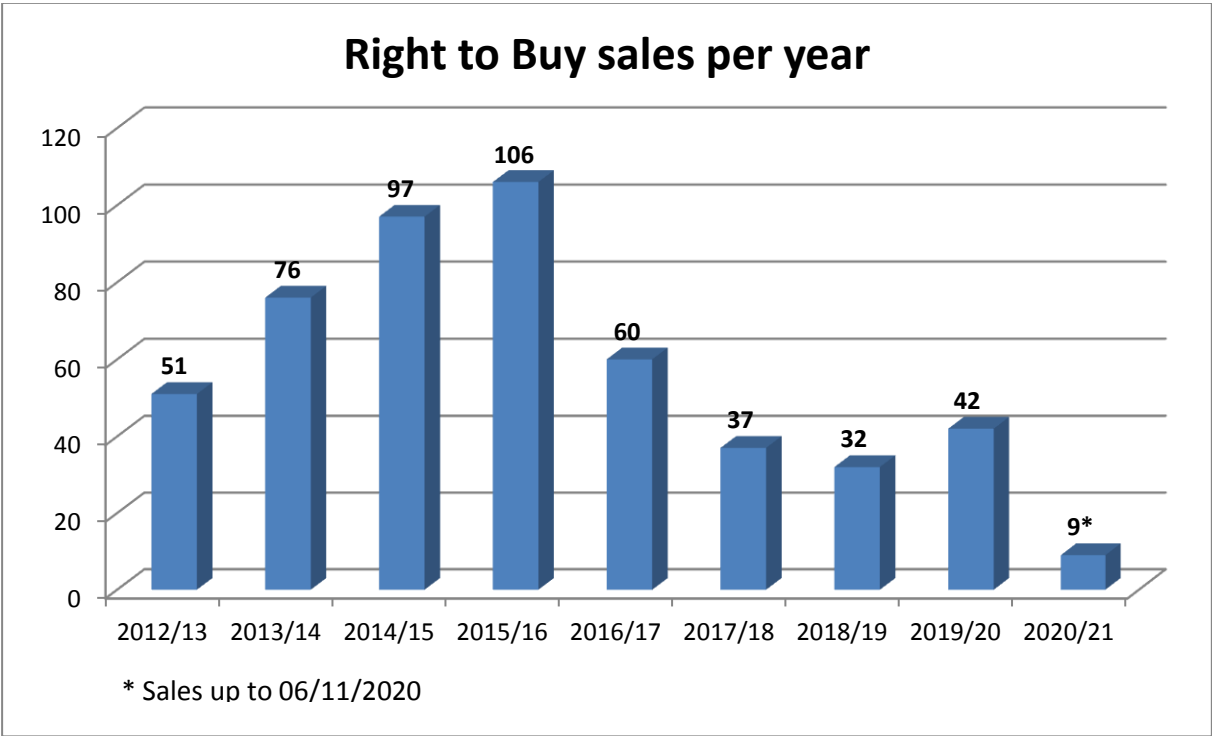
4.5.4 The impact of the Housing White paper recently published is likely to have an impact on both capital and revenue budgets and once the assessment of any additional costs have been made, further growth bids may be required and the impact included in the refresh of the HRA Business Plan next financial year.

4.5.5 The capital programme funding for 2020/21 and the draft HRA capital programme 2021/22 is summarised in the chart below.



**4.6 Use of One for One Receipts**

- 4.6.1 The Council continues to retain the majority of the capital receipts arising from the sale of Right to Buy properties, in line with the retention agreement signed with the Government. Under this agreement the receipts must be used within three years to fund a maximum of 30% of spend on replacement properties, or be paid to the Government with a high interest penalty. While the new build programme, identified in the Business Plan, is large enough to make full use of the receipts, there has often been difficulties in matching the timing of expenditure to when the receipts must be used.
- 4.6.2 The Government has recognised the potential difficulties in meeting construction timetables during the current pandemic and has allowed a time extension for the payment of unused receipts for the first three quarters of 2020/21. Latest forecasts show that with the use of this extension Stevenage Borough Council will not need to pay receipts to the Government for the current financial year. However this position needs to be continually monitored in case of any slippage in the timing of schemes. The government asked for further views on 1.4.1 receipts which were submitted by officers at the end of November.
- 4.6.3 In future years the issue of spending the receipts within the time limit should reduce, as shown in the graph below. This is partly due to a fall in the levels of RTB sales, leading to a lower level of receipts that need to be spent. Combined with the Kenilworth scheme that will ensure the use of receipts within the three year time limit. In 2021/22 the Council will need to spend 1.4.1 receipts of £2.9Million, derived from sales in 2018/19. Current projections show that these should be fully used by the second quarter of next year and that no receipts will need to be paid to Government.





4.6.4 At this time the risk of surrendering receipts to the Government has reduced if spend happens as profiled. However, the issues raised on the current time limit in the agreement will continue to be challenged, in order to have a more flexible system that allows these resources to be invested locally. Any delays, or slippage, in the development programme could breach the three year rule and lead to a loss of receipts and interest penalties, despite having schemes that need the funds. For this reason this area is reviewed each quarter in order to minimise the potential cost to the HRA.

#### 4.7 Draft Budget Proposals

4.7.1 The Draft HRA budget is estimated to be a net income of £2,923,980, which is a reduction of £204,110 over that reported in the HRA MTFS to the November Executive. The reasons for the changes are summarised in the table below.

<b>Summary of 2021/22</b>		
November MTFS (18 November 2020 Executive)		<b>(£3,128,090)</b>
<b>Increases in Income/Reductions in Expenditure:</b>		
Additional Rental Income and other fees and charges	(£3,320)	
Reduction in loan borrowing interest	(£1,790)	
Net decrease in recharges between HRA and GF	(£35,930)	
Decrease in salary inflation	(£97,880)	
Decrease in contract inflation	(£15,750)	
Other minor changes	(£16,970)	<b>(£171,640)</b>
<b>Increases in Expenditure:</b>		
Increase in debt provision	£6,600	
Lower interest on balances	£127,320	
2020/21 savings not made – timing issue	£162,500	
Other minor changes	£32,330	
Net increase in growth / decrease in savings options 2021/22	£47,000	<b>£375,750</b>
<b>Total Changes:</b>		<b>£204,110</b>
<b>Draft HRA 2021/22 budget</b>		<b>(£2,923,980)</b>

4.7.2 The 2020/21 budget summarised below includes changes not reported as part of the November MTFS, but which are included in the HRA Business Plan.

<b>Summary of 2020/21 budget movements</b>		
Working Budget 2020/21		(£3,309,210)
Increase in audit fees		£23,340
Other budgets		£40,200
<b>Total Changes</b>		<b>£63,540</b>
<b>Revised Working Budget</b>		<b>(£3,245,670)</b>

- 4.7.3 The 2020/21 HRA projected year-end net income is estimated to be £63,540 lower than included in the November MTFs Report.
- 4.7.4 All HRA balances in excess of the minimum balances held for assessed risks in year, are required to fund the HRA 30 year capital programme.

<b>HRA Balances:</b>	<b>2020/21 £</b>	<b>2021/22 £</b>
<b>HRA Balance 1 April</b>	(19,819,410)	(23,065,080)
<b>Use of balances in Year</b>	(3,245,670)	(2,923,980)
<b>HRA Balance 31 March</b>	<b>(23,065,080)</b>	<b>(25,989,060)</b>
<b>Minimum Balances</b>	2,985,000	2,985,000

- 4.7.5 CFO will be risk assessing the level of balances required in 2021/22 for the HRA. This will be included in the final HRA budget report to the January Executive and Council.

#### **4.8 Consultation**

- 4.8.1 The Council remains committed to working in partnership with council tenants and leaseholders to shape, strengthen and improve council housing services and sets out a range of options to enable housing customers to be involved.
- 4.8.2 The Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB) acts as an advisory body to the Executive for council housing-related matters, including participation in the HRA budget-setting process and the development of the HRA Business Plan. HMAB currently includes one leaseholder and five tenant representatives in addition to Member and officer representation.
- 4.8.3 The HMAB has not met in the last few months however between Draft and Final HRA budget, a joint special meeting of HMAB and Community Select Committee will meet to discuss the 2021/22 HRA budget.
- 4.8.4 All tenants will be notified of changes to their rent and service charges in February/March 2020.
- 4.8.5 The Council periodically seeks the views of housing customers through a postal survey of a sample of housing customers. This 'STAR' survey is used across the housing sector and enables the council to assess levels of customer satisfaction and to identify customer priorities. The most recent STAR survey was undertaken in early 2018 and for the first time included leaseholders and sheltered housing tenants in addition to general needs tenants.
- 4.8.6 Respondents were asked to say what was most important to them from a list of options. The top five priorities for each group of customers are shown in the table below:

#### **STAR Survey respondents' top five priorities**

Priority*	General Needs Tenants	Sheltered Tenants	Leaseholders
1	Repairs & maintenance (87%)	Repairs & maintenance (60%)	Repairs & maintenance (74%)
2	Overall quality of your home (61%)	Emergency call system (50%)	Value for money for service charges (64%)
3	Value for money for rent and charges (35%)	Supported housing manager (34%)	Overall quality of your block of flats (58%)
4	Neighbourhood as a place to live (26%)	Overall quality of your home (33%)	Dealing with ASB (39%)
5	Keeping residents informed (25%)	Keeping residents informed (33%)	Keeping residents informed (23%)

\* 1= most important

#### 4.9 The 2021/22 Financial Security Options process for the General Fund and HRA

4.9.1 The Leader of the Council recommended a departure to the normal Financial Security process for the 2020/21 budget, which normally has any options channelled through the cross party Leaders Financial Security Group (LFSG). This was primarily because of the potential level of savings required as exacerbated by the COVID pandemic and the need for Portfolio holders and the Executive as a whole to make some service prioritisation decisions.

4.9.2 The process for considering options for approval was to:

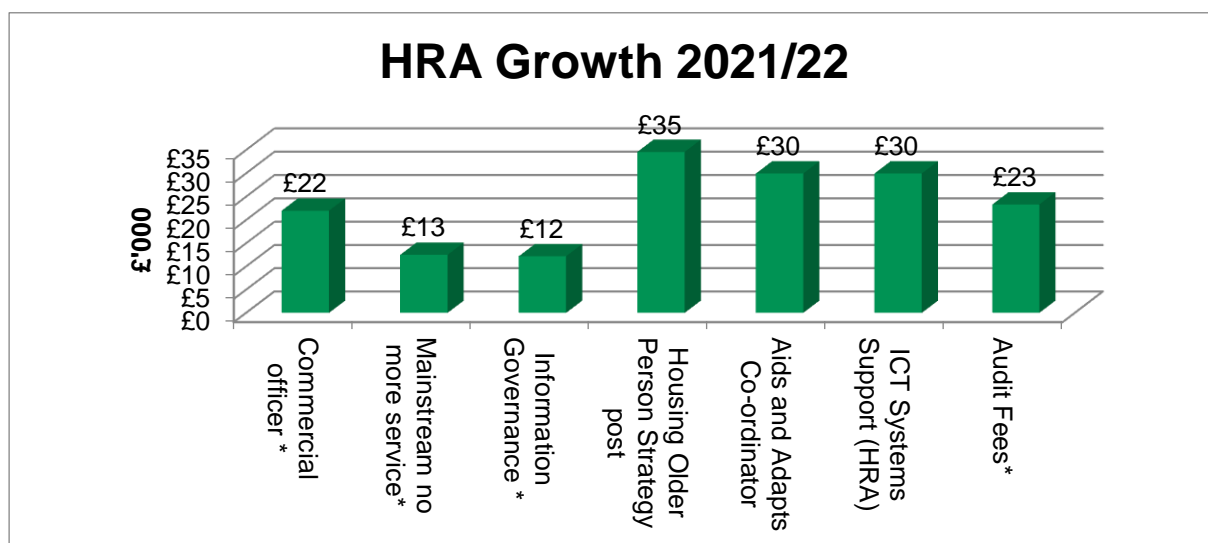
- Consider changes implemented as part of the changes to the way staff now work due to the move from office to remote working.
- Portfolio holder to review the areas of spend within their purview to consider and prioritise and recommend options for consideration as part of the 2021/22 savings package. (Included in the Financial Security report to this Executive are options totalling £225K).
- The services that are severely impacted by COVID.
- The functions that the Council were funding but were the responsibility of other public bodies.
- The process does contain some of the options considered previously by the Financial Security 2019 Executive report.
- Considering the level of budget pressures which increased the level of savings particularly for the General Fund.

4.9.3 The LSFG did reconvene to consider fee increases on 11 November and made some recommended changes to the HRA fees and charges. Fees and Charges options total £73,590 and are included in the Financial Security report to this Executive.

#### 4.10 Growth included in the HRA

4.10.1 The growth included in the 2021/22 HRA budget is summarised in the chart below and included in the Financial Security Report to this committee. Due to

the timing of the Draft HRA budget the new growth has been included but is subject to approval of the spend as part of the Financial Security report.



*\*HRA share of General Fund expenditure*

4.10.2 The Housing Older Person Strategy and Aids and Adaptation post are growth included in the Housing Older Person Strategy to this committee.

## 5. IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1 Financial Implications

5.1.1 Financial implications are included in the body of the report

### 5.2 Legal Implications

5.2.1 Legal implications are included in the body of the report

### 5.3 Staffing Implications

5.3.1 The unions are being consulted on the options approved at the November Executive on 18 November 2020. Human Resources staff are co-ordinating centrally the implementation of any staff related savings.

### 5.4 Risk Implications

5.4.1 Due to frequent Government policy changes, there are significant risks in setting the HRA budget. Historically the ring fenced account has relied almost solely on rent income to finance both revenue and capital works. Many changes in policy, including the loss of £225Million from the Business Plan from four years of rent reductions, have made medium to long term planning difficult. These risks have increased with the removal of the debt cap, as the Council is making long term financing decisions, on capital investment, based on income streams set by the current policy.

- 5.4.2 Currently one of the biggest risks to the account is a large increase in arrears. Over 2019/20 weekly rent arrears increased from £300K to £800K and it is believed that this was in part due to increasing numbers of tenants switching from housing benefits to Universal Credit. However, from April arrears continued to rise and now stand at just under £1.2Million. This was due to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic and the measures put in place by the Government, which included a suspension of evictions. To mitigate this position increased resources are being employed to help recover rent owed and the provision for bad debt has been increased to recognise that not all of the outstanding debt will be recovered (see 4.7.1).
- 5.4.3 There is a potential adverse financial impact on the HRA as a result of high inflationary pressures. Rent increases are based on the September CPI figure, which was below normal levels at 0.5% this year. If inflation rises above that assumed in the budget generally, or spikes as a result of BREXIT, reductions in spend may need to be made or some of the growth recommended in the MTFS update removed.
- 5.4.4 The full operational implications of regulatory changes after the Grenfell tragedy are still being implemented. Provision was made in the last Business Plan to allow for an additional £500K in the budget. However, as policy and best practice across the sector is developed this may need to be reviewed and could increase budget pressures on the HRA.
- 5.4.5 With the increased level of borrowing in the HRA, after the removal of the debt cap, there is a greater risk of interest rates being higher than projected and leading to a reduction in the amount of expenditure for both revenue and capital. There is also a risk that PWLB rate differential between gilts and borrowing rates will be increased as happened in 2019/20. To mitigate this, an interest rate reserve of £5.7Million has been set up to offset any future variances from expected rates.
- 5.4.6 The impact of the recent appeal hearing judgement on Kingston-upon-Thames Council verses Moss regarding Councils acting as water resellers has yet to be determined.
- 5.4.6 The HRA has an annual Financial Security target to achieve, which for 2021/22 onwards is £100,000 per year.

## **5.5 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.5.1 In carrying out or changing its functions (including those relating to the provision of services and the employment of staff) the Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and in particular section 149 which is the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Act replaced three previous equality legislations – the Race Relations Act (section 71), the Sex Discrimination Act (section 76A) and the Disability Discrimination Act (section 49A). The Council has a statutory obligation to comply with the requirements of the Act, demonstrating that as part of the decision-making process, due regard has been given to the needs described in the legislation. These duties are non-delegable and must be considered by Council when setting the budget in January 2021.

5.5.2 To inform the decisions about the Budget 2021/22 officers have undertaken Brief Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for service-related budget savings proposals. Where there is a potentially negative impact, officers have identified further action needed to inform a final decision and to mitigate the impact where this is possible. These EqIA were included in the November Report and will be appended to the final HRA Budget report together with an EQIA for the rent and service charges increase for the January Executive.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

BD1 Housing Revenue Account MTFS November 2020 Executive

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A - Draft HRA Summary

APPENDIX A	HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT SUMMARY			
	Actual 2019/20 £	Original Budget 2020/21 £	Working Budget 2020/21 £	Original Budget 2021/22 £
<b>Summary of Expenditure</b>				
Supervision and Management	10,002,557	9,177,690	9,422,701	9,359,940
Special Services	4,321,555	4,747,230	4,928,909	5,053,050
Rent, Rates, Taxes and Other Charges	637,164	465,290	465,710	465,660
Repairs and Maintenance <sup>(1)</sup>	5,361,410	7,501,970	7,395,690	7,604,140
Corporate and Democratic Costs	774,300	554,360	937,640	956,390
Contribution to the Bad Debt Provision	306,264	217,620	322,970	224,220
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>21,403,251</b>	<b>22,664,160</b>	<b>23,473,620</b>	<b>23,663,400</b>
<b>Summary of Income</b>				
<b>Rental Income:</b>				
Dwelling Rents	(39,011,816)	(40,281,360)	(40,211,950)	(40,891,590)
Non Dwelling Rents	(82,958)	(90,430)	(88,120)	(91,640)
	(39,094,774)	(40,371,790)	(40,300,070)	(40,983,230)
Charges for Services & Facilities - Tenants	(2,092,042)	(2,237,800)	(2,250,820)	(2,282,150)
Leaseholder Service Charges	(844,547)	(967,280)	(894,910)	(975,920)
Contributions Towards Expenditure	(747,005)	(344,580)	(399,060)	(346,400)
Reimbursement of Costs	(360,698)	(345,540)	(301,380)	(345,540)
Recharge Income (GF & Capital)	(1,751,255)	(1,789,600)	(1,932,440)	(2,074,840)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(44,890,321)</b>	<b>(46,056,590)</b>	<b>(46,078,680)</b>	<b>(47,008,080)</b>
Depreciation	11,351,592	12,486,420	12,327,160	12,843,260
Impairment/Loss on Revaluation	0	0	0	0
Interest Payable	6,866,958	7,837,130	7,328,770	7,800,270
Interest Receivable	(397,855)	(347,750)	(296,540)	(222,830)
<b>Net (Surplus)/Deficit For Year</b>	<b>(5,666,376)</b>	<b>(3,416,630)</b>	<b>(3,245,670)</b>	<b>(2,923,980)</b>
<b>Appropriations:</b>				
Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay	0	0	0	0
Self Financing Contribution To Provision	1,810,558	0	0	0
Pension Reversal	(374,384)	0	0	0
Transfer to Interest Rate Fluctuation Reserve	5,712,851	0	0	0
<b>Housing Revenue Account Balance</b>				
<b>Net Expenditure/(Income) for Year</b>	<b>1,482,648</b>	<b>(3,416,630)</b>	<b>(3,245,670)</b>	<b>(2,923,980)</b>
<b>Balance B/Fwd 1 April</b>	<b>(21,302,059)</b>	<b>(19,819,411)</b>	<b>(19,819,411)</b>	<b>(23,065,081)</b>
<b>HRA Balance C/Fwd 31 March</b>	<b>(19,819,411)</b>	<b>(23,236,041)</b>	<b>(23,065,081)</b>	<b>(25,989,061)</b>
<b>SERVICE DETAILS:</b>				
In 2012/13 the HRA became a self financing account and the housing subsidy system ceased. This change allows all future revenues to be available to be spent locally with the exception of the pooled element of Right to Buy sales.				
<sup>(1)</sup> Repairs and maintenance costs only. Management costs are included in the Supervision and Management line.				

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